

Kitty and Lina
A Play in Two Scenes
By
Manuel Iglesias

KITTY AND LINA

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KITTY AND LINA

KITTY AND LINA was originally produced at Manhattan Theatre Source in New York City April 3-26, 2008. It was Directed by Lory Henning. The opening night cast was as follows:

CAST (In order of Appearance)

KITTY-----Jennifer Boutell
LINA-----Marilyn Bernard

Cast of Characters

Kitty: A woman in her mid-twenties. She has blonde hair. She wears a smashing red dress and red high heels.

Lina: An elegant woman in her seventies. She wears a stylish black pantsuit.

Scene

For the Manhattan Theatre Source production, the set was dressed as the inside of a jewelry box, red and gold velvet curtains covered the backstage wall. The suggestion is that both women are priceless, sparkling jewels.

There is a small cocktail table with a chair center stage.

Time

Right here. Right now.

Note

There is a short break between scenes for set adjustment, but no intermission.

Scene 1

We hear the intro music. “You Stepped Out Of A Dream,” sung by Sarah Vaughn. Kitty pokes her head out from behind the curtain, checks out the audience and comes onstage. She is young and pretty with blonde hair. She is wearing a smashing red dress and red high heels.

KITTY. My name is Kitty. I live in New York City. And I am very pretty. Do you think I’m pretty? Don’t answer. This ain’t no audience participation thing. I’m just having a pretty day today and I don’t want or need anybody telling me otherwise. Sometimes when you feel it, you just feel it. If you’re not having a pretty day, please don’t be angry or threatened. It’s no reflection on you. It’s just how I feel, you know, today. Perhaps by reveling in my own prettiness, I can inspire you to feel good too, no matter where you stand in the beauty pageant of life.

Wait. This isn’t QVC. So put away your credit cards. I am not responsible for any of your feelings left over 30 seconds.

Of course, this prettiness of mine may be all in my head and that’s where all prettiness starts, ultimately. I’m not just talking about good bones and sparkling eyes (which I have) but a prettiness of the soul. Or, to boil it down to its essence—a good heart. A generosity of spirit. These inner qualities inform and radiate the physical presence.

I’ve encountered some people with very good bones and fine features. They wore impeccable clothes. But, after some time in their company I was able to detect the starved, mean, cold souls their good looks couldn’t disguise. They were carrying around the true ugliness that comes from deep within. Of course, I have also met some people who were just plain fucking ugly, inside and out. Bless their hearts.

Today I woke up and said to myself, Kitty, you are one pretty girl. I washed my face as the coffee brewed and noticed the areas where time and gravity had established beachheads but this only added to my sense of well being. I looked deep into my own eyes and realized they are a shade of sparkling hazel not yet

matched in nature. Wait. Yes it is. Think of the Hudson River on a sunny spring morning. (*She comes closer to the audience and shows off her sparkling eyes*)

My hair is thick and lustrous, a symphony of highlights. My lips are the color of ripe strawberries and when I apply strawberry lip-gloss, they taste like them too.

(*With a Texas accent*) My daddy owns one of the biggest Cadillac dealerships in the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex. Any of you Texans might remember his commercials from 10 years ago. Him, in a big old ten gallon hat, with them twinkling blue eyes and dimples so deep, you want to eat guacamole out of them. Daddy used to say, Kitten, you are the prettiest little thing on the planet. Whenever he said that, I felt *my* dimples flex, involuntarily. I noticed Mama would flinch a bit, a little tremor in her fierce blonde pageboy, her ever ready smile just the teensiest bit tighter.

Mama was a pretty woman. She started out as Ascension Aguilar, the prettiest girl in San Elizario, (just outside of El Paso) and wound up as Ashley Barrington of the Brookhaven Country Club. I always felt there was a fundamental sadness in her, and I must admit, an unpleasantness that would surface when she had a few too many Manhattans. But I'm not here to talk about her. Let her do her own show. Mama Takes Manhattan.

Yep, I'm from Texas. It's a big state filled with pretty women. Not carelessly, carefree pretty women, but hardcore, coiffed to the hilt, don't-spare-the-highlights, full-battle makeup, plastic-surgeon-on-speed-dial, pretty till-the-day-I-die women. Why just look at our former First Lady, Ms. Laura Bush, that pretty little thing, bless her heart. Every time I saw that dear, sweet creature on television I thanked whatever reserves of nerve brought me to New York. All the energy it takes to maintain that little smile all goddamn day long when you know that precious angel is dying to smoke her way through a pack of Chesterfields and suck down some nail polish remover.

Back home I was Little Miss Theater. I had the leads in all the school productions and then in community theater. I could sing, dance and act. Well I thought I could act then, anyway. One season I played Maria in The Sound Of Music and Maria in West Side Story. Once my family was resigned to my

showbiz aspirations they hoped I would follow the path of that other Texas beauty, Ms. Farrah Fawcett and go to Hollywood to become movie star. Oh, Farrah, bless her heart. *(She does the famous Charlie's Angle pose, holding an imaginary gun.)* But I always had my eye on New York City. I steeped myself in movies set in New York, especially Woody Allen movies. All those smart, edgy people, talking up a storm, taking their emotional temperatures every second of every day in glorious, art-filled apartments with Central Park right outside their windows. I have always had a deep affinity for Marilyn Monroe and even Marilyn went to New York to sign up with The Actors Studio and learn how to act. That was my plan too. But now, let's talk about men. *(Pause. She points to a woman in the audience)* You first---Kidding! Me first. I've gotten used to a certain amount of attention from men. It started in kindergarten when Topher Treadwell kissed me in the playground. Back home there were plenty of good-looking, well-built, pleasant boys but they bored the panties off me. My fantasy man was a scrawny, sensitive New York intellectual, somebody like Woody, but younger and better looking. I wanted me a nice Jewish boy.

My sunny, Texas country-club childhood did not prepare me for life in New York City. I did love the hustle, energy, the noise, the nerve but I was not prepared for the action on the street, the lack of, well, manners, and what I did not expect was the male wolf packs a girl has to negotiate. It took me awhile to get used to honking horns and those obscene whistles and catcalls. Sometimes I can sail right past them but every so often they go right through me like hateful, poison-tipped arrows. I feel pinned to whatever brick wall I happen to be passing, stripped naked while time stands still in the middle of the great city, in the middle of the day. I devolve into every dumb chick that walked into the dark spooky old house at midnight on Friday the 13th, despite all the evidence, and came face to face with Jason, Freddy, Michael Myers and every other psycho the movies can crank out to off young women. In the middle of the day, in the middle of the great city. A little prayer pops into my head, a gift from my Baptist days.

Everything is beautiful

Everybody's wonderful

I'm very happy and so are you

Then traffic moves on, life goes on and I'm myself again.

But I figured it out.

I didn't get into The Actors Studio but I did find a good acting teacher. I temped at an event-planning company and caught the eye of the boss, Kristin, who hired me on full time. Now I'm her right-hand woman but she knows my acting career comes first so my schedule is flexible. This weekend you can see me as Olivia in *Twelfth Night* at The Inwood Merry Players, of which I am a charter member. *(She takes a bow and shows off her dress, does a twirl)* I love this dress. It's like slipping into a champagne glass full of cherry coke--with a shot of vodka. Sometimes on dreary winter days I wear it and dance around my apartment. When I wear it my hair automatically tosses itself, my eyes glitter, my lips moisten and I have the posture of Miss America. It's something like the dress Marilyn wears in *The Seven-Year Itch*, right?

I went to a loft party on a warm spring evening in this little number. I knew a lot of the women there but none of the men. When I arrived, it looked like a wake, boys on one side of the room, girls on the other facing the coffee table, where a casket could have been but chips and dip were instead. *(She walks to stage right)* Well, I went over to the girls' side and started talking to my good girlfriends or what I thought were my good girlfriends. Now some of them are pretty and some of them are not, but I don't ask my friends to be cover girls before they can know me. I like them for who they are. This being a New York party, a lot of the girls were wearing black, even in late spring. And I know some of my girlfriends have their issues, weight, skin, hair, men. "What an *interesting* outfit," Jessica said from deep inside her black jumpsuit. "How *brave* of you to wear something like *that*," Trudy said, in her black jeans and black pullover.

Time for a drink! The bar was on boys' side of the room. *(She walks to stage left)* I was checking out the available booze, in the dim light trying to tell the vodka from the gin. A good-looking boy stepped forward and said: can I help you find what you're looking for? In a half-hour I was talking to all the boys on our side of the room while my good girlfriends looked like a pile of used tires on the other side, bless their hearts. After a bumpy start, I wound up having a great time at that party and got some new gentleman callers. Oh well.

I think, in a very small way, a pretty girl in a pretty dress helps make the world a better place.

If you don't think so then why oh why are we still talking about Marilyn forty years after her passing? The camera lovingly followed her walk in *The Seven Year Itch*, in *Niagara*, in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and *Some Like It Hot*. She wasn't posing, flirting, being seductive; she was just walking, wrapped in her own nimbus of prettiness, trying to get from one place to another--in a tight dress.

Despite her inner demons, everything about her body radiates a sense of well being, a luxurious tickle and purr from deep within that makes everything she says and does seem pre-orgasmic. She's always halfway there before a man enters the picture! But I'm not Robert Osborne and this isn't Turner Classic Movies. When I'm feeling pretty I feel like I'm channeling Marilyn. I'm owning it, riding the wave, taking that walk in the tight dress, seeing where it takes me. It has next to nothing to do with other people and my effect on them; it's that tickle and purr I'm feeling. (*Imitating Monroe*)

"I learned to walk as a baby and I haven't had a lesson since." Marilyn was a hungry girl. That glow of hers was her hunger. She was so hungry and she didn't even know it. She's so hungry she's choking on it, her voice so soft and breathless. (*Imitating Monroe*) "No one ever told me I was pretty when I was a little girl. All little girls should be told they are pretty even if they are not," (*Sharply*) Me, I'm not all that hungry. I know who I am. I get what I want. I want to be a good actor. I want to do good work. When I get older I want to age gracefully and stop being the pretty girl and become the substantial woman. I love inhabiting Olivia. She's accomplished, deeply romantic, open-hearted and blazingly articulate. Some of the men in the cast are buzzing around me and one of them, the guy playing Malvolio, is dangerously attractive. Okay, he's not Jewish but I bet we could have a good time. His life seems very complicated and all I can smell is trouble. I don't want no trouble right now. I've been down that road but that's another story for another day. A rainy day. Focus, Kitten, focus. (*Pause*) While I have you, let me run this by you.. When you look a certain way you get the "you know who you look like?" routine. From the time I was ten on some dolt has hit me with that nerf ball. And it's never the same person. It's always whichever blonde happens to be in the public eye at the time. I'm in line at the bank, the supermarket, the corner deli. I see the look in someone's eye and instead of keeping this brilliant discovery to themselves, I know this putz is going to share his or her discovery of my remarkable resemblance to fill-in-blanks with me and everyone else within earshot. The

heady mix of our celebrity-obsessed culture and adult strength ADD and my day has a good chance at being ruined. A little throat clearing and here it comes, “You know who you look like? It’s been everybody from Heidi Klum to Reese Witherspoon to Sharon Stone to Cameron Diaz. Anybody with some shade of blonde, real or bottled in their hair. You know what I mean? Does it happen to you too? (*She picks someone from the audience, male or female*) Who do you get? (Fill in blank of celebrity mentioned by audience member) Matt Damon? Yeah, I can see that. But isn’t it insulting?--Okay, back to me.

The one nobody has ever mentioned is Marilyn. I could handle that, I guess. But I’ve invested a lot in being me and looking like me, so I don’t find these comparisons flattering at all. And--the first time someone says Tori Spelling, I start swinging!

So looks are relative. People assign them to you; people take them away from you. This I learned the hard way, in that story for another day I mentioned earlier. Well, here comes that rainy day.

When I was in college I got a chance to do some summer theater in Provincetown. To make ends meet, I worked a few nights a week at a popular Italian restaurant. There was roadwork on Commercial Street that summer and some of the guys came into the restaurant for dinner. Two of them wound up coming in pretty much every night. They were Italians from Boston and our place had good food. Now Italians were second on my list of exotic men I wanted to experience so I appreciated the opportunity. Frankie and Jimmy. Frank was 35; short, dark, bandy-legged with a silly little mustache and thinning black hair. He was married with two kids. Jimmy was 21, big and beefy, a body builder, dark haired and dark-eyed too with a sweet smile. He was a big puppy of a boy. I could tell he had a crush on me and was trying to get up the courage to ask me out. Now I had perfectly good boyfriend back home but I’m not opposed to a little adventure. Jimmy brought me flowers sometimes. Always asked me how my day was going but he never did really ask me out. Frank sat there and scoped me out, his eyes black and dead in his head. Sometimes he stroked his mustache. When he did that he looked like a panther scoping out a gazelle, calculating the right time to pounce.

He snorted at Jimmy's sweet talk and seemed to shake his head at everything I said. It spooked me. Those black eyes staring at me. I found myself adding silly little flourishes to everything I said, acting like the dumb chick in the haunted house. One night I said, "Today's special is Egg Pant Parmigiana". Egg-Fucking-Pant? Frank snorted. (She imitates Frank's Boston accent) "You drinking on the job, Kitten?" He never called me by name before and he went right for the special, "intimate" version. I was rattled. I was carrying 5 bowls of minestrone to a party, passed Frank's table. He gave me a look with some heat in it, raised one brow and stroked his mustache. I tripped on a snag in the carpet and everything went flying. Nobody got hurt but I sure felt stupid and my face was cherry red. With the help of the busboys and Jimmy I cleaned up the mess on my knees, my back to Frank. "They must feed you real good here. You're filling out. Bet you really like the Egg Pant." It was one of those poison-tipped arrows, zing! Right to the heart! The dumb chick walks into the haunted house at midnight on Friday the 13th And she's fat!

Fade out, fade in. Frank became my summer lover. Or my summer fuck. My summer object lesson in self-esteem. "Looks like you're getting a zit." "Your legs gave me a friction burn. Time to break out the Lady Gillette." "What color is your hair *supposed* to be?" And the weight ones always worked. "You're really packing those jeans, mama. I like my women plump." I don't know if I gained any weight or not but he sure made me feel fat. It made it all better/worse, sweeter/worse when he fucked me and I could feel how on fire he was, how hungry he was. He had me staked out where he could take big hungry bites whenever he got the urge. And I, straight A, Glee Club Kitty, signed up for it. (*Kitty takes off her blond wig. Her hair is dark and short. She wipes off her lipstick*)

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