

Everything's Jake

by

Michael Bettencourt

67 Highwood Terrace #2, Weehawken NJ 07086

201-770-0550 • 347-564-9998 • michaelbettencourt@outlook.com

<http://www.m-bettencourt.com>

Copyright © by Michael Bettencourt

Offered under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

FADE IN:

EXT. - PARK - MORNING

Nice pocket park with benches, trees, just off a busy street. TRAFFIC sounds, but only just barely.

JANE already on one bench, coffee and a scone in hand. JAQUIE comes in carrying a bag with the same and sits. Jane is very nervous, twitchy.

JAQUIE

It is so good to see you.

A simple caress, but Jane does not respond.

JANE

Good to see you, too.

JAQUIE

Your message sounded worried. You look worried.
What is up?

JANE

Everything's fine.

Jane takes a sip.

JANE

Too hot.

JAQUIE

So the distraught tone in your 2 a.m, message—just
my imagination?

JANE
(another sip)
I wasn't "distraught." Still too hot.

JAQUIE
And the fact you didn't return my beautifully solicitous
message at 2:05 a.m. is because—

JANE
Time just got away—

JAQUIE
And your "everything's fine" is supposed to convince
this highly evolved Star-Trekkian-type being that
everything is, well, fine?

JANE
Everything is fine.

JAQUIE
So why are we here?

Jane prepares to take a third sip of the coffee that's obviously still too hot. Jaquie stops her.

JAQUIE
Nothing cools that fast except a royal marriage. Look
at me. Look at me.

Jane looks, looks away, looks back, etc. while they talk, ready to spout something but can't.

JAQUIE
How long? C'mon.

JANE
A year.

JAQUIE
How often do we talk to each other?

JANE
Often.

JAQUIE

How close are we? C'mon.

TOGETHER

"Dirt and roots."

JAQUIE

You do remember the day—

JANE

In that book discussion group.

JAQUIE

The topic?

JANE

Gender slavery. With that dyke group leader—

JAQUIE

—her sacred womyn [pronounced "wimmin"]
handshake—

JANE

—"solidarity hand-jive" you called it—

JAQUIE

Shall we?

They do their handshake. Jane laughs, nervously.

JAQUIE

Good. Now I recognize you. Out with it.

Jane picks up the coffee cup; Jaquie gives her a playful but sharp look. Jane puts it down.

JANE

I need to talk—with you.

JAQUIE

Remember: Star-Trekkian.

Jane looks away, peeved and nervous.

JAQUIE

Sorry. What is it, really? Which bastard boyfriend this time?

JANE

It's not about that—surprise, surprise. Something—more important.

JAQUIE

More important than the bastard boyfriend du jour? I'm shocked—

Jane looks as if she is in pain.

JAQUIE

Sorry again—didn't mean to make fun—you know that. Just tell me.

A glance, a hesitation, a deep breath.

JANE

I've decided to become a pre-operative transsexual.

Silence, then more silence.

JAQUIE

Repeat.

JANE

I've decided to become a pre-operative transsexual.

JAQUIE

(overlapping)

—pre-operative— This is—not what I expected—

More silence.

JAQUIE

Why?

JANE

I'm tired of being a woman!

JAQUIE

Have you explored what this means?

JANE
Sure.

JAQUIE
Really explored?

JANE
Yes. Absolutely.

JAQUIE
Consulted the physicians and read the books and talked with others who have gone the “F-t-M” route?

JANE nods yes.

JAQUIE
And you’re emotionally ready to suffer the hormonal treatments, the reassignment surgery, the years of therapy, abandonment by everyone you know and love?

JANE
Abandonment?

JAQUIE
It happens.

JANE
Yes, yes, I’ve done all that!

JAQUIE
And you would be better off as a man?

JANE
Don’t use that tone! I hate it when you treat me like I’m—

JAQUIE
What?

JANE
Like I’m not serious. I have thought long and hard.

Jane indicates her body.

JANE

I need to escape from this. I need the advantages—

JAQUIE

(tenderly)

You don't know step one about what you're saying.

JANE

You're doing it again!

JAQUIE

Then if you're so sure, Jane, stand up to me.

JANE

All right.

JAQUIE

Stand up to me.

JANE

All right! I suppose you think the "monthly flow" is a marquee event? Along with breast cancer, and cervical cancer, and uterine cancer, and hot flashes and estrogen cocktails, and osteoporosis, and lower benefits from Social Security and higher prices at the dry cleaners—it's too much work to be a goddess. Give me drumming in the woods! Give me Zeus! Yeah!

Jaquie does not respond to this but lets the words float in the air for a beat or two.

JAQUIE

Liebchen, just be straight with me. Just tell me what's really gnawing at you. I'll listen straight. I always have.

JANE

Why won't you believe me? This has to work.

JAQUIE

Because you're bluffing.

JANE

It is true! You're supposed to support me. I even have a name picked out: Jake.

JAQUIE

Why are you saying this?

Jane makes a feeble attempt at the handshake with Jaquie, but Jaquie refuses to go along.

JANE

I'm saying it for you.

JAQUIE

Repeat.

JANE

For you.

JAQUIE

I don't understand. Be clearer.

JANE

How much more fucking clear do you want me to be?
I want you! I love you!

JAQUIE

Me?

Their eyes lock.

JAQUIE

Me.

JANE

I love you, Jaquie! I love you so much. Almost from the day we met. I've been able to keep it tamed. Mostly. But not any more. I'm really, really desperate about it. About you. I thought that if I became a man, you know, maybe you would—You wouldn't take me as I am, right? The lesbian thing wouldn't work with you, would it? Am I a lesbian for feeling like this? Oh, Christ, listen to me! Really stupid, huh? Really, really stupid.

JAQUIE

No.

JANE

First Prize in the stupid category. Whooo wee! Right along with the Miss Humiliation plaque.

JAQUIE

Slow down.

Jane makes to leave. Jaquie puts a hand on her, lightly.

JAQUIE

Don't. Stay.

JANE

Roll over. Play dead. I feel like I want to jump right out of my skin.

JAQUIE

I know the feeling. Stay.

JANE

Don't hate me.

JAQUIE

Why would I hate you?

JANE

I was so afraid I'd disgust you—you aren't disgusted, are you?—I was just so desperate. I figured—I don't know what I was thinking. So clueless. "Ring-ring. Pick up the clue phone, Jane!" I had none, obviously. Me becoming a man! To love you! I mean, you date men all the time—how could I know whether you would or not? I just needed a way to escape from all this bottled-up—Oooh, I can't find the word! Do you know what I mean?

JAQUIE

Yes.

Pause. Street sounds.

JANE

What do I do now?

JAQUIE

Well, give your stupidity award—to me.

JANE

You?

JAQUIE

Yeah.

JANE

Why?

JAQUIE

For not being honest with you sooner. So that you wouldn't have had to contort yourself the way you did. So that you would know who you were loving. So that you would know who loved you.

JANE

You—me?

Jaquie nods yes.

JANE

True?

Jaquie nods again.

JANE

All along?

Jaquie nods again.

JANE

Whooowee! Yee-haw! Yes!

JAQUIE

But I need to tell you something.

Jaquie rummages in her bag while they talk.

JANE

Tell away. This is ace! This is a great day!

JAQUIE

This will not be easy.

JANE

I didn't need all that man shit. What was I thinking?

Free at last!

Jaquie pulls out what looks like a driver's license or an ID card of some sort. She hands it to Jane. Jane looks at it.

JANE

What's this?

JAQUIE

Just look.

JANE

Who is—(looking at the card)—Jack Ashley? Your brother?

JAQUIE

Jane, look closely.

Jaquie watches Jane closely. Jane looks again, and a sudden dawning comes to her face. She looks back and forth between the card and Jacquie. The following lines should be taken slowly, deliberately.

JANE

Not your brother. At all.

JAQUIE

In some places, not even the original skin.

JANE

Jack. Jacquie. So that's how you knew about—

JAQUIE

(without being flippant)

Been there. Done that.

JANE

You were once—

Jaquie nods yes. Jane hands back the card.

JAQUIE

Jack Ashley was and is a vibrant person. I like Jack. You'll like him, too. But he wanted to be me. So we exchanged places. That's the easy way of describing a long, painful journey. Are you all right?

JANE

I don't exactly know—what I am. My skin feels tight again.

JAQUIE

I told you this wouldn't be easy.

Jaquie reaches out to touch her, but Jane pulls away.

JANE

Wait.

Several heartbeats of silence as Jane ponders the situation. She sees her coffee and slowly, deliberately replaces the lid on it. Street sounds float around them.

JANE

So, I am in love with a woman who was a man? And this woman who was a man loves me, a woman, who, though not seriously, was talking about becoming a man in order to love a woman who had been a man, though she didn't know that?

JAQUIE

Gets tangled.

JANE

You date men.

JAQUIE

So do you.

JANE

Women, too?

JAQUIE

I've taught myself not to make too fine a distinction. After the—change—it was clear to me that the boy/girl line could be erased. So I erased.

JANE

Erased.

JAQUIE

I love people. Lust for, care about people. You, for instance. I've escaped from the Bastille of gender, and I ain't ever goin' back.

JANE

But you're a woman.

JAQUIE

Visually, socially—and for some reason the biomechanics just work better this way—a lot I haven't figured out yet. But inside, in the spirit, where it counts, I'm just a human being. Unfortunately, we don't have a pronoun for that yet.

JANE

Whew.

JAQUIE

Yes.

JANE

Men and women both, huh?

JAQUIE

Yes. Just like you.

JANE

Like me?

Jane chews on these words.

JANE

I feel like my brain is three sizes too small for this information.

JAQUIE

Got more than you came for. Do you need to leave?

JANE

Very mixed at the moment. Got a thousand questions and mental lockjaw.

JAQUIE

Borrow my voice.

JANE

What?

JAQUIE

Send me your thoughts. Here.

Jaquie holds out her hands.

JAQUIE

Use the keyboard.

Jane takes Jacquie's hands, holds them, gives them back.

JANE

I can't. I don't know what to say. I don't know if I can do this.

JAQUIE

We're not double-parked. No hurry.

JANE

I just don't know, Jacquie.

JAQUIE

Don't fly away. Please. I love you, too. Please.

JANE

I don't know—why didn't you tell me all this before?

JAQUIE

I wanted to—but I didn't want to risk— I'd decided that it was better to have coffee with you as a friend than tell you the truth and drink my coffee alone. It would kill me not to be near you.

JANE

I just don't know if I can be enough.

JAQUIE

Yet.

JANE

Yet. I should go. Would you walk me home?

JAQUIE

Of course.

Picking up their trash, they move away from the bench.

JANE

So many things—

JAQUIE

We have time.

They walk in silence for several steps. Jane turns to Jacquie.

JANE

I'm going to walk the rest of the way on my own.

Jaquie stops while JANE continues a few steps on. She turns and holds out her right hand. In synch they do an "air" version of their handshake. JANE leaves.

FADE OUT