

ARE YOU THERE, VODKA?
IT'S ME, CHELSEA



CHELSEA HANDLER

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SIMON SPOTLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT
NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO SYDNEY

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Names and identifying characteristics have been changed.



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*To my mother.
I love you, chunky monkey.*

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CHAPTER ONE

Blacklisted

I was nine years old and walking myself to school one morning when I heard the unfamiliar sound of a prepubescent boy calling my name. I had heard my name spoken out loud by males before, but it was most often by one of my brothers, my father, or a teacher, and it was usually followed up with a shot to the side of the head.

I turned around and spotted Jason Safirstein. Jason was an adorable fifth-grader with an amazing lower body who lived down the street from me. I had never walked to school, had a conversation with, or even so much as made eye contact with Jason before. After lifting up one of my earmuffs to make sure I had heard him correctly, I nervously attempted to release my wedgie while waiting for him to catch up. (A futile effort, as it turned out, when wearing two mittens the size of car batteries.)

“I heard you were going to be in a movie with Goldie Hawn,” he said to me, out of breath.

Shit. I had worried something like this was going to happen. The day before, I had forgotten my language arts homework, and when the teacher singled me out in front of the entire class to find out where it was, I told her

that I had been in three straight nights of meetings with Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell, negotiating my contract to play Goldie Hawn's daughter in the sequel to *Private Benjamin*.

The fact that no sequel to *Private Benjamin* was in the works, or that a third-grader wouldn't be negotiating her own contract with the star of the movie and her live-in lover, hadn't dawned on me.

"Yeah, well, that was kind of a lie," I mumbled, recovering my left mitten from in between my butt cheeks.

"What?" he asked, astounded. "You lied? Everyone has been talking about it. Everyone thinks it's so cool."

"Really?" I asked, quickly changing my tune, realizing the magnitude of what had happened. It occurred to me that this was the perfect opportunity to get some of the respect I believed had been denied me, due to my father dropping me off in front of the school in a 1967 banana yellow Yugo. It was 1984, and my father had no idea of or interest in how damaging his 1967 Yugo had been to my social status. He had driven me to school on a couple of really cold days, and even after I had pleaded with him to drop me off down the street, he was adamant about me not catching a cold.

"Dad," I would tell him over and over again, "the weather has nothing to do with catching a cold. It has to do with your immune system. Please let me walk. Please!"

"Don't be stupid," he would tell me. "That's child abuse."

I wanted my father to know that child abuse was embarrassing your daughter on a regular basis with no clue at all as to the repercussions. Word had spread like wildfire throughout the school about what kind of car my father drove, and before I knew it, the older girls in fifth grade would follow me through the hallways calling me "poor" and "ugly." After a couple of months they upped it from "ugly" to "a dog," and would bark at me anytime they saw me in the hallway.

Our family certainly wasn't poor, but we lived in a town where trust

funds, sleepaway camps, and European vacations were abundant, along with Mercedes, Jaguars, and BMWs—a far cry from my world filled with flat tires, missing windshield wipers, and cars with perpetually lit **check engine** lights.

The idea that showing up at school in a piece of shit jalopy led to me looking like a dog didn't make much sense in my mind. It really irked me that I had to be punished because my father thought he was a used car dealer and insisted on driving us around in the cars that he couldn't sell. I wanted to tell my classmates that I didn't like his cars either, and I certainly didn't like being called a dog. I hadn't had a low opinion of myself before then, but after being called the same nickname for six months straight, you start to look in the mirror and see resemblances between yourself and a German shepherd.

If it had been mild teasing, I think I probably could have handled it. But it was incessant, and started from the moment I got to school until the moment I left. After a while, most of my friends in the third grade would avoid being seen with me in the hallways because they didn't want to be blacklisted too. My best friend, Jodi Sapperman, was the only one who would walk with me to every class and defend me when the fifth-grade girls would come over to our table in the cafeteria and ask if I was eating Alpo for lunch.

“Well, I shouldn't have said ‘lie.’ That's the wrong word,” I told Jason. “I'm having trouble getting the trailer size I want. Goldie's being pretty cool, but Kurt is so mercurial. He doesn't understand why a nine-year-old needs a Jacuzzi and a personal chef,” I said nonchalantly, with a wave of my mitten. “These types of things always take time.”

“You get your own trailer?” he asked.

“Yeah, you know, your own little house when you're on set. Every actor gets one. There's sooo much downtime in movies, you really need a place to unwind. In my opinion, it's not nearly large enough to live in for three months, but it's my first major role, so I'm willing to settle for a little less than the crème de la crème.”