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VOICES



Celebrity Corner



BRAD and JEN: Roadmap to Peace

by Jerry Soverinsky

The Call

Jobs for Hollywood writers are at a premium, so when your agent calls and tells you she's found you a journalism assignment writing a

PR diary for a couple of A-list celebrities, you find a way to get over the initial waves of blinding nausea and suck up to the task. It's a job, you tell yourself, holding your hands under your oven's broiler to raise your pain threshold, a quality you deem necessary for the project. And you can use the money.

But despite my initial skepticism, I was pleasantly surprised when the dossier arrived from my agent's office. For this wasn't the humdrum media puff piece so commonly employed to revive a sullied reputation (shoplifting? drug use? hookers?). No, this was a true journalism assignment, one attempting to chronicle a historic movement that . . . well . . . just might lead to that elusive world peace.

THE SETUP

This past October, pop icons Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston made headlines by trading on their celebrity status for diplomatic portfolios. Finally fed up with the centuries-old Israeli-Arab conflict, they decided to take action.

"The last few years of conflict mean that yet another generation of Israelis and Palestinians will grow up in hatred. We cannot allow that to happen," they state on their OneVoice website. Finally, I thought, rereading their mission statement for the umpteenth time. Somebody with a plan.

And sensing the significance of their project, they hired me to keep a running journal of their progress. (Think about it: could you have enjoyed Titanic as much if you hadn't seen Behind Titanic? Doubtful!) A historical record, if you will.

They convinced me. I was officially onboard.

THE INTRODUCTION

October 27—Pitt-Aniston Compound 7:20pm

I arrive at the Pitt-Aniston compound and pull up to the gate. "It's Jerry, I'm here for the Peace thing," I announce. The gate opens, and I drive to the house.

I ring the front bell (one high "bing" followed by a low and long "bong") and moments later, there's Jennifer, ushering me in like we're old friends.

"So glad you could make it!" she gushes, shaking my hand enthusiastically. "I think we're onto something big here."

"Let's hope so," I say, gesturing to a briefcase full of blank legal pads.

She chuckles, glancing quickly at the stack of papers, and I sense a bit of nervous apprehension.

We move to the Great Room (really great!) and she tells me she'll be back in a few minutes. She wants to find Brad.

8:05pm

Jennifer enters with Brad. I stand immediately, a show of respect.

"Sit! Sit!" he commands. "None of this formality."

I like him immediately, despite his poor posture. And Jennifer, she seems much more confident now. We're ready to begin.

8:10pm

A maid enters ("Please, call her a servant," Jennifer instructs) and asks if I'm thirsty. Jennifer orders a chai tea. So does Brad. I feel self-conscious, so I order one, too (really tasty!).

9:01pm

"Let me get this straight," I start, rereading my notes from the previous hour. "Ariel Sharon thinks—"

Jennifer's cell phone rings and she checks the Caller ID. "Fuck, it's Cox," she groans. "Gotta take this, hold that thought."

I make eye contact with Brad and he gestures to the phone, feigning masturbation.

"It's not his girlfriend, it's mistaken identity. That's the twist!" Jennifer screams into the phone. "Right . . . Jesus, just memorize your lines, I'll see you tomorrow . . . right . . . OK . . . love you, too . . ."

She points her forefinger to her head and pretends to shoot herself. Brad shakes his head,



sympathetically. She can't seem to end the conversation. "OK, bye, then . . . 'night . . . OK, Court, right . . . right . . . right . . ." She closes her phone, mumbling to herself.

"Her lines again, babe?" Brad asks, tenderly.

"I cannot wait for this fucking show to end! She's driving me nuts!"

"That's Courtney," Brad explains, and he raises his chai tea toward mine, the fifth time that night he solicits clinking mugs.

"Jesus, it's 9 already?" Jennifer asks, noticing my watch. "Gotta go, CSI: Miami's starting."

I let myself out.

October 28—Pitt-Aniston Compound

2pm

Jennifer calls my cell phone, tells me to arrive early tonight—they're ordering Thai.

"Get here by six if you want any Lad Nar," she instructs. "I fucking love that shit."

"You don't need to tell me twice," I say.



5:57pm

The maid answers the door.

"Jerry, chello. Mr. Brad and Ms. Jennifer are steel working," she explains, motioning for me to enter. She takes my coat and brings me a chai tea.

7:58pm

Brad and Jennifer enter.

"I'm so sorry, our shoot ran late!" Jennifer exclaims, as she rushes into the Great Room with bags of Thai food. She motions for me to follow her into the kitchen, where she proceeds to plate the food.

"Jesus, where's the fucking wasabi!" she screams, emptying the bag and peering anxiously inside. "They cheated us. They fucking cheated us!"

"That's sushi, Jen," Brad replies in a soothing tone, stroking her shoulders. "Wasabi goes with sushi." "Right, sushi," Jennifer repeats, closing the bag as

she gazes thoughtfully at the ceiling. "Sushi."

9:17pm

"Lookit this," Jen motions to me, as we delve into the meat of their project, while drinking beers in the Family Room. "This artist friend of Brad's does really good work."

She unveils a smart-looking poster with a cartoon image of a Hasidic rabbi hugging a Bedouin. "Dead-on," I say, congratulating both.

"Like any significant campaign, this one has a readily-identifiable logo," Jen explains, reading from note cards. She goes on to clarify that the rabbi represents Israel, and the Bedouin, the Arabs.

"Smart," I say, pointing to my temple, nodding my head in approval. "It's coming together."

11:27pm

It's been a long night and I stand to leave, reaching for my dinner plate, gesturing to take it into the kitchen. Neither Brad nor Jen will hear of it.

"You're our guest, you don't do dishes," Brad instructs.

"That's what our schfartze's for," Jen explains.

As I reach the front door, Jennifer asks me to join her on the Friends set later that week and observe her daily routine. She feels it could provide balance to my piece.

October 31—The Friends set

7:42am

It's Halloween Day, and the set is festive. Matt LeBlanc is dressed as Britney Spears, and it appears to be the running joke among the crew ("Weren't you Madonna last year, gay boy!" is a typical taunt).

7:51am

Courtney Cox approaches Jennifer, who's performing hamstring stretches.

"Hi, Jen, good talking to you last night."

Jennifer continues with her stretches. Cox watches for a few moments in silence, then plops herself down next to Jen, attempting the identical stretch.

Jen appears upset, and her patience is further tested when Courtney's foot accidentally brushes her leg. Jen yanks Cox's foot away and mumbles, "Loser." Jen continues to stretch, and Courtney looks over, duplicating her moves.

Finally fed up (can you blame her?), Jen screams, "Are you copying me?"

Cox is caught off-guard and responds meekly, "No, I wasn't copying you, I like to stretch. I always stretch." She brushes herself off and disappears behind a curtain.

Jen begins working her calves.

8:27am

Jennifer introduces me to David Schwimmer.

"Jerry, this is David," she begins. "He's Jewish."

"Great," I nod, as Jennifer skips away to the catering table. David watches to see that Jennifer's out of sight and then pulls me aside.

"This Israel thing is getting out of hand. She keeps running ideas by me, asking me to teach her Yiddish words," he moans. "It's starting to affect my work."

9:24am

The first live walk-through of the week's episode. Jen and Lisa Kudrow ("very nice, but don't correct her grammar," I'm forewarned) are in the coffee shop, discussing Jen's (Rachel's) new boyfriend. Rachel stops Lisa's (Phoebe's) dialogue and motions for the set designer.

"Can we get a few more tchotkes on the console?" she begins, the designer frantically taking notes. "And how 'bout a softer chair, too? Oy, my tokhes is killing me."

"Right away, Ms. Aniston," the man responds. "Right away."

Schwimmer shoots me a look and mouths silently, “See what I mean?”

Kudrow confronts Aniston, quietly: “Why is you always talking Jewish?”

4:27pm

Brad enters the set, and he’s received warmly. Everyone seems to like him.

“Brad-o!” Matthew Perry calls out from the other end of the soundstage.

“Dickwad,” Brad mutters under his breath, forcing a smile in Perry’s direction. But he quickly covers, calling out “Matt, ‘sup?” as he motions for me and Jen to follow him to a quieter area.

When we’re alone, Brad reaches into a Barnes and Noble bag and proudly pulls out a coffee table-quality book: A Day in the Life of Israelis and Arabs.

“Fucking-A!” Jen exclaims, stroking the book seductively. “It’s beautiful, just beautiful.” She turns the pages carefully and studies each photo, handling the book by its edges.

A tear streaks down her cheek.

4:31pm

Various calls for Jen to return to the set go unanswered—she’s engrossed in the book. Executive producer Marta Kauffman approaches.

“Jen, dear, time to go back to work,” she says softly. She cradles Aniston’s chin in her hand, and looks directly into her eyes. “Come on, hon. Book can wait.”

Jennifer closes the book, sighs deeply, and heads back toward the set.

9:05pm

End of a long day’s shoot. LeBlanc and Perry are high-fiving one another, Kudrow’s checking her Blackberry, Schwimmer’s playing with a kitten, and Cox is working with her speech coach.

“Red leather, yellow leather, red leather, yellow leather,” Courtney repeats, enunciating every word. Her speech coach nods his head in approval, while Courtney continues.

I knock on Jen’s dressing room door, announcing myself.

“Come in, Jer.”

As I enter, she’s focused on the book, furiously scribbling notes in the margins. I notice a panoramic shot of the Western Wall. “Pretty,” Jen has written underneath it, adding two exclamation points for emphasis. I give it a second look.

I agree.

Pretty.



November 16—Pitt-Aniston Compound

8:42am

I arrive just before our planned meeting time of 9am, eagerly anticipating what I feel will be a grand Sunday brunch. It's been a couple of weeks since we last met, but Jen bought her first computer earlier in the month and it's been nothing but trouble. "Learning this fucking email thing's been crazy," she explains.

As I enter the house, Jen is standing at the top of the stairs. She looks terrible, like she hasn't slept.

8:47am

"Francis Ford Coppola. Wow, that's an honor," I say.

"Exactly," Jennifer adds. "See, the Mideast thing, I feel like it'll always be there . . . but this film, I mean, working with the man who directed The Godfather—"

"And Rumble Fish," I add, but it's of no consolation. Jen's obviously distraught. The film offer is coming at such a bad time. I start to resent Coppola but then catch myself. I'm sure he's unaware of the global implications.

"What about Brad?" I ask, "maybe he can get things rolling until your film ends?" I no sooner suggest it than I wish I had not.

"Brad, my husband, Brad . . . ? Are you fucking kidding me?" She motions for me to look into the den. I do, and there's Brad, laughing hysterically at The Wiggles, cereal milk shooting from his nostrils.

8:48am

"I feel like if this peace thing is meant to be, it'll be," Jen explains, ushering me out to my car (no time for breakfast. Jen's gotta shed four pounds for the movie role). "In the meantime, thank you so-o-o-o-o much for everything. You've been great, and I'll never forget you, Todd."

"Jerry," I remind her. It's too late, though. The door is closed.

THE FUTURE

It's been two weeks since my assignment fizzled out, but thankfully, my job's prorated check arrived just in time for me to reestablish phone service.

And as I glance through today's paper, I notice that a half-dozen Israelis and Palestinians have met in Geneva, Switzerland, announcing that they're planning to sign their own unofficial peace treaty, a stepping stone that they hope can gain favor with official government representatives.

It's a novel idea, but the whole concept—private parties meeting without the endorsement of their governments in an effort to spawn public policy—is one that is naïvely optimistic. For even though they've managed to obtain the much-coveted endorsement from ex-President Jimmy Carter (who's managing to squeeze time away from his current book tour), it's missing a certain trustworthiness—a certain integrity, or legitimate authority, if you will—that could elevate the plan from the fate of a long line of failed Mideast initiatives, to one of international brilliance. It's missing that one elusive piece of credibility that I feel could finally enable the region—and World—to



achieve the lasting peace that has eluded Mankind for over 2,000 years.

It's missing Brad and Jen.



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