

The Whole Banana
by
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Based on the stage play by Deb Norton

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INT. IGLOO ON THE ARCTIC TUNDRA - DAY

FRAN GARDNER, attractive in an offbeat kind of way, is standing in a bulky parka, painting a portrait of PHIL, handsome, charming and confident. Phil reclines on a divan, dressed in red silk pajamas, impervious to the cold. He is smoking.

PHIL

Done yet?

KFRAN

I'm not getting it right.

PHIL

(offering his
cigarette)

Take a break. I hate to see you
working so hard.

She grabs his cigarette and takes a drag.

A very loud, REVERBERATING KNOCK at her igloo door.

FRAN

Oh, crap! They're here!

She straightens her parka and hair and opens the door, fearfully. A crowd of CRITICS in loud, garish suits rush in, pencils poised. They eagerly gather around the painting and GASP.

The painting is inches thick with lumpy paint from years of re-working. It doesn't look like Phil. It doesn't look like anything. It is just a confusion of color at cross-purposes.

CRITIC #1

We came all the way out here for
this?!

They all turn and stare accusingly.

CLOSE UP ON FRAN'S FACE, HUMILIATED.

She looks down and seeing she is now naked, grabs the painting for cover. She slinks backward toward the door.

EXT. IGLOO - DAY

CLOSE UP ON FRAN AND PHIL'S FACES, LOOKING AT EACH OTHER.

FRAN
(pleading)
I'll get it right. Eventually. I
just need time.

PHIL
You've had plenty of time, Pony.

WIDE SHOT OF FRAN AND PHIL.

With a heave and a GRUNT, Phil pushes away the ice flow
Fran is standing on. She and the painting begin to float
out to sea.

FRAN
Wait, Phil!

PHIL
Sorry, Pony. I had no choice.

FRAN
I know. It's okay. Just toss me
the cigs.

Phil tosses her his pack of cigs.

FRAN'S POV

On shore Phil and all the critics wave a somber,
"Goodbye." She puts a cigarette in her mouth and pats
herself down looking for a lighter. But she's naked and
getting farther from shore.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Phil! The lighter!!

Phil puts his hand to his ear, indicating that he can't
make out what she's saying.

INT. FRAN'S APT., NEW YORK CITY - DAY

FRAN, from the dream, struggles in a knot of sheets.

FRAN
(in her sleep)
Phil!! Phiiiiiiilll!!!

VOICE
(from the apt. above)
SHUT THE FUCK UP!!

The VOICE awakens Fran and she sits up abruptly, shaking the nightmare from her head.

CREDITS ROLL

Fran gets up, pulls on pants and sweater and pads over to an enormous painting on an easel that dominates her tiny apartment. It bears a striking resemblance to the painting in the dream.

She lights a cigarette, stares at the painting, then squirts some paint on a pie tin. She picks up a brush and stares at the painting for another moment. Nothing is coming to her. Her eyes stray to her work desk piled high with medical books and drawing supplies.

Fran abandons the painting and sits at her desk. She continues smoking as she works on a medical illustration, referring occasionally to some crude sketches and photos of a diseased heart on the wall above her.

She brings the cigarette to her lips, but stops, looking from the diseased heart to the cigarette and back again. She finally stubs out the cigarette, disgusted with herself.

She grabs the cigarette pack, walks to the bathroom door and tosses everything in the toilet.

She heads to the refrigerator. There are some ancient tubes of paint and a bottle of wood glue. No food.

INT. MARKET ENTRANCE - DAY

Fran, in a puffy parka and a scarf, enters the smallish neighborhood market. JOE, chubby and friendly, mans the register.

Fran waves hi, heads down an aisle, then stops dead in her tracks. She looks around, confused.

JOE

Need help?

FRAN

Hi, yeah, um...

She consults her list.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Corn?

JOE

Fresh or canned?

Fran has to think for a moment.

FRAN

Canned?

JOE

Aisle two.

INT. MARKET CANNED FOOD ISLE - CONTINUOUS

A busted fluorescent light BLINKS and BUZZES annoyingly.

Fran looks at the rows and rows of cans. She sees a label and GASPS.

FRAN

Is food supposed to be that color?

She sighs, rubs her eyes. She looks down the aisle at a large display of light bulbs and moves to them.

Taking a bulb from its cardboard box, Fran touches her tongue to it. She pauses, then licks again trying to suss its food value.

She looks up. Joe is staring at her in the security mirror.

Fran freezes, mid-lick.

JOE

You know that's not food, right?

FRAN

Oh! Yeah. Disappointing. They're so cool and pretty and this thin white cardboard...

JOE

Mmm hm.

FRAN

Hey, I'm not *crazy*. You have to admit- They're appealing.

JOE

Me, I go for a cheese steak. But hey, each his own.

Joe turns his attention to restocking cigarettes.

Fran self-consciously repackages the light bulb, puts it in her basket and goes back to looking for corn.

But she can't help herself. She, stops, turns around and puts several more packages of light bulbs in her basket.

INT. MARKET ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Joe rings Fran up. He reaches for a pack of cigarettes.

FRAN
No, no. I'm quitting.

Joe raises an eyebrow.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Again.

Joe shrugs and puts the pack back on the shelf.

INT. FRAN'S APT. - DAY

PHIL, as handsome as in the dream and expensively dressed, stares at the large painting when in walks Fran, with bags from the market.

She pulls up short.

FRAN
Phil.

PHIL
Pony.

He indicates the painting.

PHIL (CONT'D)
Has Fred gotten yellower?

Fran SIGHS.

FRAN
I'm trying a new direction.

Phil raises an eyebrow.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Again. The keys are only for emergencies. We agreed.

Phil holds up a box.

PHIL
I found some more of your things.
Your clothes turn up in the
craziest places.

She sets down the groceries, takes the box and sets it on the desk.

FRAN

Thanks, but that doesn't-

PHIL

This place sure is small.

FRAN

I don't need a lot of space.

PHIL

I don't see why you won't let me help- I mean you needn't live in squalor, Po.

FRAN

Phil-

PHIL

Just a little transitional support. What else am I going to spend my mother's fortunes on?

FRAN

I'll be fine.

Phil puts up his hands as if to say, "I surrender."

FRAN (CONT'D)

I need a cigarette.

PHIL

I thought you quit!

She rummages in her purse a moment, then remembers.

FRAN

Damn it.

She disappears into the bathroom and reemerges with a dripping cigarette pack and a hair dryer.

She lays the pack on her desk, plugs in the dryer, aims it at the cigarettes and turns it on.

PHIL

(over the dryer)
TELL ME YOU DIDN'T JUST FISH THAT
OUT OF THE TOILET!!!

Ignoring him, Fran unpacks Bon Ami and light bulbs from the grocery sacks.

She opens her cupboards to reveal endless supplies of... Bon Ami and light bulbs. She SIGHS and grimly adds to the stacks.

PHIL (CONT'D)
WHERE'S YOUR FOOD?

FRAN
I GO TO THE MARKET LATELY AND I
GET... OVERWHELMED.

PHIL
SEE? THIS IS WHAT I'M TALKING
ABOUT, PONY.

Fran begins scraping a Bon Ami can with a carrot peeler.

FRAN
WHY DO YOU CALL ME PONY WHEN YOU
KNOW I HATE IT?

Phil sees the sink is brimming with Bon Ami peelings.

PHIL
I DON'T KNOW. TO ME YOU'RE JUST
PONY. WHAT ARE YOU *DOING*?

FRAN
WELL, HOW MANY CANS OF TUB
CLEANSER CAN A PERSON HAVE? I
THOUGHT I'D PAINT THE CANS.
SOMETHING. STENCIL THEM. I DON'T
KNOW.

Phil walks over and whips out the dryer plug.

PHIL
Stop!

Fran looks up.

PHIL (CONT'D)
I'm trying to talk to you, and you-
you're- fluttering.

FRAN
Okay, what?

PHIL
This is not home. Come home, Pony.

Fran fights her loneliness for him.

FRAN
You can't keep doing this. Working
at my weaknesses.

Phil plucks a Bon Ami shaving off her shirt and pushes a lock of hair off her face.

PHIL

But I love your weaknesses, Pony.
Especially your weakness for me.

Fran sidesteps him and goes to the box of stuff he brought.

FRAN

Living together was supposed to be-
Y'know, at least that's what you
said. And you couldn't-

Fran opens the box and rummages in the contents.

PHIL

I made a mistake.

FRAN

You can't call it a mistake if
it's a pattern, Phil, a *habit*.
Face it. You don't want what I
want.

PHIL

But I want to want it. It's all I
want.

Fran examines a pair of panties from the box, confused.

PHIL (CONT'D)

My place has never felt so empty.
I'm rattling around in there-

FRAN

AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

She throws the panties at Phil, recoiling.

PHIL

(alarmed)
What?! What is it?!

FRAN

These aren't even mine!

PHIL

Ah. Shit.

Fran stuffs the urge to maim him.

PHIL (CONT'D)
 I'm *sorry*. I just got so depressed
 when you left me and... I mean,
 you left me! You can't-

She opens the door.

PHIL (CONT'D)
 Hey, if you want me to leave just
 say, "Go away Phil." You don't
 have to-

FRAN
 Go away Phil!
 (Chucks his bag)
 Go away!
 (scarf)
 Go away!
 (his coat)
 Go AWAY!

Phil exits. Fran slams the door, then marches over and
 turns the hair dryer back on to dry the cigarettes.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATE AFTERNOON

Fran heads for the subway, disappearing down the stairs.
 Seconds later she reappears, throws the soggy pack of
 cigs into a city trash can and disappears again.

INT. GEORGIA'S STREET LEVEL STUDIO - LATE AFTERNOON

GEORGIA, a savvy, hip, alpha-female and Fran's best and
 oldest friend, is welding. MUSIC blares. The door BUZZES.

Georgia flips her face-guard up, irritated, but smiles
 when she sees Fran through the window and buzzes her in.

A towering sculpture-in-progress - a human-sized hamster
 wheel with bent bicycle wheels attached - stops Fran.

FRAN
 Oh, Georgia!

GEORGIA
 I know! I'm putting spikes on it
 so it'll have this meat-grinder
 quality.

FRAN
 Ooooh.

GEORGIA

Mitch said it made him feel dizzy,
trapped and homicidal.

FRAN

Woohoo!

GEORGIA

You're coming to the opening,
right? Jerry'll be there.

FRAN

Jerry?

GEORGIA

Jerry. Makes things out of old
motorcycles.

FRAN

The guy? With the bird?

GEORGIA

He's got a piece in the show -
Cruel Piano.

FRAN

You know, I just broke up with
Phil. I'm still reeling-

GEORGIA

Okay, you just broke up with Phil,
but you *just* broke up him for,
what, the 7th time?

FRAN

I really don't think I'm ready-

GEORGIA

Oh, God. Being single is wasted on
you. You know, once you're married-
It's so- I mean always knowing
what's next.

Georgia's husband MITCH pops his head in. He's an
attractive, but conspicuously normal-looking man.

MITCH

Dinner's on. Oh, hi Franny! I'll
set another place.

(Taking in the wheel)
Love the spikes, Honey!

GEORGIA

See, I knew he was gonna say that.

Mitch heads back upstairs. Georgia takes off her apron.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)
Sometimes I make him pretend to
pick me up in the video store just
to feel a little dangerous.

FRAN
How sweet.

GEORGIA
Pathetic's more like it.

They head upstairs.

INT. GEORGIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The meal is over. Fran doodles on a napkin. Georgia leans over to look. Fran is shading in the ventricle of a heart. Georgia makes a show of her profound irritation.

FRAN
What. It pays the bills. Sort of.

GEORGIA
But it's not art. You're wasting
your talent on guts and bones when
you could be making *real* art.

FRAN
(a bit defensive)
Fred's real art.

GEORGIA
Fred! You've been working on that
hunk of blockage for how long now?

She speaks as if Fran is deaf or simple minded.

GEORGIA (CONT'D)
Start something *new*. I have a
gallery.

Fran gets up.

FRAN
I need to go.

GEORGIA
Sit. There's still dessert.

FRAN
If I stay I'll just obsess on
cigarettes.

MITCH
I thought you quit.

FRAN
Well, I meant to...

MITCH
Did you try going to a meeting?
Robert at the firm, he swears it
saved his life.

GEORGIA
Oh, no, not that Nic-a-Non crap.
How is that helping? Addiction is
an option, not a disease.

MITCH
Georgia, maybe Fran wants-

GEORGIA
What she wants is to be treated
like a grown-up. Not a victim.

MITCH
Maybe we should let Fran decide
what she wants.

FRAN
Thanks, Mitch, but I agree with
Georgia. I can do it. Myself. This
time I'm going to do it.

GEORGIA
You're in control.

FRAN
I'm in control.

EXT. SUBWAY STAIRS - NIGHT

Fran comes out of the subway, passing the trash can where
she threw away her cigarettes earlier.

FRAN
I'm in control. I'm in control.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET - NIGHT

Fran grips the bars of the closed market's gate.

FRAN
I'm in control. I'm in control.

EXT. SUBWAY STAIRS - NIGHT

Fran, defeated, digs in the trash, finds the cigarettes. She flicks off the dirt and slime and lights up, luxuriating in that first inhale.

A grime-crusted, mostly toothless WINO walks up, carrying a brown paper bag.

WINO

Hey, cutie. You got the cigs...

(holds up his bag)

I got the booze. We could have us a party.

Fran looks aghast.

INT. NIC-ANON MEETING, CHURCH BASEMENT - MORNING

Twelve-step slogans cover the walls.

Fran slumps in the back row, trying to be invisible. A MOTLEY COLLECTION of recovering nicotine addicts fills the remaining seats.

MARILYN, a spiffy-looking businesswoman, speaks at the front of the room.

MARILYN

... I once fell out of a 3rd story window trying to sneak a smoke at a party. I was leaning way out and waving, you know, like you do.

She demonstrates. Knowing laughter from room.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

And I just threw myself off balance. I lay there for two and a half hours with a broken collar bone, because I was too embarrassed to call for help. In the hospital, I vowed to quit. I had quit booze. I had quit coke. I could quit smoking. But cold turkey didn't work on cigarettes. The first thing I did when they set me free was light up.

More knowing laughter.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

A friend said I had to contact my
higher power.

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

Fran walks down a city sidewalk...

MARILYN (V.O.)

But I could only think, "What kind
of higher power would have
anything to do with me?" So I
smoked for four more years.

...and enters an office of building.

INT. MEDICAL PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Fran is walking through a hive of cubicles with MR.
MICKLEMAN, a meticulous hair comber with a penchant for
polyester.

MR. MICKLEMAN

Fran, I wanna give you a raise.

FRAN

Really? Excellent! Because, my
expenses just went through the-

MR. MICKLEMAN

But, more money will mean more
commitment.

FRAN

Yes! I'm 100%-

MR. MICKLEMAN

No more working from home.

FRAN

Oh. But I can't come in to-

MR. MICKLEMAN

I know. Gotta stay flexible, your
art, yada, yada. Fran. When was
the last time you showed your
work?

Fran thinks.

MR. MICKLEMAN (CONT'D)

Right. The New York art scene is
for people with ambition. All you
have is talent.

(MORE)

MR. MICKLEMAN (CONT'D)

And here, your talents are appreciated. That renal system you gave us last week was outta-the-park!

They stop at a cubicle in the center of the hive.

MR. MICKLEMAN (CONT'D)

Your new office.

He ushers her in with a gallant wave of his hand.

MR. MICKLEMAN (CONT'D)

Have a seat.

Fran sits gingerly, horrified at the miniscule space.

Mickleman hands Fran a packet of papers.

MR. MICKLEMAN (CONT'D)

Medical insurance, a pension, progressive raises. Take some time and look it over.

Turning to go, he aims his finger like a gun and pretend shoots.

MR. MICKLEMAN (CONT'D)

Let me know by Friday.

For several seconds Fran stares at the packet, daring herself to open it. She can't do it and, instead, flees.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Fran runs out of the building. She stops, not sure where to go. PEDESTRIANS shove past, whipping her this way and that.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Fran plops on a bench, fingering the clasp on the packet. A MAN sitting next to her lights up. Fran whiffs the smoke as if savoring the smell of fresh baked bread. She thinks about bumming a cigarette but stops herself.

She bows her head and whispers.

FRAN

Higher Power?

She waits, expectantly.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Hello? Higher Power?

She waits. Nothing happens.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Anybody there? Okay, I feel dumb.
I'm agnostic. I mean I don't even
know who the hell I'm praying to.
(Wincing)
I just cursed in a prayer. Okay.
Do-over.

She takes a breath, shakes out her hands, clasps them together and looks heavenward.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Dear...

Her eyes land on a passing bus displaying a huge Hermes fragrance ad.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Hermes. Why not. Dear Hermes. Hi.
I'm Fran Gardner. I need to quit
smoking and I don't know how.

INT. HERMES' WORK ROOM - PERPETUAL DAY

About fifty out-moded monitors are stacked higgledy-piggledy against a wall. Cables everywhere.

The screens show ACROBATS, RUNNERS, MAIL CARRIERS, MUSICIANS, DREAMERS, TRAVELERS, COMPUTER USERS and PHONE REPAIRMEN.

The GREEK GOD HERMES sits at a console of dials, switches and sliders. Gloriously handsome, his toga showing off his taut, athletic body, Hermes types, lightning fast, on a keyboard, responding to the endless needs of the mortals on the screens.

On one screen a mailman is unaware that letters have spilled from his bag. Hermes types, hits return and a squirrel drops an acorn on the mailman's head, making him turn to see the mail trail.

Fran, still praying, blips onto the monitor next to the mailman's.

FRAN (ON SCREEN)
Hello? Hermes? Higher Power?

HERMES

(Incredulous)

A prayer?! Not for centuries has
one come my way.

FRAN (ON SCREEN)

Is this coming through? Can you
hear me okay?

Out of the corner of his eye, he spots two cars in a
thick fog headed straight for each other. He frantically
taps the arrow keys and the cars veer just in time.

FRAN (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

Are you listening?

He returns his attention to Fran.

HERMES

I am intent.

FRAN (ON SCREEN)

I also don't know how to quit my
boyfriend, how to find food at the
market, or what I should do about
my career. And I don't know where
my inspiration went.

HERMES

And here am I cursed with knowing
everything.

FRAN (ON SCREEN)

Can't you- I mean I'm new at this
and I don't know if I'm doing it
right. Can't you just send some
kind of sign?

HERMES

You honor me with your prayer and
I am answerable. A sign you shall
have.

He zooms in on the boss' package in her lap.

HERMES (CONT'D)

Here, this can do you no good.

He types. A scruffy young man near Fran snatches the
package and sprints out of sight. Fran jumps up.

FRAN (ON SCREEN)

Shit! My benefits! HEY!

No one at the bus stop moves or makes eye contact.

HERMES

(Confused)

But here was your sign. I fear you
do not seek to see.

Fran throws up her hands, then plops back into her seat.

FRAN (ON SCREEN)

Well. Amen. I guess.

An old fashioned mail tube spits out a scroll. The mail
tube is labeled "Zeus." There are others labeled Apollo,
Athena, Hera, etc.

HERMES

(to Fran)

Come to me again in prayer and I
will serve. How I have missed
securing prayers.

Hermes grabs the scroll, dons his winged hat and sandals
and zips out, leaving the door open on a sunny, Olympian
meadow with impossibly bright flowers.