

"Pretty Naked People"

by

David Misch

david.misch@gmail.com

www.davidmisch.com

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PRETTY NAKED PEOPLE

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(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 just 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)

Okay, 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

No one fights in a foxhole. Anyway, who had time then, with the network notes and the star meltdowns.

(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. He 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 blowjob.

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
Please, Jake -- 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, LIGHTS UP on BERNICE, 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

(hand over phone; 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.

(to Bernice)

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-kayyy. 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!

(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. 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.

JAKE

I remember being the hottest standup in town. You ever meet Chloe?

JERRY

Wife One? No. But I've heard about her for fifteen years.

JAKE

She was ---

JAKE/JERRY

--- a waitress at the Comedy Store.

JAKE

--- and she was ---

JAKE/JERRY

--- crazy about me.

JAKE

Everyone was -- I was a star. Five years of coke and I had ---

JAKE/JERRY

--- a great future behind me.

(beat)

And no Chloe.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I heard the problem was religious. She was an atheist and you thought you were God.

JAKE

I was a hot young comic -- people fought to give me coke.

JERRY

And we're in the old days again. Yesterday on the street I got aroused by a woman because she probably looked great in the Eighties.

JAKE

I, on the other hand, am dating a twenty-year-old dominatrix.

JERRY

What's she like?

JAKE

Kinda bossy. Thanks, I'm here all week.

(then)

You're thinking about divorce.

JERRY

What?!

JAKE

Us breaking up.

JERRY

Oh. Well... Jake -- we're not selling. I think we're writing great but we're not selling.

JAKE

C'mon, we gotta stick together -- you know if a team splits up they're both screwed. Remember Greenstein and Strauss.

JERRY

Whatever happened to them?

JAKE

One's a male prostitute, other's got a meth lab.

JERRY

So they're working.

JAKE

Listen, I know you love writing -- well I love not eating dog food. I'm broke. I need a sale. Unlike some people, I didn't put all my money in T-bills.

JERRY

Yes, up your nose was a much wiser investment. Anyway, we're both richer than almost everyone in the world.

JAKE

And poorer than almost everyone we know. But we can beat this if we do it as a team.

JERRY

Yes, a team -- chained together against every law of Man and Nature in a grisly dance of death till the end of time.

JAKE

I love you too. Okay... great idea!

JERRY

(hopeful)

What?!

JAKE

No, I'm just saying that's what we need.

GINA (O.S.)

Knock knock!

(enters)

(MORE)

GINA (O.S.) (cont'd)

Will Ferrell was just in the hall handing out script assignments, you get one?

JAKE

You're mean.

JERRY

And funny.

JAKE

It's the mean I like. Funny, mean and bitter -- it's like looking in a mirror only with bigger breasts.

GINA

If I thought you could get an erection that would count as harassment.

(notices picture on wall)

You know Photoshop?

JAKE

What?

GINA

There's a good-looking woman with her arm around you, I assume it's fake.

JERRY

Dawn. Jake's second wife. We'd say "Jake rises at the crack of Dawn."

(to Jake)

That was on the Bobby Lewis Show, right?

JAKE

My first series, I learned a lot there. You know the expression "Don't shit where you eat"? I never did. Then I found out it meant don't have sex where you work.

JERRY

(to Gina)

They also call him Mr. Class.

JAKE

Dawn loved sex. She wanted it all the time. Soon I realized she didn't need me to be there. I swear, she did everyone in Hollywood. In order of height. At the end she was engaged to a midget.

JERRY

But they broke up when she screwed a leprechaun.

GINA

Who dumped her when she did a troll.

JAKE
(impressed)

Nice.

JERRY
(to Gina)

You ever considered doing standup? Or writing? Actually, forget it, we don't need the competition.

JAKE
Yeah, as a sexy female Hispanic they'd diversity-hire the fuck out of her.

(JAKE's eyes go wide and he points over his head.)

GINA
What... ?

JERRY
Invisible light bulb.
(to Jake)
You have an idea?

JAKE
(to Gina)
Wanta be our partner?

JERRY/GINA
What?!

JAKE
(to Jerry)
Like in the Fifties.
(to Gina)
Left-wing screenwriters got put on a blacklist and no one hired them. So they got fronts, someone who'd use their name for the script.

JERRY
You're not serious.

JAKE
No one's done it for years, it's nostalgia! Plus...
(sing-song)
Diversity Hire!

JERRY
Come on, how could our material pass as hers? How would she take meetings?

GINA
I say I grew up watching TV, it's all I ever wanted to do.

JAKE

See? We prep her for meetings,

(to Gina)

you smile sweetly, crack wise like with us and we do the rest.

(to Jerry)

You always say the only thing that should count is the work. They look at us and see old, let 'em look at her.

(to Gina)

How're you at lying?

GINA

Seetcoms, señor, she is all I love.

(JAKE looks at Jerry: "See?")

JERRY

What if we got caught?

JAKE

Then no one would buy our scripts. Kinda like now.

JERRY

What if it sells?

JAKE

Then we'll tell! And no one'll care.

JERRY

No. It's wrong. It's corrupt.

JAKE

Bullshit. You're just scared we'll fail and you'll be humiliated. But you're failing and humiliated right now!

JERRY

(to Gina)

They call him Golden Tongue.

JAKE

(to Gina)

And not 'cause of the way I talk.

JERRY

No. Forget it. I won't betray my principles.

JAKE

Would you stop worrying about what's right and just do what I say?!

GINA

I'm gonna play outside till Mommy and Daddy stop shouting.

JERRY

Ignore that. We're just saying you're entitled to use your advantage.

GINA

My advantage! Yes, I keep forgetting what a glorious time this is to be Hispanic in America.

JERRY

But this isn't America, it's Hollywood.

JAKE

Every exec in town has the wet dream of hiring a despised minority.

(idea; to Gina)

Ooo! Ooo! Do the accent thing! It makes you sound Mexican but sexy. Sexican!

JERRY

No, do it 'cause it's cute.

JAKE

Yeah, it makes you seem adorably helpless.

JERRY

Proud and dignified.

JAKE

Poor and uneducated.

JERRY

Innocent and hopeful.

JAKE

Sexican!

JERRY

Think of it this way -- it's using prejudice to beat the system.

GINA

It's cultural appropriation.

JERRY

You can appropriate your own culture?

GINA

Yes, I'll be blazing new trails in racism -- a Latina personifying a grotesque stereotype of Latinas.

JAKE

God, this "identity" stuff. How come everyone gets an identity but me?

GINA

'Cause you got everything else!

JAKE

Really? You see me subjugating anyone? Who'm I gonna oppress, I can't get a meeting at Hulu.

GINA

This culture marginalizes everyone who looks and acts different than you.

JAKE

Isn't it the opposite? Isn't being different what makes people famous?

JERRY

Or left for dead in an alley.

JAKE

Fine.

(re: Gina)

Hey everyone, she's Hispanic and I'm not! Woo hoo!

(to Gina)

I'm celebrating our differences.

GINA

I'm throwing up in my mouth.

JAKE

We even celebrate differently.

JERRY

Jake, could you be not... you for a minute?

JAKE

(to Gina)

Look, we may feel differently about the role of ethnic identity in contemporary society, but I think we can all agree you should do an accent so we can make money.

JERRY

As César Chavez once said. Okay, first we send Bernie a script she hasn't read using Gina's name. She'll love it and want to meet.

GINA

What if she's already seen me when she was here?

JAKE

When she was here?

JERRY

Writer comes home, there's ambulances, fire engines. Cop says "Your agent came to your house, killed your wife and kids and burned everything to the ground." Writer says "My agent came to my house?"

GINA

Fine. But how d'you know she'll love it?

JERRY

'Cause you're a young female Hispanic.

JAKE

(pointed)

With an accent. But then what -- who's Bernie supposed to call?

GINA

(seems obvious)

Me.

JAKE

Bagel girl living at home? Not believable.

JERRY

You should be in the biz.

GINA

(idea)

I work for a rap record company.

JAKE

You're not black.

GINA

I'm off-black.

JERRY

Do Hispanics like rap?

GINA

Speaking for all Hispanics, depends.

JAKE

(points over head)

You're the receptionist at PirateWhore Music.

("answers phone")

"Yo! Ho."

JERRY

Good. You and your mother answer the phone "Yo Ho" till Bernie calls. Gina, this is exciting. It could mean a new life for you.

JAKE

Yeah -- if it sells you can have... Five percent.

GINA

Five percent.

JERRY

A hot spec pilot can sell for a hundred grand.

GINA

Yo. Ho!

JERRY

(to Jake)

Hey, Bernie reps Cheryl Childs -- do we have anything for her? Something Gina could have written?

JAKE

Open on the barrio...

GINA

Yes! Then a mariachi band walks by playing "Chimichanga Morning." Suddenly a bullfight breaks out. Are you actually racist or just a douche-bag?

JERRY

Always a fine line. Hey, how about "Role of a Lifetime" with a sex change?

JAKE

That script is ten years old!

JERRY

Throw in an Instagram gag, no one'll know. But we wrote it as an acting tour de force, which isn't Cheryl.

GINA

She's gorgeous!

JAKE

Yes, she reads lines badly both with and without clothes.

JERRY

The woman can do anything.

JAKE

I wish she'd do me.

JERRY

Simmer down, son -- even if she reads it and likes it you know we'll never meet her.

JAKE

But she'll have held my words inches from her tits.

JERRY

(to Gina)

He's never lost that youthful idealism.

(to Jake)

So Cheryl's an acting teacher at a Chicago community college. But what about the law that audiences don't care about show business?

JAKE

Which is why eBay has an mp3 of Taylor Swift belching for two hundred bucks.

(off their looks)

I priced it, I didn't bid.

JERRY

"Role of a Lifetime" for Cheryl Childs. It could work.

JAKE

Is the title okay?

JERRY

"Pretty Naked People."

JAKE

Beg pardon?

JERRY

It's a title I've had for years, we could use it here.

JAKE

I gotta say -- it's great.

GINA

Is there any nudity?

JERRY

No.

GINA

Won't people feel ripped off?

JERRY

Nah. You throw the line in some dialogue, no one'll think about it.

JAKE

But you know they're gonna read it.

GINA

You're really cynical.

JAKE/JERRY

Thanks.

JERRY

(to Jake)

So now all we have to do is write it.

JAKE

That's the one part of the writing process I don't like.

JERRY

Or take part in.

JAKE

Beg pardon?

JERRY

What I mean is, your area of expertise is primarily in the arena of joke production, while I, on the other hand, write the actual fucking script.

JAKE

Or to put it another way, you type what I say.

JERRY

And we gotta remember bulbonia.

GINA

Is that a disease of the upper lip?

JAKE/JERRY

Lower.

JERRY

No one cares about the disease. It's celebs -- you do six minutes of roasting then "But tonight is all about the kids."

JAKE

Y'know, sometimes I think the best part of writing is when there's a good idea you haven't screwed up by writing it.

JERRY

Okay, Act One Scene One.

JAKE

Buzz-kill.

(JAKE, JERRY and GINA walk to:)

SCENE 4

Modest living room of a small house
(chairs, sofa); a week later.

GINA

Gimme a sec, I'll settle Mom and get you some crap.

(GINA exits.)

JERRY

Quite the hostess.

JAKE

(looks around warily)

So this is East L.A. Are we gonna get killed?

JERRY

You are racist.

JAKE

Only if we don't get killed.

(then)

So Gina's meeting Bernie, which means Bernie loved the script, which means she never read it when we first sent it.

JERRY

We knew that.

JAKE

Hey, when I clear my throat, go find Mom. Gimme some alone time with Gina.

JERRY

She's half your age.

JAKE

I'm half your age, it'll work out. Anyway, don't tell me you haven't scoped Gina -- she's got a balcony you could do Shakespeare from. Her boobs have their own zip code.

JERRY

Too old-school. Freshen it, maybe something internetty.

JAKE

You can see her boobs from Google Earth.

JERRY

There you go.

(GINA brings a tray of yellow rectangular cakes.)

JERRY (cont'd)

What're those?

GINA

My mother loves American junk food but we can't afford it so she makes her own.

JERRY

(takes cake, stares)

My God -- you don't mean...

GINA
Twinkitas!

(GINA sits, they do too.)

JAKE
Nice place.

GINA
Don't patronize me.

JAKE
Terrible place.
(GINA glares)
No, I mean it.

JERRY
Gina, if this works, it changes everything for all of us.

GINA
\$5000? It's good money but it doesn't change everything.

JERRY
You're smart, you got drive -- you could start a new life.

JAKE
Fronting for sitcom writers? If there's money in that we
should do it.

(PHONE RINGS.)

GINA'S MOTHER (O.S.)
Jo! Ho!

JERRY
(beat; then, to Gina)
Okay, we're gonna prep the shit outta you to meet Bernice --
we'll tell you what she'll say and what you say back.

GINA
In other words I'm your puppet.

JAKE
No, those are the words.

JERRY
So, she's a half-hour late...

JAKE
Fifteen years she's never on time for a meeting. "Sorry I'm
late, crazy day..."

(JAKE, JERRY and GINA walk to:)

SCENE 5

Spago (two chairs and a table), the next day. GINA goes to BERNICE; JAKE and JERRY follow -- they're not at the restaurant but "in Gina's head" giving advice. (Note: When she talks to Bernice, Gina has an accent.)

BERNICE

Hi there! I'm Bernice and you're a knockout.

GINA

Thank you so much, I hope I am not late.

BERNICE

No no, I'm always early.

(JAKE and JERRY: "What?!"; BERNICE takes GINA to the table.)

JERRY

She'll get the best table so you can watch celebrities come in.

JAKE

But it's really so everyone sees her with a hot babe.

JERRY

Small talk till the waiter comes. Don't try to be clever, just smile and look awestruck.

BERNICE

Any trouble finding the place?

GINA

I just drove till I heard a bunch of reech white people getting fatter.

(BERNICE laughs.)

JAKE

And then comes the river of shit.

JERRY

Colossal cascading crescendos of crap...

(JERRY speaks while BERNICE mouths:)

JERRY (cont'd)

"Funniest thing I ever read."

(JAKE speaks while BERNICE mouths:)

JAKE

"Amazing maturity for someone so young."

GINA

How do you know she'll say that to me?

JAKE

She said it to us.

JERRY

And then she'll say ---

BERNICE

Tell me about you.

JERRY

Remember, doesn't have to be word for word, just cover the key points.

GINA

My father came here when I was very young -- he was legal, by the way.

BERNICE

I wasn't asking!

GINA

He worked a million jobs. He was doing construction, there was an accident...

BERNICE

Oh, that's terrible!

JAKE

(to Gina)

Hey, that's wonderful! Construction accident, really clever.

GINA

(to Jake)

It's true.

JAKE

Oh shit, I am so sor---

GINA

Nah, I'm yankin' ya -- he went off with some skank. And he was illegal.

JAKE

(reluctantly admiring)

You are good.

JERRY

Now for this next point, be sure to hit "storyteller" -- it's classier than "scriptwriter."

GINA

(to Bernice)

Ever since I was a little girl I've been a storyteller. I'm very proud of my heritage but something about these Anglo seetcoms really speaks to me -- the characters, the rhythms... it's what I've always wanted to do.

BERNICE

The business is changing, Gina. Markets are dying but new ones are being born and the opportunities for young people are incredibly exciting.

JERRY

You look humble but eager.

GINA

(to Bernice; humble but eager)

No one in my family has even gone to college ---

(to Jake, Jerry)

My mother has two degrees.

(to Bernice)

--- so if I could just make a leeving that would be wonderful.

JERRY

Perfect. And it's very moving, though of course we don't expect you to well up on cue.

(GINA sniffs, wipes tear from eye; BERNICE is moved.)

BERNICE

Gina, I'm gonna make that dream come true. And nothing, I tell you, nothing is gonna stop me fr---

(stops)

What!

(stands, holds out finger to
Gina, "Wait"; she's on the
Bluetooth)

Fuck me?! Fuck you!

(BERNICE walks off.)

JAKE

You cry on cue?

GINA

It's my period, I cry when I see chocolate.

JERRY

So later Bernie'll pull out Cheryl Childs and you be impressed.

GINA

I am impressed. Cheryl Childs is an actual star!

JERRY

Enh, star-ish. She got a lotta press for that Tarantino movie where she kicked a guy to death in a bikini but she never broke through.

JAKE

She's still hot but for women in features thirty is leprosy. So she's looking at TV.

JERRY

Bernie'll send the script but from there it's a crap-shoot. I know a guy who's been waiting for Bill Murray to read since the Spanish-American War.

GINA

I'll be patient.

(JAKE, JERRY and GINA exit.)

SCENE 6

Gina's house, the next night.

(DING-DONG; GINA enters.)

GINA

(to O.S., behind her)

It's ten at night, I don't know who it is!

(to self)

But if it's not Ryan Gosling he better know how to defend himself.

(to front door)

I took karate at the Learning Annex!

(GINA walks off; DOOR OPENS.)

GINA (O.S.) (cont'd)

Madre Santa Maria.

(GINA walks in with CHERYL CHILDS; 30's, beautiful, vivacious.)

CHERYL

(extravagant Spanish accent)

Gina Gonzales!

(normal)

Bernice sent your script, I read it the instant it arrived, then I had a light supper, and then I was here.

(MORE)

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Yes, I Google Mapped but it all just happened.

(looks around intently)

So this is where you live. It's like Zanzibar before it got discovered.

(then)

Can you guess why I've come?

GINA

You liked the scr-

(remembers authorship, accent)

You have liked my screapt.

CHERYL

No Gina, I didn't "like" your script, any more than I "like" my life. Because that's what your writing is. Somehow, without knowing me, you captured my hopes, my fears, my dreams.

(CHERYL stares blankly, feels for the sofa, lets herself down.)

GINA

Are you all right?

CHERYL

I've been blind for three days.

(GINA GASPS, then realizes...)

GINA

Oh -- you have a role as a blind person.

CHERYL

(pats seat)

Come, sit by me.

(GINA does)

No, I'm not doing it for a role, I'm simply practicing my craft. And I've learned so much...

(hand on Gina's leg)

It's like I can see with my hands.

GINA

(shifts leg)

Amazink.

CHERYL

Of course I bump into things a lot.

(realizes)

Just like a blind person would! But here I am rattling on about me. You're a beautiful woman.

GINA

You can see now.

CHERYL

A woman of youth and vitality who's created a true work of art. Gina, may I be honest with you? My film career is a travesty. The only thing they can think of for me is sex. Even that superhero movie last year, I was the villain's henchwoman, I beat people up wearing lycra. But then I seduce Intestine Man's father, he goes back to Olympus, I turn into protoplasm -- must everything be a cliché? That's why your script touched me so. I will not play their game anymore. No matter the cost, I will honor my art and my true self.

GINA

By doing a seetcom.

CHERYL

And it must be a success. If not, then what? Indies? Commercials? Theater? No. You and I, Gina, we're meant for more than that. I feel it.

(CHERYL reaches for Gina's hands; GINA moves her hands to her hair.)

GINA

Amazink.

CHERYL

I must leave you.

(CHERYL stands, stares blankly, walks into a chair.)

CHERYL (cont'd)

Shit!

(then)

Tomorrow I shall tell Bernice that "Pretty Naked People" -- great title -- must take absolute Number One Top Tier Priority.

(Voice Of Destiny)

And the journey begins.

(then)

You and I, Gina, we're going to do wonderful things.

(CHERYL walks off -- into the wall. A beat, then she turns gracefully, flashes a Star Smile, and exits.)

SCENE 7

Office, the next day. JAKE rushes in with coffee as JERRY reads some pages then puts them down.

JERRY

Predictable, mechanical, uninspired and disturbingly derivative.

JAKE

So you like the benefit material.

JERRY

The turd has been polished to a lustrous sheen.

(GINA walks in.)

JERRY (cont'd)

So early! And no knock knock.

(In a daze, GINA sits.)

JERRY (cont'd)

Did Bernie call?

JAKE

Did Bernie die?

GINA

Cheryl Childs came to my house. She loved the script.

JAKE

Yes! We're gonna be rich! Rich within our wildest dreams!

GINA

Bernice set a meeting next week with the president of NTN.

JERRY

Leona McPhee, we did a pilot for her years ago. Gina -- good work.

JAKE

Gina good work? It's our script!

JERRY

Wouldn't've happened without her.

JAKE

Nothing's happened! We got a chance for a chance to have a chance.

GINA

Cheryl came on to me. She put her hand on my leg.

(JAKE and JERRY are dumbstruck.)

JAKE

Cheryl Childs is a lesbo?!

JERRY

So what happened?

GINA
Nothing. I'm not gay.

JAKE
It's Cheryl Childs! If Brad Pitt wanted me I'd be gayer than Halloween.

JERRY
(to Gina)
He would. So, a meeting with the network president is a whole different animal than kicking back with Bernie...

(JAKE, JERRY and GINA go to:)

SCENE 8

TV network office (two chairs), a week later. Same idea as lunch with Bernice; JAKE and JERRY stand next to GINA but she's actually remembering what they said the day before, as she nervously goes to LEONA (30's; smart, focussed, all business).

JAKE
But don't be nervous. Leona may seem like she holds your life in her hands but she's just another desperate, frightened flunky.

JERRY
Who holds your life in her hands.

LEONA
(shakes)
Leona McPhee. Please, have a seat.

(LEONA and GINA sit.)

LEONA (cont'd)
Right off the bat... "Pretty Naked People" -- great title.

(Watching intently, JAKE and JERRY high-five without looking at each other.)

LEONA (cont'd)
And what a terrific script. And from someone so young, who no one's heard of... It's remarkable.

JAKE
She'll say something like...

LEONA
When I read it, I literally exploded with laughter.

JERRY

When did "literally" start meaning "figuratively"?

JAKE

2009. Get with it, old man.

LEONA

The writing is so fresh and confident, yet somehow mature.

JERRY

(to Gina)

Just smile and say thanks, don't worry about being funny.

(NOTE: For Leona, GINA's got her accent.)

GINA

Thank you. Can I get paid now? And not in pésos -- Beetcoin.

LEONA

(laughs)

You're delightful. Now my staff and I discussed the script extensively and we have some thoughts about the next draft.

JAKE

She'll say it's brilliant and needs a total rewrite.

LEONA

It's wonderful, but a lot of it's in Lily's acting class and we question if audiences really care about the mechanics of show business.

JERRY

Whatever her big note is, say "It's about the people."

GINA

They weel care because I weel make them.

(LEONA nods; JAKE and JERRY are dismayed.)

GINA (cont'd)

Anyway, it ees really about the people.

(JAKE and JERRY nod approvingly.)

JAKE

In class Lily says "Let me give you an adjustment" and realizes the adjustment's hers -- new job, dealing with her ex.

GINA

You know where she says "Let me geev you an adjustment"? The adjustment is really Lily's -- a new job, a new relationship with her ex, a new sense of herself and her place in the world.

LEONA

Those are excellent ideas, Gina. But there's a larger concern...

LEONA/JAKE/JERRY

... What makes this show special.

JAKE

(idea; to Gina)

Dream sequences!

JERRY

(to Jake)

Dream sequences?

GINA

(to Leona)

The dream sequences.

JAKE

(to Gina)

She imagines herself in movies and TV shows, living out stardom fantasies ---

GINA

(hand up to Jake, "I got this";
to Leona)

She has stardom fantasies where we put her eento TV shows and movies, which means you get fantastical technology and the guest stars.

LEONA

But in a way, isn't that just doubling down on the inside-show-biz?

JERRY

Typical executive shit -- act like she's a genius who just saved the script.

GINA

(to Leona)

I theenk you are wrong.

(JAKE and JERRY gape; LEONA raises her eyebrows.)

GINA (cont'd)

It ees a good point. But the story isn't about show beezness -- it ees about a woman facing meeddle age ---

(JAKE and JERRY, horrified, mouth "Middle age?!" She's calling Cheryl Childs middle-aged?!)

GINA (cont'd)
 --- and discovering she has the strength and the smarts to
 make eet the best time of her life.

JAKE
 Actually... that's pretty good.

LEONA
 Terrific! Now I understand you and Cheryl have already...

GINA
 (forgets accent; worried)
 What?

LEONA
 Met.

GINA
 (accent back)
 Oh -- yes.

LEONA
 I think with you she'll be in very good hands.

GINA
 I know she ees hoping that.

LEONA
 Gina -- you just sold your first script.
 (GINA and LEONA smile and shake.)

JERRY
 Then comes the deadline.

LEONA
 (gives pages)
 Look over these notes, call with any questions. And I don't
 wanta put you on the spot but we're deciding the schedule
 soon -- how long for the next draft?

JAKE
 Two weeks.

JERRY
 We can't say that till we see the notes!

(GINA listens with a fixed smile.)

JAKE
 Fuck the notes, we want momentum!

JERRY
 No, we need to ---

GINA
(to Leona)

Ten days.

(JAKE and JERRY are astonished.)

LEONA
Ten days! You're very sure of yourself.

GINA
Yes, I yam.

(LIGHTS OUT as GINA, JAKE and JERRY walk away.)

JAKE
(to Gina)
Ten days?! You don't set our deadline! Our deadline is set by someone who isn't you! The deadline-setter, and you, are different people!

JERRY
(ignores Jake, to Gina)
We'll do it.

GINA
Cool.

(EFX: AUDIENCE LAUGHS; JAKE and JERRY walk to:)

SCENE 9

Office; the next day. JERRY holds a remote as he and JAKE watch the benefit on TV.

SEN. BURROWS (V.O.)
I'm a politician not a stand-up but I have the utmost respect for comedians, who've played a critical role in American history.

It was a comedian who suggested to a young soldier named George Schloshington that he change his name to something "more nation's-capitolish."

It was a comedian who first uttered the immortal words, "Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?"

It was a comedian who said "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask 'What is the deal with airplane food?'"

(JERRY clicks it off.)

JAKE
And now the phone rings off the hook.

JERRY

Yeah, everyone loves fairy tales. Did Bernie e-mail you the program?

JAKE

Yep. You saw, of course, we weren't in it.

JERRY

I couldn't get past the singing group -- the Bulboniettes.
(then)
Network script notes...

(JERRY hands a page to JAKE, who looks and responds:)

JAKE

Bullshit. Moronic. Impossible. Stupid. Wrong.

JERRY

That's it, give each critically important note careful consideration.

JAKE

"Make Lily's family more integral to the action." Bullshit!

JERRY

I don't agree -- it'll show where she comes from and where she's going.

JAKE

Oh my God, it's "character arc" again. Jerry Berkowitz, savior of the lost arc.

JERRY

I admit I consider comedy an art form, and ---

JAKE

(to Heaven)

Help me Jesus.

JERRY

--- and that it's possible to make it with craft, not just spontaneous combustion.

JAKE

Y'know what I think? You do these digs 'cause you're jealous I'm funny.

JERRY

And I'm not? I'm a Jew, for Christ's sake! I'm funny genetically! But our humor comes from being thoughtful. We have an insight, we turn things upside-down, they come out funny. We're not joke joke joke.

JAKE

Like me. You think you're so superior.

JERRY

Yes, but only in intellect, physical strength and personal hygiene.

JAKE

Jerry... if we don't sell this show, I'm quitting.

(then)

"No, Jake, don't say that."

JERRY

I feel the same way.

JAKE

You can't threaten to quit if I threaten to quit!

JERRY

I've been thinking about who I am and I've decided I wanta be different. This business makes me do things I don't believe in. My whole life, I could never imagine not being a writer. Lately I can.

JAKE

But you won't quit -- you'll dump me and get someone else. Gina!

JERRY

Gina?! What's wrong with you! The world doesn't exist to screw Jake Jenson! This is how you alienate everyone! It's not just wives you go through, it's partners. How many before me?

JAKE

Totally different, I hated them all.

JERRY

And by the end they hated you. And crap like this is why. How could I work with Gina, she's not even a writer!

JAKE

She's young, she's good-looking, she's a minority. I'm only, like, two of those.

JERRY

You know assholes aren't a minority. Jake -- I'm not dumping anyone. But in this business, selfishness is the air we breathe and I'm choking on it. I need to think about other people for a second, maybe make a difference in someone's life. I wanta leave something behind.

JAKE

Bathroom's down the hall.

JERRY

Right now we can give a leg up to a bright, energetic young woman.

JAKE

I can be energetic.

JERRY

Can you be a woman?

JAKE

Nowadays anyone can! I'll get a vagina, they're like a hundred bucks at Costco.

JERRY

Are you jealous of Gina? I thought you were hot for her.

JAKE

That was before she was a partner, you know how I feel about them.

(GINA enters.)

GINA

Knock-knock. Cheryl has notes. And she's giving 'em on her boat.

JAKE

You're going on her boat?!

JERRY

This is good.

(to Gina)

But it's a yacht. When a star says boat they're being endearingly modest.

JAKE

It's like me saying I have a normal-sized penis.

GINA

Or that women find you slightly nauseating.

(to Jerry)

I set it for Friday.

JAKE

You set it?

GINA

She asked what day was good. What's your problem?

JAKE

You -- setting deadlines, taking meetings. This is our show, you don't handle things on your own.

GINA

What was I supposed to do, say no?

JAKE/JERRY

Yes! / No!

JERRY

You did the right thing but you gotta be careful. There's a lot at stake. This is our last shot. After you reach a certain age in show business, you don't exist.

JAKE

But it's different ages. For actors it's 50.

JERRY

Writers 40.

JAKE

Actress 30.

JERRY

Producer 15.

GINA

But some of that makes sense, like actresses. People like looking at beautiful young women. I like looking at beautiful young women.

(to Jake)

No I'm not.

JERRY

But they're actors not models -- shouldn't ability count?

GINA

Not in a nude scene.

JERRY

How'd we get onto a nude scene?

JAKE

It's hard enough getting onto a nude.

JERRY

Not if you're hard enough.

(JAKE and JERRY high-five without looking.)

GINA

So you're saying that for writers, age shouldn't matter.

JERRY

This script proves it. The reason we don't work is we don't use the word "like" as a comma.

GINA
Shouldn't you know young language if you're writing for
(pointed)
like, young people?

JAKE
Don't do that.

GINA
What?

JAKE
Be right.

JERRY
Okay, let's prep for Cheryl.

GINA
I don't need prep, I'll be fine.

JAKE
You'll blow it and destroy our lives forever!

GINA
Did I blow it with Leona? I aced that meeting. I'm the one
who's out there selling. It's been awhile since you sold.

JAKE
You're planning something, aren't you. You're gonna fuck us.

GINA
Never in a million years.

JAKE
You know what I mean.

GINA
Why would I mess this up? I got a chance at real money!

JERRY
Jake, you're nuts.
(to Gina)
But there is an issue. The further this goes, the tougher it
gets. There'll be notes with words you don't know.

GINA
'Cause I'm Hispanic?

JERRY
'Cause you're a civilian. Ever heard "house number"?

JAKE
Something lame you'll replace with something better.

JERRY
"Laying pipe"?

JAKE
Setting things up.

JERRY
"Button"?

JAKE
Closing line of a scene.

JERRY
We've seen this show before -- girl pretends she wrote something, decides she's really a writer, whole thing falls apart.

GINA
That's not happening. I'm proud of what I did in the meeting but I can't write for shit.

JERRY
Okay, but we need to know our arrangement hasn't changed.

GINA
It hasn't. But I have.

JAKE
Here it comes.

GINA
I'm different. I don't apologize to furniture anymore. A lot of it's due to you, I totally get that. And I'm really grateful. When people who wouldn't look at you before treat you with respect, it changes you. Anyway, I want this to work, I have a financial interest just like you.

(JAKE smirks: "I knew it." JERRY looks at Gina.)

JERRY
Ten percent.

JAKE
Ten percent?!
(JERRY, GINA shoot looks)
--- seems quite reasonable.

GINA
Thank you, Jerry. So when am I -- you -- we -- turning in the rewrite.

JERRY
Evidently, nine days.

JAKE

You only care about you -- it's your humiliation you're worried about. Meanwhile, Gina's booking meetings, yachting with the star... she's an agent! She's Bernie!

JERRY

That's harsh.

JAKE

This isn't funny. Y'know, you're right, Gina's not trying to fuck me -- you are.

JERRY

Say wha?

JAKE

You never wanted me as a partner, the washed-up coke comic who does a hundred jokes an hour but can't write a scene. You've been plotting to get rid of me from day one.

JERRY

Plotting?! All I gotta do is circle you three times and say "I never swallowed" or some other dirty-joke punchline and we're broken up. In the eyes of the Lord, the WGA and Barney's Deli, which'll have to deliver your ham, cheese and amphetamines to a different address.

JAKE

Yeah, well I'm sick of people walking out on me. This time I'm leaving. Go ahead, take over the operation.

JERRY

Really? I get the whole operation? Listen, you wanta abuse someone, Bernie's on speed-dial -- I don't need this crap.

JAKE

And I don't need you! I quit!

JERRY

Jake ---

JAKE

You've got the notes, the fixes aren't tough, do 'em yourself. Or with Gina.

JERRY

You can't quit, this whole thing was your idea!

JAKE

Which you thought was terrible! And you're right!

JERRY

No I'm not! It's working, we're getting somewhere! More important, we've made a commitment to the network, and to Gina.

JAKE

Gina's nothing! She's a house number!

JERRY

She's a human being. Screwing other people is new for you, you've always just been self-destructive.

JAKE

I'm branching out, I'm growing as a person. It's my arc!

JERRY

You're always the victim, 'cause it proves the world's against you -- Jake the martyr, the unappreciated genius. If you get within a mile of success you sabotage it.

JAKE

Good story, write that up, maybe it'll sell. Your problem is you think this is a Disney cartoon, you're the hero, and I'm the wise-cracking talking-animal fuck-up sidekick. But this is my movie and you're the uptight self-righteous old fart who people pretend to care about while they're waiting for my next scene!

JERRY

You done?

JAKE

Yes! I'm outta here! I wouldn't be your partner if the planet got bulbonia on both lips and the only way to save it was to write a basic cable cartoon show about Charlie Sheen's balls!

JERRY

Howie Mandel's not good enough?

JAKE

Fuck you, Jerry! And... and... fuck you!

(JAKE walks out, slamming the door.)

JERRY

Needs a better button.

SCENE 10

Office, a few weeks later; JERRY's with GINA, who's got her basket.

JERRY

There's no blueberry-lime?

GINA

Jerry, I like you, I do, so I really truly mean no offense, but I hope I never reach the age where I say "There's no blueberry-lime?"

JERRY

None taken.

GINA

So how's the partner search going.

JERRY

Shitty. Everyone's too young or... Really they're just all too young.

GINA

What's wrong with young?

JERRY

I can't deal. The enthusiasm, the excitement, the optimism...

GINA

Sounds horrible.

JERRY

It's heartbreaking 'cause you know their hearts'll get broken. I need someone who won't be crushed when they're crushed.

GINA

What'd Jake say when you told him about Leona? Maybe he'll come back.

JERRY

Haven't told him yet -- I'm about to, he's on his way. But he has a job. Took him two weeks. New series starring Hal Coogan.

GINA

I'm amazed.

JERRY

I'm happy for him. Jake's a decent guy inside. Deep inside. He's just perpetually terrified everything'll go wrong. Probably 'cause it has a bunch of times. He had a shitty childhood, kinda raised himself, but he made it through. Then when things were going great, the coke hit. We knew each other a little and after his partner dumped him... he stayed at our house awhile.

GINA

You saved his life. You're a good man.

(reaches in basket)

That's why I saved you... a blueberry-lime.

(MORE)

GINA (cont'd)
 (hands it over; takes breath)
 Okay. I have news...

JERRY
 (notices watch)
 Shit! It's one! He'll be here any minute! You gotta go -- if he sees you he'll freak.

GINA
 But I have to tell y---

JERRY
 In twenty minutes. Go!

(GINA exits. JERRY looks at the muffin.)

JERRY (cont'd)
 Shit -- evidence.

(JERRY stuffs it in his mouth as JAKE rushes in.)

JAKE
 So what is it! What's so fucking important!

(JERRY has his mouth full.)

JAKE (cont'd)
 Swallow your dentures? Fine, I can wait.

(JAKE watches JERRY chew. Then, after an interminable three seconds:)

JAKE (cont'd)
 Why am I here! This is my lunch, I got no time, we work till three every night!

JERRY
 You have a job, that's the amazing thing -- congratulations.

JAKE
 Oh I know -- Leona loved the rewrite. She loved what you did without me.

JERRY
 Yes.

JAKE
 Wonderful. Terrific. I'm thrilled.

JERRY
 So even a good thing is bad for you.

JAKE
 Please, you think I'm mad you wrote it yourself?

JERRY

No, 'cause irrational, self-destructive jealousy would be so unlike you.

JAKE

I couldn't be happier. Potential payoff for me, right? Great work, can I go now?

JERRY

I asked you here 'cause... if the script gets greenlit, can you help with production?

JAKE

I doubt I'll have time. I'll ask Coogan, see what he says.

JERRY

Holy shit.

JAKE

What?

JERRY

You're lying.

JAKE

About what?!

JERRY

I don't know yet. But I saw the lie on your lips.

JAKE

This is why I quit, you're always staring at my lips. My eyes are up here!

JERRY

(realizes)

You're not on a show.

JAKE

Fuck you. What does "being on a show" even mean.

(beat)

Fine, you got me. I'm unemployed. I'm unemployable. And I broke up with my girlfriend.

JERRY

The dominatrix? What happened?

JAKE

I found out she was beating up other men.

JERRY

Ouch. Tell you what's really kinky -- deciding a girl's so hot you'll have sex with only her for the rest of your life.

JAKE

Hey, I'm into S&M not bondage.

JERRY

Nice. So you want to be Jake and Jerry again?

JAKE

No. I may be single, penniless and unemployed but... I have no end for that sentence.

JERRY

You free for lunch?

JAKE

Wouldn't you rather be with Claire?

JERRY

Enh, that's not ---
(stops abruptly)

JAKE

That's not what? What were you gonna say.

JERRY

Well. Jake. I'm divorced.

JAKE

Divorced?! From Claire?!

JERRY

No, that would've been too painful, I divorced someone I don't know.

JAKE

What're you talking about? This just happened?

JERRY

Yes. Well, five years ago.

JAKE

Five years?!

(then)

Wait -- you wouldn't have me over 'cause you were divorced and it would've been embarrassing... for five years?!

JERRY

It was an awkward period.

(then)

We're still living together.

JAKE

You're divorced and living together?! Throw in a robot shark and you're on the SyFy Network!

JERRY

Also weird is I don't pay alimony.

JAKE

Why?

JERRY

She pointed out I haven't made money for years and she makes lots.

JAKE

Wow. What'd you say.

JERRY

I said that was very generous and thanks for the emasculation.

JAKE

Did she cheat on you?

JERRY

How do you know I didn't cheat on her?

JAKE

'Cause you're you.

JERRY

Actually, I kinda did cheat. With you.

JAKE

Musta been some roofie, I don't even remember.

JERRY

Claire and I weren't happy. I wasn't paying attention to her, I was only interested in our career problems. She said I was being selfish. Ring a bell?

JAKE

You are selfish -- not telling me you're divorced cost me five years of giving you shit.

JERRY

She was right, and I knew it. After we split we tried to work it out, we had lunch a few days a week, but...

JAKE

I bet she still loves you.

JERRY

I don't know if that helps.

(then)

You didn't put any of it together -- my lunches at home, never asking you over...

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

(JAKE shrugs)

'Course you're easier to fool than most people.

JAKE

Why's that.

JERRY

'Cause you're not, how can I put this, consumingly interested in people who aren't you.

JAKE

I suppose that's true.

JERRY

(shouldn't have said it)

Jake...

JAKE

No no, it is. Sorry. Hey, y'know what's funny? You were always the guy who had everything and it turns out you're as fucked as me.

JERRY

That is funny.

JAKE

At least you've got a hot script. Things going well with Gina?

JERRY

I wish you were here. But yes, it's fun seeing her go from nothing to something.

JAKE

Bagel Bitch to barracuda.

JERRY

Better barracuda than guppie. Gina's sharp, she's ambitious -- she's made it happen as much as us.

JAKE

Jerry, she doesn't create anything.

JERRY

She's creating a deal. Maybe she will end up in the biz. And we did it -- you helped her with pitching, I helped with meetings. She got the best of both of us.

JAKE

I'll say. Anyway, I'm sorry for your divorce but no lunch, no shmooze -- Jake and Jerry is over.

(GINA enters.)

GINA
 (innocent)
 Jake! What are you doing here?

JAKE
 Oh my God -- you had sex.

GINA
 What?! Are you insane?!

GINA (cont'd)
 Are you insane?!

JERRY
 Actually, Jake's kind of a sex savant.

JAKE
 I know when anyone's done it within the last forty-eight hours.

GINA
 Well, you're right, I banged someone. Can we move on?
 (to Jerry)
 Did you tell him what Leona said?

JERRY
 Yes.

GINA
 (to Jake)
 Are you happy? You gonna be a team again?

JAKE
 No.

GINA
 So you'd rather she hated it? It's better we fail, even if it costs you money?

JERRY
 Jake's insane jealousy is very principled.

GINA
 Too bad, 'cause she didn't just like it -- Bernie says it's in the finals.

(JAKE and JERRY whoop, cheer, then stop -- GINA's uncomfortable.)

JERRY
 What?

GINA

Remember I was gonna meet Cheryl on her boat? That was... well... two nights ago.

(GINA and JERRY look at JAKE, who smiles smugly.)

JAKE

You're welcome.

JERRY

(to Gina)

Wait, I thought you were straight.

GINA

Turns out I'm bi.

JAKE

Just like that?

GINA

Listen, for a woman, going bi isn't such a stretch. I mean, sex with men is fine. But women don't think the only purpose of life is to have sex forever. After awhile we think maybe it'd be nice to keep the human race going. Which men don't give a shit about.

(woman)

"Hey honey, should we start a family?"

(man)

"Unh, I dunno..."

(woman, "tempting")

"It involves fucking..."

(man)

"Oh, okay."

JAKE

(to Jerry)

She has a point.

GINA

So some of us move on. I mean, men are so naive. You actually think you're using us when we totally use you -- for sex, for babies, and most of all, for opening jars. When we don't want sex, kids or tomato sauce, men don't enter our heads. Really, if penises didn't fit nicely into vaginas, you'd never see a woman. I mean, women are gorgeous, right? Seriously,

(re: self)

who wouldn't want some of this. I fought Cheryl off for awhile. But what was I supposed to do, say no?

JERRY/JAKE

Yes! / No!

GINA

Face it, the chick is hot, my momma didn't raise no nuns, and sometimes you go with the sex organ that's around.

JERRY

Fine, but screwing the star of your show is not good strategy.

GINA

Strategy wasn't uppermost in my mind.

JAKE

How'd it happen?

GINA

Well...

(GINA walks to:)

SCENE 11

Boat at sea. CHERYL comes out in a bikini, binoculars around her neck... on a crutch, leg up, in a cast, hopping.
(GINA's accent is back.)

CHERYL

Gina, darling! Welcome aboard!

GINA

Cheryl, what happened?!

CHERYL

Oh, lots of things.

GINA

To your leg!

CHERYL

Oh! I was in a terrible car accident. My abusive husband was driving and the police think it was deliberate. But it turns out his twin brother ---

GINA

Eet's not real.

CHERYL

It is to me -- we call it "backstory."

GINA

(deadpan)

Well, eet's incredibly convincing.

CHERYL

I know! And my boobs really jiggle when I hop!

(CHERYL demonstrates.)

GINA
Yes they do. Both of them.

(CHERYL drops the crutch, takes off the plastic cast.)

CHERYL
It's tiring, though. I don't know how handicapped people keep it up all day. Anyway, ahoy!

GINA
Deed you know that is a Spanish word?

CHERYL
"Ahoy"? Really?

GINA
No.

CHERYL
Dear Lord, you are so funny! And gorgeous! I was watching you come over but you're even hotter in person!

GINA
The beenoculars add ten pounds.

CHERYL
You must be famished after your epic journey, I'll get some snackies.

(moves in)
Did you know shrimp are an aphrodisiac?

GINA
Shreemp?

CHERYL
Well something's an aphrodisiac...

(They stare into each other's eyes; JAKE and JERRY see GINA's drifted off.)

JERRY
Gina...

JAKE
Don't interrupt, she's thinking about lesbian sex!

GINA
(snaps out)
What?

JAKE
 (to Jerry)
 Asshole.

JERRY
 Okay, you did it with Cheryl, not a disaster.

GINA
 Um...

JAKE
 What.

GINA
 Well, later on we were talking, being honest...

JAKE
 You were being honest after sex? Lesbians are fucked up.

GINA
 (to Jerry)
 And I kind of mentioned... you wrote the script.

JERRY
 (beat)
 Was it unclear that not saying that was a key part of our plan?

GINA
 I couldn't help it, she was being romantic...

(SOAP OPERA STRINGS and pink lights; GINA -- now in a robe -- runs into CHERYL's arms.)

CHERYL
 Oh Gina!

GINA
 Oh Cheryl!

CHERYL
 Oh Gina! Do you love me?

GINA
 Oh Cheryl, do you love me?

CHERYL
 Do I love you, Gina? You may as well ask if I love your script -- to me they're one and the same.

(DRAMATIC SOAP-OPERA STING as GINA winces with guilt.)

GINA

Cheryl... there ees something I must tell you -- my pass-ione leaves me no choice...

(As GINA starts to confess:)

JAKE

Oh please, that's ridiculous. I know what happened. Gina's a scheming, manipulative bitch and I guarantee you she's like that in bed.

(SEXY SAX, lurid purple LIGHTS; GINA SLAPS CHERYL.)

GINA

Ya worthless wimp, do yer job or I'll buy me someone who weel!

CHERYL

B-b-but Gina... I wanted to wait till we could get gay-married and I'd invite all my famous friends and a few selected tabloids to our gay wedding and then everything'd be perfect! And gay!

GINA

Oh, everything weel be perfect right now. I figure you'll be done in a couple minutes so I asked the crew to help out. Plus my brother may be in town.

CHERYL

Oh! My heart!

GINA

Hey, no dying of your previously-unrevealed heart condition till ya pay me for the script... the script I didn't write! Hahahahaha!!!

(As CHERYL clutches her chest:)

JERRY

Look, the only important thing is whether Cheryl's gonna tell Leona who wrote it -- it doesn't matter what actually happened.

(And we go to what actually happened; GINA, now with no accent, watches CHERYL do yoga.)

CHERYL

Nice, huh? I've only had two lessons. I heard Leona's into it.

GINA

Very impressive. And it explains a lot of your moves.

CHERYL

Oh I've had those since middle school.

(GINA mouths "Middle school?!" as CHERYL does another position.)

CHERYL (cont'd)

(looks at Gina)

Hey -- there's something different about you. You seem... more intelligent... dignified... But less sexy.

GINA

I don't have an accent.

CHERYL

You're right! That's amazing!

GINA

(wry)

So now you don't wanta do me?

CHERYL

Not as much. But still a lot. What's the idea?

GINA

I was trying to seem more authentic. By being fake. But I don't wanta play you. I'm already dealing with a lotta things.

CHERYL

Like what?

GINA

This whole situation. Being with you, a celebrity.

CHERYL

("modest")

Oh...

GINA

No, you are!

CHERYL

I said "Oh" not "No."

GINA

You and Leona and... other people... think I'm smart and skilled and valuable. It's kind of overwhelming.

CHERYL

Because that's not how you see yourself.

GINA

Oh no, it totally is. I just assumed everyone was an idiot 'cause they didn't see it.

CHERYL

I see it.

GINA

So you didn't get me to the boat just for sex.

CHERYL

Of course I did.

GINA

But why me? You probably have your choice of every hot gay girl in Hollywood.

CHERYL

Of course I do. But you're different -- you're brainy and funny and talented.

GINA

So nailing me makes you look good.

CHERYL

Yes. You gotta remember, I'm kinda stupid.

GINA

What?!

CHERYL

It's not a problem, I have a fantastic life. I've made lots of money and I really enjoy what money can buy. Including people. Pretty much everyone's nice to me and I know I don't deserve that. But it feels great. I honestly don't care if it's sincere.

GINA

Life must be so simple when you're superficial.

CHERYL

I dunno, I never think about it.

(then)

Also, I have lots of sex, which I really like. And a lot of the time I have orgasms, which are great. I mean, who doesn't like a good orgasm?

(GINA acknowledges "I do.")

CHERYL (cont'd)

I don't even mind bad orgasms!

(GINA is understandably baffled. Then:)

GINA

Cheryl, why aren't you out? It's not that big a deal now.

CHERYL

I'm essentially out. It's an open secret.

GINA

But not wide open. Not open all night.

CHERYL

Actually, open all night but closed weekdays. Look, I don't really have a lot in common with most lesbians.

GINA

Other than sex.

CHERYL

There are some shared interests.

GINA

But what's more important -- being rich and famous or living your life honestly?

CHERYL

(stares, then)

Are you well? You want some Thoradine? I keep extra in my bra. Technically it's for bipolar but it works in North America too. Also my doctor says it's not FDA-approved. What's FDA?

GINA

Wouldn't you like to feel free to express yourself as a lesbian?

CHERYL

I feel I'm expressing myself as a lesbian by having sex with women.

GINA

But you can't be who you are in public.

CHERYL

No, I just can't have sex in public.

GINA

So there are some sacrifices.

CHERYL

The studios say if people find out I'm not straight my career's over. I won't be fuckable. But I'm incredibly fuckable!

GINA

I think so.

CHERYL

They say people will know I'm faking it. But that's what acting is! Actually, that's what sex is.

GINA

Are you faking it with me?

CHERYL

No, that's the beauty... you're not rich, you're not famous -- there's nothing at stake!

(realizes)

Oh shit, that was shitty. I didn't mean it, I really like you.

(decides)

I'm gonna come out. I'll make an announcement.

GINA

I'm sure you will.

CHERYL

Anyway, you may not be rich or powerful but you wrote a fantastic script. When I read it, I knew I had to be with the author.

GINA

Trust me, you do not want to have sex with the writer of your script.

CHERYL

(moves close)

I think I do.

GINA

Jerry Berkowitz.

CHERYL

Oh yeah, Jewish names get me hot.

GINA

They do?

CHERYL

No, I'm just trying to work with you.

GINA

Jerry Berkowitz and Jake Jensen wrote "Pretty Naked People" -- they got me to pretend I wrote it so it'd sell.

CHERYL

My God. Does Leona know?

(GINA shakes her head.)

CHERYL (cont'd)

This is terrible! Gina, I don't think you realize... my career is hanging by a thread -- a thread made out of TV! If Leona finds out she'll drop the script, and me, in a heartbeat. Wait... but that means if I tell her, I'm the hero -- brave, honest, willing to risk everything because of my uncompromising commitment to Truth!

GINA

Or Leona could say to hell with all of us.

CHERYL

Not if I'm convincing. Not if I make it... the role of a lifetime!

GINA

Yes, that was the original title of the script.

CHERYL

Leona's on a retreat at some lodge, choosing the new shows. I'll go! I'll go in disguise!, as a bellhop or something, then reveal myself as me! It'll be amazing and funny and moving and honest and show I'm not just a beautiful face. And body! Then I'll let it all out, everything I feel. It will truly be... the role of a lifetime!

GINA

Please stop saying that.

CHERYL

This is what I'm meant for, what my whole career's been leading up to -- the big dramatic gesture that saves the day!

GINA

Great, but y'know what's even better? Not doing anything. Berkowitz and Jensen have a plan and it's working. They'll tell Leona after she greenlights it.

CHERYL

Gina, you're young, you're naive. I know this business. I know Leona.

GINA

You do?

CHERYL

Not at all but you're missing the point. I'm a star -- I don't cower in the corner. This is my moment and I'm going big. It's all or nothing, baby, you and me together.

GINA

I guess I could come with.

CHERYL

No, you're not listening -- you and me together but separate.
You stay with Jenkowitz and Birkin ---

GINA

Berkowitz.

CHERYL

Jenkowitz and Berkowitz? That is so Jewish.

GINA

Cheryl ---

CHERYL

Don't be scared. I'll do the thinking for both of us.

GINA

That's a line from "Casablanca" -- you think I don't know
movies?

CHERYL

All right, Gina, I'll speak from my heart. I'm gonna do the
thing... that we're talking about... and we'll get what we
want... and... that'll be great. And then we'll... y'know...
do stuff.

(Beat.)

GINA

Boy do you need a writer.

(JERRY brings GINA, and us, back to the present.)

JERRY

Cheryl's going to the retreat? Where is it?

(CHERYL exits as GINA goes to Jake and Jerry.)

GINA

Mammoth Mountain, Jasper something.

JAKE

Jasper Springs. They used to have chi-chi orgies. I went
there once and spent a year on amoxicillin.

JERRY

Cheryl's an idiot, she'll ruin everything.

GINA

No, 'cause I'm going and I'll stop her.

JAKE

What?!

JERRY

No! Gina, that's crazy!

GINA

I'm not asking permission. You guys wanta save your careers, I'm trying to save my life. You got your pride, I got doctors and drugs. I'll change Cheryl's mind.

JAKE

How?!

GINA

If necessary, I'll fuck her speechless.

(That shuts them up. Then...)

JAKE

I'm going too.

JERRY

You're going to the retreat?

JAKE

I'm going on the attack. I won't get kicked down again, I'm moving forward.

JERRY

At the retreat.

JAKE

Kudos on the ironic wordplay but now's the time for action. Carpe diem.

(to Gina)

It means fish of the day.

JERRY

You're both making an unbelievable mistake. So I'll make it too -- we'll go together.

GINA

Good. I'm gonna pack.

(GINA hurries off.)

JAKE

I was right! She's gonna have Cheryl say Gina wrote the script!

JERRY

No -- Gina's getting played! Cheryl's only using her for sex, she'll forget Gina the minute it sells!

JAKE

No -- we gotta stop Gina from stealing our script!

JERRY

No, we gotta stop Cheryl from using Gina!

JAKE

Okay, let's just go and stop someone from something!

JERRY

The plan is totally screwed. I'll pick you up after I pack, but I'm only bringing enough underwear for two days.

JAKE

That's the worst threat I've ever heard.

SCENE 12

Hotel lobby, the next day. CHERYL goes to the front of the stage, faces the audience, smiles fetchingly, speaks to a desk clerk (unseen).

CHERYL

Hello, I'm Cheryl Childs.

(laughs)

No, not the actress, the movie star! So... a very important woman is coming in later and I wanta play a little trick on her. A prank! Like "Punk'd", remember that? I have Ashton Kutcher's pool-guy.

It's very simple -- I'll go behind your desk and when she comes in, I'll pretend to be an ordinary unimportant desk clerk... and then I'll reveal I'm me! Get it?!

(no response)

Okay, you don't have to laugh. Or smile. So whaddya say?

(frowns)

No?

(smiles fetchingly, takes out bill)

Well, perhaps I can change your mind with a little photo of Mr. Andrew Jackson.

(No; takes out another bill)

Not many people know he was a twin.

(smile/grimace; takes out more)

One of ten twins.

(drops smile)

Oh for fuck's sake, how much.

(grimaces, hands money; "under her breath")

Just because something's wrong doesn't mean it has to be expensive.

(pulls out wig)

"Bridget Jones's Baby"? I was up for the Emma Thompson part. Watch...

(bad accent)

'ello. Ayem a British desk clerk. Welcome to Jasper Springs Resort and Spa.

(MORE)

CHERYL (CONT'D)

(herself, proud)

And that was a cold read. Okay, you can run along.

(GINA comes up; CHERYL turns and speaks before seeing who it is.)

CHERYL (cont'd)

'ello! Ayem a British desk clerk ---

(sees, stops in amazement)

GINA

Cheryl!

CHERYL

You recognize me?

GINA

Well of course---

(recalibrates)

not. But I'm surprised to see you without a disability.

CHERYL

I have Celiac Disease. It's internal.

GINA

I was just thinking about you because ---

CHERYL

" --- because in the first flush of youthful infatuation, everyone looks like your lover." That's from "Tender Greens." Period piece. I've never done a period piece. Anne fucking Hathaway. I would've had a bodice. Can you imagine what my boobs would look like in a bodice?

(CHERYL and GINA both stare dreamily into space, imagining, then GINA snaps out of it.)

GINA

Cheryl, I came to stop you. Leona's getting away from show biz, she won't wanta see you.

CHERYL

I'm not gonna just give up -- I drove from Brentwood!

GINA

Gimme a half-hour to convince you.

CHERYL

(grins)

Make it an hour.

(GINA and CHERYL hurry out.)

SCENE 13

Hotel bench; JAKE and JERRY watch GINA and CHERYL leave.

JAKE

Ah, young love. It's so much better than masturbating.

JERRY

Well, I guess we're off on another zany adventure. Does it bother you that after long and distinguished careers in screenwriting, we can't use our names on a script?

JAKE

No. If we can be players again, who the hell cares how we do it?

JERRY

I the hell cares. We're here hoping a girl fucks an actress into lying about our script -- you don't find that humiliating?

JAKE

I think it gives me a hard-on.

JERRY

You're not sure?

JAKE

I buy pants a size too small so I never know if I'm sexually excited or chafing.

JERRY

Always a fine line.

(then)

If this doesn't work, you gonna keep writing?

JAKE

I guess. I could try a book. A blog. A podcast. Decorative cocktail napkins.

JERRY

You know how competitive that is?

JAKE

At least I'm in the game again. I refuse to be an old fart.

(A beat.)

JERRY

I didn't tell you something.

JAKE

You divorced Claire again?

JERRY

I have a pacemaker.

JAKE

A pacekmaker?! You have a pacemaker?!

JERRY

Yes, but having you repeat it loudly really eases the trauma.

JAKE

Can I see it?

(JERRY opens his shirt)

Well, that's weird. Hey, is it a problem if I make...

(sudden)

loud noises!

JERRY

It's a pacemaker not a soufflé.

(then)

Makes you think, though. When you're born, all you do is cry and shit. Then right before you die, all you do is cry and shit. What's the point?

(then)

But I don't feel old. I don't "identify" as old.

JAKE

So what are you?

JERRY

I don't know, I just got here. But I know I'm not done. I hope I'm just starting. Age is only a number, right?

JAKE

Yes, but in your case a really big one.

(then)

Two ninety-year-olds go to divorce court. Judge can't believe it -- "Why are you getting a divorce now?" Man says

JAKE/JERRY

"We were waiting for the kids to die."

JAKE

Meanwhile, I had sex with a barista.

JERRY

Part of the grieving process for your dominatrix? Jake, you've been screwing twenty-year-old women your whole life -- what does it solve?

JAKE

My need to screw twenty-year-old women.

(then)

Maybe it's to prove I still matter. That I'm not nothing.

JERRY

Well that took a turn.

JAKE

Sex makes me feel alive... needed... even if it's just for a minute or two.

(quickly)

Or an hour. And a half.

JERRY

(smiles)

You asshole.

(then)

Look, let's be honest -- fifteen years there's always been one big thing between us.

JAKE

My enormous penis?

JERRY

That. Jokes. Same argument over and over -- for you the joke is everything and everything else can die... story, character, mood. But, and I know I've said this before, great comedy's not just jokes. It's gotta have something behind it, beneath it. To make it bigger.

JAKE

But does it? Isn't it enough to just be funny? You know how tough that is -- isn't it enough to make someone laugh? For a second, a half-second, less! For one tiny tiny moment, to be... happy. Isn't that the point? Isn't that what everyone wants? What's bigger, what's more, than happiness?

JERRY

(amazed)

Who are you?

JAKE

I'm a comedy writer.

(then)

Yes, I think I'm better with one-liners but you make the script go somewhere, you make it mean something. With you it is a craft. And you're good with... you know how to... you're really, y'know...

JERRY

Articulate?

JAKE

That's the word. And you're funny.

JERRY

Thanks.

JAKE

You never liked me.

JERRY

What?

JAKE

"Outside of our professional relationship I don't particularly like you."

JERRY

A joke. A mean, stupid joke. There isn't money in the world to make me spend fifteen years eight hours a day with someone I don't like, who doesn't keep me entertained, and infuriated, every minute of those hours.

(thinks)

JAKE

You're thinking about the time away from Claire, whether if you hadn't been with me you'd still have your marriage.

JERRY

Maybe you do know me.

JAKE

I know you're a good guy. Better'n me. I never said how much it meant, what you did for me.

(then)

I make fun of your pride thing. But it's really self-respect. And I'm jealous of that.

JERRY

And I'm kind of in awe of your energy and inventiveness and relentlessness.

JAKE

That's... good to hear.

(Beat.)

JERRY

We are now officially our own joke: "Two old Jews sitting on a bench..."

JAKE

As you know, I'm not Jewish -- I just grew up in New York and I write comedy and complain a lot.

(realizes)

Holy shit, I'm Jewish.

(GINA enters.)

JERRY

Well?

GINA

Well what?

JAKE

Well Cheryl! You were getting her not to tell!

GINA

Oh yeah. That's not gonna happen.

JAKE

Did you even try to convince her?

GINA

As it turns out, no. I like Cheryl. And she wants to do this. She asked me not to pressure her.

JAKE

Who're you gonna listen to, the woman you're having sex with or two guys you barely know!

GINA

I agree she's making a mistake but I won't use our relationship to change her mind -- it's degrading.

JAKE

You're having sex with a sitcom actress, I think degrading's behind you.

GINA

(to Jerry)

You understand, right? When this started I was nothing, now I'm something. Yes, a lot of it's fake, it's your script not mine, but unless everyone's lying, you all think there's something to me. I use Cheryl, I'm as cynical as everyone else.

JERRY

I admire that, Gina. And yes -- Cheryl, Leona, me, even Jake, we all see you're special. Even if the script dies you're going places, I promise you.

JAKE

(to Gina)

Cheryl's gonna tell Leona you wrote it, right?

GINA

Oh for God's sake.

JERRY

Jake, that's bullshit. But...

(to Gina)

I didn't want to say this -- I think Cheryl's using you.

GINA

That's bullshit. She and I have a real connection. And if I'm wrong about that, tough for me.

(to Jake)

Cheryl knows you wrote the script Leona loves -- why would she sell you out for someone who can't write a laundry list? So listen up -- I'm not naive and I'm not cheating you, I want all of us to make money. Right now Leona's at yoga -- when she's done Cheryl'll tell her the truth and whatever happens happens. You guys might as well go.

JAKE

Go?!

GINA

Or don't, I don't care. I have a ride.

JERRY

(to Jake)

She's right.

JAKE

No she's not! About what?

JERRY

We're done here. Let's go home.

JAKE

No one's going ho---

(stops)

Okay.

JERRY

That was an abrupt change of heart.

JAKE

You're right -- Cheryl tells or doesn't, Leona freaks or doesn't, either way it's over. I'll get the car.

(JAKE hurries off; JERRY darkens.)

GINA

What's wrong?

JERRY

It's my car, he doesn't have the keys.

(realizes)

He's gonna find Leona. He's gonna kill the deal!

GINA

How?!

JERRY

I have no idea! Now's the part where we run!

(JERRY and GINA rush out.)

SCENE 14

Yoga studio; LEONA finishes up as JAKE appears and sees her.

JAKE

Yes. Let it begin.

(JAKE walks in.)

LEONA

Oh, sorry, do you have the room now?

(JAKE moves towards LEONA, grim and determined. His fists clench and unclench; his fierce glare throbs with years of frustration. Suddenly, he drops to his knees, sobbing.)

JAKE

I wrote it!

LEONA

What the hell?

JAKE

I wrote it!

LEONA

(nervous)

Of course you did.

JAKE

Technically Jerry and I wrote it.

LEONA

(edging out)

You and Jerry must be very proud...

JAKE

I'm not crazy!

LEONA

Of course not.

JAKE

Jensen and Berkowitz.

LEONA

Yes! Jensen and Berkowitz.

(looks at wrist, where there's
no watch)

Ohmahgosh, look at the time, I'm late for a thing...

(starts to leave, then)

(MORE)

LEONA (CONT'D)

Wait a minute -- Jensen and Berkowitz... You're Jerry Berkowitz!

JAKE

No!!!

LEONA

Jake Jensen?

JAKE

Yes!!!

LEONA

What're you doing here?!

JAKE

"Pretty Naked People" is our script! Gina's fronting for us!

LEONA

Are you still being insane?

JAKE

I'm not crazy, I'm desperate! Please! You gotta know the truth, then you gotta greenlight the script, then you gotta give me money!

LEONA

It's a lovely plan. But if Gina's a front, why tell me now?

JAKE

I don't trust her. I don't trust Cheryl. I don't trust Jerry!

LEONA

Right. Okay, thanks.

JAKE

This wouldn't've happened if society hadn't thrown us away 'cause we're old, 'cause of its stupid obsession with youth!

LEONA

Didn't that start when everyone was obsessed with your generation?

JAKE

Don't be right!

(then)

Okay, maybe we were a little full of ourselves. Maybe we thought old people were idiots, they couldn't be hip or sharp or talented. But I admit it, we were wrong -- it turns out young people are idiots!

LEONA

Are you calling me an idiot?

JAKE

Yes, if you don't make the pilot! Don't you see, this is my last chance to be immortal! Even if it's only for a few years.

LEONA

I gotta think this over.

JAKE

No, don't think!, just do what I say!

(then)

I'm scared, Leona. I need this sale. That's why I'm stripping myself naked in front of you.

LEONA

Metaphorically. Please God, metaphorically.

JAKE

Literally!

(JAKE starts pulling off clothes, down to his under-pants.)

JAKE (cont'd)

You'll help me if you see me, really see me! This is who I am, and it's not pretty!

LEONA

(closes eyes)

No, it's not.

JAKE

Open your eyes! To me and the script! You know it's great and it's mine!

LEONA

I thought you co-wrote it.

JAKE

Yeah, but most of the good parts are me.

LEONA

Does Cheryl still wanta do the show?

JAKE

Are you kidding? She's desperate too! It's not hard to find Cheryl Childseses -- throw a bag of rocks at Burbank Boulevard there'll be a dozen desperate mid-thirties actresses with concussions!

LEONA

She's attached to the script -- without Cheryl there's no deal.

JAKE

Oh come on, what kind of world would this be if we were loyal to the people we make promises to. It'd be chaos!

LEONA

I have to think about what's right in this situation, what's ethical.

JAKE

Now you're just babbling.

LEONA

So Cheryl didn't know what you and Jerry and Gina were doing, and now Jerry, Gina and Cheryl don't know what you're doing. That is officially too much drama for a comedy.

(LEONA starts to leave.)

JAKE

You're leaving?

LEONA

Yeah -- wanta come over and see my flatware?

(JAKE, astonished, mouths "Flatware?!")

LEONA (cont'd)

Truth is, Jake, I don't give a shit who wrote "Pretty Naked People." It's a terrific script and I'm tempted to pull the trigger.

JAKE

Okay then!

LEONA

But I'm not going to.

JAKE

W-t-fuck?! Why not?! Wait. I know. It's...

JAKE/LEONA

Cheryl.

LEONA

We all know her career's on the edge. You, or whoever, wrote a helluva part. But to play all those different characters? Cheryl Childs doesn't have the chops.

JAKE

Are you saying --- ?

LEONA

It's a pass.

JAKE
So you'll think about it.

LEONA
No, I'm passing.

JAKE
Till you have a chance to think about it.

LEONA
I am rejecting your pilot. I am rejecting "Pretty Naked People." The answer to whether I'll go forward with your script is no.

JAKE
Okay. Just think about it.

(LEONA emits a sound of intense frustration...)

LEONA
(sound of intense frustration)

(... then walks out.)

JAKE
Fine! You can take away this sale but you'll never take away my dignity!

(JAKE drops to the floor, sobbing. JERRY comes in, goes to Jake.)

JAKE (cont'd)
Don't pity me. I am not pathetic.
(looks at self)
Actually, I define pathetic.

JERRY
(hands clothes)
Why, Jake. Why'd you do it.

JAKE
Because you lied. The divorce, the pacemaker -- you lied, so I couldn't trust you.

JERRY
Okay, and when did you become a twelve-year-old girl? We never told each other everything, we were business partners! And friends, yes, but cut the crap -- I didn't betray you and that's not why you did this.

JAKE
Then why did I?

JERRY

You're asking me? Everyone knows Jake Jensen is an enigma wrapped in a mystery wrapped in a pile of flaming bullshit.

(GINA enters and sees Jake half-naked, sniffing, on the floor.)

GINA

At a zoo once, I saw a bear with diarrhea. But this is gross.

JAKE

I'm sorry, Gina. I didn't want you to see me this way unless we were wrestling in jello.

GINA

You asshole. What happened?

JAKE

Leona's not gonna do the pilot. She doesn't think Cheryl has the chops.

GINA

But Cheryl doing it was the whole idea!

JAKE

An idea Leona now thinks is shit.

JERRY

Okay, didn't see that coming.

JAKE

That's it then. I'm finished.

JERRY

You're not finished.

JAKE

I'm broke, no job, sitting on the floor in my underwear, humiliated by a network executive twenty years younger than me... that's close to being finished.

GINA

(mutters)

"Close to"?

JERRY

You're wrong, Jake. You're not done. None of us are. We're the Boomers. Sure, we're old now, but we're still the grooviest generation ever. We let our freak-flags fly. Black was beautiful, sisterhood was powerful, hippie was happy. We tuned in, we turned on, we dropped out, we got back to the garden. We stopped a war. We got rid of our evil President. We had the best sex, the best drugs, the best rock 'n roll, the funkiest flicks, the hippest hair, the coolest clothes.

JAKE

There are good movies now.

JERRY

Shaddup, I'm on a roll. We've been there, we've done that and we're ready for whatever's next. Bring on the psychedelic walkers, the denim Depends. Bring on that motherfucker Death. Hell no, we won't go! They can't scare us with pacemakers and Alzheimer's and cancer -- we faced down Vietnam, bad acid and disco. Bring it, eternity! Bring it, mortal coil! Bring it, vale of tears! We'll drop when we're done and we'll leave like we lived -- with a bang. Banging, if we can. We'll be senile delinquents! And when that lame-ass Goth with the bent sword comes for us, I guarantee you one thing -- our deaths are gonna be groovy!

(Beat.)

JAKE

That makes me feel better?

GINA

Can we go now, before someone reports us?

JERRY

No one's gonna report a naked man in a yoga studio.

(A SECURITY GUARD enters.)

GUARD

We got a report of a naked man in a yoga studio.

JERRY

Next room over.

GUARD

Okay, let's go. I'll get to the bottom of this.
(grabs Jake)

C'mon.

JERRY

Y'know what sucks?

JAKE

Everything?

JERRY

I think Leona's wrong. Cheryl Childs has chops. We put her down but she's barely ever been asked to act. With "Pretty Naked People" I think she woulda shocked the hell outta everyone.

GINA

So do I.

JAKE

So do I.

GUARD

So do I.

(They look at the GUARD, amazed and amused.)

JERRY

You a big Cheryl Childs fan?

GUARD

The biggest.

(removes moustache, padding)

In fact, I think I can safely, and maybe a little sadly, say...

(voice changes)

... no one's a bigger Cheryl Childs fan than me.

(It's CHERYL. Jaws drop.)

CHERYL

I may not be much of an actress but I look great in a moustache.

GINA

Holy shit. You can act!

(GINA grabs CHERYL and they KISS.)

JERRY

Cheryl, that was amazing!

(to Jake)

Wasn't that amazing?!

JAKE

(to Jerry, but staring at Gina and Cheryl)

Sorry, were you saying something?

JERRY

Cheryl...

CHERYL

(still kissing)

Sorry, were you saying something?

JERRY

Cheryl, seriously -- do that for Leona and we got a show.

GINA

Really?

JERRY

We'll find her right now, blow her mind, and the next thing you know Cheryl'll be on set saying ---

SCENE 15

Apartment living room, three months later; CHERYL's on a cell.

CHERYL

I'm moving back to Boston. How can I interior design in Los Angeles? Their interiors've all been designed and their exteriors've all been Botoxed!

(AUDIENCE LAUGHTER)

... What? Oh shut up, Bernice, you lying, cretinous twerp-farter.

(LAUGHTER, APPLAUSE)

Oh, and by the way ---

(to camera)

I'm gay.

(realizes)

Lesbian. Actually, I've been with some guys. So, bisexual. But mostly gay. Also, I have a nut allergy.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Cut! What's happening? I never got these new pages.

CHERYL

They aren't pages, they're me. I just came out on national television.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Cheryl, you know the show isn't live -- we can just do another take.

CHERYL

Oh. Yes. I knew that. But no other takes -- that's what we broadcast. Or I walk.

(APPLAUSE, CHEERS; CHERYL smiles and curtseys.)

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

In that case, cut! Moving on...

(GINA comes out with a clipboard; CHERYL looks woozy and GINA grabs her.)

GINA

Whoa! You okay?

CHERYL

A little faint.

GINA

Celiac Disease?

CHERYL

Fucking shock. I can't believe I did it.

GINA

You were wonderful. And genuinely brave.

CHERYL

I really am.

(her CELL DINGS; looks)

Wow! Audience people tweeted it and they're praising me for my inspiring courage! The last time that happened is when I gained ten pounds and went to the beach. God I love low expectations.

(picks up water, shakes head;
to off-stage)

Would someone please find me the right kind of water -- lesbians have to hydrate just like normal people.

(to Gina)

Let's go to my trailer and celebrate.

GINA

I gotta talk to Jake and Jerry, be there in a sec.

CHERYL

You better -- the caterer is a young blonde and she doesn't make you wait to eat.

GINA

Cheryl, act your age not your bra size.

CHERYL

They're actually about the same.

(then)

What can I say, I like pretty women.

GINA

So do I. But one at a time.

CHERYL

Gina, I'm gonna love you till the day I don't.

(CHERYL exits; LIGHTS UP on Jake and Jerry.)

GINA

Guys, I wanta apologize again about the script.

JERRY

What? Other than the dialogue, characters and premise, it's exactly what we wrote.

JAKE

But explain to me, what's a "twerp-farter"?

GINA

What could I do? Officially I'm Associate Producer but I'm just a glorified P.A. But I love the job. And I know I keep saying it but that's all on you and I'm so grateful. What they did to you is horrible! I told everyone you'd be the greatest producers! They wouldn't listen!

JERRY

You tried your best.

JAKE

They wouldn't listen.

GINA

I owe you everything. And some day I'm gonna hire you myself.

JERRY

You don't have to make that promise.

JAKE

I consider it legally enforceable.

CHERYL (O.S.)

Gina!

GINA

(smiles)

Duty calls.

(GINA hurries off.)

JAKE

Speaking of happy couples, I'm seeing someone new and she's kinda special.

JERRY

'Cause she doesn't need help with her homework?

JAKE

Actually, she's an elderly woman, in her thirties. And if that's not weird enough, she likes me. Pretty much every girl I've ever been with, all they wanted was money or drugs or the incredible sex. This woman actually likes me. And that turns me on. Sick, right?

(sees)

Whoa! Here she is!

(LEONA enters; she and JAKE kiss. JERRY's in shock.)

JERRY

Get some coffee, I gotta do a spit-take.

JAKE

(to Leona, re: Jerry)
Always with the jokes.

LEONA

I'm hiding in the audience, don't want the boss to spook everyone.

(to Jerry, who gapes)
Having some trouble processing?

JERRY

Some.

LEONA

I saw him in his underwear and I liked his body.

JERRY

You think Jake has a good body?!

LEONA

I didn't say it was good, I said I liked it. And he's funny. And he's nuts. What girl can resist that?

JERRY

But seriously.

JAKE

Hey, I'm standing here.

LEONA

Seriously? With Jake you never know what's gonna happen. And I hate knowing what's gonna happen.

(to Jake)
I gotta get back -- see you tonight. Oh, and bring your penis.

(CELL RINGS, sees readout)

Shit...

(clicks; fake cheery)

Bernice!

(During the following, LEONA just happens to be facing upstage whenever BERNICE talks.)

BERNICE (O.S.)

Leona -- I'm at the taping and I saw that scene with the phone call.

LEONA

Bernie, I'm just a suit, I had nothing to do with the script.

BERNICE (O.S.)

Well, whoever did it... I love it! "Bernice, you lying, cretinous twerp-farter" -- classic! And the way she never does anything but somehow fucks everyone? Genius!

LEONA

Well we're happy you're happy.

(LEONA clicks off, points at Jake, then at her crotch, then exits.)

JERRY

Wow. Look, I hate to ruin the moment, but...

JAKE

You're gonna retire.

JERRY

What?! How'd you know that? I didn't think of it till I started to say it!

JAKE

I could see it on your lips.

JERRY

Actually, I think I retired when I saw you in your underwear. Also, my testicles disappeared.

JAKE

Probably coincidence. So you've officially aged out?

JERRY

No, I meant what I said. I still have stuff to do but show biz isn't right for me anymore and I wanta find out what is.

JAKE

That's pretty gutsy. For a man your age.

JERRY

I didn't know what was coming next when I was twenty and that worked out. I'll read, travel, maybe date a little.

JAKE

Women who looked great in the Eighties.

JERRY

I may change it to the 2000's. And you?

JAKE

I've been doing some thinking. Especially about the resort, and why I did what I did.

JERRY

Figured it out?

JAKE

I was scared I couldn't make it alone. That I needed a partner. You. I hated that. So I acted like a self-centered asshole. Don't say it's not true.

JERRY

I'm being very quiet.

JAKE

My wives, my other writing partners, I didn't know any of 'em were leaving till they were out the door. But you, Jerry, you I noticed. You're the one relationship I've ever kept going. But now... well, Leona's wonderful and I'm gonna have some money. Hey, if the series is a hit I'll be able to do coke again!

JERRY

Oh Jake, you and your wacky drug addiction.

(then)

So, since we're really broken up -- wanta have lunch tomorrow? Just non-professional Jake and Jerry?

JAKE

I wouldn't be Jake and Jerry with anyone but you.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Places, everyone -- Chinese food scene!

JERRY

(to Jake)

Chinese food scene?

(JAKE shrugs)

Hey -- you wanta exit stage left?

JAKE

Why not. We've seen this show before.

(JAKE puts his arm around JERRY and they walk off.)

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

And... action!

BLACK-OUT.

THE END