

Low-Country Squirrel

by Gary V. Powell

Bought this place on short sale. Nice neighborhood, so I didn't expect the likes of Darryl Lester. He must've done all right, though. Lots up this way ran a million per. Homes averaged over 10,000 square feet. Just last week, Darryl shot a squirrel from his back deck overlooking the thicket grown up between him and the lake.

After the squirrel went down, I walked next door to Darryl's place.

Said, *What the fuck, man?*

He said, *Maybe you'd like a beer.*

I said, *Why not?*

My wife, Leslie, traveled out of town—Beijing or Hong Kong, one. Used to dance naked, soft bare feet on my chest. Now she worked for a bank, gone most of the time, something with bonds. I worked from home, something with hydroponic gardening.

Woman Darryl was married to, Maddy, tall and lean, ink showing above her panty line, fetched beers from a cooler, then fetched the squirrel where it lay. South Carolina gal, grew up in a swamp, didn't need to be told. All three of us smoked my hydroponic produce and drank beer while she skinned and cleaned on a granite counter top. Used a pearl-handled buck knife, sharp enough to open a man like a melon.

Darryl said, *Maybe ought to stew that squirrel.*

Maddy said, *Whatever, honey.*

Like she might use that knife on him.

He slapped her on the rear when she walked past.

While Maddy cooked, Darryl and I drank more beer and smoked more hydroponic bud. We talked NASCAR and swimming pools designed to resist most bacteria, kind of stuff Darryl invested in. What he did—invested.

I asked how long him and Maddy been together.

He said, *About long enough.*

I drank another beer then went inside to take a leak.

On the way, I looked over Maddy's shoulder. Squirrel meat, smoked sausage, peas, carrots, okra, and new potatoes bubbled and frothed. Looked pretty good. I could see down her blouse, nipples brown and pointy. Looked pretty good, too.

She asked did I like what I saw.

I said, *What do you think?*

She followed me into the bathroom. We kissed, tongues wrestling like feral animals. She pressed her breasts into my chest and ground her pelvis into my thigh. She reached below my belt and gave me a squeeze.

I said, *We best cut this shit out.*

She said, *Whatever.*

Gave me a smile.

Not long after, we sat down to the squirrel. A little gamy, a little tough, but Maddy knew how to make a sauce. It embraced the meat in a thick, buttery ooze. I sopped with bread, licked my fingers.

Watched Maddy's every move.

We drank wine and ate, not much said.

Ate every bite of squirrel.

After Darryl passed out, Maddy gave me a blowjob on their deck. Slow and syrupy. Nothing asked. Nothing given in return.

She wiped her mouth.

Said, *See you next time.*

Like she knew there'd be a next time.

I zippered up and said goodnight.

Walked home.

Later on, the wife messaged, asking how things were. I gave her the low down on Darryl shooting the squirrel.

Didn't mention the stew.

