

THE FOUR HAGS OF THE APOCALYPSE EAT SALAD AT THEIR GENERAL MEETING

JANE: I'm not joking! Can't you see that? Why would I joke about this?

JOAN: Jane, don't raise your voice to your father.

JAMIE: You can't go into the business.

JANE: Why not?

JAMES: Because you can't.

JANE: That's no reason. Give me a real reason.

JAMES: You really want to know? You're a girl Jane. Girls do not do well in business.

JANE: That is crap!

JOAN: (completely shocked) Jane!

JANE: You think Jamie would be a better businessman than me? Jamie who can't even hold up a C-coverage.

JAMIE: You're always throwing that in my face!

JANE: I don't need to throw it in your face. It's already there!

All four begin speaking at the same time.

JOAN: Girls do certain things and boys do certain things.

JANE: Mom, that's not the way the world works any more.

JAMES: This discussion is closed!

JANE: Why can't I go into my business? Why can't I?

JOAN: Girls do certain things and boys do certain things.

JAMIE: I'll never go into the business. Can't you understand that? Never!

JAMES: This discussion is closed!

There is a pause before they all begin to speak in unison.

ALL: I can't take it any more! (to audience) They just don't understand walls.

Characters

DEVOUR
PURGE
STARVE
IMAGE

DEVOUR, PURGE, and STARVE are sitting at a large table. There are four salads laid out at four places. An arrangement of four free salad dressings stands on one corner of the table. There is a large alarm clock sitting beside PURGE. PURGE is filing her nails. STARVE is slumped on to the table, sleeping. DEVOUR is devouring her salad, with great distaste.

DEVOUR: This is disgusting. (she continues to eat) Ugggh. It's awful. (she continues to eat) Who ordered this?

PURGE: Vi.

DEVOUR: It's Vi's turn? Aw, why didn't somebody tell me?

PURGE: It's hardly rocket science my dear.

DEVOUR: Some one should have told me. Everybody knows how I feel about rabbit food. I would have brought extra or ate before I came.

PURGE: Greens are good for you.

DEVOUR: So why aren't you eating?

PURGE: It's polite to wait for all the guests to arrive.

This stops DEVOUR in mid bite.

DEVOUR: Oh. I guess I should wait too.

PURGE: Whatever you like.

DEVOUR: I can wait.

DEVOUR puts down her fork, and pushes herself away from the table. The pull to eat is tremendous. She has to get up from the table and walk around. PURGE continues to file her nails.

DEVOUR: She's not going to be long, right? I mean, it'll only be what, five minutes?

PURGE: Give or take a few.

DEVOUR: I can wait five minutes.

PURGE: Good for you.

DEVOUR: I can stop eating for five minutes.

PURGE: Of course you can.

DEVOUR: Of course I can. I mean, I'm sure there are many times in the day when I'm not eating therefore I should consciously be able to stay away from food, even if there's some on the table right in front of me. It's only going to be five minutes though, right? I mean she is going to get here on time, not like the last meeting where she made us wait for an entire hour. And of course it was her turn so we weren't just waiting for her, we were waiting for everything and I almost had to eat my chair for the waiting. It's going to be five minutes and not a second longer, right?

Right? Tell me it's just going to be five minutes!

PURGE: Breathe darling, Breathe!

DEVOUR takes a crazed breath. She lets it go. She takes a smaller breath. She realizes she may have been a bit hysterical and gives a little crazed hysterical laugh.

DEVOUR: Over the top?

PURGE: Much. Oh Dev.

DEVOUR: Sorry.

PURGE: I can't stand to see you suffer. Eat if it's that bad.

DEVOUR: Don't be silly. Immy will be here any minute. I can wait.

STARVE gives a huge snore.

DEVOUR: This is all her fault. She knows how I feel about... The least she could have done was bring dessert. Vi. Vi! Percy, give her a shove. Wake her up.

PURGE PERCY: (gently shaking STARVE) Wakey, wakey darling.

STARVE: Huh?

DEVOUR: Salad, Vi?

STARVE: (yawning) Oh. Sorry, I forgot.

DEVOUR: Huh. No dessert either. This is going to be some meeting.

DEVOUR will try to stay away from the table, but the pull is too great and she eventually starts eating again.

STARVE: I'm trying to lose weight again. Are we starting?

PURGE: Immy hasn't made her grand entrance.

STARVE: Ok. (She slumps back down on the table)

IMAGE: (entering) What was that about my grand entrance?

IMAGE is drop dead gorgeous, in a deep red evening gown.

DEVOUR: Immy!

DEVOUR and PURGE gather around IMAGE. DEVOUR has a hunk of fettuce in her hands.

IMAGE: Hello everyone! Dev dear, don't be a grab hands use a fork.

DEV: Sorry. Nice dress.

PURGE: Darling, where did you get that outfit?

IMAGE: Do you like?

PURGE: It's fabulous.

IMAGE: It's a sample. Some of us are just naturally blessed with a size six figure.

PURGE: You look amazing.

IMAGE: I know. Sorry I'm late. I was at a high school reunion making all the men love me and all the women hate me. I was having so much fun I forgot the time. Where does it go? You all look absolutely wonderful. Don't fidget Dev. I can hardly believe it's been a whole year since we've been together.

PURGE: I could never pull off a dress like that.

IMAGE: So few of us can my dear.

PURGE remains silent. She returns to the table. During the following PURGE runs a hand over her stomach. She sits and stares at her alarm clock.

DEVOUR: Reunions. Those are my kind of people. They hate their jobs. They hate their partners. They've got kids, cars, houses, bills, bills, and they can't for the life of them fit into that pair of jeans they've kept since high school. They used to be able to eat French fries for breakfast but now everything clings; layer after layer and no matter what they do it won't come off. And now they've got this reunion to go to and it's late at night and they eat and they are sure that everyone will look better than they do and they eat and they have turned the corner between fading youth and looming middle age but still they eat and they eat and they eat.... Makes me hungry just thinking about it.

PURGE: You're always hungry.

DEVOUR: It's my job to be hungry. And all I've got to eat is rabbit food. This stuff isn't even hitting my stomach. It just sails on through.

IMAGE: Relax Dev, I brought dessert. (She holds up a box) Chocolate cake.

PURGE & DEVOUR: Chocolate cake.

PURGE: My favourite. (She picks up the alarm clock and starts to shake it)

DEVOUR: (taking the box in a trance) It smells divine!

IMAGE: Put it on the table please.

PURGE: (she bangs the clock on the table.) Come on damn you!

IMAGE: Don't rush it Percy, it'll go off soon enough.

DEVOUR: (checking out the box) Vi won't have any, Immy will hardly have any, that means at least two pieces!

PURGE: Maybe I'll just run and do it now before the meeting.

IMAGE: When the alarm goes off.

DEVOUR: Immy you are the best.

IMAGE: I figured Vi wouldn't bring much. I can't let my girls waste away could I?

PURGE: See, it's not rocket science at all.

DEVOUR: I don't suppose we could throw caution to the wind and eat dessert first.

IMAGE: After the meeting.

DEVOUR: Oh ok.

STARVE gives another snore.

IMAGE: Poor Vi.

DEVOUR: Give her a shove Percy.

STARVE: What? I'm awake. Hi Immy.

IMAGE: Hi yourself. How are you?

STARVE: I lost three pounds yesterday.

IMAGE: What did you eat?

STARVE: Half a lettuce leaf.

The alarm clock goes off. PURGE stands.

PURGE: Finally. Don't start without me girls, all right?

She exits on the run with the file she had been using.

STARVE: Do I look all right?

IMMY: Of course you do. How do you feel?

STARVE: A little tired, but otherwise good.

IMMY: (shaking her head and giving a disappointed sigh) Oh Vi.

STARVE: What is it?

IMMY: Nothing.

STARVE: What's the matter? Tell me.

IMAGE: You know I would only say this because we are the very best of friends. Just between us girls.

STARVE: Of course. You can tell me anything.

IMAGE: Time was when you could eat a quarter of a lettuce leaf and lose five pounds a day.

STARVE: I know. I know.

IMAGE: You can't let yourself go like that.

IMAGE: I tried, I really did. But I get so hungry.

DEVOUR: Tell me about it.

IMAGE: Don't drool on the cake please.

STARVE: (yawning) I used to be able to go three days without eating. Now I can hardly last an hour. I don't know what's wrong with me these days.

IMAGE: You're just getting older Vi. Happens to the best of us. It's a shame you don't have my metabolism. Everything goes straight to your hips.

STARVE: I know. My hips are so huge. It's not my fault though, large hips run in my family.

IMAGE: If you want to be thin then you do what it takes. It's a matter of discipline.

PURGE: (entering) What is?

IMAGE: Percy you're positively radiant.

PURGE: It's the afterglow.

IMAGE: Well it suits you. You see, Percy has everything down to a schedule. She vomits regularly whether there is anything in her stomach or not.

DEVOUR: Yech. (She gives a little shudder)

PURGE: I don't even notice any more. It's just like breathing.

STARVE: I'm so hungry.

IMAGE: Discipline Vi, Discipline. Speaking of which... (speaking to DEVOUR who has been picking through everyone else's salad bowls.) do you think you could leave some for the rest of us?

DEVOUR: Sorry. Vi's little speech got me going again.

STARVE: Are we starting?

IMAGE: Not quite. I have to set up.

STARVE: Ok. (She slumps back on the table. DEVOUR is still eating.)

IMAGE: Dev!

DEVOUR: I can't help it. It's a reflex action. I need to have something in my hands.

PURGE: You should take up smoking.

DEVOUR: Ewww. Disgusting.

PURGE: But it works.

DEVOUR: Why don't you do it then?

PURGE: I already have a system.

DEVOUR: What do you think Im? Should I start smoking?

IMAGE: I fear you'd end up eating the cigarettes. Put up the easel will you

dear?

DEVOUR runs over to set up the easel. The first sheet of paper has "Annual Meeting" written on it.

PURGE: I brought some pictures in. Second tier models in Japan.

IMAGE: That sounds very nasty.

PURGE: It's a regular vomitorium.

DEVOUR: Were we supposed to bring visual aids?

IMAGE: Of course not darling. Where did I put my graphs?

PURGE: By the salad dressing.

DEVOUR: The fat free dressing. Everything has to be fat free. I hate salad. Last time we had such a great meal.

IMAGE: It doesn't seem to stop you though.

DEVOUR: A girl's got to eat.

IMAGE: (she hits the gavel on the table) I call this meeting to order.

DEVOUR: Vi, wake up! We're starting!

STARVE: Ok.

PURGE: What's on the agenda?

IMAGE: I want to hear the reports first. Dev?

DEVOUR: Late night snacking is up. Baby boomers are experiencing a significant "life's work" malaise, which is so beautiful you can't imagine. Bulges are up, fat free is of course through the roof. Everyone is eating fat free like it's going out of style. All day, every day.

STARVE: Why so glum?

PURGE: Isn't that good?

DEVOUR: I hate fat free. It tastes like crap, it's loaded with chemicals... (she sighs) I would kill for plain old regular ice cream.

IMAGE: But the point is that they're eating.

DEVOUR: Oh they're eating all right. It's a vicious circle to be proud of. The more they eat, the more they maintain their weight and the more they weigh, the more they eat. And so on and so on and so on.

IMAGE: Excellent. Percy?

PURGE: We're about the same. Up-chuckers just don't rise in numbers like Dev's do.

DEVOUR: My numbers only go up when they get older. You have such a narrow market.

PURGE: True. However, the mass media hysteria seems to be building nicely.

Everyone's got to be thin, and not everyone can be like Vi. (She turns to STARVE, who is sleeping again) Right?

IMAGE: Vi? Vi! Someone wake her up.

PURGE: Join the living dearest.

STARVE: Huh?

IMAGE: Your report?

STARVE: (yawning) Um, the numbers are up. Way up in California. Those girls are afraid to chew gum for fear of gaining weight.

PURGE: You see? Who knew television would work so much in our favour?

DEVOUR: Nobody eats in California. I'd stick out like a sore thumb on a bumblebee.

STARVE: My median is getting younger too.

IMAGE: How young?

STARVE: Sometimes it's 8 or 9.

IMAGE: Fantastic Vi! How did you do that?

STARVE: (yawning) It's nothing really. Most of the work's done for me. (She starts to slump again, PURGE pokes her awake.)

PURGE: Ah, ah, ah.

STARVE: I'm awake.

PURGE: (to IMAGE) And how are things at your end?

IMAGE: Delightful. Absolutely delightful. We're getting them young and keeping them longer. They're intimidated, fearful, and continually looking for the unachievable goal of airbrushed magazine perfection.

STARVE: Sounds like we're good across the board.

DEVOUR: Great! Let's eat cake.

IMAGE: Before we do that, I have something to share with you all. This letter was brought to my attention from one of the satellite offices. Tell me what you think.

DEVOUR: I think we should eat cake.

IMAGE: (reading) "As I look forward into the next era, my eyes do not rest easy on what the future holds for womankind."

PURGE: You never bother with this kind of tripe Immy.

IMAGE: "As the four horse men of the apocalypse foretell the end of the world, I see four hags who are bringing about the downfall of women."

DEVOUR: (sitting up and taking serious notice) What's this?

IMAGE: "It is not men who are to blame. We have been going about this the

wrong way. We agree to lose weight when accused of being fat. We believe we must attain magazine perfection. The women who pose for those pictures believe beauty is the only way to survive. Men may say things to us, but we believe them. We act on them. We turn ourselves inside out and for what? For the glory of becoming skin and bone. Soon we will be nothing but skin and bones."

STARVE: Well. (Yawning) La, di, da.

IMAGE: What do you think?

DEVOUR: She's loopy goosy with the royal "we" isn't she?

PURGE: If this writer represents the norm, we could be in serious trouble.

DEVOUR: Or is she a wacko splinter group?

PURGE: Are people listening to her or laughing at her?

STARVE: Sounds like a wacko to me. She's obviously not looking at the girls I look at.

PURGE: Me neither.

DEVOUR: Then what's the worry?

STARVE: Im?

IMAGE: I don't know. I just didn't think that someone would catch on so quickly. I thought we had more time.

DEVOUR: Hey, I'm working as fast as I can. We all are.

IMAGE: The question is, are we spinning our wheels or are we making some real progress?

PURGE: (holding up the letter) This is not the norm. She's a Cassandra who will get stabbed in the heart before the masses find out she was right.

STARVE: The damage has been done.

IMAGE: But there's still so much more to do.

DEVOUR: And we'll do it. (Her voice becomes callous and cold) For every step forward, they move two back.

PURGE: Which is closer to our waiting arms.

STARVE: And when we grab on...

DEVOUR: We don't let go.

There is a moment of silence.

IMAGE: Well my dears... I knew I could count on you.

IMAGE tears up the letter.

PURGE: They can call us anything they like, so long as we still have the upper hand.

IMAGE: This calls for a toast.

DEVOUR: A chocolate cake toast.

STARVE: None for me thanks.

PURGE: Now Vi, you have to eat something.

STARVE: (looking at her arms) I'm not skin and bones am I?

IMAGE: You're beautiful.

STARVE: Do you really think so?

IMAGE: Try for a quarter loaf tomorrow.

STARVE: I will. I really will.

The alarm clock goes off. PURGE gets up to leave.

PURGE: Save a piece for me.

DEVOUR: Let's order more food. Who likes Mexican?

PURGE: That'll hurt coming back up.

STARVE: Nothing for me thanks.

DEVOUR: Chinese. I love Chinese.

IMAGE rises to toast the others – PURGE hasn't left yet.

IMAGE: To the four hags of the apocalypse. May we ride swift and sure. May we rise to the occasion of our ambition. May we succeed where others have failed. To the hags.

The lights fade.

— THE END —



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