

Mr. Fishy

"Fishy, time for our program!"

Our program comes on at 8 and Fishy is always behind the rock until I tell him.

"Maybe she'll do the President tonight. It's about time, you know she's going to eventually."

Mr. Fishy swims out in front of his rock and I drop him some flakes.

"There you go, snack while you watch. You know she's gonna do him this time."

Fishy gulps his flakes at the top of the water, and I go get the remote. Once Cindy left, I got Fishy and we got to be best friends real quick. It wasn't hard to move his tank to the couch, all I had to do was throw away one of the cushions and put a board there. That looked kinda funny though, so I cut the cloth off the cushion and stapled it to the board. Now my couch matches again, but it's blue and sometimes Mr. Fishy tries to

swim through the bottom of his tank. He doesn't thank me for anything. Now he sits on the couch when he used to sit on the desk. You can't watch your programs very well from the desk.

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I don't get a word of thanks for anything. I've been working at the Marigny Health Club for 5 years, and no one says a word of thanks to me for locking up at night and making sure the machines are working. I see these two fat ladies every damn day and I don't get a word of thanks from them.

They come in and one says, "You know we've been having trouble with Greta."

Other fat lady says, "What do you mean, she always been so parentable."

Fat lady says, "I think it's just the move to Ursulines. She's not making friends as fast as we thought and basketball has been a nightmare."

Other fat lady says, "But she's such a great little player."

Fat lady says, "This coach is just awful Lucinda."

Everyday before lunch I gotta listen to them jaw out the most vain bitch talk I've ever heard in my life. They smile or

sigh when's it's appropriate but I know they ain't really listening, just waiting for their turn to talk again.

Fat lady keeps going, "She started her in the first game, when we played those hoodlums from Lafayette, and I swear God there were boys on that team. I think one of them had a tattoo, it was horrible. Just horrible. Greta had the worst time of it, she was getting knocked around silly, and you know those refs aren't going to do anything, not for a white girl. It was a nightmare, Lucy."

Their ellipticals are so close that their spit lands on my sign in sheets. They're moving their lips faster than their feet and their cottage cheese leg fat is 'bout to bust out of their luxury stretch pants. If one of them pops it'll ooze chunky lady fat all on the floor and I'll have to clean it up. I don't like cleaning up. One time a kid yakked on the rowing machine after his workout and I had to clean his fluids out of the wheel.

Fat Lucinda says, "Well she's played with the rough girls before, it couldn't have been that bad."

Fat lady says, "She fouled out of that game, Lucy."

Fat Lucinda says, "Oh my god..."

Fat lady says, "The first game at her new school and she fouled out. She's never fouled out before."

Meanwhile my ellipticals are hoping the both of them foul out and go home. My poor machines are crying under all that weight, creaking like a whore's bed.

Fat Lucinda says, "Poor girl. So what happened?"

Fat lady says, "Since then the coach has been starting this other girl, and she can't play. She looks like a cancer patient out there, she's so thin."

Fat ladies laugh.

Both of them stop walking and laugh until they're shaking like wet concrete in a plastic sack. I don't understand why they can't get a treadmill at their house and leave me the fuck alone. They're probably coming from Uptown where the tourists take those walking tours, just gawking at these fat ladies houses while the fat ladies are gawking back at them from the inside. I know they got room for a treadmill in there, then they wouldn't have to come outside again. Instead they come down here and make me listen to all their bullshit, even though I keep the club nice and the machines clean. I don't get a word of thanks

from them, that's for sure.

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I come home most nights and Fishy and me watch our programs, maybe get little bite to eat. Fishy likes his flakes more than most things. He takes to them like he's some shark and not a little bitty fishy swimming on the couch. I sit on the other end so as to not disturb his water. He doesn't like his water being disturbed because he can't eat his flakes that way. He does like his flakes.

Now Cindy never would've let me put Mr. Fishy on the couch, and so that's why I put him there. I didn't get a word of thanks from her, no sir, not any damn time. Mr. Fishy never met Cindy, but we discuss her exploits almost everyday. He's a good listener. He just looks at me and eats his flakes while I tell him about it. I don't ever interrupt our programs though. We gotta watch our programs because we ain't got Hulu or none of that.

I say to Fishy, "You know that Cindy was just using me for my money so she could go out and fuck that asshole she works with."

Fishy says, "Gulp. Gulp."

I say, "That guy's name was Derrick or some shit. Fucking Derrick. What kind of name is that supposed to be?"

Fishy says, "Gulp."

I could tell he knew what I was saying though, because he swam around his tank and looked me right in the eye.

I say, "I found a receipt from Crescent City Steaks. I swear to God, Crescent City."

Fishy jumps up to get a flake.

I say, "You're damn straight. I know she ain't got that kind of money, so I told her, 'You been stealing from me, out my own house?'"

Fishy stops eating, so I know he's listening now.

"She says to me, 'No I'm not taking any of your money.' So I said, 'Well then you've been stepping out.'"

I knew that bitch was stepping out. Just like on our programs, you can see it before it happens. I loved her so much, tears came out boiling when she stepped out on me.

Fishy says, "Gulp. Gulp."

I say, "Sure why not?"

I break him off a piece of Brother's chicken and toss it in his water.

I say, "I'm going to have to clean your tank again now, 'bout to eat me out of house and home."

Fishy eats his chicken fry in little bitty bites.

I say, "You know I'm not violent, Mama didn't raise me that way. I loved that Cindy so much though, I told her how it was going to be if she did what she did."

Fishy says, "Gulp."

I say, "What kind of bitch goes to Crescent City? She knew she was going to hear from me on it. I told her too, man I was hot."

She had come home that night all in her work clothes like she hadn't just been at Crescent City with that Derrick guy. She said her boss took her, I said I know your boss didn't take you. She said he took the whole office, I said what kinda fool do you take me for? She must've had some little bitch outfit in her bag somewhere so I took it from her.

I say to Fishy, "Man you should of been there. I knew she

had that whore outfit in her bag, so I took it and I fucking poured it out."

Fishy laughs, man he's got a real good laugh too.

I say, "Things going everywhere: pencils, lipstick, tampons, all that shit. She must've put her whore clothes somewhere else though because they weren't in there."

Fishy says, "Gulp."

I say, "Damn Fishy, where are you putting it all?"

I give him more Brother's. Then I go and get the ice cream out, because I always get some ice cream at the end of our program.

I say to Fishy, "I told her, 'Bitch you're going learn not to step out on me, not when I love you so much.'"

I loved that girl like smoke loves fire. I don't know why she kept stepping out on me, not when I loved her so much. She didn't even know 'bout the times when I went to St. Louis. I got a girl I see when I go back there, ain't as good as Cindy was though. Now I just got Fishy. Maybe I'll take him and we can get on up to St. Louis. They got health clubs there too I bet.

Our program wraps up and the girl was 'bout to do the President, sure enough.

I say, "I told you she was going after the President. I told you didn't I? Just like that bitch I had, always stepping out."

Mr. Fishy knows what I mean. He keeps eating his Brother's, and I give him a little ice cream too.

I say, "Get you some dessert in there, since I'll be cleaning your tank already. "

Fishy says, "Glug."

I say, "You're welcome."

I finish my ice cream and go to bed. Fishy starts watching the next program so I leave the TV on for him.

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The next morning I get up at 5:30 because I gotta open the doors at 6:00, even though most people don't come until 9:30. Fishy's on the couch except he's watching an infomercial instead of his programs. I gotta change the channel for him because you can't get water on the remote.

I say, "Your tank is fucking gross man."

He doesn't even gulp because he's knows I'm right.

I say, "Now I'm going be late for work. You give me a second though."

I take Mr. Fishy out of the tank and put him in the cup. He doesn't like going in the cup because there aren't any rocks or fake seaweed in there. The cup is blue, just like the couch cushions, so he runs into the side all the time even though I tell him to be careful. Just like I told Cindy what was gonna happen if she kept stepping out with fucking Derrick.

I tell Fishy, "You didn't finish your chicken."

He says, "Glug."

I say, "Don't get an attitude on you. I'm just saying you didn't finish it."

He runs into the side of the cup.

I get the little net and scoop all the chicken bits out, and it doesn't take too long. Then I pour some water out and pour some water back in. Fishy likes getting new water but he does not like the cup. I try to tell him that he's got to go in the cup if he wants new water, but he doesn't listen. He stills hates going in the cup. He doesn't ever listen to me.

I drive to work and open up before Mr. Salsmin gets there. Mr. Salsmin is my boss and he's a real clean character. He doesn't come in too much though because he's got lots of real estate he's got to keep eyes on. He probably lives down there by the walking tours too, knowing him like I do. I know he's quick, because he can tell I don't like the fat ladies. We talk about them all the time.

One time I said, "They going to break our machines sir, swear to God."

He said, "Are they using them in an improper way?"

I said, "They're fat as hell, they don't need to be on those machines."

He said, "You can't talk to the customers that way."

I said, "I don't talk to them at all. They're the ones talking all damn day long."

He said, "Are they being disrespectful to you?"

I said, "They never shut the fuck up."

He said, "Please don't curse in my office."

I said, "Shit, sorry Mr. S."

He said, "That's alright."

I said, "I'm telling you we gotta get them off our

machines."

He said, "I'll look into it next time I'm here. Just be respectful."

Mr. Salsmin is always telling me to just be respectful. I didn't get no respect from Cindy, that's for damn sure. Can't believe that bitch was stepping out on me. I haven't told Mr. Salsmin that yet, but I know he's got my back. He ain't even married so no one's taking any of his real estate, or sneaking out in whore clothes. I gotta tell him about Cindy and these fat ladies when he comes in next, but soon as I unlock the door, a real old lady walks in.

I say, "Welcome to Marigny Health Club, slide your card or sign in."

She slides her card and doesn't say nothing to me. I was just trying to be nice but she gives some evil eye while she goes in. She's got all kinds of bags under her eyes, she's got bags everywhere. Her face looks like a scrotum, but Mr. Salsmin says I gotta be respectful to the customer even when they're a camel skin sack of shit, all brown and wrinkly like her.

I clean off the benches with a towel and watch the news a

little bit. All kinds of shit is going down in the world and no one knows a thing to do about it. Mr. Salsmin says we're going to hell in a hand basket but I think we've got a full streetcar going. Everybody's fighting everybody, politicians just keep lying, just like the President on me and Fishy's program. Hell, you can't even keep a girl 'round here without her stepping out on you.

Camel Bag Skin Sack leaves after a while. Probably good because she ain't long for this world anyway. I don't say that to her though because I gotta be respectful like Mr. Salsmin says. Ain't too long before Fat Lady One and Fat Lady Two come in and start torturing my machines with their nasty ass legs again.

I keep my machines running nice. After we close up sometimes I take the covers off and make sure everything's all smooth with them. You gotta put axel grease on the ellipticals sometimes to get them to have that good roll, you know? I used to work in a garage in St. Louis so I know how these things work. I got a girl back there I see sometimes, but Cindy didn't know 'bout her. That Cindy was just a dirty cheatin' whore.

Fat lady and Fat Lucinda get on and I can hear those ball bearings saying, "Oh God, get off me please," but they don't listen. They just keep on half walking, jiggling their vacuum

sealed asses all around. How long does it take to get stretch pants 'round an ass like that, is what I want to know. Bet they gotta stay away from sharp corners or else their ass cases would pop and juice would bust outta there like July fire hydrant. Pretty soon they get to yapping like they always do. I hope Mr. Salsmin gets here so I can show him how they're disrespecting this club.

Fat Lucinda says, "So Brett has a management conference this weekend and he just told about it yesterday. How am I supposed to get Tank into the kennel? I know he knew about it before yesterday."

Fat lady says, "Do you always come to his conferences?"

Fat Lucinda says, "His boss's wife does, so this time he wants me to."

Fat lady says, "What is this? The sixties?"

Fat Lucinda says, "I know, like I don't have enough going on."

Fat Lucinda never has a kind word to say about this Brett guy, reminding me of what Cindy used to do. I'd be watching my program and minding my own, meanwhile she's jawing on the phone with her old lady. She didn't think I could hear her but I heard

damn near every word and there wasn't a kind one in there.

Fat lady says, "Well I can keep Tank if you want."

Fat Lucinda says, "He'll destroy your yard though, let me call the kennel first."

Fat lady says, "Ok, but we'll can take him if they're booked already."

Fat Lucinda says, "I'm sure it'll be fine, I'm used to this by now. He's never worried about how these things affect me. "

Fat lady says, "Well just tell him you can't make it this time.'

Fat Lucinda says, "Skip the conference?"

Fat Lady says, "Stay home and we could go out this weekend!"

Fat Lucinda says, "Jesus, that would be fun, wouldn't it?"

God in heaven, I think this bitch is trying to step out on Brett. Just like I was tellin Fishy, they all do it, it's just a matter of time. Just wait till I tell him tonight. I'm trying to focus on work but she's jawing out tons of shit so loud I can't take it, so I turn on the news man and crank him up.

Fat lady says, "I love that teal dress you wore to the

kids's graduation."

News man says, "Syrian rebels and anti-Islamist forces have launched a considerable resurgence campaign to take back the city of Kobani."

Fat Lucinda says, "God I don't even know where that thing is."

News man says, "Chief Middle East correspondent Adam Liverliar is coming to us live from Damascus. Adam what are you hearing about the progress of this campaign?"

Fat lady says, "What? You don't wear it anymore?"

Fat Lucinda says, "Gotta shed a few more pounds before I try and put that back on."

Adam Liverliar says, "Yes News Man, as you can see behind me, news of the resurgence has sparked demonstrations all over Damascus in protest of this renewed military effort."

Fat lady says, "You're already looking great, I can tell you've lost weight already."

Fat Lucinda says, "Aww you're sweet."

Adam Liverliar says, "Demonstrators claim that the presence of Western powers in Syria has given rise to renewed violence from Islamist groups."

News man says, "But haven't these groups been occupying cities and townships in Eastern Syria for months now?"



Fat lady says, "You should look for that dress."

It's all lies, any fool knows that. I can tell when people are lying almost every time, and it made me a pretty good card player back in St. Louis. I used to play cards with the boys from the garage on Fridays with a \$25 buy in. I could tell when Lawrence was bluffing because he always raised \$10 when he didn't have shit for cards. Manuel could barely speak English so if I could get him talking, I knew he was blowing smoke. I used to take all their money and spend it with a girl I used to see up there. We'd go out and get a steak dinner, maybe go see the fights if they were having any. Never told Cindy about any that though.

Mr. Salsmin doesn't play cards but I don't know why, he's got plenty of money to lose. When I got my first paycheck from him, first thing I did was go on down to the card house and get my ass whupped by a table full of Vietnamese. They were all brothers and real slick card players too. I had to give them one of Cindy's paychecks too because mine didn't last long. I smoothed it over with her though, can't believe she would step out on me.

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The fat ladies walk out and you know the machines are singing, "Glory, Glory," even though I've still got the News Man up loud. There's nobody but me inside and so I flip the sign and take my lunchin' break. I go down to Liuzza's because they got girls that'll still treat you right if you tip enough. I keep my eyes open though, I ain't no fool.

After lunchin', a few clean cats and some shady bitches pass through the health club, and I'm really running things. Machines are moving sweet and folks are pleased with it all, so I decide to cruise down to Cindy's when I get off work. I got some luck rollin', maybe I'll turn her up.

One time she got hot with me and went to stay with her old lady for a couple days, so I decide to roll down there to check the scene out. They got potholes the size of heaven and hell down there though so you gotta get out the car and walk a ways. I stroll up to her old lady's house and I see her sister's baby playing out there with a truck.

I say, "What do you got there son?"

He says, "Vrrmmm bow!"

I say, "You seen your auntie round here?"

He says, "Vrrmmm Vrrmmm Pow!"

He's not going to be any help but here comes her old lady out the screen door.

She says, "You know you ain't supposed to be here."

I say, "This is a sidewalk."

She says, "You can't come a hundred feet from my baby. Says so right here."

I say, "I'm not doing nothing. Tell Cindy I'm ready for her to come home."

She says, "She ain't going with you. My lawyer says you can't come a hundred feet from her no more."

Kid says, "Vrrmmm KaPow!"

I say, "What kind of bullshit is that?"

She says, "You can look right here. You probably got one of these in the mail for you right now."

I say, "Tell her to come on out and come home."

Kids says, "Krsssssh Beep, Beep."

She says, "She ain't even here, she's down at work but you can't go down there neither. Not more than a hundred feet."

I say, "She's stepping out with fucking Derrick, ain't she?"

She says, "Don't curse in front of my grandbaby. You gotta leave now before I call someone."

I say, "You sure raised one of hell of a slimy bitch."

She says, "You better get gone before I call someone."

Except I can't just cruise outta there. I got to walk back to my ride, turning my back on the kid playing in the street. He keeps on saying, "Vrrmmm Vrrmmm Bow, Beep Beep Pow," like he's making his own get away. She wasn't going to treat me this way, not when I loved her so much. I couldn't wait to tell Fishy what we we had to do. We were going to miss our program that night.

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When I get home I say, "Fishy we're outta here."

He says, "Glug."

I say, "Damn straight. We're going back to St. Louis. I know Lawrence can get me my job at the garage again and I got a girl up there I see sometimes. Maybe we could crash with her."

Fishy says, "Glug, glug."

I say, "I gotta make a call first though."

I pick up the phone and it rings a ton of times. I dial again and it just keeps on ringing. I dial again and this time it goes through.

Mr. Salsmin say, "What? What is it?"

I say, "Mr. Salsmin, I got a family emergency I gotta attend to in St. Louis. I'm going to be gone for the rest of the week."

He says, "You don't have any sick days left."

I said, "I don't matter one way or the other if I got sick days. I got an emergency in St. Louis."

He takes a long time then he says, "Alright then, I guess I can find someone to cover for you."

I say, "Make sure they grease the ellipticals."

He says, "Yea sure."

I say, "Alright bye."

He says, "Alright then. Be safe I guess."

Like I said, Mr. Salsmin is one clean character, always looking out. Soon as I hang up the phone, I throw every piece of shit I own in the back of that Monte Carlo and we hit the fucking road. I got to buckle Fishy in the front seat because he doesn't do well in the back.

Before we head on up to St. Louis I got to see if Cindy was out with that motherfucker Derrick. I drive by her work and sure enough, she ain't there, so I go back by her old lady's place. I knew she was stepping out with that motherfucker, I knew it the whole time. She wasn't going to treat me like this, not when I

loved her so much.

We drive up and I'm getting hot in all kinds of ways, sweat's coming off me like a steam engine stack. Fishy's starting to get worried because the potholes are disturbing his water. I dump him some flakes and a piece of chicken from a box in the floorboard. We come in hot, plowing over those potholes and throwing Fishy's water all on the dash. He freaks out so I dump him some more flakes. I honk my horn three times and her old lady comes out.

I say, "Cindy, you best come tell me why you're stepping out."

Her old lady says, "You can't be here right now. Not within a hundred feet of my baby."

I say, "I know about Derrick but baby it's ok. It's gonna be ok, come on out now."

Old lady says, "Quit your hollering because she ain't coming out here."

I say, "I'll give you another chance baby, please."

Old lady says, "No, she ain't giving your crazy ass anymore chances. You gotta get outta here."

I say, "Please baby let's just talk about it."

Old lady says, "I'm bout to call the cops."

I say, "Please."

Old lady says, "I'm bout to call them."

I say, "Me and Fishy are going to St. Louis!"

Old lady says, "Good, go on then."

I say, "Fine, I ain't even coming back. You hearin me  
girl?"

I blast outta there strong this time, to hell with  
potholes. She wasn't going to treat me this way not when I loved  
her so much. I'd go back to St. Louis, pick up my job at Larry's  
Garage. Fishy and me could setup there and I could win some card  
games and get a little luck going. How dare she treat me that  
fucking way? I gave her all my money and didn't lose it playing  
cards except for a few times with the Vietnamese. They were all  
brothers anyway, sending each other Vietnamese cheat signs. We  
pass over the causeway and I turn to Fishy.

I say, "We sure showed that bitch."

But Fishy's upside down, dead as Pharaoh.

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