

THE KISS OF LIFE

BY

STUART HEIMDAL

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STUART HEIMDAL
INFO@STUARTHEIMDAL.COM
912-657-7043
110 BINNACLE COURT
SAVANNAH, GA 31410

FADE IN:

INT. REGGIE'S ROOM -- DAY

He's late again. REGGIE dresses quickly. Ties his beat up tennis shoes, puts on his tank top, jumps into his pants that are worn thin, a rope for a belt, and a ski beanie for a hat. He looks like a hobo. No shower again today. He's in a hurry.

INT. MORNING WOOD CAFETERIA -- DAY

LAWRENCE walks slowly with his cane and balances his breakfast tray while shuffling towards a round table in the middle of the cafeteria. He is dressed in a white shirt and tie but has an army field jacket on despite the heat. He is very tall and thin, but distinguished looking.

CHESTER sits at the table eating. Suit jacket, vest, and nice slacks. Freshly ironed look.

Reggie gets to the table. He and Chester talk quietly. Lawrence arrives finally.

LAWRENCE

What are you peons doing?

CHESTER_

Adjusting my dentures. You never get used to the taste of the glue. But at least I don't have a diaper rash like someone I know...

REGGIE

I hate wearing those things to bed! There's no way to keep things dry. It's like I'm wearing a heating pad and a garbage sack... But at least *something* is in bed with me.

CHESTER

Well, I can't stand to have *anything* in bed with me. It was hard enough getting used to my wife being in bed with me.

LAWRENCE

Good grief, soldiers! Can we please change the conversation?

While the men talk BELLE enters in the back of the room. She is a cafeteria worker. Big woman. She could be the bouncer at a rough bar. Belle approaches an older gentleman seated at another table.

BELLE

Why is it that you pigs can't keep
your crumbs on your plates?

Belle bends over and picks up crumbs from the floor. The old gentleman cowers away from her in fear.

Belle sees Reggie and the others looking at her and she stands up, then scowls at them. She storms over in their direction.

Lawrence and Chester quickly turn away from Belle. Lawrence grabs Reggie and pulls him into the conversation.

LAWRENCE

Hurry! Act like you're busy eating!

CHESTER

I think we'd better get a move on.
Let's get out of here!

Belle notices that the men aren't looking and catches a quick glimpse of her reflection in a napkin dispenser. She straightens her hair net carefully, adjusts her blouse, and proceeds to the men's table.

BELLE

Good morning gentlemen! I see you're anxious to be one of the first to partake of our wonderful breakfast this morning. It's a quarter past five. Starting to get up a little late, don't you think?

REGGIE

Good morning Belle! Wow! Do you look ravishing this morning!

BELLE

Oh shut up, and I'll bring you some orange juice!

Belle abruptly turns and lumbers towards the kitchen. She smiles to herself. He noticed! Reggie calls after her.

REGGIE

When are we running off together?
Remember what you promised me!

BELLE

Oh, why don't you grow up?

LAWRENCE_

Why don't you act like a gentleman and leave the poor woman alone?

CHESTER

I can't believe he's brave enough to even talk to her. I've seen her beat the life out of the garbage man. She scares me to death!

LAWRENCE

You should've seen her at the over forties dance. She almost broke Ernest Newsom's neck when he tried to get too close to her. Then again, Newsom never did make it to corporal either.

Reggie turns to Chester. He speaks loudly.

REGGIE

She's one hot kisser, Chester!

BELLE

Oh, not that again!

LAWRENCE

Give it a break, will you? She's not interested.

REGGIE

That isn't what she told me in the broom closet! She said that I make her weak in the knees.

CHESTER

That was probably from the smell of your after shave.

REGGIE

I don't wear after shave. Anyway, I told her about my son taking me on vacation with him and she got all excited and wanted to come with us!

LAWRENCE

You're the biggest liar I've ever met. She said no such thing.

REGGIE

She's not a bad lover either.

Chester nearly falls off his chair. Lawrence stands up quickly as if a superior officer just entered the room.

LAWRENCE

You have finally lost it! You had better be joking! What happened to your dignity, soldier?

CHESTER_

How can you stand to get that close to her?

REGGIE

Well... once you get past the smell of her arm pits, it's not that bad.

Chester starts to wretch involuntarily.

LAWRENCE

I refuse to believe it. You did not kiss that professional wrestler over there.

REGGIE

Did too! Used my tongue as well!

Chester starts to hyper-ventilate.

CHESTER

(Puffing)

Stop it... Stop it... I can't listen to this any more.

LAWRENCE

All right, Casanova! Prove it.

REGGIE

Prove what?

LAWRENCE

Get her over here. Let's ask the queen of the "Hell's Angels" all about your amazing kiss.

CHESTER

(Groaning)

With tongue and all?

LAWRENCE

With tongue and all.

REGGIE

Now wait a minute. Wait a minute. .
. uh . . . you can't embarrass her like that! That would ruin everything!

LAWRENCE

No, no, no. You're not getting off the hook that easy, lover boy. I'm calling your bluff right here and now. You've been bragging about your romance with her forever. I want proof. Now's your chance.

Reggie looks around as if deciding what to do.

REGGIE

How much cash do you have on you?

LAWRENCE

What does that have to do with anything?

CHESTER

Oh, you'll never get any money from him. The money in his wallet is safer than the gold in Fort Knox, and much less available to the general public.

REGGIE

I'll bet you ten dollars that I can get my beautiful Belle to kiss me right here in this cafeteria. In front of everybody.

Chester stands up quickly as if something's pinched him hard.

CHESTER

(Whispering seriously)

Now wait just a minute! You can't kiss her in here. Kissing in public is not allowed! Bad enough if your wife makes you do it behind closed doors, but never in public!

LAWRENCE

Not to worry. This civilian's never had ten dollars in his entire life. He can't afford to make this wager.

REGGIE

Well, if you're too sissy to put up a little cash . . .

LAWRENCE

Oh, I'm definitely not too sissy. In fact, I'll pay you ten dollars just for the sheer entertainment value! Now wait a minute... I know your sneaky little ways. You're not going to run up and sneak a little kiss on the cheek. No, no. She's got to kiss you. And on the lips too.

CHESTER

(Groaning)

With the tongue?

LAWRENCE

No, no, please. People are trying to eat their breakfast. Just a kiss on the lips will do.

REGGIE
 (Bragging)
 No problem.

Chester stands up and extends his hand to Reggie.

CHESTER
 You're a brave man, Reggie. It's been nice knowing you! I've never seen anyone do anything that stupid in my whole life. I know I owe you one for saving my life in the war and all, but I'm afraid I can't do anything to save you this time. After you're dead, I'll tell your family about it of course.

Lawrence stands up.

LAWRENCE
 Reminds me of Pearl Harbor for some reason. He'll probably get clobbered just as hard as we did that day.

CHESTER
 With *those* pants, he looks more like Davey Crockett and the Alamo.

LAWRENCE
 Affirmative. With similar results too... Well off you go, Romeo.

REGGIE
 No problem boys. Just watch the master.

Reggie gets up and scrambles over to the kitchen.

LAWRENCE
 What an idiot.

Reggie closes in on Belle. He leans in very close to her face and whispers.

REGGIE
 Listen, babe. Just give me a little kiss and I'll make it up to you later.

BELLE
 You must be joking! You're absolutely the last person on earth that I'd kiss!

Belle reaches over and grabs an empty cafeteria tray. She bashes Reggie on the head with it.

Reggie cowers back towards the others. Belle smiles to herself.

Reggie suddenly stops and turns back to Belle. He's had an idea.

REGGIE

Hey, love. It's like this... I'm trying to get into this club, ya see. I need you to kiss me, or my friends won't let me into the fraternity.

BELLE

Don't even think about it Reggie. I know what kind of club you want to belong to, and I'm having nothing to do with it.

Reggie quickly approaches Belle. He leans in quickly as if to steal a kiss on the lips. Belle reacts by stepping backward. Her hand instinctively jumps out and slaps Reggie on the cheek.

Reggie is shattered. His world has come to an end. He mopes back to the boys.

CHESTER

Didn't you say your boy was coming to visit today before work?

LAWRENCE

He called last night. Can't come. Some poor old begger had a heart attack last night, and Tom had to operate.

Reggie's eyes open wide. A light comes on.

Reggie stands up quickly and starts across the room towards Belle.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

What the devil does he think he's doing? His brains must have fallen out of those trousers!

Chester covers his eyes and turns away from the action.

CHESTER

I can't bear to watch it. Tell me when it's over.

Reggie almost reaches the kitchen when he suddenly starts to stumble as if he's about to faint. He grips his chest dramatically. He bangs into several chairs and one of the tables.

He does a complete pirouette and then falls backwards onto the floor. He lays on his back clutching his chest.

REGGIE

Oh, my chest! I don't think I can make it!

Belle turns around and stares at Reggie.

BELLE

What's the matter with him? He looks like he might be sick. Oh, I hope that it's nothing serious.

REGGIE

(Weakly)

Belle. . . Belle!

Lawrence and Chester come shuffling across and stand over Reggie. They're joined by Belle who kneels down over Reggie.

LAWRENCE

Hey now, that's cheating!

BELLE

What's wrong with you Reggie?

Belle kneels down close to Reggie's face.

BELLE (CONT'D)

I think he's trying to say something.

CHESTER

Oh, he's definitely making a statement.

LAWRENCE

He's got some nerve!

REGGIE

I need the kiss of life Belle! It's my heart! I . . . Can't . . . Make . . . It!

A large crowd of old people gathers around at the spectacle.

Belle looks up at the others for direction. She straightens her hair net.

CHESTER

(To Belle)

Well, go on then. Save him.

LAWRENCE

(To himself)

What an idiot.

Belle looks back at Reggie and leans in a little bit.

CHESTER

(To Lawrence)

Kiss your money good-bye.

BELLE

As long as everyone understands
that I'm only doing this to save
his life!

LAWRENCE

(To Chester)

I can't believe that someone would
actually sink to this level. This
is more disgusting than hugging a
dirty latrine right after you've
thrown up!

Belle starts mouth to mouth on Reggie. Reggie brings his right arm up and wraps it around Belle's head forcing her to keep her head in place and he kisses her wildly.

Belle struggles frantically to escape, but to no avail. Her arms flail wildly. As she struggles Belle tries to straighten her hair net. Reggie extends his left hand towards Lawrence as if expecting him to put the money in his hand.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

You know what?

Lawrence reaches into his back pocket and retrieves his wallet.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

I think he's earned it!

Lawrence stoops over to Reggie's outstretched hand and lays a ten dollar bill across it.

Belle finally breaks free, a little dazed. She smiles and then dives down onto Reggie's face for more, much to Reggie's surprise and delight. She kisses him passionately.

Chester starts the dry heaves. Lawrence smiles.

FADE TO BLACK: