

LADY BUG

Written by

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INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

KURT THOMAS, 60s, wears a flannel over a white shirt and blue-jeans. He stands in the doorway, while WINSLOW THOMAS, 50s, with short hair an old floral button down, sobs.

WHITNEY THOMAS, 30s, lies, pale, under a thin blue blanket.

The DOCTOR, 30s, pulls Kurt into the hallway.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Doctor reviews her clipboard. Kurt holds his coat in silence.

DOCTOR

I am very sorry about your loss,  
Mr. Thomas.

Kurt stares at the Doctor, unmoved.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

However, there's another matter  
that needs to be discussed, if you  
wouldn't mind following me.

The Doctor points the direction with her clipboard.

INT. HOSPITAL CHILDREN'S WING HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Doctor stands behind Kurt. Kurt peers into a window of a hospital room. KIA, 4, an African-American girl, sleeps on a bed. She holds a stuffed elephant.

Kurt turns to face the Doctor.

KURT

There must be a mistake.

The Doctor flips through some pages on her clipboard.

DOCTOR

Whitney J. Thomas, pronounced dead,  
3:45pm. James L. Reynolds,  
pronounced dead on sight at 1:00Pm.  
Daughter of Whitney and James, Kia  
R. Thomas. You are Kurt Thomas?

KURT

Well, yeah, but I--

The Doctor tucks her clipboard under her arm and sighs.

DOCTOR  
There is no mistake.

KURT  
She mentioned a boyfriend a few  
letters ago, but never a girl.  
Especially, not a--

DOCTOR  
Not a what?

The doctor stares at Kurt.

Kurt turns back to the window, then back to the Doctor.

KURT  
My wife-- she's real upset and  
don't need to be gettin' all  
excited over this. Let me tell her,  
alright?

The Doctor nods.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Kurt helps pack a distraught Winslow in their rusty truck.

WINSLOW  
Honey, are you sure you don't mind?

Kurt closes the truck door. He talks through the open window.

KURT  
I will take care of all the  
plannin', darlin'. Everything will  
be alright.

Kurt kisses Winslow's forehead.

KURT (CONT'D)  
See you tonight.

Winslow wipes a tear and drives away.

Kurt watches her leave and turns back toward the hospital. He loosens his top button.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFE - DAY

Kurt fidgets with a balloon string. He sits at an open table holding an ice cream cone.

A NURSE, 20s, walks Kia and her stuffed elephant to meet Kurt. The Nurse hands Kurt paperwork to sign and exits.

Kia sits at Kurt's table. Kurt gives her the balloon and ice cream. He smiles.

KURT

Heya' there, Kia. My name's Kurt.  
But you can call me Pappa Kurt, if  
you'd like.

Kia licks her ice cream.

KURT (CONT'D)

Ya see, your momma, Whitney, that's  
my baby girl. My daughter. That  
makes you my grand baby.

Kia continues to lick her ice cream. Kurt tickles Kia's elephant. He shakes its paw.

KURT (CONT'D)

How'd you like to come stay with  
your Pappa and meet Gram?

Kurt notices Kia's ladybug hair clip. He smiles.

KURT (CONT'D)

That's a nice buggy you got holdin'  
your hair up.

Kia touches it. She giggles and reveals her few teeth. Kurt laughs. He wipes ice cream from the tip of her nose.

EXT./INT. THOMAS HOUSE - NIGHT

Kurt, with Kia on his hip, and small suitcases around his feet, struggles to open his front door. Kia sleeps against his shoulder with limp arms.

Winslow, hair slept-on and wild, opens the door in her robe. She squints at Kia through the dark. Her eyes widen.

WINSLOW

Kurt. What in God's name is this?

Kurt hushes Winslow and enters the house. He lays Kia on the living room sofa, grabs her bags, and closes the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Winslow stands with her arms crossed in the dark hallway. She whispers at Kurt.

WINSLOW

What the hell is that little crow  
doin' in my house? Have you lost  
your damn mind?

Kurt grabs Winslow by both arms.

KURT

Winnie, please. Quiet.

WINSLOW

Who's child it that?

KURT

That there is Whitney's girl.

Winslow yanks her arms from Kurt's grip. She backs away.

WINSLOW

What are you goin' on about?  
Whitney never had no babies. She--

Winslow stumbles backward toward her bedroom door.

WINSLOW (CONT'D)

She would have told us.

KURT

Take one look at that girl. You  
think she woulda' felt like she  
could tell you that?

Winslow backs against her door.

WINSLOW

No. Stop it.

Kurt takes a step toward her.

KURT

You aren't the only one who lost  
someone in that crash, Winnie.  
We've gotta--

WINSLOW

No!

Winslow slams her bedroom door and locks it in Kurt's face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kurt carries Kia on his shoulders. He shows her all the photos on the fireplace mantle.

Kia reaches for a photo of her mom. She frowns.

KURT  
I miss her too.

He sets Kia down and kneels to her level. He grabs her hands.

KURT (CONT'D)  
Momma is an angel now, way up in the sky. She's happy up there with your daddy. They've got little chickens and baby cows. You know what the cows say?

Kia giggles.

KIA  
Moooooo.

KURT  
That's right. Mommy and daddy are up there takin' care of Jesus's cows.

Kurt looks down at Kia's elephant.

KURT (CONT'D)  
You're gonna' be alright, kid. As long as I'm around.

He boops Kia's nose.

INT. KURT/WINSLOW'S BEDROOM - DAY

Winslow sits, weak, in a rocking chair by her window.

Tears fall from her face onto the photo album in her lap. She thumbs through it.

Kurt knocks on the locked door.

KURT  
Winslow.

She doesn't respond.

KURT (CONT'D)  
 You can't stay in there forever.

Winslow reaches for a bottle of liquor from the cabinet beside her and takes a swig.

EXT./INT. THOMAS HOUSE - DAY

Two southern bell CHURCHGOER'S chatter among themselves, holding a pie. They knock on the front door.

CHURCHGOER 1  
 I heard it was a drunk driver.

CHURCHGOER 2  
 Poor souls. Word is the Thomas girl had a child in the car.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Winslow, still in her robe, peeks out the window. She watches the churchgoers walk up to her porch, and eavesdrops.

OUTSIDE

CHURCHGOER 1  
 Her child?

CHURCHGOER 2  
 From what I hear, heard it's a negro.

They raise their eyebrows. Churchgoer 1 puts on an unattractive shade of lipstick on.

CHURCHGOER 1  
 Married?

Churchgoer 2 opens her mouth to speak, but Kurt opens the door in a dirty apron.

BEDROOM

Winslow slams the curtain shut. She turns from the window.

OUTSIDE

Kurt wipes his flour covered hands on his apron.

KURT  
 What can I do for you ladies?

Churchgoer 1 flashes kurt a lipstick smudged smile.

CHURCHGOER 1

Why, hello, Mr. Thomas. We just came by to pay our respects.

CHURCHGOER 2

Yes. We are just so sorry for your loss.

KURT

I appreciate that.

Kurt nods and goes to close the door. Churchgoer 2 stops it with her foot, and peeks her head to see around Kurt.

CHURCHGOER 2

Is Winnie around? We'd like to give her a pie.

KURT

She's not in at the moment. I'll give it to her.

Kurt reaches for the pie, but Winslow slides in front of him with a fake smile planted on her face.

WINSLOW

Well, hello, ladies. Is this for us?

Winslow takes the pie.

CHURCHGOER 1

Oh, Winnie. We are just so so sorry for your losin' Whitney.

CHURCHGOER 2

At least you have the baby.

WINSLOW

I'm sure I don't know what you're goin' on about a baby. But thanks for your condolences.

The churchgoers exchange a look.

Kia peeks her head between Winslow's legs. Winslow tries to push her from the door, but makes Kia falls to the ground.

Kia cries. Kurt picks her up.

KURT

Thank you, ladies.



Kurt shuts the door abruptly. The churchgoer's exit.

HALLWAY

Kurt holds Kia. Winslow sinks into the darkness of the hallway.

WINSLOW

I'm --

KURT

Just stop.

Kurt heads toward the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kia plays on the tile floor with her elephant and some marbles. Kurt cooks on the stove.

Winslow enters from the hallway with a drink in her hand.

She leans against the counter next to Kurt.

WINSLOW

The talk of the town. That's what we are.

She stares down at Kia and takes a sip from her glass. Kurt continues cooking.

WINSLOW (CONT'D)

I can't imagine what they must think. Lettin' my only daughter to run off and breed with some nigger.

Kurt slams his fist on the counter.

KURT

That's enough.

WINSLOW

I won't have this kind of blasphemy in my household.

KURT

I'm warning you, Winnie.

WINSLOW

They weren't even married! How could you condone this?

Kia cries on the floor. Kurt picks her up and brings her in the living room.

Kia continues to cry. He comes back into the kitchen and yells.

KURT

That was our little girl. No churchgoin' old bags, who can barely hang on to the skin under their chin, are goin' to come to my house and change how I feel about my own daughter.

WINSLOW

I just--

KURT

You're just selfish.

Winslow sets her glass down.

KURT (CONT'D)

If you can't accept the only bit of our little girl that we have left, then that's it.

Kurt points toward the living room.

KURT (CONT'D)

That little girl in there needs us. If I have to do it alone, god damn it, I will.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Winslow stumbles from her bedroom into a dim kitchen. She squints through the blinds of the front window.

The truck is gone.

A note sits on the table. Winslow grabs it.

INSERT - THE NOTE, which reads:

"Took Kia fishin' - Kurt"

BACK IN THE KITCHEN

Winslow puts the note in her robe pocket and makes coffee.

EXT. WHITNEY'S FUNERAL - DAY

Kurt and Kia dress in black. They sit at the front of a small crowd of seated people, near an open casket.

The PASTOR, 60s, speaks in front of the crowd.

PASTOR

Whitney J. Thomas was taken from this world too early. She was well known in this community as a kind hearted soul. She will be missed greatly, but she is now with the Lord in his paradise.

Winslow arrives at the back of ceremony. She spots Kurt in the front. She sits next to Kia.

Winslow notices the ladybug clip in Kia's hair.

EXT. THOMAS HOUSE LAWN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Winslow, Kurt, and YOUNG WHITNEY, 6, sit on a blanket in the dry front lawn.

Young Whitney laughs. She pours Winslow a pretend cup of tea.

WINSLOW

I have a present for you, darlin'.

Winslow holds out her closed fist. She lets young Whitney flip and pry it open.

A rhinestone ladybug hair clip sits in her hand.

Whitney picks it up and kisses it. Winslow helps her put the clip in her hair.

EXT. WHITNEY'S FUNERAL - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Kurt reaches for Winslow's hand, but doesn't look at her.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Winslow holds a new baby-doll for Kia. Kia plays with her elephant on the floor.

Winslow sits next to her. She offers her the doll.

Kia turns away from her.

WINSLOW  
I didn't mean to knock you down  
yesterday, Kia.

Kia continues to play with her elephant.

WINSLOW (CONT'D)  
I got you this doll to say that I'm  
sorry.

Kia peeks over her shoulder. Winslow offers her the doll. Kia  
accepts the doll. She picks at the doll's hair.

WINSLOW (CONT'D)  
Can I play too?

Kia turns away.

KIA  
No.

WINSLOW  
That's okay. Maybe tomorrow.

Winslow makes her way to the door.

KIA  
Maybe.

HALLWAY

Kurt meets Winslow when she exits. He grabs both sides of her  
face.

KURT  
No different than you and me,  
Winnie. She'll grow to love you.  
Baby steps.

Winslow nods with a weak smile, she glances back at Kia  
through the door, then turns to Kurt.

He kisses her forehead, and he walks into Kia's room.