

"she started with, 'Well, how do you like playing the ugly man opposite Cybill Shepherd?' I said, 'What?' And I thought, What the fuck...? Okay, this is how it's gonna be, and I just gave them stock answers and standard things. I don't like to be put in that position where I'm going, 'Um, well, I, uh, uh...'"

So why was he talking to me?

"Well, I talked to you because you were my friend before this all happened," he said, "and I feel comfortable talking to you, because we used to talk when we didn't have anything to talk about! You know, when we were just talking about, 'Give me an Absolut and tonic,' and so on."

I met Bruce Willis maybe two years ago when we were both working at a downtown club called Kamikaze. I was a doorman, he was a bartender. We all called him Bruno. Kamikaze was slow then, hadn't quite caught on as the successful art bar it is now. Sometimes, there'd be only twenty or thirty people knocking about in the cavernous space. Bruno—Bruce—would leave the bar and hang around at the door in an undershirt, baggy pants and a Japanese-inspired headband. Or something else entirely. Sometimes he'd tell jokes, sometimes he'd play the harmonica, sometimes he'd break into a blues song. He was always spontaneous, funny, inventive, quick. He was David Addison before there was a David Addison. Kamikaze's co-owner Kirke Walsh remembers, "He was my kinda guy—a real fucking loudmouthed pain in the ass. But I loved him. He was Bruno, what can I say?" Kevin DiPietro, another of Kamikaze's owners, says, "He was hell-bent on entertaining. It's great to see him on the screen now doing the same schtick. I wouldn't want anyone to think we took him for granted or thought he was mundane."

"When I first started at Kamikaze," Bruce said, "we had a contest to see who could dress the wildest. We used to get totally wild. It was really a fun place to work. But I worked. I helped Kirke and those guys scrape paint off the walls and tear it down—you know, tear the place apart and put it back together."

I wondered why so many aspiring actors work as bartenders.

"Tending bar, working nights, is one of the best things an actor can do," Bruce said, "because it allows you to have your days free, and you don't have to work five days a week. You can work three shifts three nights, and if you are in a good place, you can work three or four nights a week and make enough money to support yourself okay. I worked for Peter Herrero up at Cafe Central a long time before I got the job at Kamikaze. He was a great guy who allowed me to leave anytime I got a play or a job, for a couple of months, and then let me come back and pick up my shifts."

While tending bar, Willis appeared in Off- and Off-Off-Broadway plays. The lead in the third cast of Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love* ("One of the best theatrical experiences I've ever had"). Dennis Watlington's *Bull Pen* ("Not a lot of people saw that play"). Not to mention the Levi's 501 Jeans commercials. ("There's one where I'm washing a car, and there's one where I'm walking through Central Park with these very Ray-Bans on and I do a real quick spin and the shades fly off.") You've seen the commercials. Willis pointed out to me four times that they're still running.

Kirke Walsh claims that it's in Bruno's contract that he has to come back and do a guest bartending shot at Kamikaze. And it wouldn't be out of character.

Anyone who knows Bruce and has seen *Moonlighting*'s David recognizes the similarity of personalities—even down to the Ray-Ban sunglasses. And the obvious question is how much of Bruce went into David?

"Me getting this part was like an accident waiting to happen. A lot of people ask if they wrote it for me. But the guy who writes it, Glenn Caron, wrote it before he had ever met me, and it's good how it worked out. We think alike. We have a similar sense of humor. He's a young guy from Long Island. It's his baby. He did the whole thing. When I read the script, I laughed out loud, couldn't believe the great

things I got to say! Now it's kind of written for me. There are really only two people—Glenn and me—who really get this kind of humor. I could change things if I want to. You know, bring certain jokes and certain little tags into it." Like in the pilot episode when he ordered a Kamikaze for Cybill.

How did he get the part?

"Accidentally." Bruce was going to go to Los Angeles to visit his girlfriend and to see the 23rd Olympiad (a friend had given him tickets). But he was up for the part of Jim in Susan Seidelman's *Desperately Seeking Susan* (the part that eventually went to Robert Joy) that was casting in New York as well as in LA. So he stayed in town and watched the Olympics on TV. For the *Desperately* audition, he "looked really nasty," unshaven, his hair chopped off and three earrings in one ear—"it was a Lower East Side thing." After he didn't get the part, he called his agent at Triad Artists and said he was off to vacation in California. "So I was in California two days and the office called out there and said, 'Look, you should go in on this show *Moonlighting*. It's the very last day of casting and they're going to shut the project down.' So I went with the earrings in and my hair all chopped off and I got the script and I laughed my ass off. It was a really funny script. Went in and read and the producers and the director said, 'This is the guy.' They'd seen something like three thousand people in ten cities."

He came back to New York, did an episode of *Miami Vice*. Then he got a call from his agent telling him that *Moonlighting* didn't want him, "forget about it." The next day, the producer called and asked him to come back to LA and test with Cybill Shepherd. The next week, he was David Addison, "the ugly man opposite Cybill Shepherd."

Bruce Willis is not ugly. It's just that he isn't Pierce Brosnan. "I think that was one of the problems that ABC had in hiring me," Bruce said. "I don't really have that kind of standard television look, you know—what is that Warren Zevon thing? What did he sing? 'I saw a werewolf in Trader Vic's. His hair was perfect.' I think that a lot of people in TV have this perfect look, this very sculptured look. And I don't think I have that. I look a little different."

*Moonlighting* is about a brash young East Coast guy and a beautiful former model who reluctantly (on her part) become partners in a Los Angeles detective agency. They have very few cases and model Maddie Hayes (Shepherd) always wants to dissolve the agency. Brash young David Addison (Willis) keeps the agency barely intact as a means to keep Maddie around. Sometimes she's so icy, it's like romancing the stone. The relationship is love-hate and the dialogue is the snappiest, zingiest, quirkiest, sexiest to be written and performed since the days of screwball comedies. It's like Grant and Hepburn or Tracy and Hepburn. With Eighties film noir thrown in.

"It's a modern madcap comedy," Bruce said. "Before we did the pilot, we screened a lot of old screwball comedies. We screened *Bringing Up Baby*, *His Girl Friday*. Cary Grant is like the master of that stuff. Toss-away lines. The biggest complaint I get about this show is that the plots are very thin and the story line is weak, but it's not about telling a story. It's about the jokes. It's about making you laugh. We're here for no other reason."

*Moonlighting* is the best work Cybill Shepherd's done since *The Last Picture Show*. Willis brings it out in her. He acts, she reacts.

"She's playing a straight man," Bruce said, "and it can be a very thankless role. It's hard to do it well, and I think she's doing great work in this thing. Some people say, 'The chemistry between you two is what really makes the show.' But you can't play the chemistry. You can't say, 'Okay, Cybill, now we're going to play this chemistry.' I do what I do and she does what she does, and what comes as a product of that is what makes the show work, I think."

Do Bruce and Cybill socialize off the set?

"We're friends. But working in episodic television with the schedule we have, where it's a two-character show, is a very monastic way of life. We average sixteen or seventeen hours a day, from about five or six in the morning until nine or ten at night. I mean, it's not like dig-