

Cast of Characters

Kim Borden, 24

Hollis Johnson, 30

Spike

Place

A Los Angeles dive bar.

Time

The present, about ten o'clock on a Tuesday evening.

Act Two

SCENE: About eleven-fifteen the following evening.

AT RISE: *HOLLIS is pacing nervously back and forth in front of the jukebox. He wears ordinary clothes but clearly dressed in a great hurry. For example, his pants and shirt clash and his shoes do not match each other. He wears a tiny backpack stuffed with something soft. SPIKE is polishing glasses behind the bar.*

HOLLIS. Another root beer, please?

SPIKE. Very good, sir. *(Pours drink.)*

HOLLIS. Isn't she usually here by now?

SPIKE. Usually. *(Hands drink to HOLLIS.)* Shall I add this to your tab?

HOLLIS. I have a tab?

SPIKE. Yes, sir.

HOLLIS. How bad is it?

SPIKE. Bad, sir.

HOLLIS. Do you take American Express?

SPIKE. Yes, sir, but for this amount I must insist on the Platinum Card or higher.

(HOLLIS hands SPIKE his entire wallet.)

HOLLIS. Just take whatever you need.

(The front door opens and KIM enters the bar. She is flushed, excited. Her outfit is even sexier than last night's. She heads straight for the bar, not noticing HOLLIS.)

KIM. Spike, honey, you might as well just start an IV.

(SPIKE pours her a Diet Coke. As she chugs it, HOLLIS creeps toward her in fits and starts. He is drawn to her, but afraid. KIM finally speaks to HOLLIS without turning to look at him.)

Could you be not so creepy when you creep?

(HOLLIS turns and dashes out of the bar.)

Spike, who was that?

SPIKE. Who was what, Ms. Borden?

KIM. Never mind. Do you have anything for a headache?

SPIKE. I recommend sleep.

KIM. It'll never happen.

(SPIKE pours another Diet Coke.)

Throw in a cherry, please.

(SPIKE freezes.)

Go ahead. I'm feeling reckless.

(SPIKE drops a maraschino cherry into KIM'S drink.)

I mean, who am I hurting, anyway, except me? Who cares if I down *ten* Diet Cokes? I can do anything I want.

(HOLLIS re-enters and looks on quietly.)

SPIKE. Dinner with Ms. Marwood passed pleasantly?

KIM. I passed on dinner with Ms. Marwood and had dinner with none other than Mr. Braniff.

SPIKE. I see.

HOLLIS. Braniff? Mr. Marry-Me-By-Fax?? How could you see him again?? You said you were through with him!

KIM. *(Spins around.)* No, I said his lawyer called and...wait, what business is it of yours? Where's Angelica?

HOLLIS. *(Amazed:)* You said her name correctly.

KIM. Did you abandon her at the airport?

HOLLIS. I did not.

KIM. Did you tell her not to come?

HOLLIS. Well...what business is it of yours?

(KIM turns and chooses a song from the juke box.)

That was rude of me.

KIM. At least you dressed tonight. Sort of.

HOLLIS. I'll have you know that I am known about town as something of a dandy—

KIM. (*Cutting him off:*) What did she say when you told her not to come?

HOLLIS. I didn't. She came. What happened between you and that man?

KIM. What do you think happened?

HOLLIS. I shudder to think.

KIM. “Shudder”? Really? I make you shudder?

HOLLIS. Frankly, the images flashing through my mind are quite unwholesome.

KIM. So you automatically assume...

HOLLIS. I know better than to assume *anything* when it comes to you. (draws a deep breath) Did you two...procreate?

(KIM chooses not to answer.)

Of course you did. Look at your hair.

KIM. My hair? What's wrong with my hair?

HOLLIS. It's wanton!

KIM. *I'm* wanton!

HOLLIS. Exactly!

KIM. So are *you!*

HOLLIS. I am well-governed.

KIM. Last night you were down on your knees!

HOLLIS. True. I was. But not without some debate.

KIM. You're wanton.

HOLLIS. I was investigating an unfamiliar area of my personality. That territory has now been fully mapped, charted, and catalogued.

KIM. And tonight you're here to conquer it?

HOLLIS. I am concerned about you.

KIM. Because I have fluffy hair?

HOLLIS. (*Heavily:*) How was the...interaction?

KIM. You mean the sex? You tell me, Mr. Unwholesome Images.

HOLLIS. (*Closes his eyes.*) I can't put it into words.

(His eyes remain closed throughout the following exchange until indicated.)

KIM. Do you see me there, in your mind? All cute and sweet? My hair tamed and demurely in place?

HOLLIS. Actually, it could use a few strokes with a stiff brush...

KIM. Suddenly, there's Mr. Braniff! And he brandishes a big, stiff brush!

(HOLLIS flinches.)

He steps up behind me and begins working those long, hard bristles through my hair. Slowly...languidly...luxuriously...

HOLLIS. Oh dear God in heaven...

KIM. (*Gasps.*) My breath quickens. I close my eyes. I focus all my other senses on his driving, relentless strokes. Brush, brush, brush...

HOLLIS. Brush...brush...

KIM. Soon my hair is straight.

HOLLIS. (*Seeing it in his mind:*) It looks stunning.

KIM. I wrap it up in a nice, tight bun.

(HOLLIS nods approvingly.)

I button my blouse all the way to the top...

(HOLLIS nods.)

...making sure it's completely tucked in.

HOLLIS. Very good.

KIM. But Mr. Braniff rips everything off!

HOLLIS. (*Stricken:*) Rips? (*Hopefully:*) You mean "steals"? "Buys without paying"?

KIM. Rrrrrrips. Strrrrips. Remoooooves. In a mad, animal fury.

HOLLIS. Not everything. Please.

KIM. Every stitch.

HOLLIS. Did he fold up your blouse at least?

KIM. Animals like us don't need blouses!

HOLLIS. He's an animal? Do you call for help?

KIM. I call for *more!*

HOLLIS. You're brainwashed. He's brainwashing you!

KIM. Wait till you hear what I do to *him!*

HOLLIS. No!

KIM. Yes!

HOLLIS. No!

KIM. I yank off his belt—

HOLLIS. (*Opens his eyes.*) That's it! I can't take any more!

KIM. But he's still dressed!

HOLLIS. I prefer him that way! And I respect your privacy too much to wallow in any more sordid details.

KIM. Come on, Hollie—you love it!

HOLLIS. This is starting to resemble one of those awful television programs where cameras follow people into the bathroom.

KIM. How do you know it isn't?

HOLLIS. Don't start that again, I beg you...

KIM. You could be on camera right now and never know it. They make those things so small that I could have one hidden... (*Points at a button on her chest.*) ...right here, watching every move you make.

HOLLIS. Why didn't you stay all night with that person?

KIM. Maybe I didn't feel like it.

HOLLIS. I suppose leaving men gets easier after turning down your fourth proposal.

KIM. You left here last night.

HOLLIS. You told me to! *Ordered* me to!

KIM. How do you know I meant it?

HOLLIS. Of course you meant it!

(She says nothing.)

People say what they mean. They should. They ought to.

(KIM pores over selections on the juke box.)

Why would you say something you don't mean?

KIM. Because I can.

HOLLIS. Well, clearly Mr. Greying Temples was unable to satisfy you.

KIM. You know how to satisfy a woman?

HOLLIS. I've read up on the latest techniques. It's really a very simple process.

KIM. What does it entail?

HOLLIS. "Reading" people. Figuring out what they lack. Devising a plan to fill that need. And executing it.

KIM. You think you're ready to fill my need, Hollie?

HOLLIS. I...I'm still reading you. The steps must be taken in order.

KIM. What do you read in me?

HOLLIS. What do you want to know?

KIM. What do I do for a living?

HOLLIS. That's easy. Of course you already indicated that you labor in an office that has at least one branch on the East Coast and that has a Marketing department. So you must work in publishing. Bright young women like you always end up in publishing or public relations.

KIM. I'm in publishing? What do I publish?

HOLLIS. *(Stares at her a moment.)* Cookbooks.

KIM. Hollie! I know I've gained weight, but...

HOLLIS. Not because of your figure. Women just like cookbooks. Don't

they?

KIM. It must be entertaining looking at a stranger and trying to piece together the story of her life. Of course you could have just asked.

HOLLIS. Well... Do you have a job? What do you do with your days?

KIM. Nothing anymore.

HOLLIS. More games! (*To SPIKE:*) May I have something to drink? Soda water, perhaps?

SPIKE. Coming right up, sir.

KIM. It's not a game. I quit. Today.

HOLLIS. You quit that your publishing job?

(SPIKE puts a glass of soda water on the bar for HOLLIS.)

KIM. I can't remember what it was.

(HOLLIS takes the soda water and swallows it in one gulp.)

I'm trying to put it out of mind.

HOLLIS. (*To SPIKE:*) Another one of these, please.

(SPIKE serves HOLLIS his drink then carries a tray of dirty glasses into the back room.)

KIM. I worked in an office.

HOLLIS. What sort of office?

KIM. It's not important.

HOLLIS. You've told me about your *sex life*—why would you be embarrassed about an office? (*Thinks.*) Wait... who ran your "office"? An escort service? A pornographer? (*Gasps.*) A Democrat??

KIM. I'm trying to put it out of my mind.

HOLLIS. What filthy, depraved things did they force you to do?

KIM. I spent a lot of time on the phone.

HOLLIS. (*Nods.*) Phone sex. I knew it. No wonder you're so verbally evocative.

KIM. Not phone sex! I handled group sales for a ballet company!

HOLLIS. (*Confused:*) Ballet company? “Ballet” as in “dance”?

KIM. Yes! Now can we just drop it before I start crying all over again?

HOLLIS. Why would you be embarrassed about working for a ballet company?

KIM. I never said I was embarrassed!

HOLLIS. I adore the ballet. (*A realization:*) It all fits—no wonder you gather data by dancing! You must have adored constantly being around it.

KIM. I hated being around it but not *doing* it.

HOLLIS. Oh...well not everyone can be in the limelight, of course—surely you’ve faced that by now...

(She says nothing.)

Except that you come here, so maybe you haven’t faced it.

KIM. Just shut up.

HOLLIS. Why did you give up dancing? Were you injured?

KIM. Some of us have it and some don’t.

HOLLIS. Which company?

KIM. The Steinhart.

HOLLIS. The best.

KIM. And I’m not the best. I hated being reminded of it day after day.

HOLLIS. You’re much too sure of yourself to be intimidated by a lot of silly dancers.

KIM. I know. That’s why I quit.

HOLLIS. That’s why you gave up dancing?

KIM. That’s why I quit my job today.

HOLLIS. (*Hopefully:*) Which means you won’t be having any more contact with... Ah—so your fling with Mr. Braniff was a “farewell-to-the-affair” affair?

KIM. What?

HOLLIS. Your tryst with Mr. Braniff this evening. That was a “kiss-

off”? “Thanks for the memories”? “One for the road”?

KIM. What tryst?

HOLLIS. When you and he..?

KIM. Who said we had a tryst?

HOLLIS. You did! You described it to me! In great detail.

KIM. I may have led you to the water but you’re the one who drank. I never actually claimed we had sex.

HOLLIS. You said—

KIM. No, *you* said! That was in *your* mind. You trying to “read” me. You read wrong.

HOLLIS. I apologize. Heartily.

KIM. Do I really seem trashy to you? Tell me honestly.

HOLLIS. You said you’d slept with a man you met in this bar.

KIM. Once. That makes me trash?

HOLLIS. I never called you “trash”.

KIM. “Do you work for an escort service? A pornographer?” It’s insulting. Is that how you view every woman who turns you on?

HOLLIS. I never meant to insult you.

KIM. Besides, *you* picked up a woman at church! At least when you go to a bar, you’re ready for it!

HOLLIS. I only meant that...I can’t stand the idea of you cheapening yourself!

KIM. Mr. Braniff called me this afternoon out of the blue. He’s back in town on business. We had dinner—a good-bye dinner. And we said good-bye. That was it.

HOLLIS. No...dessert?

KIM. What do you mean by “dessert”?

HOLLIS. Cheesecake? Tiramisu? Bread pudding?

KIM. I paid the check and came straight here like I do every night.

HOLLIS. *You* paid it?

KIM. It was my treat.

HOLLIS. Did he attempt anything untoward?

KIM. He's engaged.

HOLLIS. When I think of him slashing his way through your life like a swordsman in a pillow factory...

KIM. (*Impatient:*) Instead of turning me into some epic poem, why don't you just make a pass at me?

HOLLIS. A pass?

KIM. You know what a "pass" is, don't you?

HOLLIS. A verbal or physical flirtation intended to indicate to a potential partner a sincere desire to establish a romantic and/or sexual relationship.

KIM. Sounds about right.

HOLLIS. What if you slap me?

KIM. Forget it. (*Turns away.*) Spike? Fill 'er up!

SPIKE. (*From back room:*) Be right with you, Ms. Kimberly!

HOLLIS. I can't make a pass at you. It wouldn't be right.

KIM. Sure, choirboy. Hey, now you can go back to your church friends and tell them how you resisted the charms of a fallen dancer. It'll make a great story.

HOLLIS. *I'm* the one who has fallen.

KIM. You? Hollie, you're just a few prayers shy of canonization.

HOLLIS. I'm unclean. It would be improper of me to make advances.

KIM. (*Disgusted:*) You have not bathed?

HOLLIS. I've bathed. But I've been with...another.

KIM. Another what?

HOLLIS. Another woman.

KIM. Bethany? She was a long time ago.

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