

**The Kiss**  
by George Sapio

**Cast:**

Eisenstadt: M, a photographer, 30s-40s

Glenn: M, a sailor returning from World War II; very excited to be alive, early 20s

Edith – female, nurse, 20s-30s

**Setting:**

A New York City street crammed with celebrating people and littered with ticker tape.

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*At rise: a tableau. A soldier, bent over a nurse, holding her in the classic photograph position of EISENSTADT's "The Kiss". The tableau is held without movement while we hear four camera shutter clicks in rapid succession. Offstage we hear a voice (EISENSTADT): "Yes! Fantastic!"*

*The tableau breaks: the soldier straightens up and releases the nurse, who staggers, trying to catch her breath.*

**GLENN**

Wow! Yeah! Hooray!

*GLENN looks at the EDITH, who is staring at him, shocked. As he leans in to kiss her again, EDITH brings her knee up into his crotch—hard. GLENN exhales, gasps, and crumples to the pavement. EDITH draws back her foot to kick him again. EISENSTADT enters, carrying a Leica 35mm camera, and gets between them.*

**EISENSTADT**

Stop! Stop! Are you insane???

**EDITH**

Did you see what he did to me?

**EISENSTADT**

Of course I did! He kissed you. So what?

**EDITH**

So what??

**EISENSTADT**

In case you hadn't noticed, young lady, we're celebrating the end of the war! You are supposed to be happy.

**EDITH**

Excuse me...???

**EISENSTADT**

You just assaulted a sailor! A hero!!

**EDITH**

I assaulted him???

**EISENSTADT**

You just kneed that poor man in the... the ...

**EDITH**

Damn right I did! You saw what he did to me.

**EISENSTADT**

He was just kissing you!

*[GLENN groans loudly]*

**EDITH**

Just kissing me? He grabbed me and...

**EISENSTADT**

It was perfect!

**EDITH**

Perfect?

**EISENSTADT**

Yes! I've been waiting for this shot all day!

**EDITH**

What?

**EISENSTADT**

I've been following him for almost six blocks.

**EDITH**

Waiting for him to assault someone?

**EISENSTADT**

Lady, I didn't have to wait. Loverboy here's been grabbing every woman he could catch! And what are you talking about, "assault"? He was *kissing*.

**EDITH**

You've been watching him . . . *following* him for *six blocks* while he...  
How many women has he . . . kissed?

**EISENSTADT**

I dunno. Who cares? About a dozen maybe.

**EDITH**

A dozen???

**EISENSTADT**

Lady, what is your problem?

**EDITH**

You've been following him for six blocks while he grabbed and assaulted a dozen women??

**EISENSTADT**

Look. I don't know if you heard, but the *war* is *over*. Get it? [*Bends down to GLENN*] Hey buddy. You okay? [*GLENN groans*]

**EDITH**

So “the war is over” gives him the right to just grab any woman he sees and kiss them?

**EISENSTADT**

You betcher sweet lips, baby. These guys are heroes. And that kiss was the one I was waiting for. You owe him an apology.

**EDITH**

An apology?

**EISENSTADT**

Lady, where have you been? Without him and his fellow sailors we'd all be speaking Japanese by now!

**EDITH**

I don't believe this. So you've been following him, watching him kiss young women for six blocks. You're a moron.

**EISENSTADT**

I'm a photographer! My job is to get the shot, whatever it takes.

**EDITH**

Those poor women.

**EISENSTADT**

You're the only woman who's complained. The lady in her eighties he puckered up on 46<sup>th</sup> street was definitely *not* unhappy. Took him half a block to shake her off, actually.

**EDITH**

He kissed a woman in her eighties?

**EISENSTADT**

He's been kissing everything that wasn't a guy. He kissed a couple of six year olds--

**EDITH**

Oh my god.

**EISENSTADT**

I thought it would make a great shot but he hadda bend over too far. I was hoping he'd grab one and lift her up to kiss her, but he didn't.

**EDITH**

Too bad.

**EISENSTADT**

Now ya get it!

**EDITH**

What I have, you creep, is a bad taste in my mouth. All he had for breakfast was cheap whiskey and cigarettes.

*[GLENN stirs. He begins to rise, painfully. He slowly staggers to his feet, wavers unsteadily. EISENSTADT crosses and helps him stand. GLENN looks at EDITH, a mixture of resentment and fear]*

**GLENN**

Holy crap, lady. There was no reason to do that.

**EDITH**

There sure as hell was.

**GLENN**

No there wasn't. I didn't mean no harm.

**EDITH**

You think it was okay to grab me like that and force a kiss on me?

**GLENN**

Force? I mean, come on...

**EDITH**

Force. You didn't ask. You just grabbed me.

**GLENN**

Holy crap. Lady... it wasn't anything... it was just a kiss.

**EDITH**

This jerk tells me he's been following you all over town watching you grab women and kiss them.

**GLENN**

Yeah. I'm happy.

**EDITH**

You do that every time you're happy?

**GLENN**

What?

**EDITH**

Do you, every time you're happy, run amok like a sex-starved felon on parole?

**GLENN**

I . . . come on! I didn't do nothin' wrong!

**EISENSTADT**

Jeez! Cut the poor guy some slack, will ya?

**EDITH**

You're a pig.

**GLENN**

And you're a prude. Jeez, lady. You need to get a boyfriend or something.

**EDITH**

I want an apology.

**EISENSTADT**

He don't owe you nothin', lady. [*To GLENN*] Sailor, you don't know it, but I think the photo I took of you and this . . . lady here . . . I think it's gonna be remarkable.

**EDITH**

I want an apology.

**GLENN**

Oh ferchrissakes. Okay. I apologize. Ya happy? [*To EISENSTADT*] Hey, can I get a copy of that picture?

**EDITH**

That was not an apology.

**GLENN**

Lady... I didn't mean no harm. Really. It was just a stupid kiss!

**EDITH**

You're worse than a pig. To think you can take . . . assault . . .

**EISENSTADT**

Here we go again.

**GLENN**

Look who's talking about assault! Lady, that knee of yours almost crippled me!

**EDITH**

That was self-defense.

**EISENSTADT**

Oh good god.

**GLENN**

Lady . . . what the hell do you want from me?

**EDITH**

An apology.

**GLENN**

I gave you one!

**EDITH**

That was not an apology. That was you trying to dismiss me. You have no idea what you're doing, do you? Running around like a madman---

**GLENN**

Lady, I'm just happy to be alive, okay? I was due to ship out again in three days. Back to the Pacific. Now I don't have to. Get it? I survived. I can rattle off the names of twenty guys I shipped out with who didn't make it. I'm happy. I get to live. So I grabbed a few kisses. I never thought I'd *get* those kisses. I would lay awake night after night hoping and praying I'd get back safe and in one piece.

**EISENSTADT**

For what it's worth, sailor, I'm on your side. Lady's nuts.

**EDITH**

And you are nothing but a scavenger and a thug.

**EISENSTADT**

Oh jeez.

**EDITH**

You think a mugging is art.

**EISENSTADT**

Getting the shot, getting the moment . . . *that's* art.

**EDITH**

You have no idea what art is.

**EISENSTADT**

Oh, really. And I assume you do know what art is?

**EDITH**

I'd like to think so. [*EISENSTADT chuckles, shrugs in a "Can you believe this broad?" manner*] You think a sailor kissing a woman is art. But that moment has nothing special, nothing new, nothing once-in-a-lifetime. It shows nothing we haven't seen before. It's amateur.

**EISENSTADT**

Lemme guess. You can do better.

**EDITH**

Yes, I can.

**EISENSTADT**

[*Beside himself with amusement*] Oh boy. This I gotta hear. Okay, lady, take yer best shot.

**EDITH**

Will you take another photograph?

**EISENSTADT**

Sure. I got a few frames left.

**EDITH**

[*To GLENN*] Will you consent to another kiss?

**GLENN**

Jeez, I dunno. You really hurt me with that knee.

**EISENSTADT**

Hey guy. She's a looker.

**GLENN**

And that's just it? A kiss?

**EDITH**

That's it. You try anything else . . .

**GLENN**

I get it. [*Beat*] Okay.

**EDITH**

[*To EISENSTADT*] Are you ready?

**EISENSTADT**

Sure. Why not?

*[EDITH reaches for GLENN as he starts to open his arms. She grabs him by his collar, places a knee behind his leg and tips him backwards, catching him in her arms. GLENN flails for a second, then stops as EDITH places her lips on his and starts to kiss him. The kiss lasts for eight seconds, and it is clear this is no ordinary chaste kiss. The tableau resembles the first identically, except for the switching of positions. Suddenly she stops, steps back and stands GLENN up. GLENN is stunned, both by her handling of him and the intensity of the kiss]*

**EDITH**

Now. You know why that makes a better shot? Because I'm the one initiating it. I'm the one stealing the kiss. Know what that means? It means the women of this country have been waiting and hoping and praying every day that our husbands and brothers and fathers and sons will step off those boats and grab us and hold us and never ever let us go again. It's better than some undersexed, half-drunk thug in a uniform walking around and . . . That's why it's a better shot. Would you like to know why I'm not down at the docks when they unload? Because *my* fiancée is not coming back. He's not going to come down that gangplank and into my arms. Get it?? I don't feel the urge to celebrate because I have no one to celebrate *with*. So if you have any brains or guts, you'll use the photograph I just



gave you because it tells a much better story than the ones you scavenged.  
Now. I'm going home. Please excuse me.

*[EDITH starts to exit]*

**GLENN**

Lady. Lady!! *[EDITH stops, but doesn't turn to look at him]* Listen . . .  
I . . . I didn't know. I was just . . . I'm sorry.

**EDITH**

Accepted.

*[She exits. EISENSTADT and GLENN look after her.  
EISENSTADT turns away.]*

**GLENN**

I didn't know.

**EISENSTADT**

How were you supposed to? Don' worry about it, kid. Ya made it home  
and that's all that counts. You did your job. You fought off the enemy. A  
grateful country thanks you.

**GLENN**

You gonna use the one of her kissing me?

**EISENSTADT**

Are you kiddin'? Hell no. I only took it so's you could get another kiss  
from her. She wasn't bad lookin'. Son, you deserve everything you can get.

**GLENN**

She was right. It makes a better shot.

**EISENSTADT**

Nahhhh. A woman manhandling a guy like that? No paper in town would  
print that. *[Chuckles]* Nope. I know a winner when I see one. Take care,  
kid.

*[EISENSTADT exits. GLENN looks away in the  
distance . . . maybe at EDITH's receding form]*