

The Whole Banana

A romantic comedy
about faith, freedom and fruit.

By

Deb Norton

Deb Norton
11871A Koenigstein Road
Santa Paula, Ca 93060
805.794.0101
playing@verizon.net

Copyright © 2003 by Deb Norton

In order of appearance:

FRAN: Fragile and over-thinking. Paddling fast to keep her head above water in a restless ocean with no shore in sight.

MRS. SARAH: A Coney Island spiritualist/magician/witch, possibly of Greek origins.

PHIL: Fran's never-quite-ex-boyfriend. Intelligent, but self-centered, he is charismatic, handsome and difficult to resist.

GEORGIA: Fran's best friend since art school. Savvy and hip, she knows what's right and what's best.

HERMES: Greek god of communication, transformation, thieves, travelers, musicians and acrobats. Magical, mercurial and irrepressible.

Voices of:

Tim

Jerry

Tiny

ACT I SCENE 1

(Fran is in the aisle of the market. There is a hum and flicker emanating from a fluorescent light on the fritz and the dead murmur of muzak. Fran reads from her shopping list.)

FRAN

Can of corn. Can of corn.

(She looks at the items on the shelf, mystified. Mrs. Sarah enters, wheeling her cart. She speaks with a Greek accent.)

Corn...

MRS. SARAH

What you say, Honey? Oh. Was you talking to me?

FRAN

Oh, no. Or, well— Okay, yes, You'll think I'm such a—

MRS. SARAH

No, I won't. Tell me you problem.

FRAN

It's my list. I can't— It's like that thing when a word stops meaning anything?

MRS. SARAH

How long you was with him?

FRAN

Huh?

MRS. SARAH

Honey, it's written all over you. You trying to get over somebody. How long you was together?

FRAN

Oh. Well, eight years, give or take.

MRS. SARAH

Well shoot, that's your problem,
right there!

FRAN

It is?

MRS. SARAH

I remember after my first
divorce I couldn't do the
dumbest thing. I'd go to the dry
cleaners, give the man a package
of ground chuck and ask could he
have it ready by Wednesday.

FRAN

Really?

MRS. SARAH

Are you kidding? Don't call him.
He's no good for you.

FRAN

How can you be sure?

MRS. SARAH

You got joy with him?

FRAN

He makes me laugh.

MRS. SARAH

Not the same thing. Let's see
that list.

FRAN

This first one... This can of
corn. What do you make of it?

MRS. SARAH

Corn. So.

(Hands Fran a can of corn.)

Ba-da-bing.

FRAN

Wow. Thank you.

(Fran hugs her.)

You're an angel.

MRS. SARAH

It gets better. You see. It always does.

(Pats her arm. Makes to leave.)

FRAN

Does it? Because, you know, sometimes I come home, I haven't even managed to buy food. There'll be shoelaces, wood-glue— Christ, I want a smoke.

MRS. SARAH

Here, you have one of mine.

FRAN

No! That's the thing. I quit.

MRS. SARAH

Well, it's a miracle you even find the store.

FRAN

Once I brought home a giant jar of maraschino cherries. I mean pounds and pounds. I must've been attracted to the color is all I can figure. I lived off it for a week so I could put off going shopping again.

MRS. SARAH

You know, Honey, I really gotta—

FRAN

The thing is I'm so careful when I'm making the list. I try to really think it through so that I'll be prepared when I'm actually faced with the food, walking down the aisle.

MRS. SARAH

Okay but, I—

FRAN

(Grabs a can.)

But then I see these and alarms go off. They look sharp and is food supposed to be that color? And is it good for me, because how do I know what's good for me? But the box of light bulbs has that thin white cardboard and it feels nice against my cheek. At home I take out the bulbs and they're cool and pretty. Very promising. I touch my tongue to the glass.

(Fran is now putting her tongue on a light bulb that she has pulled from her basket. She is completely absorbed. Mrs. Sarah sees her chance, sneaks away.)

It's clean. Flavorless. It's still appealing, but it's not food. It's not—

(Fran finds herself alone in the aisle.)

God? Higher Power? I'm having— I need help. I need you to give me some— to help me shop. Is that something you do? Listen, can't you nudge something off a shelf or— Some kind of sign? It's just, in a moment such as this, I'd love to know if I'm— You know— If I'm making contact.

(There's only the sound of the fritzing light and the muzak.)

SCENE 2

(Fran's apartment. There is a wooden chair, a single bed and a drafting table with drawing supplies. Dominating the room is an easel with a very large painting on it. This is the painting later referred to as Fred. There are paints and brushes on the floor around Fred's base. Phil is in the kitchen rummaging through the piles of inedible groceries. Fran enters with bags from the market.)

FRAN

Phil.

PHIL

Pony.

FRAN

Phil. I've gotta get those keys back from you.

PHIL

I came by to drop off some of your clothes. They turn up in the weirdest places. Where's the food?

FRAN

That's an interesting question. I know I have a can of corn, at least. It was hard won, but you can have it. You want it hot? I'll just heat it up.

PHIL

Actually, I'm not so hungry for lunch all of a sudden.

(They kiss. Clothing flies.)

FRAN

Oh god. Phil, I miss you so much.

(He carries her to the bed.)

But, oh, wait. Phil, we shouldn't—

PHIL
No, no, we absolutely shouldn't—

FRAN
(Having difficulty breathing.)
Because we— We talked about
this...

PHIL
Oh, Pony, Look at you. You got
more beautiful since you broke
up with me.

FRAN
We broke up with each other.

PHIL
That's very generous.

FRAN
Is it close in here?

PHIL
Yeah, very.

FRAN
Oh God. I can't get my breath.
There's no air.

PHIL
I'm going to make love to you
for days. Break all my old
records.

FRAN
(Wriggling out of his embrace, toward the
window.)
Okay, yes, but just— /I need
air. Let me open the window.

PHIL
Where are you going? Po, hey,
what're you— Don't open the
window. It's freezing outside.

(Fran gets free and throws open the
window. Phil recoils from the cold.)

FRAN
(Hanging out of the window, her breathing becoming regular.)

Phil?

PHIL
Pony?

FRAN
Why do you call me Pony?

PHIL
I don't know. To me, you're just Pony.

FRAN
But I'm not. I'm not Pony. You know, Philly, we weren't going to see each other for a while. We definitely weren't going to sleep together.

PHIL
Aw, now see? The cold air is bringing you to your senses. That's not what we want. Anyway, what can we do? We miss each other.

FRAN
We broke up. We're supposed to miss each other, right? I mean, we must have had our reasons, right?

PHIL
I really was just going to drop off your clothes and go, but there you were, looking so...

(He makes a move toward the window.)

Fran. Pony-pie. I have to close the window. I can't feel my face anymore.

FRAN
No, stay there. I'm doing it.
(She closes the window.)

There.

PHIL

That's better. Now come here and defrost me...

FRAN

(She sees the clothes Phil brought.)

Are these the clothes?

PHIL

Those are they.

(Fran examines a pair of panties, confused. Suddenly she screams, drops them, recoiling.)

FRAN

Phil, these aren't even mine.

PHIL

Ah. Shit.

FRAN

You, jerk.

(Beat.)

I'm gonna have some corn. You want some?

(Fran marches her groceries to the kitchen.)

PHIL

I guess we're getting up now.

(Annoyed, Phil tracks down his pants, begins to dress.)

Fran unpacks the Bon Ami, light bulbs, wood glue. She opens her cupboards to reveal endless supplies of Bon Ami, light bulbs, wood glue. Disappointed, she sighs, adds to the towering stacks.)

FRAN

Phil, you can't be serious. Really.

PHIL

Oh, I'm sorry. Here. Have one.

FRAN

Stop that! Jesus, Phil. I'm hanging by a thread here.

PHIL

So let go. You know, if you were really ready to quit it wouldn't be this hard. Just do what you want, Po.

FRAN

Like you.

PHIL

Why not like me? Because, you know, pleasure does not always lead to pain.

FRAN

But, often it does. In my experience, quite often.

PHIL

Well, if you look for it, wait for it, expect it.

FRAN

It's non-negotiable.

PHIL

What does that mean?

FRAN

I don't know. It's from Nic-Anon. It means stop working on my weaknesses, you devil.

PHIL

Pony, I am very fond of your weaknesses. Especially your weakness for me.

FRAN

Put it out. I'm not messing with you.

(He does.)

PHIL

Tyrant. You know, deny yourself these little amusements you don't get any brownie points. You just get mad with hunger. This sin-pleasure connection is a lot of crap. And you're not even Catholic.

FRAN

Catholic! Phil! Of course. You did that whole thing.

PHIL

Survived it. Yeah.

FRAN

Well, do you still— Do you pray? To, you know, God?

PHIL

I'm not sure I really believe in the Big Man anymore.

FRAN

So then you're what, an atheist?

PHIL

Or maybe more like an apathist

(Fran begins scraping a can of Bon Ami with a carrot peeler.)

FRAN

It's just these words get thrown around at the Nic-Anon meetings. Prayer. That higher power stuff. So I've been making stabs at it and— I don't think I'm doing it right. If you could just tell me, like for instance, what does it feel like when it's working?

PHIL

Frankly, if you ask me, the whole deity worship thing is for people who can't be bothered to think for themselves. And besides, if there was a God, we'd still be getting naked.

FRAN

I don't know. When I was a kid, praying was just something I did. Like wishing. Or singing. Sometimes I'd sing my prayers. Did you ever do that? At bedtime? Like a lullaby almost or a— I mean how do you just forget about God?

PHIL

What are you doing?

FRAN

What? Well, how many cans of tub cleanser can a person have? I thought I'd take the labels off, paint the cans. Or stencil them. Something. Stack them. I don't know. I can't just throw them out, can I? Then they'd be garbage. I hate making garbage.

PHIL

Stop.

FRAN

What? Why?

PHIL

If you'd just stop, you'd see me here, and you'd want me to kiss your ever-talking mouth.

(He starts to chase her. She counters.)

You know, you're beautiful when you're running away.

FRAN

Wait. Phil. Stay away. I'm asking you nicely.

PHIL

Ah! I've got you now.

FRAN

Don't— You don't— I'm not playing.

(He grabs her. Fran gets a book from the art table and brings it down hard on Phil's head.)

PHIL

Ow! Hey!

(Fran runs into the bathroom.)

FRAN

Phil, I'm sorry, but when you're so near me I can't breathe.

PHIL

What?

FRAN

Don't take it wrong, but it feels like I'm dying.

PHIL

That is stunning news.

FRAN

Don't be hurt.

PHIL

Tell me what should I be. No wait, this is crazy. You can't be suffocated by someone's just being present.

FRAN

But that's exactly—

PHIL

I'll tell you what this is about. You want to date other men.

(She comes out of the bathroom.)

FRAN

God. Date? No. I'd rather eat glass. Look, I— Maybe I have asthma—

PHIL

Come on Fran. Tell the truth.

FRAN

I am not the liar.

PHIL

Oh, it always comes back to this. I've made mistakes. More than any person alive, you can make me feel like such a criminal.

FRAN

I can't breathe and somehow you're the one that gets to hog all the suffering. What is that?

PHIL

And when did we start hitting each other?

FRAN

You wouldn't leave me alone.

PHIL

You want me to leave you alone? Easy. Say, "Go away Phil."

FRAN

Go away Phil. Go away. Go away, go away, away, away, away. Go away Phil!

(She throws his coat at him.)

PHIL

Now see how simple that was? Three little words, and I disappear.

(Phil slams out. She throws the foreign underwear after him.)

FRAN

Higher Power? Please, Oh, please are you there? Is this how its going to be? My voice in a vacuum? Frustrating! I'm frustrated! Okay. Okay, Fran. God doesn't like an angry pilgrim. I'm trying too hard, right? Make contact with your Higher Power. That is so

general. You know, this is
cruel, wrong, to make me try so
hard. I'm showing up and you're—
Well. Anyway. Amen