

Out and Out Lies

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FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - MALL NEAR SMITHSONIAN MUSEUMS - DAY

Sunny early fall day. KITA BURKETT sits on a park bench, eating lunch and throwing a ball for her collie Rex. She is forty-four, strong facial bones, casual professional clothes.

Heading back to work, she puts Rex through agility moves, leaping a bench, weaving through posts. A souvenir vendor waves hello and splay his legs. Kita signals Rex and the dog darts between the vendor's legs.

A POLICEMAN stops her.

POLICEMAN

Ma'am, you can't let that dog run loose.

KITA

He's not loose. Rex, come!

(he comes)

Sit!

(he sits)

Shake the gentleman's hand!

The dog lifts his paw. In a reflex, the policeman takes the paw, then quickly drops it.

POLICEMAN

Never mind.

EXT. SMALL SIDE STREET WITH MUSEUM BUILDING - DAY

Kita and Rex approach an unobtrusive door with a sign, "Technology Archives." They go in.

INT. BASEMENT WORKROOM - DAY

A plain functional room jammed with cabinets, workbenches and antique machines, some in pieces on the benches.

As Kita comes in, her colleague PHIL turns from his computer. He watches her bend to touch noses with the dog.

PHIL

Kita, can I ask you something?

Purely research.

Rex lies down in the corner.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Do all women get so mushy about
their dogs?

KITA
(cheerfully)
I don't know. Do all men make
sweeping generalizations?

Their chuckle is cut short by the PHONE RINGING.

PHIL
(on phone)
Tech archives. This is Phil.

He signals to Kita.

PHIL (CONT'D)
She says she's Senator Burkett's
housekeeper. Is that...?

KITA
(with alarm)
Dad!

INT. KITA'S CAR - DAY

Kita drives fast, making phone calls. Rex is on the passenger
seat.

KITA
(into phone)
Hi, Mom? No, it's about Dad. His
kidneys have tanked. He's not...

Her voice chokes.

KITA (CONT'D)
I know, Mom. Thanks. You need a
ride? I could... Yeah, ok. Look, I
gotta call all the Mamas, but I'll
see you at Dad's. Love you.

She hangs up, punches another number.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Kita's car, a small sedan, passes other cars.

INT. CAR - DAY

Fragments of conversation, as Kita makes phone calls.

KITA

Hello, Mama Mona?... Yeah, Dad's
real bad...

New call.

KITA (CONT'D)

...is Anitra West available...? No,
just tell her Senator Burkett needs
to see her, urgently... No, he's
not one of the senators she's
lobbying. He's her ex-husband...

New call.

KITA (CONT'D)

...Mama Joyce, you are so sweet!
I'll see you up there...

New call.

KITA (CONT'D)

This is Kita Burkett, Candy's
sister. Is she...? Yes, I know she
doesn't talk to me but it's
urgent... The hairdresser? Could
you give me the number?

New call.

KITA (CONT'D)

...I need to speak to Candy Mosley.
It's urgent... Well, when she's not
under the dryer, could you tell her
that her father is dying?

She punches the phone off. She scowls at the road ahead,
tries to calm herself, then punches another number.

KITA (CONT'D)

This is Kita Burkett, Stan Mosley's
sister-in-law. It's very urgent...

(pause)

The subcommittee on revenue...?

(listens, seething)

Never mind, just do me a favor,
could you? Tell him that his father-
in-law, the man who got him that
precious seat in Congress, is
dying.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A car cuts into the lane in front of Kita. She brakes hard to avoid it.

INT. CAR - DAY

Still jangled, she makes one more call.

KITA

Hey, Linda. How are you doing?
How's Rachel...? That's good.

As she talks, she grows steadier.

KITA (CONT'D)

I thought you'd want to know, my
dad's real bad... Yeah, thanks. I
know he'd be glad to see you. He
tells me daily we were stupid to
break up. Not that he's the one to
talk...

She punches the phone off and sags wearily. Rex licks her hand and her eyes fill with tears.

EXT. SENATOR BURKETT'S ESTATE - DAY

Manicured grounds surround a mansion with pillared facade.

A red BMW screeches to a stop in the driveway. MONA jumps out and rushes to the door. She is in her fifties, flamboyant and gypsyish.

Two large golden retrievers bound up and jump on her, slobbering. Mona struggles to push them off.

MONA

My fellow spirits- I love your
energy, but...

A timid HOUSEMAID opens the door.

HOUSEMAID

May I help you?

MONA

(struggling with dogs)
Can you... communicate with
animals?

HOUSEMAID

I meant-- Are you...?

MONA

I'm Mona. The senator's third wife.
Is he...?

Another car pulls up and MAMA JOYCE gets out. She is sixty, plump and motherly.

The dogs rush to jump on her, pawing and slobbering. She pats them and tries to hug Mona at the same time.

MONA (CONT'D)

Darling Joyce, your aura is the color of a perfectly ripe cantaloupe. I trust that means you're well.

JOYCE

You know me... I trot along. But you're looking lovely. Not your aura. Just, you know... you.

A third car pulls in. Kita's mother ROSEMARY gets out. She is seventy, lean, vigorous and outdoorsy.

The dogs launch themselves full gallop in her direction. She barks a command.

ROSEMARY

Dogs! Sit!

The dogs skid to a halt and sit. She bends to pat them and they nose her face. When they start to jump again, she gives them a look and they sit.

Kita's car pulls up. She gets out and hugs Rosemary warmly.

KITA

Hi, Mom.

Hugs are exchanged all around.

KITA (CONT'D)

Mama Joyce... Mama Mona...

Mama Mona hangs a crystal and chain around Kita's neck.

MONA

For healing.

KITA

But Dad's the one...

MONA

Oh, I have one for him, too.

INT. SENATOR BURKETT'S BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE on a crystal resting between gaunt collarbones.

View widens to TENNISON BURKETT lying in bed, eyes closed, breathing labored. He is eighty-six, with eagle-like bone structure.

A circle of women keep fond vigil: Kita, her two ex-lovers, and Tennison's four ex-wives in descending decades of age. His current wife FELICITY, thirty-three, holds his hand.

Kita's sister CANDY and her husband STAN MOSLEY come in. Candy is forty, pretty and coiffed. Stan is fifty, sleek and stuffy.

KITA

Candy! You made it--

Her greeting is halted by an icy look. Stan puts a protective arm around Candy and they walk past Kita and her ex-lovers to greet Rosemary and the stepmothers.

Candy and Stan settle at the end of the circle, away from Kita. The vigil now feels stiff and solemn.

Tennison's eyes flicker open and travel the circle of women. Reaching Stan, they recoil and return to the women.

TENNISON

What a vision... of heavenly
splendor.

He gasps for breath.

FELICITY

Don't overdo, darling.

TENNISON

It's my last chance... to overdo...

His eyes fix on Kita.

TENNISON (CONT'D)

Come here, Tiger Kitten.

Felicity yields her place. Kita kisses him and they gaze at each other with powerful affection.

He makes a gesture of dismissal.

TENNISON (CONT'D)
Everybody else... out!

When he and Kita are alone, he labors to speak.

TENNISON (CONT'D)
Shoulda been you in Congress...
dammit... Stan won't ever be
worth... mind like a tollbooth,
counting quarters... and Candy...
love her to death, but...
(he grimaces)
You, though... you'd be whip by
now...

KITA
Dad, you know I'd rather chew glass
than have anything to do with
politics.

He smiles, weakly.

TENNISON
Such a waste... shoulda found
somebody... to be a front for
you...

KITA
Right. Like my girlfriend could
have run for Congress.

His laugh is overcome by coughing. She helps him take a
swallow of water.

TENNISON
You find yourself... someone...

KITA
I've had two someones. Nine years
each. I messed up both times.

TENNISON
Need more practice...

KITA
Fifth time's a charm?

TENNISON
You bet... practice til you drop...

KITA
It's too exhausting. I don't know
how you survived four breakups.

TENNISON
Got myself... four good friends...

KITA
I know. You'd have made a terrific
lesbian.

He guffaws and again is overcome by coughing. He pushes away
her offer of water.

TENNISON
Women... are a gift from god.

KITA
Yes, they are. I agree. But really,
Dad, you don't need to worry about
me. I'm happy right where I am.

TENNISON
Really?

KITA
Truly.

He peers at her dubiously.

TENNISON
No woman... and you're happy?

KITA
That's what I just said.

TENNISON
Cross your heart?

She crosses her heart. He closes his eyes, panting weakly.

Suddenly, he opens his eyes and with a convulsive effort,
heaves himself up off his pillows.

TENNISON (CONT'D)
Kita Burkett, you've done me proud!
You tell a lie even straighter than
your old man can!

He falls back dead.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A cavernous church is filled to overflowing. Organ plays.

Tennison's relatives, ex-wives, and their array of connections are in front pews, with Candy and her family sitting as far from Kita and her mother as they can.

Candy periodically scowls at the collection of ex's and tries to gather her two children closer. Stan sits rigidly upright, as if to fend off iniquity.

The organ stops. The MINISTER begins an extravagant eulogy.

MINISTER

We are gathered here to remember one of the truly great men of the last century. A fearless captain, steering his course straight and true...

The family react to the hyperbole with an array of emotions -amusement, scorn, irony, affection, sorrow.

MINISTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...a man who could rightly be called a genuine statesman and a north star of integrity. An ideal of loyalty, steadfastness and commitment to principle. A model of loving family life...

Jarred from her sorrow, Kita leans close to her mother's ear.

KITA

Are we at the right funeral?

INT. BURKETT MANSION - DAY

Large, elegant reception rooms are packed with people from the funeral, who circulate with hors d'oeuvres and drinks.

Kita stands in one corner, pinned by a stream of political connections who come to murmur platitudes. Fragments of her conversations mix with conversations around her.

CONNECTION 1

(to Kita)

I'm so sorry.

KITA

Thank you.

CONNECTION 2

(to Kita)

He was a true statesman.

KITA

Yes, I know, thank you.

BUSINESSMAN 1

(to Senator 1)

...Senator, have you met Winston Thorpe, the chairman of the board at...

CONNECTION 3

(to Kita)

Such a loss. After making him, they broke the mold.

CONGRESSMAN 1

(to colleague)

...Rasmussen's solid on the communications bill, but...

KITA

(to Connection 3)

That's very kind. Thank you.

SENATOR 2

(to Businessman 2)

...not letting a bunch of college kids stop us from going forward...

CONNECTION 4

(to Kita)

...such an inspiration...

SHARON GREENOUGH and her husband JEFFREY HOLT come into the room. Both are mid-thirties. Sharon is charismatic, a pro at working a crowd. Jeffrey is tall, good-looking, quietly forceful. As a couple, they look like models in a commercial.

Catching sight of them, Kita is momentarily distracted.

KITA

...yes, a great loss...

She drags her attention back to the person shaking her hand.

KITA (CONT'D)

...that is, yes, an inspiration...

Sharon and Jeffrey move through the crowd, smiling and shaking hands. Sharon's attention makes people glow, but she is always moving onward.

INT. NEXT ROOM - DAY

Sharon and Jeffrey move into an adjacent room, where Sharon shakes hands with Felicity.

SHARON

Hello, Mrs. Burkett, I'm Sharon Greenough. I never had the privilege of knowing your husband. He retired the year I was elected. But I want you to know, I consider him one of my heroes.

Felicity suddenly bursts into tears and hugs Sharon.

FELICITY

That is the sweetest thing anyone has said to me.

Nonplussed, Sharon lets her sob a moment, then delicately slides free.

SHARON

Have you met my husband, Jeffrey Holt?

JEFFREY

I'm very sorry about the senator.

FELICITY

Thank you.

JEFFREY

He was very... generous with his affections.

FELICITY

Oh, yes, wasn't he the most loving man...?

Sharon leaves them talking and slides away to work the room.

SHARON

Mrs. Waterford, hello. I love the brooch.

MRS. WATERFORD

You do? I found it in Italy.

SHARON

Italy! What wouldn't I give...

She slides onward.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Hello, Jerry, how are you?
(back towards Mrs.
Waterford)
It was so lovely to see you.
(to Jerry)
Have you been out on your boat?

JERRY
Not nearly enough.

SHARON
(smiling, sliding onward)
What's ever enough?

INT. FIRST ROOM - KITA - DAY

Kita looks frayed with effort.

CONNECTION 5
...such a great loss...

KITA
Yes, thank you.

INT. SECOND ROOM - SHARON - DAY

A colleague OTTO takes Sharon's elbow, pulls her aside.

OTTO
Listen, Sharon, Gordon asked me to
snag you. He wants to talk about
House 1070. Could you tell Ed?
(gestures)
There's a storeroom down that hall.
Say in twenty minutes?

INT. FIRST ROOM - KITA - DAY

Kita continues her responses, wearily.

CONNECTION 6
...a true statesman...

KITA
Yes, so I'm told. Thank you...

CONGRESSMAN 2
 (to Congressman 3)
 ...you need a dam, I need
 waterfront renewal, Quarry wants
 his tunnel...

CONNECTION 7
 (to Kita)
 ...they broke the mold...

KITA
 I know. Thank you.

As the connection moves away, she mutters to herself.

KITA (CONT'D)
 Smashed it into tiny little pieces.

CONGRESSMAN 3
 (to Congressman 2)
 ...and Durgin wants his soybean
 research. We'll work it out...
 (pausing to greet Kita)
 Miss Burkett, your father was a
 true statesman. After making him,
 they broke the mold.

Kita finally loses her grip.

KITA
 Did you even know my father?

CONGRESSMAN 3
 Not personally, of course, but by
 rep-

KITA
 Because if you had, you'd know that
 he was the most brazenly
 calculating horse-trader in
 Washington. He'd laugh out loud at
 anyone calling him a statesman.

She brushes past him and hurries out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Kita flees down the hall, seeking solitude. She glances in
 doorways, but everywhere she looks there are people.

She opens a door, catches a glimpse of copulating buttocks,
 shuts it again. She opens another door, sees a geeky aide
 busy on a laptop, shuts it again.

Finally she finds a storeroom with no people. She goes in, switches on a light and closes the door.

INT. STOREROOM - DAY

Room is stacked with miscellany: bar stools, folding chairs, a large wardrobe, golf and fishing gear. Shelves of linens line one wall.

Kita paces in agitation. She spots a child's chair in the back corner, behind the wardrobe. She sits, hunched to fit.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Sharon tries doorways, looking for Otto. She finds the buttocks and laptop, then finally the storeroom.

INT. STOREROOM - DAY

Kita hears the door open and stays still.

Sharon closes the door and perches on one of the bar stools.

One by one, her three colleagues, ED, GORDON and Otto, sneak into the storeroom. They pull chairs and bar stools into a huddle to plot strategy.

GORDON

OK, we've got the skill players on this bill. What we need are some defensive linemen.

ED

What about Twitchell? He's got the muscle-

OTTO

Uncomplicated by brains.

SHARON

He's got some tricky demographics back home--

ED

But if he does sign on, Corley and Furillo will come, too.

SHARON

So how do we get him?

GORDON
Don't suppose you'd be willing to
sleep with him?

Laughter.

SHARON
You've got nice pecs. Why don't you
give it a try?

More laughter.

GORDON
I'm not his type.

SHARON
He's not my type.

ED
Aw, come on. What about the good of
the country?

SHARON
(cheerfully)
Fuck you.

ED
Name the time and place. I'm there.

She makes a face at him, good-naturedly.

SHARON
The main thing is, we can't let
this leak until after the vote on
686.

Murmur of agreement.

Out of sight, Kita shakes her head. This is too familiar.

INT. STOREROOM - LATER - DAY

Ed and Gordon are gone. Otto opens the door a crack, peers
out, then ducks into the hallway.

Sharon sits perched on a barstool, thinking.

Kita thinks she's alone and stands up.

Sharon leaps from the stool. Her heel catches on a rung and
she staggers, knocking over a chair. Grabbing to save
herself, she pulls a pile of tablecloths down on top of her
as she hits the floor.