

SHE WILL HOLD ME

Christine Benvenuto

CHARACTERS

ALAN, male professor, 40, any race/ethnicity

CODY, female college student, 18, any race/ethnicity

AMBER, female college student, 18, any race/ethnicity

TIME

The present

SCENE

A professor's office on a college campus

SYNOPSIS

Professor ALAN and student Cody meet during his usual office hour, but their conversation isn't a typical teacher-student exchange.

CODY enters, ALAN is seated behind desk

ALAN

Cody. What a pleasant surprise. You don't usually come during office hours.

CODY

Uh huh.

ALAN

Is anyone else waiting out there?

CODY

Nope.

ALAN

Well, sit down, sit down. (*conspiratorial*) I guess we'd better leave the door open. Since it is my office hour.

CODY

It is open. (*sits across desk from him*)

ALAN

Right. (*laughs*) So, did you - anything in particular bring you in today?

CODY

I could have come to talk about the reading assignments. Or my paper. That's what students usually do during office hours.

ALAN

smiles, as if she's teasing; then hesitant

What's on your mind, kid?

CODY

I'm pregnant.

ALAN

laughs; then looking at her, stops

You're not joking.

CODY *flat*

I'm not joking.

ALAN

Close the door.

CODY

That could be my paper topic. An exegesis of unplanned pregnancy in -

ALAN

Close the door. (*CODY gets up, closes door, returns to seat*) Well, well, well. (*picks up pen, rapidly taps desk with it*) How did this happen?

CODY

I'm surprised I need to explain that, Alan.

ALAN

You're on the pill.

CODY

No, I'm not.

ALAN

What! Of course you are. Didn't you say, pill, IUD - Oh my - You've got to be kidding me. I thought you were handling this.

CODY

You never asked.

ALAN

I never asked because I thought you were handling it. I always assume people have this covered -

CODY

People.

ALAN

You. I mean you. I treated you like a grown up. I assumed you had this covered! (*angry, sarcastic*) Obviously, I assumed too much.

CODY

I'd say so.

ALAN

You're eighteen -

CODY

You're forty.

ALAN

You're eighteen! You're a woman. You're not a - not a *child*.

CODY

That would be the alternative.

ALAN

What?

CODY

The alternative to woman. Child. Also little girl, baby -

ALAN

You've been sexually active for how long? Years, am I right? Years! What do you usually do?

CODY

Condoms.

ALAN

We used condoms.

CODY

Not all the time.

ALAN

I can't believe this. I didn't worry about condoms every time. I thought I didn't have to. I thought you -

CODY

You thought I was handling it. Yeah. You said.

ALAN

stares at her, throws himself back in his chair

You aren't usually like this.

CODY

You mean pregnant.

ALAN

Why didn't you tell me I needed to wear a condom every time?

CODY

Why did you say you had no sperm.

ALAN

I said low sperm. I never said no sperm. Low sperm count isn't no sperm count.

CODY

You said you couldn't make a woman pregnant.

ALAN

I said I couldn't make my wife pregnant.

CODY

Your wife's a woman.

ALAN

Of course my wife is a woman! (*steadies himself*) She's the only woman I've tried with. Deliberately tried to - I haven't been successful. Yet. I'm still - I'm still trying. (*leans toward her across desk, they stare at each other*) I'll help, of course. You know that. The procedure. I'll pay. I'll pay half.

CODY

Uh huh.

ALAN

How about what's-his-name? Your boyfriend. You've told him, I assume. What does he say?

CODY

He says he'll pay half. (*shrugs*) I guess the two of you are more alike than I realized.

ALAN

That's all? That's all he has to say about this situation?

CODY

That's all you have to say about it.

ALAN

I suppose he blames me for this. Because he always wore condoms.

CODY

Blame doesn't interest him. Anyway he figures with your sperm count - (*shrugs*).

ALAN

He knows about my sperm count? Jesus.

CODY

I guess Jesus knows too. I meant -

ALAN

I know who you meant!

CODY

You didn't say it was a secret.

ALAN

I can't believe he knows about *us*.

CODY

Us.

ALAN *impatient*

That we sleep together.

CODY

We don't sleep together.

ALAN *exasperated*

That we have sex!

CODY

He shouldn't know that we had sex.

Loud banging on door, ALAN jumps, CODY stays absolutely still, eyes on ALAN; ALAN starts to speak, door slams open

AMBER

loud, aggressive

Oh, howdy! I didn't know if anyone was home.

ALAN

Amber. What can I do for you?

AMBER

dropping heavy backpack to floor

It's your office hour. Says so right on the door. (*points*) Office hour. Open door hour. Anyone-needing-help-with-anything hour -

ALAN

Yes, I'm aware of what time it is, Amber. What is it you need?

AMBER

I need help with my paper, Professor. That's why students usually come here, isn't it?

ALAN

Okay, er, fine. I'm helping Cody right now. As you can see. I'll just finish up with Cody and then I'll be right with you.

CODY

eyes on ALAN

Hey, Amber.

AMBER

Hey.

ALAN

Alright, just take a seat outside, Amber.

AMBER

suspicious, looks from ALAN to CODY, whose eyes remain fixed on ALAN

What are you helping her with?

ALAN

Her paper. I'm helping Cody with her paper, Amber, just as you want me to help you with yours.

AMBER

Then where's her stuff? Her laptop? Her notebook? She doesn't have a paper. She doesn't even have a backpack.

ALAN

Amber. Cody doesn't need a backpack to discuss ideas.

AMBER

What ideas?

ALAN

What ideas? What ideas?

CODY

Alan (*Amber raises brows over use of his first name*) was just about to tell me why my boyfriend shouldn't know -

ALAN

jumps to his feet

Okay, that's it! Haha. (*nervous*) I can't deal with two of you at once -

AMBER

That's for sure, *Alan*. That - (*assumes archery stance with arms raised as though pointing arrow at ALAN's face*) - is right on target.

ALAN

Amber, please leave! I mean, please wait outside until I'm done with Cody.

AMBER

drops arms, stares at him

And when exactly are you going to be *done* with Cody? What time of day will it be when you are done with Cody, Professor?

ALAN

They stand staring at each other over CODY's head in silence before ALAN speaks
I'm not sure. Frankly it - it may be awhile.

AMBER *quietly*

Then I won't wait. I have class.

ALAN

Okay! Great! Thursday - come again Thursday. I'll help you then. (*turns away, rubbing back of his head*)

AMBER

picks up backpack

I'll do that. *(squeezes CODY's shoulder, CODY momentarily covers her hand with her own; she exits, leaving the door open)*

ALAN

calls after her

Close the - never mind. *(goes around desk to door, closes it, then retakes his seat; sighs, rubs his face)* That girl is really - She's in my other class, she's so - Well, never mind. It's inappropriate behavior to discuss one student with another.

CODY

That's inappropriate behavior with a student. *(they stare at each other)* You were about to tell me why my boyfriend shouldn't know we had sex.

ALAN

Jealousy! Jealousy for one thing, Cody. Jealousy among many other reasons, jealousy being just one of the many many reasons people don't tell their boyfriends when they're having sex with someone else.

CODY

You think he's jealous of you.

ALAN

No. *(shakes head)* No, I don't think he's jealous. Clearly, there's no reason in the world for him to be jealous. There's also such a thing as discretion. Not talking about - Never mind, too late to worry about that now. At least he isn't a student here. *(sits back in chair, laughs bitterly)* This is incredible. Here I've been knocking myself out trying to get my wife pregnant and you - *(waves hands)* Just like that.

CODY

Knocking.

ALAN

Unfortunate choice of word.

CODY

You don't know if it was you.

ALAN

If you and he were using condoms every time -

CODY

We used condoms. You have low sperm. Maybe a little of his healthy sperm got through the condom and met up with a little of your weak sperm and they worked together.

ALAN

Is that supposed to be a joke?

CODY

I'm not laughing.

ALAN

Well, I don't know. (*shakes head*) Maybe this is hopeful, anyway.

CODY

Hopeful. Explain hopeful, Alan.

ALAN

Well, I mean about my wife, my - I can father a child. I didn't know that. Look, I'm just trying to see the light at the end of the tunnel, the rainbow, the silver lining.

CODY

The tunnel. Describe the tunnel, Alan. The walls of the tunnel you're in. Describe the rainbow. Describe the silver lining.

ALAN *thinking*

Well, actually. I mean, actually, if you wanted - If you didn't - if you were -

CODY

If I didn't. If I was.

ALAN

What I mean is you - You, you have options. Of course.

CODY

I have options. Of course.

ALAN

I mean we, my wife and I, we've, we've, we've talked about, about options.

CODY

You and your wife have talked about my options.

ALAN

Not your options - haha. We didn't even know, that is - Our - our options. Adoption. Surrogacy. If what we're hoping for doesn't work out. If you - if you wanted to go with adoption instead - if you wanted to go that route, we could, I mean I could - I mean, I mean, just stay with me here a minute, let me think out loud.

CODY

You're thinking out loud.

ALAN

Yes, it's - I mean, of course, we wouldn't say it was mine -

CODY

Yours.

ALAN

To my wife. Of course, we don't know it is mine, it might be your boyfriend's. I'd tell my wife it was yours and his and we'd - adopt. (*waits for CODY to speak, goes on when she doesn't*) Just hear me out here, I mean, look, it isn't even really adoption, is it? I mean, it's not like I actually need to adopt my own -

CODY

No.

ALAN

Wait, just -

CODY

No.

ALAN

I mean I have some right -

CODY

No.

ALAN

Okay, not over your -

CODY

No.

ALAN

Stares at her in silence a minute

Okay. Okay, fine. (*sighs*) Should I be asking you if you want to have a child? If you want to have a child now, at eighteen, a college freshman? A single, teenage mother. You want me to engage you with those questions? Those fantasies? Is that what you want me to do?

CODY

No.

ALAN

Should I -

CODY

No.

ALAN

Do you want me -

CODY

No.

ALAN groans

Baby, look. I'm sorry for you, I'm sorry you have to go through this. You know that. You're upset right now. But I'm not to blame for this situation. You know I'm not to blame.

CODY

I'm upset. I seem upset to you. But you aren't to blame.

ALAN

You know I assumed you were -

CODY

Covering it. Yeah. You said.

ALAN

That's right. (*they sit in silence*) So. You'll have to make an appointment.

CODY

I have an appointment.

ALAN

Oh. Already have an appointment. That's good, that's good. Efficient. (*clears throat, forcing himself to say the words*) Would you - would you like me to come? To come with you when you go to the clinic?

CODY

No, thanks.

ALAN

relieved, also rejected

Okay. But - I mean, someone needs to go with you. To be with you, at the clinic. And getting home after - afterward. Someone needs to - to hold - to hold -

CODY

I'll be held.

ALAN

I was going to say, hold your hand. But I guess you mean - what's-his-name - your boyfriend - I guess he's going with you.

CODY

He isn't. He wants to. I said no.

ALAN

Well, but - if he doesn't come - I mean, someone has to. You shouldn't go alone.

CODY

after a silence

I won't be alone. Amber's coming with me.

ALAN *confused*

Amber? Amber who? (*frowns*) Which - You don't mean - (*gestures toward door*) You don't even know that girl! She's not even a friend of yours - (*becoming uncertain*) She isn't. She isn't like you at all. She isn't a friend of yours. Is she?

CODY

She's my best friend.

ALAN

Ah. Well. I didn't know that.

You didn't know that.

CODY

I guess there's a lot I didn't know.

ALAN

I guess there's a lot you didn't know.

CODY

END