

"Tom Kirby"

ABERDEEN

I'll do what I always do. I'll
make it disappear.

INT. TOM KIRBY'S PACKARD CONVERTIBLE - NIGHT - LATER

Tom drives. Luciana Delgado sits in the passenger seat.
She's been cleaned up, face and hair washed, wearing a coat.

**I
START**

TOM

You hungry? Want something to eat?

LUCIANA

No thank you.

A silent beat between them as Tom drives. And then...

TOM

Why didn't you call the police?

LUCIANA

Because I know Mr. Ziegler works for
you, and you seemed like the kind of
man who would help me.

TOM

I'm glad you called. I'm glad you
let us take care of this, Luciana.
And we are gonna take care of this.
(a long beat, and then)
Hey, what was your favorite picture
when you were a kid?

She's surprised at the question, thinks about it for a moment.

LUCIANA

"Poor Little Rich Girl."

TOM

Shirley Temple.

LUCIANA

The movies always make me happy.

TOM

Me too. Growing up they were all I
cared about. I went to church,
but...

(a beat, and then)

Now when I went to the movies... when
the lights went down and the screen
lit up? That's when I knew there was
a God.

(CONTINUED)

1/12

Paradise Pictures Pilot

LUCIANA
Where did you grow up?

TOM
A smaller town than you. And it
took me a long time to figure out
this town.

Tom pulls in front of SCHWAB'S DRUGSTORE on Sunset Boulevard.

TOM
Movies are dreams, Luciana. And
this town is a dream machine.
That's why we all came here in the
first place.

Tom pauses. Lights two cigarettes. Hands one to Luciana.

TOM
But the people who make the
dreams... they're not as funny or
as charming or as heroic as the
people in the dreams. Not a single
one of them. Do you understand
what I'm saying?

LUCIANA
I think I'm beginning to.

TOM
So you have to decide. Does a
young girl from Marfa, Texas,
really belong in a place like this?

Luciana doesn't answer him. Instead, stares out the window.
A long moment. When she turns back, Tom hands her some cash.

LUCIANA
What's this for?

TOM
A ticket home.

She takes it, reluctant but grateful. Several \$100 bills.

LUCIANA
Can I ask you a favor?

TOM
Anything.

LUCIANA

Before I leave... can I visit the
studio? I've never been to one...
I might never get another chance.

Tom doesn't think it's a great idea. But he forces a smile.

TOM

Come by whenever you'd like.

STOP

And as he resumes driving, PRE-LAP BEBOP JAZZ MUSIC...

INT. NIGHTCLUB AT THE DUNBAR HOTEL - NIGHT - LATER

A hopping, upscale JAZZ CLUB with an African-American crowd.
In the day, hosted greats like Lena Horne, Cab Calloway, Louis
Armstrong. Tonight's stage is filled with a young group of
musicians, fronted by the handsome ALDO BOYD (30) on the sax.

Tom enters as Aldo finishes a rousing solo. Aldo spots Tom.

INT. NIGHTCLUB AT THE DUNBAR HOTEL - PRIVATE TABLE - LATER

Tom and Aldo sit in the back of the dark club, with drinks.

ALDO

You have no shame, Tom Kirby.
You're really gonna walk into the
Dunbar Hotel and ask me to do that?

TOM

You think I wanna ask you to do
this?

ALDO

I don't care if you want to or not,
you are asking, Tom.

(a beat, then)

You know in this very hotel, they
held the first convention for the
NAACP. Know what that stands for?

TOM

C'mon, Aldo, of course I do -

ALDO

National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People.

TOM

I need Charlie Sanders. If I don't
get him, this picture's gonna bomb
and take my career with it.

3/12

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STANLEY (CONT'D)

"Step up, ladies and lads, and hold on tight because the Ferris wheel will spin your life around."

(looks at the script)

"The wheel spins and spins and you don't know where you'll be when it stops."

Stanley puts the page down. A moment passes. He crosses to a cabinet and drags out a PORTABLE HOME MOVIE PROJECTOR. Then he roots around and finds an old COWBOY HAT, dusty and worn.

Stanley sets the projector up. He inserts two film reels and carefully threads the film along the wheels. Then he faces the projector to a bare white wall. Finally... Stanley presses a button. The movie projector begins to hum.

A GRAINY OLD SILENT FILM begins to flicker on the white wall. Stanley puts the cowboy hat on his head and sits on his sofa.

ON THE SCREEN -- the 35-year-old "Sheriff" wears that same cowboy hat, spurs and a big silver badge. He lassos a runaway horse, but the animal is strong, and the Sheriff realizes too late that one end of the lasso is tied to his own ankle. Soon, he's on the ground, dragged by the runaway horse.

Stanley smiles, entertained, happy watching his younger self.

INT. TOM KIRBY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Tom's sitting at his desk, staring out the window at the nighttime Hollywood skyline. He's holding a glass of whiskey. A KNOCK at his open door. And Gretchen enters.

TOM

Front gate give you any trouble?

GRETCHEN

They never do.

TOM

Because they know if they did, they'd have to answer to me.

GRETCHEN

So where's this script?

Tom drains his whiskey and then he makes his way over to her. He hands her Wyatt Osborne's "Heart of Darkness" script.

TOM

I'm gonna need big parts for Isabelle Yates and Aldo Boyd, too.

(CONTINUED)

4/12

II
START

GRETCHEN

(thinking)

She can be Kurtz's fiancée. And Aldo can be the guide taking Marlow up the river. I'll make sure that role has some meat on its bones.

TOM

And that, boys and girls, is the Miss RKO touch I need on this.

GRETCHEN

I still can't believe he's letting you make it.

TOM

What, you think it's not box-office gold? A movie about how evil lurks in the heart of every man.

GRETCHEN

You think it lurks in yours, Tom?

Tom thinks about that for a moment, and then slowly nods...

TOM

It's why this story hits me. Marlow's on a mission to find Kurtz, but he's really trying to find himself. His biggest fear is turning into the monster he's hunting.

GRETCHEN

So, to you, they're the same person, at different stages of the same journey?

TOM

It's like this town. We're all two people. Who we were when we got here... and who we became once we decided to stay.

She smiles.

GRETCHEN

I think you've had too much to drink.

Tom grins and makes his way to a radio on a bookshelf. Fiddles with the tuner, until he finds a song he likes, Ink Spot's "The Gypsy." He walks back to Gretchen, looks at her.

TOM
Dance with me.

GRETCHEN
Oh, come on, Tom...

TOM
One song. For old time's sake.

Tom steps closer to her. He takes one of her hands, and puts his other hand on her waist. She relents, moves close to him.

~~THE INK SPOTS (OVER THE RADIO)
BUT I'LL GO THERE AGAIN
'CAUSE I WANT TO BELIEVE THE GYPSY
THAT MY LOVER IS TRUE
AND WILL COME BACK TO ME SOME DAY~~

They sway to the slow, melodic tune for a few moments. She rests her head on his shoulder. It's comfortable and safe.

TOM
Holtzie's selling the studio to
your bosses over at RKO.

She slowly moves her head from his shoulder and looks at him.

GRETCHEN
What? I haven't heard that...

TOM
They're keeping it under wraps.
This movie is my swan song.

GRETCHEN
You gave that man everything, and
this is how he repays you --

TOM
Hey, it's not like that, he's broke.

GRETCHEN
He built the studio on your back,
Tom, and now he's gone and
squandered all your hard work.

TOM
I wanted the studio on my back.
Gretchen, don't blame Holtzie for
what happened to us way back when.
Blame me.

6/12

GRETCHEN

I wish I could, but I don't. You wanted to be Irving Thalberg more than you wanted anything else. I didn't like it, but I understood.

TOM

Irving Thalberg. What an idea, huh?

GRETCHEN

Forget Irving Thalberg. You've done a pretty good job being Tom Kirby.

Tom looks at her. She looks at him. It's a loaded moment. And then Tom leans in to kiss Gretchen. And she closes her eyes. But... as their lips touch, Gretchen pulls away.

GRETCHEN

I... I have to go. I'll have some pages for you in a few days, okay? You should get some sleep, Tom.

STOP

Gretchen takes the "Heart of Darkness" script and walks out the front door. As the Ink Spots continue to croon for Tom...

EXT. PARADISE PICTURES LOT - THE NEXT MORNING

A gray blanket over the yellow sky. The lot is still quiet this early. A whistling JANITOR wheels his cart into Sound Stage 11, with a card outside that says "The Funny Bone."

INT. SOUND STAGE 11 - "THE FUNNY BONE" SET - MORNING

The sets are still under construction. They are a REPLICA OF AN OUTDOOR COUNTY FAIR, with dunk tank, kissing booth, vendors advertising funnel cake, a shooting gallery and Ferris wheel.

The Janitor notices something strange over at the Ferris wheel. He approaches the Ferris wheel, sees something hanging from one of the cars. It's a man hanging there.

Face frozen in death, a ROPE NOOSE around his broken neck. There's a note pinned to his coat. It says: "Off into the sunset." The dead man wears a dusty, worn cowboy hat.

The dead man is Stanley "The Sheriff" Whalon.

END OF ACT THREE

7/12

TOM

~~He won't take my calls. But that
piece of shit has another thing
coming if he thinks that means he
doesn't have to talk to me.~~

~~ABERDEEN~~

~~After he sees those? He's gonna
wanna talk to you.~~

Aberdeen starts out but...

TOM

~~One more thing, Ray. It's time you
paid a visit to Freddie Ziegler.~~

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - DAY - LATER

Tom drives his Packard along the high, curvy road, heading west, several car lengths behind a '46 CHEVROLET SEDAN.

EXT. RKO RANCH - ENCINO - DAY - LATER

The Chevrolet pulls into the sprawling backlot of the RKO RANCH and parks. The driver opens the door for Columbia Pictures President HARRY COHN (54), a severe-looking man. A moment later, Tom's Packard pulls in too. Tom steps out, follows Cohn to an EMPTY STREET SET where director FRANK CAPRA (48) supervises his art department as they stake a sign in the ground that reads: "YOU ARE NOW IN BEDFORD FALLS."

HARRY COHN

What's the story, Frank?

Frank Capra turns around, surprised to see Harry Cohn.

FRANK CAPRA

Harry. Well, there's this angel who stops a guy from killing himself. The guy sees what life's like without him around. We got Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed. It's sweet.

HARRY COHN

Eh. Stewart's washed up. So when you gonna come back to Columbia, Frank? You haven't made a picture as good as "It Happened One Night," and that one you made with me.

TOM (O.S.)

What, you didn't like "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington"?

III
START →

Harry Cohn and Frank Capra turn to see Tom approaching.

FRANK CAPRA
Tommy Boy.

TOM
It's good to see you, Frank.

They shake, warm and familiar. Then Tom turns to Harry Cohn.

TOM
You don't seem to know how to
return a telephone call, Mr. Cohn.
So I'm here to tell you in person.
I want Charlie Sanders for my new
movie.

HARRY COHN
And I want Betty Grable to give me a
blowjob, but that's not gonna happen
either. What's that little studio of
yours called again? I always forget.

TOM
You won't after you see these.

Tom hands Harry the tan envelope. A beat. Then Cohn opens
it, finds RACY PHOTOS of the Beautiful Redhead, a dead ringer
for Rita Hayworth, IN BED WITH ALDO BOYD. NAKED, KISSING,
BODIES INTERTWINED. The photos are grainy, well manipulated.

TOM (CONT'D)
Now my eyesight's not so good, but
I'm pretty sure that's Rita Hayworth
getting the stuffing fucked out of
her by a black man. Aldo Boyd, in
fact.

HARRY COHN
You son of a bitch, this isn't her --

TOM
Rita's a big fan of Aldo's. Raved
all about him in last month's issue
of Silver Screen magazine.

Tom pulls out the issue of Silver Screen magazine, March
1946. The cover girl is... the beautiful RITA HAYWORTH.

HARRY COHN
You goddamn asshole --

Cohn tries to shove him, but Tom steps aside and GRABS Cohn.

TOM

You got a hard-on for Rita Hayworth the size of the Empire State Building. Gilda herself, the Love Goddess you made in your little laboratory. Maybe this girl isn't Rita Hayworth, but she sure does look like her. And that is Aldo Boyd. So when I put those photos out in the world, they're gonna do some damage. You wanna find out how much?

A beat. Still being held there by Tom, Cohn snarls...

HARRY COHN

You want Charlie Sanders? You can have that fairy. Wait 'til your picture comes out and everyone knows your leading man likes to suck --

TOM

Mind your manners, Harry. And you say a word about Charlie? I'll put you in the ground, that's a promise.

Tom releases him. Cohn glares at Tom, then walks to his car.

FRANK CAPRA

You know Cohn's not gonna forget this.

TOM

That's kinda the idea.

FRANK CAPRA

I heard about Stanley Whalon. Hell of a thing. I'm real sorry, Tommy.

TOM

Yeah. It's a wonderful fucking life, huh?

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

STOP

Whistling a tune, Freddie Ziegler returns to his room.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddie Ziegler enters and shuts the door. He doesn't see Ray Aberdeen standing in the doorway of the bathroom. Aberdeen RABBIT-PUNCHES Freddie, which drops him to the floor.

In pain, Freddie looks at Aberdeen standing over him.

Holtz just looks at Tom for a long moment. Then says...

HOLTZ
Don't forget who works for who, kid.

And then Holtz... smiles. A nice moment, interrupted by...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Excuse me, Mr. Kirby? Tom Kirby?

Tom looks over at a WAITER, who's holding a telephone.

WAITER
You have a telephone call, sir.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - NIGHT - LATER

Tom's Packard climbs the roads of the desolate canyons.

INT. SMALL HOUSE IN THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom shuts the door behind him. Laying on the bed is Isabelle Yates, gorgeous even now. A doctor has been in this room. The movie star is groggy as she recovers from giving birth. Tom sits on the side of the bed and he puts a hand on hers.

II
START

TOM
I told 'em to call me if it was early.

ISABELLE
And I told them not to. Tom, he's gone. Forever. That little boy.

TOM
You shoulda called me.

ISABELLE
I wanted to keep him...

TOM
Are you crazy? Toting around a little bastard baby? That'd do wonders for your career. You're emotional right now, mister --

ISABELLE
Don't you call me that.

TOM
We got a great thing going. That's why we went to all this trouble --

ISABELLE

Do you know why I didn't want you here? Because you never suffer.

TOM

You don't think I suffer?

ISABELLE

No, I don't. The rest of us, we make all the sacrifices. For you.

TOM

You got no idea what you're talking about.

ISABELLE

You think all this...

She motions at the room, at the LIGHTS OF THE CITY down below.

ISABELLE (CONT'D)

Is one of your movies. But it's not. This is my life, you asshole. And you don't get to decide everything --

TOM

You know what, Isabelle? It is a movie. It's all one big production.

(tugs at his jacket)

This is a costume.

(smacks the bed)

This is a set.

(points at her)

You're a character.

(jabs at his chest)

And so am I. In fact, I'm the main character. And if you want out, then get the hell out. Believe me, I won't have a problem finding someone else to play your part.

ISABELLE

He had your eyes, Tom.

A moment. And then Tom slowly stands. Calm now, he says...

TOM

We're starting up a new movie. So you got a week to pull yourself together. Then we're calling the press. Telling 'em you've come back from your wonderful trip.

STOP

12/12