

LOVE AND TEAR GAS

By Ken Levine

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LOVE AND TEAR GAS

A Romantic/Political Comedy

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SYNOPSIS: Set in the late 1960s/early 1970s, a movie star marries a political activist and moves into his shabby house that comes complete with an unusual handyman. This three-character comedy explores idealism vs. practicality. What follows are a series of complications, including an adoption, a costly faux pas, PR nightmare, and the Oscars.

DURATION: 90 minutes.

SETTING: Living room and kitchen of a small home in Santa Monica.

TIME: Late 1960s/early 1970s.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 2 males)

KIM (f).....30's, Hollywood actress committed to social activism. *(400 lines)*

WALTER (m)30's/40's Political activist, intense, charming. *(244 lines)*

LARRY (m)30's-50's, African-American. Handyman. Sees the big picture and finds Kim and Walter's intensity quite amusing. *(272 lines)*

ACT ONE

AT START: *Either over black or projection, we hear:*

ARMY: *(Voiceover.)* This is Army Archerd with today's showbiz report. The big news of 1968—well, besides the assassinations and riots and Vietnam War—is the announced breakup between two of Hollywood's biggest stars—Robert Redford and Kim Carlisle. Kim has left the golden boy for—of all people—Walter Arbogast, the political activist who has protested his way to the cover of Newsweek. Love and tear gas are in the air.

SCENE 1

SANTA MONICA HOUSE – NIGHT (1968)

A small rundown wooden house. Stage left is the front door and a curtained window to the street. Stage right is the back door and a very modest kitchen. No dishwasher or modern (even for 1968) appliances. An upstage hallway leads to an offstage bedroom. The furniture is all mismatched and early "Thrift Shop." A portable TV with rabbit ears sits on a table. There are piles of books everywhere and fresh roses in a vase.

The front door opens and WALTER ARBOGAST (30's/40's), wearing a rumpled suit, enters with KIM CARLISLE (30's, movie star radiance), dressed casually in jeans, wearing a cloth headband.

WALTER: Gimme a minute. I'll put on some Joni Mitchell, pour some wine, light a joint...

KIM: *(Excited.)* No no. Just do the speech again.

WALTER: Really?

KIM: Yes. The part I love. You know which one.

WALTER: Okay. Well... the people we thought were intransigent were the people who were proclaimed socialists and labor leaders, who, in practice, were frightened at the prospect of a student movement.

KIM: Now that's how you get a girl into bed.

She kisses him, then:

WALTER: God, I wish I knew you in high school.

KIM: Your speeches are brilliant and make me sooo hot. They changed my life.

WALTER: In two days?

KIM: Yes. You opened my eyes to racial injustice, abject poverty, and human suffering!

WALTER: And for that, I'm getting a little action. Who knew?

KIM: For once I feel I'm doing something important, and it's all due to you. That's what I was put on this earth for, not to win an Oscar. Okay, bad example because I do want to win an Oscar more than anything. Take that, Mommy 'cause I'll have one too. Damn, I'm still shallow.

WALTER: Again, it's only been two days. (*Taking her hands.*) But you're not just some stereotypical self-absorbed actress... anymore. You're passionate and committed and willing to sacrifice for the greater good.

KIM: You're right. I am, damn it. And I'm serious—I want no favoritism, no special treatment. I ride the bus just like everyone else.

WALTER: At times we may even ask you to drive the bus.

KIM: Don't be ridiculous.

WALTER: Right.

KIM: But trust me. I'm used to slumming. I was on a sitcom.

They kiss.

WALTER: I still can't believe someone as amazing as you is here.

KIM: (*Looking around.*) Me too? What is this little shack? Is this where you hide from the FBI?

WALTER: No. This is my house.

KIM: It is?

WALTER: Yes.

KIM: You live here?

WALTER: You don't like it.

KIM: No, no, I—Seriously?

WALTER: I can't be a man of the people if I don't live like them. I reject materialism in all forms. It makes you soft, complacent, insulated. And I don't say that to cast any aspersions on you. I'm sure in your profession you need a screening room and mud bath and grotto in your house in Bel-Air. But for me, a place to crash and store my books is all I require.

KIM: (*Putting on a good face.*) No no, it's perfect. I love how... authentic it is. I mean, here we are in Santa Monica but hey, we might as well be in... Mississippi.

WALTER: We can go to your place like we did last night.

KIM: No, no. This takes me back to my college days (*Looking around.*) and I do sincerely like the roses, but the important thing is we're alone. I have you all to myself.

They kiss. LARRY enters from the hallway. He's African American, 30s-50s, scruffy, dressed in dirty clothes and sporting an LA Dodgers cap. He always has a large satchel.

LARRY: I killed a rat in your pantry.

KIM: (*Startled.*) AAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!

WALTER: (*To LARRY.*) Uh... not now.

LARRY: And just reset the traps in your dresser. Ohmygod. Kim Carlisle. Wait'll I tell Antoine under the freeway. He carries around your picture. In his pants.

KIM: Walter, who is this person?

LARRY: At the moment, his exterminator. But I'm also his handyman, his valet, and his decorator—I stole those roses from someone's garden.

WALTER: This is Larry. I don't know his last name.

LARRY: Olivier.

KIM: (*Looking around.*) Well, I could see why you'd need a handyman. Or the Army Corp of Engineers.

LARRY: You'll find I'm especially present during vermin season.

He gives her a big Cheshire cat smile. A beat, then:

KIM: Okay, I'll take that joint.

WALTER: I also have hash if he doesn't leave.

WALTER gets one out, lights it, and gives it to her during the following:

LARRY: Let me get a whiff. You can thank marijuana for the man you see standing before you today.

KIM: Dear God.

KIM takes a big drag.

LARRY: *(Sniffing.)* Ahhhh. “Durban Poison”—offering a delicate bouquet of anise, earthy spiciness and sweetness.

KIM: Well... *(Extending her hand.)* nice to meet you.

LARRY: *(Shaking hands.)* Whoa. You’re offering your hand to a lowly dreg of society?

KIM: I like to think I have great compassion for the downtrodden.

LARRY: Will you meet Antoine and sign his picture?

KIM: Fuck no.

LARRY: Then how about Dodger tickets? Can you get Dodger tickets?

WALTER: Larry, don’t you have a sump pump to drain?

LARRY: Gotcha. The headband. I know what that means.

KIM: Huh?

WALTER: That’s not what it means.

KIM: Wait a minute. Do you think I’m that easy that I’d sleep with a man just because he gave me a headband? For your information, Mister, I slept with him an hour after I met him, long before getting the headband. So ha! *(Takes another drag.)* This is some good shit right here.

LARRY: It’s the anise that gives it just that perfect kick.

WALTER: *(Emphatic.)* Goodnight.

LARRY: *(To KIM.)* So you left Robert Redford for him?

WALTER: Larry!

KIM: Yes I did.

LARRY: Not that Walter ain’t a prince of a guy, but you had Sundance, woman!

KIM: I’ve never met a man more brilliant and deep.

LARRY: Still. We’re talking about the same Robert Redford, right?

Blonde guy, cute little dimples—

WALTER: OUT!

LARRY: All right, fine. You don't have to use your "disperse, it's the National Guard!" voice with me. *(Then.)* Ms. Carlisle, it's been a slice. I must admit, I base my movie selection on air conditioning, but I have seen several of your pictures. You're very good.

KIM: Thank you.

LARRY: But as the great Vin Scully once said—

WALTER: Oh no. Vin Scully again?

LARRY: Yes, Vin Scully, the voice of my beloved Los Angeles Dodgers and the nearest thing we have to the return of the Lord. During a pitching change Vinny once said: "good is not good when better is expected."

KIM: What's that supposed to mean?

LARRY: You could win an Oscar someday. Take more challenging roles like your mama did.

WALTER: Damn it, Larry. Kim, I'm so sorry about this...

KIM: No, he's right. That's exactly what I've been saying to my agent. I love this guy. Thank you. I am going to push harder. If I'm going to do only one movie a year now it has to be the right one. Like "Bonnie & Clyde." I mean, why should Faye Dunaway get shot 40,000 times and not me?

LARRY: Vinny's also right about Farmer John wieners. "The eastern most in quality, the western most in flavor."

KIM: *(Shaking his hand.)* Well, Larry, this has been an unexpected pleasure meeting you.

LARRY: Likewise. And I'll let you two rutting piggies be. *(Shaking his head.)* Robert Redford.

KIM: Robert was a fling. This is serious.

LARRY: How serious? 'Children' serious?

WALTER: Isn't that a little personal?

LARRY: It's not for me, it's for Antoine under the freeway. He has dreams of being a father.

KIM: Sure I'd love children. I don't just want to save the world and win an Oscar.

LARRY: I'll tell him there's hope. *(To WALTER.)* And you?

WALTER: We're very serious. That's what the headband means. It's a symbol.

LARRY: What about the children part?

WALTER hesitates a long beat, then:

LARRY: Uh oh.

KIM: Walter. You don't want to have children?

WALTER: No, it's... um... (*Deep breath, then.*) Okay, in the spirit of full disclosure, I... I can't.

KIM: Physically?

LARRY: You got a bunch of "lazy swimmers?"

WALTER: Yes, I have a low sperm count.

KIM: Okay, I'll take that hash.

WALTER: I'm not convinced it's a bad thing. Do we really want to bring children into this world of unrest, injustice, and utter chaos?

KIM: Of course.

LARRY: Y'know, people have been spouting that balloon juice for centuries. And yet, they've been bringing children into the world through all kinds of crises. The Depression, the Black Death of the Middle Ages, China during the Mongol Invasion. The only thing keeping those poor schleppers going was poontang.

KIM: I just always saw myself having children.

WALTER: We could always adopt.

KIM: Yes, I suppose.

LARRY: Lord knows how many kids Redford has.

WALTER: In one minute I'm going to hit you with a peace sign.

LARRY: (*A la Scully.*) Thanks for listening, and I wish you all a very pleasant good evening.

LARRY exits out the back door.

WALTER: Look, we can certainly explore this topic further. (*Taking her hands again.*) But for now, let's make this a better, safer, more just world for all children. Okay?

KIM: Okay.

He kisses her, then:

WALTER: Let me make sure the waterbed is warm enough.

KIM: (*Apprehensive.*) You have a waterbed?

WALTER: Have you ever made love on a waterbed?

KIM: No. Will I know when it's over?

They exit up the hallway. Lights down. Over black or projection, we hear:

ARMY: (Voiceover.) This is Army Archerd with today's showbiz report. Hollywood's queen activist, Kim Carlisle, spoke today on the floor of the U.S. Senate, accusing them of gross negligence and not serving the public's interests. After the fiery speech they all took pictures with her.

SCENE 2

SANTA MONICA HOUSE – NIGHT
(SIX MONTHS LATER – 1969)

Lights up. LARRY is under the kitchen sink with a wrench fixing the plumbing. WALTER and KIM enter. KIM is wearing the headband and holding a long-stemmed rose.

KIM: Wouldn't you say a significant number of blacks and whites, who have very progressive views feel there is longevity to integration?

WALTER: Absolutely. As we got experience through the civil rights struggle, we started to realize the full scale of our oppression and started to find language for it.

KIM: Both vocally and culturally.

WALTER: Yes, this was mass disaffection. This was everybody being very visibly out front in their repudiation of the code of ethics and lifestyle of society.

LARRY emerges from the sink.

LARRY: Excuse me. Can I ask you crazy kids a question?

WALTER: Sure.

LARRY: What the FUCK are you talking about?

WALTER: Hey!

LARRY: "Mass disaffection?" "Language for oppression?" Who talks like that?

WALTER: We don't expect you to understand.

LARRY: Well, you should. 'Cause guess what—I'm "America." (*To KIM.*) Do you understand?

KIM: Yes. Of course. (*Beat.*) Mostly.

LARRY: In six months he's turned you into him with boobs. (*Re all the books.*) You been reading all this Mao Tse Tung and Gore Vidal shit?

KIM: You have to be informed if you want to effect change.

WALTER: I'm incredibly proud of her.

LARRY: Read "Valley of the Dolls."

KIM: I have... well, the screenplay.

WALTER: I've never been with a woman so exciting, so passionate, and yes, it's easier to face the prospects of getting tear gassed when I know I'm coming home to you.

KIM: (*Touched.*) Oh God, I'm going to cry.

LARRY: I'm going to hurl.

WALTER: But it's more than that. Our relationship is deeper than just sex five nights a week.

LARRY: Five nights a week? I gotta start handing out headbands.

WALTER: I love you.

KIM: What?

LARRY: You do?

WALTER: Yes.

KIM: You love me? You've never said that before.

WALTER: It's never come up.

LARRY: Not even during sex?

KIM: No.

LARRY: What do you talk about during sex?

WALTER: I recite speeches. (*Off LARRY'S look.*) I know, but it works.

KIM: He also brings me one red rose a day.

LARRY: Look, I don't mean this with any disrespect, but you people are WHITE.

KIM: And I love you, Walter. The first moment I looked into your eyes, it was like you were lit from within. I just knew you were the one.

They kiss.

LARRY: Whiter than white. CHANTILLY LACE.

WALTER: This does segue into why I brought you here tonight. I have a surprise for you. Stay right there.

WALTER exits to the bedroom.

LARRY: So... haven't seen you here in a while—like six months.

KIM: Well, you know between the rallies, sit-ins, and filming my next movie. Oh, I took your advice and was much pickier and landed a great role as Maud Gonne.

LARRY: Who?

KIM: In the early 1900's she was an Irish revolutionary, suffragette, and actress. Does that remind you of anybody?

LARRY: Judy Garland.

KIM: Ha ha.

LARRY: Well, congratulations. This could be your Oscar role.

KIM: That's what I'm hoping. It's got all the ingredients—a courageous woman fighting against all odds, and I get to do a foreign accent.

LARRY: Still. Six months.

KIM: All right. I will admit I'm not altogether... comfortable here. It's a little too... 'Grapes of Wrath-ish'.

LARRY: Yeah, I figured. A big movie star in humble conditions like these.

KIM: Hey, I'm not an elitist. I'm just a regular normal down-to-earth person like you... except I've showered since Alaska became a state. But Jesus, this place is a dump.

LARRY: Aw, it's not so bad.

KIM: You're here fixing things every single day. Doesn't that say something?

LARRY: Yeah. I'm fixing things reeeeeeeall slowwwwwwwwww-ly.

KIM: There are rats!

LARRY: Oh, that's easy. You just sprinkle a little kitty litter and they scatter. It's the leaky roof that's a bitch.

KIM: The roof leaks?

LARRY: Only when it rains.

KIM: The one night I was here I didn't sleep a wink.

LARRY: The bees?

KIM: There are bees?

LARRY: I'm talking out of school.

KIM: No. It's his waterbed—rolling up and down and up and down. It's hard to sleep when you have to fix your eyes on the horizon.

LARRY: It does take some getting used to.

KIM: Wait a minute. You sleep on it too?

LARRY: Hey, I'm entitled to breaks. I'm not a mule.

KIM: See ya in another six months.

WALTER enters.

WALTER: Okay, I should do this proper.

He drops to one knee and produces a ring box.

KIM: Holy shit.

WALTER: Kim, words are hollow without resulting action. To create public awareness, symbols are often employed. I have now declared my love for you and as such feel it's time for that representative symbol.

LARRY: Who are you, Mr. Spock?

KIM: That's the most romantic proposal I've ever heard.

LARRY: It is?

WALTER: Will you do me the honor of—?

KIM: YES! YES! MY GOD, YES!

She shrieks in joy. He stands. They embrace.

LARRY: Have you worked out the 'children' part yet?

WALTER: *(Under his breath.)* Shut up.

KIM: *(Excited.)* Lemme see the ring. Lemme see the ring. *(Opens the box.)* Oh, it's beautiful.

WALTER: It was my grandmother's.

LARRY: So you'll have to take it off when you visit her. *(Off WALTER'S glare.)* Aw, come on. A little levity from your Best Man.

WALTER: You're not my Best Man. Bobby Seale will be my Best Man.

KIM: And Audrey Hepburn will be my Maid of Honor.

LARRY: I can't wait to see those two get together to plan the festivities.

KIM: Oh my darling. I'm so happy! And there's no need to wait to live together. Ooh, I have the ideal room for all these books.

WALTER: What? No. We're not moving to your place.

KIM: We're not?

WALTER: No. We're living here.

KIM: Here? Here here?

LARRY: Oh goody. Mary Poppins is coming to live with us.

WALTER: Yes, sweetheart. I told you, that big mansion is an extreme example of gross excess... although you've done wonderful things with it. But it defines us as privileged, which is counter to every principle we stand for.

KIM: It didn't bother you five nights a week.

WALTER: Kim, I... I just assumed. What has all of this been for the last six months? Proving to yourself and others that you're no longer entitled and no longer on a higher strata than all the deserving people we're fighting for.

KIM: Yeah, but...

WALTER: Besides, you said you liked this house. Thought it was authentic.

KIM: "Authentic" is LA-speak for "tear-down."

WALTER: Kim, I can't marry you and live in separate locations.

KIM: (*Considers, then.*) You're right. Of course. If I want to become the person I want to become I have to make the full and complete commitment. Mrs. Kim Arbogast—although I'm not changing it professionally—would be thrilled to start her new life here in this house.

WALTER: That's the Kim I love, cherish, and admire.

They hug again.

LARRY: Don't I get a hug too? I'm practically living here.

KIM: Aw, what the hell?

She hugs him and says:

KIM: (*Sotto.*) Save me.

LARRY: (*Sotto.*) I hear ya.

They break the hug. WALTER holds out his hand.

WALTER: Here. What do you say we celebrate?

She offers her hand and he leads up the hallway.

KIM: Can we at least bring in my California King?

WALTER: I need the waterbed, honey. For my back.

KIM: Right.

WALTER: And you have to admit—there's nothing quite like making love on a waterbed.

KIM: The Teacup ride at Disneyland but sure, it's an experience.

They exit into the bedroom. LARRY shakes his head. Lights down. Over black or projection, we hear:

ARMY: (Voiceover.) Well, there was more than wedding cake that melted in the dark at MacArthur Park as movie star, Kim Carlisle, and nonpro, Walter Arbogast, tied the knot at that iconic Los Angeles location. From there the guests marched to City Hall for a rally that got a little out of hand. The happy couple, the Black Panthers, and Audrey Hepburn were all released on bail.

SCENE 3

SANTA MONICA HOUSE – LATE AFTERNOON
(FOUR MONTHS LATER)

Lights up. KIM is in the kitchen area scrubbing pots and pans. She's putting up a good front but from time to time her frustration slips through. LARRY sits in a chair and observes while smoking a joint and leafing through a stapled packet of Xeroxed newspaper clippings.

LARRY: So what's this I'm reading?

KIM: You mean instead of helping?

LARRY: I'm on my lunch break here in the Gulag.

KIM: It's a clipping service. Whenever I'm mentioned in any newspaper it's flagged and I get a copy.

LARRY reads aloud as KIM continues scrubbing pots and pans.

LARRY: “Kim Carlisle is living a storybook life. Since her marriage two months ago she has an unmistakable glow, a radiance. I can’t imagine any woman not wanting to be in her shoes right this very moment.

KIM: Oh yeah. “Storybook life.”

LARRY: “And career-wise there’s an even greater glow. No one would be surprised if ‘Oscar’ doesn’t come a’ callin’ this year.”

KIM: I’m hot.

LARRY: You are on a roll.

KIM: No. I’m shvitzing like a galley slave.

LARRY: I hope you’re still getting that daily red rose.

KIM: Yes, and it’s very sweet. But y’know what would really set this young girl’s heart all a’flutter? A garbage disposal!

LARRY: As the lord, Vin Scully once said: “It’s a great time of the year... if you can stand it.”

KIM: Vin Scully doesn’t have to clean the team’s uniforms and hang them on the foul pole to dry.

LARRY: You’re a tad snippy today.

KIM: I get four hours sleep a night.

LARRY: Do you ever say no to him?

KIM: There’s no need to. This is my period of adjustment, that’s all. And it’s making me a better person. (*Beat.*) If I can stand it.

LARRY: Move over. You wash, I’ll dry.

KIM: You are a godsend. How can I ever repay you?

LARRY: Send two dollars to “The Dodger fan special” which includes a Dodger yearbook, Dodger pen, and a Dodger pillowcase... which is ideal for trapping raccoons.

KIM: (*Singing.*) ‘*Green Acres is the place to be/Farm livin’ is the life for me.*’

The phone rings.

LARRY: I’ll get it. (*On phone.*) Hellooo? Arbogast residence. End the war, impeach Nixon, trade Bill Buckner... Who shall I say is calling?... Sophie Raskin-Greenfield?

KIM: (*Holding out her hand.*) Oooh, my agent.

LARRY: (*On phone.*) Can I take a message? She's currently scrubbing the—

KIM: (*Grabbing the phone from him.*) Gimme that! (*On phone.*) Sophie, hi... Who was that? Oh, Sidney Poitier. So what's up?... Really? They're going to make a movie of 'the Godfather'? Everyone on the bus loves that book... No, I'm reading 'Das Kapital'. But that's groovy. (*Spotting something.*) Hang on a second, hon. (*Sotto to LARRY, pointing, matter of factly.*) There's a rat, Larry.

LARRY: (*A la Poitier.*) "They call me Mr. Tibbs."

She shoos him, he chuckles, and during the following goes to the kitchen area, grabs a bag of kitty litter and sprinkles a little where the rat was spotted.

KIM: Who's directing? ... Francis Ford who?... Well, I'm sure she's very good. What's that? Marlon Brando. I've always wanted to work with Marlon Brando... as long as I don't have to kiss him. Who else?... Al Pacino, Robert Duvall, Al Martino—

LARRY: Wow! They got Al Martino. You HAVE TO do this movie!

KIM: (*Sotto, to LARRY.*) Shut up. (*On phone.*) I HAVE to do this movie! I don't even need to read the script. That'll be my one picture for next year. Call Paramount. I'm in. (*Hangs up.*) HOLY SHIT!

LARRY: This won't conflict with you going down to Kentucky and unionizing corn cob workers or some such shit?

KIM: I'll make it work.

WALTER enters, agitated.

WALTER: Did you see the news? Nixon just called up another 80,000 troops to Vietnam. It's unconscionable!

KIM: (*Indignant.*) Immoral!

LARRY: (*Equally indignant.*) Water soluble!

WALTER: The government's insistence on adhering to the fallacy of eastern imperialism is costing innocent lives.

KIM: The presumption is galling on every level.

WALTER: The inhumanity!

KIM: The hypocrisy!

LARRY: The leprosy!

WALTER: Innocent American boys are pawns in a manpower channeling system that costs many of them their lives.

KIM: Right, but why did you single out American boys?

WALTER: What?

KIM: If we're talking inhumanity, we must extend it to all humanity. What about the North Vietnamese? Those boys are just as young and it's worse for them because we're fighting on their soil. Not to mention innocent civilians.

WALTER: I agree with what you're saying. I just wouldn't focus on that.

KIM: Why not?

WALTER: It muddies the message. Our goal is to encourage a call to action from America. All parties are then beneficiaries.

KIM: But in a broader sense you're placing the value of one group's lives over the value of another group's.

WALTER: We can't save everybody. I only have one bus.

KIM: But clearly you're picking sides.

WALTER: So what?

KIM: That's wrong.

LARRY: Vin Scully never picks sides.

WALTER: Don't kid yourself. He wants the Dodgers to win.

KIM: No, I've heard him. He's very objective.

LARRY: Even against the Giants.

WALTER: The Giants suck!

KIM: See? You are picking sides.

WALTER: I'm not Vin Scully!

KIM: Well, you should be.

LARRY: No one is.

WALTER: I don't want to be Vin Scully!

LARRY: You want to be who then? Harry Caray?

WALTER: Who's that?

KIM: An actor.

LARRY: Voice of the Cardinals.

KIM: Same guy?

LARRY: I doubt it. What movies is he in?

WALTER: This is nuts! Kim, listen, my heart goes out to the Giants...

I mean Viet Cong. But we have to see the big picture.

KIM: Why can't the big picture include the little picture?

WALTER: Okay, now you're just getting into semantics.

LARRY: That's all any of this is. You're both essentially on the same side.

KIM: We are? Then why are we arguing?

WALTER: I'm not.

KIM: Well, I was.

WALTER: Look, I love you, and I love that you care so deeply about everyone in the world. *(Kisses her.)*

KIM: Yeah, yeah, it was an argument.

LARRY: Tell him your good news.

KIM: Oh. Right. The movie I'll be making next year is "The Godfather." With me, and Marlon Brando, and Vic Damone.

LARRY: Al Martino.

KIM: Al Martino.

WALTER: What are the dates? What will you miss?

KIM: That's your reaction?

WALTER: "The Godfather" is a big book.

LARRY: No, the correct response is "Hey, Kim, that's great. Marlon Brando—wow zowie! I bet every actress in town wanted that part. And you got it. I'm thrilled for you."

KIM: Right. Was that so hard?

WALTER: I would never say "wow zowie."

LARRY: How often did you get beaten up as a kid?

WALTER: More than the Jewish kids. But Kim, now that I know the magnitude of this accomplishment, I am all the things Larry said... just not as "street."

LARRY: That was "street" to you?

WALTER: Congratulations, darling.

He kisses her and exits up the hallway.

LARRY: Congrats from me too.

KIM: For what?

LARRY: For standing up to him. He's a formidable presence. You held your own in that argument. Kudos to you.

KIM: Thanks. Wait. You said there was no argument.

LARRY: Of course there was an argument. I was just sick of it. "The fallacy of eastern imperialism," "manpower channeling systems?" Who taught you Fauntleroy's how to fight?

KIM: Oh. Well... I guess I did stand up to him.

LARRY: Damn straight.

KIM: Thank you. Thank you very much.

LARRY: You're most welcome.

KIM: (*Beat, then.*) Who won?

Lights fade. Over black or projection, we hear:

ARMY: (*Voiceover.*) Army Archerd with you at the Egyptian Theatre and now coming our way is the ravishing Kim Carlisle. Kim, you look ravishing. Who are you wearing?

KIM: (*Voiceover.*) Ward. Montgomery Ward.

ARMY: (*Voiceover.*) Ravishing. Say, you have been active in so many zany things. What's the latest?

KIM: (*Voiceover.*) It's really important to end the war.

ARMY: (*Voiceover.*) Amen. Bring our boys home. See? I'm even wearing a ribbon.

KIM: (*Voiceover.*) Not just our boys. All the young men who are in this senseless conflict.

ARMY: (*Voiceover.*) What? You mean the enemy?

KIM: (*Voiceover.*) They have families and dreams just like you and me.

ARMY: (*Voiceover.*) But they're the enemy.

KIM: (*Voiceover.*) We're the ones who invaded their country.

ARMY: (*Voiceover.*) Oh, look, there's Julie Christie. Thanks, Kim. Julie, you look ravishing.

SCENE 4**SANTA MONICA HOUSE – NEXT MORNING**

Lights up. KIM is on the phone. She is wearing her headband.

KIM: “The Godfather” people pulled out? Why?... I didn’t say I was for the enemy. Sophie, I can straighten this whole... What? It’s done? Diane Keaton? She’s not even Italian... Hey, I’m swarthy in the right light and makeup... Okay, find me something else as good. Are they making “Bonnie & Clyde Two?”... I dunno, maybe they survived.

She hangs up. LARRY enters with his usual satchel over his shoulder.

LARRY: *(A la baseball announcer.)* Hello everybody.

KIM: “The Godfather” deal fell through.

LARRY: *Mi dispiace, bella signora.*

KIM: All because of one innocuous comment I made.

LARRY: I dunno. That little slip of the tongue caused quite a shit storm. People are now calling you “Kim Cong.”

KIM: There’s always a few that will try to take you down.

LARRY: More than a few. Even Antoine under the freeway no longer carries your picture. You’ve been replaced.

KIM: By who?

LARRY: Diane Keaton.

She groans in exasperation.

LARRY: Does Walter know?

KIM: Not yet. He’s still asleep.

WALTER: *(Offstage.)* WHAT THE FUCK?!!!

LARRY: Break it to him gently.

WALTER enters from the hallway wearing a robe. He’s furious to say the least.

WALTER: KIM CONG?!!

LARRY: Okay, now this will be an argument.

WALTER: It’s all over “The Today Show.”

KIM: Walter, mellow out.

WALTER: It would take a horse tranquilizer to mellow me out! Do you know the damage you've caused?

KIM: A journalist pressured me.

WALTER: Journalist?! Oh really? You caved under the brutal interrogation of a Hollywood entertainment reporter?! Before today his biggest scoop was where Barbra Streisand gets her bagels!

LARRY: Factors Deli on Pico. (*Shakes his head.*) And she calls herself a Jew.

KIM: Hey, Army Archerd is the real deal. He has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

WALTER: So does Trigger!

LARRY: Where? I gotta see that.

WALTER: Can my wife and I have one damn conversation without you here?

LARRY: Why would you want to? (*Off WALTER'S glare.*) Okay, fine. I'll be in the front yard manicuring the "topiary."

LARRY exits. WALTER crosses to the kitchen and pours himself a drink.

WALTER: I told you yesterday not to focus on the Vietnamese, didn't I? There was a reason for that. It's hard to win the hearts and minds of America if they think WE SUPPORT THE ENEMY!

KIM: You're drinking? At eight A.M.?

WALTER: We don't have a horse tranquilizer.

KIM: Walter, I am truly truly sorry. I will make a statement. I will apologize.

WALTER: Do you have any idea what this has cost me?

KIM: It's not just you. It cost me too. I'm no longer in "The Godfather."

WALTER: WHAT?!

KIM: Okay, maybe not the right time to bring that up.

WALTER: This is a disaster!

KIM: Don't be so melodramatic.

WALTER: (*Sarcastic.*) Gee. Sorry. I'm not a nuanced actor. I'm not Robert Redford!

KIM: He would be patient and understanding.

WALTER: Not if you went before the cameras and told the world he fucks sheep! And even that wouldn't be as bad because it's not like his mission in life is to keep sheep out of the military!

KIM: Where's 'charming Walter'? I miss 'charming Walter'.

WALTER: He didn't marry Kim Cong.

KIM: I've never seen you like this.

WALTER: How the hell am I supposed to spin this? What do I say? "When my wife said she supported the (*Finger quotes.*) "enemy" she meant Jerry Lewis movies?!"

The phone rings. WALTER snatches it.

WALTER: (*Snippy.*) What? Who's calling? Sophie Raskin-Greenfield.

KIM: My agent. We'll make this right. (*On phone.*) Sophie, hi... What? Are you serious? Over this?... Well can't you overrule the agency?... We've been together for ten years. I paid for your nose job! ... All right, fine, I'll get someone who's LOYAL! And your new nose looks like a snout!

She slams the phone into its cradle.

KIM: Bitch! Can you believe that? They fired me.

WALTER: I'm not surprised. You don't seem to realize the magnitude of your faux pas.

KIM: Stars say stupid shit all the time. Why do you think we need writers?

The phone rings again.

WALTER: Christ!

KIM: (*Answering.*) Carolyn, my angel... What? Oh no. You too? This can't be happening. You've been my manager for twelve years. I paid for your buttocks lift! ...Carolyn, please... Okay, well then screw you! And your ass is now so flat you could serve tea on it! (*Hangs up.*)

WALTER: This is what happens when you devote your career to an industry built entirely on artifice and greed.

KIM: Twelve hours ago I was living a storybook life so shut up.

WALTER: From now on I want you to run everything by me first.

KIM: Excuse me?

WALTER: There's too much riding on this for it to implode due to a thoughtless incendiary remark. We've spent months building momentum. Our rallies attract ten times the audience they did a year ago.

KIM: And why do you think that is, numb-nuts? Because of ME!

WALTER: It's my movement.

KIM: And my burning bra!

WALTER: This is a side of you I've never seen.

KIM: (*Defiant.*) I know. Isn't it great?

WALTER: Look, I didn't cause this mess. I just want to ensure it never happens again.

KIM: Y'know, you're very controlling.

WALTER: I'm an ORGANIZER!

KIM: Well don't organize me!

WALTER: Then don't give me reason to!

KIM takes off her headband, hands it to WALTER, and starts for the front door.

KIM: Here.

WALTER: Where you going?

KIM: The beach, which if I were buying a house in Santa Monica would have a view of!

She storms out. Lights fade.

ARMY: (*Voiceover.*) The fallout from Kim Carlisle's shocking statement continues. First "The Tonight Show" and the "Steve Allen Show," and now her appearance has been canceled on the popular children's "Soupy Sales" show.

SCENE 5**SANTA MONICA HOUSE – NEXT DAY**

Lights up. LARRY is strategically placing buckets around the living room. KIM enters sans headband.

KIM: *(Re buckets.)* What are you doing?

LARRY: It's supposed to rain tonight.

KIM: Why don't you fix the roof?

LARRY: I did. But apparently I'm not an expert craftsman.

KIM: Well, at least we can refill the waterbed.

LARRY: Sleeping any better?

KIM: No. And forget about sex. But the good news is: once the bed gets rolling he doesn't need me.

LARRY: So how are you doing?

KIM: Soupy Sales—a guy who gets hit in the face with pies doesn't think I'm worthy of being on his show, that's how I'm doing.

LARRY: In fairness, you don't know whether it was Soupy or his puppets that had the problem.

KIM: I've got calls into agents and managers. No one is calling back. This isn't supposed to happen until I'm 40!

LARRY: Listen now, it ain't over until the last out. Unless you're the Dodgers. Vinny starts plugging the postgame show in the fifth inning.

KIM: Well, I'm just going to have to put aside my activism for a while and devote 100% of my time and energy to fixing this.

WALTER enters with a baby swaddled in a blanket. NOTE: Throughout the play the baby is never actually seen.

WALTER: Congratulate us. We're parents.

KIM: WHAT?!

WALTER: I couldn't give you a baby myself, but like we talked about, I could still give you a child.

KIM: Are you insane?!

WALTER: Not the reaction I was expecting.

LARRY: Don't even think of chasing me off for this one. As the great one would say, "pull up a chair." *(Sits in a chair.)*

KIM: (*Still gobsmacked.*) You adopted a baby?

LARRY: PLAY BALL!

WALTER: She's two weeks old.

KIM: Don't you think you should have, I dunno, RUN IT BY ME FIRST?

WALTER: But I just assumed...

KIM: You're always doing that. You're always just assuming. Did it ever occur to you to get my opinion first? I'm not that hard to find. This house is eleven square feet!

WALTER: Okay, I hear what you're saying and you're right. Perhaps you would have preferred an Asian child or Latin child.

KIM: NO, YOU IDIOT! This is a huge decision that will change the course of our lives. How can you just go off and do this? My God. We didn't plan, we're not prepared.

LARRY: We need a new roof.

WALTER: Look, I wasn't expecting it to happen so fast. There's a volunteer who was going to put her baby up for adoption and asked if I wanted her first. I had mentioned our desire to adopt. The normal process is endless and rigorous and takes years. This was a chance to skip all of that.

LARRY: And you have all these Vladimir Lenin books you can read her at bedtime.

KIM: So you made the decision all by yourself.

WALTER: I had to. She needed to know right then. Kim, it was either today or who knows, maybe two or three years down the road.

KIM: Walter, this is the worst possible time for me. My career is in shambles. I no longer have a team. Puppets hate me. And now without any warning or preparation, I have to become a mother? I never even played a mother in a movie!

WALTER: Look, I'm sorry. Again, I thought this is what you wanted. It's still not official until we sign the paperwork.

KIM: I do want a baby, and your gesture was very sweet... in a clueless man sort of way, but it's such an enormous responsibility and I just don't think we're equipped at this time to properly care for...

She gets her first look at the baby and instantly melts.

KIM: Ohmygod! She's gorgeous.

She takes the baby from WALTER.

KIM: Look at that, she's smiling. Hi, sweetheart. I'm Kim. *(Beat.)* I'm your new mommy.

Lights fade.

KIM: *(Voiceover.)* This is Kim Carlisle and I would like to apologize for remarks I recently made. They gave the false impression that I was supporting North Vietnam and that is not the case. I'm a proud American. I imagine some of the confusion stems from the fact I played Eva Braun on Broadway, but that was a musical. Again, I support Uncle Sam, not Hitler, not Ho Chi Minh and I'm sorry if my comments caused you distress in any way. Thank you. God bless America, nowhere else.

SCENE 6

SANTA MONICA HOUSE – A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER

Lights up. LARRY peeks through the closed curtains on the window leading to the street. KIM is feeding the baby a bottle.

Outside we hear protesters yelling "Kim Cong! Kim Cong! Go back home to Vietnam!"

KIM: Well, the apology sure worked.

LARRY: Between the reporters, TV crews, and protesters there must be forty/fifty people out there. *(Waving.)* Hi, Antoine. Is that a Diane Keaton tattoo?

KIM: All these idiots marching around with their stupid signs. What good is that gonna do?

LARRY: You do see the irony here, right?

KIM: We fight for just causes. But yeah, half the time we're jerking our chains.

LARRY: Where's Walter? For once he gets to be the person who calls the police.

KIM: He's in Florida at some college that won't offer Urdu classes. That's more important than his family. Okay Maud, let's get a burp.

She begins patting the baby's back to induce a burp.

LARRY: I still say you should have named her Vinesha.

KIM: I'm not naming her after a baseball announcer. (*Re outdoor chanting.*) God, protesters are annoying.

LARRY: Here. Let me fix that.

KIM: What are you gonna do?

LARRY: You'll see.

LARRY exits out the back door. KIM now cradles the baby and rocks back and forth.

KIM: (*To baby.*) You need a nap, young lady. This isn't exactly a lullaby, but I don't know any lullabies yet, so...

She begins softly singing "For What It's Worth."

KIM: "There's something happening here/
What it is ain't exactly clear/
There's a man with a gun over there/
Telling me I got to beware..."

From outside we hear fireworks go off and a commotion as people scatter. Maybe a little baby crying SFX too.

KIM: AAAAAAA! What the hell?!

LARRY enters from the backdoor.

LARRY: (*A la Vin Scully.*) Hello everybody. It's 'illegal home fireworks night' here at beautiful Chavez Carlisle.

KIM: You had fireworks?

LARRY: Oh, yeah. Keep 'em in the shed out back for just such an occasion. Oh, that reminds me—never light a joint when you're out in the shed.

KIM: Dear God.

LARRY: The TV news crews are still here. (*Calling out.*) Don't make me get out the "Assorted Color Ammo Smoke!"

KIM: (*To the baby.*) I'm sorry, sweetheart. Mommy wanted to save the world and wound up living in a shit hole with no help because if one poor person in Arkansas can't afford help then nobody should have it. And Mommy said something that people misunderstood and now everyone on the planet hates her—except the North Vietnamese government—they sent her a pair of traditional strap on Guoc Mocs. And now Mommy can't go out of the house, can't take you for a ride, can't even drive to the top of Topanga Canyon to that ripoff commune market your daddy insists I go to. Gelson's is somehow now an enemy of the state.

LARRY: This whole *woman-of-the-people* thing, that ain't you.

KIM: I don't know who "me" is. I want to be that *woman-of-the-people* and I want to do my part to make this a better world, but God help me, I miss massages and housekeepers and a real bed. Is that being too spoiled? Wanting a mattress? But if I go back I know I'd feel tremendous guilt, and I would feel like a failure, and my marriage would probably be over. So I'd fail at that too. But I'd have my sunken tub, gorgeous view of the city, and a closet. Mixed emotions are fine when I'm acting, but not in real life.

LARRY: You could always just give money.

KIM: No. That's not enough. You can't inspire people by just giving money. You can't pitch in. You can't see the changes for yourself.

LARRY: I tell you what, Kimberly Louise Carlisle, you're one of the good ones.

KIM: (*Re protestors.*) Not according to them. To them I'm the most hated person in America.

LARRY: Give it time. Folks hated Lincoln too.

KIM: They shot him.

LARRY: Never go to the theatre to see a comedy.

KIM: I don't know. My apology was a bust. To hire a PR firm now would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and who knows if even they could resurrect my career and reputation from the ashes?

LARRY: Oh, you can save it. That's for sure. But it won't cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It'll set you back seven dollars and ninety-nine cents.

KIM: What?

LARRY: I need to buy a new transistor radio. My old one's on the fritz, and the Montreal Expos are in town this weekend. Don't want to miss a moment of those Titanic tilts.

KIM: Are you serious? Just seven-ninety-nine?

LARRY: Money-back guarantee—although I'd have to pay you back in installments.

KIM: Doesn't Walter pay you?

LARRY: Oh yeah, but that all goes towards rent.

KIM: Which reminds me—just where do you live?

LARRY: Bel-Air.

KIM: What?

LARRY: Down the hill from you.

KIM: Are you kidding me?

LARRY: But in a dinky guest house.

KIM grabs her purse, finds her wallet, and pulls out some bills.

KIM: Okay, so what's the plan?

LARRY: Pull back the curtains.

KIM: What?

LARRY: Pull back the curtains.

KIM: (*Beat.*) That's it?

LARRY: That's it. The camera crews are already in place. Let them see what I've been seeing—a big movie star who, by choice, is now a hard-working mother. Just do what you been doing—taking care of a baby with no help, scrubbing pots and pans, chasing rats. You'll never see Debbie Reynolds or my landlady, Joan Crawford, do any of that hazarai. After all, this ain't no movie set, and it ain't something you started today for show. For months now you been in that "period of adjustment." Well, you adjusted, sister. Time to show the world.

KIM: That's the whole plan? Nothing else? Just let them film me doing everyday mundane things?

LARRY: With grace and dignity, two qualities you got coming out of your ass. People will take notice. Just keep it real.

KIM: *(Still hesitant.)* I dunno.

LARRY: You're holding out for a better six dollar offer?

KIM hands him the money. Lights fade.

SCENE 6

SANTA MONICA HOUSE – LATER THAT DAY

Lights up. The curtains have been pulled back. We see a TV camera lens or two peeking in the window. The baby is in a bassinet.

KIM is attempting to assemble a crib. She has no idea what she's doing. A few of the wooden posts are up. Lots of pieces are spread out on the ground.

KIM: *(To herself.)* Look, it's me. I'm building a crib just like a normal below-the-line person. *(Beat.)* How the fuck do you build a crib?

She continues working.

KIM: Cribs aren't "built." The director says "I want a crib" and it just appears. That's just "a law of nature."

The baby cries. She crosses to the bassinet.

KIM: You're probably hungry. Let me fix you a bottle.

She hastily crosses to the kitchen but trips on some of crib pieces. She growls, puts up a pot of water and crosses back to the bassinet.

KIM: It's coming, sweetheart. Would you like a lullaby?(*Singing.*)
"We shall overcome/
We shall overcome."
Back in a sec.

She races to the kitchen, and again trips. Stray crib pieces go flying.

KIM: MOTHER FU—(*Catching herself.*)—Fu-Funnel cake. Yum.
(*Under her breath.*) God, I'm lame.

She takes a bottle out of the fridge. The water's not hot enough yet. She races back, trips again, and this time out of frustration, kicks some of the pieces.

KIM: I don't mean to pull rank, but I'm a star and you're objects!

The baby continues to cry.

KIM: If you stop crying right now, Mommy will buy you a pony.

The baby stops crying.

KIM: Well, aren't you a little golddigger? (*Beat.*) Let's see if the water is ready.

She hurries to the kitchen, baby in one arm, and tries to negotiate putting the bottle into the water. She accidentally touches her hand on the hot pot.

KIM: FUCK!!!

Then a big smile for the cameras as she catches herself. The baby starts to cry.

KIM: Mommy hurt herself. Have some empathy. (*Sings quickly.*)
"We shall overcome/
We shall overcome."

The crying stops. KIM spots something.

KIM: Oh hell! Mommy just spotted a rat.

She gently puts the baby back in the bassinet, grabs the big unwieldy bag of kitty litter, and is about to leave a small trail when she trips again, but this time does a face plant—right into the crib, splintering it, as kitty litter goes flying in all directions.

KIM: AAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!

The baby starts to cry. Blackout.

END OF ACT ONE

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