

INT. MIKE & MEL'S OFFICE

Mel looks up ("Late as always") as Mike comes in.

MIKE

So the youngest girl turns out to be a single mother.

MEL

Whoa! Don't just start where we left off Friday, lead me into it. Even the Constitution had a preamble.

MIKE

And it's still getting laughs today.

MEL

Not everything needs a laugh.

MIKE

Not if it's on CBS.

MEL

It's 10:30, you're gonna use up your one-liners by noon.

MIKE

Okay, nice and slow for the old guy -- spec sitcom pilot about four girls who work at a spa and we meet their clients and learn about their lives and problems ---

MEL

Mike, you rolled your eyes. At "learn about their problems".

MIKE

No I didn't. Maybe one eye rotated like 5 degrees.

MEL

That eye, and the asshole behind it, think that character and backstory and depth have no place in comedy.

MIKE

No, they do. Just not in funny comedy.

MEL

Does it seem we're fighting more?

MIKE

We've been fighting 15 years. Except when we were showrunners.

MEL

Who had time then, with the star meltdowns and network notes. And the cocaine.

MIKE

C'mon, I did cocaine twice -- 1989 through '95, and an hour ago.

MEL

That's another thing, it seems like more and more now we talk about then.

MIKE

The days when we had respect, money and careers. Why is that, I wonder.

MEL

It just makes us more pathetic.

MIKE

Hey, nothing makes me more pathetic.

MEL

It's been 10 minutes and already I'm thinking lunch.

MIKE

You going to your house again?

MEL

I enjoy a home-cooked meal.

MIKE

You microwave Tater Tots. You just don't want to eat with me.

MEL

After a thousand meals at Canter's that seems unlikely.

MIKE

Then why not invite me over?

MEL

'Cause I see enough of you every day.
'Cause you're a social embarrassment.
'Cause outside of our professional relationship I don't particularly like you.

MIKE

C'mon, Mel, gimme a reason.

MEL

I'm ashamed of our flatware.

MIKE

(grin)
Flatware's a funny word.
(no grin)
But you're only using it to lessen
the pain of rejection.

MEL

Flatware flatware flatware.

MIKE

Did our agent call? Like it matters.
He'll just lie. Bernie invented
lying. Whenever someone in the world
lies he gets a residual. He's so
crooked he has to straighten up to
get into a car.

MEL

Done?

MIKE

I got two more.

GINA (O.S.)

Knock knock!

A lovely young Latina (GINA) enters with a cart: bagels, muffins, croissants, frozen yogurt.

MIKE

Y'know, instead of saying knock you
could actually knock.

GINA

That's what they'd be expecting. I
have enemies everywhere. They want
my muffins.

MIKE

I'll bet.

GINA

But I save them for Mel. Mike, your
usual?

MIKE

I'm that predictable.

GINA

You have the same thing every day but
no, you're not predictable.

Walking to Mike with a bagel, she bumps a chair.

GINA

Sorry.

MEL

You realize you just apologized to a chair.

GINA

Chairs are people too.

MIKE

You're gorgeous.

GINA

Hello?

MIKE

I'm just saying.

GINA

Well don't. Our passion must remain unspoken as well as unfelt.

MIKE

Tomorrow I'll get something new.

GINA

Three years, Mike. I've been doing this three years and you don't notice I'm never here Tuesdays.

(re: bagel)

Eat it.

And she leaves.

MIKE

She wants me.

MEL

I got that. But she really wants health insurance.

MIKE

I can be health insurance. How do you know that?

MEL

Instead of flirting and joking, I actually talk to her.

MIKE

How's that working for you?

MEL

I'm not trying to get in her pants.

MIKE

You can barely get in your own.

MEL

Gina's a good kid. Tuesdays she's home with her mother who's got 5 or 6 medical conditions, hence her potential attraction to you if you were health insurance.

The phone rings; Mel checks the readout.

MEL

Bernie.

MIKE

10 bucks he lies 3 times before "Hi there".

Mel punches the Speaker button.

MIKE/MEL

Bernie!

CROSS-CUT with...

INT. BERNIE'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

BERNIE, a bit older than Mike/Mel, sits at a cluttered desk.

BERNIE

Boys! I woulda called last week but I was incredibly busy with pilot season. Hi there!

MEL

(punches Speaker; to Mike)
Two -- he never meant to call and he wasn't busy.

MIKE

Pilot season ended a month ago.

MEL

(hands Mike \$10, hits Speaker)
So what's up.

BERNIE

I'll try to keep it short.

MIKE

Just think about your wife.

BERNIE

I got you a gig.

Mike clutches his heart, staggers, grabs a chair, falls, rolls on the floor. Mel ignores him.

MEL

That's nice.

BERNIE

It's no big deal but it could lead to things, get your names around town.

MEL

So you're saying after 30 years in the business, people don't know us?

BERNIE

Exactly. It's a benefit, you'll write material for the celebs. I'll tell you the rest at lunch tomorrow.

Mike's "recovering" but, hearing "lunch", goes into epileptic spasms, thrusting a pencil between his teeth.

MEL

Um, okay. Nate and Al's?

BERNIE

Le Cirque.

Mike stops and stares.

MEL

Um, great. What's the charity?

BERNIE

It's a disease. Bulbonia.

MEL

Sounds like a country Groucho Marx is President of.

BERNIE

It's a disease of the lip. From what they tell me, usually the lower.

MEL

We're doing a benefit for lower lips?

BERNIE

Le Cirque, tomorrow, 1.

Dial tone. Mel punches off and thinks.

MIKE

What's wrong?

MEL

Nothing. This is good.

MIKE

"Bulbonia". Why couldn't we get cancer?

MEL

Can't catch a break.

MIKE

Cancer, heart disease, AIDS -- the world is filled with wonderful horrible diseases and we get lips. One Angelina Jolie reference and I'm tapped.

MEL

We'll make it work. If we can only get through lunch.

EST. LE CIRQUE - THE NEXT DAY

INT. LE CIRQUE

Mike (in a faded jacket) and Mel wait in front as the glam and gorgeous swirl around them. Mel's uneasy.

MIKE

What is wrong? And don't say he's late, he's always late.

MEL

Our agent barely speaks to us for a year then invites us to a prestigious restaurant.

MIKE

Prestigious? They got paintings of nudes on velvet, their nipples follow you around the room.

MEL

Mike... We're fired. Bernie's firing us as clients. He hopes expensive food and a public setting will keep us -- well, you -- from going nuts.

MIKE

Oh please, he just got us a gig.

MEL

Mercy gig.

MIKE

You ever had a mercy fuck? They're great.

MEL

As I'm sure paying tribute to Bulbonia will be.

Bernie enters, talking on a cell.

BERNIE

(to cell)

Just a sec...

(MORE)

BERNIE (cont'd)
 (to Mike/Mel)
 Boys!

MIKE/MEL
 Bernie.

BERNIE
 Sorry I'm late, crazy day. Hi there!
 Henri...

As a MAITRE D' brings them to a table, Bernie raises a finger to Mike and Mel; he has to finish his call.

BERNIE
 C'mon, he's been there 6 months and change. ... Okay, lemme know the "Mixed Nuts" situation.

He's done; they're at the table.

BERNIE
 I'm ready -- gimme the flounder.

Even the Maitre D's surprised; Mike and Mel check their menus.

BERNIE
 (to Mel)
 Try the lamb, it's incredible.

MEL
 It's 60 bucks.

MIKE
 What, did it swallow a steak?

BERNIE
 Price is no object.

Mel looks pointedly at Mike, who ignores him.

MIKE
 I'll have two of the risotto.

BERNIE
 Two?

MIKE
 They're 30 apiece, I won't let this putz outspend me.

Bernie nods to the Maitre D', who leaves.

BERNIE
 So, the benefit. Now even though it's a freebie ---

MEL
 It doesn't pay?

BERNIE

--- it took a lot of effort to get.
The business has contracted, you know
that. Reality shows, the internet...

MEL

Aeroplanes, the printing press -- it
was a helluva millennium.

BERNIE

I think you'd be better off with a
different agent.

MIKE

We know that.

MEL

You're firing us. And the benefit's
like severance pay.

MIKE

Without the pay.

MEL

This is shitty, Bernie. There are
scripts of ours you never read.

BERNIE

You think I haven't tried to get you
work?

MIKE

No, I think you landed two guys on
series in the spring and sat on your
fat, shit-laden ass ever since.

MEL

(impressed)
"Shit-laden".

BERNIE

Calm down.

MIKE

Or what, you'll fire me more, you
half-senile, all-asshole twerp-
fucker?

MEL

Twerp is iffy but fucker saves it.

MIKE

You sit at your desk drooling into
your Metamucil praying the phone
won't ring 'cause it's on the same
frequency as your sphincter and it's
tough to clean up which is why you
always wear brown.

BERNIE
 (grimly calm)
 Umber.

MEL
 (to Bernie)
 There could be a flaw in your
 restaurant plan.

MIKE
 (stands)
 Fire us? You don't have the balls.

BERNIE
 (to Mel)
 Didn't I just do it?

MEL
 He's in a groove.

MIKE
 You disgusting worm-like substance.
 You slimy green fungus. You gigantic
 piece of microscopic pond-scum.

MEL
 He took Bio in college.

MIKE
 I wouldn't be your client if the
 planet got cancer and the only way to
 save it was to give you 10% of an
 animated cable show about Howie
 Mandel's armpit. I'd tell you to rot
 in hell but you're an agent so
 decomposing would be a step up.
You're fired, Bernie, and when we
 sell our next series there'll be a
 character named Bernie who never does
 anything but somehow fucks everyone!
 (trying for exit line)
 And he'll be based on you!

He stomps away.

MEL
 Are we still doing Bulbonia?

BERNIE
 (clenched teeth)
 Your choice.

MEL
 We'll think about it.

He heads off to catch Mike.