

**Melina's Fish**  
by Y York

© 1981

CHARACTERS

Jake: Late thirties, a screen writer.

Mona: Late thirties, a screen writer.

Place: Jake's apartment.

(The living room of Jake's apartment. He is seated at a table, typing. There is a bowl with a fish in it. The doorbell rings and he answers it. Mona enters carrying packages.)

Jake: (Opens the door.) Late. Not like you.

Mona: The stores are crazy.

Jake: Why are you shopping on Saturday?

Mona: Peter's birthday. I didn't have a chance before.

Jake: What is he going to be, sixteen?

Mona: Can it, Jake.

Jake: No, really. How old is he going to be.

Mona: I said can it.

Jake: Come on, how old is he?

Mona: He's older than Melina. (Shouting) Hello, Melina.

Jake: She's not here.

Mona: You're kidding.

Jake: No, not here.

Mona: She left you.

Jake: No.

Mona: You threw her out.

Jake: She's attending a lecture on holistic medicine.

Mona: Ah. What happened to Yoga?

Jake: She still takes Yoga. I think this is part of it. They're connected.

Mona: Maybe I'll take Yoga.

Jake: Why?

Mona: Well. Melina certainly looks "healthy."

Jake: Cut it out, Mona.

Mona: What? I said she's healthy.

Jake: I heard your quotation marks.

Mona: So? You like "healthy" girls. What's wrong with that?

Jake: And you date communist children.

Mona: Peter is not a communist.

Jake: But he is a kid.

Mona: At least he can vote.

Jake: Melina can vote.

Mona: As soon as they give the class in voting booth.

Jake: Hey! You don't appreciate Melina.

Mona: You don't appreciate Peter. I can't believe she left us alone. What's this? (Mona looks at the fish.)

Jake: Melina's fish.

Mona: I thought you said no pets.

Jake: I felt sorry for it.

Mona: Yeah? Why?

Jake: He's maladjusted. He's a maladjusted fighting fish. He's supposed to blow bubbles and the lady fish lays eggs in the bubbles. He blew the bubbles, and she laid the eggs. Then, he ate the babies. And then, he ate the lady fish. Then he got depressed and started blowing bubbles all alone in the bowl.

Mona: Hum.

Jake: Yeah. She's left us alone, before.

Mona: No.

Jake: Sure.

Mona: No.

Jake: She has.

Mona: Nooo, Jake. Not this one. I was flattered.

Jake: Why?

Mona: It's like ... I'm a threat to your connubial bliss, or something. That's a laugh.

Jake: Why is that a laugh.

Mona: Oh, stop it.

Jake: No, why is it a laugh?

Mona: Jake, come on!

Jake: We'd make a great team.

Mona: ... I'm having a deja vu.

Jake: You say that every time I say that.

Mona: (Takes a page out of the typewriter.) Where's the rest of this?

Jake: Under the book. We're perfect for each other.

Mona: (Reads script.) Do you mind? I need to read this.

Jake: What do we do more than any couple you know?

Mona: Fight.

Jake: Besides fight.

Mona: Yell.

Jake: Yell is part of fight.

Mona: I don't know what we do!

Jake: Come on, you know.

Mona: I don't know. (Holds up script) This sucks.

Jake: We laugh.

Mona: We don't laugh. I laugh at you and you laugh at me, but we don't laugh.

Jake: (Picks up script) What's wrong with it?

Mona: People don't talk like this. It's not real.

Jake: Yes, they do. I've heard them.

Mona: You think this junk up, say it to Melina, then tell me it's real, you've heard it.

Jake: How do you know?

Mona: Because that's what I do.

Jake: You say stuff to Melina?

Mona: (Looks at fish) I don't think he should be in the sun.

Jake: He's okay. How come I wasn't invited to the party?

Mona: No party. Just Peter and me.

Jake: Cozy. How do you like having a 23 year-old boy friend?

Mona: How do you like having a 22 year-old girl friend?

Jake: That's different.

Mona: Why?

Jake: Old guys always go out with young girls.

Mona: Yeah, because old girls are wise to old guys.

Jake: Where do you think we should we change it? (the script)

Mona: Everywhere it's trite, which is ..everywhere. The characters are okay. The story's good. But you can't say stuff like, "I love your legs." It makes him seem like a jerk.

Jake: But it's important to the story.

Mona: I know the story, Jake. Do it with the camera. Tight on his face, tight on her legs. Have the actor salivate or something.

Jake: Doesn't that make him a jerk?

Mona: Maybe, but it's more subtle.

Jake: Okay. Write it in.

Mona: And a picture of Hemingway hanging in his bedroom? Who needs another comparison to Hemingway?

Jake: Except, because it is so trite, it reflects the jerkiness of the guy.

Mona: ... That's interesting.

Jake: Thank you. ... She is jealous.

Mona: Who? Oh. Why?

Jake: I don't know. Maybe... I don't know.

Mona: Come on.

Jake: I talk about you all of the time.

Mona: Sure. I talk about you, too.

Jake: (Happy) Yeah?

Mona: Of course, Jaaake. I spend my whole life with you, what else have I got to talk about? You're it.

Jake: Yeah. I guess that's why she's jealous. Isn't what's his name?

Mona: Who?

Jake: What's his name.

Mona: Who?

Jake: The communist.

Mona: He's not a communist.

Jake: He dresses like a communist. Isn't he jealous?

Mona: No.

Jake: Huh.

Mona: What, huh?

Jake: You wish he were.

Mona: Yeah. But he's not. He's too busy saving people. You should see the girls at these meetings.

Jake: Young?

Mona: With these young little bodies. Braids.

Jake: Jealous?

Mona: Sure.

Jake: Isn't that chauvinistic?

Mona: Yeah, but it's also real life.

Jake: (Offended) Why isn't he jealous of me?

Mona: Stop being offended.

Jake: I'm not offended, I'm ... curious.

Mona: I think he thinks I've got a good deal in him.

Jake: He has a good deal in you.

Mona: You know, I don't think that fish ought to be in the sun.

Jake: He's okay. Oh, no!

Mona: What?

Jake: My fighter is floating at the top of the bowl.

Mona: Quick, put in an aspirin.

Jake: Have you got one?

Mona: All I have is Tylenol.

Jake: Put that in.

Mona drops a tylenol in the bowl.

Jake: Is anything happening.

Mona: We have to wait for the capsule to dissolve.

Jake: Capsule? How old is that thing?

Mona: It's old. I've had them since the cyanide thing.

Jake: Oh, swell.

Mona: You know, maybe an aspirin is for plants.

Jake: Great. What should I do?

Mona: Walk it around.

Jake: What?

Mona: Yeah, they do that.

Jake: They don't.

Mona: Yeah, I've seen it. Walk it around.

Jake takes the fish out of the bowl and start to walk around the room with it.

Mona: Not like that! In the bowl.

Jake: Oh.

Jake puts the fish in the bowl, picks up the bowl and walks around the room.

Jake: This is ridiculous.

Mona: Will you stop fooling around? Give me that.

Mona takes the bowl, sticks her fingers in the bowl, walks around the bowl.

Mona: I'm walking him around the bowl. They do this with sharks. I saw Marlin Perkins do this on Wild Kingdom. I'm forcing air into his gills. It's artificial respiration.

Jake: Is anything happening?  
Mona: I can't tell.  
Jake: Take him out.  
Mona: (She takes the fish out) His eyes are open.  
Jake: Great. Throw him in the bowl. (Does, pause) He's not swimming.  
Mona: He's not breathing.  
Jake: I think I'll try heart massage.  
Jake reaches in and gets out fish. Rubs fish.  
Jake: Do you know which side a fish's heart is on?  
Mona: Rub the whole fish. (Pause) I think we should force water down his gills.  
Jake: There's a pitcher in the kitchen.  
Mona exits to the kitchen.  
Jake: You can pour water down his throat while I massage his heart. Come on and live, fish. Live for Melina, the blonde beauty, and for little Jake.  
Mona enters with pitcher, pours.  
Mona: Here.  
Jake: Jesus.  
Mona: That's not water.  
Jake: That's was a martini. Very dry.  
Melina: Sorry. Looked just like water. Give me the fish. (Takes fish)  
Jake: What are you going to do?  
Mona: Electric shock. I'm sticking him in an outlet. (Screams) My, God.  
Jake: You idiot! Are you trying to kill yourself? Look.  
Mona: What?  
Jake: He flipped.  
Mona: Put him in the bowl.  
Jake: He flipped!  
Mona: Where is he?  
Jake: He's behind the heater. Here, chew this.  
Jake hands Mona gum.  
Mona: What is it?  
Jake: Gum! It's gum! Chew it.  
Mona: It's not sugar-free.

Jake: This is life and death.  
Mona chews gum.

Mona: All right! I think you should turn off the heater.

Jake: Right. Oh, man, I can't turn the knob. There! You know, I think I turned it up.

Mona: What do I do with this? (The Gum)

Jake: Hanger.  
Jake gets a coat hanger.

Mona: I think I lost a filling.

Jake: Give me the gum. Where is he?

Mona: Back there. Can you see him?

Jake: Yeah. Damn. He's not sticking.

Mona: You're going to spear him, Jake.

Jake: What's that smell?

Mona: Somebody's cooking fish...  
They stare at each other for a second and then start to laugh. They laugh a lot.

Jake: See, we laugh.

Mona: We're ridiculous.

Jake: We're perfect, great.

Mona: Can it, Jake. Let's flush the fish.

Jake: We can't. Melina will think I ate it.

Mona: She won't!

Jake: Yeah. She thinks I'm a monster.

Mona: You're a pussy cat.

Jake: Melina doesn't think so.

Mona: She's really afraid of you?

Jake: Yeah. But she likes it. That's what she likes best. I've got him. (The Fish)

Mona: Here's a tissue. You better open the window. Poor old fish. What's his name?

Jake: I wouldn't let her name him.

Mona: You monster.

Jake: (Laughs) Yeah.

Mona: What's with the martinis?

Jake: Oh, you know.



Mona: No.

Jake: Sometimes I have a martini.

Mona: No, you don't. Half a beer. Maybe.

Jake: Lately I've been having martinis.

Mona: My God.

Jake: What?

Mona: I'm so dense. You're getting ready to change girl friends. That's why you made a run at me. Martinis! You don't have anybody waiting in the wings this time.

Jake: She's driving me crazy.

Mona: She's devoted to you.

Jake: She's making me sick. I hate devotion.

Mona: I'm going home.

Jake: We have to finish the script.

Mona: I'll call you.

Jake: You don't understand me on the phone.

Mona: I can't see your hands.

Jake: You don't bore me.

Mona: Eventually, I would.

Jake: We've been together for ten years.

Mona: We work together.

Jake: I've been thinking...

Mona: I turn into a woman every time you get tired of your girl friend. I'm so sick of this.

Jake: You're always a woman.

Mona: No, I'm always a person. Until you get bored. Then, I'm a woman. (Surprised) I'm getting mad.

Jake: I like your fire.

Mona: Today it's my fire. Usually it's my stubbornness.

Jake: We'd be great together.

Mona: You never ask me how I feel.

Jake: I know you like me.

Mona: I usually like you. I don't like you when you start.

Jake: We think the same way. You finish my sentences.

Mona: Exactly.

Jake: So?

Mona: We think the same, we act the same, we like the same things — movies, food. You're an older, uglier, me. Who needs it?

Jake: I'm not older.

Mona: ... You're a little older.

Jake: What? A couple of days?

Mona: That's a little. Call me when you find a new girl friend.

Jake: I don't want a new girl friend. I want you.

Mona: And hurry up so we can finish the script.

Jake: I don't want a new girl friend. I get a new girl friend every year.

Mona: Two.

Jake: What?

Mona: You get two every year. Two new girls. Except in '81 you got a girl that was the fall of '79. I guess that year you only had one new girl.

Jake: Two a year?

Mona: Yeah. Nineteen girl friends and one personality. I've had to learn nineteen girls' names.

Jake: What about me?

Mona: I know your name.

Jake: What one personality?

Mona: You always date the same girl. In a different body. No. You always date the same girl in the same body. Why don't you stay with Melina.

Jake: Wait a minute, Angel. How many men have you been through?

Mona: ... Three.

Jake: Three?

Mona: A five year marriage, a three-year romance, and for the last two months, Peter.

Jake: Three? My God, you're a virgin.

Mona: Goodbye.

Jake: Wait. I didn't mean to call you a virgin.

Mona: I'll get over it.

Jake: I like you so much.

Mona: A strangled scream came out of her mouth. (Does)

Jake: Let's just kiss. Let's kiss, okay?

Mona: Okay.

Jake: Really? We can.

Mona: Sure, let's kiss. Come here. Come over here.  
They kiss.

Mona: What happened?

Jake: What happened? Nothing happened. We kissed. (A pause, as that sinks in.) Oh.

Mona: I don't think we have to re-write so much as cut. A lot of this information is redundant with the visuals you've specified.

Jake: You work on it — in pencil. I'll be back.

Mona: Okay. Where you going?

Jake: To get another one of these. (The fish.)

Mona: Good idea.

He exits. She types. End