

Weight until dark- A real horror story

Dave Barry is a humor columnist who is published in 500 newspapers in the U.S. and abroad. He won the 1988 Pulitzer prize for Commentary and has published 24 humorous books.

When he isn't making millions laugh with his humor, he plays in a literary rock band called Rock Bottom Remainers. Other band members include Stephen King, Amy Tan, Ridley Pearson, and Mitch Albom. He and his wife, Michelle, live in Miami with their two children Rob and Sophie.

By DAVE BARRY

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I recently had a terrifying experience. It was exactly like a scene from a horror movie, when the actors find themselves in a house that is obviously possessed by Evil, with doors slamming by themselves and blood dripping from the ceiling, but the actors are such morons that they stay in the house anyway.

"With these older homes," they tell each other, "you're going to have a certain amount of ceiling blood."

And then of course something horrible happens to them, such as being sucked down to Hell by the Demon Toilet, and as the last of their body parts disappear in a counterclockwise direction, you, the movie viewer, chew your popcorn and think, "They deserved it."

That's what I used to think, too, until I had this terrifying experience. We were on vacation, staying in a strange house. Night was falling. I went down to the kitchen. It looked like a normal kitchen, with normal, harmless appliances, until suddenly ...

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... the violins (this house had a string section) were playing music from the shower scene in "Psycho", and we saw the most horrifying sight you can see in a kitchen:

A digital scale.

I don't know how it got there. No sane human would put a scale in the kitchen. Maybe it crawled there on its own from the bathroom, seeking the company of other appliances. But whatever the reason, there it was, and instead of sprinting out of the house right then, I foolishly stayed.

Every time I went into the kitchen, I could feel the scale watching me. Soon it was sending me messages via scale telepathy.

"Before you eat a third 'low-fat' blueberry muffin the size of Arnold Schwarzenegger's head," it would say, "why don't you step on me? What's the worst that can happen?"

I have not stepped on a scale in years. We don't have a scale in our home, because scientific studies have shown that scales attract gravity, a leading cause of falling down.

So for a week I ignored the scale. But finally, one afternoon, while enjoying a light pre-meal meal, I decided, what the heck, I'll just step on this thing and ...

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When I saw the number on the scale, I was forced to face a shocking, but unmistakable, fact: The scale was defective. Through some kind of digital error, it was giving me the weight of a completely different person, apparently Shaquille O'Neal. Or his car.

But eventually I came to accept the truth: I am overweight. This is not my fault. My body, without consulting me, has been converting the food I eat into fat, as opposed to something I can actually use, such as toothpaste.

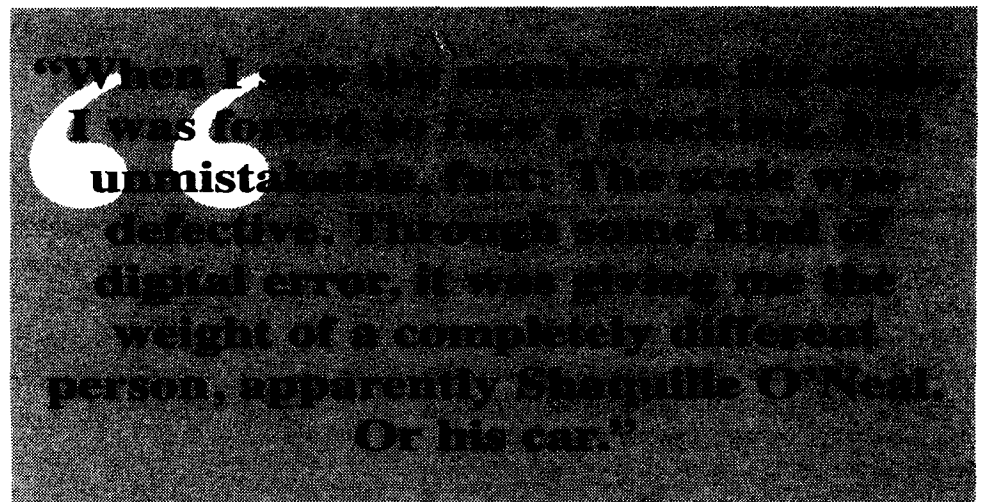
The problem with human bodies is that they're based on a design that is eons old. Our bodies believe that any day now, we'll have another Ice Age, and there won't be any more food, so they need to store up lots of fat. So while our brains are in the 21st century, wanting desperately to lose weight, forcing us to eat salads and engage in bizarre cult activities such as "Pilates," our bodies are back in 12,000 B.C., thinking: "I made six more ounces of fat today! Bring on the glaciers!"

It would be great if we could explain to our bodies that times have changed, and they no longer need to make so much fat. Recently, medical researchers tried to accomplish this by having a group of overweight people eat calendars clearly indicating that the current year is 2003. Their bodies turned these into fat.

So I have accepted that, if I want to lose weight, I'll have to bite the bullet (the bullet is fat-free) and take aggressive action. I've already begun a rigorous regimen of watching TV infomercials in which models with perfect bodies

work out using comically cheeseball exercise contraptions that Fold for Easy Storage and clearly have nothing to do with how the models look.

But merely watching infomercials will not get you into shape. For that, you need to take real action, which is why I also purchased an issue of Men's Fitness magazine. It's full of pictures of men whose "abs" bulge out like subcutaneous chipmunk platoons. It also has articles on weight loss, quoting leading medical experts who all agree that the ONLY proven way to lose weight, and keep it off, is to eat sensibly and exercise regularly.



Ha ha! Those wacky medical experts! Always with their jokes! But the magazine itself was delicious.

(Dave Barry is a humor columnist for the Miami Herald. Write to him c/o The Miami Herald, One Herald Plaza, Miami FL 33132.)

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