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The Use of Deadly Force

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The Use of Deadly Force

[LIGHTS UP.]

[HARV stands facing his wife ETTIE in the middle of their kitchen. There is a kitchen table with two chairs behind them. HARV is a cop, only a few years in the force, his hair cut short. He wears his uniform pants and an undershirt. ETTIE, the doting wife, wears a blouse and jeans, her hair simple and functional. Her cheek is red.

A plate and food are spilled out on the ground, though ETTIE has a fork clenched in her hand. She raises it feebly before dropping it to the ground. HARV breathes heavily and holds his hand, half-crushing it in his grasp. He sits with his back to her, his body convulsing slightly. Perfectly rigid, ETTIE slowly bends down to begin cleaning up the mess.]

HARV: [sounding parched] Come on. You don't have to clean that now. Come here. Sit down here. Come on.

ETTIE doesn't stop.

HARV: [con't] I said you didn't have to clean that. I'll [beat] I'll get to it later. Sit down here.

[He stands up, finally facing her again.]

HARV: [con't] [agitated] Stop, dammit. I said stop that. [calm] Ettie, dear, come sit at the table. We'll talk about this. I want to talk, don't you? You can just come here really nice and sit down, then we can talk. Just talk, that's all.

[ETTIE finishes scraping bits of food onto the plate and stares down at it.]

Harv gets closer to her.

HARV: *[con't]* *[agitated again]* Ettie!

[ETTIE suddenly stands up and walks offstage.]

ETTIE: *[cutting him off]* I need paper towel.

[HARV pursues her for a few steps.]

HARV: Don't go on like this, Ettie. We can work on this. We can, I swear. Talk to me. *[pause]*

[He talks more to himself than anyone else.]

HARV: *[con't]* He was a Hispanic guy, about 5'4". And he had big eyes, too big for his face, so they bugged out a little, he looked like a frog, even in his photos all the guys at the precinct were saying that he looked just like a frog. *[to offstage]* Rob said that, from the Christmas party? *[back to self]* This wide, mope-y mouth too, just like a frog. You could tell he tried to press his lips forward to hide it, but it didn't work at all. His hair was all little black ringlets, just over the top of his head.

[ETTIE enters with a clump of paper towel and starts to wipe at the floor.]

HARV: *[con't]* *[addressing her now]* You heard that, right Ettie? He looked like a frog with, like, a jerry curl, a really short one right on top of his head. You can imagine that. You can see that. He wasn't fat, understand, he wasn't fat, just his face looked like that. *[pause]* I hate when you don't look at me! I'm right here, right in front of you, and you're so worried about that fucking food-

[HARV steps towards her with an unbridled energy that comes across as forceful. She flinches at the action.]

HARV: [*con't*] [*completing his last line*] That you... don't. [*beat*] Don't stay down there. Stand up. I'm up here.

[*ETTIE stands, although not facing him.*]

HARV: [*con't*] Ettie, they're going to take my badge away, you understand that? They're really going to do it. I won't be able to work if they take my badge away. We need to pay loans on the house, the car, I need to work. I need my badge. You don't think they will, will they?

[*HARV grabs ETTIE by the forearms and, despite her writhing against it, turns her towards him. She cranes her neck to look away from him and tries to hold back tears.*]

HARV: [*con't*] [*pleading*] You don't think they'd really take it away, do you? They'll let me work a different beat, or do community service or something, don't you think that? Don't you think they'll let me do that?

ETTIE: Let me go, Harvey!

[*Upon releasing her, she slumps down in the furthest chair, her head down, her hands kneading each other furiously, her face streaming with tears. She tries to control her sobbing.*]

HARV: [*talking to nobody*] Those big eyes looked right at me when I came around the corner. Even through the dark and everything I could see them. This is how they taught me to hold it, just like this.

[*HARV pantomimes drawing a handgun from a side holster. He keeps his trigger arm stiff, his other hand cupping the invisible stock. He draws his weapon several times.*]

HARV: [*con't*] [*becoming frantic*] See, you keep your arm strong, because there's more kickback than you think there is. Always straight in front of you, very solid. This motion, over and over again. Line up the sight. Breathe out. Just like this. I came around the corner with

a hard turn, leading with the gun. You make hard turns, watch your blinds, strong arm. He was right there, just around the corner. Those frog eyes were scared, you could see it, they were bigger than the pictures, he was scared.

[He goes towards ETTIE, yet keeps a safe distance.]

HARV: *[con't]* *[steadily more and more frantic]* It wasn't hard, but only because I didn't think. He flashed something metal and I fired, fired twice. Squeeze the trigger, don't pull, don't throw off your sight. Blam Blam! It was quick, just like that. Blam blam! I wasn't thinking, Ettie. I had my arm perfect, I swear. Really quick. They want you to think it's slow, but it's not, they just go limp, Ettie. He dropped right there. Just went limp. He had a gun, they said that. I didn't know then, I didn't, but they said he had one. He would have shot me! You don't want me dead, right Ettie? It was really easy, just quick, Blam Blam! I can't tell you how powerful it is- I am- I swear, really quick!

[HARV looks at his wife, tears welling up in his eyes.]

HARV: *[con't]* *[passive]* I'm sorry, Ettie. I'm so sorry.

[HARV sits at the chair opposite ETTIE. He is in awe.]

HARV: *[con't]* I didn't mean to. I'm really sorry. It won't happen again. It won't. I love you. You know I love you, Ettie. You know that, right? I haven't changed. Believe me, I haven't. I'm still the same. We can wake up tomorrow just like we were. I haven't changed. I love you. Talk to me, Ettie. We'll talk about this.

[He puts out his hand towards her. This is a big moment for them both. Her conflict in choosing is played out on her face. She looks and turns away from it. HARV gets up from the table and goes off to the side of the stage. He gets down to the floor and begins doing pushups, grunting and yelling out the numbers he's done. ETTIE watches him from her chair. She flinches at each number as she slowly tucks her knees toward her chest.]

HARV: [*cont'*] 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10...

[LIGHTS DOWN.]

[END SCENE.]