

ACT TWO

Scene 1: June 1959

Garth Williams appears.

GARTH. There's a villain in Alabama, folks, and I have been cast in the role. Yes, I wrote and illustrated *The Rabbits' Wedding*. I am the scandalous, the infamous, the pornographic Garth Williams! Maybe you read about me in *Look* magazine: Born in New York, educated in Europe, I'm known for my taboo subject matter—bunny rabbits. How rare for me to be in the spotlight, as I can usually be found as a supporting player, illustrating books by E.B. White and Laura Ingalls Wilder. *Those* perverts.

Beat.

It's my parents' fault: My father was a cartoonist, my mother a landscape artist. They exposed me to books filled with art from all over the world; the most outrageous and arousing images! And so my goal, like their goal, is to drown children in a watercolor world of the most unspeakable aspects of the human experience. Namely—kindness, tolerance, amity, tenderness, humor, joy, respect for others, interest in the natural world, and...hope for the future.

For the record? Pencils ready? I was completely unaware that animals with white fur were considered blood relations of white human beings. The book was written for children, who will understand it perfectly, as it is only about fuzzy love. It was not written for adults; they are not smart enough to understand its simplicity. It has no hidden political message. It was never intended to wake the sleeping giants of hate.

Beat.

Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of art will know that the rabbits are a different color for visual contrast. My book was published in black and white! My inspiration was 11th-century Chinese art: visual balance; yin and yang; dark and light. As in Chinese scroll art, I just think a black horse next to a white horse looks more

picturesque. But that sounds a bit grand, or worse—like an explanation. And art owes no explanation.

However, if you're seeking evidence that I am a political rather than pictorial creature, then perhaps you should investigate my other shocking titles: *Baby's First Book*. *Baby Animals*. *Baby Farm Animals*. *The Kitten Who Thought He Was...a Mouse*. *Animal Friends*. *Home for a Bunny*. *Mister Dog*. *The Friendly Book*. *The Adventures of Benjamin Pink*.

Beat.

Well, I think we all know what that last one's about, don't we?

If you're in Montgomery, Alabama, and you're curious about my latest picture book, *The Rabbits' Wedding*, you can find it among fifty-nine other books on the "reserve shelf" of the Alabama Library Service, right where it belongs, alongside the topics of abortion, contraception, and communism.

My publisher, Harper Brothers, has informed me that my romance about two herbivorous creatures is shaping up to be one of my best-selling titles ever. I couldn't have done it alone. I'd like to thank Senator E.W. Higgins, the great champion of children's literature! We never even knew that we needed him!

Scene 2: Summer 1959

Thomas enters Emily's office with a stack of magazines, papers, and mail. Her desk is more cluttered with paper than before.

THOMAS. *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Mirror*, *Times of London*, *Le Monde*. All of this from one little story in one little segregationist newspaper.

EMILY. And one not-so-little mention of book-burning.

THOMAS. Did you see what Mr. Webb wrote in the *Advertiser*? (*Reading, or does Garth put a hat on as Webb on the sidelines and read?*) "Senator E.W. Higgins is a man of elephantine ego and