The OP

A 10 minute play

by

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CAST

NICK BRYANT - 30s - Casual clothes, but wears a holstered pistol under his open shirt. In his pockets, he carries a gold detective badge and handcuffs.

JUDY OWEN - 30s-50s - Similar attire to NICK including a holstered pistol. SHE wears her ID and gold detective badge on a bead chain. SHE carries a walkie-talkie.

SET - A bare apartment. There are two folding chairs and a set up folding table. One folding chair is upstage; a three ring binder is on the seat. A few empty coffee cups, discarded snack wrappers and a full ashtray sit on the table. A camera sits mounted on a tripod downstage facing the audience. The actors play as if there are two windows downstage. The camera points out one of the “windows.”

AT RISE: JUDY stands looking out a “window” with her binoculars. SHE is listening to the walkie-talkie. NICK walks around looking at the apartment.
JUDY
(To the walkie-talkie)
Copy. We’re 10-84 at the OP. All quiet at the suspect’s place. 17:00 hours. Yeah. (SHE listens) Yeah. Roger that.
(Puts down walkie-talkie on the table, resumes looking out the window with binoculars.)

NICK
A shitty day in a shit hole OP. Look at this place.
(Looks up at the ceiling)
Is that a rat hole?

JUDY
(Chuckles)
I don’t remember it, but rats don’t bother me. I’ve seen worse. At least you’re not pulling an eight hour shift in the surveillance van with Jimmy Hartigan. Ugh, what a creep. Hartigan’s got this funk that’d give me nose bleeds...
(Gestures around the room)
And hey, the toilet flushes and the OP’s got a clear line-of-sight. We’re livin’ the dream, baby.

NICK
The what?

JUDY
The OP … observation point. How many stakeouts have you done?

NICK
I’ve done a couple in patrol cars.

JUDY
Waiting for the Krispy Kreme to open up ain’t a stake out.

NICK
Very funny.
(Looks out other window)

JUDY
Since you’re there, why don’t you check the camera?

NICK
Looks okay. Memory card’s good. I think the battery’s okay.
JUDY
Lemme see. This thing’s finicky. If anything happens, let me handle it.

NICK
Okay.

JUDY
How come I don’t know you?

NICK
Voluntary sign-up. I needed the overtime.

JUDY
Yeah, but I don’t even recognize you from the house. You new?

NICK
Kinda. Passed my 18 months back in April. I got a transfer from Midtown South.

JUDY
Okay, rook. Here’s my three rules for stakeout: stay awake, keep your head outta your ass and do exactly what I say.

NICK
Sure...How we fixed for meals?

JUDY
I ordered something on the way over - Chinese.

NICK
Could you add something to the order? (SHE shrugs “I guess so.”)

NICK
Have them throw some fried rice. And a Coke.

JUDY
Okay. I’ll text it in. (SHE types into HER phone. NICK picks up the binoculars and looks out the window)

Cool. Should be here any minute.

NICK
So why we watching this skell?
JUDY
They didn’t tell you anything?

(HE shakes his head)
My unit’s been watching this place for a couple weeks. Word is the main suspect, AKA, Horace Stacker, is cooking a lot of meth over there. Movin’ it too. We just need enough PC to go in.

NICK
Couple a weeks and you haven’t found probable cause yet?

JUDY
Yeah, sensitive topic. Word is, he may be getting some help.

(NICK looks at her, puzzled.)
Every time we plan a raid, he seems to get the heads up. We break doors, we find empty rooms.

NICK
Holy shit. A snitch in the precinct?

JUDY
(SHE looks at him)
Maybe. How long you been working with the 7-8?

NICK
Three months and I asked for it. My wife and I got a place in Fort Greene. ... Why you looking at me?

JUDY
No. I’m just sayin’ this ain’t no ordinary stake out.

NICK
Looks pretty ordinary to me.

JUDY
How ‘bout you keep track of anyone comin’ and goin’ and I’ll take care of the rest.

NICK
So we’re just watching the game of this guy Stacker?

JUDY
There’s also a BOLO on a mope named Alex Zlato. Intel says he’s from Cartagena way, now in our neighborhood. But they say he could be moving in on Stacker’s operation. He’s got a bunch a warrants. We see him, we call in the cavalry.
NICK
What’s he look like?

JUDY
(She picks up the 3-ring binder off the chair, opens it, and shows him photographs. Points at one photo)
That’s Zlato. A real gaucho, likes to wear cowboy hats, boots. Hell, he probably carries a six-gun.

NICK
Shouldn’t be too hard to spot in Brooklyn.

JUDY
(Points out window)
And see the guy with the red bandana tied up on his head? Sitting on the steps? I call him Tupac.
(HE raises the binoculars)
He’s their spotter.

NICK
Great spotter. He’s looking at his phone.

JUDY
It hard to get good help nowadays. Don’t forget the usual shit, either. Get license plates, see what’s getting delivered. And get ready to be bored.

NICK
Oh, I’m ready to be bored. ... So how ‘bout you?

JUDY
Huh?

NICK
You know about me. What about you?

JUDY
I share a place with my brother in Bay Ridge. I like to cook. I have dog named Frodo.

NICK
Nice. You a Tolkien fan?

JUDY
Who?
NICK
J.R.R. Tolkien. He wrote Lord of the Rings, the Hobbit...

JUDY
I like the name Frodo.

NICK
My wife and I looked at Bay Ridge. Really nice with all those ethnic restaurants and...

JUDY
But you didn’t move there. I get it. I live there ‘cause my brother’s there. He’s got stage four cancer, so most of the time it’s a colossal bitch.

NICK
Oh. I’m sorry.

JUDY
His medical bills don’t make it easy. I grab overtime anywhere I can, but I’m still strugglin’ – like this stakeout. I don’t want to but . . .
(SOUND of Doorbell)

JUDY
Thank God. I’m starved.
(They both move to the door. But she stops him.)
First rule of stakeout, someone always stays at the OP – no matter what.

NICK
Yeah. Sorry.
(SHE exits. HE looks out the window with the binoculars. SHE returns with a large paper bag and starts to set the food containers out. HE reaches for a container.)

JUDY
Hey.
(SHE points to the window as if to say “You’re on duty.” As HE turns to look out the window, SHE pulls out an iced tea, a Coke, a quart plastic food container and three cardboard pint take out containers. SHE eyes them nervously, peeks in each one and when she opens the third, pulls out a piece of paper. SHE reads it quickly and pockets it. SHE is about to put the third container back in the bag when NICK turns back.)
NICK
Your spotter guy looks like he’s taking a nap.
(HE steps over to grab the Coke and the nearest pint take out container. SHE stops HIM with her hand.)
Sorry. Which one’s mine?

JUDY
(Gives him one)
This one.

NICK
They gave you an extra rice?

JUDY
No. I ordered two.

NICK
Why’d you order two pints instead of one quart?

JUDY
I like brown rice and fried rice, okay? Jesus. I don’t care if the spotter’s taking a dirt nap. Stay on the OP.

(HE shrugs and goes back to the window. SHE puts the third pint container back in the bag. Picking up the walkie-talkie, SHE puts it on the chair farthest from the window. SHE opens the iced tea, drinks and strolls to the camera; she adjusts the controls and returns to the food and begins to eat.)

NICK
Hey.

JUDY
Hey, what?

NICK
That guy. See him. Down there. He’s wearing a cowboy hat.
(He strolls to window)
I can’t see his face. The hat. But I think something’s up.
(SHE squints out window)
And shit! Two other guys coming from the other way. See them? In the hoodies? I think they’re strapped. You on the camera?
JUDY
(Moves to camera, squints at viewfinder)
Yeah. I see 'em.

NICK
(Shocked)
Whoa! You seeing this?
(Flinches several times)
Holy shit! You seeing this?!

JUDY
Call it in!

NICK
They’re inside now! And see that car?

JUDY
What car? There’s like, twenty cars. Call it in!
(SHE fiddles with the camera)
Shit!

NICK
(Pointing)
There. It’s slowing down.

JUDY
Call it in, numbnuts. I got it!
(SHE looks in the camera and fiddles with the controls. HE steps back and grabs the walkie-talkie)

NICK
(To JUDY)
What’s the car?

JUDY
What?

NICK
ID on the getaway car, the blue one? Plate number?

JUDY
It’s already gone.
(Struggles with camera)
Shit. I can’t…It was a Honda Civic — blue.

NICK
I know it’s blue. Jesus. You know how many blue Honda Civics there are in this city?

(To walkie-talkie)
Stand by, dispatch.

(Pushes her from the camera)

JUDY
Hey!

NICK
If it’s on here we can go back and…

(He looks at camera. Beat. He stares at her.)
Where are the shots?

JUDY
What?

NICK
From today. There are no recent photos on this camera. There were, but now they’re gone.

JUDY
You’re crazy.

(She shoves him over to look at viewfinder)

NICK
I don’t think so. Something’s wrong here. Really wrong.

JUDY
Oh c’mon!

NICK
The one time we really need photos as evidence, the camera was off.

JUDY
Calm down, rook.

NICK
Sorry. I’m not a rook. I’m Detective Bryant. IAB.

(Pulls his detective badge from a pocket)
JUDY
(Disgusted)
I should’a known a dick like you’d be internal affairs.

NICK
Your story about a snitch in the precinct is right, but we have reason to believe the snitch is you.

JUDY
‘Reason to believe”? Are you fuckin’ kidding me?

NICK
For a detective second grade, you’re getting some pretty hefty deposits in your bank account.

JUDY
That’s my business. Not yours!

NICK
You knew this was going down. But I can’t figure out how you got the message to turn off the camera.

JUDY
I made a mistake, asshole. Shit happens.

NICK
You wouldn’t do it through the phone – we could get records. I didn’t see any visual signals. The only outside contact you’ve had is...

(They both look at the paper bag on the table. HE realizes and lunges for the bag before she does. Pushing her away, he upends it. Sauce packets and the third take out container spill on the table. They struggle for it, but it lands on the floor. A roll of 100 dollar bills falls out. NICK grabs it.)

JUDY
That’s one of the craziest... The delivery guy must have... that’s gotta be his money! His tip money!

NICK
He gets tips in hundred dollar bills?
JUDY
Even if that money was for me, I’m a respected veteran; no one’ll believe your story.

NICK
(Pointing the "rat hole" in the ceiling, and waves to it.)
Jimmy Hartigan might. He’s been recording the whole thing.

JUDY
You internal affairs guys are shits, you know that? I made 12 Gs from this. Twelve lousy G’s and my brother’s bills would’ve been paid. Free and clear. And what’s 12 G’s to these motherfuckers?

(Gestures out the window)
They make 12 G’s in an hour!
(NICK, sadly pulls out a pair of handcuffs)
Your guys posted outside?

NICK
Front and back. Don’t do it.

JUDY
Do what?
(SHE backs away from HIM)

NICK
Judy? I need your gun and shield. Right now.

JUDY
(Nods. Puts her gun on the table but not her detective badge.)
Sorry, you’re not getting this.

NICK
Don’t.

JUDY
(Smiles.)
And you thought this stake out would be boring.
(SHE runs out. HE runs upstage.)

NICK
Judy?! Judy!? Judy!!

(HE exits. LIGHTS FADE)