

The top of the fourth act.

DM: Yes. Okay.

Ron: Because David was incredibly sexually frustrated, the line goes kind of all over the map by the time they get to Padua.

DM: (Laughing)

Ron: That was the joke and we couldn't do it.

DM: Yeah. They were married quite "sterily."

Ron: Yeah. (laughter)

DM: Well, I am going to ask you about a bunch of episodes, but let's continue with Shakespeare. So, how did the idea of *Atomic Shakespeare* come about? Is it something Glenn pitched to you or did both of you have ideas?

Jeff: That was ours.

Ron: Actually, Jeff came up with the idea of doing the show in iambic pentameter and we started talking about doing a mystery based on *King Lear*, I think.

Jeff: It was actually *Hamlet*.

Ron: Yeah.

Jeff: The original thought was *Hamlet* because it had a murder mystery. I thought, as a detective



Love, 16th Century style Kate and Petruchio wake up after their long belated night of bliss as man and wife in *Atomic Shakespeare*.

show... and I went in and told Ron about it and it evolved from there. The great thing was, you know, you could come up with an idea like this. I mean, people weren't going around pitching iambic pentameter television shows very often. It was terrific to be able to go to Glenn and say, "This is what we want to do," and he would just say, "Great! Great! Go do it." As opposed to, "Gee, I don't know. It's never been done. Blah... Blah..." You know? You really had the freedom.

Ron: It's funny though, I remember the day we pitched. We had three or four ideas worked out and we pitched all of them. And then at the tail end, we said we have this idea of doing a show in iambic pentameter. And that's the one, you

know, Glenn sparked to. And we started pitching the mystery based on *Hamlet* and it wasn't quite happening for him, and that's actually where I suggested *Taming of the Shrew* and he said, "Yeah."

DM: Was it difficult for you to write or did it flow out of you?

Jeff: You know, very honestly, I'd like to say that it was painstaking and difficult, because I

think of all the things we wrote on the show, it tends to be the one that is associated with us the most, you know? But the truth is, it might have been, in a weird way, one of the easier things we did on the series. This is my theory and I

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think you (Ron) and I have talked about it. We had come from comedy, more from broader comedy, and we were big Monty Python fans. We were really into that kind of stuff. And so the fact that this was part *Moonlighting*, part sketch, I think, fell into an area that we just knew really well. We had this piece we could work off of and there was something about it that flowed. I mean, as Ron was saying, this was a first draft. What you saw on screen was a first draft, and a just slightly edited one in post (production).

Ron: I would agree, I think, because we knew the *Moonlighting* voice, and we had Shakespeare so we were playing against something. You weren't coming up with whole cloth from nothing. It actually made our job easier. I mean, when Bruce's Petruchio shows up and is wearing sunglasses and the horse has sunglasses, that's an easy joke to get to.

Jeff: I mean, you take a Python or a *Saturday Night Live*, you've got their sketches playing off something so often. You know, you're parodying something, and that can be an easier kind of writing if you know that kind of comedy because you do have something to work from, so we took to it. You know, I'm not sure if it was everyone's cup of tea, but we loved it because we had that mix of sensibilities at the time.

Ron: By the way, I think that it's interesting to note that, while people talk about that particular episode, it's one of the lower rated ones. I think people see Shakespeare advertised and went over and watched *Riptide*.

DM: And a lot of teachers are introducing...

...Ron and Glenn and I, as well as Roger (Director) and the rest of the gang, had talked about the things we would do with them after they slept together... it could have been as compelling, as interesting, as fun to watch as anything we had done before.

Jeff: Yeah. I know.

DM: And Will Mackenzie told me that he gets calls from the DGA asking permission to show it to their students.

Jeff: Isn't that nice?

Ron: I had a friend up in northern California who is an English teacher in junior high. And he asked for a

tape of that for that very reason.

DM: Yeah. I mean, it's a fun way to be introduced to Shakespeare.

Jeff: It wasn't something that we spent lot of time reading at the time either.

DM: Well, you know what? In my interview with Glenn, he did say that his wife Mary did a production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in college, so I guess he had always had that in the back of his mind.

Jeff: Is that right?

DM: Yeah.

Ron: I mean, *Moonlighting* ultimately, you could say the concept of the show is very Shakespearean.

DM: Yeah, Glenn obviously took to the concept about you wanting to do Shakespeare.

Jeff: Um hmm.

Ron: Yeah.

DM: Because *Moonlighting* was about the battle of the sexes.

R&J: Yeah.

DM: Even Will said in his interview that Maddie and David are Kate and Petruchio.

Ron: Yes. Exactly. It just fits.

DM: Now did you interact with the directors that filmed your scripts?

Ron: Sometimes later.

Jeff: Not much in the beginning.

Ron: Glenn actually buffered us from the vicissitudes of the stage, whatever was going on down there, and that was perfectly fine with us at the time. I think by Shakespeare, we were down on the set. It was not even to give notes necessarily. It was simply to be a part of it.

Jeff: At a certain point, though, we were in casting and would have discussions with the director at that point, but it was fairly minor over all. It was just something Glenn took care of at that point.

Ron: You know, in fact, I think it was our first script *Knowing Her* with Dana Delany.

DM: That's right, and Peter Werner directed that.

Ron: And I will never forget we were kind of stumped on the this final action scene, and late at night came up with the idea of doing a car chase that was at a funeral where the antagonist takes off in the lead hearse, and the whole funeral party thinking it is leaving, takes off after it. We write this, and I remember that we handed it in late at night, and Glenn was already gone, and we didn't know what the reaction would be. And it was, I believe, that next day, I was driving onto the lot and we had to drive past the main *Moonlighting* stage to get to our offices. And I saw a hearse sit-

ting there and I thought, "Yes!" (Laughing).

Jeff: We were less excited when we found out someone had actually died on the show.

Ron: (Laughing) Yeah. But our interaction with the directors, especially early on, was pretty non-existent.

DM: And then in your scripts, did you write directions for the directors? Because in one particular episode, for instance, in *Knowing Her* where Maddie comes in all wet and her nylons are torn...

Jeff: Very, very specific. Yes. Sure.

Ron: That's not direction though. That's the fabric of a scene. When you say "direction," if you mean shots and close ups, yes, that stuff was done. And that was, frankly, set by Glenn. Glenn used to do that and we basically took to it.

Jeff: In both ways... I mean, we would say "Close on Maddie," or "Pull back to see David over here."

Ron: Yeah.

Jeff: But, you know, we would put direction in that way. In a case like yours...

DM: Shooting between the legs...

Jeff: Probably the shot between the legs, no. That's probably Peter, but absolutely the way she

looked, because it was all about the fact that she had been changing tires in the rain.

Ron: It's what kicks off the whole show.

DM: In terms of collaborating with the other writers, there are times when you are paired up with others like Charles (Chic) Eglee. I mean, how does it work so that everybody gets a writing credit?

Jeff: Every incident is different. Sometimes we'd share credit with the rest of the staff because we'd all worked on something together. And Ron and I rewrote a lot of other shows that we didn't get credited on, because you just do that as a producer.

Ron: Well, at a certain point, we just started handing out credits, whoever's turn it was to get some because it was such a kind of roundelay, at least by the second and third season.

Jeff: That's what I was getting to, toward the end, we were just doing it as a group. We would take scripts and take an act, a piece, or whatever. But the Writers Guild has rules about how many people you can credit a show at one time, so we would split that up. Normally, two people on teleplay and three on story was the best we could do, so we would take turns. There were really just a few instances like that. But that was because they were

group efforts. Really fun efforts, by the way, we loved the time we spent kicking around ideas with the rest of the staff.

Ron: I remember a particular episode that was a true, and very effective group effort called *Symphony in Knocked Flat*. I remember we all sat around and we kind of worked on the story and we split up acts, and at one point, Jeff and I were even writing separately. We weren't writing together. It was more time-effective for us to act as individual writers and this happened in our second season or maybe even closer to the end of our first. But we were going off and writing individual scenes and then getting back together in the room and basically going over them. It amazingly turned out to be a very funny episode.

Jeff: I don't remember who got credit on that.

DM: I do have an episode guide here.

Jeff: Well, we know it was the one of the assistants on the show. Her husband had come in.

DM: Actually, *Symphony in Knocked Flat* was in the third season. Here it is. Dale Gelineau is credited.

Jeff: That's right.

Ron: That's right.

Jeff: Melissa Gelineau was Jay Daniel's assistant, and Dale was

her husband.

DM: And Pauline Miller.

Jeff: That's it.

DM: Now, I thought one of the funniest episodes you guys wrote was *The Bride of Tupperman*.

Jeff: Thank you.

Ron: Oh, yeah.

DM: That was a lot of fun, especially in the beginning when David is asking Maddie out for a date, and they find out that they just totally disagree on what to do.

Jeff: That's the one I mentioned earlier where we hit our stride. You know in *Knowing Her*, we did some rewrites, it went through maybe four drafts. We wrote it way too jokey at first. That was the transition Ron was talking about. We got to a draft where, you know, I would guess probably seventy percent of what you saw on the show was ours, the draft you actually watched, but it took awhile to get there. *Tupperman* was our second original show that was all ours, and most of what you saw was ours. And that was sort of the show where we finally thought, "Okay." We wrote it probably in December of that first season and we thought, "Okay. We got the

Probably the best time of interaction for us with him (Bruce) was when he asked us to write *Hudson Hawk*.

show now." And I think that's when Glenn kind of looked at us and said, "Okay, we have something here now."

DM: That episode also showcased what David felt what was important in a woman and what Maddie felt what was important in a woman.

Jeff: It kind of struck to the core of that idea. Yeah. Yeah. Thanks.

DM: Another episode that was a milestone was *Witness for the Execution* where they actually kissed in the garage and it wasn't a dream sequence.

Ron: There's a very funny story that I have to tell about that one. The idea was, basically, a person comes in and says, "Witness my

murder because I am going to die, it's a long lingering death, and it will eat up my children's inheritance. If I commit suicide, the insurance company won't pay off. But if someone comes in and kills me and you come in afterwards and prove it was murder, my insurance will have to pay off." So, everything he says is true and David wants to take the case. The only thing the guy didn't tell David is that he is going to kill himself and the moment David walks in the room, he will be accused of the murder. So, basically, the client came in to the agency to get a patsy. Well, this is a great idea and we realized when we got to the second act break that we had killed off our antagonist. There were no witnesses, and we didn't know how to solve this. And it was filming and we had only a few days to figure this out and we kind of hit a wall. One night, actually, my wife came up with the solution, the clue that proved the client had killed himself, which were the slippers facing the bed. This, in real life, would not have held water, but...

Jeff: *Moonlighting* wasn't real life?

Ron: (laughing)

DM: (laughing)

Ron: Well, close. And I remember coming in the next day and mentioning it to Jeff and Glenn, and it flew, and so, in an episode somewhere around there, I named

a character Lieutenant Tapia, and that's her maiden name. Since she didn't get story credit, I thought, well, we could at least immortalize her name in here somewhere. But that was a very fun episode to do once we got past a rather major hurdle.

DM: Now, about the kiss in the garage, what was the actors' reaction when they saw that in the script?

Ron: Boy, I don't know.

Jeff: You know, we weren't involved with them enough at that point to know. I mean, we had, later on, a lot more interaction with them, and Bruce, in particular. But, at that point, we didn't see their reaction. Just wrote it



Having fun with our fanzine Jeff Reno (left) and Ron Osborn are among the people we interviewed who enjoy reading *Moonlighting Strangers*. Needless to say, we are truly honored.



and sent it on because we didn't do table reads or anything on the show, you know? Scenes got sent down oftentimes a day or two before and they were shot. They rarely saw full scripts.

Ron: I don't think they ever saw full scripts.

Jeff: I don't know if they ever got a full script.



“Thank God I don’t wear briefs.” David thought when he impulsively barged out his bathroom in *Witness For The Execution*.

Ron: We might have started the season with full scripts. Maybe the first one...

Jeff: Yeah.

Ron: Maybe two.

DM: Okay. In terms of them kissing then, I guess Glenn was okay with that?

Jeff: Yeah.

DM: Because in the past it was always such a big tease. It was done in a dream sequence, so now you’re showing the audience...

Jeff: I think that the three of us... I mean, you know, Ron and Glenn and I talked about it is my memory. And I think the three of us all felt that it was time to escalate. Nobody wanted it to get stale,

and you didn’t want to hold back everything too long, or it would just be a constant tease. And so, I think it was just a decision that it wouldn’t be a bad thing.

Ron: You know, it’s funny though, what that speaks to is, us being in the center of

things at the time and none of us, Glenn as well, having a clear arc for a series. You know, Glenn came in with this terrific series notion. We and the staff came in and took to it. We all wanted to advance it, but if we sat down and said this is going to be four seasons, maybe we wouldn’t have peaked things in the second season. We would have somehow found a way to redefine or renew ourselves, or keep it going. But it was because we were always flying by the seat or our pants and it was exciting. But it was also a little limiting; we never had a certain overview, if you will. Where that kiss came, I don’t remember. It was probably fine at the time. But where we probably peaked the series, I think, everyone can look back and say it was too soon.

DM: Yeah. Well, probably because with both the

press and the audience wondering “Will they or won’t they?” What happened after that episode was the kiss was forgotten because they never referred to it again.

Jeff: You know, I don’t know if anyone else will tell you the same thing, the group you’re interviewing. But my response to people is, it’s always been kind of the assumption of the press and the audience and everybody that the show got bad once they slept together. And that’s not what it was about. You know, Ron and Glenn and I, as well as Roger (Director) and the rest of the gang, had talked about the things we would do with them after they slept together. And my feeling still is, it could have been as compelling, as interesting, as fun to watch as anything we had done before. What happened very simply was Cybill got pregnant and was gone, and we had to write a show where all of her scenes were filmed in the summer.

Ron: We had to write a series.

Jeff: We had to write a whole series... a bunch of episodes where her character is in Chicago and we film all her episodes, you know, by getting done incredibly fast. And then sometime in September when she’s gone, Bruce and the rest of the cast get together. And we shoot the rest of it and cut it together. So, not only is that an impossible way to do