

BUNNIES

By
Joanne Hoersch

BUNNIES

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Bunnies was originally produced in October, 2021 by Hudson Theatre Works, at the Theatre at the Wilson School in Weehawken, New Jersey, under the direction of Frank Licato, with the following cast:

Bonita.....Serena Marie Williams

Janice.....Ryan Natalino

Lottie.....Irene Rivera

Kekkie.....Bess Miller

Margo.....Mandy Evans

Set Design-Greg Erbach, Lighting-Tyler Hieb, Music/Sound-Donald Stark, Costumes-Ann Lowe, Stage Manager-Dawn D'Arrigo

CAST (5 Women)

BONITA: (24). African American. She is exceptionally beautiful and ambivalent about her beauty.

JANICE: (28) White, working class and high spirited.

LOTTIE: (26) Hispanic, somewhat depressed.

KEKKIE: (20) White. New in town.

MARGO: (37)

TIME: January, 1973.

PLACE: The Playmate Bar and the locker room of the NY Playboy Club.

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SCENE 1

January 1973, evening, the Playmate Bar of the NY Playboy Club. Three Bunnies, BONITA, LOTTIE and JANICE each stand DS in their own circle of light. They are dressed in their Bunny costumes, holding cocktail trays. In unison they do a Bunny Dip, bending backwards over the unseen tables in front of them and placing a cocktail napkin on the table.

LOTTIE/JANICE/BONITA. Good evening. I'm your Bunny...

LOTTIE. Lottie.

JANICE. Janice.

BONITA. Bonita. *(They straighten up and assume a bunny stance.)*

LOTTIE/JANICE/BONITA. May I see the Playboy key? *(They do another Bunny Dip and mime taking the Playboy key from each customer.)*

LOTTIE/JANICE/BONITA. Thank you Mr...

LOTTIE. Armstrong.

JANICE. Duncan.

BONITA. Pershing.

LOTTIE/JANICE/BONITA. Will you be dining with us tonight or just having cocktails? *(They wait.)* Cocktails! May I suggest one of our special drinks, served in a souvenir mug?

LOTTIE. Senor Playboy.

JANICE. Bunny Brew.

BONITA. Rabbit Punch. *(Bonita says "Rabbit Punch" in a slightly hostile way.)*

LOTTIE /JANICE. I'll be right back with your cocktail!

BONITA. Right. Just the usual. *(Lottie, Janice and Bonita exit. Bonita immediately returns with a glass of green chartreuse on her tray. She bends over backwards in the Bunny Dip and places the chartreuse on the cocktail napkin. She looks down at the table and then pulls her hand away, almost violently.)* No! I don't want this anymore! *(Bonita rushes off stage. Blackout.)*

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SCENE 2

The dressing room of the NY Playboy Club, later the same evening. There is a long vanity mirror running almost the length of the stage and a row of light blue swivel stools in front of the mirror. Several rows of lockers, with benches. Upstage left, but offstage, is 'Bunny Mother' Gretchen's office.

Janice is at her locker, taking off her Bunny ears and shoes. She sits on a stool, lights a cigarette, puts the lighter between her breasts and starts reading the paper.

JANICE. Did you see the paper today? *(Long pause.)* Lottie! I'm talking to you.

LOTTIE. *(Lottie takes off her Bunny ears and throws them into her locker.)* You mean that woman? *(Lottie kicks off her shoes and tosses them in her locker.)*

JANICE. Yeah. Her name was Roseann Quinn. And she was my age. She was 28. *(Janice undoes her collar, cuffs and bowtie.)*

LOTTIE. I saw some guy reading about it on the train. Actually I saw everybody on the train reading about it. *(Lottie undoes her collar, cuffs and bowtie.)*

JANICE. I live 5 blocks from the bar where it happened. I'm a little freaked out. *(Lottie approaches her.)*

LOTTIE. Those collars have too much starch. Ciggy please.

JANICE. Did you hear me? *(Janice gives Lottie her cigarette.)*

LOTTIE. I heard you. I need time to figure this thing out. *(Lottie reads the paper over Janice's shoulder.)* 'Tom Keating, the night bartender, had seen Miss Quinn in the bar on Monday night with a date. He said he could not recall the appearance of her escort, only that she had seemed happy.' *(Lottie grabs the newspaper from Janice and continues to read silently.)* My God. He stabbed her eighteen times. *(Janice takes the newspaper back.)*

LOTTIE. Hey, I was reading!

JANICE. Ciggy or newspaper. Take your pick. Never mind. *(Janice hands the newspaper back to Lottie.)* I read the story three times already. He smashed her head in with a ...

LOTTIE. With a what? With a what?

JANICE. A sculpture. Of herself. A sixty pound sculpture.

LOTTIE. I don't see anything about that.

JANICE. He must have been one angry dude.

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LOTTIE. (*Reading out loud.*) ‘Miss Quinn was a teacher at ...her nude body...and on the table was an uneaten meal.’ No nothing about any sculpture.

JANICE. An uneaten meal. That’s right. And dishes piled up in the sink.

LOTTIE (*Stops reading.*) It doesn’t say anything about that either.

JANICE. Implying she was a bad housekeeper. I’m a bad housekeeper! I’m telling you, I’m freaking out.

LOTTIE. It’s OK, Janice. They always sensationalize this stuff. Look at the headline, “Nude victim of sex slaying.” They’ll catch him. Listen, I can’t talk about this right now. I’ve got to go. Would you unzip my costume?

JANICE. I’ve been to that bar lots of times. I liked it because they let women in even if they’re not with a guy. Name me one other bar that does that. Come on Lottie, let’s get something to eat at PJ’s. I’m starving.

LOTTIE. I’m too tired. And I have to get up early. I have to see my parents. They’re worried about me. Not about – this. Well, now they’re going to be hysterical. They want me to get a job as a secretary in a nice office so I can dress like a lady, and be treated like a lady. I’ve tried working in a ‘nice office’ and I wasn’t treated like a lady. But they won’t listen.

JANICE. And you’d make half what you make here, if you’re lucky. (*Bonita enters, distressed. She is wearing a silver lamé costume, with silver ears and shoes.*)

BONITA. God dam key holders. (*Bonita slams her tray down on the bench. She opens her locker and throws her shoes into the locker. She lights a cigarette and sits on the bench.*)

JANICE. Who?

BONITA. Who do you think I mean? The members, the customers.

JANICE. Yeah, well that’s yesterday’s news.

LOTTIE. Come on, Janice, she’s upset.

JANICE. I’m upset too. What does she have to be upset about? She’s Bunny of the Year, for God’s sake. She’s all...silver. She gets a bigger pay check than we do, and bigger tips.

BONITA. What did you just say?

JANICE. (*Pointing to Bonita’s breasts.*) That too. Bonita, it’s one of the reasons all the cardholders voted for you. People stare at you. You were on Page 6! You’re a half celebrity and you’ve only been here 8 months.

BONITA. Lottie was on Page 6 too, when she was dating that guy from CBS.

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JANICE. I'm going on six years of service to Playboy. Look at the muscle in my right arm. It's from hoisting all those Bunny Brews. And I've never been in the Post. What room were you working tonight? Penthouse? I heard the act they've got up there is pretty good.

BONITA. Earth to Janice. I was in the Living Room. I'm always in the Living Room. I came down to see you in the Playmate Bar.

LOTTIE. She did. Bo, could you unzip me?

BONITA. *(At her locker.)* Give me a second. I need to get organized here. *(To Janice.)* Are you high again?

JANICE. *(Rubbing her nose.)* That would be a 'no.' I'm nervous.

BONITA. Well, I'm upset.

LOTTIE. C'mon chicky babe, what's up? Some jerk made a pass at you?

BONITA. Another time. Right now I need to get out of this costume,

LOTTIE. *(Laughing.)* Bo, your ears are sticking straight up. Why don't you bend them a little, give yourself some character? Soften it up a bit.

BONITA. *(Taking off her ears and throwing them onto the bench.)* I did that on purpose because I was trying to intimidate someone. I was trying to look formidable.

JANICE. You do realize that you're dressed like a rabbit.

BONITA. Yes, I realize that, Janice. Thanks for pointing it out. I really needed that. By the way, I saw the show in the Penthouse. It's awful. Some Canadian group, like Up With People. They're all dressed in sequined jump suits and they look like Gumby. How could you possibly think it's a good show? *(Bonita rips off her collar, cuffs, bowtie/.Pause.)* They put too much starch in these collars. *(Pause, then to Janice.)* Hey!

JANICE. Hey! I didn't mean to come off like a jealous bitch. Though I think I probably am.

BONITA. I want to apologize. It's one of the customers. He's just a jerk. And I'm blowing it way out of proportion.

JANICE. Let's not talk about it unless you're going to come clean, OK? We're all on edge because of that. *(Janice points to the newspaper.)*

BONITA. Oh, God, I know! He smashed her head in with a 60 pound sculpture. *(Janice, standing behind Bonita, looks at Lottie and points down at Bonita's head, as if saying "See? I told you so.")*

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LOTTIE. (*Pressing on her stomach and sides.*) OK!, You're right!

BONITA. I'm right about what?

LOTTIE. Nothing Bo. I was talking to Janice. Would somebody please unzip me? I can't breathe in this thing. (*Lottie burps*). And it makes me burp.

BONITA. It's all for beauty, darling.

LOTTIE. No babe, it's all for money.

BONITA. You're so unromantic.

LOTTIE. You do know what Freud said about romance? (*Janice and Bonita exchange knowing looks.*)

BONITA. No, we don't. But we do know he's all you talk about lately.

LOTTIE. Yeah, well I'm trying to understand. I gotta read this to you. (*Lottie pulls out a worn, dog-eared book from her locker.*) You know the cat was a cocaine addict, big time. Big time. But you probably already knew that, J. You could've copped from him.

JANICE. Not funny.

LOTTIE. I read some of the letters he sent to his wife. You gotta listen to this. (*Lottie ruffles through a few pages.*) Here, listen to...

JANICE. I can't get my eyelash off. OW!

BONITA. Could someone get my zipper? No, never mind. (*Bonita sits on one the vanity stools, distracted,*)

JANICE. Ow! That hurt. The glue on this eyelash is all stuck together.

LOTTIE. Listen!. This is when she was his fiancée.

JANICE. Now I look like a goldfish!!

LOTTIE. (*Yelling*) Listen! Listen! (*Bonita and Janice stop talking,*)

'My Princess, when I come. I will kiss you quite red. And if you are forward, you shall see who is the stronger, a gentle little girl who doesn't eat enough, or a big wild man who has cocaine in his body.'

BONITA. God! I'd get out of there so fast. (*Bonita starts reading the paper.*)

LOTTIE. You don't think that's sexy? The brute beast crouching inside the educated, civilized man. A few snorts and he's master of the universe.

JANICE. No, I don't think that's sexy. You think the guy who murdered Roseann Quinn wasn't charming and civilized?

LOTTIE. It's the disguise, the subtext, the contradiction and the tension. I love it.

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BONITA. He's like us. (*Bonita sits on the bench.*) I'm a student at Columbia majoring in 17th century French literature. But my subtext, my contradiction, is that actually I'm a whore.

JANICE/LOTTIE. What?

JANICE. Bo, what the hell are you talking about?

LOTTIE. It's one of the key holders. That's what she's talking about. I'm your union rep. If this guy touched you...

BONITA. It wasn't that simple.

JANICE. Bo, come with us. Lo and I are going to PJ's. (*Seductively.*) Steak Tartare. M,mm, raw meat. You'll feel so much better.

LOTTIE. No, we're not going to PJs!

JANICE. And Bloody Marys. We could all use a drink.

BONITA. I'm not in a very sociable mood.

LOTTIE. And I have to get up early.

JANICE. Bo, you don't have to socialize, all you have to do is eat. Lo, what's half an hour? Come on.

LOTTIE. I'm exhausted.

JANICE. Fifteen minutes. One quick drink.

LOTTIE. Buzz off! I can't.

BONITA. Hold on. I'll be right back. (*Bonita exits in a hurry.*)

JANICE. I don't want to go home! I can't. I cannot go home. Alone. I used to go to that bar. Alone.

LOTTIE. (*Beat.*) OK. I get it. You can crash on my couch. John's in the bedroom now with me. We made up. We have to leave early but I'll give you a set of keys. Hangout, watch TV, there's some pot in a bowl on the coffee table, and there's rolling papers in the drawer so help yourself. And if you get panicky, there's some ludes in a box in the kitchen closet.

JANICE. And we'll go to your place together? Open the door... together?

LOTTIE. It's sort of a one person lock, but...

JANICE. When I go into my building, until I'm right at the door, I hold my keys...wait a minute. (*Janice rummages in her purse for her keys, but Lottie pulls out a set of keys first. She holds them in a fist with the ends of the keys pointing through her fingers.*)

LOTTIE. Like this! Your father taught you that, right?

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JANICE. Yup, when I was twelve. Hey, who's your daddy?

LOTTIE. Come on, every father in the country showed his little girl how to defend herself. (*Janice takes out her set of keys and grabs them in her fist.*)

See? We're good. I'll take the right eye and you take the left.

JANICE. I like that idea. I think my blood pressure went back to normal. Hey Bo, did your father ever...(*Janice looks around for Bonita.*) Where'd she go? (*Long pause.*) So...you're back with John? (*Pause.*) Excuse me, is that a 'yes'?

LOTTIE. I'm back with John, yes. (*Pause.*) It's good to be back with him. I don't like sleeping alone. But there's a lot to work out.

JANICE. Keep going...

LOTTIE. Not worth talking about.

JANICE. You're the one who believes in the talking cure.

LOTTIE. I wish it was more containable. I wish that this...

JANICE. Love...

LOTTIE. Sure. This love thing. I wish it could have unfolded slowly, one day at a time. Instead it was everywhere and all at once and the passion was like this thick, blue fog, and the only person you could see through the fog was each other.

What I felt every day from the minute I woke up to the minute my head hit the pillow at night was inexhaustible desire. It wiped out every other feeling. And the more John and I made love, the worse it got.

It was feeding on itself, this endless yearning for his body, for his breath against my neck, for the strength of his arms. J, all he had to do was touch me, just a whisper of a touch against my hand, my face, and my body was on fire. The scent of him, the way he looked at me. It sizzled through my blood. When he kissed me, when we made love, it felt...treacherous, oh yes, that's how it felt, like something this powerful shouldn't be allowed. In a sense it took my life away, but what a ride.

JANICE. (*Fanning herself.*) Is it hot in here? Lottie, man you tell a good story.

LOTTIE. But then you move in together and you have to start doing all these other things, like buying stuff; a mop, a vacuum cleaner, a set of dishes, so you try to work backward, build a relationship that can actually survive the monotony of daily life. You try to understand that what you had simply can't last in the real world.

I loved John before I even knew much about him, before I knew that he talks in his sleep, that he hates cleaning the apartment, that he smokes too much pot. Love makes no room for anything else. Love and living do not work together.

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I get mad when he leaves his clothes on the bedroom floor. He gets mad at me when I don't empty the ashtray. I kind of like fighting with him. It brings the whole...

JANICE. Love. You do love him. Come on.

LOTTIE. Yeah, I guess. But I hardly know him. You know what? You never talk about your love life.

JANICE. One day I'll tell you all about it. I like John. Like him better than that guy from CBS.

LOTTIE. Me too. But it has crossed my mind that one day he'll take the offending ashtray and throw it at me.

JANICE. (*Alarmed.*) What do you mean?

LOTTIE. I bummed you out, I didn't mean to.

JANICE. I can't go home, Lottie. But now I'm thinking...

LOTTIE. There was no good reason for me to say that. I'll tell you why. Because there's a chance I might be the one to throw the ashtray.

JANICE. I still like John?

LOTTIE. Stay at my apartment tonight, babe. Stay two nights. It'll be fine. And safe. (*Bonita enters.*)

BONITA. That was a total waste of time. I need a ciggy. I forgot to buy some. (*Lottie holds up a pack of cigarettes. Bonita reaches for it but Lottie pulls the cigarettes away.*)

LOTTIE. Could you *please* unzip my costume?

BONITA. All you have to do is ask, Lo. (*Bonita unzips Lottie's costume.*) You've got all these red marks running up and down your back.

JANICE. You never noticed that? I get them too. Every time I wear this stupid costume. Because there's whale bones in them and everything's too tight.

LOTTIE. (*Going behind the lockers to change into street clothes.*) They're not whalebones. They're plastic. Freud's wife had real whalebone corsets. Man, that must have hurt.

JANICE. (*Trying to unzip her own costume.*) I know all about corsets. I was a Gaslight Girl for 9 months.

LOTTIE. (*Fully clothed.*) I was a Rockette. (*Lottie starts kicking like a Rockette.*)

BONITA. Go on. You're too short.

LOTTIE. No, I'm not. I made the cut but I *was* at the end of the line.

BONITA. You looked so cute when you said that.

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LOTTIE. I want to be...you. (*Bonita takes her ears off the bench and puts them on Lottie's head.*)

BONITA. There you go. Those ears do look intimidating and you're five inches taller.

LOTTIE. I still want to be you. You're so cool and confident.

JANICE. At Gaslight, they lace you up so tight. They got my waist down to 18 inches which makes all those extra inches sort of move up into your breasts and they just pump up and bulge out.

BONITA. (*Squeezes her waist and looks at her profile in the mirror.*) Eighteen inches is really small.

JANICE. You can't eat or drink anything when you're out on the floor. By the end of your shift you're food deprived, oxygen deprived. You're half dead. One night I started hyperventilating and I thought I was going to faint. So I ran into the kitchen and grabbed a knife, then I sliced open all the laces. I took the deepest, richest breath of hot, smelly kitchen air. It was delicious. And then I fainted. Right on the floor. (*Janice pretends to faint onto the floor.*)

BONITA. What? You never told us.

LOTTIE. The Freuds had a fainting couch. Everybody had a fainting couch, 'cause – everybody fainted.

BONITA. Like Sleeping Beauty, though she was probably in a coma. A long sleep is like a short death. She's silent, subdued, and therefore sublime which creates a space for her to be anything that her beauty inspires in the imagination, an exquisite corpse to the prince who bows down beside her, gazing longingly upon her perfection, taking his time to absorb every inch of her. Her glass coffin was the guardian of her youth, but the prince is so overcome with love that...

LOTTIE. He awakens her with a kiss. The kiss that begins the slow inexorable march towards death. (*As Lottie and Bonita are talking Janice crawls downstage between them.*)

JANICE. One of the chefs threw a glass of water in my face. It worked!

BONITA. From the moment of her awakening, she begins to age, one second, one minute at a time. (*Janice stands up and struggles to get her costume unzipped.*)

LOTTIE. She marries the prince, bears his children, her belly sags, her breasts go limp. Even a corset won't help. Sex and death baby!

BONITA. I was going to end it on a happy note. It's a fairy tale Lottie.

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JANICE. (*Getting her costume unzipped.*) Ooh, that feels good.

LOTTIE. Sex and death. What else is there? You see why I love Freud? The cat was onto some really heavy stuff.

JANICE. Stop it! OK? No sex, no death.

LOTTIE. OK. OK.

BONITA. I think I do need a drink.

JANICE. Yay! PJs! Bo, look at my back. I'm bleeding.

LOTTIE. (*To Janice.*) Come with us tomorrow to visit my family. It'll get you out of your head.

JANICE. No, I don't want to meet anybody's parents.

LOTTIE. My mom hasn't spoken to me since I started working here. She told me I took the first step into prostitution. But now all of a sudden, she's ready to "forgive" me.

BONITA. Aren't you lucky.

LOTTIE. But the thing is, she was too embarrassed to tell her friends what I do for a living. I shamed the family, if word got around, blah, blah, blah. Then a couple of them saw the Page 6 article in the Post. (*Lottie starts to laugh.*) "NY Bunny Lottie Estrella steps out on the town with CBS vice prez."

BONITA. (*Laughing.*) Don't tell me. They loved it.

LOTTIE. Yup. They think I'm a movie star. But my mother's Ecuatoriana – from Ecuador - and she goes to church as often as she goes to the bathroom. What she knows about Playboy are the magazines my father thinks he's hiding in the closet. I told her to say that I work for the AFL/CIO, which is true. I *am* the union rep.

BONITA. You're so proud of it Lo. And so good at it. I wonder...

LOTTIE. Thank you!

JANICE. Hello! I'm bleeding over here. It's dripping on the floor. (*Janice emerges half dressed, in bra and slacks.*)

BONITA. You're not bleeding. But do you know why you have those marks? Because you're getting fat, Janice. I'm sorry but it's better if I tell you than have you hear it from our dear Bunny Mother. You know what she'll say and you know what she'll do.

JANICE. It's that I get the munchies when I smoke a lot of pot.

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LOTTIE. *(To Bonita.)* Watch this. *(Lottie grabs Janice's purse and pulls out two packages of Hostess Cupcakes.)* You smoked pot, didn't you, while you were down on the floor, where every single manager is a spy.

JANICE. One of the busboys...

LOTTIE. Do you know how many calories these things have?.

JANICE. I like the creamy middle.

BONITA. Janice, if Gretchen finds out, you're finished. You're smoking pot with a busboy, you're busting out of your costume. J. she's not our Bunny 'Mother,' she's management. And if you go five pounds over the weight you were hired at, she'll use it as an excuse...

LOTTIE. No! All Gretchen can do is send her to a fat farm at Playboy's expense. It's in the rule book. The union fought really hard for that one. I fought really hard for that one. I'm holding onto these cupcakes. *(Lottie takes the Hostess cupcakes away from Janice and puts them in the garbage can, upstage left.)*

JANICE. *(To Bonita.)* I'm not getting fat. Every week at weigh in, it's the same number on the scale, *(Raising her voice.)* But that Nazi Bunny Mother of ours keeps telling that new seamstress, that Betty co-Nazi, who by the way used to work at Gaslight - to take in my costume! It's sabotage, she's trying to push me out.

LOTTIE. Bull shit. She can't do that.

BONITA. Shhh! She's in there, in her office!

JANICE. What do you mean? It's 3:00 in the morning.

LOTTIE. I don't think she's in there.

BONITA. I was just talking to her - five minutes ago.

LOTTIE. About?

BONITA. Mr. Pershing.

LOTTIE. That little guy who sits at your station and drinks green chartreuse? I knew it! I knew it was him!

JANICE. Yes! I knew it was him too! *(Janice and Lottie slap each other's hands.)*
/What'd he do?

LOTTIE. /What'd he do?

BONITA. In a minute. I can't tell if Gretchen's got the door closed. I need a new tail and I've got to drop off my collar and cuffs. Anybody else? *(Janice and Lottie drop their cuffs, collars and tails on the tray.)* I'll casually walk past her office on

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my way to the sewing room. (*Bonita exits. Janice pulls Lottie downstage, out of earshot.*)

JANICE. So what do you think it is?

LOTTIE. You mean with Pershing? I'm not sure. He's definitely a regular. Always sits at her table. A few times I saw him sitting at – no that's not right. Maybe some kind of rule infraction. Maybe, I don't know. He looks too nerdy.

JANICE. Could be he complained about...

LOTTIE. You know if he did break the rules, she should've come to me. The union is here to protect her.

JANICE. I'm saying maybe he complained about the service or something? That's ridiculous. She's perfect. She does everything perfectly.

LOTTIE. She's coming! She's coming! (*Lottie and Janice break into hysterical laughing as if they'd been telling jokes. Bonita enters with three new tails on her tray.*)

BONITA. Got everybody new tails. I brushed them too. Everything's fine. (*Bonita lowers her voice.*) Gretchen left. The door's locked.

JANICE. Bo, she's gone. You don't have to whisper. (*Yelling.*) The Nazi went home!

LOTTIE. Want to hear her latest newsletter?

JANICE. No! I want to hear about Pershing.

BONITA. I need to get more comfortable. One second, I promise. (*Bonita opens her locker, takes a pair of rumpled pantyhose out from under her breasts. Bonita tries to unzip her own costume.*)

JANICE. I got it. (*Janice approaches Bonita so she can unzip her costume.*)

BONITA. Actually, leave it. Sorry, It's not you, it's me. (*Bonita looks down at her costume.*) I'm half naked.

JANICE. So get dressed.

LOTTIE. Listen, listen. "Dear Bunnies, A reminder that wrinkled eyelids are absolutely contrary to Bunny Image and will not be tolerated. Neither will sagging, hammock style arm flesh." Ugh. That's disgusting. Does she have to describe it?

JANICE. She's talking about Margo. She *is* going to fire her. Even Margo knows it. She's 37 and her body's in violation. Total violation.

LOTTIE. God damn Bunny Image. Stewardesses are going on strike. Why can't we? Do waiters get fired when their arm flesh sags? I don't think so.

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JANICE. But waiters aren't sex objects, they're....waiters.

LOTTIE. Well, we're waitresses.

BONITA. Can I tell you now? About Pershing? I'm ready.

LOTTIE. Of course, Babe. If you're ready, we're ready. J?

JANICE. I'm all ears.

BONITA. OK, here goes.

LOTTIE. Sit down, Bo. You're shaking. You want a ciggy?

BONITA. No, I'm OK. Mr. A.B. Pershing, Gold Card holder for ten years.

LOTTIE. I remember now! It was Margo! Pershing sat at Margo's station a few times.

BONITA. Because he knew she was vulnerable. You know, the weakest, the oldest in the herd.

LOTTIE. Oh, shit chicky babe. He put a move on you? You should have come to me!

JANICE. Will you let her talk?

LOTTIE. Sorry! Sorry! Go ahead.

BONITA. All right, here goes. I'm over dramatizing this. It's a stupid story....it's really very stupid.

LOTTIE. Hey Bo, I didn't know this was such a heavy thing. We don't need to hear about this jerk.

BONITA. I'll take a ciggy please.*(Lottie gives Bonita a cigarette. Bonita tries to light it but her hand is shaking. Lottie steadies Bonita's hand.)* Thanks. Every

Friday, Saturday and Sunday night for three weeks when I first started here, I served Mr. Pershing 2 green chartreuses. He never said much of anything to me. Paid his bill, got up and left. Then one night I'm walking past his table and he goes like this,...*(Bonita indicates that he gestured for her to come closer.)*

LOTTIE. I think I saw him.

JANICE. Don't interrupt.

BONITA. He goes like this. *(Bonita indicates again that he gestured for her to come closer.)* 'Come closer. Come closer.' His voice is very low. I could barely hear him, so I leaned over and... anyway, it was a big mistake.

LOTTIE. The customers are not allowed to touch the Bunnies.

BONITA. He didn't, It was the way he looked at me. Not me. My breasts. He was very obvious, and he kept motioning for me to come closer. I feel like an idiot now.

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But anyway, I was so close I could smell the chartreuse, not on his breath, more, like it was on his tongue. I could smell how it had soaked into his tongue and was going sour and I realized he'd been drinking before he came to the club. He was probably drunk.

He's holding his left hand under the table, tensed in a fist, then all of a sudden he comes up with it between us, like this fist right in front of my face, but he's smiling at me. I jumped back. I thought, 'My God, he's going to hit me', but he gestures again with his right hand, 'Come closer, come back.' All I wanted was to get away. But I had only been here 4 weeks. If I even appeared to insult a customer I could get fired. What had he done? He hadn't broken any rules. So I lean in to him again. I was so alert, watching for any sudden movements. I could smell his shoe polish and the starch in the collar of his shirt. He was very, very clean. And trimmed. Nothing that wasn't attended to. He takes a white linen napkin and places it over his left fist. He's as conscious of my movements as I am of his and he doesn't want to startle me. He blows on the napkin and pulls the napkin away. And what do you know? There's a fifty dollar bill, folded and sculpted like a beautiful flower, which he offers to me like a bouquet. Of course I was amazed and entertained, but I couldn't take the money. I wasn't raised that way. I don't accept fifty dollar bills from strangers for no reason. Because I served him a green chartreuse? It was...out of proportion.

LOTTIE. Bo, stop listening to your mother. It was fifty bucks. Sheila got a \$50.00 tip last night because some guy liked the way she lit his cigarette. That's what we're here for. To make money.

BONITA. I didn't earn it.

LOTTIE. Pain and suffering count. So does humiliation. You're in 3 ½ inch spiked heels, you have to bend over backward to serve him.

BONITA. He said, "Don't be so uptight." But I couldn't do it. He takes this flower of a fifty dollar bill and starts unfolding it with his little manicured fingers, and I could see, he's silently blaming me for ruining his big moment. He places the bill on the table and says. "Take it. And bring me a double chartreuse." But I didn't take it. So, the next Friday, he sits at Margo's station, just drinking his chartreuses and getting his key for the dinner buffet. And he keeps on sitting at her station and I couldn't help but notice him. You see I felt guilty. Trying to give me money, do his little magic trick, because it was the only way he knew how to make a connection to

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a female. That's my theory of what was going on in his head. I thought I was wrong.

LOTTIE. Freud would agree with you. The male ego is a frightening - but actually you were really being confronted by his ID. And in that case,

JANICE. Can we talk about Freud later?

LOTTIE. Sure. Sorry. Bo, give me a drag. *(Bo hands Lottie her cigarette.)*

BONITA. Lottie, what has Freud got to do with my story?

LOTTIE. I don't know chicky babe. I guess I like putting things in a larger context. It's not just about "me," you know, it's about the world, the zeitgeist, the mother-child relationship. The butterfly effect.

BONITA. Well, this is about me! Damn it Lo! That's one of the reasons I didn't want to say anything. You sort of took it away from me, sanitized it, like whatever it is, it's part of some Freudian predictive theory of male behavior. This was one guy, one little, insecure guy. And I'd made it all worse. I put the blame on myself.

LOTTIE. I wasn't trying to belittle you, if anything I was trying to make you feel better. You write poetry. You study all the time. You're beautiful. You know all this. But, fine, tell your story to Janice. I'll see you guys tomorrow. J, here's the keys.

JANICE. No!

BONITA. Lottie! Wait! Please! I'm sorry!

LOTTIE. I'm sorry too. I didn't mean...

BONITA. I'm always sorry. I'm like soaked in sorryness. I live my life being sorry. I felt sorry for Pershing.

LOTTIE. I'm always sorry too. I apologized to my parents for being an embarrassment.

JANICE. You did not!

LOTTIE. *(To Janice.)* You're never sorry about anything. You get high all the time, you get angry, you bum all my cigarettes...

JANICE. It's just me. Just who I am. *(Bonita and Lottie look at her.)* OK, I'm sorry. I don't know what I'm sorry about. I'm sorry for being me. Always. Day and night. All I am is...me and I'll never be anybody else. I'm getting old and I'm so, so, sorry. *(All of a sudden, Janice starts to cry.)* Man, that came out of nowhere. I don't want to get old. Lo, do you have a tissue? *(Lottie pulls a small packet of tissues from her locker and sits next to Janice.)*

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LOTTIE. Keep the whole thing. And you're not getting old. You're 28.

JANICE. (*Sniffing.*) Stewardesses – automatic termination at 32. It's in their contract.

LOTTIE. They're on strike. And they're gonna win.

JANICE. Bo, would you tell us the rest of the story? I want to know what happened.

BONITA. Sure, I will. OK, so I was voted Bunny of the Year – wait, before I go on, you're not getting fat J. I shouldn't have said that. I think that Betty *is* a Nazi. She's been taking in my costumes too.

JANICE. You're not just saying that to make me feel better?

BONITA. Do you want me to go on?

JANICE. (*Nodding her head vigorously.*) Yes, I like it when you tell stories.

BONITA. OK. So I'm voted Bunny of the Year and the next Friday, Pershing is back at my table. It was OK, because I wanted to make things right.

If he offered me the fifty again, I would take it and simply thank him. Clearly I'd hurt his feelings and for what? Fifty dollars? So, Lo, I think you're right.

LOTTIE. End of story?

BONITA. No. Before I went to his table, I got a green chartreuse from the bartender, and brought it to him, all prepared for his little, 'come here, come here' routine but instead, he grabs my wrist, twists it, pries open my hand and presses a folded bill into my palm.

LOTTIE. He's not allowed to touch you!

BONITA. You're right! But I didn't care. Because I thought it was my fault that he was acting this way. I took the money. I even said, "It's so nice to see you again, Mr. Pershing." And then I got out of there.

When I opened the bill I saw it was a hundred dollars, not fifty. A hundred dollars! I had to serve Pershing another chartreuse and again he grabs my hand, but harder this time. A lot harder. Like he wouldn't mind breaking my wrist.

LOTTIE. I'm getting angry at this creep.

BONITA. He says, "I figured the whole thing out, Miss Bunny of the Year. Miss High and Mighty! I figured the whole thing out." Then he pulls on me hard, both hands on my arms and hisses into my ear, "You thought you were too good for me. Fifty's chump change for Bunny of the Year. You're exactly what I thought you were, the minute I saw you. A whore, just an expensive one."

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JANICE. My God, Bo. He thought you didn't take the money 'cause it wasn't enough?

LOTTIE. He manhandled you. If Gretchen doesn't do something, I will. They need to throw this freak out. Damn it! Damn him!

BONITA. Any second thoughts I had about taking his money disappeared pretty fast. And we developed a relationship.

JANICE. /You what?

LOTTIE. /No, don't say that!

BONITA. (*Holding up her hand to indicate they should just be patient.*) Until tonight he'd come in, slam a hundred dollar bill on the table. I'd cruise by and pick it up. Then I'd take his order for green chartreuse, another order of green chartreuse, another hundred dollars. He was totally, completely contemptuous of me, and I felt very alive and clear headed within his contempt.

He thought I was a whore. I didn't care. I thought he was a little prick. That's what makes the world go round.

JANICE. You must have gotten a lot of money from him. Let's see. You were voted Bunny of the Year, when? Six months ago?. So every Friday, Saturday and Sunday for six months, with an average of two drinks per night?

BONITA. Sometimes three, or more.

JANICE. (*Janice is calculating on a piece of paper.*) More? All right, so we all don't get too excited I'm calculating an average of two for 26 weeks.

BONITA. I took two weeks off to study for my exams.

JANICE. OK. Twenty-four weeks. Oh my God, that's \$14,400 dollars. Bonita, that is not bad for heavy lifting green chartreuse. You could move to Scarsdale. On your own. I mean – without a man!. You could buy a house. Without a man!. Fourteen thousand dollars!

BONITA. But then I read about Roseann Quinn. Today. On the subway.

LOTTIE. Is that why you went to Gretchen?

JANICE. Forget about Gretchen.

BONITA. I'll say.

JANICE. Bonita, quit. You've got more than enough to pay for school. You've got enough for school, for a house, for...God it's a lot of money.

LOTTIE. She's not going to do any of that. There's more to this story. She sent it back to him or burned it or something. I'm waiting for the second installment.

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JANICE. Well, if you haven't burned it yet, think about your needy friends. I've always been there for you through good and bad, thick and thin.

LOTTIE. You've known her for eight months.

JANICE. I'm worth it! No, I'm not.

BONITA. I went to Gretchen because I got scared. Pershing hates me. He pays me for the right to hate me. And I hate him. It can't go on. Roseann Quinn met some guy in a bar. She made him angry.

LOTTIE. Nobody knows what happened.

JANICE. You think he stabbed her 18 times because she was making him laugh?

LOTTIE. I think we don't know what happened.

BONITA. Get this: Gretchen knows Pershing. As soon as I mentioned his name, boy, she lit up like a little firecracker. His name's Al, by the way. "You know Al? He's so much fun. Knows how to take care of you. He's been coming here since I was a Bunny."

JANICE. I can picture exactly how Gretchen handled him. Wiggling her ass when she walked away from the table. Making sure he saw her roll up the tips and slide them between her breasts. Giggling hysterically at every word he said. Just workin' the room. I bet he helped pay for her co-op.

BONITA. You know what I did? I put myself in danger. I ignored the signals he was giving off. To pay attention. I should have paid attention.

JANICE. Honey, have you looked at yourself in the mirror lately? What do you expect? We work for Playboy! Oh, don't give me that self-righteous look. Sex is our stock in trade.

BONITA. No! it isn't. The illusion of sex is our stock-in-trade.

JANICE. That's even more dangerous babe. Work it a little more with Pershing, and you'll have enough to retire and get away from this whole game. Toughen up, take a deep breath and ...handle it. Do you know how lucky you are?

LOTTIE. Are you out of your fucking mind? That guy is nuts. He tried to break her wrist, for God's sake. He called her a whore. Who knows what else is going on in his head?

JANICE. But he's paying to live out a seamless fantasy. Bonita got into his head and fucked with that fantasy.

LOTTIE. Let's see. In my last job I worked as a secretary and I had a fantasy that I was going to get a huge promotion, and a huge raise. Guess what didn't happen?

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So, I decided I had the right to go into the managing partner's office and break his teeth. God damn him, he ruined my fantasy.

JANICE. You didn't have a right to that fantasy. Secretaries don't get huge promotions, and besides you told me that you went in to talk to them about going to law school. Oh, and they took you real seriously. How many partners at that law firm? How many associates? Don't bother. Eighty six attorneys. You told me Lottie. How many were females? One.

BONITA. How many were Black? (*Lottie and Janice just stare at Bonita.*)

JANICE. You want to make your dreams come true? Fight the Power, baby, it's the only way.

LOTTIE. Bullshit, Janice. You're telling Bo to get in bed with the power – men with money – just close her eyes and suck it up. That's what you're saying out of one side of your mouth. But, oh, ooh, you live five blocks from where that woman's head was smashed in with a sculpture of HERSELF and you don't want to go home tonight.

JANICE. Wait a minute, wait a minute! Just because I say 'fight the power' doesn't mean I'm not scared shitless. Oh, and wasn't it you who said, "We don't know what happened?"

LOTTIE. I don't know how to figure this all out. I need to keep thinking. I need to understand. Why do we make men so angry?

JANICE. Ask Freud.

LOTTIE. I will. He's the key to all of it.

BONITA. Why don't you ask Gloria Steinem or Shirley Chisholm instead of Freud? Shirley Chisholm ran for president.

LOTTIE. And lost. I've gotta keep trying. (*Pause.*) John got into law school.

BONITA. Bummer.

LOTTIE. Don't worry about it. I'm going break through with the union. I just know it.

JANICE. Sure you will, babe.

BONITA. You've been fantastic.

LOTTIE. You really think so? That means a lot to me. I gotta keep on it. You know what? I bet Gretchen's not gone. I bet she's upstairs talking to corporate about Bo.

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BONITA. No, I didn't even get a chance to say anything about Pershing. Once she said she knew him, I decided it didn't matter.

JANICE. Yeah, but she knew something was up. Wait – her door's open!

LOTTIE. She's got somebody in there!

JANICE. *(To Bonita.)* Your replacement, darling.

LOTTIE. You can't fire the Bunny of the Year – not yet.

BONITA. It's the new girl. I saw her in the Living Room tonight.

JANICE. I bet she trailed Margo.

LOTTIE. She trailed the Bunny she's going to replace? That's nasty, man.

BONITA. Gretchen's on her knees. She's checking for the Three Diamonds!

JANICE/LOTTIE. The what?

BONITA. The three diamonds. Between your legs. Didn't she check you? J, stand with your legs together. *(Bonita takes her flashlight and kneels down in front of Janice. Bonita points to an area between Janice's ankles and her calves,)* You need to have a space here. *(Bonita points to an area between Janice's calves and her knees.)* And here. *(Bonita points to an area between Janice's thighs. She traces a line with her flashlight.)* No overlap. No pressed flesh between the thighs. A little window of light. The three diamonds. *(Bonita switches off her flashlight.)*

JANICE. Honey, don't stop!

BONITA. I was trying to annoy you.

JANICE. Why?

LOTTIE. Oh God, if only we were born rich instead of beautiful.

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