

Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue

10 page sample

By Alanna Coby

anc531@nyu.edu

Draft 1

Spring 2020

CHARACTERS

ACT 1

2019, Connecticut, USA

KIM: female, mid-30s, Connecticut Elite, white
LINDSAY: female, late 30s, Connecticut Poor, white
ASHLEY: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Elite, white
LESLEY: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Elite, white
DANA: female, mid-40s, South Carolina Elite, white
ALEX: female, mid-50s, California Elite, white
SAM: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Middle Class, white
TAYLOR: female, early-20s, Connecticut Poor, white*
STACY: female, a six month old baby, Connecticut Poor, white

*The actor playing LINDSAY also plays TAYLOR

ACT 2

1785, London, England

KIM: male, English Lord, white
LINDSAY: male, English Pauper, white
ASHLEY: male, English Gentleman, white
LESLEY: male, English Gentleman, white
DANA: male, English Gentleman, white
ALEX: male, English Middle Class, white
SAM: male, English Gentleman, white

ACT 3

2019, Connecticut, USA

KIM: female, mid-30s, Connecticut Elite, white
TAYLOR: female, early-20s, Connecticut Poor, white
ASHLEY: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Elite, white
LESLEY: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Elite, white
DANA: female, mid-40s, South Carolina Elite, white
ALEX: female, mid-50s, California Elite, white
SAM: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Middle Class, white
STACY: female, a six month old baby, Connecticut Poor, white

ACT 4

1823, New England, USA

KIM: female, mid-30s, Connecticut Elite, white
LINDSAY: female, late 30s, Connecticut Poor, white
ASHLEY: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Elite, white

LESLEY: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Elite, white
DANA: female, mid-40s, South Carolina Elite, white
ALEX: female, mid-50s, California Elite, white
SAM: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Middle Class, white

ACT 5

2019, Connecticut, USA

KIM: female, mid-30s, Connecticut Elite, white
LINDSAY: female, late 30s, Connecticut Poor, white
ASHLEY: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Elite, white
LESLEY: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Elite, white
DANA: female, mid-40s, South Carolina Elite, white
ALEX: female, mid-50s, California Elite, white
SAM: female, mid-40s, Connecticut Middle Class, white
STACY: female, a six month old baby, Connecticut Poor, white

NOTES:

All 7 adult actors in this play must identify as female.

/ indicates an interruption

Accents must adhere to the date, place of origin & class of each character in each act.
Some stereotype is acceptable, but please avoid caricature.

This is (mostly a) satire. Please pace accordingly.

“We need not descant on the dangerous impressions that are made on the female mind, by the remarks that fall incidentally from the lips of the brothers or servants of a family; and we have before observed, that improper topics can with our assistance be discussed, even before the ladies, without raising a blush on the cheek of modesty.”

-In the preface to Francis Grose’s *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1785)

“If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament.”

-Florynce Kennedy (1916-2000)

TAYLOR

(To DANA)

Move or I'll scream.

DANA

Absolutely not.

LESLEY

(To KIM)

Seriously, we should call/

ASHLEY

Shut up, Lesley.

SAM

(Reaching out towards TAYLOR)

Come sit on the couch for a minute, just a *minute*/

TAYLOR

I said *no*!

ALEX

(In a biblically commanding tone)

Taylor.

Sit down.

Now.

TAYLOR, seeing that she's overpowered, slumps in on herself. She allows herself to be led to the couch.

TAYLOR slowly sits, not looking at KIM, who is still holding STACY.

A breath.

DANA pours more wine. There is no glass for TAYLOR, so DANA hands TAYLOR her own glass, and gulps from the bottle.

ALEX hasn't moved from her perch on the sofa.

TAYLOR starts to quietly weep.

SAM rubs her back until TAYLOR shrugs her off.

ASHLEY

Ok.

Ok.

I think we all need to take a big, deep breath.

DANA

You don't honestly...you can't possibly think it's acceptable behavior to walk into a stranger's house and leave them your *baby*.

That's *insane*.

LESLEY

I'm pretty sure it's also *illegal*!

SAM

Stop, stop.

No name calling.

(Rubbing TAYLOR's back again)

I'm sorry, Taylor. I'm so sorry you're having such a hard time.

TAYLOR

Stop fuckin' touching me.

SAM puts her hands hurriedly into her lap, and starts wringing them. She looks desperately at the other women

ALEX

(Quietly)

What happened, Taylor?

The women look at TAYLOR, expectant. She says nothing.

ALEX

We have all night. Go on.

LESLEY

(Whispers)
But I told Eric/

ALEX glares at LESLEY.

LESLEY

I'll text him.

ALEX

(To TAYLOR)
Go on. We're listening.

TAYLOR

I don't have to tell you anything.

ALEX

You do. Or we're calling the police.

Beat. Taylor sighs.

TAYLOR

I got pregnant. And I didn't want to keep the baby, so I went to the clinic because I *didn't want to have a fuckin' baby*. So I got myself there, drove like an hour and a half, and when I got there *she* was there. Talking some shit like that Asian chick in Juno, just...in my fuckin' face and, like, telling me that I was killing a soul that belonged to god or some fuckin' bullshit like that and I just...I mean...I don't know. She told me to follow her to that crisis center, with all those nice-looking women who fuckin' *lied* about how they could help me and I just kept crying and crying and...you were just smiling at me and telling me like don't do it, Taylor, don't fuckin' do it, you're gonna *regret*...and like this little unborn thing like...fuck...I mean like, it was *Stacy*, in there, and she *does* have a soul, I guess, but then it was like...I mean I had only been pregnant for like a month and I'd been drinking and shit because I didn't *know*/

ASHLEY

(Gasps)
Oh, how awful/

LESLEY

Drinking?! Does she have FAS or/

DANA

Oh, shut up, y'all know I drank all through the first trimester with Duncan/

LESLEY

But *that's* why/

DANA

If you say that's why he's deaf in one ear so help me god, Lesley, I'll have to kill you; you *know* that's genetic.

(To ALEX)

Forgive me for bringing G-O-D into that context, but she *knows better*/

LESLEY

Oh *please*/

KIM

Could you all please STOP?

A beat.

DANA

(To TAYLOR)

Then what happened, honey?

TAYLOR

The fuck you think happened? I shit that watermelon you're holding outta my vag and now here I fuckin' am.

ASHLEY

Really, your language is just/

DANA

Can't you get help from your family, or, or/

TAYLOR

(To DANA)

What's your name?

DANA

Me?

TAYLOR

Yeah, you. I'm looking at you. What's your fucking name?

DANA

I really don't think that's any of your business.

TAYLOR

That's funny, cuz it seems like all of this business is none of *any* of you bitches' business. Seems like if *you'd all* minded your own fuckin' business, I wouldn't be here, cuz Stacy *definitely* wouldn't be here.

She sees the poster board with the women's notes on it. She reads it. She laughs, a short, hard note. She looks at the women.

TAYLOR

The fuck is "Connecticut for Life"? You turning the state into a prison now?

Beat.

ASHLEY

There are services, Taylor, there are ways of asking for help.

TAYLOR

I *am* asking for help.

SAM

Oh, Taylor. Oh, honey.

TAYLOR

I'm dead-ass fuckin' serious. *Help me.*

SAM

I think we should pray.

DANA

Yes, yes, please, Jesus, give me strength/

ALEX

(Quietly)

"Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that any one who fled/

TAYLOR

Are you serious right now?

ALEX

/to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly"/

Stop. Everyone.

KIM

Beat.

(To TAYLOR)
How did you find me?

KIM

(Sarcastic)
Well, Kim, I just prayed *real hard*/

TAYLOR

Now that's just unnecessary.

LESLEY

I used a phone book.

TAYLOR

You didn't. I'm unlisted. And I hired one of those services that scrubs personal information, so I know you didn't find me online.

KIM

Beat.

The last time we talked you told me to go to the river and throw my worries into the water.

TAYLOR

...So?

KIM

So there aren't any rivers near that crisis center. So I knew you didn't live around there. So I looked up the phone number you gave me, and it's listed in Greenwich. So I figured you meant Byram River. SO I called the Archdiocese of Hartford and pretended to be you/

TAYLOR

You *what?*!

SAM

TAYLOR

And asked what Greenwich address they had on file for me, because, (*impersonating KIM's voice*) "We just moved into our dream home, want to make sure you can still reach us."

They were real happy to hear from you.

Beat.

SAM

Taylor, this is all really heavy stuff. You've had a hard run of it. I get it. I really, really do.

LESLEY

We all have hardships in our lives. But look at your baby.

TAYLOR

Don't fuckin' guilt trip me, ok?

LESLEY

This innocent little gift from god...it's not her fault.

TAYLOR

I NEVER SAID IT WAS.

ASHLEY

Don't you have family, someone, anyone, to support you? I know that those early years can be such a lonely time-

TAYLOR

I don't have a family.

LESLEY

Everyone has a family.

TAYLOR

Are you fuckin' retarded? I said I *don't*.

LESLEY

I know for a *fact* that if you reached out instead of lashing out, you'd get what you need. It might not be what you want, but it will be what you *need*. Right, Ashley?

ASHLEY

I work with a woman who has three children, god bless her, and she uses the aid from our church. Have you looked into that?

DANA

(To ASHLEY)

You mean that Guatemalan woman you were telling us about? Oh, Taylor, it's so inspirational, you gotta hear this/

SAM

Dana, please.

Taylor, tell us what you mean when you say you don't have a family.

TAYLOR

Which of the words do you not fuckin' understand? I. Don't. Have. A. Family. I definitely don't have a goddamn husband. My mother died right after Stacy was born.

DANA

Your mama *died*?

SAM

I'll say a prayer for her soul.

ASHLEY

But Stacy is your family. Surely, you must understand that.

TAYLOR

Yeah, I fuckin' know she's my family. And I'm fucking *failing her*/

LESLEY

So you're grieving.

SAM

That's rough. Grieving makes us do all kinds of terrible things, sometimes. It's just a phase, though, Taylor, I promise it gets better. When my mother died/

TAYLOR

I don't give a *fuck* about your mother.

ASHLEY

You need to watch your mouth, young lady.

TAYLOR

Oh, fuck you. Fuck *all* of you.

(To KIM)

You said I would regret it for the rest of my life, if I didn't have that baby.

You were wrong. I had her. And I do regret it. I regret listening to you. I regret going to that goddam clinic the same day *you* were there. I regret listening to you fight for *her*, for just walking away and letting you ruin my fuckin' life.

So here she is, Kim. Your own little bundle of *personal responsibility*.

A stunned silence.

KIM looks down at the baby. She looks back at TAYLOR. Baroque music fills the stage.

Blackout.

ACT 2

*A gentleman's club in London, England in 1785.
Baroque music blares.*

KIM sits at a large round table alone. He has stacks of papers in front of him. His glasses perched on the end of his nose, he reads, grunting or chuckling occasionally.

LINDSAY enters, wearing an apron and carrying a tray with an enormous stein of beer on it. He places the beer carefully in front of KIM, but manages to spill some anyway.

As KIM reacts the music cuts out.

KIM

Fool!

LINDSAY

I'm sorry, m'lord.

KIM

Sorry! He's sorry!

LINDSAY

I'll just wipe it/

LINDSAY reaches towards the papers as KIM smacks him on the side of the head.

KIM

Don't *touch* anything, idiot/

LINDSAY

Ow, sir! OW!

KIM

OW, HE SAYS!

LINDSAY

Me 'ead!