

"Pretty Naked People"

by

David Misch

david.misch@gmail.com

www.davidmisch.com

August 21, 2018

PRETTY NAKED PEOPLE

by David Misch

(Note: All "sets" are projections, with a few pieces of furniture. Four actors; all roles other than Jake, Jerry and Gina are played by one woman.)

SCENE 1

An office, old and fading, not unlike its occupants:

JERRY (50's-60's; calm) is at a desk with a laptop, pad, pen and vitamin bottles, all of which he carefully positions...

... and JAKE (50's-60's; not calm), who rushes in with coffee. JERRY looks up ("Late again") as JAKE goes his side of the desk, covered with crumpled papers.

JAKE

So the youngest girl is a single mother.

JERRY

Whoa, don't start where we left off, lead me into it. Even the Constitution has a preamble.

JAKE

And it's still getting laughs today.

JERRY

Not everything needs a laugh.

JAKE

Not if it's on CBS.

JERRY

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

JAKE

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

JERRY

Jake... you rolled your eyes. At "learn about their problems."

JAKE

No I didn't.

(off JERRY's look)

Fine, maybe one eye rotated like five degrees.

JERRY

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

JAKE

No, they do, just not in funny comedy.

JERRY

Ten minutes and already I'm thinking lunch.

JAKE

You going home?

JERRY

Yeah, have a little Claire time.

JAKE

You're married to her. You just don't wanta eat with me.

JERRY

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

JAKE

Then why not invite me over?

JERRY

'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.

JAKE

C'mon, Jerry, gimme a reason.

JERRY

I'm ashamed of our flatware.

JAKE

(grin)

Flatware's a funny word. Anyone who says flatware is okay in my book.

(no grin)

But you're only using it to lessen the pain of rejection.

JERRY

Flatware flatware flatware.

(then)

Does it seem like we're fighting more?

JAKE

We've been fighting fifteen years. Except when we were producers.

JERRY

Yeah -- you don't fight in a foxhole. Anyway, who had time then, with the star meltdowns and network notes.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

(pointed)

And the cocaine.

JAKE

Hey, I did cocaine twice -- 2005 through 2008, and an hour ago.

JERRY

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

JAKE

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

JERRY

Remember our medley of aging Boomer hits?

(sings)

"My boyfriend's back --- "

JAKE/JERRY

" --- is giving him trouble..."

JAKE

Did Bernie call? Like it matters. She'll just lie. Our agent invented lying. Whenever anyone in the world lies she gets a residual. She's so crooked she has to stand up to get in a car. She's so full of shit, right after she takes a shit she's still full of shit.

JERRY

Done?

JAKE

I got two more.

GINA (O.S.)

Knock knock!

(GINA, a lovely young Latina, enters with a basket of baked goods.)

JERRY

Gina! How delightful.

JAKE

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

GINA

That's what they're expecting. I have enemies everywhere. Just now, guy down the hall almost turned me in.

JERRY

For what?

GINA
No one gave me permission to do this. The guy figured it out
and threatened to report me.

JERRY
What'd you do?

GINA
Apologized, said I'd never do it again, and gave him a blow-
job.

JAKE
C'mon.

GINA
Okay, I didn't apologize.
(then)
Look, guys are always pulling that power crap on me -- I
throw 'em a muffin and say "Eat it."

JAKE
Well, I admire your cojones.

GINA
(accent)
Oh! You have spoken to me in what would be my native language
(no accent)
if I wasn't born in Glendale.
(re: muffin)
Jerry, blueberry-lime? It's new.

JERRY
What is life without risk.

GINA
(hands to Jerry, then:)
And a bagel for Jake.
(goes to Jake, bumps chair)
Sorry.

JERRY
You don't have to apologize to furniture.

GINA
Chairs are people too.

JAKE
You're gorgeous.

JERRY
God, not again.

JAKE
Nothing like a hot girl with a cold bagel.

GINA

Sorry, Jake, but I'm afraid our passion must remain unspoken as well as unfelt.

JAKE

You'll come crawling back tomorrow.

GINA

Two years. I've been doing this two years and you still don't remember.

JERRY

(to Jake)

Tuesdays she's home with her mother.

(to Gina)

How is she?

GINA

Other than the arthritis and diabetes, great.

(tosses JAKE bagel)

Eat it.

(GINA leaves.)

JAKE

She wants me.

JERRY

Y'know, Gina's really interesting. We should write about her.

JAKE

Well, Hispanic is the new black.

JERRY

She works this hard to keep her mother alive.

JAKE

She told you that?

JERRY

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

JAKE

How's that working for you?

JERRY

I'm not trying to get in her pants.

JAKE

You can barely get in your own.

(Jerry's CELL RINGS; he looks.)

JERRY

Oh my God -- it's Bernice.

JAKE

Ten bucks she lies three times before "Hi there."

(JERRY clicks Speaker.)

JAKE/JERRY

Bernice.

(On the other side of the stage, BERNICE is in a brown suit, Bluetooth in ear.)

BERNICE

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

JERRY

(clicks Mute; to Jake)

Two -- she wasn't busy and she wasn't gonna call.

JAKE

Pilot season ended a month ago.

JERRY

I'll buy lunch.

(clicks Speaker)

What's up.

BERNICE

I got you a gig.

(JAKE clutches his heart, staggers, falls, rolls on the floor. JERRY stares impassively.)

JERRY

That's nice.

BERNICE

It's incredibly exciting, could really get your names around town.

JERRY

So you're saying that after thirty years in the business, no one knows us?

BERNICE

Exactly. It's a benefit, you write material for the stars. Marian Burrows'll be there.

JERRY

The senator?

BERNICE

We'll talk details at lunch -- Spago, tomorrow.

(JAKE, "recovering", mouths "Spago?!" and goes into an epileptic spasm, thrusting a pencil between his teeth.)

JERRY
Oh-kayyyy. What's the charity?

BERNICE
It's a disease. Bulbonia.

(JAKE stops, stares.)

JERRY
Bulbonia? Sounds like a country Putin's invaded.

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

JERRY
We're doing a benefit for lower lips?

BERNICE
Spago at 1.

(LIGHTS OFF on BERNICE; JERRY clicks off and thinks.)

JAKE
Bulbonia. Why couldn't we get cancer?

JERRY
Can't catch a break.

JAKE
Lips. One Angelina Jolie reference and I'm tapped.

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

(JAKE and JERRY walk into:)

SCENE 2

Elegant restaurant; i.e., table and three chairs. JAKE and JERRY sit; JERRY's uneasy.

JAKE
What's wrong? And don't say she's late, she's always late.

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

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

JERRY

Jake... we're fired. Bernie's firing us as clients. She hopes expensive food, a bullshit gig and a public setting will keep us -- well, you -- from going nuts.

(BERNICE enters.)

BERNICE

Fuck you, loser!

(JAKE and JERRY are understandably startled.)

BERNICE (cont'd)

(to Jake/Jerry)

Boys!

(We realize she's on her Bluetooth.)

JAKE/JERRY

Bernice.

BERNICE

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

(leads them to table)

So, you see the menu? Try the lamb, it's incredible.

JERRY

Isn't it like sixty bucks?

JAKE

What, did it swallow a steak?

BERNICE

So, the benefit -- Burrows needs six minutes of non-partisan political gags. And even though it's a freebie ---

JERRY

It doesn't pay?

BERNICE

It's a low-level high-profile gig. Not a lotta jobs out there for... experienced... writers. Buyers want young, they want hip, they want colors and genders.

(then)

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

JAKE

We know that.

JERRY

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

JAKE

Without the pay.

JERRY

This is shitty, Bernice. Have you even tried to get us work?

JAKE

No. Ever since she landed two guys on a series she's been sitting on her fat, shit-laden ass.

JERRY

(impressed)

"Shit-laden."

BERNICE

Calm down.

JAKE

Or what, you'll fire me more, you lying cretinous twerp-fucker?

JERRY

(to Bernice)

Twerp is iffy but fucker saves it.

JAKE

You sit at your desk drooling into your juice-cleanse praying the phone won't ring 'cause it's on the same frequency as your sphincter which is why you always wear brown.

BERNICE

(grimly calm)

Umber.

JAKE

(stands)

Fire us? You don't have the balls.

BERNICE

(to Jerry)

Didn't I just do it?

JERRY

He's in a groove.

JAKE

You putrid disgusting worm. You slimy green fungus. You gigantic piece of microscopic pond-scum.

JERRY

He took Bio in college.

JAKE

I wouldn't be your client if the planet got bulbonia and the only way to save it was to give you ten percent of an animated YouTube series 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.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

You're fired, Bernice, and when we sell our next show there'll be a character named Bernice who never does anything but somehow fucks everyone!

(trying for exit line)

And she'll be based on you!

(JAKE stomps away.)

JERRY

Are we still doing bulbonia?

BERNICE

(clenched teeth)

Your choice.

JERRY

We'll think about it.

(JERRY walks to:)

SCENE 3

Office; after. JAKE paces, furious.

JERRY

You are so immature.

JAKE

(baby voice)

You are so immature.

JERRY

You make a thoughtful point.

JAKE

(baby voice)

You make a thoughtful point.

JERRY

You asshole.

(A beat.)

JAKE

Truth? That was horrible. I can't stand feeling like I'm nothing. I'd rather be hated than ignored.

JERRY

Lucky you don't have to choose.