

JUMPY

Lights up on THOMAS, late 30s, in his open apartment kitchen, cooking. Dressed in full home chef regalia - apron, dishcloths, even a small chef's hat, which he doffs - Thomas puts a loaf of bread in the oven and pores over a cookbook recipe as he stirs the several pots going on the stove. Rain and light thunder outside.

The doorbell rings. Thomas looks up for a moment, then heads to the door. The doorbell rings again. Thomas calls out.

THOMAS  
Hello?

VOICE  
Thomas Greer?

THOMAS  
Yes?

VOICE  
Sir, this is the police. Could you please open up?

Thomas peers through the viewfinder, looks back at the kitchen, then opens the door to reveal OFFICER, mid-40s, standing in the hallway, his slicker soaking wet with rain.

THOMAS  
Yes?

OFFICER  
Thomas Greer?

THOMAS  
Yes. Please come in.

The Officer glances over Thomas' shoulder then takes one step into the apartment.

OFFICER  
Thank you.

THOMAS  
Um, can I get you a towel?

OFFICER  
That's not necessary, sir. Sir, I'd like to ask you a few questions if you don't mind.

THOMAS  
Of course, please make yourself comfortable, I'm just going to turn off the burners.

As Thomas steps back toward the kitchen, the Officer takes another step forward and looks around warily.

OFFICER

Burners?

Thomas glances back at the Officer and points to the stove.

THOMAS

Yes. Yes, Officer, I'm just cooking right now.

The Officer looks to the kitchen, then at Thomas, and relaxes.

OFFICER

Excuse me, sir, I'm sorry about being abrupt. That's just...excuse me.

THOMAS

No problem, Officer, that's quite all right. Are you sure I can't get you a towel?

Pause.

OFFICER

Thank you, sir, just a small one would do.

Thomas hands the Officer a dishtowel from around his waist and goes to the kitchen. As the Officer starts toweling off his face and hands, Thomas turns off the burners.

THOMAS

Can I ask what this is about?

OFFICER

Sir, we've received some noise complaints about you.

THOMAS

Noise complaints? Who from?

OFFICER

One of your neighbors, sir.

THOMAS

Yes, well, that would make sense. But how come they called you?

OFFICER

Sir?

THOMAS

I mean, why didn't they just call the building management?  
Or just talk to me directly?

OFFICER

I couldn't say, sir. People are a little nervous right now.

THOMAS

Yes, I understand, but that doesn't explain why—

OFFICER

Sir, do you live here alone?

THOMAS

Yes, why?

OFFICER

Do you happen to have a girlfriend?

THOMAS

No, Officer, I'm gay.

OFFICER

(turning to Thomas)

You an actor by any chance?

Pause.

THOMAS

No, I'm a stage manager.

OFFICER

Uh-huh. And have you been rehearsing in your apartment?

THOMAS

Um, yes, how did you...?

The Officer sits at a small kitchen table center, undoes his raincoat and starts toweling off his front and behind his neck.

OFFICER

I figured. That's something been happening in this neighborhood. With the quarantine.

THOMAS

OK. What does this have to do with the complaint?

OFFICER

One of your neighbors heard what sounded like a domestic disturbance, she heard noises like a person in danger. She called us.

THOMAS

Oh, no, Officer, my God, I'm very sorry, that wasn't the case at all. We were rehearsing a scene, we stopped an hour ago, a scene from Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, the bit with the gun.

At the word "gun", the Officer flexes in his chair.

THOMAS

(cont'd)

Relax. Relax. I'm sorry, it's just a very famous scene from the play where the character George points a shotgun at his wife and two young guests and pulls the trigger and a retractable umbrella pops out. The wife and the two guests scream and drop to the floor, at least the way we were rehearsing it.

The Officer stares at Thomas.

OFFICER

Yes, well, that likely explains it.

THOMAS

It's actually a very funny scene.

OFFICER

It doesn't sound like it. What did you say the name was?

THOMAS

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.

OFFICER

Never heard of it.

The Officer wipes his face one last time and hands Thomas the towel. He then fishes in his coat pocket for his pen and a small note pad and makes some notes.

OFFICER

(cont'd)

Sorry to disturb you with this, sir, it's just...I'm sorry, I figured it was exactly this sort of thing, like a dumb TV show.

THOMAS

We stopped an hour ago.

OFFICER

I know.

THOMAS

I suppose it's sort of a compliment.

The Officer looks up at Thomas and then resumes writing.

OFFICER

Not really, sir. The complainant's description was not what a typical domestic disturbance is like. We get calls where the victim is screaming into the phone as it's happening, the perpetrator just keeps striking the victim, they don't care, who knows what they're thinking, if at all. What they're on.

THOMAS

I didn't know.

OFFICER

What you were doing, it wasn't likely. This quarantine, people getting up to things, just what people do being indoors. We've told the duty officer, I've had three calls like this in the last two weeks. She was pretty jittery too. I suppose. Told me to walk over here and check it out anyway. Nothing slipping through the cracks.

THOMAS

You walked all the way from Midtown South?

The Officer glances up briefly.

OFFICER

There's a shortage of squad cars right now.

Thomas stares at the officer as he closes his notepad.

THOMAS

Uh-huh...would you like another towel?

OFFICER

No, thank you, but that's, you're very polite, I'm obliged. Not too many people are these days.

Pause. The men look at each other.

OFFICER

(cont'd, looking over Thomas's shoulder at the stove)  
You said you were gay, right?

THOMAS

(bristling slightly)

Yes.

OFFICER  
What are you cooking?

THOMAS  
Shrimp paella.

OFFICER  
Thought so.

THOMAS  
Would you like some?

OFFICER  
I smelled it when I came in.

The Officer glances outside.

OFFICER  
(cont'd)  
Well, if you're offering, gotta say I wouldn't mind a  
taste, thank you.

Thomas goes to the kitchen and starts spooning paella into a bowl.

THOMAS  
I like it with some of the broth left. The way they-

The kitchen timer starts beeping loudly. The Officer immediately  
pushes back from table and drops his hand a bit toward his holstered  
sidearm.

OFFICER  
Hold it!

THOMAS  
(yelling)  
It's just the timer, the kitchen timer! It was set to go  
off when the paella was ready! Just the timer, it's ready,  
that's all that's going on!

The Officer relaxes.

THOMAS  
(cont'd)  
All right?!

OFFICER  
Sir, excuse me, I'm very sorry, this is, I don't know what  
to say. This isn't. I don't know what to say.

Thomas gathers himself and puts a bowl of paella at his place.

THOMAS

That's OK. Please, just sit down. It's hot.

OFFICER

(pulling his chair back to the table)  
I'm sorry. Please, join me, untie.

Thomas stirs the paella a bit more.

THOMAS

Thanks, it just needs a few more stirs.

OFFICER

Bit ridiculous I suppose, me telling you to relax, pot calling the kettle black.

Thomas stares at the Officer as he eats.

OFFICER

(cont'd)

Are you from the Ironbound?

THOMAS

No, I'm...I'm following a recipe.

OFFICER

Tell you to do it like this?

THOMAS

Well, not quite, like I said.

OFFICER

It's excellent...though I think you took it off the heat a few minutes too soon.

Thomas and the Officer briefly smile.

OFFICER

(cont'd)

Although, you know, to make it really genuine, it could use some bread.

At that instant, the smoke alarm goes off loudly and the Officer jumps back, knocking over his chair and drawing his gun at Thomas.

OFFICER

Get your hands up!

THOMAS

(putting his hands up)

It's just the smoke alarm! I forgot, there's bread in the oven! I forgot to turn it off, I just forgot, that's all!

OFFICER  
(still leveling his gun)  
Turn off the alarm! Turn it off! Now turn off the oven!

THOMAS  
OK, OK!

After a moment, the Officer drops his sidearm, and holsters it.

OFFICER  
I think I should go now.

THOMAS  
Yes, I think you should.

The Officer looks at Thomas for a moment and then does up his raincoat.

THOMAS  
(cont'd)  
By the way, Officer?

OFFICER  
Yes?

THOMAS  
On your way out, can you stop by whichever one of my neighbors it was, and tell them what's been going on. I'd really rather not have the police back. And people are a little nervous right now.

OFFICER  
Of course.

The Officer looks out at the rain.

OFFICER  
(cont'd)  
Really coming down now.

THOMAS  
Yes, it is.

The Officer leaves and closes the door behind him. After a minute, Thomas heaves a long breath and takes off his apron. Underneath, he's wearing a t-shirt with "BLM" emblazoned on it in huge letters. Tossing the apron on the table, he slowly spoons himself a bowl of paella. Thomas sits down at the table, looks at the oven window, then out at the rain, now coming down harder than ever. He slowly takes a bite or two of the paella.



THOMAS

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf, who's afraid--

There is a huge clap of thunder and a flash of lightning.

BLACKOUT.