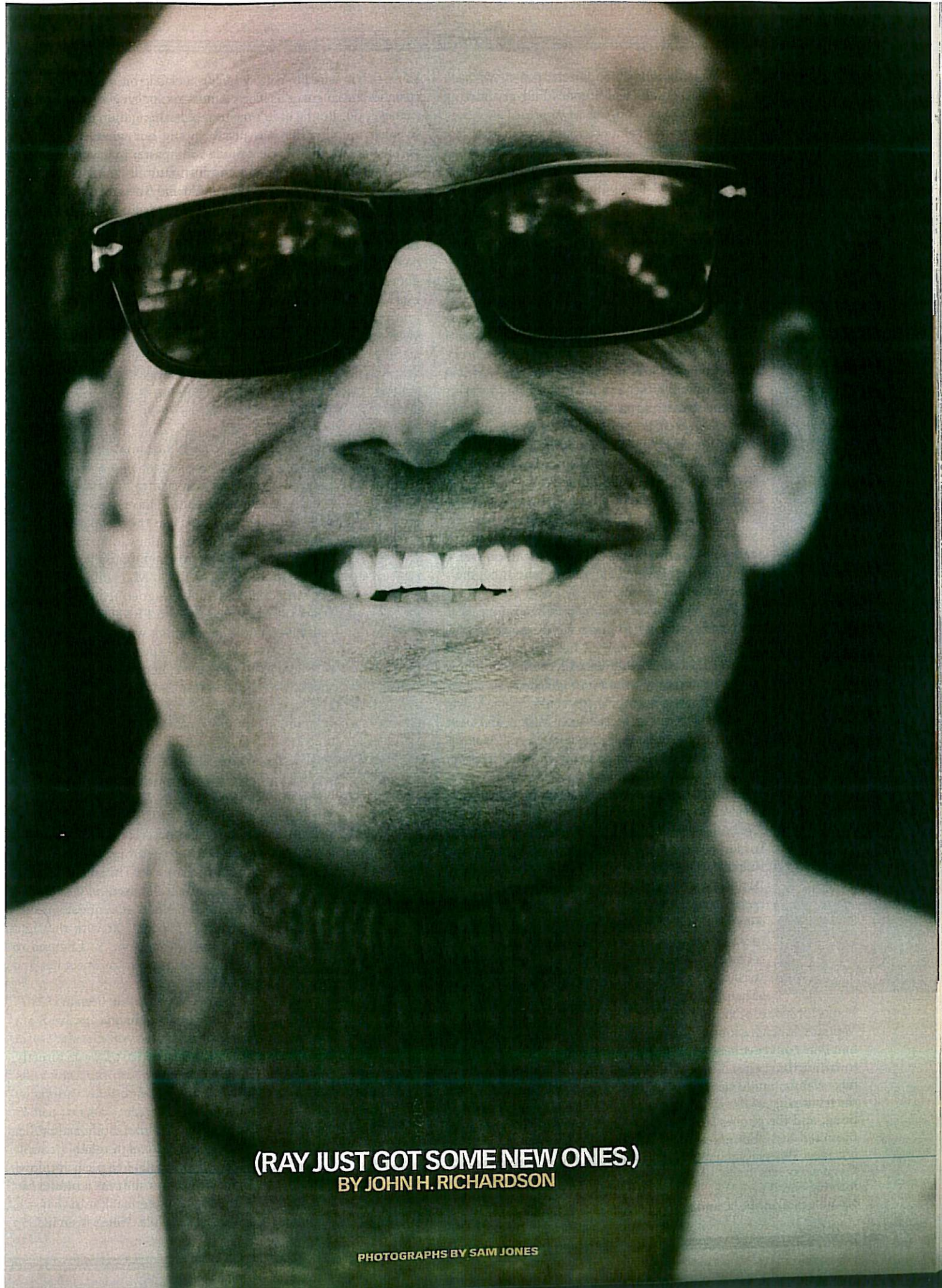


## **LIVE BY THE BLOND, DIE BY THE BLOND**

**RAY MANZELLA IS A STARMAKER, A SVENGALI,  
A HOLLYWOOD HUSTLER. HE'S HAD BIG CLIENTS  
LIKE VANNA, PAMELA, AND JENNY.  
BUT SOMETIMES CLIENTS LEAVE,  
AND A STARMAKER MUST GET NEW ONES.**





**(RAY JUST GOT SOME NEW ONES.)**  
**BY JOHN H. RICHARDSON**

**PHOTOGRAPHS BY SAM JONES**



**Ray comes to my room and spreads blonds across my bed, three** gorgeous creatures with diamond cheekbones and glimmering gimlet eyes. "This year's bumper crop," he says.

Lorene Fields he met at his hair salon. Her face is triangular, like a snake's. Her mouth is full and stunningly cut. You could count on one hand the times Ray has put on the brakes for a beautiful woman, because he's been around some beautiful women, but there was something about Lorene. Turns out she was a top model who'd quit the business. When they had lunch, he fell in love with her. "She is just so *stable*."

Number two is Lisa Dergan, who has the same high-cheekboned look as Lorene but more mainstream, a mixture of homecoming queen and Bond girl. She was last year's Miss July. "The thing that I like about her is she's drop-dead gorgeous, of course, and a top golfer—she was a model for Guess? Golf. Plus she's the most articulate four-year graduate, top of her class at San Diego State, majored in art history and interior design, speaks Japanese, lived in Japan and modeled, lived in Munich. I see her being the next Mary Hart or Hannah Storm. She could do golf, she could do sports. She needs a little training, but I think she'd be a home run."

The third woman is a former Hawaiian Tropic girl named Shana Hiatt. "She's a great dancer, she's got great credentials, she's done a lot of on-camera, I see her being the next Jenny on MTV kind of a thing—she's young enough, she's poised, she's awesome."

Ray's a very handsome man. When people meet him, they often try to guess which movie star he looks like—Roy Scheider, Michael Douglas, Ted Danson, George Hamilton? Maybe that's why this feels so innocent, so wholesome, like he's just cheering on the team. He beams down at the photos. Any one of them might be the next Vanna, the next Pamela, the next Jenny, the next perfect Ray Manzella hybrid that becomes not just an actress but an icon you can cross-promote from movies to books to dolls to toothpaste to infomercials. They sold a million Vanna White dolls on the Home Shopping Network—a *million dolls*! "These girls jump off the page," he says. "They're channelstoppers, every one of them. If all three make it, it wouldn't surprise me. If not, I'm gonna quit the business."

**Ray was in his thirties and had just quit working as** a stockbroker when he pitched a book on the history of the soap opera to Doubleday. Another guy wrote most of it and they split the commission. Then he helped Mel Blanc get a deal with Warner

Books for his autobiography, *That's Not All Folks!* Then his friend Vanna, who had a job turning letters on *Wheel of Fortune*, asked him if he could get her a poster deal. Ray didn't think it was going to be anything special until he pitched *USA Today* and got this huge Vanna fan on the line. They ended up putting the poster on the front page of the Life section, mentioned his name and everything, and the phones went crazy. Once he saw the potential, he promised her, "I'm gonna make you bigger than the show." For him, too, this was a chance to be somebody. So they went around the country like in *Coal Miner's Daughter*, doing appearances and meetings until people got a sense of her firsthand and what an incredible person she is, and that snowballed into "a huge marketing

thing that was really big," which is a classic bit of Rayspeak—he mangles the language as if he's almost apologizing for the things he makes it do. But he didn't try to mold Vanna, didn't do some big Svengali number, he was just bringing out what was already there—like Vanna's Perfect Smile toothpaste; that was a natural call. You look at Vanna and you just naturally think toothpaste. Spring Air mattresses offered \$30,000 and Ray said, How about a Vanna White signature line? That's a twelve-year relationship now, a huge deal, hundreds of thousands. And Nestlé chocolate, the Buf-Puf nail tool, McDonald's. She still sells six thousand of her comfort-step shoes every time she does a half hour on HSN. Public appearances, she gets \$30,000 for an hour and a half, one of the most popular celebrities ever. And Ray noticed that she carried knitting needles everywhere she went and made the most amazing, sweet kitty-cat silhouettes with these complicated cluster stitches, so he pitched a series of stitching manuals to Warner Books, another six-figure deal. He realized there was something strangely enigmatic about her and played on that to get her another huge advance for her autobiography, *Vanna Speaks*.

Then he got into the whole infomercial business, ended up working with Sugar Ray Leonard and Suzanne Somers and Kim Alexis and Tony Little—tons of people. Pitched Carmen Electra. Eleanor Mondale. Got Shatner and Nimoy to sign *Star Trek* memorabilia for QVC. Maybe he should have been pushing for more of a theatrical clientele, but this was the business he found himself in. And then Pamela Anderson came along, and Ray began to get a reputation as the king of the blonds. For a certain type of actress-Playmate-spokesmodel, Manzella Entertainment was the golden door. And then he signed Jenny McCarthy and helped her get on MTV and hired a PR team to help promote her and suddenly, boom, everything was Jenny: the cover of *Rolling Stone*, the cover of *George*, some monstrous endorsement deals, the NBC sitcom—just huge, huge opportunities.

Now all he has to do is do it again.

**Lorene is wearing unusual furry pants and a little orange shirt.** "You look adorable," Ray says.

"My friend is a designer," she says.

After a very short wait, they go into the office to meet an executive vice-president that Ray knows from *Wheel of Fortune*. Ray says he really appreciates his taking the meeting on short notice and vamps a little about a potential infomercial thing he's doing with Sophia Loren and how he wants to get things on a productive track because he's leaving for Europe on Thursday. Then he gets right to pitching Lorene. "I really feel, based on her credentials and training and the seasoning she's had as a model on camera work and her look, my instincts tell me that with the right type of opportunity she would be very, very big. So I figured to meet with you and to kind of have you, you know, meet her and have her meet the appropriate people . . ."

The executive turns to her. "How long have you been in L. A.?"

"Well, I've been in L. A. about four and a half years."

"From?"

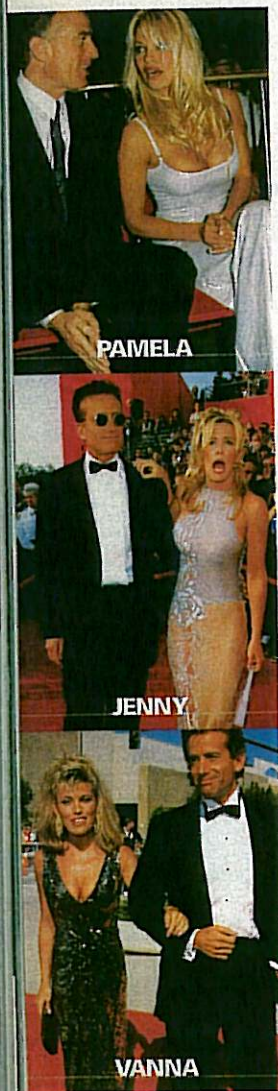
"From all over. Indirectly I'm from the East Coast; directly, from Texas."

"But you lost the accent?"

"Uh, I never really picked it up."

Lorene's only twenty-six. She thinks of her body as just her shell. She has a kid. Her husband went through rehab a couple of times and now he's finally clean. She chats in a pleasant, low-key way, never losing her dignity. She says she was a model but she studied theatrical and really wants to get back into that.

"She's also a very good dancer," Ray says. "She's been in Gap





campaigns where they do swinging, and she has the ability to be featured as a main dancer—"

"And singing," Lorene says.

"I didn't know that," Ray says.

"It's in my bio."

Ray grins. "See, you learn something every day about a client." It doesn't even slow him down. "Not only does she have a real channelstopper with the look, she can back it up. I can see where she'd go to, you know, some nice levels—the way the soaps develop certain things and weave story lines, she could be incredible. And then from there she could do nighttime television—it could even come first, I don't know."

"We should get you over to *Days of Our Lives* and *Young and*



LISA

*the Restless*," the executive says. "They're always looking for new faces." He tells Ray to get in touch when he gets back from Europe.

Outside, Ray reviews. "He could have just said, 'Very nice to meet you, and this is great, we'll talk.' They can be very vague when they want to blow you off without being rude. But he said, 'When you get back, we'll set this up.' He was very specific."

Afterward, he watches Lorene walk to her car. She's so slender and lovely in her orange shirt and oddball pants. "I look at her, and she just lights up your life," Ray says. "There's something about her that is absolutely unique. And I love her name, I love her look, I love her attitude, I love her depth. So now she's on the fast track. She'll meet the top people, and then she'll

read, and if her reading is good, she'll get a contract."

I ask him if he's ever seen Lorene act. He hesitates for just a second before answering.

"You know what? I don't have to. Just by the legitimacy of her background, and I know how absurd this business is—you work with the right director, you get the right presentation, *anybody* with her background could be an incredible actress."

**Tonight Ray looks like William Devane. He opens the door to his** penthouse suite wearing one of those European suits that button at the top button. He's getting ready to go out to Spago's with Lisa and her friend Kelly and Mark Cuban of Broadcast.com, which Yahoo! just bought for \$6.1 billion. Cuban made like a billion two overnight. Ray met him when someone from Broadcast.com helped him do a live cybercast on the Jenny McCarthy Web site, Theflood.com, and lately Ray's been helping him set up some Internet movie-rights deals, like this \$4 million deal they just finished with Trimark Pictures. That's really the direction his business is going these days. And he's got this other Web site with Vicki Iovine and *The Girlfriends' Guide* that's going to be huge—she's Jimmy Iovine's wife, an ex-Playmate, and she's written this series of books for Putnam that has been published in twelve languages. All this comes out of Ray in a steady stream until it forms a kind of mist. Pretty soon you start to feel like it's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and anything really is possible.

But right now he's got to finish up this potential infomercial thing with this other guy, Sophia Loren's lawyer. So he leads Lisa and me to the dining table and pulls out a chair. "Sit down, talk," he instructs.

Lisa's happy to entertain me. She'd be the perfect date for a lavish night in Vegas, gorgeous in a clingy blue dress. The huge diamonds glittering on her ears look like they belong on her ears. She tells me she grew up in a happy outdoorsy family in San Diego, studied art history in college, and wants to be in sports broadcasting in some capacity. She's very deliberate, often pausing to think before she speaks, and she fields the *Playboy* question with perfect poise. "They didn't just want a pretty girl naked, they took your personality into account and wanted to show that. And there's never been a golf theme before—well, once, but the girl did not really play."

Behind Lisa there's a grand piano and then huge windows and the glittering lights of the Santa Monica Pier. Ray's been staying in this hotel penthouse since selling the house he bought with Jenny—two or three weeks now.

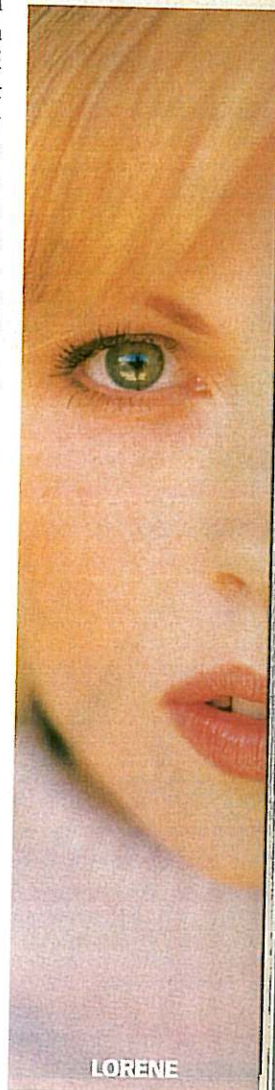
"I worked out like crazy," Lisa says. "I made sure there wasn't one thing I could feel insecure about."

Sophia Loren's lawyer comes our way. "Are you leaving?" Lisa asks. "Can you say goodbye in Italian?"

Saying goodbye in Italian seems to involve hugging and kissing, then the lawyer grins over at Ray. "She even smells good," he says.

The overnight billionaire slouches over the grand piano, noodling at something by Led Zeppelin.

**Ray's all over Jen-X: Jenny McCarthy's Open Book**, starting with the dedication: To "my manager and soul mate who guided me through the perils of Hollywood like a true star-maker." On page twelve she writes about how MTV told Ray—"who



LORENE



was then JUST my manager"—that they didn't want to audition a *Playboy* Playmate for the *Singled Out* cohost role. A few pages later she tells the story of being at Cannes the year of *Barb Wire*, when Pamela Anderson got angry because it seemed that every time the cameras showed up for her, Ray showed up with Jenny. At one press conference Pamela got so annoyed, she stopped everything and pointed at Ray. "See this guy here?" she said. "Well, he's fucking her."

Pamela fired Ray a little bit later, then trashed Jenny again on *Saturday Night Live*. She told *Premiere* magazine, "I don't need a manager. I don't need a baby-sitter. And I definitely don't need a date."



LORENE

But Jenny and Ray get the sweetest Hollywood revenge. First Ray badgers the MTV people into seeing her and then Jenny sticks her tongue out and farts and acts like a goofball and gets famous and they move in together and Ray's doing his magic sales thing, putting her face everywhere. *Rolling Stone* comes to visit and breaks the news that "Jenny McCarthy has a boyfriend." They do *Howard Stern* and Howard asks Ray dirty questions about Jenny. And they really do seem to be compatible, with the same zany energy and restlessness. Ray escorts her expertly to the Oscars and takes final position in the list of her boyfriends: "And then I met Ray. He's just great. And finally, I felt safe."

There's even a Ray page, a little love shrine topped by a heart with his name inside, decorated with a favorite snapshot. "Older men know . . . more than just which fork to use with a salad," she writes. "Ray knows what he's doing, in more ways than one."

Last December, after four years, she left him for the director of her new movie. He read about the engagement in the tabloids.

**The car phone rings. It's Don Christian of QVC.** "Hey, Donald, how are you?" Ray says. "I'm going to England, and then I'm going to Majorca to meet with Majorca Pearls. I got the licensing from the Vatican to make rosaries from the pearls—we have the jubilee and all the artwork and everything, so it's very exciting. A friend of mine owns a castle there; I'll stay with him, and then I'm going to Barcelona and Madrid. I'm taking my girlfriend to show her some of Spain also, so it's about 30 percent business and 70 percent pleasure. Anyway, I sent Mark an e-mail to follow up aggressively with you, and then we can take the next step. All right? All right."

Ray hangs up and tells me the Majorca Pearls deal is going to be huge. "We may do a live remote from Rome next Easter. Gonna get every Catholic parish imaginable."

The phone rings again. "So that answers that. Okay. Wonderful. Okay, I'm at the building right now. I'm gonna come up."

Ray gets out of his Range Rover. He's wearing Kenneth Cole shoes and a Jil Sander suit that was selected by his personal shopper. Upstairs, he takes a seat in a tiny office on a chair crammed between a file cabinet and his assistant's desk.

"Did we ever hear back from MTV at all?"

"No. Left a message."

"Now, this artwork I got from the Vatican. I want to get that letter out to QVC."

"Did you see what I wrote?"

"Yeah. It was good. We'll make it better. And I want to send Mark an e-mail that Don Kushner wants to connect."

They're working in this cramped space because Ray's office across the hall is still bare. He used to have four thousand square feet on Maple Drive, a gorgeous space in a prestigious district, but since his recent reversals he's moved into three small offices in a larger office occupied by his accountants. "This is going to be great for me," Ray says. "I'm going to bring down some furniture from the house, some Warhols."

He grabs the ringing phone. It's George Simone, a producer who works with the Home Shopping Network and is launching a Jennifer Flavin cosmetics line. "Jack Kirby is giving a dinner tomorrow and I want you to be in a festive mood," Ray says. "I think when you become so painfully wealthy about a year from now, you're gonna be like Mike Tyson walking into a casino—we're gonna get you one of those little hoods around your head, and there will be people putting the cape around you and shit."

Ray asks his assistant, Nira, to get some press kits for him to take on his trip. She gets up. She's nice-looking, mid-thirties, could be a former actress.

"Don't be gone long, because I miss you already," he says.

She smiles and gives him a pat on the shoulder as she goes by.

The phone rings again, one of the guys involved in the Jenny McCarthy Web site. "You're rich, you're fuckin' rich, right?" Ray says. "It doesn't get any better than that. A couple things I want to give you an update on. We're gonna make this major transformation and make the Flood more of a black-urban type of site. Okay? Jenny's out. We're gonna completely strip Jenny out of the whole thing. We're gonna have a whole new look and whatever. But I'm gonna have people discuss that with you. What's great is we're going to have a whole new show planned. . . ."



**Yeah, it was a great house they had, Ray and Jenny, up in the Palisades.** It had the most amazing lawn, two and a half acres rolling right off the bluff. Whatever she says now, you don't buy a house like that unless you're pretty serious. But let's not talk about that. And let's not talk about the ex-wives and the children, either. Let's go to the Pacific Athletic Club, which is right at Sunset and Pacific Coast Highway, an amazing spot with a view of the whole Pacific Ocean. Shaq got rehabilitated here. Ray does fifteen parallel dips, three sets. "Cuts you along the arms," he says. At the stationary boxing bag he kicks and punches furiously. "If you did that for a few months, you'd be like a pencil," he says.

He is in amazing shape, six foot one and 175 pounds, a perfect



triangular form with veiny arms and a flat stomach. He's worked out his routine with a variety of trainers over the years, runs every day, lifts weights every other day, does fifteen minutes of jumping jacks and reverse push-ups and stuff every morning—"my morning Zen thing." He demonstrates the reverse push-up. "Jimmy Caan showed this to me, not that it's complicated."

While he's doing the leg machine, he flips open his phone. "We're at the gym. Have you sent that FedEx out? Okay, anything else happening?"

After some sit-ups with an Ab Roller, he tells me about his infomercial with Tony Little for the Ab Isolater. "We sold six million of 'em all over the world. I'll send you one. I made a mil-

lion bucks personally off of that."

We do some chin-ups. "Those are great arms," he tells me. "You could really develop those arms."

**Ray's on the phone again.** "Hefner had the twins, the triplets, and his girlfriends on the dance floor all at once. He'll never die and he's never gonna get old. Tony Curtis was not there, but we sat with Kevin Costner. He was there for a while. Rod Stewart was there."

He makes another call. "I'm coming to Europe with someone who's going to be the next girl to take it straight to the top. She's Miss July 1998, and she is like the next Mary Hart. She's very articulate, college educated, really terrific. You know, the spin could be to any publication that this is the next one Manzanilla's taking to the top. Because they've seen me do it in the UK three times already."

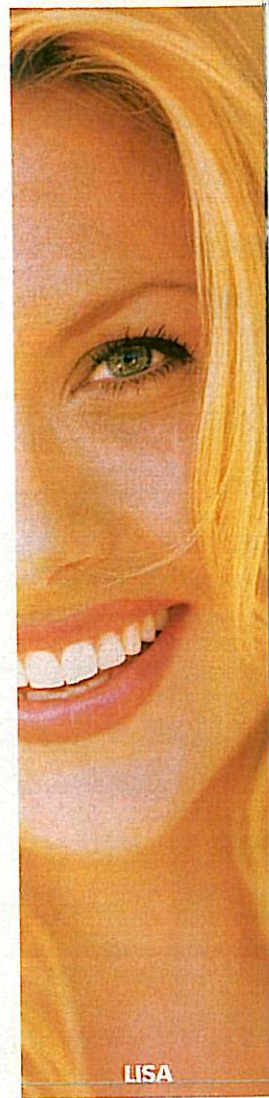
This is what Ray does. He's a phone man. The phone is a black funnel that he fills with all the hunger and honey he can summon. "Believe me, I would not be having this conversation, but you have my attention because that sounds interesting. How old is she? And does she live in the UK pretty much? Okay, that's good. A low-key Jenny? I don't know if that's kind of an oxymoron maybe, a low-key Jenny. But yeah, okay. I understand."

**Tonight Suzanne Somers is wearing a short, short green suit and lime shoes and looks great.** She has terrific legs. She and her somewhat older husband, Alan, who also manages her, have come to the penthouse to take Lisa and Ray to Hugh Hefner's birthday party. "You look great," she tells Lisa.

Lisa is wearing another clingy dress. This one is black, with a spray of diamonds stitched across it. Her three-inch black heels have a smaller splash of diamonds. "It's a Richard Tyler," she says. "I love Richard Tyler."

They show some photographs of a hike they all took near Palm Springs—Lisa looks adorable in jeans and pigtails—and then Suzanne talks about a concert she gave last week down in Texas for fifteen hundred insurance agents and she was listening backstage to the hum, knowing that it was at one level and her job was to take it to another level. Then she went out there and she had them completely in her control and it was great. "You feel like a part hooker. You try to figure out what they want and give it to them, and then the art is to raise the level and lower the level and take them with you."

"That's so terrific," Lisa says, swaying close to Ray. "That must be so satisfying."



**This being Hollywood, there's a bitter ex-partner.** Back in elementary school out in Woodland Hills, when Ray was dating Dennis Brody's sister, Dennis used to look up to him. He was kind of an older-brother figure. Later Dennis became an agent with William Morris, and after Ray got into the Vanna business, it seemed reasonable to get together—Ray could do his entrepreneurial thing and Dennis would do the theatrical side. Because the theatrical-talent business was not Ray's business. So they started sharing the offices on Maple Drive. Ray signed Pamela, and then Dennis went to work. "For the first three years, up until *Barb Wire*, I did all of her theatrical business and most of her other business as well. It wasn't until she got really hot that Ray got more involved."



Same thing with Jenny. "I met her, through her acting coach. I put her on *Singled Out*."

But Ray took all the credit, and when he fell in love with Jenny, he started pushing Dennis out of the Jenny business. Eventually Dennis split, taking all the real acting clients, like Donna D'Errico and Rodney Van Johnson. Ray took Kim Alexis and Tony Little. "It was a sad situation. Basically I felt that I was given up for a chick."

**Ray doesn't want to talk about the ex-wives. The first was Bonnie, his high school sweetheart. He married her when he was nineteen, partly because she was pregnant and partly for love. He got a film-technician job at Technicolor and joined Local 683 and**

tries to help them, and they kill him for it. After a certain length of time you begin to see patterns.

"Even with Lisa," he says, "I have to be careful."

**The talking rock asks who we are. Back in the old days, they used** to say that if the Rock denied you, you were in serious misery. But the Rock admits Ray as it always has and we wind up a hilly driveway past a yellow highway sign that says, PLAYMATES AT PLAY, until we reach the circular driveway of a small castle. "Lisa's in an infomercial thing today," Ray says. "It's a company called Guthy-Renker," he says. "They have, like, Victoria Principal, Tony Robbins, Fran Tarkenton."

Today Ray's wearing black Dolce & Gabbana shoes and a brown Donna Karan suit. With cuff links. He's here to play gin with Hef.

First we walk through the aviary with ferns and lizards and parrots and aquariums sunk into the rock wall, and across the broad lawn with peacocks and flamingos, and into the famous underground grotto and the monkey cages and the underground bathroom complex with its saunas and showers. Ray remembers parties with John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd, swimming in the grotto with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, celebrity tennis tournaments with Kirk Douglas and Johnny Carson. He got on the list by flirting with the right girl, and it gave him a career and a life. He got to know Vanna up here. Met his wife Sondra here—that's her on the pin-ball machine in the Playroom. A call from the mansion hooked him up with Pamela. He met Lisa here, too, New Year's Eve, right over there by the swimming pool.

"I wasn't in the best of spirits, because the last New Year's I was with Jenny, and so about quarter till twelve, I see some friends of mine on the dance floor around Hef, and I'm kind of like, Let's just get through this, and they go, 'By the way, have you met Lisa Dergan?'"

Ray and Lisa started to dance. Ray loves to dance, and Lisa is a very good follower. At midnight they gave each other a friendly kiss and kept on dancing. After a while they started grabbing the balloons from the dance floor and popping them between their butts and bellies, laughing and having a great time, and then suddenly it was four in the morning and she was dropping him off at his car.

**They met for lunch, Lisa says. It was supposed to be** dinner, but she was tired and called him and said, "I don't want to be tired at our first date. Anyway, lunch is better than dinner. There's less pressure." And the amazing thing is, once she and Ray started talking, they got on the subject of going through different changes in your life and Ray opened up about Jenny and the very shaky place he was in and he just seemed

so vulnerable and real. Lisa said, "You know what? There's this great book that you should read, it's written by Dan Millman."

And Ray almost fell off his chair. "Dan Millman is a close friend of mine! Are you gonna say *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*?" And she said, "That's the book!"

That clinched it. Both of them loved the same book! It's the story of a trampoline champion who meets a mysterious guru at a gas station and learns ancient Oriental wisdom. And there was something else Ray did—she doesn't want to say what, it was too weird, but the whole thing touched her and made her feel that here was a real genuine guy—and after lunch he sent her two dozen beautiful long-stemmed white French orchids and a little note that



brought home the bacon. But after seven years, that fell apart, and he married Robin Mattson, a soap actress. His first blond. She was funny and had a good heart, but they were young and life was so very disco then. After a somewhat longer period of bachelorhood (coinciding with the beginning of his heavy Playboy Mansion phase), Ray married Sondra Theodore, a former Playmate and longtime girlfriend of Hefner's. Also a blond. The marriage lasted eleven years and produced two children. She was another wonderful sweet person with a lot of problems.

The bottom line is, all those marriages, he was just too young to be making a lifetime commitment to anybody. That's Ray's theory. His other theory is that he finds wounded people and then



said, "I had a great time with you at lunch." That did it. She was smitten. And a few days later she got a copy of *Way of the Peaceful Warrior* signed by Dan Millman. "It was just sitting on my front doorstep, and I started crackin' up. 'Oh, that Ray.'"

**Ray stops by his old house up in the Palisades—the one before the one with Jenny, the one he's still paying for with alimony—to say goodbye to his kids. His daughter opens the door. "Dad, I lost another tooth."**

She's a pretty little thing about ten years old. Ray takes her hand. "Remember the one you lost at my place? I still have it. It's still stuck in that gum."

She and her friend lead us back to the kitchen, where they're getting ready for a bake sale. It's a very homey place, stuffed with cows and crockery and hanging pots and signs: ALL CRITTERS WELCOME, SONDRA'S BED & BREAKFAST. There are some Christian books on a shelf, courtesy of Sondra's new boyfriend.

"How many do I get for two bucks?" Ray asks. "I better get quite a few. Do we get five each?"

There are six dogs: Tillie, Blondie, Bingo, Little Max, Rusty . . . "And we're missing Zach. Where's Zach?"

"You don't want to see him. He smells bad."

Upstairs, Ray's son is watching TV.

"Taylor, what are you doing, dude? I want you to meet a friend of mine. Oh, you're watching *Star Wars* or something?"

Ray turns to me. "He knows Mark Hamill. He's getting to know Mark real well."

We watch the movie for a bit, then Ray kisses his son on the head. "I love you. I'm leaving for Europe tomorrow, so I'll call you from Europe. I love you. I'm gonna call you."

He goes looking for the maid. "*Dónde está mi* laundry?"

**At the Gerry Blanck's Martial Arts studio, Ray puts on kick-boxing pads and gloves and pounds Blanck backward with a ferocious series of punches and kicks. He works hard. He sweats. But the workout ends early because Blanck has to do a photo shoot for *Inside Karate* magazine. "It's been a slice, man," Ray says. "We're gonna boogie."**

He doesn't like to talk about sad things. When I ask him what it was like losing his girlfriend and his biggest client and turning fifty all in the same year, he cocks his eye. "Oh, you're trying to personalize it now? You're trying to put yourself in my shoes and go, 'Boohooohoo?'"

Ray's brother Lenny is the one who tells me about their father, how he told Ray a million times he'd never amount to anything. He tells me that their mom always took Ray's side, and that from a very young age Ray believed in love and went for it, all the time and all the way. And he tells me that Ray spent last Christmas sitting all alone in the \$3 million house up on the bluff, so depressed it was scary. Ray always poured himself into work and love, business and girls, and as long as those two things were going okay he would just charge along and never show a crack. He'd get completely absorbed. But the thing with Jenny really knocked him back. One night on the phone he sounded so depressed, Lenny drove two hours to be with him. "He was just really down," Lenny says. "Really down. He was still hoping they could reconcile."

**Ray's having a drink at the bar with the former chairman of Live Entertainment and another guy because they're taking over Harvey Entertainment and they want Ray to be on the board, so when Lisa comes in she goes to wait for him at the table. She had her nails done, her hair done, she's looking gorgeous in a simple black dress that cost upwards of \$1,500. Ray says that if you look like a million bucks, you get the \$100,000 jobs. He bought her the first few designer dresses but then told her she had to start paying half. It's important to make that kind of investment in yourself.**

Then George Simone joins us. Ray set up this dinner so Simone could meet Lisa and maybe hire her to represent one of his product lines. The Jennifer Flavin cosmetics line was going to need a



spokesmodel in Japan. Simone's a beefy older guy in a black sweater. His attractive, younger wife has a tremendous rock on her finger and diamond hoop earrings.

Ray tells them about the \$4,000 bottle of wine he bought in Vegas.

"You should never pay for anything in Vegas," Simone says. "In Vegas you get it on the arm."

"I thought it'd be a thousand, fifteen hundred, and, you know, there's no prices," Ray says. "I was like, *oooofff*, my dick got this big. Here I am trying to impress a girl by not asking what the price is."

"We had eight waiters," Lisa says.

Then Ray tells them about his trip [continued on page 136]

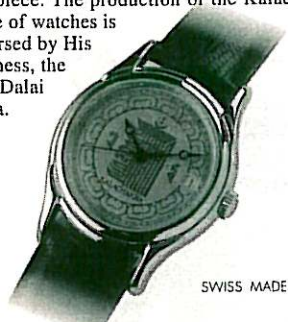


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## LIVE BY THE BLOND

[continued from page 129] with Lisa to Europe, staying at the Lainsborough Hotel in London and then this castle in Spain.

"Well, if you're staying at a castle, you better get *that* on the arm."

Then Ray calls for a pause in the conversation. "Lisa has something to say to you."

Taking a moment to collect herself, Lisa starts talking in Japanese. Everyone listens attentively. When it's over, Ray asks her to translate.

"Good evening, I am here to present Silky Skin Care product, which is a very wonderful product for your skin."

Ray's plans for Lisa seem fairly modest. He says he's "got to get some momentum going on Shana." As the weeks go on, it seems that his real hopes are focusing on Lorene. Today he's meeting her at the MTV building. She's wearing hip-huggers and a little black sweater set that shows a lot of creamy midriff, and Ray gives her a hug. "You look good, you look very MTV," he says. "I want to put a microphone in your mouth right now."

In a stylish conference room, three young MTV executives listen politely while Ray gushes about what a channelstopper Lorene is and evokes "the success we had with Jenny." They seem a little stiff, uncomfortable with this old Hollywood ritual. One of the executives looks up from her résumé. "I have to ask—the Metropolitan Opera *and* the San Quentin Drama Workshop?"

But Lorene handles herself with relaxed dignity, as always. She mentions her husband the guitarist and her rock videos. She says that she can sing and talk just like early Debbie Harry, if anyone happens to be planning a biopic. Every now and then Ray sticks in a little Rayspeak. "She's a real heat-seeking missile of success," he says.

The executives start warming up. Mike Larkin is developing over at VH1, they should go see him. The new TV-movie division might have some stuff. And there actually is a Debbie Harry movie in the early stages. Who knows?

Ray's having a commission problem. This kind of thing is really upsetting. "John suggested I give you a call, and what I simply want to do was to, you know, introduce myself and discuss with you, you know, that we're looking to try to establish some kind of relationship with a finder's-fee arrangement for making not only the introduction but keeping this thing moved along through a series of meetings. Okay, what happens, I have a management company that manages primarily celebrities, but I get very much involved with packaging a lot of other kinds of businesses. I've become very friendly with Mark Cuban of Broadcast.com, because he serviced my Web site—he's the chairman of the company, is forty years old and has a billion two. And as I started working with him, he said, 'Ray, I'd like you to make some deals for me in this area. . . .'"

Ray digs out the photo in the green leather frame. It's him at five or six, a sepia-tone shot. "Look at this hairdo. It's like, you know, Gumby."

Jenny loved this shot. She bought the green leather frame. And after they broke up, Ray started looking at the picture and one day just instinctively started to talk to it. "How did we end up like this?" Kind of going through a real kind of heavy-duty thing. And when he talked to his therapist about it—Ray's been in therapy since his twenties—his therapist said it was a good idea. So he began confiding his feelings, up there in the lonely \$3 million house on the bluff, to the hopeful six-year-old in the old photograph.

"As much as I might be this dynamic, you know, mogul bullshit thing, Mr. Groovy Gets Laid, *he* is someone that I have let down," Ray says, pointing to the picture. "I haven't protected him, and by that I mean, like, if somebody gives you some shit or if somebody counters you—I had that today on the phone, it was very upsetting to me—he gives me a lot of juice, gives me some great energy. Like I noticed when women start giving you shit or they start doing stuff that's just really wrong, more and more I kind of go, Excuse me? And that's really protecting *him*, because he's getting fucked over."

This is what Ray told Lisa that day at lunch, after they connected on *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*. Later she gave him a picture of herself at the same age to keep his little guy company. There it is now, in a corner of the green leather frame. She's wearing a sailor suit and has cheeks like apples. "This little munchkin, I mean, that's adorable," Ray says. "No matter what happens to us—and I think that we have a real nice thing that can last a long time or forever—she's worth it."

On his birthday, Lisa gave Ray a caricature of those same two photographs—only in Lisa's version they are very rich children posed with their cell phones and golf clubs in front of the Breakers hotel. It's the frontispiece for a beautiful leather-bound folio-sized book with blank pages. Opposite the illustration she wrote out the story of that first romantic lunch when Ray told her he talked to the photo, a revelation so "personal, vulnerable, daring" that he had her heart from that moment on. "So here we are," her memoir ends, "two adults who have found each other with that little girl in me and that little boy in you—here they are together enjoying each other like they had met long ago."

"I'm just leaving the office," Ray says. "Gotta do the workout thing. I want you to attend a meeting with Vicki Iovine. This thing is getting bigger and bigger; iVillage went public last month and with my background and vision, I think we could be making \$100 million within a year and a half—this will be *bigger* than iVillage."

Oh, and we're meeting a new blond tonight. Don Kushner recommended her. One thing, though—we might have to observe the male code of silence. "In case

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he's doing her on the side, I don't want his wife to get all upset," he says. "I don't know if he's a player or not, but 95 percent of these guys are."

**Ray walks into the Ivy right on the dot of eight.** Even though he never does this kind of thing, even though he's just doing it as a favor for Don, he never keeps a woman waiting. Kimberly has just arrived, too. She has kind of an art deco look, with a long face and pouty 1920s lips.

Ray puts his menu aside. "We don't have to look at the menus," he says. "Let's just relax a bit."

Kimberly recently started kick-boxing because her acting teacher said it might make her less reserved. Ray tells her about his Tae-Bo. He recommends one of the Ivy's famous gimlets, and they decide to try that new Polish potato vodka. She came from a small town in Minnesota and got a job working for Jon Peters, the famous movie producer who started as Barbra Streisand's hairdresser and ended up cochairman of Columbia Pictures. She had to wear high heels and skirts every day. Peters would do a dress check, make her turn around to show herself off. Don she met when she was an intern at ICM. One day he noticed she was depressed, and they became friends, and later on he helped her get some jobs and stuff. There was never anything, you know. He's just a really nice guy who likes to help people.

"It's good you've been around the business and you feel comfortable with these people," Ray says.

A man with a familiar face walks by, saying hi to Ray. It's Bob Saget, host of *America's Funniest Home Videos*.

Ray turns his attention back to Kimberly. "Are you represented?"

She nods. "It's a smaller agency. They called me up tonight—they said it's for a movie with Balthazar Getty, but it's topless in a G-string."

Ray shakes his head.

"I said no way, and they said you're not in a position to choose."

Ray seems pained. "Not in a position to choose?"

"I don't even have that kind of a look."

"You do have an exotic look," Ray says. "I could see where they might be thinking a kind of Uma Thurman..."

Kimberly's listening.

"But this isn't a quality project. I'm sorry that happened to you. I would never talk that way to someone. *Wow*," He shakes his head. "I'm sorry for being opinionated, but I'm shocked by that."

He changes the subject to TV. Has Kimberly ever considered episodic or daytime? "You'd be great as an alien in *3rd Rock from the Sun*—that's a well-written show."

When the entrée comes they order another potato-vodka gimlet—but just one, to share.

Mark Curcio of Artisan Entertainment

stops by the table, shakes hands. "I returned your call at 6:05," Ray says.

"I was on the golf course," Curcio says.

The waiter brings the gimlet-to-share in two glasses. It looks very much like two drinks. As they sip, Kimberly says to Ray, "You're not what I expected at all."

"I'm not?"

"I heard you slept with Pamela, you slept with Jenny, all that kind of thing. I expected you to be this old sleazy guy."

"And you came anyway?"

"I told this friend of mine I was coming to see you, and he said, 'He's made these women into stars. He's totally capable of making you a star. But he fucks them all.'"

Ray is visibly embarrassed, in a half-pleased way. "Wow. That is so—I mean, the thought that people are out there wandering around the town saying things like that about you..."

"But you must really love beautiful women," Kimberly says, studying him.

"You know what? To compliment you, if I had my way—I mean, I have this niche where I've become known for working with certain kinds of people and doing certain kinds of deals, but if I had my way..."

At this point Ray gets a little hard to follow, but the gist seems to be that he likes her. He likes that she's different. He likes that she's educated. He has a feeling she could deliver some real nice stuff. And he wants to help her. If he was a pure film guy, she'd definitely be in his stable. If he hadn't created this niche for himself, if he had his way, he'd much rather work with an actress like her than a pretty girl. "And don't get me wrong, I'm totally happy with my successes and I think I've achieved..."

Kimberly's face stays very still. She knew coming in that she wasn't exactly Ray's type, wasn't a Jenny or Pamela or Sondra or Lisa. And she does want a different kind of career than that. But still. You hope.

Ray doesn't seem to notice. He keeps on talking, an unusually thick fog of Ray-speak that almost certainly includes the words *vision* and *Vanna* and *dot-com*. Then the waiter comes to see about coffee or dessert, and Kimberly says no, nothing at all, thank you.

Ray orders coffee. "I could send you out on some things," he says.

Kimberly's shoulders rustle, she leans forward. "Don tells me you're really rich," she says.

Another fog of Rayspeak on how he came up from nothing and he's proud of what he achieved but really being rich is enjoying your life and creating an atmosphere where people can feel comfortable and have fun, whether it's in a camper or an elegant hotel.

Kimberly turns to me. "You know, he doesn't seem like a player at all."

"I'm a romantic," Ray says.

Then Bob Saget walks by the table again, and this time he stops for a chat. **12**

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