



# JANE ADAMS: NOBODY'S TOOL

BY SUSAN MICHALS PHOTOGRAPHY KWAKU ALSTON  
MAKEUP BRUCE GRAYSON FOR SOLOARTISTS.COM/OLAY MANICURIST CINTA FOR AVECCINTA.COM

**L**ed Zeppelin blares on her car stereo, not Lady Gaga. Actress Jane Adams doesn't go that way, she is more of a Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan kind of girl. She reads Proust, not Grisham. There's not an iPhone or BlackBerry in sight, just your standard, straightforward cell phone. "I just can't do it," she says of Apple's electronic bestseller. "It's a computer, a phone, what else? I don't want to join the ranks of the constantly responding." She has kindly offered to drive me to my car, which is not that far away, but by L.A. standards it sure is, about a block and a half. After an afternoon of chatting is where it ends. But to get to this point, we have to go back to where it began.

Jane Adams has often been called 'quirky,' but she's more of a non-traditionalist. Her acting career has careened left and right, from the mainstream (*You've Got Mail*) to the absorbingly disturbing (*Little Children*). She won a Tony Award for best actress for the Broadway play, "An Inspector Calls" and one of the National Board of Review's highest accolades for Best Ensemble Cast for her turn in Todd Solondz's *Happiness*. Her latest role, albeit one of the most unusual, is that of pimp in HBO's raucously amusing new series, "Hung." Adams looks like the last person on earth that would be pimping, and that's why the show works so magnificently.

Creators Dmitry Lipkin and wife Colette Burson are already well versed in the art of the con — they are the powers behind the short-lived dark comedy, "The Riches." Once again, they have created a show revolving around the art of the con — sly moves and machinations that prove thoroughly engaging, but as the layers are pulled back and characters are carefully revealed, it's more than just a game, it's a story about discovery — in others and most importantly, in oneself.

In "Hung," Adams plays Tanya Skaegle, a neurotic poet caught in a dead-end proof-reading temp job. Like so many looking to make a quick buck, she attends one of those millionaire seminars entitled "Unleash Your Inner Entrepreneur" (led with great hilarity by Steve Hytner) full of optimism and excitement. It is here she bumps into Ray (Thomas Jane), a former fling that never called back. Unlike Tanya, Ray's not so optimistic. His wife's left him, he's teaching at the high school he once attended, and his house just burned down. He doesn't have a lot give until Tanya comes up with a brilliant idea — marketing Ray's considerable appendage — thereby fulfilling a sea of wealthy, bored women currently residing in their Michigan neighborhood. Soon Tanya goes from promoting her own half-baked millionaire idea (Lyric bread, the equivalent to a fortune cookie, but instead you'll find a poem inside

a loaf) to becoming a marketing maven — a bohemian Suze Orman in training. She is determined to make this work, despite Ray's shortcomings in the departments of romance and foreplay, and turn this little venture into something huge.

**Venice: When I read the show "Hung" was being made, I began wondering what the premise was going to be. All I had read was the blurb in Variety: "A dark comedy about a struggling middle-aged high school basketball coach who figures out a way to use his best asset."**

**Jane Adams:** So what was your idea of what it was going to be?

**The story of a loser teacher who has a big dick.**

Right. [laughs]

**But now that I've seen a few episodes and gotten into the groove of things, it's not just that. There's a lot of subtext.**

I saw bits of the show — really raw — and I was just amazed at how Ray (Thomas Jane's character) evolved. I love hearing what you think, because I don't know what's coming up. I didn't see the latest episode, but the part that I did see (which this writer will not divulge here) made me stand up out of my chair and say to Collette (Burson, co-creator), "I love this show." I mean, even if I wasn't in it, I would watch this show.

**Without giving it away, in that fourth episode, Ray really turns the corner. He realizes he has a gift, shall we say.**

To give... or whatever. I can't come up with the right way to say it; Collette and Dmitri do that. I'll just say, "He has a big dick." But I thought it was beautiful. The reason I said I would watch this show even if I wasn't on it, is because there are lots of interesting questions that people will hopefully be asking themselves about the nature of sexuality...

**In a dark, but humorous way.**

See, I'm a big fan of the darker, and then the funny.

**The show is great, but some people might be thrown off at first by the dark/funny juxtaposition, but what I found was by the end of the fourth episode, it was like, the culmination of Act 1.**

Right. I think that's really true.

**The tone is reminiscent of Dmitry's last show, "The Riches." Had you seen that show before working with him?**

I hadn't. I guess because I wanted to come at this from a fresh perspective.

**Maybe that goes back to your thoughts about skipping the I-phone/BlackBerry route for the moment; it's not that ignorance is bliss, it's just skipping a barrage of preconceived notions and distractions.**

You're right. I want to take this at face value. It doesn't have anything to do with "The Riches" really; it's a whole new world.

**Let's chat about *Little Children* for a moment. That movie is so...disturbing. But you and Jackie Earle Haley are so fantastic in the scenes you have together.**

I know...but about Jackie... [pauses] I really believe in synchronicity. There was this store in New York City called Built by Wendy. She designed a tee shirt with different sketches of Jackie's face from the *Bad News Bears*. I just loved that shirt — and I was wearing it all the time. And then one day I got the call to go and audition for *Little Children*. When I found out it was him in the role, it was just weird. It was sort of, kismet.

**He was tremendous in that movie. But still, it was a hard movie to take.**

I guess so — but when you're in something, you don't get to see it the same way other people see it. Sometimes you see something you've done, and you think, 'Oh, I remember the day I did that scene, we had roast beef.'

**But when you do a role like that, does it have an effect on you at all?**

I don't think so. My friends might say otherwise. Sometimes I'll let something in my life upset me a bit more, unconsciously, than I might have if I wasn't playing a role where I need to be knocked a bit off center.

**But many actors get really immersed in their roles — they live and breathe the role, like Robert De Niro, for example, and stay completely in character all the time.**

I can't really say I go that way. You know how we were talking about synchronicity... and the unconscious — I'm really fascinated by how much we're really led around, not just actors, but everyone — by our unconscious. I think I'm just led into whatever character I happen to be playing in that moment. It just starts manifesting itself into my life for a while.

**When one looks at the scope of your work, it's so broad and variegated. You've got *Little Children* on one hand, and then *You've Got Mail*.**

I loved working with Nora Ephron, even though I didn't get to spend much time with her. Let me tell you a quick funny story about her... I've read all of Joan Didion's work, and she's a friend of Nora's. In *Goodbye to All That*, Joan talks about living in New York,



and leaving it. She says, "New York is either for the very, very rich, or the very, very young, and I was neither." I had lived in New York for a while myself, but I moved out to L.A. Needless to say, I ended up back in New York for something or other, and I ran into Nora and she asked where I was living. I told her I was living in L.A. and she sort of implied that that was totally the wrong move. And I said, 'But you know, Nora, your friend Joan Didion wrote that great commentary on who New York is really for, and I totally agree. Nora said, rather seriously, "But Jane, she came back." I love New York, but it's a hard life and I'm not in any hurry to get back. I need the sky, and the trees, and the sounds of birds singing...not the sounds of the garbage trucks and sirens. So right now, I just love L.A.

**So I'm sure everyone asks you, 'How did you get this pilot and why did you want to do it?' and we all know you got it through your agent. But what piqued your interest?**

The title – I thought, what is this? My first instinct was, it's too clever, this isn't for me.

**Why not?**

Trust me, I do this all the time. At first I thought I wasn't right to play Tanya.

**But this show strikes me as almost like an indie film, and you strike me as the quintessential indie girl.**

That's why, on the second pass, that's what I felt, too. I loved it the first time around, but I didn't know how I really fit in. That was my first instinct. I guess what I'm saying is, sometimes my instincts are kind of off. [laughs] And then I spent more time with it, and I actually think now I was so right for it, I couldn't see it.

**Sometimes you need a little time to really understand that something can be a really good thing for you.**

You are totally right. And then I fell in love with it. Also, I found out Alexander Payne was directing it, and after we finished shooting he said, "I never thought of anyone else for Tanya."

**The way that the show is edited is so suggestive. It's cut so you almost get to see Thomas full frontal, but it's just a tease.**

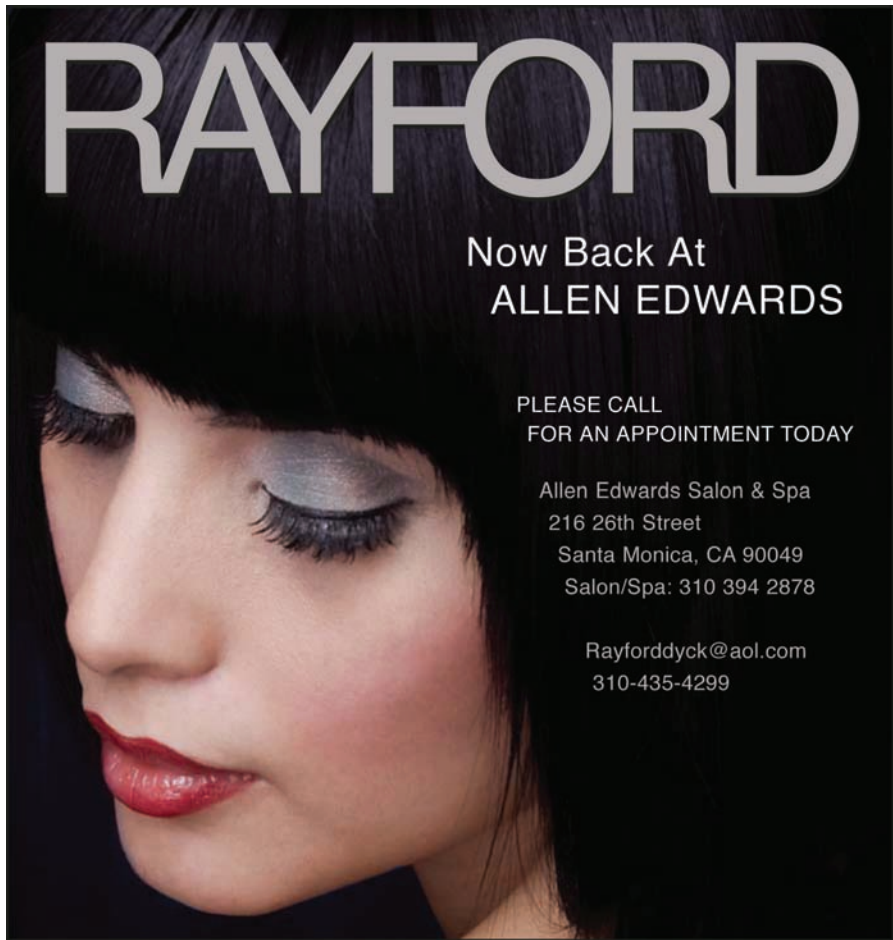
[Laughs] Thomas, as a person, is just much happier without his clothes on.

**But as an audience, we're so curious!**

Good. I think that's the way it should be. It's probably just getting bigger and bigger in everyone's mind.

**The show is really smart, but achievable and attainable to everyone.**

I love working on it. Thomas and I have a



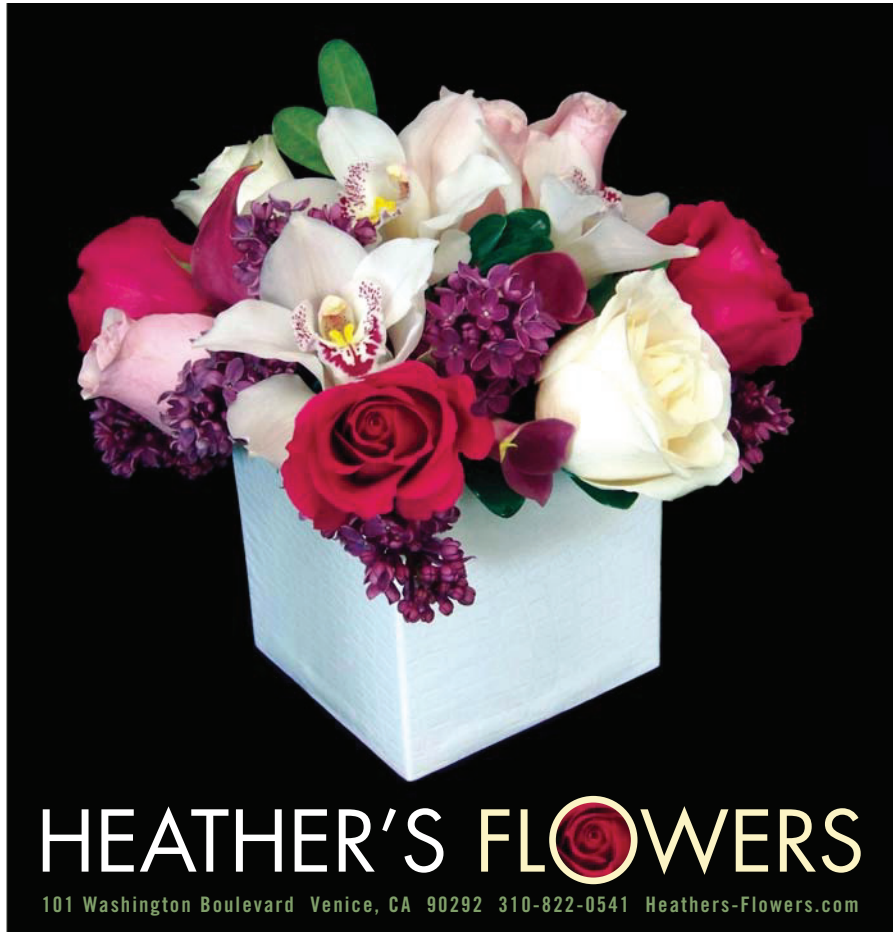
# RAYFORD

Now Back At  
**ALLEN EDWARDS**

PLEASE CALL  
FOR AN APPOINTMENT TODAY

Allen Edwards Salon & Spa  
216 26th Street  
Santa Monica, CA 90049  
Salon/Spa: 310 394 2878

Rayforddyck@aol.com  
310-435-4299



# HEATHER'S FLOWERS

101 Washington Boulevard Venice, CA 90292 310-822-0541 Heathers-Flowers.com



rapport you can't fake. When we were first in Michigan filming, we were out in the middle of town, in the middle of the night, walking around. Thomas took off his shoes — he would've taken off all his clothes if he could — and we walked across these parking lots to this giant Best Buy that was like a beacon in the moonlight. It was like Mecca. [laughs] The parking light is all lit up and there are these sad little trees throughout the lot — you know the ones that never get old and are there forever as sort of landscaping? We climbed one of them — without talking about it — looking at the Best Buy. That's what I can bring to the Tanya and Ray relationship. It's random, silent knowing. I know it's a little far out, but it works, at least for me.

**So when it came to getting to know your character, did you do any “pimp” research?**

I don't really do that, I'm not a big research person. I don't really write anything down. For me, it's really more about what is Thomas saying, right in front of me, right now. More in the moment.

**That's very Buddhist of you.**

[Laughs] Or something. But I will say, all of a sudden, playing Tanya, all of my iTunes audio book collection looks like it belongs to someone else. It's all of these Wayne Dyer, Deepak Chopra...suddenly it's like 25 self-development, spiritual audio books. That's the kind of weird thing I was talking about — the unconscious becoming part of the conscious existence — I only noticed when we were deep into shooting, 'Whose collection of books is this?' I used to be a solid fiction girl.

**Maybe when you're in Tanya's space, and her mindset, and her poetry...**

I think this whole idea of me or my character cracks me up. I would say my process is sort of no process. My favorite thing about character or the actor, is when I was working with Anne Meara and Jerry Stiller — they were playing my parents in the film *A Fish in the Bathtub*. I absolutely adore them. Jerry and Anne came over one day and Jerry said, "I was talking to the director because my character this and my character that." And then he walked away, and Anne turns to me and says, "My charactah! My charactah! He was doing this all last night! So I said to him: Jerry! Jerry! Character?!? It's YOU!" There's nothing I can bring to Tanya, that I don't have somewhere in myself. ▼

*"Hung" airs Sundays at 10PM on HBO.*