

Household Spirits by Mia McCullough ©2008

ROX CONT'D

Please tell me you have beer stashed somewhere in this house.

(ERIK shakes his head.)

It's all right. I'm really in the mood for tequila, anyway.

ERIK reaches into a cabinet and pulls out a bottle of Pine Sol. He twists off the cap. ROX regards him with skepticism bordering on disgust.

ERIK

Smell it.

(ROX sniffs it.)

Cuervo Gold.

ROX

How well did you wash that bottle?

ERIK

Really, really well.

ROX

You are the *best* creepy step-brother ever.

(He offers her the bottle)

I am NOT drinking out of that.

(She gets two glasses.)

You having some?

ERIK

Sure.

ROX

If this kills me I'm going to be very disappointed in you.

She dips her pinky finger in the glass and tastes it. She doesn't mean to be seductive, but she is.

ROX CONT'D

You first.

ERIK takes a gulp. ROX takes a gulp.

ROX CONT'D

Thanks for sharing, by the way.

ERIK

It was left over from a party.

ROX

Doesn't Angela try to clean with it?

ERIK

She doesn't believe in Pine Sol. She thinks Evelyn bought it.

ROX

As if.

You know, she thinks you're gay.

ERIK

Is that you're not-so-subtle way of saying that you think I'm gay.

ROX

No. I have no idea.

ERIK

So that's your way of asking.

ROX

I was just mentioning it. You don't have to respond.

ERIK

I wasn't planning on it.

ROX

I don't think you're particularly effeminate. You're more sort of...Columbine. But maybe those guys were gay too, what do I know? You don't have a secret gun fetish, do you?

ERIK

I wouldn't call it a secret.

ROX

Don't fuck with me.

ERIK

I'm not. I have an interest in firearms.

ROX

You don't have any, do you?

ERIK

No. I wouldn't mind learning to shoot though.

ROX

Why? You got a hit list?

ERIK

Not a serious one. It's a useful skill. When our society degenerates and we have civil war or anarchy, the world will be divided into people who can use a gun and people who can't.

ROX

You think about this shit?

ERIK

Sure. The three most important things you can do to prepare for the inevitable breakdown of society are: get Lasik surgery, a big dog, and a good gun. And learn how to use it.

ROX

What, no bomb shelter?

ERIK

Bomb shelters are for paranoid losers.

ROX

And you are...?

ERIK

A realist. I've been asking my father for shooting lessons for three Christmases now. Seems unlikely he will comply. I'll probably have to wait until I enlist.

ROX

In what?

ERIK

I'm deciding between the Air Force and the Navy.

Beat.

ROX

You're joking, right?

ERIK

No.

ROX

You are aware of the unrest in the Middle East.

ERIK

I am aware of unrest in every moment of the day. But the conflict that I am confronted with on a regular basis is stupid, pigeon-shit, popularity contest, who drives a nicer car and can hit a home run bullshit and I'm not sure the Middle East is far enough away from these people.

ROX

So you'd rather hang out with suicide bombers?

ERIK

They, at least, have principles. I don't even plan on finishing high school. I'm gonna enlist next month on my eighteenth birthday.

ROX

But aren't you, like, a really good student and shit?

ERIK

Every day I set foot in that place, my respect for humanity goes down another notch.

ROX

Erik, you've just gotta rough it out. College is so much better than high school. It's like a whole other social environment. It's not so fucking....

ERIK

Darwinian?

ROX

I was gonna say vicious, but Darwinian is good. I mean, especially if you're gay, Erik, you can't go into /the military.

ERIK

/I'm not gay.

ROX

Well, whatever. People aren't so uptight about that kind of shit in college. They don't judge you.

ERIK

No one judges you? Or were you taking a *random* poll on whether or not you dress like a whore?

ROX

Okay, some of the people I hang out with can be superficial and judgmental, but not everyone's like that.

ERIK

So why do you hang out with them?

ROX

Because they're my friends.

ERIK

That's fucked up.

ROX

Yeah. Sometimes I think Margarita here is the only non-judgmental friend I've ever had.

ERIK

I thought her name was Julie or something.

ROX

JEWXXXXX-lia. Yeah, I hate it, I keep trying out new ones. I guess her original name was Hortense or Hilda or something, some German fat-girl name. But my grandmother called her JEWXXXXX-lia. Like it was important that the doll was Jewish. That always sort of irritated me. Like, why are you bestowing a religious orientation on a fucking doll? Shouldn't they be exempt from that shit?

ERIK

So is that true about the Nazis and the paintings?

ROX

I guess.

ERIK

Kind of cool to think that the SS ripped open your doll.

ROX

I don't know if "cool" is the word I'd use.

ERIK

It does kind of make her a historical figure.

ROX

I guess. She'd probably have some interesting things to say if she could talk. I'm sure she knows things about my family I'll never know.

(annoyed, MORE)

ROX CONT'D

Bubbi always used to say: one day we'll cut you a smile, JEWWW-lia, and the wealth of the ages will spill from your mouth.

Pause. ROX takes a gulp of her drink.

ERIK

You don't like being Jewish.

ROX

I'm not Jewish. Not according to Jewish law, and definitely not according to my grandmother. I've just got the name.

ERIK

Does it bother you that other people think you're Jewish? Because of the name?

ROX

No. I don't— Kind of. No. Yeah, a little.

ERIK

So you're an anti-Semite.

ROX

No, I can't be an anti-Semite.

ERIK

Why?

ROX

(laughing)

Because I'm Jewish!

ERIK

You're a self-loathing, anti-Semite.

ROX

Well, what about you, Jew-boy? You want people to know you're Jewish? Do people know? Do people know you're mom was a Jew?

ERIK

They know she was crazy.

Beat.

ROX

Seriously? Like people you go to school with know you're mom was mentally ill?

ERIK

Oh yeah, the schizophrenia, the suicide. It's a nice piece of neighborhood lore.

ROX

Wow. That sucks.

ERIK

Yeah.

ROX

I couldn't handle it if people at school knew about my dad being in prison.

ERIK

It's not people knowing that's so bad. It's the surveillance. Everyone waiting for my symptoms to emerge. My guidance counselor, my shrink, Angela, my dad...somedays. Sometimes I just want to start a dialogue with the fuckin' microwave, scare the crap out of them.

ROX

Get yourself institutionalized.

ERIK

Your mother would like that.

ROX

She's got her own issues. She's a highly medicated individual.

ERIK

Yeah, I know. I've tried some of her stuff.

ROX

What!

ERIK

I get bored.

ROX

So are you worried about it. Inheriting it?

ERIK

Yeah, I guess. I try not to think about it.

ROX

But like, another few years, if it doesn't rear its ugly head, you should be free and clear, right?

ERIK

What, does Evelyn have you studying up so you can monitor me too?

ROX

I'm a psych major.

ERIK

Oh.

Beat.

ROX

Do you remember your mom?

ERIK

No. Sometimes it seems like I do, but then...

(he looks at the pantry)

I don't think I remember her.

ROX

Did she off herself in the house?

ERIK

I think so.

ROX

You don't know?

ERIK

I assume. Doesn't sound like she went out much.

ROX

How'd she do it?

ERIK

No idea. Dad doesn't talk about it.

ROX

Have you asked him?

ERIK

I don't know. Not in a long time.

ROX

You asked him and he didn't tell you?

ERIK

He doesn't like to talk about it.

ROX

I bet you could find out on-line. It might be in an archived paper.

ERIK

Yeah, it's not. Not the details.
I don't really want to know anymore, anyway.

ROX

Okay.

(beat)

I totally don't believe you, but whatever.

(Pause.)

Do you think people at school know?

ERIK

Maybe.

ROX

Oh my God, that would make me insane!

(ERIK shrugs)

(Beat.)

You want to light the candles?

ERIK

Sure.

They go to the island and pull out
candles. ERIK LIGHTS A MATCH,
lights the Shamus and they
alternate lighting the candles.

ROX

I like it when Hanukkah falls over Christmas.

ERIK

Me too.

There is a KNOCK on the WINDOW over
the sink.

ROX
What the fuck was that?

ERIK
Get down.

They crouch behind the island.
ANOTHER KNOCK.

ROX
What is that?

ERIK
Someone's knocking on the window.

ROX
One of your friends?

ERIK
They would call. Don't look.

ROX
There's no one there.
Maybe it's Santa.

They creep to the window and peer
out. A SOFT KNOCK at the DOOR. They
both jump. ROX stifles a scream.

ERIK
Don't answer it.

ANOTHER KNOCK. ROX goes to the
door, pulls the curtain away.

ROX
Oh my god.