

## Sample Chapter from “Too Big For Broadway!” by C.C. Cowan

Beverly is sitting in her dressing room at the Red Room Lounge. Once again she finds herself daydreaming about returning to the great stages of Broadway. The cold brick walls and scuffed floors left made the reality of that seem quite bleak. “Why did I ever agree to work here? This place is a dump and I....” Before she could finish her sentence, Tony Ferrell storms through the door like a battery acid and startles her. “Because you needed a job, that’s why,”

Tony was a horrible dresser, literally stuck in the 70’s as far as his fashion sense was concerned. He wore a pair of tight polyester pants, and a multicolored shirt, reminiscent of the colors painted on the bus of the Partridge Family. He’d been listening to her the whole time.

“Goodness Tony, don’t you ever knock?” Bev said, trying desperately to cover herself up.

Yeah right” he responds in a condescending tone. “I need to speak to you for a moment.”

Bev turns away and adjust her rub as not to expose herself to Tony.

“Can it wait? I have less than 10 minutes before I go on.”

“Yeah, right. That’s what I want to talk to you about.”

“Tony please, I’m trying out a new number tonight and I need a few moments alone to become one with the song.”

“Bev, there’s been some changes.”

I knock at the door invades the moment. Emily Cox one of Bev’s oldest and dearest friends has stopped by to see if she needed any help before going on stage. She’d do that pretty often, whenever she stops by the club. It gave them a few minutes to chit chat before the show.

“Knock, knock!” Emily said from behind the rickety dressing room door, then peeked in to surprise her friend. “Hey girl, do you need any help getting ready?”

Tony watched in disbelief.

“ Oh, hi Tony.” she says and then pauses as she reads the look of disgust on Tony’s face.

“Oh am I interrupting something?”

Bev has managed to slip behind an old Japanese partition to change into her outfit for the opening number. “Actually girl, I’m glad you’re here. Can you help me with this dress?”

Tony mutters under his breath. Emily notices.

“What’s wrong with him?” she says, then rests her purse on a nearby hat box.

“Oh he’s okay, he was just about to tell me about some last minute changes.”

“Changes, what changes”

Emily was forward, Tony hated that, to him she was just down right nosey. He ignored her at first.

“Bev I’d like to talk to you...alone!” he scoffed.

Bev took his tone lightly. “It’s okay Tony, whatever you have to say can be said in front of Emily. It’s not like she’s going to steal a routine or something.”

Emily and Bev chuckle as Tony becomes more agitated.

“Okay then.” he says as he positions his tongue in the side of his mouth, swings the door to the dressing room open.

“Would you come in please.”

At that moment, a look of cockiness nestled on his brows, a look of befuddlement on Bev’s and Emily’s. After a few moments a woman walked in, slowly as if time was waiting on her. She was a young woman, with flawless skin, the kind that could rival that of a newborn baby. Her lips were painted a deep shade of red, but shined as though they were kissed by the goddess Venus. Her complexion was the color of honey, and her black and neatly twisted and held by a jeweled clip. She wore stiletto shoes, sunglasses, and a full length mink, which when she walked, exposed a pair of legs that seemed to go on forever. A ferociously snobbish air preceded her. While inside the room she looked around as if walking into the tiny space was beneath her.

“What the..” Emily mumbled.

“Bev Johnson meet Kitten Leroux.”

The young woman extended her hand to Bev as if it should be kissed. Bev looked on in befuddlement.

“Oh no she didn’t!” Emily muttered in disbelief.

“Nice to meet you.” Bev said.

“Charmed I’m sure.” Kitten replied as she withdrew her dainty hand.

“Tony what is this about?” Bev questioned, her tone commanding.

But before Tony could respond, the young woman interrupts.

“Tony I thought you said this dressing room was huge, I have make-up cases bigger than this.” she said as she removed her sunglasses, displaying her full beautiful eyes..

“What, what are you talking about, who are you?” Emily questioned. Yet the young woman ignored her, for as much as she ignored anyone that didn’t have the power to make things happen for her. She continued.

“This place isn’t big enough to hold all the offers I’m going to get once the talent scouts see me performing here.” She placed her arms around Tony’s neck and drew closer to his lips. “Now Pookie (a nickname she made up for him just moments prior) you promised me that my dressing room would be at least three times this size and you don’t want to disappointment me now do you?”

Tony tries to quickly silence the young vixen but it’s too late, he blurted out his intention. Bev watched in astonishment.

“Her dressing room, her dressing room!”

The young woman removed her very expensive coat and tossed it onto the sofa, completely engulfing Emily’s purse. Emily followed behind her and lifted the coat from the sofa and dropped it to the floor.

“Oh God, Tony didn’t you tell her?”

“Tell me what?” Bev questioned.

Tony hesitated when he noticed the serious look on Bev and Emily’s faces. Kitten on the other hand wasn’t afraid of anything and interjected immediately. “I’m the new host of the Red Room Lounge!” she said, her tone was bubbly as she seemed to look off past them, drifting into her only little world for a few moments.

“What? Wait a minute Tony!”

“No you wait a minute, I told you if you keep coming in late that I was going to replace you and that’s just what I’m doing.”

“You can’t do this, what am I going to do to pay my bills?”

“I don’t know and I don’t care, I have to think about my club first.”

Emily is watching from the sidelines and is growing more mad with every word.

“Your club? This ragged dump barely qualifies as a bar, far less a club. Just look at it, it’s never been the first thing on our mind. You’re all about money. If it weren’t for Bev the only audience you’d have in here even one night a week would run into the cracks when the lights come on.”

“M what are you saying” Bev questioned, growing more visibly shaken by the second.

“I’m saying that he thinks Ms. PYT (pretty young thing) over there will bring in more money with you, that’s why he want’s to replace you.”

“That’s not true.” Tony responds.

“No then what is the truth?” Emily demands, placing one hand on her hip and stares him directly in the eyes.

“The truth is, the truth is...”

Tony stutters then retreats Emily’s glare; but she continues.

“The truth is, all your thinking about is your next lay, let me tell you something you no good....”

Before she could finish, Kitten who had momentarily drifted into an egotistical bubble, returned to reality and would make her disinterest in what Emily had to say very clear.

“Uh, Tony!” she interjected, snapping her fingers as she spoke. Her tone was like some sort of command for Tony to retrieve her coat and move on with their purpose for being there. “We don’t have time for this; I have to get settled and changed if I’m going to perform tonight.”

“Tonight!” Bev questioned.

“Yes tonight!” Kitten retorted mockingly, her tone full of arrogance.

Tony lifted her coat from the floor, brushed it dust from it with his hand, then held it ready for their departure. Kitten continued to speak as he stood quietly, waiting like a dog for it’s master. He hung his head low avoiding any opportunity of making contact with Bev and Emily as Kitten continued her obnoxious behavior.

“You know, I would say it was nice meeting you both, but I’d be lying.”

Bev seemed dazed but all that was going on Kitten knew it. That alone caused her attitude meter to soar through the roof. Tony listened, his mouth twisted and eyes squinted with every word that came from her mouth. He couldn’t take it anymore.

“Babe, your hair.” he interrupted, in hopes of relieving Bev and Emily of their assault .

“Huh, oh yes.” Kitten responded as if she had forgotten something. “I really do have to run, after all I don’t want to keep Jean Philippe waiting.” She through that name out as if it stood for something. No one responded.

Within seconds she slithered back into her coat, but even then she was graceful. Tony prepared for their exit by holding on to the doorknob, but the relentless Kitten wasn’t finished. In her mind her exit needed to be just as jaw dropping as her entrance, and since the stage was set she felt it necessary to deliver one final blow from her verbal arsenal.

Bev who had drifted off for a few moments, was unaware of what would come next. Emily watched in astonishment.

“Well ladies, I have to go now, I hope there’s no hard feelings, after all it’s just business, right Pookie?”

Tony responded like a child.

“Yes, yes that’s right.” he said then proceeded to twist the knob.

Before he could open the door more than a few inches, Kitten delivered the coup de gra. Pulling “Oh honey, would you mind doing me a favor while I gone.” she said as she ran her gentle hand along the side of his face.

“Anything for you babe.” he responded, shivering, an invisible erection forming in his pants, he was a pure mess and under her spell.

She glanced around the small room, turning her lip up in a show of disgust at the inadequate furniture, the filthy floors, lack of space and in disapproval of the present company. She paused only for a second then said. "Get rid of the trash!"

Her words sent Bev reeling. Tony's eyebrows shot upward, and his jaw dropped, and so did Emily's, Bev's too. Kitten lowered her sunglasses over her eyes and prepared for her exit, thinking, mission accomplished!

Kitten lives for drama, and she'll stir it up anywhere, anytime, and in the lives of anyone she can. For her Bev was just target practice. She stood chuckling on the inside. Meanwhile, the statement was cutting through Bev like a shape knife, Emily too. As different as they were, they were on the same accord in that moment. Kitten needed to be dealt with.

"Who are you calling trash, two bit?" Emily said as she stepped forward, removing her earrings as she spoke.

"And what is that supposed to mean?" Kitten replied.

"It means that 'two bit', Tony, brought your 'two bit' backside in here, wearing that 'two bit' dress and that 'two bit' fur, probably a throw back from the 80s fur vault and you think your going to get away with throwing insults around. Little girl please, you have another thing coming!"

The look on Emily's face telegraphed her intentions. That is, before Bev intervened.

"I'll handle this Emily, after all, she was talking to me, right?"

Kitten chuckled sarcastically then quickly sliced into her laughter "Yes."

"Well I won't resort to name calling. You see, I'm not old but I'm old enough to tell you that the way you're behaving makes you look bad.."

"Is that right?" Kitten responded.

"Now, I don't know you, and you don't know me, and if Tony feels he wants to replace me with you that's fine. I have no problem with that; but I will not stand her and be called names by some a little girl that thinks playing diva is going to take her places." Bev said, stepping closer to Kitten as she spoke.

Tony watched. Kitten seemed virtually unaffected by the theater icon's assessment of her, but she would not let Bev get the last word.

"You know you're right about two things, you are old enough to be my mother, it's pitiful and you are TOO BIG of a women; my suggestion to you, is that you join a health club; BIG is so not in this year!" she scoffed, then lowered her sunglasses over her eyes, as if to say, conversation done!

Emily had seen enough. She was no longer going to just stand there and let her friend be insulted that way. "Bev honey, you don't have to put up with this, let's go." she said, taking Bev by the hand as she spoke. Yet Bev would not be moved. She just stood there staring at the young arrogant soul in front of her. It was at that moment that she remembered her youth, and how beautiful she was seemingly so many years ago. She'd do anything to get those years back, to have that body again, that passion, that feistiness. However, in that moment she recognized something as well. The truth! The truth that she had been hiding from for so long, burying in a mound of chocolate desserts and salty snacks every evening. The truth that she didn't love herself, the truth that she was no longer young, or slim. That truth that had suddenly presented itself before her, and it was in the form of a 22 year old with a gorgeous body, and wearing stiletto pumps. No matter how much it hurt, it was still the truth.

“Bev did you hear me?” Emily said, trying to break Bev’s trance like state.

“Emily, do you mind waiting for me outside? I’d like to speak to Tony alone.”

“What? No, I’m not leaving you alone with him, no!

“Please Emily!” Bev barked. “There’s something I need to say to him.”

Tears formed in her eyes and she saw the compassion in her friend’s.

“I’ll be right outside, if you need me, I’m right here.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“Yeah she’ll be fine, what do you think we’re going to do to her?” Tony responded.

“You know what Tony, drop dead.” Emily lashed back, then exited the tiny dressing room.

“Do you mind leaving too?” Bev asked as Kitten stood watching with a smug look on her face.

“Oh I’ll leave, but let me say this before I go. You don’t want to be here when I get back, trust me, it won’t be nice if I have to get ugly.” Kitten’s threat is smooth and deliberate. Satisfied that there was nothing left to be said, she exits the room very dramatically, slamming the door behind her. Bev looked Tony square in the eyes.

“I can’t believe you did this to me, after all that I’ve done for you and this club.”

“Done for me, what have you done for me or this club? All I do is pay out money, pay to keep having your dresses stitched every time you bust a seem, pay for your lunch, pay for your dinner, he’ll I’m tired of it!”

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me, it’s costing me almost as much to feed you as it is to pay you to sing.”

Bev lowered her head as he continued.

“Look at this, looking around at all the bags of snacks, and candy bars scattered around this room. You have a problem.”

“I told you Tony, eating relaxes me.”

“Yeah well, if you keep eating like this, you’ll be relaxing in a plus size casket. Now, I don’t think there’s anything else to say. So if you’ll excuse me, I have to get the place ready for Kitten’s debut.”

“That’s it huh, you’re just going to replace me with that, that, too bit alley cat you dragged up in her?”

“Now there you go, you better watch your mouth.” Tony demanded.

“You’re right, I’m sorry, I’m not the type to call names, but I’m angry.”

“Yeah well, who you should be mad at are those potato chips and Twinkies you keep shoving into your; they’re the ones that put the weight on you, not me, and not Kitten Leroux.

“Kitten Leroux, uh!” Bev responded, turning her mouth down in disgust.

“Frown all you want but Kitten’s going to be a big star real soon, you’ll see .”

“Yeah, and the devil’s going to be a star in heaven too!” Bev scoffed.

“Whatever, just get out.”

“Just like that huh?”

“Yeah just like that!” Tony mimicked, then exited the room; slamming the door behind him.

The silence in the room was deafening. Her fears had come to fruition. Fear of growing old, A fear that we all fell in time, the fear of getting older, being replaced, feeling unnecessary, fear of not having control over what happens in her life. It was all too much for her, overwhelmed she fell to her knees and let out loud cry. Emily who was waiting just outside in the hall, heard her cries and raced in

“Bev, honey it’s okay, it’s okay.” She said, trying desperately to comfort her friend. “Come on, don’t do this. You’ll get through this.”

But Bev continued “What am I going to do now Em, what am I going to do now....”