

Deceptive Ardor

By

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CHRISTOPHER POPE (19) sits alone, unaccompanied in his dirty Saturn XR Vue. The door pockets in his car are polluted with cigarette wrappers and old car fresheners; he throws the trash to the very back of the car.

Still high from the substance he attained from his friend, he looks at his eyes in the rearview mirror. They're beet red. He puts on some sunglasses from his center console.

Dressed in brown khaki shorts and a white t-shirt, he checks his clothing for any marks or scents. He reaches into the back seat of his car and pulls out a half-empty cologne bottle.

He sprays the cologne on his neck and puts a snapback on his head to hide his messy hair.

KIMBERLY DONAVON (19) approaches Chris's car from her front door. As she walks towards him, she peers inside his window to see him waving back at her.

She raises her hand for a brief moment to greet him back, before sliding her arm down. Her outfit consists of a blouse and a short skirt: she's dressed to impress.

She opens the car door to join Chris inside the vehicle.

CHRIS
Kimberly, hey.

KIMBERLY
(sniffing)
It reeks of weed in here.

CHRIS
It wasn't me. I just dropped my
friend off.

KIMBERLY
Mhm, okay.

Kimberly rolls down her side window, letting the smell escape.

CHRIS
Anyway, what's up?

KIMBERLY
Can we take a walk? I can't stand
this smell.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

Sure.

Chris and Kimberly both exit the car. Chris locks his car as they begin to wander down the sidewalk, side-by-side.

2

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

2

KIMBERLY

There's something that's been on my mind that I've been hiding from you.

Chris remains silent, awaiting Kimberly's long explanation. He starts to take short steps, trying not to stumble and show that he's high.

KIMBERLY

Since I've just graduated Art school, I have a choice. I can either go off and work for Mr. Boris at his art studio and become an intern, or I can further my education using the scholarship I received. Some place in New York looks the most promising.

CHRIS

You look great today, Kim.

KIMBERLY

Are you even listening to me?

CHRIS

Not really. I just don't know what you're trying to say.

KIMBERLY

You sure are stupid. I'm asking for your opinion.

CHRIS

Then why didn't you make that clear?

KIMBERLY

I thought I did?

CHRIS

Hardly.

(CONTINUED)

KIMBERLY

Will you stop being an asshole and decide on this with me? I'm this close to breaking up with you on how you've been acting towards me.

Chris reaches into his pocket and slips a cigarette in between his lips. He lights it, then inhales.

KIMBERLY

Great, now you pull this on me.

(pause)

Anyway, if I'm gonna do this, I wanna make sure it goes right. I don't want to make any mistakes; surely you can understand that.

CHRIS

If you really want my advice, Kimberly, then you've already made a mistake. By asking me. By asking anyone. How will you truly know what you want to do when you take my opinion and don't even decide for yourself?

KIMBERLY

But you're not deciding for me. I admire your input, that's why I'm asking you.

CHRIS

Well, you shouldn't. Do what you want, Kimberly. You can either go work for that bastard Mr. Boris and probably make nothing for a while, or you can go away to New York, by yourself, and bust your ass earning yet another degree, only to miss the internship.

KIMBERLY

Just give me an answer.

CHRIS

I can't. And if I could, I probably wouldn't. I don't want to in any way persuade you from doing what you really want.

Chris throws his cigarette down on the ground, crunching over it with the heel of his tennis shoe. Kimberly stops walking abruptly. Chris stops with her.

(CONTINUED)

KIMBERLY

When did you become so caught up in what's best for me? You've never given a damn about me.

CHRIS

That's not true, you know that. I've never stopped thinking about what's best for you.

KIMBERLY

Drop the compliments.

CHRIS

I'm serious. If you want to be happy, how in the hell are you going to do that when you don't even know what'll make you happy?

KIMBERLY

What if I told you that it's always been you.

CHRIS

What of me?

KIMBERLY

You've always claimed a part of me that no one ever will. You still do, and it feels like you have used me every way you can.

CHRIS

I don't know what to say other than I haven't.

KIMBERLY

You have.

CHRIS

Name an instance.

KIMBERLY

I don't have to. You know perfectly well what I'm talking about.

CHRIS

I don't.

KIMBERLY

Chris, don't be foolish.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS
Am I foolish?

KIMBERLY
To an extent, yes.

CHRIS
There's a thin line separating
foolishness from being sensible.

KIMBERLY
I'm not going to debate with you on
this. I am lost, confused rather. I
don't know what I want, and time
hasn't been on my side these past
few months.

CHRIS
Do you mind if we sit down? I'm
fatigued, to say the least.

3 EXT. PARK - DAY

3

Kim and Chris sit down on a bench nearby, they have arrived
at a small playground area for toddlers. They sit close by,
with Chris lighting another cigarette. Kim scoots a bit
further away from him.

CHRIS
3 years and today was the day you
decided to develop a distaste for
my habit?

KIMBERLY
I distaste much more than your
filthy smoking habit, Chris.

CHRIS
Do you distaste me?

KIMBERLY
I never said that.

CHRIS
Surely you did.

KIMBERLY
Anyway, there's something else I've
been meaning to tell you.
(pause)
I slept with someone.

Chris freezes in horror, throwing his cigarette away in
frustration.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS
How long ago?

KIMBERLY
I don't remember exactly, like two weeks ago.

CHRIS
Oh, you don't remember? I bet you remember exactly how the sex was.

KIMBERLY
Don't put this on me.

CHRIS
I hardly see how this is my fault.

KIMBERLY
Because you pushed me to do it, you have been so mean to me lately, I needed to feel something besides growing pains.

CHRIS
What's his name?

KIMBERLY
I'm not giving you that information.

CHRIS
Then you don't deserve to be with me if you're going to keep these kinds of things from me. What do you expect of me to do in a situation like this?

KIMBERLY
Listen.

CHRIS
I'm done listening. You listen to me.

(pause)
Never once have I kept anything from you. I always am as straightforward as I can be with you. You always blame me for your mistakes, and that can never be justified. I can't be forced to take the responsibility for things that you do.

Kimberly remains silent, intently listening to Chris.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

I'm sorry for how stressed you've been, believe me, I am. But that does not call for cheating on me. How you make me feel says a lot about who you really are.

KIMBERLY

I'm sorry, I was scared.

CHRIS

Of?

KIMBERLY

Losing you.

CHRIS

You must be terrified now, because as far as I'm concerned, you already have lost me.

KIMBERLY

It's crazy how I can have all of this inside of me, and to you, it's just words.

CHRIS

Because there's nothing but words in you. No love, no compassion for me anymore. There's nothing real inside you anymore.

Kimberly stands up, tearing up. She sniffs and wipes her eyes before they overflow with tears. She begins to walk back towards her house just a few blocks away, by herself.

Chris sits alone on the park bench.

CHRIS

You always were the first-morning thought, and the last evening sigh, and every goddamn thing in between.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END.