

## BRING BACK PETER PAUL RUBENS

*Marlene and Jerry, 20s, are a happily married couple in Michigan. Marlene, an overweight woman, has entered a magazine modeling contest and has made the second cut. She is looking forward to the finals in New York City. Jerry, also overweight, realizes that Marlene's chances of getting to the final cut are slim. The issues of weight and approval have come up over and over again for this couple. Today, Marlene is trying to convince Jerry to make plans to go with her to New York.*

MARLENE: You'll take time off to come to New York with me, won't you?

JERRY: I don't know. It's been really hectic at the shop lately.

MARLENE: Why can't Peter cover?

JERRY: You said it's on a Friday. I have to train a manager. I have reps coming in. I have to order tools that day.

MARLENE: Can't you order them early or the week after? It's not as if the hardware store is going to have a huge run on drill bits or whatcha doohickeys.

JERRY: That does happen. Depending on the doohickey we're talking about.

MARLENE: Okay. The idea is it's not life or death. The city will not be suffering from mass pandemonium if some thingy isn't available that week at the hardware store.

JERRY: What if the thingy is an air conditioner and we get a massive heat wave?

MARLENE: Why don't you just say, "Honey, I don't want to come?"

JERRY: Honey, I don't want to come.

MARLENE: Jerry, why not?!

JERRY: It's a modeling contest, honey. Only a handful of people make it to the end.

MARLENE: Love that vote of confidence.

JERRY: There's no lack of confidence. It's just—there's a lot of competition and it's tough to be sure that you're the one who is going to make the final cut.

MARLENE: You don't understand—not many have gotten passed this second cut. Only twenty-five of us are going to New York.

JERRY: Well, that's still a lot. How many do they pick—one or two?

MARLENE: The magazine editor—Mr. Stewart—he told me that they cut thousands of women on the first cut and seven hundred in the second. I'm in the remaining twenty-five. Considering those numbers, I have a pretty good chance.

JERRY: Well, your portfolio is pretty hot. I'd date ya.

MARLENE: So what are you saying? I look better in the pictures than in person?

JERRY: No.

MARLENE: Well, you think I look fatter in person?

JERRY: No. I never said that. I'm not getting into this discussion with you. I know how it ends. So who judges this thing?

MARLENE: Modeling agents.

JERRY: Hmm.

MARLENE: Hmm? What does that mean? What did you expect? You obviously don't think they'll ever pick me.

JERRY: I didn't say that.

MARLENE: You didn't have to. I can tell. It's not just for the skinny girls. I'm going for the plus size model category. You do get that, right?

JERRY: Even those women look skinny to me.

MARLENE: True. They don't accurately represent the plus size population like me. But I do have a chance, you know. It would be exciting even if I could make it to the final fifteen. If I can, cool, I may be able to do some modeling, which would be great money for us.

JERRY: I just don't want you to be disappointed.

MARLENE: Why am I necessarily going to be disappointed?



JERRY: I just said you might be. I don't want you to be.  
MARLENE: Well stop being all negative. I'm nervous enough myself. I don't need you to be doubting me.  
JERRY: I'm not. It's just you've been talkin' it up with every one and I don't want you to, to . . .  
MARLENE: Feel foolish when I lose? Is that what you were going to say?  
JERRY: No.  
MARLENE: Are you embarrassed of me or something?  
JERRY: No! No, of course not. But I'm confused about why this is so important to you.  
MARLENE: Why wouldn't it be important to me? Women are subjected to unrealistic expectations of what they are supposed to look like. There are so few accurate and realistic portrayals of women's bodies as they should be. I have a chance to be a healthy role model for women. Maybe being overweight isn't the best thing in the world, but it's not nearly as harmful as being an anorexic, size two, twelve-year-old who is forced to sell herself as a sex fiend. And who's over-the-hill—trashed—by the time she's twenty-five.  
JERRY: Okay, okay, I understand that, but you have a perfectly good job.  
MARLENE: I'm not going to quit my job. I love planning events. And I'm good at it. That's what you were thinking the whole time I was talking? That I was going to quit?  
JERRY: No. I don't know. I don't why it bothers me.  
MARLENE: I do. It bothers you because you think I'm never going to be a finalist, or worse, I will be, and you'll have to watch your wife parading around in a bathing suit. Walking around in public with all of her fat hanging out.  
JERRY: That is absolutely not true.  
MARLENE: Isn't it? Remember Brad's Fourth of July cookout?  
JERRY: Oh God.  
MARLENE: "Oh God" what? You kept wanting me to change out of my shorts.

JERRY: I did not. I didn't care. I just thought you were going to be cold near the lake.  
MARLENE: So it had nothing to do with the fact that I was meeting your college buddies? That you'd be embarrassed by your fat wife?  
JERRY: No. It didn't. I told you that I thought you were going to be cold. That's all. *(She gives him a look.)* I did.  
MARLENE: So why did you keep trying to cover me up then?  
JERRY: I didn't. *(Beat.)* They were just a little too short. I thought you might turn the other guys on.  
MARLENE: Oh please. You were emanating embarrassment. And it's not like you're not fat.  
JERRY: Thanks. Thanks a lot. I don't want to talk about this anymore.  
MARLENE: Why not? I mean, all I'm saying is that it's not fair. You were wearing shorts, and I didn't tell you to cover up your big belly.  
JERRY: I never call you that.  
MARLENE: What?  
JERRY: Fat.  
MARLENE: But you think it. And I am. I'm fat. And so are you. So here we are.  
JERRY: I don't feel like having this discussion anymore.  
MARLENE: That's great. Just shut down. All that tells me is that I'm right. You are embarrassed of me showing off my body in a modeling contest. And you know what? Even though it hurts my feelings, that's your issue. Not mine. You're just as bad as everyone else. Worrying that people will think less of you because there's "more of me" on your arm.  
JERRY: If that were true, I wouldn't have married you.  
MARLENE: I was wearing a gown then. My body was covered.  
JERRY: The point is that I'm obviously not ashamed of the way you look.  
MARLENE: No, it's not obvious or we wouldn't be having this discussion.



JERRY: You know how turned on you get me. And you know I'm not faking that.

MARLENE: I know. And you turn me on too. But that's not the point. We're talking about being in public. About being embarrassed by what *others* think—which means that not only are you buying into the “skinny stereotype” as the ideal, but you're more concerned with other people's opinions than what *you* believe.

JERRY: That's not true.

MARLENE: Then let me ask you a question. What if we didn't have to wear bathing suits? Only evening gowns? Would you feel more comfortable?

JERRY: (*Unsure about how to answer.*) Well, I . . . probably. Yeah.

MARLENE: (*Irritated.*) So what does that tell you?! And don't tell me you're old-fashioned because you aren't.

JERRY: I don't know. I'm just telling you how I'd feel. You wanted me to be honest.

MARLENE: Yeah, I do. But now you're agreeing with me. You're embarrassed of my weight and how people perceive you because of it.

JERRY: No, I'm not. It's just . . . Okay . . . when my father died, I started gaining weight. I mean, right when he died. Everybody and their brother kept bringing all this food to us. It's what people do. I don't know why. It's not like food would make up for my dad being gone. My dad was dead, but we had pies and cakes falling off our counters. I was always real confident before that too. My mother didn't want to talk about my father's death. Every time I brought it up, she'd invite me to sit down and eat. It was like it was supposed to make me feel better or something. And it did in the moment—until afterwards. It was kind of an obsession. Like keeping me connected to my dad. Before I knew it, I had put on fifty pounds. I couldn't believe it. I'd suddenly become . . . fat. I was dating this girl, Samantha, at the time.

MARLENE: You mentioned her once I think.

JERRY: We were in gym class one day. We had one of those stupid rope things. I couldn't get up at all. I just kept slipping. My hands were all raw and burnt. And I was sweating like crazy. That never happened before. I was always pretty good in gym. And then these guys started laughing at me. Then they started cracking jokes about how fat I was. One of them turned to Samantha and oinked. He just kept oinking over and over. “It must be fun doing it with a pig! I'm amazed he hasn't squashed you yet.” And then they all burst out laughing. Samantha broke up with me that very same day. She couldn't even look me in the face.

MARLENE: Oh honey, I'm so sorry. How come you never told me that before?

JERRY: I don't know. It never came up before. It's not like it's the happiest memory.

MARLENE: I'm your wife. You can tell me the bad as well as the good.

JERRY: I didn't mean to hurt your feelings about the whole weight thing. I guess I didn't even realize I had so much shame about it. I suppose in this weird way, I didn't want you to put yourself in a position where people could laugh at you. Not because I don't think you're beautiful. I do—body and all. But because I know how narrow-minded and cruel people can be. And modeling, more than anything, is about being judged in superficial ways.

MARLENE: But don't you see that you're making it easy for them?

(*He looks at her puzzled.*)

MARLENE: I can't change their opinions of what is beautiful—I can't change the images stuck in their narrow, little brains by not showing up. By avoiding potential embarrassment. I have to be there, with confidence. I won't let them laugh



at me because I know that I'm something to look at as well as someone to look up to.

*(He smiles. Beat.)*

MARLENE: What?

JERRY: Nothing. It's just . . . you are. *(He kisses her and starts to leave.)*

MARLENE: Hey, where're you going?

JERRY: Booking our tickets to New York—what do you think?

## FLYIN' HIGH

*Tommy and Agnes, 29, went to high school together twelve years ago. Today, they run into each other in a cooling center in a bad section of New Jersey on a hot evening. Both have been on different paths and ended up in the same place. Tommy was the star basketball player destined for the big time; Agnes was an overweight overachiever who expected to and did take care of her sickly parents for years. Somehow forces bring these two opposites together to reanalyze what it means to be successful.*

TOMMY: Hey, uh, Miss, do you have fifty cents on you? I want to pick up a cup of iced coffee.

AGNES: *(Still reading her newspaper.)* No. Sorry. I don't do that.

TOMMY: What do you mean you don't do that? I'm just talkin' fifty cents.

AGNES: *(Barely looking up.)* Hey, I don't need to get hassled here. I don't do it cause I've seen too many people in this neighborhood, including family members, who use every penny to buy drugs and alcohol. So just forget it!

TOMMY: I wasn't going to do that. *(Beat.)* Fine. *(Sits.)* I understand. *(Sighs.)* Man, it's hot, huh?

AGNES: *(Putting her paper down.)* It's horrible. I had some stupid kid throw a brick at my air conditioner this morning. I coulda killed him. I had to drag the damn thing to the repair shop on a wagon you pull behind you. I hate coming here. It makes me feel poor.

TOMMY: Well, at least it's cool. It beats sittin' in a room that's a hundred degrees. My air is out too.

AGNES: It just stinks in here. Do you know when this place closes? *(He shakes his head no.)* You look familiar. Do you play bingo?