

A Slim Chance

A One Act Play by
Toni Neobard

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The play is about a group of ladies at a weight loss group meeting who are waiting for the meeting to begin. The ladies ages range between 55 – 75. Most of them have been going for years and have hardly lost any weight, if at all.

The play opens with a horseshoe of chairs with one person (Carol) sitting on a chair and various ‘possessions’ (including a coat and someone’s packed breakfast) spread over 5 more of the chairs, so as to ‘save’ them.

[Offstage and not seen] The routine is that as each person arrives that they ‘weigh-in’ and then sit down in the ‘horseshoe’.

Cast

Terri	Has an ironic way of looking at things
Carol	Kind, would help anyone. She’s also very efficient and organised and upbeat about things
Diane	Can be a bit blunt and on the rude side. Is insensitive to people’s feelings. She’s also negative about everyone and everything
Katy	Loud and bubbly and forgetful
Jenny	A bit quiet and reserved, but sensible.
Pat	The oldest one of the group. Lost her husband a couple of years back and is a bit lonely. On the look-out for a nice man...or in fact any man....
Sarah	Is the weight loss group leader, but only speaks at the very end.

Terri: Hi Carol, are all these chairs ours?

Carol: Yup, you can sit in any of these [*indicating range of chairs*].

Terri: Cheers, I'll sit next to you then. Can I donate you back your coat [*passes over coat which is saving the place*]? What surprises did the scales have for you today?

Carol: Oh, I put on half-a-pound. It's so blimmin' annoying. I tried so hard this week as well.

Terri: It's just like that some weeks. I put on a pound, and I think I dodged a bullet. Mind you I am wearing clothes that weigh less than air. I actually rolled up several lots of clothes this morning and put them on the kitchen scales to see which was the lightest. [*Whispers*] I'm not even wearing any knickers.

Carol: [*A bit shocked*] Really! I'd be frightened my leggings would rip at the seam and would reveal all to the world.

Terri: Ah it'll be fine. I needed to do something as I've basically eaten everything in sight this week.

Carol: A pound is not so bad. You know how Sarah tells us that we should think about our weight loss as a journey, and there will be service station stops along the way. So, don't beat yourself up about it.

Terri: Well that's all very fine and dandy but some people who come here are so thin already they only have to go a few miles up the road. My journey is longer, say from Ipswich to Norwich. But in the twelve years I've been coming to this group I've gone a rather pretty route via the West Country, through Rhyl, then a scenic detour to Liverpool and I'm currently visiting Kingston-upon-Hull and contemplating a bit of time in Carlisle.

Carol: Oh, you do crack me up. But I do wonder whether we are a disappointment to Sarah. She tries so hard to motivate us each week. I can't believe

that I've been coming here 10 years myself and now weigh 8lbs more than the day I walked in.

Terri: But if we didn't keep coming each week, we'd probably be even bigger. I see it as a bit of a damage limitation exercise. Oh, here's Diane now.

Diane: [*Walking towards them*] I'm sure their scales are wrong. I weighed myself this morning and my scales showed I'd lost a pound, but they say I've put on a half. I don't know why I keep coming.

Carol: Morning Diane. You come because of seeing us of course. We can all support each other.

Diane: Yea, that's not really working so well is it?

Carol: If you're struggling you can always give me a call or message me. I know it's hard. You do really well given what you have to put up with.

Terri: [*Changing the subject*]. If I was you Carol, I wouldn't leave your breakfast there [*indicating another chair*]. You weren't here last week so you don't know about Katy and Banana-Gate.

Carol: 'Banana-Gate' what was that?

Terri: Well you know how 24 hours before weigh-in, we all virtually starve ourselves - in the hope, that by some miracle, we'll lose half a stone - even though we know we've eaten enough for 10 men the rest of the week? So, I did the starving bit, which meant I was really, really, hungry by the time I got here last week.

Carol: Yes, I do the same, I don't even have my morning cuppa before getting here.

Terri: Same here. So, I brought a banana for breakfast with me. But not just any old banana. It was one at the peak of perfection. It had just turned from green to that lovely pale-yellow colour, without a blemish or brown marking in sight. It was also a monster, the king of all plantains.

Diane: [*Interrupting*] I hate green bananas, they give me stomach-ache and I end up spending the day on the loo. I like mine really ripe and sweet.

Terri: Oh no, they've got to be only past the green stage for me. Anyway. I put my banana on one of the chairs with some other bits and pieces, just to save the chairs as we normally do. Then I thought I'd get myself a coffee and sit down and really enjoy my perfect piece of fruit.

Diane: Speaking of coffee, I know this story so I'm going to get one now, anyone else want one?

Carol: No thanks I got one when I arrived.

Terri: Yes please [*Diane exits*]. Well when I got back from the kitchen, Katy was in one of the chairs. She was eating a banana.

Carol: I think I can see where this is going!

Terri: As soon as I saw it, I knew it was mine. There couldn't be two such flawless specimens in existence. Also evident was that my banana was missing from where I left it on the chair next to Katy.

Carol: So, what did you do?

Terri: Well I thought I should make an effort to look for it in case I'd made a mistake, but I knew I wasn't wrong. So, I looked in my bag, making a bit of a show of it, but to no avail of course. I then asked Katy, if she'd seen my banana. She was just popping the last bit of it in her mouth as I asked the question.

Carol: Oh dear.

Terri: It was at this point that I saw realisation dawn in her eyes. Her face then turned bright pink and she immediately bent down to search her handbag.

Carol: How embarrassing for her.

Terri: Well it was, but it was also funny. For she pulled out of her bag a teeny tiny excuse of a banana, all spotted brown and squashed at one end.

Carol: She must have been mortified.

Terri: She was. I didn't think for one moment that she had coveted and stole my banana. I know she didn't do it deliberately, but still, how she could have mistaken mine for hers is beyond comprehension.

Carol: Yes, she would never do it on purpose, she's just a bit scatty at times.

Terri: I know. I did mourn the loss of my banana, but it did give me a really good laugh. She can't stop apologising now.

Diane: [*Returns with two coffees and gives one to Terri*]

Terri: Thanks Diane.

Carol: Where are the others? Anyone know if anyone else is coming this week.

Terri: I know Pat's coming. She was telling me that she's signed up for some on-line dating.

Diane: Oh my god, that's a very dodgy thing to do. Everyone tells lies on those sites. A friend of mine dated a man who said he was a pilot. Apparently, he was quite good looking, and she saw him a few times. Of course, he was lying. He turned out to be a Bingo Caller at the local Mecca.

Carol: You do have to be careful with these things.

Terri: Yup you could end up dating a butcher who happens to be an axe murderer.

Diane: Knowing Pat it wouldn't bother her too much, especially if it meant she could have one of those death-row marriages.

Terri: Perhaps...providing she hadn't already ended up as a batch of sausages. In any case, we don't have a death-row in this country. But I take your point.

Katy: Hello everyone. How are you all?

Carol: We're all a bit down in the dumps, we all put on this week. How did you do?

Katy: I lost a pound and a half. Mind you I put on two and a half last week, so I suppose it could have been better.

Carol: You should focus on the positive. That's a great result. [Pause] Terri was telling me about the Banana incident last week.

Katy: Oh, don't I could have died. I'm so sorry Terri. But I did go to Tesco yesterday and got you a replacement banana. I spent ages choosing one really carefully.

Terri: Really Katy, it doesn't matter.

Katy: I got it just how you like them, a Terri perfect banana.

Terri: Well that's kind of you, but you really, really didn't need to.

Katy: Trouble is, I accidentally ate it. My Toby popped round in the afternoon and whilst I was chatting to him in the kitchen, I somehow picked it up and ate it without realising.

Terri: Honestly Katy, forget it. Although I shall get much pleasure from reminding you about it from time-to-time.

Katy: You wouldn't be so cruel...[*thinks about it for a second*] ah but yes you would [*laughs good naturedly*]. Jenny's coming. She's just having a last-minute wee before weighing-in.

Diane: There's that annoying woman at the scales again.

Katy: What annoying woman.

Diane: The one that lost 9lbs in her first week.

Carol: Some people do seem to do really well on the plan.

Diane: Well, I think that when she joined, she had a load of stones in her pocket, so when they weighed her the first time it inflated her weight. Then all she has to do is take out some stones each week.

Katy: What would be the point of that then?

Diane: She'd have a better weight-loss than everyone else each week, with minimal effort.

Katy: But doesn't that sort of defy the purpose of coming here?

Diane: Well no-one could lose that much weight in a week without some sort of cheating going on.

Carol: That lovely man Geoff lost 10lbs in one week, and I don't think he would cheat.

Diane: It's not fair, men always lose more.

Terri: I noticed Pat having a bit of a flirt with him last week.

Carol: I always think how brave men are to come to these meetings, when usually there's only one or two.

Terri: They certainly need to be brave with Pat around. I saw Pat offering Geoff a bit of her Diet Works Silky Nut Crunch that she'd just bought. He refused of course.

Diane: And that's another thing that gets my goat. All these products that we have pushed at us. They charge a fortune for a bar full of air and the size of a postage stamp. Their stupid size is the only reason they are low calorie. They must think we are all mugs.

Carol: I know but it's nice to have a treat at the end of the day. Here's Jenny and Pat now.

[Jenny & Pat approach]

All: *[All say hello/hi to Jenny and Pat]*

Jenny & Pat: *[Both say hello/hi.]*

Carol: How did you both do?

Jenny: I lost a pound, so I'm pleased with that.

Pat: I lost a half.

Carol: Well done both. You are doing well. How much is that all together.

Jenny: That's 7lbs over the last 4 weeks. My head's in the right place for once, which makes a change.

Pat: I'm getting on for a stone loss since Christmas. I've got that wedding to go to. It's only 7 weeks away now, and I must get into that dress. You never know who might be there, perhaps some dapper widower. I can't afford to miss opportunities at my time of life.

Carol: You are both an inspiration! We need a bit of that what with all the changes that are happening with this group? I'm not keen on them.

Diane: They make me cringe. It's bad enough telling people that I belong to "Diet Works", but at least it implied, however vaguely that it was a diet club. Now they've gone and Americanized it. They say we now have to call it just "DW" and that those initials don't stand for anything. And they say that "DW" relates to Daily Wellbeing [*uses hand gesture to simulate inverted commas*] to imply that the focus is now on health and being well and not losing weight. What's that go to do with dieting I ask you? Damn stupid.

Pat: Yes, I don't like the way they have rebranded everything.

Terri: I heard that we don't even have to weigh-in any more if we don't want to. What's the point of that I ask you?

Carol: I don't think any of us would still be here if it wasn't for Sarah. She's so lovely, and it's not her fault if the DW 'powers that be' have imposed a load of daft changes.

Terri: Apparently this dingy church hall is now a 'Focus Space' and our meeting is called a 'weekly seminar'. Who'd have thought!

Carol: I don't think Sarah likes the changes, but she's a professional and tows the party line.

Diane: If it ain't broke, don't fix it I say. I hope the company start losing millions.

Carol: Oh, I do hope not, it might put Sarah out of a job.

Terri: One person that could do with being put out her job was that Deana. Do you remember her Carol, you know, when we joined up before and used to go to the group at the old Scout hall?

Carol: Ah yes. She was awful. She even brought her ferrets to the meeting once!

Diane: Ferrets, what's that got to do with losing weight?

Carol: Absolutely nothing. Horrible, smelly creatures they were too.

Terri: For some reason she decided to give us a lecture on the advantages of ferret keeping. I have to say I really enjoyed the bit when she held the two of them up and the gingery one bit her really hard on her knuckle.

Carol: Oh God I'd forgotten that.

Terri: Really? I dined out on that story for ages afterwards. If you recall, she then dropped them both and they went on a on a high-speed rampage about the room. Deanna lost several members and one of her best helpers as a result of that. Not everyone appreciates having their coat and handbag marked with ferret urine.

Carol: Yes, it was very funny with hindsight. I recall she was rude to people as well.

Terri: She was just like that woman in that sketch on telly. You know the Fat Fighters one.

Carol: Yes, you're right she was. She also used to tell people off for putting on weight.

Diane: Hmm. I'd have told her exactly where she could shove her activity tracker if she tried that with me. I'm surprised anyone went to her class if she was that rude.

Carol: We didn't have much choice, there weren't any other meetings, or even any competition back then. It was about 25 years ago.

Terri: She used to have it in for that man, Derek. Do you remember him?

Carol: Yes, I do. Didn't he come because his doctor warned him he was morbidly obese and wouldn't make old bones unless he did something about his weight.

Terri: That's right. Did you know that I came across him a couple of years back?

Carol: No, how come?

Terri: Well he was a good friend of my friend Tim. Tim mentioned I did family history research, and as Derek wanted his done, he contacted me. I did the research, and a really peculiar family he had too.

Carol: That was good of you.

Terri: He did pay me for it. The trouble was he seemed to start finding excuses to contact me.

Carol: He probably liked you.

Terri: One time he said he wanted more copies of the family tree. But then he confessed to me that he had some kind of religious revelation.

Katy: Now that's getting a bit weird.

Terri: It got weirder. For he told me that God had told him we were going to be great friends.

Pat: I wouldn't have minded being his friend.

Terri: I think you would Pat. He started to creep me out a bit. Especially when he called me and asked if I could research what would be a good breed of domestic pig for him to keep in his garden.

Katy: You're making this up.

Terri: I swear I'm not. I explained that I was purely concerned with genealogical research, and pigs were completely outside of my comfort zone.

Carol: I would think pigs would be outside of most people's comfort zones.

Terri: He said that he recognised I was good at computer searching and just thought I might help him out.

Carol: So, did you?

Terri: It was easier to say yes, so, I gave him the contact details of the British Pig Association.

Katy: ...and, what did he get?

Terri: Nothing. His lifestyle was totally wrong for pig husbandry. The Association basically told him it was a bad idea and to forget it.

Carol: What happened to him.

Terri: I didn't hear anymore from him.

Pat: What a shame, he sounded lonely.

Terri: Lonely, probably because he was odd. I later found out from Tim that the Doctor had been right in his prognosis, for Derek died not long after I last heard from him, he wasn't even 60. I think Pat, that his death wouldn't have really been conducive to a long-term relationship.

Pat: [*Sighs*] Well I suppose so.

Katy: [*Changing the subject*] Did you notice that Sarah's display is all about exercise. I hope that's not what we'll be talking about today.

Terri: Well I've hit upon a new way to exercise. And what's more I can do it from the comfort of my armchair.

Katy: I like the sound of that, pray do tell.

Terri: Well I read an article that talked about how scientists had done a study of fat people and thin people. They noticed that thin people fidgeted for a much greater period of time than those that were carrying a bit of weight.

Katy: ...and?

Terri: So, I've taken up fidgeting. It means I can sit in my chair of an evening and as long as I am twitching my arms and jerking my legs, I will be fidgeting myself thinner.

Katy: I don't think I would be able to concentrate on my programmes with all that thrashing around. Is it working?

Terri: Too early to tell. I only started last night. Mind you my Mark did ask me whether I was ill. He said that with all my writhing about he thought I had gone down with St Vitus Dance. It's also bloody exhausting. I'm not sure I'd recommend it as a long-term strategy.

Jenny: I've thought about taking up jogging. There's a local 'couch to 5K' group that meets twice a week and I thinking about giving it a go.

Diane: I don't think you should do that.

Jenny: Why's that?

Diane: Well it can break up marriages.

Pat: Why on earth would you say that?

Diane: Well what about that dowdy bint that used to come here - I think she was called Vicki. You know the one that lost all the weight. She was a real frump and ended up looking a right stunner. Well she took up jogging. She met a man at the park run, left her husband and ran off to Scunthorpe with him. That's why she doesn't come to the meetings any more.

Terri: From her point of view it was a bit of result I would say. I hate exercise myself. Sarah always says we should find something we like to do, as that's the only way we are likely to keep it up.

Jenny: That's very true.

Terri: The trouble is, I don't really like anything.

Jenny: There's lots out there. Things like Zumba classes and kick-boxing.

Terri: I can't see me taking to any of those. I did take up swimming with a friend years back.

Jenny: That's good. Swimming's an excellent all-round exercise.

Terri: That's as maybe, but I still found it an effort. I ask you, what is better on a cold wet Sunday afternoon? Your choice being to stay in the warm, wrapped up in a cosy throw and watching an old film on the telly; or to strip of your clothes, change into your cozzie, and go outside into the cold with the aim of plunging yourself into freezing water?

Jenny: Ah, but it's good for you.

Terri: I kept telling myself that, and I kept it up for a while. We used to have an hour's swim, well I say swim. In truth we did quite a lot of chatting in between swims. The best bit was when we rewarded ourselves afterwards in the cafeteria with a tea and bun.

Pat: I love a toasted bun, me. Dripping with butter, mmm.

Jenny: Why did you stop going?

Terri: Well we found the swim part started to get shorter by about 10 minutes each week. Until one week, we got to the pool and decided to skip the swim and go straight to the cafeteria.

Carol & Katy: [*Laugh*]

Pat: I don't mind a bit of walking...if it's not raining or cold of course. And I don't do uphill. I've never understood the point of hills, especially when you have all that effort to go up them, only to have to come down the other side.

Terri: I know what you mean.

Jenny: Talking of walking, that reminds me. I won't be here next week.

Carol: Why, what's happening then?

Jenny: John and I are off to the lake district. We are hoping to have a nice relaxing week and are planning on a bit of fell walking.

Pat: That definitely sounds too energetic to me.

Diane: Oh, that'll be bad news for the diet. I always manage to put on half a stone whilst I'm away.

Carol: Not everyone does. What about the lady who was here last week who had just come back from an 18-day Caribbean cruise? She had managed to lose 4 pounds!

Diane: Oh, that skinny piece. Who goes on an all-inclusive cruise and only eats salads and raw veg?

Carol: Yes, she was amazing what with all that temptation.

Diane: I thought she was just annoying. Especially when she said [*sarcastically*] "oh I did indulge one day, I had a crusty roll".

Carol: I don't think she exactly said that....

Diane: [*Interrupting*] I bet she had her nose to the trough the whole time but was going back to her cabin and throwing it all up after. She looks the type.

Terri: I've often thought I was semi-bulimic myself.

Carol: What do you mean?

Terri: Ah well I do the bingeing bit, but I just miss out the being sick part after.

Carol & Katy: [*Laugh*]

Jenny: Well, we will be self-catering, so I don't think it will interrupt my diet too much. And I'll also be doing more walking than usual so that will help.

Diane: The last thing my David would want is to be on a diet on his holiday.

Jenny: But the trick is, that you just don't tell them! I've been doing things like sneaking grated carrot and courgette into things like bolognaise sauce for the last 18 months or so and John has no idea. He's lost over a stone since I've been coming here. He thinks it's down to his daily stroll, but I know better.

Katy: They've no idea have they, the poor lambs.

All but Pat: [*laugh, make hmm noises or agree*]

Carol: Well I hope you have a nice time away Jenny. The weather looks good for next week.

Katy: Just don't let Jeremy get the better of you Jenny.

Carol: You mean John. Your husband is John isn't it Jenny?

Katy: Ha, no Jeremy is that little demon that lives on your shoulder.

Carol: Jeremy? Why Jeremy?

Katy: Well Sarah was telling us last week how we needed to employ tactics to keep at bay the little devil who sits on our shoulders and tells us to eat things we shouldn't.

Terri: Yes, Katy said she was going to call hers Jeremy and tell him to sod off if he started any of his old nonsense.

Carol: You two do make me laugh. That's really funny.

Terri: In fact, Katy, couldn't you crash into that annoying cruise woman, and transfer your Jeremy onto her shoulder. Perhaps she'll get an idea what dieting is like for normal people.

Diane: She already looks scrawny and haggard to me.

Terri: I'd give scrawny and haggard a go if it meant I was thinner.

Carol: You say that, but you'd hate it.

Terri: Well I suppose the fat helps keep the wrinkles at bay.

Pat: [*Who's not really listening and speaks as if far-away*] I'd like to go on a cruise. I might meet a rich man. I could do with one of them

Katy: Couldn't we all.

Pat: If I'm honest, any man whatever his financial status would do.

Carol: Oh Pat, I'm sure there's someone out there for you.

Pat: But time is running out. I thought that dieting would improve my chances. I reckon I'll still be trying to lose weight on my deathbed.

Diane: A bit like that Margaret. She must have known she had a terminal illness, but her friend Sue said she was still dieting to the end.

Carol: Perhaps she just wasn't feeling very well and lost her appetite.

Diane: Well I'd be stuffing pies and cheesecakes for all I'm worth.

Terri: Yea I'd give it a good go too. You'd have nothing to lose at that stage. It might give the pall-bearers a challenge though.

Carol: Just listen to you two, you're both terrible!

Terri: We know.

Katy: One day it will all come together and we will all be slim and beautiful. I have a feeling that we are all going to do great this week and that this year will be our year.

Carol: Quick, I think the meeting's about to start. Are you still all on for our usual Cream tea this afternoon?

All: [*say yup, yea, yes etc*]

Sarah: Good afternoon everyone, lovely to see you all
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The End