

Born To Be Wide

A Play

by

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BORN TO BE WIDE

Born to Be Wide is a tale of the overweight told in monologues, vignettes and fantasies through the eyes of a rather large leading man. It is therefore necessary for the actor playing GREG not have to wear a fat suit to be big, but just be naturally large.

Though this is a full-length play, it is designed to be performed in one long act of about 90 minutes.

Set requirements are extremely minimal. The stage should be small. The only real requirement is a table-like box on one side of the stage and five chairs later in the play. A tuba or sousaphone may sit off to one side. There are many props used, but the table is the only real piece required for an adequate presentation.

CHARACTERS

GREG - Male, mid 30's. Very large (275+ range).

AMBER - Female, mid 30's. Works with Greg at Gordon's Music Sales. Quick-witted but a bit unstable.

GORDON - Male, mid 40's. Owner of Gordon's Music Sales. Condescending and slick.

MINDY - Female, late 30's-early 40's. Greg's older sister. Very motherly.

SAM - Male, late 30's. Greg's older brother (but younger than Mindy.) A true bastard.

DAD - Male, late 60's-mid 70's. Second generation Eastern European Urban Jewish.

(Music plays from an old horror film. We hear wind and rain with dogs barking. From the back of the theater GORDON, DAD, SAM, MINDY and AMBER emerge in a group, dressed like villagers in a Frankenstein movie. They hold torches, shovels, pitchforks and other weapons. They speak with German accents and move as a group through the aisles like they are hunting down the Frankenstein monster.)

GORDON

Zis way! Ze monster went zis way!

DAD

We must save ze village from ze monster!

AMBER

I saw him head away from ze castle! He vos heading toward ze old man's house on ze edge of ze forest!

SAM

We must kill ze monster! We must stop ze freak of nature before he kills!

AMBER

Vere is my daughter? Vere is my little girl?! Vee must save her!

MINDY

Vait! Do we really know vot we are doing? Do ve know zat he is really a monster?

DAD

Are you stupid or something? He has killed many men!

MINDY

No he hasn't.

GORDON

He is a threat to our way of life!

MINDY

It is your imagination.

SAM

He is an abomination of science. He is not human. We must stop him before he destroys us all.

MINDY

Zere is no monster. Ze only monster is inside of us.

GORDON

Don't listen to her! We must kill ze monster!

(The group exits, shouting "KILL ZE MONSTER! KILL ZE MONSTER!" as they wave their torches and weapons. All sound fades. The stage is dark. A spot comes up on one side to show GREG, who stands alone. He addresses the audience.)

GREG

Hi. I'm fat. (pause) No, really, I am. And you know what? It's okay. I've been fat my whole life to my knowledge and I think I've adjusted pretty well to it. Being fat is all I know. And I don't mind it, either. You're probably thinking that I've just rationalized around it, but I really feel good about myself and about being fat. You see, I look at it this way: Everybody is different. There are beautiful people and there are ugly people. There are thin people and there are fat people. If there were no fat people, what would happen to all the thin people? That's where I come in. I represent one end of the spectrum. I am a necessary extreme.

Being fat can be fun sometimes. You're immediately pegged as being jolly. You always have a job playing Santa Claus around Christmas time. You never have to share a seat on the bus. And you never have to worry about what you can and can't eat, because you can eat everything ... and on many occasions do. I love eating. (pause) No, really, I do. Eating has got to be one of my top five favorite things in the world. If I couldn't eat like a pig, I wouldn't be complete. So that's that. I'm fat and happy about it. I was "Born to Be Wide," if you will.

Call me Greg. Greg Newton. (pause) No, really, that's my name. I know what you're thinking. To answer the question, "yes" ... I grew up with the nickname "Fig." It used to get me upset, but eventually, like being fat, it became part of my identity. Soon I became proud to be "Fig" Newton. I'm proud of who I am. I have a good job, I have good friends, I have a good family ... well, two out of three. But the thing that makes me ... makes me furious is people who try to change me. If I hear one more person trying to talk me into losing weight I'll ... I'll ... I'll eat them! Right up. They'll never know what hit them.

Back a few months ago, my identity was definitely on the line. It seems that everybody wanted me to be someone I wasn't. Everybody.

(Lights come up on the other half of the stage. Classical music plays quietly in the background. AMBER stands behind a work table, diligently dissecting a clarinet. She wears a green smock over her clothes. As he speaks, GREG dons a similar smock.)

GREG (cont'd)

That's Amber. We worked together at Gordon's Music Sales in Forest Hills. I'd been there for three years, ever since I came to New York. We did instrument repair, and we were good. Best service in Queens. I was in love with Amber, and she was in love with me. It didn't happen overnight, either. It took months of work to get her to come around and to overlook my being fat. You see, most people don't really like me when they first meet me because of the way I look. (pause) Really, it's true. But as soon as my natural charm takes over, nobody can resist. That's the way it was with Amber. But just a few months ago everything was on shaky ground.

(GREG approaches AMBER quietly and ominously from behind. AMBER does not notice.)

GREG (cont'd)

(Quiet and ominous) Aaaaaamberrrrr. (pause)
Aaaamberrr.

AMBER

(Flat but facetious) Good morning, Greg.

GREG

Aw, how'd you know it was me?

AMBER

Hmm. It must have been the ground shaking.

(They embrace and
exchange a friendly
kiss.)

GREG

Ah, mon cherie, fly away with me!

AMBER

Sure. Anywhere in mind?

GREG

(Dramaticlaly) It matters not to me. We'll fly to Morocco, Anaheim, Aruba, the Dog Star . . . the Knish Nosh down the street. (reaches into his pocket and pulls out a bag of M&M's) "M"?

AMBER

Thanks. (takes an M&M) You didn't happen to see the hot-glue sticks around here, did you?

GREG

Uh-oh.

AMBER

What "uh-oh" ...

GREG

Remember yesterday around four o'clock when I said I was hungry and the candy machine was all out of Snickers bars ...

AMBER

You didn't eat the hot-glue sticks again, did you?

GREG

Well ...

AMBER

Those things can ruin your teeth!

(GREG produces two hot-glue sticks and waves them in front of AMBER's nose.)

GREG
Surprise.

AMBER
I knew you didn't eat them.

GREG
Naw. Actually I ate the rosin. It's kind of sticky, but if you heat it up first it tastes a lot like maple syrup.

AMBER
(Laughs) Oh, Greg ... what am I gonna do with you.

(AMBER kisses him on the cheek.)

GREG
I have some ideas if you need suggestions.

AMBER
I'll bet you do.

GREG
So ... aren't you gonna ask me how my meeting went with the bank yesterday?

AMBER
Oh, that's right! So ... how did your meeting go with the bank yesterday?

GREG
Nice of you to ask. After about an hour of laughing in my face, pointing fingers and childish name-calling they decided they'd back me.

AMBER
Oh! That's wonderful!

GREG
Now all I need is a location ... and a partner.

AMBER
Greg, you know that if you open your own music shop I'll be right there with you.

GREG
You will?

AMBER

Do we have to go through this every day? Of course I will! You're not gonna get rid of me THAT easily.

GREG

Then marry me.

AMBER

I thought we've been through this.

GREG

Let's go through it again, please? You know how much I love repeated rejection.

AMBER

Greg, you promised.

GREG

No I didn't.

AMBER

Then promise me now.

GREG

Okay. I promise ... what was I promising again?

AMBER

That you'll stop asking me to marry you.

GREG

But I love you!

AMBER

And I love you too. Now promise.

GREG

Does this mean you will?

AMBER

PROMISE!!

GREG

Not until you say "yes."

AMBER

Greg, I can't.

GREG

Then go out with me tonight.

AMBER

No.

GREG
Tomorrow night.

AMBER
No.

GREG
Can you pencil me in for a week from Tuesday?

AMBER
Greg ...

GREG
Oh, come on. Why won't you go out with me?

AMBER
It would never work.

GREG
You know, you're right. We already love each other, we get along great, we have a good time when we're together ... we'd be miserable.

AMBER
That's not what I mean.

GREG
Then at least go out with me.

AMBER
You're not my type.

GREG
I'm not? I AM anatomically correct.

AMBER
Really?

GREG
I hope I didn't shock you.

AMBER
Well, THAT myth is now destroyed.

GREG
Honestly, Amber, I don't know why you won't go out with me. This isn't a fat thing, is it?

AMBER
What did I tell you about putting yourself down like that?

GREG

Then tell me it isn't a fat thing.

AMBER

Well, you could stand to lose a couple of pounds ... like fifty or sixty.

GREG

Then it IS a fat thing.

AMBER

I don't want to hurt your feelings. It's just that ... well ...

GREG

I'm fat.

AMBER

You're a wonderful guy. There are a million girls who'd love to go out with you ...

GREG

But not you.

AMBER

You're putting words in my mouth.

GREG

I asked you out and you said "no." I didn't put that "no" in your mouth.

AMBER

Look, Greg, I love you. I love you a lot. I wish I knew what it was ... what happened to you that makes you be so ...

GREG

Oh, Amber, Amber, why does everybody have to psychoanalyze me?

AMBER

Because you're a great guy and we all care about you.

GREG

But I'm perfectly happy the way I am! I know what I look like, I know how much I weigh, I know how much food I eat a day. And you know what? It's okay! This is me! This is Greg Newton, and I'm perfectly happy to be what I am!

AMBER

And I admire that in you.

GREG

Besides, if you don't go out with me, I really WILL eat the hot-glue sticks.

AMBER

Don't forget to wash it down with some valve oil.

GREG

I'm not kidding.

AMBER

Oh, I'm sure.

(GREG takes a hot-glue stick and holds it up to his mouth.)

GREG

Just like a gooey candy bar ... Mmmmm ...

AMBER

Greg, cut it out. You're making me nervous.

GREG

Then go out with me.

AMBER

What do you have in mind, Casanova.

GREG

Do I sense your resistance weakening?

AMBER

Maybe. What do you have in mind?

GREG

Oh, I don't know. Dinner, a movie, groping, a little sodomy perhaps, then a midnight snack?

AMBER

Can we skip the movie and go straight on to the sodomy part?

GREG

Anything you want. As long as we eat first.

AMBER

Can you cook?

GREG

Is a bear Catholic? Does the Pope shit in the woods? Does a woodchuck chuck?

AMBER

Can you cook?

GREG

I dabble.

AMBER

Then cook me dinner. I'm a terrible cook. The man I love has to be king in his kitchen.

GREG

Just call me "your majesty."

GORDON

(Off-stage) Newton!

GREG

Quick, look busy!

(Mr. GORDON enters.)

GORDON

Newton, have you fixed that cracked oboe yet? I've got an angry mother breathing down my neck.

GREG

I'm on it, Mr. Gordon. Tell her it'll be ready by noon.

GORDON

Fine, fine. You're a whiz with woodwinds, Newton.

GREG

I also give great brass.

GORDON

(Not amused) Terrific. Now before you two start goofing off again, I need someone to go out to one of the schools.

(GREG frantically raises his hand and waves it around.)

GORDON (cont'd)

The Band Director at Davidson High School needs one of you to check out their marching percussion equipment.

GREG

(Trying to get his attention, like he has to use the bathroom) Ooh! Ooh!

GORDON

Bathroom's down the hall, Newton.

GREG

Let me go, Mr. Gordon. Please! Please!

GORDON

What are you working on, Amber?

GREG

Oh, come on, Mr. G. Don't send Amber.

GORDON

Sorry, Newton. I need that oboe.

AMBER

I can finish the oboe.

GORDON

I'm sure you can, but I want you to go to Davidson.
The Band Director will be expecting you around eleven.

GREG

Aw, come on boss. Can't I go?

GORDON

I told Randy that Amber's going.

GREG

Randy? Randy Borden? He's my pal! We're meshpucha!
We hang out all the time! We play in a band together!
We go to eat every Wednesday Night!

GORDON

I don't care if you two are homosexual lovers. I'm
sending Amber.

AMBER

But Greg is much better with drums than I am.

GORDON

I'm relieved. Amber goes, Newton stays.

GREG

This isn't a fat thing, is it?

AMBER

Greg, that isn't nice.

GREG

It isn't ... is it?

GORDON

If you must know, Newton, Amber projects a better corporate image than you do.

GREG

Corporate image? We do instrument repair, not sell computers! Besides, I do better work.

AMBER

Greg!

GREG

Drums! On drums!

GORDON

The answer is still "no." I just can't risk it.

GREG

Risk what? I do good work!

GORDON

You just don't project the image that Amber does.

GREG

Then it's a fat thing.

GORDON

Okay, okay, it's a fat thing. Work on that oboe.

AMBER

I have to agree with Greg on this one. You have no right to discriminate against him because of his size.

GREG

But it's all right for you.

AMBER

Later, sweetheart.

GORDON

Amber, I've been running this business for fifteen years. People expect a lot from me and any representative from my company. You can't just waltz in here from Oklahoma, or Arizona ... or wherever you came from ... and tell me how to run my business. I can't risk my reputation -- the reputation of my store -- in the pudgy hands of Moby Greg, the Great White Whale.

GREG

You hold him down. I'll sit on him.

GORDON

Newton, I hate to pry ...

GREG

Oh, by all means pry. I live for humiliation.

GORDON

Newton ... exactly why are you so fat?

GREG

Simple. Because I eat too much.

GORDON

Why do you eat too much?

GREG

Because I'm fat. It's a vicious cycle.

(AMBER laughs)

GREG (cont'd)

An attractive figure like this takes a lot of work. It doesn't come natural, you know.

GORDON

Then why don't you do something about it? Surely you can't WANT to be so fat.

GREG

What if I do? Can that be so strange?

GORDON

Son, NOBODY want's to look like a parade float.

GREG

Really? Oh, I don't know about that. A few flowers here and there and I'll be ready for Pasadena. Hey Amber, you can ride on top and wave!

GORDON

Newton, you infuriate me.

GREG

Okay, Mr. Gordon. Tell me why you kill a fifth of gin every day?

AMBER

Or why you smoke a pack of cigarettes every day?

GREG

And then there's those mysterious phone calls before any basketball game.

GORDON

Newton, I don't know why I keep you on here. You're such an embarrassment.

GREG

Could it be my charming personality and girlish physique?

GORDON

I don't have time for this, Newton. Amber, head out around ten-thirty. Newton, I want that oboe by noon ... and NO LIP!

(GREG makes kissing sounds. GORDON leaves.)

GREG

Can you believe that guy?

AMBER

He has a point, you know.

GREG

Yeah. Right on the top of his head.

AMBER

That's not what I mean.

GREG

I know what you mean. So now I'm an embarrassment.

AMBER

No, I ...

GREG

(Interrupting) Hey, it's not my fault that old man Gordon doesn't think I'm as wonderful as you do.

AMBER

You know, you'd be so handsome if you weren't so fat.

(Lights go down on AMBER.)

GREG

(To the audience) Ouch. She went right for the jugular. I'd never have expected anything like that from Amber. But I saw the writing on the wall. Women don't love fat men -- unless they're Pavoratti or just ruch. But it hurt. It really hurt. As unfair as it seems I've always believed it one way or another. It didn't matter who you were or what you were. You could've been ugly, or short, or crippled ... but fat? Fat chance.

(Lights come up again.
MINDY enters, carrying a
basket of laundry. She
stands behind the box and
folds clothes as she
talks.)

MINDY

If you would lose some weight you wouldn't have these
problems.

GREG

(Still to the audience) My big sister, Mindy.

MINDY

But you're just a victim. It's really Mom and Dad's
fault.

GREG

First of all, Mind-a-roo, I don't have problems.
Second of all, if I DID in fact have problems, I'd be
more than willing to accept responsibility for them
without blaming Mom and Dad.

MINDY

(Oblivious) We come from a dysfunctional family, you
know that?

GREG

Are you sure we're related? Did we grow up with the
same set of parents?

MINDY

All I'm saying is that it's not your fault.

GREG

What's not my fault? Has some crime been committed?

MINDY

I think so. (holding up a sock with a huge hole in it)
What have you done to your socks?!

GREG

Aw, you can fix 'em for me, can't you?

MINDY

I don't know. What's in it for me?

GREG

Unconditional love?

MINDY

I'll think about it. But I'll tell you what you CAN do for me.

GREG

Anything, Mindalicious, sister 'o mine. Name it.

MINDY

There's this girl at work who's just right for you ...

GREG

Aw, Min-dini, how many times do we have to go through this?!

MINDY

But she's perfect for you!

GREG

Oh? How fat is THIS one?

MINDY

She's got a great personality.

GREG

That big, huh? She must be HUGE!

MINDY

Greg, you have to put Amber behind you and go after women of your own kind.

GREG

You mean sub-humans?

MINDY

If you don't lower your standards you'll be alone for the rest of your life.

GREG

Standards? Look, Min-dacity, my only standard where women are concerned is that they can't weigh more than me, and even THAT'S negotiable. I just can't stand you meddling into my love-life, or lack thereof ... ESPECIALLY when it comes to Amber. Other than that I feel I've been fairly open-minded to your attempts.

MINDY

(A beat - oblivious) "Min-dacity." That's a new one. I'll have to remember that.

GREG

Were you listening to anything I said?

MINDY

You have no clue. Not even a HINT of a clue.

GREG

Have you ever seen a baby pigeon?

MINDY

Oh, God, not the baby pigeon speech again.

GREG

Hey, I listen to you go on about your boys. You can endure the pigeon speech.

MINDY

You do this every time I try to ...

GREG

(Interrupting) But you still don't get it. Have you ever seen a baby pigeon?

MINDY

(Humoring him) I'm sure I have.

GREG

Think. Have you really?

MINDY

I really can't remember.

GREG

Can you describe a baby pigeon?

MINDY

Uh ... no. Okay, you got me. I've never seen a baby pigeon.

GREG

But they exist, right?

MINDY

Well, yes. Of course they exist.

GREG

But you've never seen one. How do you know they exist?

MINDY

Well, there are full-grown pigeons, and they have to start somewhere ...

GREG

But you've never seen one.

MINDY

So, what's your point?

GREG

You'll have to figure that one out for yourself.

MINDY

Oh, come on!

GREG

(Laughs) Nope. You're on your own.

MINDY

Greg, you're a shit!

GREG

Thanks. Now, what's for dinner?

MINDY

Is that all I am to you? A free meal once a week and someone to abuse?

GREG

Laundry. Don't forget laundry.

MINDY

Ah, that's right. So will you go out with my friend?

GREG

Ordinarily, subjecting myself to such torture would be high on my agenda. This time, however, I've set my sights on higher ... uh ... stuff.

MINDY

I thought Amber snubbed you.

GREG

She did ... at first. But my natural charm and charisma finally wore her down.

MINDY

A pity date. Works every time.

GREG

It was not pity! She's going out with me because she's in love with me.

MINDY

But you said ...

GREG

(Interrupting) Okay, okay, she's not in love with me per se ... YET. But after this all that may change.

MINDY

Would you like my friend's number? I'm sure she'd love to hear from you.

GREG

Sorry, Minds-koff. My heart belongs to Amber.

MINDY

Here. Take it anyway.

(MINDY hands him a card.)

GREG

Hmm. Nice card. Phone company. That's a bad sign. I don't know why I should thank you, but "thanks."

MINDY

I love you, you big lug. You know that.

GREG

Big lug? Now you're comparing me to something in a car engine? You wouldn't happen to have a lug wrench on you, would you? My neck's kind of stiff ...

MINDY

Oh, shut up. You set the table - I'll hunt for the boys.

(Lights go down on
MINDY.)

GREG

(To audience) Did you like the pigeon thing? It's one of my favorites. Mindy doesn't think so but I DO have a clue. Believe it or not, I'm an expert on matters of the heart. It's like the pigeon thing ... or better yet, it's like a jigsaw puzzle with one piece missing.

Even though the piece is missing you still know what it looks like, and the more you search for that missing piece the clearer the image of what it SHOULD look like becomes etched into your brain.

But I digress ...

I really love Mindy, though she is a little confused sometimes. She's my best friend in the whole world. She took me in when I came to New York and we still see each other every week. She also has a washing machine.

I get a little pissed off at her ragging on Mom and Dad. Not to say that I idealize them or anything, but I knew that they did the best they could with what they had. I mean, I couldn't expect them to have the time or the interest in me that they did for Mindy and Sam. I was the youngest and they were old.

Putting all that aside, I was glad that Mindy didn't get on the weight issue too much. I'm not afraid to face it, but it was starting to become a recurring theme and I hate being analyzed by everybody all the time, ESPECIALLY since I don't need it.

So, my date with Amber was approaching fast. I was pretty nervous but I tried to be cool about it. Little did I know what creature lurked within ...

(Lights come up on AMBER, who is standing behind the box. She is wearing a smock and is working on a trumpet. GREG dons his smock and casually strolls up behind her and peers over her shoulder.)

GREG
What'cha doin'?

AMBER
Kid had an accident at a football game. Crunched the bell.

GREG
Hmmm. Nice piece of work.

AMBER
(Exploding) Oh? And just what is THAT supposed to mean, Gregory Andrew Newton? Just because you finally persuaded me to go out with you doesn't mean you can treat me like some Malibu Beach bimbo. I knew I should never have said I'd do it. This is why it'll never work. Every time I care about someone something like this happens ... they wind up treating me like an object. Well let me tell you something, Gregory Andrew Newton, I'm not some easy piece of ass!

GREG
Huh?! But I ...

AMBER

(Interrupting) And another thing, mister, just because I said I'd go out with you doesn't mean I want to have sex with you.

GREG

I never ...

AMBER

(Interrupting) This is a mistake. A big, fat, mistake. I should never have consented to go out with you. You men are all alike ... just like my brothers. Do they care about MY feelings? Do they give a DAMN whether I live or die?!

GREG

Amber, get a grip.

AMBER

All men are toe-jam.

GREG

Hello? Is this you?

AMBER

You heard me. You make me sick.

GREG

(To the audience) Count 'em folks ... she used my middle name TWICE. This is definitely a bad sign.

AMBER

Who the hell are you talking to?!

GREG

Who, me? Oh ... no one.

(GREG motions to the audience to be quiet.)

AMBER

Fine. Then leave me alone. I knew I should have never let you in. It'll never work between us. Never.

GREG

Ah-HA!

AMBER

What "Ah-ha?"

GREG

You're afraid of commitment!

AMBER

And what do you mean by THAT crack?

GREG

The signs are pretty obvious. But it's okay. It's nothing to be ashamed of.

AMBER

Are you nuts?! Now, leave me alone. I have a trumpet to fix.

(Pause as AMBER works for a few moments.)

GREG

Is this a female thing?

AMBER

WHAT?!

GREG

(To the audience) Okay, it's a little crude. But after a display like that you have to consider all the options. It's real unlike her to blow up like this. Anyway, unbeknownst to either of us, this tender scene was about to meet its Comic Relief.

SAM

(Off-stage) Yo! Kids! Anybody home?

GREG

It's Sam. That's ALL we need. (to the audience) My brother Sam and I have a rather strained relationship. I love him and all, but he is ... well ... how can I put it. A little ... obnoxious? Could be. Let's put it this way ... if Sam were a stuffed animal he'd be a Crock of Shit. Anyway, he has this annoying habit of calling me ...

SAM

(Interrupting) Hey! Sparky!

GREG

(Grumbling) ... Sparky.

AMBER

(In an obviously better mood - almost flirty) Hi, Sam.

SAM

(Brushing her off) Hey, babe. Sparky! Get your fat ass over here and give me a kiss! Didn't your mother teach you any manners?

GREG

(Grumbles) Apparently not. What's YOUR excuse?

SAM

Greggie-poo, you're such a wet blanket! Dance with me!

(SAM grabs GREG and
dances briskly for a few
moments.)

GREG

So, to what do I owe this distinct displeasure?

SAM

What's the matter? Can't I visit my little bo' at
work?

AMBER

Of course you can.

GREG

Usually not unless you want something.

SAM

Sparky, baby, are you insinuating that I'm a pest?

GREG

Of course not.

SAM

Good.

GREG

I'm coming right out and saying it. You're a pest.

SAM

Yeah, but you love me anyway.

GREG

That's debatable. So, what do you want?

SAM

Funny you should ask. I got a call from Dad today.

GREG

Oh my God.

AMBER

Your father? Is he okay? Is there something wrong
with him?

GREG

Dad's NEVER been okay.

AMBER

Oh, I'm sorry. You never said he was sick. What does he have?

GREG

A wandering nose and a sick sense of humor.

AMBER

I'm serious, Greg.

GREG

So am I.

SAM

Aw, Dad's okay. It's YOU who has the problem, Sparks.

GREG

I do NOT have a problem! Why does everyone INSIST I have a problem?!

AMBER

Relax, it's okay.

SAM

Hey, it's cool. (exaggerated - sarcastically) HE doesn't have any problems, Amber. Right? Wink, wink ...

AMBER

You want to pick up your guitar, don't you?

SAM

It's ready? I only brought it in two days ago!

AMBER

Oh, we do fast work here. Greg, go get your brother's guitar.

(GREG exits.)

SAM

So, you two an item yet?

AMBER

Us? No. I might go out with him, but I have my doubts about the situation. I'm trying to get him to shed a few pounds.

SAM

We've all been down this road with him before. Greg won't drop pound one until HE's ready.

AMBER

When will that be? I've been waiting a long time.

SAM

If I were you, I'd stop waiting. The more you want him to slim down, the longer it'll take.

AMBER

What do you mean?

(GREG returns with a guitar.)

SAM

How dare you call my brother a fat, disgusting, pig!

AMBER

What?!

GREG

It's okay. He does that all the time. I fell for it the first fifty or sixty times. Now it's just Sam. Here's your guitar. All re-fretted ... good as new.

SAM

Terrific. You didn't do the work, did you?

AMBER

I did. I'm better at strings than Greg.

GREG

But I give great brass.

AMBER

Please drop that joke. It's not funny.

SAM

Well, toodles kids. Gotta run. (exits quickly)

GREG

It's hard to believe that we're related.

AMBER

He's sweet. I don't know why you act so funny around him.

GREG

Wait a minute ... Sam's sweet but I'm toe-jam, right?

AMBER

That's not what I meant.

GREG

I think the statement "Men are toe-jam" said it all.

AMBER

I ... I didn't mean it.

GREG

It's too late. But maybe if I was REALLY toe-jam you wouldn't throw your tantrums. Take Sam for instance. He really IS toe-jam, but you think he's "sweet."

AMBER

He IS sweet.

GREG

Do you know who Sam is? He's the Devil incarnate! He's the little brother I never wanted -- and he's four years older than me! I don't know, he just makes me feel ... so ...

AMBER

Frumpy?

GREG

Frumpy?! Where'd you come up with an adjective like that?

AMBER

Sam's just having fun! Whenever he comes around you pull into a shell like a turtle.

GREG

(Sarcastically) Well, I guess I'm just not as wonderful as Sam.

AMBER

I never said that. And quite frankly, mister, I don't like your attitude.

GREG

So what else is new. Sam makes me feel like the butt of a big inside joke.

AMBER

You're just over-sensitive.

GREG

Sam's IN-sensitive.

AMBER

I don't like this side of you. This is what I mean when I say it'll never work.

GREG

Yeah? Well, I'm sorry I suffer from simple sibling rivalry. And at least I acknowledge my brother and sister! At least I HAVE a relationship with my siblings. At least I don't freak-out at the first thought of a commitment ...

AMBER

Okay, okay, you've made your point. So, neither of us is perfect.

GREG

I never said I was. I also don't expect YOU to be.

AMBER

Sorry about the "toe-jam" comment. I guess I'm a little on edge.

GREG

Yeah, I guess so. Maybe you should switch to decaf.

AMBER

(Giggles - a beat) So?

GREG

So ... what?

AMBER

Sam never said what your father wanted.

GREG

You're right. Knowing my dad, it was to make me feel worthless.

AMBER

I always thought you loved your dad.

(Lights fade on AMBER.)

GREG

(To audience) I do! Really, I do. There are aspects and angles to a son's relationship with his father that aren't that easy to put your finger on.

At times Dad can be the best friend I ever had. At times he can be a bigger pain in the butt than Sam. And if you have a butt like mine, just imagine the pain.

Dad lives in Texas, and I'm glad ... that he lives so far away, that is. Every year he visits us in New York with the intention of moving up here, and every year he reaffirms his decision not to. Anyway, Dad sometimes lacks ... well ... simple consideration.

(Doorbell rings. Lights up as DAD enters. He carries suitcases.)

GREG

Dad! What are you doing here?

DAD

What's the matter? Can't I see my own son anymore?

GREG

I should hope so. I'm pretty hard to miss.
(facetiously) Oh my God, it's your eyes, isn't it.
Oh, father! Say it isn't so! Damn it, Dad, you can be so irresponsible!

DAD

Don't get fresh. If I wanted fresh I could always visit your sister.

GREG

Sorry, Dad. Come in, come in. You're looking good, as usual.

DAD

You're as fat as a horse ... as usual. Why don't you go on a diet?

GREG

Why don't you mind your own business?

DAD

You're my son. You ARE my business.

GREG

I thought retail men's clothing and schtüpping married women half your age was your business.

DAD

Very funny. What you need is a good woman.

GREG

Oh, Dad, I'm tired of good women. Know any bad ones? Women I can just use and throw away like one of those juice boxes? (a beat) You know, the ones with the little straws that you poke through a dot in the top? The women, not the boxes ...

DAD

My son the comedian. When was the last time you got laid, mister comedian?

GREG

Laid? In what sense? What am I, and egg?

DAD

Sex, Gregory, sex. When did you last have sex?

GREG

Gee, Dad, you think you could possibly be a little more forward?

DAD

Answer me. When was the last time you had sex?

GREG

Is this a rhetorical question?

DAD

Oy, if your mother were only alive to see this ...

GREG

Hey, keep Mom out of this. She's not here to defend herself.

DAD

It's been a long time, hasn't it.

GREG

Yeah. Fifteen years already. Time sure flies.

DAD

Fifteen years? You haven't had sex in fifteen years?

GREG

Sex? I thought we were talking about Mom.

DAD

Stupid! We were talking about your sex life.

GREG

Sure. What would you like to know about it?

DAD

Do you have one?!

GREG

(Scoffing) Do I have one? Do I have one?! Well! Of COURSE I have one! Do I have a sex life ... why I otta ...

DAD

So you're getting nookie regular?

GREG

Sure! I get "nookie" all the time! How about you?

DAD

Your right hand doesn't count.

GREG

And why not? She always gives me a good time ... she never nags ... she's a cheap date ... five fingers, no waiting ... and I don't have to get her drunk. Well, once in a while I splash some bourbon on her just to get her a little tipsy ...

But she always respects me in the morning. Me and my right hand. We've got a pretty good thing going. Why do you always have to criticize my relationships? You parents just don't understand! True, she is my hand, but I love her. There. I've said it. I love her. Dad, I'd like you to meet Rosie Palms, my future wife. Rosie, Dad. Dad, Rosie.

(GREG extends his hand as if to shake hands with DAD.)

DAD

Oy! Irene, Irene ...

GREG

Come on, Dad. Lay off Mom.

DAD

Irene, where did I go wrong?

GREG

Oh, lighten up! I'm just having fun.

DAD

Enough with the hand?

GREG

Enough with the hand. But I DO have this inflatable doll I keep in the closet ...

DAD

Oy Gevult! My son the pervert! The fat pervert.

GREG

I resent that statement!

DAD

What, you're NOT a pervert?

GREG

No, I'm not your son. I guess you never wondered why I bore a strange resemblance to our old milkman.

DAD

Why couldn't you be more like your brother, Samuel?

GREG

Because I'm too busy being like Greg. I figure I'd just let Sam be like Sam. It fits him better.

DAD

Such a disgrace. Such a disgrace!

GREG

Moi? Disgrace? Daddy dearest, let's come down from whatever planet we're on and pull ourselves together. You're my dad and I love you, but I'm a good person. A real mensch. I got a good job, good friends and I'm happy, despite you.

DAD

Despite ME?

GREG

Face it, Dad, you weren't much of a parent to me when I needed you.

DAD

Your mother died. I had to find my own life.

GREG

Yeah, but you didn't have to exclude me.

DAD

Look, Gregory, I spent my whole life doing what I was supposed to do. I worked my entire life to support your mother and your brother and sister. It took a lot of energy to raise them. When you finally came along, well ... it wasn't easy. I just figured you'd do okay with your brother and sister helping.

GREG

Dad, when Mom died Sam was away at college and Mindy was married and two states away. You were all I had and you deserted me.

DAD

Gregory ... I did what I had to do. Your mother's death was hard to take. When you live thirty seven years with someone it's hard to just pick up and move on.

GREG

Yeah, I know. Look, Dad, I'm sorry about what I said about you deserting me. You had your own life. I couldn't expect you to share it with me.

DAD

It wasn't fair to you.

GREG

Hey, I got over it. I'm okay, Dad. Honest.

DAD

Okay? You buried yourself in pizza-pies! Face it, Gregory. You're a fat pig who'll never get married.

GREG

Maybe I don't want to get married.

DAD

Don't be meshugena. Everybody wants to get married.

GREG

Hey, let's not put the cart before the horse.

DAD

Why not? You eat like one.

GREG

Dad ... I'd kind of like to meet the right girl first. I'm fussy about details like that, you know.

DAD

So, while you're being fussy I'm without grandchildren.

GREG

Grandchildren?! You hated having your own children! What do you want with grandchildren?! And besides, Mindy has two kids! Last I checked they count as grandchildren, unless the laws have changed again. They're always changing. Wait a minute ... I'm getting matrimonial laws confused with tax laws again. I hate it when that happens.

DAD

You need to lose some weight.

GREG

Oh, no. Not you, too!

DAD

You could be such a great man if you'd only lose some weight.

GREG

I didn't know the two were connected, unless you're using the word "great" as a size reference. Under that assumption, I already AM great.

DAD

Your mother was big like you. Look what happened to HER. Diabetes. It runs in the family. It runs in our genes.

GREG

Kind of like diarrhea.

DAD

Joke all you will, Jackie Mason, but if you don't lose some of that fat you'll be alone and dead.

GREG

I always thought the two were synonymous.

DAD

Don't joke about dying, Gregory. A man like you could go any second. For that matter, a man like ME could go any second.

GREG

Dad! Were you trying to make a joke?

DAD

What's this, you got a monopoly on jokes?

GREG

Trust me; you're not gonna die anytime soon. You're as healthy as a horse. For that matter, you smell like one, too. For all I know you're hung like one.

DAD

I do better than you do, mister comedian, thank you very much.

GREG

Dad, in Texas homicide is legal if it's justifiable. That includes messing around with another man's wife. (In a mock-Texan accent) I figger you'll live to a hunerd 'less some deranged cowboy plugs you with his shotgun for pokin' his filly.

DAD

I do a valuable service to all the women I associate with.

GREG

I didn't know bone-jumping was considered a service.

DAD

Seven nights a week I'm with different lady-friends. The secret is that all their husbands don't think a little Jewish man is a threat. Lucky for me I don't want a relationship and neither do the women. It's all purely sexual.

GREG

I think I'm gonna be sick.

DAD

What's the matter? Your old man too much for you?

GREG

(Flustered) Too much for me? Too much for me?! (to audience) I hate to interrupt this tender father/son moment, but I do have a date with Amber any second now and the last thing I want is my dad hanging around. He can be a nice guy and a good conversation piece, but so is a fish tank. It's time to get nasty. (to DAD) Sorry, Dad, but you have to go now. Go visit Sam for a while.

DAD

But I just got here! I plan on spending a week or two just with you!

GREG

(Angry and more flustered) A WEEK OR T- ... Sam, you son of a bitch ... Dad, we gotta talk.

(Doorbell rings)

DAD

Expecting company?

GREG

Bloody hell! It's Amber! We have a date!

DAD

A date? With a woman?

GREG

No, Dad, with a kumquat. Now ... look like furniture.

(SAM enters with a flourish.)

SAM

Father! Papa! Mi Padre! Daddy-doo!

DAD

Samuel! My number one son! Good to see you. You're looking well, as usual.

SAM

Yeah, and you smell like a horse ... or is that Greg?

DAD

He sure is as fat as one.

GREG

Feel free to talk about me like I'm not in the room, please.

(SAM and DAD embrace.)

DAD

You said Gregory would love to have me for a few weeks.

SAM

He does! ... wouldn't you, Greg?

GREG

I would have liked to have known a little in advance, that's all.

SAM

What do you mean "a little in advance?" I told you the other day at the music store!

GREG

No you didn't. You only told me that he called! You said NOTHING about him visiting OR my putting him up.

SAM

I didn't? I could have sworn I did.

DAD

In the meantime, what about me? I don't want to be a bother ...

SAM

You're no bother, Dad. Greg will be happy to put you up.

GREG

Ordinarily, sure. But right now I'm a little busy.

(SAM pulls GREG down stage, out of earshot of DAD.)

SAM

Look, big guy ... Dad only comes once a year. You KNOW how he gets along with Mindy, and Kate's too neurotic to let him stay at MY place. That leaves you, Sparky.

GREG

Sam ... any other time would be fine, but right now I have a pressing engagement that I have to devote all of my attention to.

SAM

A "pressing engagement?" You mean like a date with a woman or something?

GREG

If you must know, yes.

SAM

Serious? YOU?! A DATE?!!

GREG

Thanks for the encouragement.

SAM

I'm sorry, I'm in shock! Who is it with? That babe from the music store? I knew it'd be a matter of time before you were doing her.

GREG

(Angry) Don't talk about Amber like that!

SAM

Greg?

GREG

(Still angry) What?!

SAM

You're so cute when you're angry.

GREG

(Fumes, turns to DAD) Dad ... why don't you and Sam go out to dinner or something. My treat. Go to the Sizzler or something. Just leave me alone for the evening. Please.

DAD

Whassa matter? Now I'm not good enough for your friends?

GREG

Dad, I never said that. Just a few hours. Please.

SAM

(facetiously sobbing and sniffing) I can take a hint.
I know when I'm not wanted around here. You don't
love us anymore.

GREG

Sam ...

SAM

No, no, you can't stop me now. It's too late. The
damage is done. Goodbye ... ex-brother.

GREG

Sam ... don't.

DAD

Samuel, stop teasing your brother.

SAM

I'm not teasing. I mean it.

DAD

Gregory, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cause such waves
between you two.

GREG

Dad, he's joking.

DAD

But he said ...

GREG

Trust me.

SAM

Yeah, I'm only joking.

(SAM gooses GREG. GREG
jumps. AMBER enters
unnoticed.)

GREG

PLEASE don't do that.

SAM

Was it as good for you as it was for me? So, when does
your girlfriend get here? What's her name again?
Lavender ... Violet ... Magenta ... Chartreuse ... ?

AMBER
Try "Amber."

GREG
(Surprised) AMBER!

SAM
AMBER! It's your turn, Dad.

DAD
Wha ... ?

GREG
Dad, I'd like you to meet my friend Amber. Amber, this is my dad.

AMBER
Pleased to meet you, Mr. Newton.

DAD
My son is a fat pervert. He has sex with his hand.

AMBER
Excuse me?

GREG
DAD!!!

SAM
Oh boy! Sparky! What a guy! Say, are you turning a bright shade of red or is the lighting bad?

AMBER
Am I interrupting some sort of family thing?

GREG
Uh ... no, everything is just fine. They were just leaving, weren't you guys.

DAD
My boy has no respect. All the way from Houston, Texas I come and he throws me out in the street.

AMBER
Was this what Sam forgot to tell you the other day at the shop?

GREG
Uh-huh.

SAM

I feel the need to warn you - even though Sparky here is a big guy, he's a little under developed where it counts.

(SAM laughs as he uses his fingers to indicate something very small.)

GREG

(Steps down stage to the audience) Did you ever get into one of those situations where you wish ... oh, to hell with it. (to AMBER) Is there a hammer somewhere that I can bash my brains out with? Actually, any heavy, blunt object will do.

AMBER

Honestly, Greg.

DAD

So, missy, why would you want to go out with a pervert who's so fat? He's a disgrace!

GREG

I thought you WANTED me to get laid!

AMBER

What?!

GREG

That's not what I meant.

AMBER

Oh, I'm not good enough for you, huh?

GREG

No!

SAM

Come on, Amber. You're an attractive woman. Why would you want to be seen with the Big Fig here?

GREG

Thanks for all your support, folks. My family, ladies and gentlemen ...

AMBER

I've had it. I knew from the beginning that this was a bad idea. I should never have said I'd go out with you. From now on we should really keep things on a strictly impersonal, businesslike basis.

GREG

Why are you always so eager to end any relationship before it even begins?!

(SAM grabs GREG by the arm and pulls him far down stage.)

SAM

RELATIONSHIP?!! Where do you get off using a dime-store word like that?! Let me tell you like it is, Sparky. There are people in the world that are destined for certain things. Some people are born to be great, some are born to be small ... some rich, some poor ... some beautiful, some ugly. Some are meant to have love, and some aren't. People like you just aren't designed to have love, Greg. It's your destiny to be alone. I know it hurts to hear it, but until you let go of all that emotional baggage of yours and lose some weight, you'll never have love and you'll be alone for your entire life.

(SAM goes back up stage, leaving GREG alone.
EXTREMELY long pause as GREG stands, devastated.
He looks to DAD and AMBER and they turn their eyes away in shame.
Eventually they turn their backs on him. GREG looks at his watch.)

GREG

(To audience) There it was, dinner time, and for some reason I'd lost my appetite. I should have called Ripley.

I felt like I'd been betrayed. Betrayed by my own kind ... by my own family. I never asked to be made different. I never asked to see things the way I see them, or feel things the way I feel them. I never asked to look the way I do. I never wanted to be an outcast just because I wasn't smart and well-adjusted and beautiful. There aren't many well-adjusted people in the world, but it's full of smart and beautiful. There's no place in the world today for ugly on any level. At times I feel that everything within me is ugly ... except two things: my heart and my soul. Everybody's got to believe in something and I believe that deep inside I'm good and that my humiliation and solitude is all part of some higher plan ... though it's probably all a huge rationalization to stop myself from putting a bullet into my head. I think it was Frank Sinatra who once said: "A prayer, a blonde or a bottle of Jack Daniels ... whatever gets you through the night."

Believe it or not, I'm not perfect. Really, it's true. I never claimed to be perfect. But I'm happy, and I don't know why everybody seems to want to take that away from me. Every morning I look in the mirror and see how big I am. I don't know why it should bother everybody so much when it doesn't bother me. But I can see the writing on the wall. (to SAM) Okay, Sam ... Amber ... Dad. I'm at your mercy. What do you want from me?

DAD, AMBER & SAM
(in unison - like a Greek Chorus)
LOSE WEIGHT!!!

GREG
Are you sure?

DAD, AMBER & SAM
(in unison)
YES!!!

GREG
Have you considered MY feelings in this matter?

DAD, AMBER & SAM
(in unison)
Well ...

GREG
Do you actually think that if I just lose weight my entire life will be perfect in every way and you'll all get off my case?

DAD, AMBER & SAM
(in unison)
ABSOLUTELY!

GREG
Promise?

DAD, AMBER & SAM
(in unison - almost defeatedly)
We promise ...

GREG
(To the audience) Hey, this is pretty neat. My own
little Greek Chorus. (holds up four fingers to chorus)
How many fingers am I holding up?

DAD, AMBER & SAM
(in unison)
FOUR!

GREG
Recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

DAD, AMBER & SAM
(in unison) I pledge allegiance to the flag of the
United States of America and to the republic for which
it stands ...

GREG
(Interrupting) Okay, okay ... that's enough. (to
audience) I love toying with them like this.

(MINDY enters far up
stage.)

MINDY
Are you having fun?

GREG
What are YOU doing here?

MINDY
I'm here to make sure you know what you're doing.

GREG
I can't fight them anymore. I'm giving in. Doesn't
sound too complicated.

MINDY
But why? Why are you giving in to them? Do they have
any IDEA what they're asking you to do?

GREG
Tell her, guys.

DAD, AMBER & SAM
(in unison)
LOSE WEIGHT!

(Lights go down on DAD,
AMBER & SAM, who leave
unnoticed.)

MINDY
Do you REALLY think that's the answer?

GREG
Is what I think really important?

MINDY
Of course it is. Do you really think all of life's
problems center around how much you weigh?

GREG
THEY seem to think so.

MINDY
But they're not you, are they.

GREG
What are you getting at?

MINDY
Losing weight is good, but your motivation is all
wrong.

GREG
They want me to.

MINDY
It's all so much more complicated than that. Don't you
see?

GREG
But ...

MINDY
No "buts." How do YOU feel about it?

GREG
I ... I feel ... I feel mad.

MINDY
Exactly.

GREG

They're asking me to give up who I am for what they want! They have no clue!

MINDY

They might as well tell an alcoholic to just stop drinking, or a smoker to just stop smoking. It's so much more involved.

GREG

So what am I supposed to do?

MINDY

I can't answer that for you.

GREG

These are the people I share my life with. I can't live to make them happy, but things are sure miserable when they're not.

MINDY

You'll be making a big mistake.

GREG

Yeah, well, I don't see any way of proving that to them without showing them I'm trying.

MINDY

Do you REALLY want to be thin?

GREG

No! ... Yes. Yes, of course I do. I just ... well ...

MINDY

Complicated, isn't it. Let me tell you something. Being fat is a symptom, not a cause. If you eliminate the symptom the cause will still be there.

GREG

Whoa! Causes ... symptoms ... you're giving me a headache.

MINDY

Do you know the cause?

GREG

What?

MINDY

Do you know the cause? Do you know what makes you fat?

GREG

Are you getting me back for the pigeon thing?

MINDY

You can be skinny as a rail, but until you face the cause you'll always be fat. Do you want that?

GREG

I don't know. I do and I don't.

MINDY

Nobody is asking you to be perfect, Greg. We just want you to be happy.

GREG

But I AM happy.

MINDY

I know. That's why you need to make the right decision.

GREG

Where do you get all the answers?

MINDY

You know the answers yourself. Don't talk yourself out of them.

(MINDY exits. GREG stands alone, confused. The silence is broken by a voice-over.)

VOICE-OVER

And now, ladies and gentlemen, it's time for America's favorite quiz show, "What's My Malady!" And here's America's favorite quizmaster ... Bert Spoon!

(SFX: crowd cheering and cheesy Game Show music. GORDON enters, dressed - and talking - like a game show host. He pushes GREG off the stage.)

GORDON

Thank you, Millard. Yes, it's time for "What's My Malady," the game show that asks America ... "what's my malady?"! The rules are very simple, so without further ado, I'd like to bring out today's lucky contestant! Millard!

VOICE-OVER

Today's contestant is a housewife from Hoboken, New Jersey. Her hobbies include boiling lobsters and knitting humorous placemats. Let's give a big "What's My Malady" welcome to Mrs. Olis Smithson!

(AMBER enters, dressed as an old lady. SFX: crowd cheering.)

GORDON

Mrs. Smithson! Welcome to "What's My Malady."

AMBER

Olis. Call me Olis.

GORDON

Olis. You know how to play the game, so without further ado, let's bring out today's abusers! Millard!

VOICE-OVER

We have a surprise, because it's Family Day today on "What's My Malady."

(SFX: crowd cheering)

AMBER

Oh, I LOVE Family Day.

VOICE-OVER

Our first co-dependent worked in retail clothing for all of his life. Now he's a retiree residing in Houston, Texas. He's a widower and his hobbies include golf and being a general pain in the ass. Let's welcome Herschel Newton!

(SFX: crowd cheering.
DAD enters and stands
SL.)

VOICE-OVER (cont'd)

Our second victim is a seamstress, a two-time divorcee and has two sons. She enjoys cleaning house and reading self-help books. Let's welcome Herschel's only daughter, Melinda Newton!

(SFX: crowd cheering.
MINDY enters and stands
next to DAD.)

VOICE-OVER (cont'd)

Our third victim is a Loan Officer, he has a neurotic wife, and enjoys playing the guitar. Let's welcome Herschel's number one son, Samuel Newton!

(SFX: crowd cheering.
SAM enters and stands
next to MINDY.)

VOICE-OVER (cont'd)

And our final victim does musical instrument repair, he can't get a date, and enjoys such childish pastimes as watching cartoons and reading comic books. Let's welcome Herschel's youngest son and number one embarrassment, Gregory Newton!

(SFX: crowd laughing.
GREG enters and stands
next to SAM.)

GORDON

Okay, Olis, you've met the victims. Now it's time to play ... "What's My Malady." Remember, each victim suffers from some kind of addiction, social disorder or illness. I'll give you the malady and it's up to you to pair it with the abuser. Are you ready to play, Olis?

AMBER

Ready when you are, Bert!

GORDON

Then let's go! Here's the first malady for one thousand dollars! One of our abusers is ... a womanizer.

(SFX: clock ticking.)

AMBER

Oh ... I don't know ...

GORDON

Take your time, Olis.

AMBER

Oh ... pass.

GORDON

It's okay, Olis, you can still make some money here. For five hundred dollars, which one of our abusers is so insecure that he has to put others down to make himself feel good!

(SFX: bell.)

AMBER

Oh my God! What's that?

GORDON

Nothing to be alarmed about, Olis, it's just today's Bonus Malady, making our second abuser worth an extra one hundred dollars! Our second abuser also is dependent on drugs!

GREG

(Whispers to SAM) Drugs?!

SAM

(Whispers) It's nothing. I just smoke an occasional joint. It helps me deal with Kate.

GREG

How about a divorce? It might get better results.

SAM

I only resort to pot on special occasions.

GREG

Oh? Like when?

SAM

Oh ... like ... waking up ... going to work ... brushing my teeth ...

GORDON

We need an answer, Olis.

AMBER

Sorry, Bert, I just can't place it.

GORDON

We're still okay, Olis, but there are only two maladys left. So, for two hundred and fifty dollars, which one of our victims can't accept responsibility for his or her own life?

AMBER

Oooh, that's a toughie, Bert.

GORDON

Yes, we're real stinkers here on "What's My Malady."

AMBER

Oh ... the old man?

DAD

Who are you calling old, missy? I've schtüpped women half your age!

(SFX: buzzer.)

GORDON

That's incorrect, Olis, but it only leaves one more malady. So, for fifty dollars and the opportunity to ridicule and criticize a seemingly normal human being, which one of our victims has ... an eating disorder.

AMBER

The one on the left! Greg! He's the one!

GORDON

THAT'S ABSOLUTELY CORRECT!

(SFX: crowd cheering.
AMBER jumps up and down
and squeals like a
garden-variety game-show
contestant as MINDY, SAM
& DAD exit.)

AMBER

Oh, I can't believe it!

GORDON

Well, face it, Olis, it was an easy one. But nonetheless, now you get to publicly ridicule the victim!

(SFX: crowd cheering.)

AMBER

(Reluctantly at first, but gaining confidence) You ... have no self control! You're fat and ugly! Go on a diet! You shouldn't be allowed to function in society! Don't you have any shame? You're a pig! You make me sick!

(SFX: crowd cheering.
AMBER exits.)

GORDON

Okay, Olis, we get the point. So, America, tune in tomorrow for another episode of YOUR favorite game show ... "What's My Malady!"

(SFX: crowd cheering.
GORDON exits. Long
silence.)

GREG

That did it. I could only take so much. I had to go on a diet. If anything I had to appease my shallow family. I made the decision right then and there. God help us all.

(As GREG exits, we hear the same horror film music that was played at the beginning. SAM, DAD and AMBER enter from the rear of the theatre in their German Villager's costumes toting torches, rakes, etc. Again, all speak with German accents.)

SAM

Look! Over there! Ve've caught ze monster!

AMBER

Qvick, before he escapes! Tie him down!

DAD

Ach! They've caught him! They've caught him!

(They start to run toward the stage. MINDY, also in German garb, comes from behind.)

MINDY

You fools! You are making a mistake!

SAM

It is you who is the fool! He is a monster!

MINDY

It is YOU who are ze monsters! Ze creature means no harm to you. He only wants to live.

AMBER

He is a beast and must be destroyed!

(All run off yelling ad-lib "KILL ZE MONSTER!" MINDY waits as they start to exit and soon runs after them. As they converge on the stage, a terrible roar is heard and GREG chases them away. The sounds die down.)

GREG

(To audience) I know what you're thinking. You're wondering about the diet. (pause) I went on it. (pause) Lost ten pounds. Can't you tell? (pause) Don't worry, I can't either. It's the proverbial drop in the bucket. I have to admit, my expectations were low. Face it, was I doing it for me or just going through the motions to please my family? A noble effort, perhaps, but since it was for all the wrong reasons my heart just wasn't in it.

I'll tell you what, dieting is truly for the birds. I've lived on shakes, I've swallowed vitamin supplements, I've scarffed down salads, I've denied myself any and all food ... I've done it all. I even joined a gym. What a humiliating experience. I'll tell you ... people who go to gyms aren't trying to GET healthy, they already ARE and are just trying to maintain what they've already got and show it off. You know what else is humiliating? Spandex. Nothing makes you feel like more of a failure when someone like me is surrounded by people in spandex.

So, I was on my own. I did some exercises at home. I took long walks ... kind of a prelude to jogging. Yes, jogging. I also ate less and what I DID eat was healthier for me. (pulls out a small green salad) Rabbit food. I hate this stuff. What I wouldn't give for a cheeseburger.

(GREG sits on a stool behind the table and starts eating. GORDON enters. GREG hurriedly puts the salad away and dons his smock.)

GREG (cont'd)

Oops! Sorry, Mr. Gordon. I'm getting right to work.

GORDON

Newton! Relax! Finish your lunch. It's alright.

GREG

Thanks all the same, Boss. I'm not too comfortable eating in front of other people. It's kind of a personal thing.

GORDON

It's okay, Son, I understand. Do you ... have a minute?

GREG

Sure, Boss. What's on your mind?

GORDON

It's about what I said the other day ... about you being an embarrassment to the company.

GREG

Look, Mr. Gordon, it's okay.

GORDON

No, it's not okay. I mean ... you do fine work. No, you do GREAT work. Don't ever think for a second that I don't appreciate you.

GREG

Thank you. Thank you very much.

GORDON

So you understand the problems a business owner can encounter.

GREG

You've lost me.

GORDON

You're a good man. You're a good employee. You do good work and I'm glad to have you as part of my team.

GREG

(Impatient) Yeah ...

GORDON

So you understand when I become concerned about image and appearance and stuff like that.

GREG

I'm not asking to work the front desk.

GORDON

I know you're on a diet, and that's good. I'm glad. And someday ... someday soon, I hope ...

GREG

The point, Mr. Gordon, the point.

GORDON

Well, let's just say that when you're down to a more ... uh ... reasonable size you can look forward to more assignments out in the field.

GREG

Uh-huh. I see. I can go into the field when I take up less of it.

GORDON

I knew you'd understand. It's nothing personal ... strictly business. (sighs) I'm glad we had this chance to talk.

(GORDON starts to walk away.)

GREG

(Ominously) Oh, Mr. Gordon ...

(GORDON turns. GREG pulls out a gun and shoots GORDON once. GORDON is stunned... to say the least.)

GORDON

Newton! What the fuck are you doing?!!

GREG

Say your pwayers, wabbit.

(GREG shoots GORDON five more times. AMBER and DAD jump out from behind the table. They wear smocks and surgical masks. They wrestle with GREG, disarm him, and eventually pin him down on top of the table. SAM enters wearing a smock & surgical mask as well as other doctor equipment, making him clearly look like a surgeon.)

SAM

Has the patient been prepped for surgery, nurse?

GREG
SURGERY?!!!

AMBER
We've decided to administer the anesthetic after all,
doctor.

(DAD pulls out an
unusually large, soft or
inflatable mallet and
hits GREG on the head
with it.)

GREG
Ow! Stop it! Let me go!

SAM
Ready for surgery. Scalpel!

(DAD gives SAM a large
knife. SAM speaks as he
pretends to cut GREG's
stomach open.)

SAM (cont'd)
The patient has been diagnosed as being happy and
having a positive attitude. Of course, these delusions
can not continue. Our only hope now is to perform a
"Happyectomy."

GREG
Are you nuts?!!

DAD
Shut up, you, or I'll give you a "k'nock."

SAM
This is a very delicate operation, so if I were you,
Fatso, I'd lie back and hope we get it right.

(SAM digs around. GREG
struggles.)

AMBER
What is it, doctor?

SAM
It appears we have here...(whips a comic book out) a
comic book! Obviously the patient lived in a fantasy
world where he had to escape using childish methods.

GREG

Hey! Put that back! That's the latest issue of "Mighty Man!" He's my favorite.

AMBER

If you know what's best you'll be quiet. The doctor is less likely to make mistakes that way.

(SAM continues to dig.
He pulls out a music
book.)

SAM

Advanced Tuba Etudes?

GREG

It keeps the lip in shape. It's very effective.

SAM

Not anymore, Tubby. Ah-HA! Look what we have here!

(SAM pulls out theatre
tickets.)

GREG

Those are my tickets to "Phantom"! I've been waiting MONTHS for those!

AMBER

Well, fat boy, you won't be needing them now! (cackles maniacally) Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

(DAD cuffs GREG on the
head.)

SAM

Oo-Hoo! Lookie what we have here ... (pulls out a magazine) The latest issue of Wanker's Weekly. Defend your way out of THIS one, fat-stuff.

GREG

Uh ... There's a great interview with Bill Clinton. Yeah, that's it! A great interview.

AMBER

You expect us to believe you actually read that slap rag? It's purely whacking material.

DAD

It is! He told me himself!

SAM
Silence! The final stage has begun. There is something lodged too deep inside for me to see. In order to get to it I must remove his heart.

GREG
My heart?! I need that!

AMBER
It's only a myth. I know dozens of people who don't have a heart. Look at lawyers -- or real estate agents.

GREG
I'll bet they're not much for conversation.

DAD
(Cuffs GREG again) Shut up! The doctor is operating.

GREG
If you hit me ONE MORE TIME

SAM
Hold him still ... this should hurt.

GREG
Hurt? Huh?!

(GREG screams bloody murder as he struggles. SAM finally pulls out a heart-like object.)

SAM
There. Well, he won't be needing this anymore.

(SAM casually tosses the heart over his shoulder.)

AMBER
Have you found the last object yet, Doctor?

SAM
Yes ... I believe I have it ... Ah!

AMBER
What is it, Doctor?

GREG
Yeah, what is it?

(SAM slowly pulls out a cartoon-like hero sandwich, at least one foot long. All examine it. GREG then snatches it out of his hand and holds it like a sword. SFX: Errol Flynn-type music. DAD, AMBER and SAM pull out an equally cartoon-like carrot, celery & cucumber and the four engage in a long, dramatic and swashbuckling sword fight. During the course of the fight, SAM dies and then DAD dies. Finally, GREG disarms AMBER and holds his sandwich up to her throat. Threatening-type music fades in.)

AMBER

What are you going to do to me?

GREG

You? I have something special in mind for YOU.

AMBER

Have mercy on me! Have mercy!

(GREG ties AMBER's hands.)

GREG

Mercy?! You want mercy?! Did you show me mercy when you betrayed me?! No, Amber, you ... you get to die slow. Real slow.

(MINDY enters far up stage. She carries a basket of laundry which she places on the table and folds as she speaks. Music "dies" and falls off like a tape slowing to silence.)

MINDY

I remember once you used to use your imagination for such wonderful things.

GREG

Curses! Mindy!

MINDY

Remember when you used to write stories and poetry ... and songs? You used to write songs for days! What happened to you?

GREG

Go away, Mindy.

AMBER

Save me!

MINDY

You should be ashamed of yourself. Where did all this hostility come from?

GREG

I mean it! Go away!

(MINDY unties AMBER.
AMBER runs off.)

MINDY

Look what you've done! You've gotten a bad attitude about all this. Quite honestly, I liked you better before you went on this stupid diet. (pause) Okay, guys ... show's over. You can go.

(DAD, SAM & GORDON get up
off the floor and exit.
GREG helps fold laundry.)

GREG

I HATE this diet! Eating is ... well ... it's what I am. It's like a comfortable place to be. I feel like I've been kicked out of my own home.

MINDY

It's simple withdrawal. Any addict goes through it. But remember, you're eliminating the symptom ...

GREG

(Finishing the sentence) ... not the cause. Yeah, I know ... I know. You're really stuck on that.

MINDY

That's because it's the truth. You should try facing up to it one of these days.

GREG

Sam sure knows the truth.

MINDY

Sam? What did he tell you?!

GREG

What? Nothing. Sam told me nothing.

MINDY

Tell me, Gregory Andrew Newton. What did that sleezeball tell you?!

GREG

There it is again! I can't escape my own middle name!

MINDY

(Impatient) Greg...

GREG

Aw, Min-dilini, do I really have to get into it right now? I'm miserable enough as it is.

MINDY

Fine. I'll just go to Sam.

GREG

No! Don't do it!

MINDY

(Calls) Oh, Sam ...

(Lights go down on GREG,
but remain on MINDY.
Lights also come up as
SAM enters. GREG
persistently tries to get
in MINDY's light, or at
least get in between SAM
and MINDY.)

SAM

You rang?

MINDY

What did you tell Greg?

SAM

Only the truth.

GREG

It's okay. You don't have to tell her.

MINDY

Yes he does. Now, as you were saying? ...

SAM

I just told him that he would never have love and always be worthless unless he dropped a few pounds.

MINDY

You did WHAT?!

GREG

He's kidding! Tell her your kidding, Sam.

SAM

That's really what I told him ... in not so few words.

MINDY

Sam, you're ... you're ... ooh . .

GREG

Toe-jam?

MINDY

Exactly. Toe-jam.

SAM

Hey, I only deliver the facts.

(Lights go down on SAM
and up again on GREG.)

MINDY

You shouldn't listen to him.

GREG

He's my brother. Who ELSE should I listen to?

MINDY

I'm your sister. What about me?

GREG

I listen to you. I listen to him. I listen to everybody.

MINDY

This is all Mom and Dad's fault.

GREG

Oh, no. Here we go again.

MINDY

They were awful parents. They fucked ME up for life.

GREG

You left home when you were sixteen, Mind.

MINDY

I had to! They kept trying to run my life.

GREG

You were a kid! You're not supposed to have all the angles when you're a kid.

MINDY

They spoiled Sam rotten, ignored YOU, and treated ME like shit.

GREG

Mindy, Mindy, Mindy ... you've got to stop blaming Mom and Dad for everything bad that happened in your life and accept responsibility for things on your own. Mom's dead and Dad lives thousands of miles away. You're a big girl now.

(MINDY drops a piece of clothing. She picks it up.)

MINDY

Everybody is a result of their environment. All three of us are screwed up because of them.

GREG

Speak for yourself. If I'm gonna be screwed up, I'd like the credit.

MINDY

Oh yeah?! Just look at YOU, you fat slob! You eat like a pig, wallow in self-pity and run to me for a shoulder to cry on. Well, little brother, you can just forget it! Until you come to grips with where you came from and where you're going, I have no more sympathy to give you. And another thing ... you can forget about coming here to do your laundry. Use a Laundromat like all the other losers.

GREG

Oh yeah? Well, FINE! The only person I thought I could count on, and you betray me too. Well, if I'm gonna fight this battle it looks like I'm on my own. So much for unconditional love. You were all I had and now I have nothing. I never asked for any of this.

(GREG storms out. Long pause as MINDY stands pensively for a moment.)

MINDY

GREG! Wait! Come back!