

HAPPY HARVESTING
A ten-minute play
By Rebecca Kane

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Cast of Characters:

KIKI: Woman, 20s-early 40s

BERT: Man 20s-40s

MICHAEL: Young boy

LILY: Preteen girl

Place:

A well-tended garden.

Time:

June, modern day.

[Lights up on KIKI, a woman with natural but well-maintained beauty, long conditioned hair, and a flowing maternity dress. She is visibly pregnant. She walks into her garden with a kit of tools in one hand (including a phone stand) and a basket overwhelming one of her hands, and a phone in the other. She speaks into the phone as she monologues, expertly adjusting her phone instinctively throughout.]

KIKI:

Good morning, everyone. Happy Thursday, happy harvesting, happy last day of my second trimester, yay! Happy... whatever it is you need to start your day off right. For me, it's the smell of coffee I put up for Bert. Of course, I wish I could have a cup, SO jealous, but that day is around the corner, right? And if I can't have coffee, I just make my way out to my garden and see what little treasures this beautiful June day has to offer. Every day with my garden means every day has hidden gems, even when it may not seem so obvious, and that's what today's vlog is about - finding something to harvest even when it may not seem like there's much to pick from for the day. After all, if nothing else, then at least you have the lovely memories associated with each item you planted. Planted yourself, with your own two hands. If you have nothing else, at least you have that.

I'll start here up front, in the herb garden I have from these hanging planters. We have beautiful basil ready to cut for today. Basil may not look like much more than leaves. But the possibilities are endless. Sauces, soups, soaps even. And just take a smell...

[She picks a leaf and inhales deeply. When she looks up again, it's taken her to a memory. Wherever these memories exist, the lighting should shift to indicate somewhere indoors, much harsher than the morning light. BERT enters her dreamscape, a slightly rough around the edges man, but nonthreatening, warm to start. He rubs her belly.]

BERT:

Just a few more weeks until our first baby.

KIKI:

Just a few more weeks until we become a family.

BERT *[to her belly]*:

Lily, did you hear that? You're already family! And we don't even know you yet.

KIKI:

I know her. I feel like I knew her the second she arrived in there. I've known her for seven months, then when you count the next two or so, and then maternity leave... when I go back to the work, I'll have known her for over a year.

BERT:

You're going back to work?

KIKI:

Yes. Of course. We talked about it last week...?

BERT:

Right, I remember, I just thought... it didn't seem like we decided?

KIKI:

We could use the money, Bert.

BERT:

Not if I get that promotion at work.

KIKI:

What promotion?

BERT:

I didn't tell you? To managing director.

KIKI:

No, you didn't. That's amazing, though!

BERT:

And that's the most amazing part - you can stay home with the baby all the time.

[He hugs her from behind, then exits, as she turns back to the basil and returns to the garden light.]

KIKI:

Amazing... amazing opportunities with this basil. And you know what I've said countless times in my recipe posts... basil LOVES tomatoes!

[She goes over to a vine of multicolored tomatoes.]

KIKI:

Okay, I know I just said the possibilities are endless... but with these tomatoes, they really are. Look at all these different colors! The eye goes right to these bright red ones, but the flavor in these sort of tie-dye ones is unexpected and incredible, and the green ones—

[She picks a green one. This memory starts with Bert entering, finishing putting his suit and tie on. Kiki helps adjust him with things like the tie, button, hair, etc.]

BERT:

You didn't happen to make a sandwich yet, did you?

KIKI:

It's by the door, with your papers.

BERT:

Really, babe, I don't know how you do it.

KIKI:

Helps to have a loving husband knocking it out of the park at work.

[They kiss or hug quickly, he touches her belly again.]

BERT:

You're knocking it out of the park as a mother. You're in good hands, baby number two. Whoever you may be.

KIKI:

I thought we had decided on naming him Jeremy? After my father?

[He purposely distracts himself finishing getting ready for work.]

BERT:

We did? I don't remember that.

KIKI:

We definitely did— I don't remember when, exactly, I think like last week? Pregnancy brain—

BERT:

Exactly. We'll talk about it tonight. Date night!

KIKI:

But I do remember we decided. And... okay, sounds good, my sister will be over at seven.

BERT:

Your sister?

KIKI:

Well, who else?

BERT:

I don't know, one of the babysitters we looked at on that website? Any of them?

KIKI:

What's wrong with Katie?

BERT:

I'm not sure she should be around children, actually, Kiki. With the way she drinks.

KIKI:

What?! She doesn't— it's only social.

BERT:

I just noticed she socializes a lot.

KIKI:

It's just a little wine. She won't tonight. She loves spending time with Lily.

BERT:

I'm sure, I just know how you sisters love to cut loose on Fridays. How about this? We'll talk about it later.

KIKI:

I don't remember her ever being out of control...

[He kisses her goodbye and exits, just as we hear the sound of a baby crying. She's a little frantic in the next bit.]

BERT:

Pregnancy brain, that's all. See you later.

KIKI:

What— but that wouldn't— Lily, I'm coming— Bert, wait, you forgot your--!

[When she realizes she's just holding a green tomato, it brings her back to the garden.]

KIKI:

Oh, where was I? Sorry. Pregnancy brain. The green ones. They're so tasty, all it takes is a little work. A little breading, a little frying, and it may be the best thing to come out of your garden all season. Speaking of a bit of work for a lot of rewards...

We have some kale over here ready for picking. I know, I know. I can hear all of you booing. But have you ever had a kale ceasar, with fresh dressing, loaded with anchovies and cheese? Or crunchy kale chips right out of the oven? Or... let's see here... one sec...

[When she went to pick the kale, it took more work than she thought to sit down, get comfortable, get down to the root, not tear the leaf, etc...]

Back to memory land. She sits in a way that obscures her belly. Bert sits next to her on the ground.]

KIKI:

I just don't understand.

BERT:

Maybe it's not for us to understand.

KIKI:

I didn't do anything differently for this one. The first two... Lily and Michael were so easy...

BERT:

Well, maybe that's the problem. Maybe you should rest more when we try again.

KIKI:

I need a little time.

BERT:

I think it will help.

KIKI:

Maybe I don't want to try again at all.

BERT:

You're just saying that because you're hurting right now.

KIKI:

Exactly, Bert, you don't understand. The pain of it. It's not just emotional, and that alone is like torture, but the cramping, the blood... it feels neverending.

BERT:

It will end when it happens again.

[He reaches for her.]

KIKI:

The doctor said to wait and rest.

BERT:

You'll have plenty of time to rest when you're pregnant again.

KIKI:

If it doesn't work... I can't take that again.

[When he holds her or grabs her, there's something threatening about it.]

BERT:

It's not for us to understand.

[He doesn't let go of her to exit until she finally holds a bunch of kale in her arms. She's back in the garden light. Now covered in dirt, her smile is forced.]

KIKI:

I can't wait to cook with this later. Today, even. Kale and white bean soup, anyone? Now, I know kale isn't everyone's cup of tea. Sort of an acquired taste. Or texture. But speaking of greens, my followers know that I can't have a fun soup without an even more fun salad. How does someone make a salad fun? The key is color.

[The next two memories, speaking to her children, come to her a little more rapid fire. Her lines between the recording in present time and past conversations blur. If her children can't appear on stage, maybe they're just recorded voices off stage.]

We have this crisp green arugula...

[*Her son appears.*]

MICHAEL:

I don't like green stuff though.

KIKI:

You have to get used to the flavor.

MICHAEL:

I don't like salads. You always make a lot of salad when you're gonna have a baby.

KIKI:

With just a little practice...

MICHAEL:

And when you're gonna have a baby, you don't play with me anymore.

KIKI:

And the right recipe...

MICHAEL:

You just sit around until it's time to make dinner. And then daddy just talks all the time. You don't even tell me stories. I wish there were no more other babies after Nina.

KIKI:

You'll find that sort of bitter flavor has more dimension. Rewards, even.

MICHAEL:

But daddy said there were gonna be more babies.

[*If Michael appeared on stage, he takes some greens and exits sadly. LILY appears on stage, subdued, troubled.*]

KIKI:

Pairing it with my light everyday vinaigrette recipe, which I posted about last May, is the key to making a versatile salad to accompany any lunch, dinner... or even dessert with these fresh strawberries.

LILY:

I know what to look for.

KIKI:

The key with strawberries is not to pick them too soon.

LILY:
I said I know.

KIKI:
Hey, what's wrong? You've been touchy all day. Your father said you barely greeted him after work today. You know that's not appropriate, with how hard he works—

LILY:
I got my first period.

KIKI:
Lily. My love. That's... wonderful news, when did it—

LILY:
I don't feel wonderful.

KIKI:
Of course, there's so much to adjust to. I have so much to talk to you about, when did it start?

LILY:
Last weekend.

[Kiki is floored in the wrong way.]

KIKI:
LAST weekend...

LILY:
It's done now. And I told dad.

KIKI:
You told your father—

LILY:
And he said, congratulations, that's WONDERFUL, you're a woman now, like your mom.

KIKI:
It is wonderful.

LILY:
NO IT'S NOT! I don't want to be wonderful like you! I just want to be regular! And be a girl like my friends! I don't want to have a baby yet! I don't want to have babies and be sad all the time!

KIKI:
Lily, there's more to it than that!

LILY:

No, there isn't! Not here, in this stupid garden, with your stupid strawberries!

[Distraught, Lily exits, leaving picked ruined strawberries on the ground. Kiki tried to get up and run after her, but she was stopped by her belly, her basket of veggies, and her phone. She drops the phone fully, probably losing the recording in a sea of plants. It doesn't matter, as she gets up and holds some unripe strawberries in her hand.]

KIKI:

And I didn't even get to tell you yet about zucchinis.

See, everyone thinks zucchinis are the star of the show. Zucchini bread, courgette fries, or caramelized over a crostini, it's one of the most versatile, popular, and thankfully fast-growing of my crops. But while you're busy with that bread and muffin batter, the batter and the oil, you might miss one of nature's secret gifts.

[She picks up a delicate zucchini blossom.]

If you've never seen a zucchini blossom, let alone tasted one, you're in for a surprise. It may not seem natural, taking a flower, and using it for more than a bouquet, but once you give it a shot... I guarantee you'll never go back.

[Still holding it, she reaches into the garden for her phone. But instead of starting a new video, she dials a number and tries not to cry when it picks up.]

KIKI:

Katie? It's me. Your sister. I know. I know I haven't called. I know how long it's been. I've missed you so much. I think I need your help... yes. I would love that. I can't wait to see you. Thank you. I can help you with your little herb garden if you want. As long as I can still garden, I think there's nothing I can't do.

[End of play.]