

Heart for Hire

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Est. Running Time: 20mins.

Characters:

ELISE Twenty to thirty years old.

CONNOR Twenty to thirty years old.

MELISSA Any age. As foul as possible.

Setting:

Modern day, a park bench.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

A woman sits alone on a park bench, reading. She is dressed somewhat promiscuously, a leather jacket open over a button-down buttoned-down just one button too far, revealing a flattering lace brassiere. 2-inch character heels and a mid-thigh skirt with tights. Note: Nothing about her is cheap. She looks great.

CONNOR enters. He does not present well, but has a great deal of boyishness to him. He looks like he needs a hug. He hesitates when he sees the woman seated and watches her for a moment. Then he takes out his phone and looks at it, then back at her, then back at it, and back at her. He squints, trying to recognize her. He exits. He enters. He stops. He exits. He enters and at a full sprint plants himself on the bench next to her. She jumps.

CONNOR: This seat taken? *(He laughs awkwardly and in realizing what he has done, laughs a little more.)*

ELISE shakes her head and turns back to her book, maybe shifting uncomfortably.

CONNOR: Right. Good. Okay!

ELISE offers a weak smile.

CONNOR: Yeah!

ELISE looks up, confused.

ELISE: Um...yeah?

CONNOR: Yep! Yes indeed!

ELISE: Um...sorry?

CONNOR: *(Nodding pointedly, assuring her of something.)* I'm here. It's me!

ELISE: *(Nodding, confused.)* Erm yes.....sorry do I-?

CONNOR: Know me? Oh, no. No, no.

ELISE: *(Moving to stand.)* Right....

CONNOR: I mean- sorry, I've never.... I mean- not yet.

ELISE: Not yet?

CONNOR: You don't know me yet. *(Pause as he thinks about how to proceed.)* But you want to. If you know what I mean.

ELISE: *(Disgusted, moving to stand again.)* I think I do-

CONNOR: Oh! Oh no! I mean- I'm sorry, I thought you would be a little more in the loop. I'm sorry, I'm sure I'm doing something wrong.

ELISE: *(Hesitating, she is nice and he is trying so hard...but at what?)* I- um you're not doing anything wrong. That's okay. *(She sits, carefully far.)*

CONNOR: *(Distressed and oh, so nervous.)* Okay. *(Pause.)* Well I think I am, because- I just haven't done this before.

ELISE: Well....that's okay. Um. Everyone has to have a first time. *(She looks around, referring to the park.)*

CONNOR: *(Still distressed at his fumbling, but getting more comfortable.)* Is it like this for everyone? Their first time?

ELISE: *(Uncomfortable, but wishing to do the right thing.)* Well yeah, I guess so. I... I mean, I don't remember my first time //at the park, but outings can be hard for everyone....

CONNOR: Yeah. Yeah!

ELISE: *(Laughs a little.)* Yeah.

CONNOR: Wow. *(Pause.)* You're.....you know, you're different. From like in the movies.

ELISE: I...yeah. I guess.

CONNOR: Like, you're nice. And you seem really smart. You're so....clean.

ELISE: Um. Yes. Yes, I am clean.

CONNOR: And I like that you aren't wearing any furs. That always seemed over-the-top. Like what a waste of hard-earned money, ya know?

ELISE: Yeah-

CONNOR: Like you work so hard, serving 'the man' every day and night for what? Furs? I wondered about that. But I guess that's old fashioned.

ELISE: Um. Well..probably. I mean, I don't have any furs. Do you- I guess you don't.

CONNOR: What?

ELISE: Sorry I- I was going to ask if you liked furs. But then I realized // that you don't.

CONNOR: No. I don't like furs. *(Realizing he may have broken some unspoken boundary.)* BUT, I wouldn't judge you for having furs, I'm not like that, I'm not picky // at this point I realize I'm getting what I'm paying for-

ELISE: No, no! I don't mind, I don't like them either, I mean, like you said, I'm not wearing any-

CONNOR: Right. *(Long pause.)* Well. I guess I'll start.

Quickly, he throws himself at ELISE, grabbing her face between his hands and kisses her firmly. ELISE struggles and throws her hands up, punching his back with one hand reaching in her pocket for a small tube of mace which she then sprays directly at both of their faces, causing them to throw themselves from each other, each howling and clutching their eyes.

After some time of howling, and crying, and rolling in pain, ELISE pulls herself back up onto the bench they had shared. She is still in a great deal of pain and holds her hands over her eyes. CONNOR continues to moan on the floor.

ELISE: I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

CONNOR: This isn't the experience that was described....

ELISE: I mean- I'm NOT sorry!

CONNOR: I knew women could be unpredictable....

ELISE: Why did you DO that!?

CONNOR: But that's why I paid for a kind of assurance-

ELISE: What are you talking about?! // Why did you DO that!?

CONNOR: I mean, talk about unprofessional!

ELISE: Unprofessional?? // What!?

CONNOR: Out of all the times, out of all the people....

ELISE: God! Oh my god, I mean, Jesus Christ!

CONNOR: The one woman I pay to kiss me is the one that rejects me! Can you // believe that?

ELISE: What!? I never-!

CONNOR: *(sitting up)* Oh my god. Are you serious?

ELISE: Paid to kiss you!? Are you out of your mind?

CONNOR: *(standing to accuse her)* Yeah, and more than enough not to be treated like that! In my whole life I've never been rejected // so violently!

ELISE: Stop! Stop, stop, stop- you paid me? // You must be confused-

CONNOR: Oh my god! You're going to cheat me? Are you serious? This is unbelievable-

ELISE: *(Standing)* Hey! *(Pausing to gather herself and clutch her eyes again.)* Hey. You never paid me. You have me confused. Is that what you were talking about with the furs?

CONNOR: I did! I did! Two hundred dollars! Through the- *(Taking out his phone to show her.)* through the app.

ELISE: And the being clean?

CONNOR: *(Looking at his phone.)* Huh?

ELISE: You were all impressed that I was so...clean?

CONNOR: *(Looking at his phone and then up at her for a moment to reply.)* Oh. Sorry. Oh yeah. Clean.

ELISE: *(Exasperated.)* Hey!

CONNOR: *(jumping and looking at her)* Hey! What? What is it?

ELISE: Are you listening to me?

CONNOR: Yeah! Sorry- right, you're clean. That's....nice. Good for you.

ELISE: Oh my god.....

CONNOR: But you still didn't kiss me.

ELISE: Are you kidding-

CONNOR: I just paid good money for an experience and that didn't count as a kiss frankly, so I'm going to need that back and I'll just take my business elsewhere-

ELISE: Great! I think you should! Wait-

CONNOR: What?

ELISE: You paid someone two-hundred dollars to sleep with you?

CONNOR: No, no, nothing like that.

ELISE: Then what?

CONNOR: To kiss me. I just wanted you to kiss me.

ELISE: You paid someone two-hundred dollars to kiss you?

CONNOR: Yeah, okay we're clear on that. (*Embarrassed pause.*) So, that's not you- huh?

ELISE: Erm, no.

CONNOR: Huh. Well that's kind of.....yeah.

ELISE: Yeah.

CONNOR: Yeah. Well.....I'm sorry for that.

ELISE: Mhm.

CONNOR: That whole- kissing you unexpectedly, without consent or any particular signs you might want to be kissed. I read a lot of fiction with female protagonists and I know that being friendly with someone isn't one of the signs.

ELISE: Fiction with female protagonists?

CONNOR: Right.

ELISE: Uhm. Cool.....why?

CONNOR: Good experience. Shows me how the other side lives.

ELISE: How the other side-?

CONNOR: It's part of the 'Raising Young Feminists' Handbook.

ELISE: There's a handbook-?

CONNOR: It gives you great information on 'How to Be an Ally in a World of Apes'.

ELISE: (*Laughing.*) 'A World of Apes'?

CONNOR: You know, men who act like animals.

ELISE: (*Laughing harder.*) Yeah, yeah- I get it.

CONNOR: What?

ELISE: Sounds amazing.

CONNOR: It's very well written!

ELISE: *(Still laughing.)*

CONNOR: Whaaat?

ELISE: It's just that- *(She breaks off into laughter.)* I can't believe I just got assaulted // by someone who's training to be a feminist ally.

CONNOR: Assaulted!

ELISE: *(Laughing hysterically and then stopping to cover her eyes again.)* Yeah! Assaulted! YOU assaulted me! Fuck!

CONNOR: What?

ELISE: My eyes hurt like hell.

CONNOR: Oh. Sorry.

ELISE: Ow. Don't your eyes hurt?

CONNOR: *(Discovering.)* No, not really.

ELISE: What!?

CONNOR: Yeah, actually they feel fine. A little watery maybe.

ELISE: Are you KIDDING me?

CONNOR: I eat a lot of carrots.

ELISE: Excuse me?

CONNOR: I have very strong eyes. Sturdy.

ELISE: Oh my god....

CONNOR: In fact, I feel up to assaulting you again if you don't mind-

ELISE: I DO mind, thank you.

CONNOR: *(Laughing.)* Sorry.

ELISE: You're laughing at me right now!

CONNOR: Well it's kinda funny.

ELISE: It is not!

CONNOR: Just the fact that you, in trying to defend yourself from a feminist-in-training, sprayed yourself in the face more than me, the offender.

ELISE: *(Annoyed and wincing in pain.)* Yes, I get it.

CONNOR laughs.

ELISE: Shut up! *(He doesn't.)* You really think me being in pain is funny!?

CONNOR: *(Laughing.)* No, no, not that part. Just the irony, and the tears, and the you-being-mad-at-me stuff. *(She shoots him a look.)* A little. A little funny. Sorry, I must be nervous.

ELISE: You don't *seem* nervous...

CONNOR: That can't be true.

ELISE: Why not?

CONNOR: I always seem nervous. 'My name is Arnold Wiggins and I am a very nervous person-'

ELISE: Huh?

CONNOR: It's a reference, sorry. I guess you didn't get it.

ELISE: I guess not.

CONNOR: You don't get out much do you?

ELISE: *(Rolls her eyes at him.)* So, Arnold?

CONNOR: What?

ELISE: Your name is Arnold? Usually people introduce themselves before they assault you.

CONNOR: Oh, no!

ELISE: Weird name.

CONNOR: Connor.

ELISE: Nice name.

CONNOR: Thanks.

ELISE: Elise.

CONNOR: Huh?

ELISE: Is me. My name. Hi! I'm Elise! *(They shake hands.)*

CONNOR: Nice to meet you. Sort of.

ELISE: Yeah. Sort of.

CONNOR: I should've asked you your name.

ELISE: Well, that would've been a more normal progression.

CONNOR: Well yeah, but it would've cleared that up. You're not Melissa.

ELISE: Oh. No.

CONNOR: Yeah.

ELISE: What does she look like?

CONNOR: Kinda like you.

ELISE: Can I see?

CONNOR: Really?

ELISE: Yeah, I want to see my whore doppelganger.

CONNOR: *(He laughs and takes out his phone.)* Okay. *(A moment. He shows her.)*

ELISE: *(Gasps)* That doesn't look like me!

CONNOR: Sure it does!

ELISE: She doesn't look anything like me!

CONNOR: Well maybe if you had less clothes on... *(She hits him.)*

MELISSA enters. She is a brunette with a great body and an ugly everything else. Everything about her is cheap. She speaks loudly into a cell phone as she crosses the stage- she does not notice them.

MELISSA: Fat fuck stood me up! Fucking loser didn't even show up for his kiss.

CONNOR and ELISE exchange a look.

MELISSA: What? *(Pause.)* No, I'm serious, I didn't tell you about this? *(Pause.)* His KISS!

CONNOR winces.

MELISSA: Yeah, that's it! *(Pause.)* Two-hundred dollars. *(Pause.)* I'm a good kisser! *(Pause.)* Crazy fuck said he wanted to 'connect'. Total weirdo.

An uncomfortable silence covers the stage as she exits. CONNOR stares at the floor.

ELISE: *(Trying to make a joke.)* She doesn't look very clean. *(Trying again.)* I think she might own furs.

CONNOR gives a weak smile and shuffles a little bit. They stand in silence. After what feels like forever he looks up at her. Suddenly, ELISE grabs his face in her hands and plants a firm kiss on his lips. A beat.

CONNOR: Have you heard of consent? *(ELISE laughs.)* You assaulted me! *(She laughs again. A beat.)* You didn't have to do that.

ELISE: I know.

CONNOR: You stole my first kiss for a second time!

ELISE: Your first kiss?

CONNOR: Well- second technically. But I'm not counting either of them.

At this point they've gradually moved closer and closer together. He faces her and she leans in and they share one real first kiss.

ELISE: Did that count?

CONNOR: Nope. Nope, that one also did not count, you'll have to try it again.

They share another, more tender, but short, kiss.

CONNOR: May I steal your first lunch?

ELISE: What?

CONNOR: May I steal your first lunch?

ELISE: What-?

CONNOR: I just- see I was trying to continue the thing, but it didn't really work, damn- uh, would you like to get something to eat? Now? For lunch?

ELISE: *(She gathers her things and readies herself to go.)* Typically I would recommend asking that stuff first.

CONNOR: Well I wasn't ready.

ELISE: Ready-?

CONNOR: I feel strongly about lunch. *(ELISE laughs.)* Lunch is a very special thing you only do with another truly hungry person.

ELISE: I'll keep that in mind.

They exit.

THE END