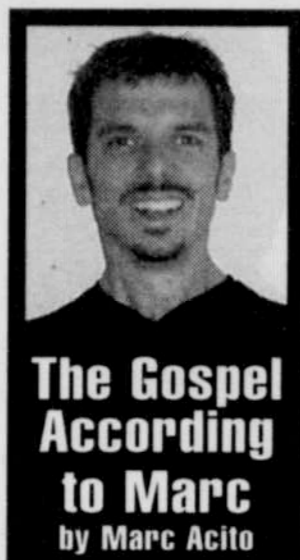


HUMOR

**S**o I'm in Los Angeles, shopping for slutwear in West Hollywood, when I see him coming right toward me in a pair of designer shades talking on his cell phone: a toddler in a stroller.



**The Gospel According to Marc**  
by Marc Acito

Like the song says, "I love L.A.!"

Now, there's an immediate assumption among us pale, doughy Northwesterners that people who live in a warm, sunny climate must be incredibly vapid (as if choosing to live where it rains 300 days a year demonstrates our superior intelligence). And with the warm, sunny climate, of course, comes scantily clad bodies, which gives one the opportunity to admire the skillful work of ambitious plastic surgeons. I mean, the boobs in L.A. are so firm you could serve appetizers on them. And that's just the men.

Of course, no one in L.A. would eat those appetizers because everyone is so skinny. I find this especially strange since you can get such yummy Jewish soul food there. Even the Mexican restaurants serve kreplach, tzimmes and borscht, which sound less like food and more like a full-service law firm.

For instance, I'm in Canter's Deli waiting for a Reuben sandwich behind a 60-ish guy with his arm around a woman young enough to be his granddaughter, which means, of course, it's his girlfriend.

"Y'know-ow," she says, popping her gum, "I never ate sandwiches before I met you."

From the looks of her, she's never eaten much of anything.

I'm thinking of starting a not-for-profit dedicated to bringing the obesity epidemic to L.A. I'll call it Feed the Actresses. We'll hire a teary-

eyed Sally Struthers to go on the air and say, "For just pennies a day you can feed Lara Flynn Boyle." Parents of picky eaters can now say to their children: "Finish your food. There are starving actresses in Hollywood."

**B**ut I wasn't in L.A. to make fun of people, although that was definitely a side benefit. I was there for a week of meetings with movie executives who had read and fallen in love with my novel.

One of my meetings was at Art's Deli in Studio City. I could tell Art's is a popular spot for meetings because it was full of well-groomed, overcaffeinated patrons seated alone and eyeing their watches. At 8:30 a.m. on the dot, the phone started to ring and the hostess wandered around telling people their party would be late because the 405 was a parking lot.

The guy in the booth behind me got really cranky about it. "Did he say how late he'd be?" he huffed, as if his party could predict traffic patterns from the inside of a Lexus. Waiting in L.A. is a sign of weakness. The longer you wait, the less important you are.

Me, I couldn't care. I'm a writer. It's my job to sit around and eavesdrop. Plus, it gives me time to prepare witty bons mots I can insert spontaneously into a conversation.

I had also prepared for these meetings by ask-

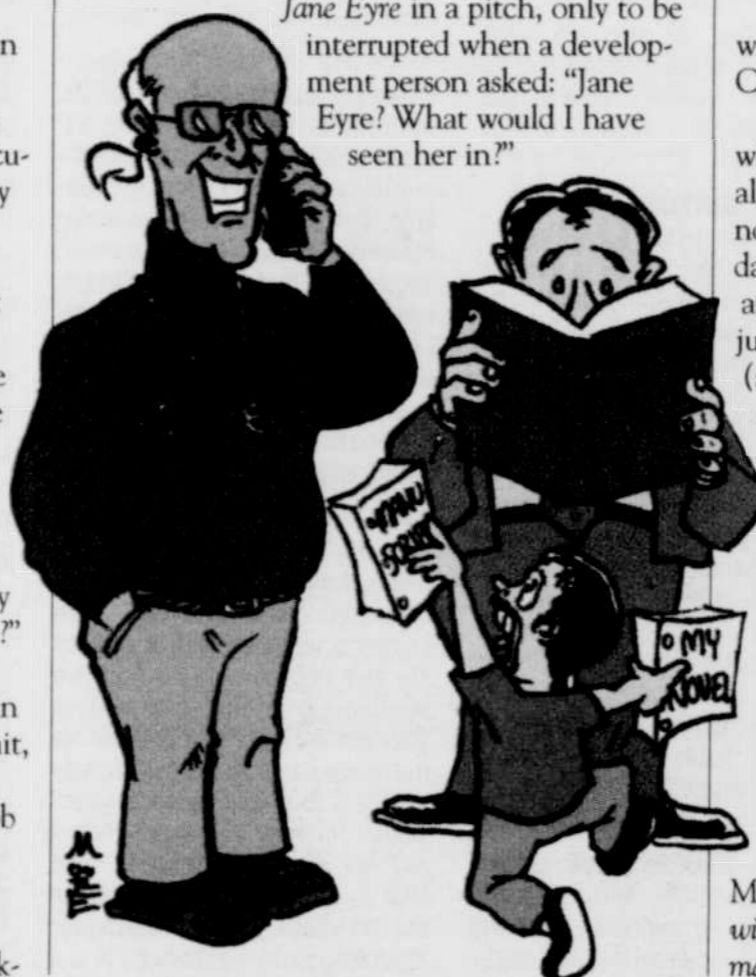
# Hello, deli

The Gospel's goin' Hollywood

ing advice of my experienced writer friends. And every one of them had a cautionary tale about the legendary insipidness of movie executives.

One of them warned me, "Don't use any three-syllable words."

Another told about the time he referenced *Jane Eyre* in a pitch, only to be interrupted when a development person asked: "Jane Eyre? What would I have seen her in?"



Still another told me the story about Dame Maggie Smith being led into a meeting by a bubble-headed assistant who chirped, "Everybody, this is Dame; Dame, this is everybody."

And, of course, there's the writer with a screenplay adaptation of Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* who received a rejection letter that read: "Dear Mr. Chekhov: Thank you for your submission. While we can't use your current script, please let us know if you have anything else..."

(Sure! There are these three sisters who want to go to Moscow, see? I'm thinking Cameron, Julia and J-Lo.)

So you can imagine my surprise and delight when I discovered that movie executives actually have brains (the producers of *Gigli* notwithstanding). I took 12 meetings in five days, and every person I met was vital, passionate and exceedingly intelligent. And I'm not just saying that because I want them to hire me (although I should add that they were all enormously charismatic and charming).

Seriously, these people READ for a living—not just scripts, but stacks of books...hard, serious books, many of which I'm too bubble-headed to comprehend.

So let's recap: L.A.'s got a warm, sunny climate, yummy Jewish soul food and surprisingly sharp people.

Like the song says, "Hooray for Hollywood!"

And that, my friends, is *The Gospel According to Marc*. **J**

MARC ACITO's novel, *How I Paid for College*, will be published in September. Write him at [marc@marcacito.com](mailto:marc@marcacito.com).

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