



Last of the Red Hot Lovers

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Characters Discussed

Barney Cashman, the forty-seven-year-old owner of a New York seafood restaurant, who is facing a severe midlife crisis. He describes himself as a “nice” man with a “nice” wife, living a “nice,” but completely uneventful, life. He has been faithful to his wife during their twenty-three-year marriage, but he has had fantasies. Determined to experience for one afternoon a memorable romantic episode before he dies, he overcomes his timidity and arranges a tryst with an attractive woman who has been a patron at his restaurant. Neither this encounter (act 1), nor the two that follow (acts 2 and 3), are successful, however, so Barney ends as he began, a “nice,” thoroughly moral, man.

Elaine Navazio, a somewhat coarse woman in her late thirties who believes, when she accepts Barney’s invitation to meet him at his mother’s apartment, that he wants only a quick sexual encounter. She is totally unimpressed by his attempts to make anything more than that of their meeting. She says that she indulges in extramarital sexual encounters because they make her feel alive, and she has no sympathy for Barney’s needs. She leaves, sarcastically wishing him luck in his quest for the “impossible dream” and hoping there is a cigarette machine in the lobby.

Bobbi Michele, a twenty-seven-year-old unemployed entertainer who visits Barney to repay twenty dollars that he loaned to her to pay an accompanist who assisted her during an audition. She is an offbeat representative of the “new morality” of the 1960’s who regales Barney with her wild stories of coast-to-coast sexual encounters, real and imagined, and persuades her straitlaced friend to join her in getting high on marijuana.

Jeanette Fisher, a contemporary of Barney and a family friend, a very depressed lady who has decided to repay her husband’s confession of infidelity by having an affair with Barney. She tells him that she does not find him physically attractive, however, and rambles about the immorality that she finds rampant in society. They argue about whether there are any “decent” people left in the world, and after Barney has pretended to stalk her in an effort to show her some “indecencies,” she leaves, chastened, to forgive her husband, Mel.

Sources for Further Study

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