

KING OF EIGHTS

Written by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (2M, 2W)

JOHNNY (40s), a low-budget film director

BOYD (about 20), an actor

ALLIE (about 30), an artist

Rae/Barb/Dispatcher/Emcee/Girl at Party/Voice/Hottub
Girl/Landlord/Librarian/Lorraine/Mail
Carrier/Mechanic/Midge/Midwife/Salesperson/"The Girl"
(various ages, all played by the same actor)

The house.

JOHNNY enters, standing outside, framing a shot with his hands.

JOHNNY

This is the shot: Interior night. A house in Forest Park, St. Louis.

ALLIE enters house, lugging in furniture.

ALLIE

A rug. A couch. Some chairs.

A painting of a house is lowered to eye level just behind the couch.

BOYD enters house.

BOYD

And a painting of a house.

ALLIE enters house, holding a baby.

ALLIE

Not a copy of this house, just one that reminds you of it.

BOYD

There's a couple inside.

ALLIE

New parents.

BOYD

(to ALLIE)

You and me.

JOHNNY

Exterior Night. A man pulls up in a newly-restored, vintage Vauxhall Viva. He carries a gun.

JOHNNY walks towards door of house, holding gun.

ALLIE

Stark contrasts. Blacks and whites. Lights and darks. The inside of the house is lit up bright. Outside, walking up the sidewalk, the man steps in and out of shadows.

JOHNNY
You may wonder how we could have
gotten to this point.

ALLIE
The two of us inside, oblivious.

BOYD
The man outside with the gun.

JOHNNY
But the more you think about it,
the more you realize it couldn't
have happened any other way. As if
it was fated to be.

JOHNNY kicks open the door.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Boyd-O!

JOHNNY raises gun.

ALLIE screams, shelters child in her arms.

BOYD races toward JOHNNY.

JOHNNY fires gun twice.

BOYD is hit. He staggers, slumps.

BOYD, ALLIE and JOHNNY freeze for a moment—BOYD slumped over
a chair; JOHNNY in black, gun lowered to his side; ALLIE with
baby, looking up with horror, shock and grief.

The twirling blues of a POLICE LIGHT cast the image in blue,
then shadow; blue then shadow.

JOHNNY, ALLIE, and BOYD get up.

BOYD
It started four years earlier.

Scene shifts to

A BAR ON CHICAGO'S NORTH SIDE

Enter RAY.

RAE

At the place where I was tending
bar.

BOYD, now in hoodie and jeans, walks across stage, puts a
coin in jukebox.

Music plays: "Across 110th Street," by Bobby Womack.

JOHNNY, in t-shirt and jeans, sits at bar nursing a drink.

RAE, behind bar, wipes out glasses—a slow night.

JOHNNY

(noting music, to RAE)
Bobby Womack! Aww man, who put this
on?

RAE gestures to BOYD sitting by jukebox.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Who's he?

RAE

Dunno. He keeps coming in.

JOHNNY

Is he old enough?

RAE

Doubtful.

JOHNNY

You gonna get in some trouble?

RAE

Not if I don't serve him.

JOHNNY

You don't?

RAE

Water, sometimes a Coke.

JOHNNY

(miming a shot of Boyd)
Push in, push in, push in.
(laughs)
You got a good face.

JOHNNY raises a glass to the kid.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

And good taste in music.

JOHNNY gets up, walks towards BOYD.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Hey. Hey! Hey, I like that fuckin' song you picked out, man. I like it a fuckin' lot.

BOYD

Ok.

JOHNNY

Can I get you something? Water? A Coke? I'd say beer, but Rae says you ain't old enough and I'm not gonna get her in trouble.

BOYD

I'm ok.

JOHNNY

You don't wanna talk? A'right. I can respect that. I was thinking, though—you got a good face.

BOYD

(after a long pause)

Ok.

JOHNNY demonstrates framing a shot of BOYD's face.

JOHNNY

It's young, but it's *seen* things. You act?

No response from BOYD.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Like movies? Theater shit?

(calling out to RAE)

Rae, vouch for me. So he doesn't think I'm hitting on him. Tell 'im what they call me.

RAE

Johnny the Mooch?

JOHNNY

Not what you call me, asshole, *other people*.

RAE

Johnny 8.

JOHNNY

(proudly)

King of the Eights! 8 millimeter.
Movies. That's why I'm checking out
faces.

BOYD

Anything I've...

JOHNNY

...Seen? Nah. Well, maybe. You go
to film festivals?

No response from BOYD.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

"Image Union?" Channel 11? PBS?
Saturday nights? They had one o' my
films. "Here Comes a Regular." They
had to cut it off.

(demonstrating)

This part. And this part. To
conform. The aspect ratio.

(explaining, way into it)

See, if you shoot wide-screen but
they show it on TV, you lose two
columns. Like when you watch
"Magnificent 7?" Spaghetti
Westerns? You're losing this and
this. It's like reading a book and
all the words here and here are cut
off. You live around here?

BOYD

Sometimes.

JOHNNY

The other times?

BOYD

Other places.

JOHNNY

With your folks?

BOYD gives him a look.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Sorry. I ask people questions. I'm
interested. People. Character
sketches. You in school?

Another look from BOYD.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Yeah, fuck school. Like maybe if you're gonna be a doctor, an astronaut, I can see it. You work a job?

BOYD

I'm between.

JOHNNY

Yeah, fuck jobs. You know where I work? You'll laugh. "Squeaky Clean."

BOYD

With the green jumpsuits?

JOHNNY

That's me.

BOYD

People's houses.

JOHNNY

Fuck you—"People's houses." *Office buildings*. 444 Mich. When I was a kid and we went downtown, I'd look at the buildings. And there'd be one floor dark, another floor dark. Like dark dark dark dark. Then, one strip of light. And I'd wonder—*what is up there? Why's that floor lit when all the others are dark?* 'Cause that's how I was. An inquisitive kid. And now, it's like you could be that kid staring up at that strip of light wondering what's up there. But now you know the answer.

BOYD

You.

JOHNNY

This motherfucker right here. It's a better gig than you'd think.

BOYD

Good pay.

JOHNNY

Competitive, yeah. But that's not the thing. You know—as an *artist*.

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