

**QUIET STORM**

A Short One-Act Play  
by Ken Love

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## **CHARACTERS**

**BETHANY**

African American female. Early thirties.

**HARRIS**

African American Male. Mid-thirties.

## **THE PLACE**

A jazz nightclub, a bedroom, Central Park. All in Manhattan.

## **THE TIME**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century. Mid-Autumn.

NOTE: Each scene in the play has a title which is projected onto an US screen in white letters on a black field, then fades as the action begins.

“Quiet storm  
Blowin' through my life  
Through my life  
You're just like a quiet storm  
Blowin' through my life, through my life  
Through my life, through my life”

**Smokey Robinson**

*for Lovers*





**AFTER THE DANCE**

(Bethany and Harris are sitting at a table in a nightclub after closing. All is quiet)

BETHANY

I . . . What I meant was –

HARRIS

What?

BETHANY

No – wait a minute –

HARRIS

I'd hate to make you feel uncomfortable . . .

BETHANY

Trust me. It isn't . . .

HARRIS

What are scared of?

BETHANY

. . . I'm sorry – *what* . . . ?

HARRIS

Harris! The name's Harris, *Miss* Bethany.

BETHANY

No, I didn't –

HARRIS

Didn't what?

BETHANY

Alright.

HARRIS

Okay?

(Silence)

BETHANY

I like this place. Really . . .

HARRIS

Let me get you another –

BETHANY

. . . In spite of the fact . . .

HARRIS

Wine – I mean Chardonnay, or –

BETHANY

. . . I mean, in spite of – Oh, no. No, that's okay –

HARRIS

It's alright.

BETHANY

It's after closing.

HARRIS

And I own the place.

BETHANY

And I've had two already . . .

HARRIS

We got coffee.

BETHANY

Of course, you've got coffee – wait a minute . . .

HARRIS

What?

BETHANY

I'm so sorry, what was your –

HARRIS

HARRIS!!

BETHANY

Right! I knew that –



HARRIS

I know.

(She laughs)

I just love your laugh.

(She smiles)

And everything that comes with it.

BETHANY

I'm from Alabama.

(Silence)

A little town in Alabama. Down south.

HARRIS

I surmised that.

BETHANY

I'm just . . . Look, what I'm saying is –

HARRIS

What?

BETHANY

I want . . . I want you to know exactly what you might be getting into.

HARRIS

Why? Something wrong with small town Alabama folks?

(Silence)

Alright. If you think this is a bad idea –

BETHANY

No, listen . . . Harris . . . I – I like you. I mean . . . I didn't want to come here tonight. Nothing personal –

HARRIS

That's alright.

(He kisses her)

BETHANY

Oh, Harris.

HARRIS

I gotta nice view of Central Park from where I stay.

BETHANY

I didn't want to come here tonight.

HARRIS

Your girlfriend's gone.

BETHANY

I know.

(He touches her hand)

HARRIS

Want me to call you a cab?

BETHANY

Harris.

(He kisses her cheek)

I'm from down south.

HARRIS

And I'm from the big city. So at least one of us will know what we're doing.

(Another kiss)

That's supposed to be funny.

BETHANY

Sorry.

(Yet another kiss)

Back home I did have my share of boyfriends.

HARRIS

Then what are you scared of?

BETHANY

I – I don't know. I . . .

(Another kiss)

I swear . . . I did not want to come here tonight –

HARRIS

Please . . .

(He touches her face. Lights fade)

### **TOUCH ME IN THE MORNING**

(Early morning in Harris' bedroom. Lights rise as he rouses, then sits up in bed and observes Bethany gazing out the window in her underwear)

HARRIS

Want breakfast?

BETHANY

I'm alright.

HARRIS

You sure?

(Silence)

I got coffee.

BETHANY

I know.

(They laugh)

It looks so cold outside.

(He hums, sings softly – )

HARRIS

*Autumn in New York . . .*

BETHANY  
Look at the leaves.

HARRIS  
Yeah . . .

BETHANY  
Hmm.

HARRIS  
The bed is still warm, though.

BETHANY  
I need to go.

HARRIS  
It's Sunday.

BETHANY  
And I think . . .

HARRIS  
You're from down south –

BETHANY  
I didn't forget . . .

HARRIS  
And my name is –

BETHANY  
Harris!

(They laugh)

HARRIS  
Bed is getting cold.

BETHANY  
Already!

HARRIS  
How long you been up?

(Silence)

You ain't going nowhere.

BETHANY

Maybe . . .

HARRIS

I can make breakfast.

BETHANY

I don't know.

HARRIS

What?

BETHANY

I – I think I need to . . .

HARRIS

*You ain't goin' nowhere.*

(Silence)

BETHANY

Who the hell are you?

(He laughs)

*Who are you, Harris?*

HARRIS

Come over here and see.

BETHANY

I told you: I've got to go –

HARRIS

And I said –

BETHANY

I didn't hear that.

(Silence. They smile at one another)

HARRIS

How long you been up?

BETHANY  
Truth is . . . I can't recall . . .

(Silence)

I heard –

HARRIS  
Something woke you . . . ?

BETHANY  
Yes.

HARRIS  
Something . . .

BETHANY  
. . . I think . . .

HARRIS  
You don't have to go, do you?

BETHANY  
From back home . . .

HARRIS  
Back home?

BETHANY  
I think –

HARRIS  
Wait a minute –

BETHANY  
. . . a rooster crowed –

HARRIS  
Oh, bullshit!

(They laugh. Silence)

BETHANY  
A siren –

HARRIS  
Woke you up.

BETHANY  
Yes.

(He rises, approaches and embraces her from behind)

HARRIS  
It's Sunday. Early. And the beds still warm.

(Pause. Then they kiss. After a moment, he leads her back to bed. They lie down and cuddle beneath the covers)

BETHANY  
I didn't want to go anywhere last night. Least of all to a bar.

(He kisses her)

HARRIS  
My bar. My club.

BETHANY  
I practically grew up in a bar. My daddy's.

HARRIS  
So, what's the problem?

(He kisses her again. She reciprocates)

BETHANY  
Your bar. Your club.

HARRIS  
What's not to like?

BETHANY  
I didn't say – Wait! I didn't mean . . .

HARRIS  
Right! The kind of folks who own bars –

BETHANY  
No! No, listen . . .

HARRIS

It's alright. I'm used to it.

(She kisses him)

BETHANY

We've got plenty of –

HARRIS

Time? To get old? Sure, we do.

BETHANY

I like your club –

HARRIS

But?

BETHANY

It's – it's not for me.

HARRIS

You're from down south.

BETHANY

It's just . . . Listen, Harris . . . I like you –

HARRIS

And we done covered that.

BETHANY

I should go –

HARRIS

Please . . .

BETHANY

It's okay. I –

HARRIS

We haven't had breakfast yet.

BETHANY

But I'm alright. I mean . . . I need to go –



Please. HARRIS

Harris . . . BETHANY

*Please –* HARRIS

(He kisses her passionately. Silence)

BETHANY  
I didn't want to go out last night. Especially to some club.

(Silence)

What about me? HARRIS

I do like you, Harris. BETHANY

All I want – HARRIS

I know what you want. BETHANY

Are you sure? HARRIS

I think. BETHANY

(They kiss and embrace, gradually making their way back beneath the covers as lights fade)

### **AUTUMN LEAVES**

(Bethany and Harris are sitting on a park bench in Central Park)

I didn't expect you. HARRIS

BETHANY

I went out anyway . . .

HARRIS

Oh, yeah!

BETHANY

. . . I wasn't expecting anything . . .

HARRIS

But when the unexpected happened . . .

BETHANY

. . . I didn't want anything . . .

HARRIS

I don't like being caught off guard, but –

BETHANY

Here I am!

(They laugh)

What about you?

HARRIS

I try to live in a world that's real.

(Silence. They look at one another)

My club. My bar.

BETHANY

Where the unexpected happened.

HARRIS

Maybe.

BETHANY

No such thing as fate.

HARRIS

Maybe.

BETHANY  
What about love?

HARRIS  
I expect –

BETHANY  
Soon.

HARRIS  
Maybe.

BETHANY  
I expect it . . .

HARRIS  
But what do you want?

BETHANY  
I could wait . . .

HARRIS  
What do you need?

BETHANY  
I guess . . .

HARRIS  
Are you sure?

BETHANY  
Harris . . . I like you –

HARRIS  
Expect it! Expect everything!

(They kiss, then stop abruptly. Something has caught  
Harris' eye)

On the other hand –

BETHANY  
Let them look!

(They laugh. Silence. Then Harris hums, sings –)

HARRIS

*Autumn in New York . . .*

BETHANY

Look at the leaves.

HARRIS

Hmm . . .

(Silence. They move closer to one another)

I got into jazz while in the Army. I dug the sound.

BETHANY

You needed that sound.

HARRIS

Everyday! All the time!

BETHANY

Hence that club.

HARRIS

Amen!

(Silence)

BETHANY

I was practically raised in my daddy's bar.

HARRIS

Your daddy . . .

BETHANY

I love him . . .

HARRIS

Your daddy –

BETHANY

I did not want to go out last night. Least of all to a bar.

HARRIS

You found me, though.

BETHANY

Daddy was good to me.

HARRIS

But you couldn't take the life.

BETHANY

I fell in love for the first time –

HARRIS

In your daddy's bar?

BETHANY

I didn't expect it.

HARRIS

But –

(Silence. She looks at him)

BETHANY

I like you, Harris. I like your club . . .

HARRIS

But . . .

BETHANY

It's not for me.

HARRIS

Maybe.

BETHANY

Listen –

HARRIS

Please!

(He kisses her. She reciprocates)

BETHANY

I can be honest with you.

HARRIS

Be yourself.

(She laughs. Harris does not)

*Expect me. Expect you.*

BETHANY

You're serious.

(Face to face, they look at and into one another. Silence.  
Lights fade)

### **BLACK COFFEE**

(Lights rise on Harris standing before his bedroom  
window in his robe, sipping black coffee)

HARRIS

She wasn't looking for anybody . . . She didn't want to go anywhere that night.  
Especially to some damn club.

(Lights rise on Bethany sitting on a chair in US limbo,  
occasionally sipping black coffee)

BETHANY

I was practically raised in a bar . . .

HARRIS

My bar! My club!

BETHANY

. . . My daddy's.

HARRIS

A woman.

BETHANY

A man I loved . . .

HARRIS

Unexpected.

BETHANY

. . . I wasn't expecting love . . .

HARRIS

But –

BETHANY

But . . . I found it that night . . . in my daddy's bar.

HARRIS

She said she worked in her daddy's bar.

BETHANY

He taught me to wait tables and tend bar. And I was good, to be as young as I was.

HARRIS

A young girl in a bar.

BETHANY

I'd come to find love . . .

HARRIS

What else?

BETHANY

. . . from a guitar player singing with the band.

HARRIS

She'd come to hate that life . . .

BETHANY

I fell in love. And played the fool.

HARRIS

She wasn't planning on going anywhere that night.

BETHANY

No more.

HARRIS

What was she running from?

BETHANY

I won't live with foolishness anymore.

HARRIS

Her heart . . .

BETHANY  
Or hurt.

HARRIS  
. . . her heart . . .

BETHANY  
I damn near got married in my daddy's bar.  
(She laughs bitterly)

HARRIS  
. . . What does it say?

BETHANY  
Who are you, Harris?

HARRIS  
I'm here!

BETHANY  
I'd hope to have left my heart in Alabama . . . along with the hurt.

HARRIS  
I can be hurt, too.

BETHANY  
Harris . . .

HARRIS  
I know what pain is.

BETHANY  
. . . *Who are you?*

HARRIS  
I know it's a little early in the game, but –

BETHANY  
Does he know what he's getting himself into?

HARRIS  
As long as I've been around . . .



BETHANY

Does he even know himself?

HARRIS

. . . You'd think a man would know better.

(He laughs bitterly)

BETHANY

In fact, who – WHO in the world has the wherewithal to know themselves?

(She and Harris share in the bitter laughter, then silence)

None of us . . .

HARRIS

None of us . . .

BETHANY

What do we know?

HARRIS

Not a damn thing.

(Harris stares at the coffee in the cup, pours it out, then gets a bottle of Scotch and pours himself a glass, then drinks)

*I want this woman.*

BETHANY

What does he want?

HARRIS

My club! My bar! *A woman!*

BETHANY

Whatever it is . . .

HARRIS

I'll show her! I'll give . . . to her.

(He drinks down the Scotch)

BETHANY

I hope he knows what he's asking for.

(Fade on Bethany. Harris pours another drink)

HARRIS

You didn't want to go anywhere that night. Least of all to some damn club.

(He raises the glass in a toast)

That's alright. I'm here. *I'm here.*

(He gulps the drink down. Black out)

### **WHAT DOES IT TAKE**

(Lights rise in Harris' apartment. He and Bethany are standing at opposite sides of the bed, facing each other)

HARRIS

You see me.

BETHANY

But who are you?

HARRIS

It's still early in the game.

BETHANY

I hate to play. Now stop calling it a –

HARRIS

I know what I want.

BETHANY

But –

HARRIS

We'll come to that.

BETHANY

You make it sound like reading a book.

HARRIS

Meaning you can't just run to the next chapter.

BETHANY

This ain't no game.

HARRIS

I know what I'm doing.

(Bethany laughs)

You're from Alabama.

BETHANY

And it's cold up here.

HARRIS

Still "Autumn –

BETHANY

... in New York".

HARRIS

But –

BETHANY

I swear, I did not want to go anywhere that night.

HARRIS

But you and your girlfriend wound up –

BETHANY

She asks about you.

HARRIS

... in my bar. My club.

BETHANY

And your name is –

HARRIS

What do you want?

BETHANY

I'm . . .

Still not sure?  
HARRIS

Thanks to you –  
BETHANY

What?  
HARRIS

I still like you –  
BETHANY

What's my name?  
HARRIS

(Silence)  
Say it. *SAY IT!*

(Silence. She steps to his side of the bed)

You know who I am, right?

I want to know.  
BETHANY

And to read that book, you've got to –  
HARRIS

One page, one chapter at a time.  
BETHANY

Which might take –  
HARRIS

*Who are you?*  
BETHANY

(He kisses her)  
Okay.

Get it?  
HARRIS

(She nods)

If you hadn't gone anywhere that night –

(She silences him with a kiss)

Okay.

BETHANY

(Lights fade as he slowly, sensuously, starts undressing her)

**NEVER, NEVER GONNA GIVE YOU UP**

(Lights rise back in Central Park. Bethany and Harris are standing beneath an umbrella, which Harris is holding. A light rain is heard)

I . . .

HARRIS

. . . I slept well.

BETHANY

Yeah.

HARRIS

(Silence)

No . . . I'm sorry –

BETHANY

Nothing you did –

HARRIS

What's wrong?

BETHANY

I . . .

HARRIS

. . . didn't sleep?

BETHANY

HARRIS

*I want this woman.*

BETHANY

Is there something you need to tell me . . . ?

HARRIS

I still want this woman . . .

BETHANY

. . . *But?*

HARRIS

You slept –

BETHANY

Not you, though.

HARRIS

You slept . . .

(She approaches and embraces him)

BETHANY

Talk to me.

HARRIS

I still want you.

BETHANY

*But?*

HARRIS

Nothing. Maybe . . .

BETHANY

Yes?

HARRIS

Maybe . . .

BETHANY

You can tell me.

HARRIS

I know.

BETHANY

It's alright.

HARRIS

I couldn't . . . I could not bring myself to –

BETHANY

You couldn't sleep. But . . . you held me.

HARRIS

I still want this woman.

BETHANY

*You held me!*

HARRIS

You did not want to go anywhere that night.

BETHANY

I slept in your arms last night.

HARRIS

Least of all to some damn club.

BETHANY

In spite of what was troubling you.

HARRIS

The unexpected happened.

BETHANY

Talk to me, Harris.

HARRIS

I . . . I couldn't sleep –

BETHANY

Turn the page –

HARRIS

I – I . . .

BETHANY  
Take your time. Turn the page.

HARRIS  
If I could –

BETHANY  
You can, baby!

HARRIS  
I'm here!

BETHANY  
And I'm sure now.

HARRIS  
I want this woman.

BETHANY  
I did not want to go out that night.

HARRIS  
But the unexpected –

BETHANY  
Always happens.

HARRIS  
*What's my name?*

BETHANY  
I'm not going anywhere.

HARRIS  
Then what's my name? Say it . . . SAY IT!!!!

(Silence. She kisses him slowly. He responds. Then,  
slowly, they break the kiss)

BETHANY  
I love the view of Central Park from your apartment.

HARRIS  
And I love your laugh.



BETHANY  
And everything that comes with it?

HARRIS  
Still.

BETHANY  
I'm from down south.

(He kisses her)

HARRIS  
*And my name is –*

BETHANY  
Harris.

(They embrace. Harris looks up and closes the umbrella – the rain has stopped. They begin walking through the park, hand in hand)

(Lights fade. End of play)