



THE MONEY SHOT

BY NEIL LABUTE



DRAMATISTS
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INC.

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The world premiere of THE MONEY SHOT was produced at the MCC Theater (Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, & William Cantler, Artistic Directors; Blake West, Executive Director) on September 22, 2014. It was directed by Terry Kinney, the scenic design was by Derek McLane, the costume design was by Sarah J. Holden, the lighting design was by David Weiner, and the sound design was by Rob Milburn and Michael Bodeen. The cast was as follows:

STEVE Fred Weller
BEV Callie Thorne
KAREN Elizabeth Reaser
MISSY Gia Crovatin

CHARACTERS

STEVE

BEV

KAREN

MISSY

“Success is the one unpardonable sin against our fellows.”
—Ambrose Bierce

“I love Hollywood. Everybody’s plastic, but I love plastic.”
—Andy Warhol

“Rape me. Rape me, my friend.”
—Nirvana

THE MONEY SHOT

Silence. Darkness.

Blasts of light go off, like a sea of flashbulbs — as if the paparazzi had just stormed the beaches at Normandy.

Frozen in the glare: four people (a man and three women). All dressed nicely, all in their mid-twenties to later-forties (the man might be nearing fifty but is not telling a soul).

The space itself is a gracious Spanish-style patio that's connected to a lovely home up in the Hollywood Hills. Two big doors (both open) lead into the rest of the house.

The edge of an infinity pool can be seen off in a corner and the whole place is surrounded by lush fauna. In case it isn't clear, this is a nice spot. Really nice.

Once the lights have faded they remain in this pose for a second longer, like a Polaroid developing. Suddenly, they all come to life. Mid-laughter. The man speaks:

STEVE. “ ... Suck on *that*, you little bitch!” (*They all burst into laughter again — it varies from polite to riotous. Steve gets up and pours himself another drink from a nearby counter outfitted with liquor.*)

BEV. And then what? (*Bev is Karen's “partner” and this is their house — Steve and the younger woman [Missy] are guests here.*)

STEVE. What do you mean?

KAREN. She's asking what he said back ...

BEV. I think he understands the question.

STEVE. Back to *me*?

KAREN. Yes! What'd Christof say to you after you said that? I was

still in makeup ... *(To the others.)* I mean, I *barely* use any, but that's ... *(To Steve.)* Anyhow. Steve?

STEVE. Oh. Well, he just ... I mean ... You know how Christof is!! Little bastard hasn't shut up since he won the *Palme d'Or* ... So ... *(Steve smiles coyly at this and continues tinkering with his drink. A big grin — he's a good-looking dude.)*

KAREN. Steve! Tell us! Come on ... *(Everyone leans forward, waiting to hear the finish to his tale. Steve stops and turns. Plays the moment. Sits down.)*

STEVE. Okay, okay! *(Smiles.)* Not a fuckin' thing.

BEV. What?!

STEVE. He couldn't! I walked out, right after that. I said that — "Suck on that, you little bitch!" — and then I turned and left, straight back to my trailer. Did not come out, the *entire* afternoon ...

KAREN. I can attest to that!

STEVE. Sorry about that, Karen, but hey, you've gotta do something every so often, right? I mean, take a stand or whatever. If not, they see you as weak and that's the start of it right there ... beginning of the end in *this* business.

KAREN. You're not wrong about that.

STEVE. Right? I mean, seriously ...

BEV. Yeah, for you maybe — actors — but not us. Not everybody else on the food chain ... *we* walk out and someone's waiting in the carpark to take our spot. *Literally.*

KAREN. That's true and it sucks — there's a total disparity between *talent* and the rest of the crew ... *(To Steve.)* Anyway, it was no big deal. I actually agree with you.

STEVE. ... for once!

KAREN. *Not* true! *(Beat.)* No, I think he gets away with a lot of shit being whatever he is: European, I guess. An "artist."

STEVE. Shit! If he's an artist I'm the fucking *Mona Lisa*. *(Beat.)* I don't even know what I mean by that, but you still understand me, don't ya? I mean, that makes sense ... right? *(Beat.)* Missy? *(He turns to Missy, who hasn't said anything so far this evening. She's just drinking and playing with her hair.)*

MISSY. Yep. I *totally* get it.

STEVE. See? *(To the others.)* Missy gets it. And she really does, too — like, *seventy-five* percent of what I say she gets — and I'm not saying *gets it* as in she understands me, no. I'm saying as in *comprehends* ... we're "soul mates," Missy and me. *(Beat.)* Anyway,

we should get down to it if we're gonna discuss this *sex* thing ... come to an "understanding" or whatever. Right? They wanna shoot the scene tomorrow ... (*Steve is waiting for a response — Karen and Bev both nod.*)

MISSY. It's true ... (*To the others.*) We really are.

KAREN. What's that?

MISSY. Soul mates. (*To the others.*) I felt that immediately — the first time we made love. Backseat of Steve's *Porsche*.

KAREN. That's great.

BEV. ... *Awesome*.

MISSY. Thanks!

STEVE. It's pretty sweet when you run into that one person, you know? "The one." Doesn't matter at what age, I mean, look at me! Forty ... whatever. In my forties. I have been through a *lot* of things in my day, *relationships* and all that crap, but I have never felt for any of those ladies what I felt for Missy, first time that I saw her out there on her *boogie board* ...

MISSY. We met by the ocean.

BEV. Yeah ... I was able to follow that part ... (*Missy smiles and nods at Bev, who studies this beautiful girl who has somehow landed at her home. Bev smiles back.*)

STEVE. She was incredible ... running along, up and down that stretch of beach there in Hawaii — you know the spot I mean? Where that one chick, the younger girl ... she got her arm bitten off by some shark? Right down by ... what's her name again?

MISSY. I dunno. Beth-something ... was that it? I'm not sure ... Or Becky maybe? *Becky* ...

KAREN. I don't remember now ... (*Beat.*) Sharks are misunderstood, though. I did a voice-over once, for this Greenpeace documentary ... and they really are majestic creatures. *Majestic*. (*To Steve.*) Sorry. Go ahead ...

STEVE. Huh. Doesn't matter. I got asked to play her dad in that picture they did about it but no way ... I'm not ready to pack it in quite yet!! Play supporting bits in some Lifetime-looking movie! (*Beat.*) Plus, the money was shit ... Dennis Quaid took it. He was okay. (*Beat.*) He also played the gay dude in that one picture ... with Julianne Moore. Remember? You guys *must've* seen that! I passed on that one as well ...

MISSY. Yeah, that was good — and it had that one black guy in it, too. He sells insurance.

BEV. Huh. (*To Steve.*) Why “must” we’ve seen it?

KAREN. ... Bev, don’t ...

BEV. No, I’m just asking. (*To Steve.*) Why do you assume that “of course” we saw *that* movie ... because it’s got gay characters in it? Is that why?

KAREN. Can we just ... please?

BEV. It’s only a question. (*Karen and Bev exchange silent “looks.” It won’t be the last time this evening.*)

STEVE. No, I’ll tell you why. Not because he’s a fag in it — “gay,” sorry, “gay” — I figured you saw it because it’s a quality film so I just *presumed*. It’s my mistake. (*Beat.*) I see all the Oscar nominees on *screeners* that I borrow so I figured ... what with Karen being a *member* of the Academy ...

BEV. Huh.

STEVE. We work in the industry. It’s our job to support it and know what other people’re up to, I think ... (*To Karen.*) Anyway, you know I’m not homophobic, right? I mean, that’s pretty obvious.

KAREN. (*Mock-serious.*) ... *Ummmmmm* ...

STEVE. Hey, hey, don’t even kid! I do that AIDS run, like, every other year, so, come on — and I do the *whole* thing, too, not like just at the start when they’re out there taking pictures or, you know — I get the t-shirt and everything! It’s true.

MISSY. I can vouch for that. I wear one of ’em as a nightgown. (*To Steve.*) Which year is it again, baby?

STEVE. I dunno! ’08 maybe. I can’t remember. The one with the *rainbow* on it ...

BEV. Ahhh, I think they *all* have rainbows on ’em, Steve — that’s kinda the point.

STEVE. What is? (*Bev just stares at Steve — she decides not to pursue this.*) What? I seriously don’t get the reference you’re making — is it from a movie? *Wizard of Oz*, or ... like...? (*Bev remains silent — chooses to go over and get a few more olives off a nearby table instead. Karen fills the gap.*)

KAREN. I did that one year — wait, or was it for breast cancer...? (*To Bev.*) Honey, do you remember? (*To the others.*) It was through my *foundation* and sometimes I get things mixed up. I *think* it was cancer ... (*Bev glances over at Karen, then turns back to Steve.*)

BEV. Anyway. Yes, we saw that movie ... It was called *Far From Heaven* and it’s very good.

STEVE. Agreed! Quality. Absolutely. I just don’t wanna get typecast,

so I said “no” ... I’d work with that director in a heartbeat on a regular picture. I *totally* would ...

KAREN. No, I can understand that ... I mean, look at me, right?

STEVE. Sure. *(Beat.)* Wait, what?

KAREN. After I came out! I lost a *lot* of work, had all these assumptions made about me and who I am ... first call I got was not from my family or my agent or some, like, old friend from high school. *No.* It was from a producer on *The L Word* ... seeing if I wanted to do a guest spot! *(Beat.)* We all have to make choices, right? Each of us with our own little *cross* to bear ... and I’m okay with that. I am. I am A-OK. *(Karen looks at Bev and smiles — Bev returns to her seat.)*

BEV. God! You’re always *apologizing* ... for ...

KAREN. Bev, I don’t wanna get into this right now, okay? We have guests. *(To the others.)* Actually, Bev would never tell you this because she’s a very ... well, lemme put it this way ... she lets her work speak for itself. *But ...*

BEV. ... Karen, just let it be ...

KAREN. No, I’m proud of you and I wanna say it! Okay? *(To the others.)* She was actually an *assistant* editor on that film. *(Beat.)* Not the surfing one ... the Julianne Moore.

BEV. So yeah, we did see it! *(Smiles.)* A couple *hundred* times!

MISSY. Wow! Congrats! *(Beat.)* Is that black guy big? He seems *huge* ...

STEVE. That’s cool. Total prestige pic! I really would’ve done it, too ... if it hadn’t been for the whole, you know ... gay thing. *(Bev doesn’t buy this at all but a look from Karen tells her to “let it go.” They all sit silently for a moment.)*

MISSY. Bethany Hamilton!

STEVE. Huh? *(Beat.)* Who’s that?

MISSY. The girl from the shark attack. *(That was very unexpected — Karen and Bev study Missy a bit more at this point while Steve beams at her with pride.)* *What?* I saw the movie, like, *six* times ...

KAREN. Good memory.

MISSY. That’s what I do most days, is go to the mall and see films. Plus all the, like, premieres and stuff we go to ... so yeah. I’m pretty okay at remembering things.

STEVE. Nice one, baby! Yes, *her* ... *(Beat.)* I met Missy right there, in Kauai; I was doing a sequel to one of my franchise pictures. *Pain Merchant*, I think. *Pain Merchant 3: Hell Hath No Fury* —

THE MONEY SHOT

by Neil LaBute

1M, 3W

Karen and Steve are glamorous movie stars with one thing in common: desperation. It's been years since either one's had a hit, but a hot-shot European director could change that with his latest movie. The night before filming a big scene that will undoubtedly bring them back onto the pop culture radar, Karen and her partner, Bev, meet with Steve and his aspiring actress wife, Missy, in order to make an important decision. How far will they let themselves go to keep from slipping further down the Hollywood food chain? **THE MONEY SHOT** is a hilarious and insightful comedy about ambition, art, status, and sex in an era — and an industry — where very little is sacred and almost nothing is taboo.

“Neil LaBute does it again — and even farther out. . . . entertainment start to finish. . . . LaBute gets his laughs — and he gets a carload of them . . . Watching Hollywood get its comeuppance, the audience gets its money's worth.”

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“ . . . an acid-tongued showbiz satire . . . barbed accuracy . . . consistent pleasure. . . so spirited is the jousting — and LaBute's seemingly inexhaustible supply of acerbic zingers — that one could easily watch it all go on even longer and more absurdly into the night. [LaBute] has several rip-roaring showstoppers up his sleeve . . . ”

—**Variety**

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