

Everything's Jake

by

Michael Bettencourt

67 Highwood Terrace #2, Weehawken NJ 07086
201-770-0550; 347-564-9998; m.bett@verizon.net

<http://www.m-bettencourt>

(Copyright © by Michael Bettencourt)

Everything's Jake

DESCRIPTION

Gender and sexual identity are slippery concepts when it comes to human beings, as Jane finds out when she reveals to Jacqui her strong love for Jacqui, only to find out that Jacqui has a secret about her past that could either destroy or strengthen their budding relationship. A play about fluid boundaries and not-so-essential "essential" natures.

CHARACTERS

- JANE
- JAQUIE

(**Note:** The ethnicity of the characters does not matter.)

SETTING: Two park benches in a "V" shape -- the "point" formed by the benches points upstage; the characters do not need to stay seated throughout the scene

TIME: Present, early evening

SOUND: Street sounds, muted -- plays throughout

Everything's Jake

JANE is already seated on one bench, coffee and a scone with her. JAQUIE comes in carrying a bag with the same and sits. JANE is **very** nervous. In JAQUIE's dealings with JANE, she always treats JANE with patience and tenderness.

JAQUIE

It is so good to see you.

Gives her a simple caress, e.g., a hand on the shoulder. JANE acknowledges but does not respond.

JANE

Good to see you, too.

JAQUIE

(holds JANE's hand)

Your message sounded worried. You look worried. What's up?

JANE pulls her hand away in an obvious movement and picks up the coffee cup.

JANE

Everything's fine.

(takes a sip)

Too hot.

JAQUIE

(with affection, lightly)

So the distraught tone underneath your 2 AM message was just my imagination?

JANE

I wasn't "distraught."

(takes another sip)

Still too hot.

JAQUIE

And the fact you didn't return my beautifully solicitous message at 2:05 AM is because --

JANE

Time just got away from me today.

JAQUIE

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

JANE takes a small bite of her scone.

JANE

Everything is fine.

JAQUIE

So why are we here?

JAQUIE puts a hand on JANE's forearm as JANE prepares to take a third sip of the coffee that's obviously still too hot.

JAQUIE

That coffee's still too hot. Nothing cools that fast except a royal marriage. Look at me. Look at me.

JANE looks, looks away, looks back, etc. during the next few lines.

JAQUIE

How long have we worked on this friendship?

JANE

A year.

JAQUIE

How often do we talk to each other?

JANE

Often.

JAQUIE

How close are we?

JANE smiles, as if against her will.

JAQUIE

C'mon.

TOGETHER

"Dirt and roots."

JAQUIE

You do remember the day we met?

JANE

(smiles again)

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 -- the actors can devise their own. JANE laughs, nervously.

JAQUIE

Good. Now I think 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. I figured that. What, 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 -- Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make fun -- you know that. What is it?

JANE

(takes a deep breath)

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

JAQUIE sits back.

JAQUIE

Repeat.

JANE

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

JAQUIE

This is -- not what I expected -- Why?

JANE

I'm tired of being a woman!

JAQUIE

Have you explored what this means? Really explored?

JANE

Sure. Yes. Absolutely.

JAQUIE

You've 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.

(indicates her body)

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

(with some force)

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

JANE

All right.

JAQUIE

Stand up to me.

JANE

(slightly manic)

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
(near tears)
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? 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

(attempt at a feeble joke)

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.

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
Whooo wee! 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 drivers license or an identity card
of some sort. She hands it to JANE. JANE looks at it.

JANE
What is 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 JAQUIE. 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. Jaquie. So that's how you knew about --

JAQUIE
(quietly, without being flippant)
Been there. Done that.

JANE
(holding up the card)
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
(reaches out to touch her)
I told you this wouldn't be easy.

JANE
(pulls away)
Wait.

There are several beats of silence as JANE ponders the situation. As she does so, she fidgets with her hands, perhaps shredding her scone or a napkin. The 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
The language gets a little tangled, doesn't it?

A bit more shredding.

JANE
You date men.

JAQUIE
So do you.

JANE
Women, too?

JAQUIE
I've learned 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 -- there's
a lot about this 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.

A bit more shredding, then stops.

JANE
Whew.

JAQUIE
Yes.

JANE
Men and women both, huh?

JAQUIE
Yes. Just like you.

JANE
(surprised by JAQUIE's words)
I feel like my brain is three sizes too small for
this information.

JAQUIE
You got more than you came for. Need to leave?

JANE
I'm very mixed at the moment. I've got a
thousand questions and mental lockjaw.

JAQUIE

Borrow my voice.

JANE

What?

JAQUIE

Send me your thoughts. Here.

(holds out her hand)

Use the keyboard.

JANE takes JAQUIE's hand, then gives it back.

JANE

I can't. I don't know what to say. I need my own words. I don't know if I can do this.

JAQUIE

We're not double-parked. No hurry.

JANE

I just don't know, Jaquie.

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'd kill me not to be near --

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 benches.

JANE

So many things --

JAQUIE

We have time.

They walk in silence for several steps.

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 exits.