

## Dirty Donuts

George Chapman is the fattest person I know.

He isn't the fattest person you know, but that's because you haven't gotten to know him yet. He is not wider, or mushier than many of the fat people you will encounter. He won't cramp you more than your average obese person on a Southwest flight, or—at first glance—seem any bigger than an overweight person taking up two seats on the subway. But, inside, George Chapman is the fattest of the fatty-fat-fats. He lives for food. Grease surely runs through his veins, not blood, as in you or me. He is solely motivated by food, and refuses to participate in the world we live in. Instead, George eats his way through his own edible earth; his is a world which simply orbits around his next McDonald's run.

George looks like a man living on Planet McDonald's. A younger version of Peter Parker from Family Guy, George is round in all the wrong places. His sloppily ironed white work-shirts stretch tight over his bulbous midsection. The button securing his chino pants is frequently pushed to its limit, creating a dangerous environment for all that cross his path. One day that button will pop. Someone's going to lose an eye.

He fidgets frequently. Every minute or so, George runs his hands through his hair, distributing whatever crumbs and grease were once on his fingers, to their new home on his scalp. These head-inhabitants-- depending on the time of day--may be the remnants of one of many breakfast McMuffins. If it's later in the afternoon? Perhaps a Whopper. George's sandy brown hair, which is always heavily greased—not from hair product, but from fast-food product—is trumped only by his oily and broken-out skin. This results in a red, shiny quality. Like Santa's. But a super gross Santa. Like the serial-killer one in that holiday episode of Tales from the Crypt.

George, however, is no Santa. He lacks any Santa-like qualities. George is not generous. He will not share with you even a morsel of his plentiful breakfast, lunch or dinner. He is a hoarder of food. Or, he hoards it for the five minutes he can keep it from his mouth. But not only does George eat all the food he can get his saturated sausage-y fingers on, oh no. In its absence, George talks about food. Constantly. It's as if he can't talk about anything else.

George and I met while we were working for Clarity, a small staffing firm in downtown Chicago. A start-up lead by eager young professionals, our bosses were always trying to bolster our come-up efforts. Part of this bolstering meant that George and I were asked to attend a seminar intended to 'further our technical knowledge in an ever-changing market.' Whatever. The pay-off was that if we went to the seminar, we both got a raise. I promptly booked us two seats, although the next available slots were for well over a month later.

"George, will February third and fourth work for you for the conference? I know it's forever from now but that's the earliest pair of spots I could find," I asked.

I stood over George's cubicle, surveying that morning's crumpled sheets of yellow McDonald's sandwich wrappers. I counted six for the day, so far. It was only 9 a.m.

"Sure, that's fine," George replied, "Do you think they'll be serving lunch there?" He looked up, eagerly.

“George, I—I don’t know. It’s more than a month away,” I counted two more wrappers, hiding in his trashcan.

“Because if they’re serving a hot lunch, I won’t have to bring something. That’s why I need to know,” he said, matter-of-factly, turning back to his computer.

“I don’t know, George. But I’d like to confirm our reservation, so you are available on those dates, yes?” I asked.

“Well, where is the building?” George was typing away, his fingerprints leaving greasy smudges on his keyboard as he went.

“It’s downtown, George.” His red, waxy face was lit like a 3D-movie in the blue hue of the computer screen.

“Well, where downtown, exactly, because if it’s near any good restaurants we can just go and get lunch. That might be what we need to try and do.”

“Jesus Christ, George I don’t know. Can you make the seminar or not?” I stood over him.

“I guess I’ll just plan to bring something, just in case,” George replied, “But hopefully they’ll buy us lunch.”

“Oh my god. Ok George. Let’s hope so,” As I walked away, my high heels clicked on the linoleum floor, because, duh, George chose the cubicle next to the kitchen.

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One bright, windy and extra-frigid morning—not at all uncommon in Chicago—I was early for work. Not only was I early, but I was feeling oddly upbeat and generous. I decided to buy breakfast for the entire office. I hurried through the icy city streets in search of the nearest donut shop.

Inside the Dunkin Donuts, I loaded up on only the best—lemon jellys, Boston cremes, and of course maple frosted—and was back on track to get to work just in time. I precariously balanced the two large boxes of donuts alongside the two jumbo brown boxes of hot coffee, carrying my own individual coffee, as well as my oversized purse and laptop. All in heels. I was a business woman about town, I was. I was on time, cheery as the day is long and looking good while I did it all. Who says you need ugly snow boots for a Chicago winter?

I arrived in front of our office at 1212 LaSalle Street ready to conquer the world. A reasonably hot guy opened the building’s front door for me, seeing that my arms were full. I thanked him and stepped forward onto the slick, slate entrance. I turned back to smile at the man, but instead felt my feet slip beneath me. Oh no. Oh God. I was going down. Would I choose to toss the delicious donuts and catch myself, or smear myself across the downtown pavement and save the treats?

A rational woman would have sacrificed the donuts. She would have tossed the coffee. She would have used her arms to break her fall. In fact, a rational woman may have even sacrificed her laptop and purse, had the fall been as treacherous as mine. But at that time in my life, I was no rational woman. I clutched the coffee—both the boxed coffee and my individual one—for dear life, and hugged my body around the boxes of donuts. My laptop and purse only acted as

unbalanced weight on my body, and somehow, as I coiled in to protect my goods, my feet flipped upward, as if I was levitating momentarily on a magician's table. This means that when gravity had its inevitable way with me, I landed smack down on my ass. Not just my ass, which is cushioned for a reason, but my ass-bone. Also known as the coccyx, the ass bone is one of many you really, really don't want to break.

THWACK. I laid still on the pavement. Powdered sugar floated through the air like fresh snow flakes. I was crying, involuntarily, from pain and shock. I had seriously injured myself over a few lousy donuts. Nope, I was no rational woman. I was a damn fool. I wiped at my tears from my spot on the slushy sidewalk. The hot-ish guy leaned over me. My savior.

"You just wiped chocolate on your face," he said.

Maybe not my savior.

I looked at my gloved hand. Covered in a nearby smooshed donut's chocolate icing.

"Do you want me to call an ambulance?" the (slightly less-hot, now) guy asked.

"No, no. I'm okay. Just help me get up please," I said, my voice shaky.

I had a job, sure. But one thing I did not have was decent insurance. So broken ass-bone or not, I was gonna' have to tough this one out on my own.

As the not-as-hot-guy helped me to my feet, I started to feel the severity of my injuries. Without the help of fear and shock, my ankle throbbed. Hot, sharp pain shot down my spine and seemed to divide into each leg, sending that shock to my heels and right back up to where it started, over and over. I started to cry again when I noticed the spilled coffee down my new winter coat. It was torn in two places that I could see, and my dirty donuts were scattered all over the icy ground around me. I was in pain, I looked like shit, and my donuts were covered in street grime. Not-so-hot-guy noticed my tears, and hurriedly started picking up the dirty donuts, putting them back in their original boxes. He gingerly handed me each box, along with the crushed, dripping coffee containers.

"What the fuck am I supposed to do with these?" I asked him as building security helped me limp to the elevator.

At the 14<sup>th</sup> floor, I thanked security for the escort and limped the last few steps to the office alone. The pain was excruciating, but I was hell-bent on not incurring a \$5,000 visit to the E.R. I reached the front door and slowly pushed my way through.

In our lobby, our bosses were holding our morning meeting. Each staff member, dressed professionally, and ready to take on the day, stood, staring at me. Mouths were agape. Tierra, a fresh-faced recent grad who worked in the cubicle next to mine looked at me as if I had been assaulted. I looked like I had. My clothing was ripped and disheveled. I was covered in white powder. I was carrying crumpled boxes, dripping hot brown who-knows-what. The chocolate streaked across my face absolutely looked like poop.

I struggled to the nearest trashcan, and deposited the dripping coffee boxes. I then tossed the donut boxes alongside in an adjacent can and leaned against the wall of a cubicle. My breathing was slow and labored. The pain was too much.

“I got you guys donuts. But then I fell,” I sighed, my voice cracking as tears continued to stream down my face.

I turned to walk to my desk, but was interrupted by Adam, the company’s young CEO.

“Um, excuse me?” He asked sheepishly.

“Yes, Adam?” I turned to him, wet-eyed.

“That’s the recycling bin,” he pointed to the can filled with donut boxes, “Would you mind?”

I limped back over to the bin and removed the donuts. “No, not at all,” I said, slamming the filthy boxes on the meeting room table, instead.

I started limping back toward my desk, breathing loudly and deliberately so as not to pass out from the pain. Fat George, this time, stopped me.

“Hey buddy!” He remarked, administering a greasy fist bump to my shoulder, nearly knocking me over again, “Are any of those donuts okay to eat?”

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Far be it for me to let a broken ass-bone keep me from a good party. When Clarity announced that our company Christmas party was coming up, I immediately RSVP’d for two. I imagined what I would wear--my sparkly black holiday dress and matching stilettos, of course. I would bring my friend Billy, a tall and handsome confidante. Gay enough to be better dressed than anyone at the party, but seemingly straight enough to pass for a date, Billy was more than great arm candy. Billy was also kind, and had worked in nursing. This meant that he could help me limp along throughout the night, and hold me over the toilet when I had to pee. We were close, and he was compassionate. If anyone was going to see me awkwardly positioned and naked from the waist down, Billy would be best.

The event was an open-bar soiree, my favorite kind, and would also feature a swanky five-course meal. What pain I couldn’t subdue with my painkillers, I figured I could subdue with alcohol. Free alcohol. I was excited, although I wondered if my coworkers would tease me for bringing a different kind of donut—the orthopedic kind—to the table.

There was a ton of food at the party. Our five dishes were unique, tasteful and very large for a multiple-course meal. We were offered option after gourmet option, including stuffed crab Portobello mushrooms, an extensive oyster sampler, lobster ceviche, some particularly delicious grilled scallops, and even a Funghi pizza. That’s Fancy for ‘mushroom pizza,’ possibly my favorite thing after free booze. Those were just the apps, before a hearty entrée: either the black pepper and almond rubbed rack of lamb, or a flank steak with garden salad. Each item was paired with a wine selection, but we were also welcome to order cocktails. Dessert would end the feast, a selection of fruit and crème brulee tarts.

We ate, we drank. We ate more. We drank more. We drank a lot more. Shots were served, and bellies were full. Before any of our entrees arrived, we were all stuffed to our brims. Well, almost all of us.

The tables were littered with half-eaten apps and empty wine glasses. Servers scurried to clear the uneaten items in preparation for our main course, but were met with a loud protest from—you guessed it—Fat George.

“Why would you clear those?” George interrupted a waiter, grabbing him by the arm, sweat dripping down his red, furrowed brow.

“It is time for the entrée, I’m sorry I didn’t realize you were still working on this one,” the waiter, a consummate professional, replied.

But George wasn’t ‘still working on’ the appetizers. In fact, George had approached a waiter cleaning *our* table. George wasn’t even sitting there. He was sharking our leftovers!

“Well, please leave the appetizers,” George said firmly, “I will finish them,” he said, looking pointedly at each of the tables before looking back to the waiter.

I sat, not in shock, and not surprised. Mostly, I was embarrassed. The tuxedoed waiter gave us all a look of disapproval. I felt like I should discipline George as if he were a younger brother. I did not. My butt hurt too badly to get up and I was drunk.

The appetizers were left at each table, and entrees were squeezed in every-which way by irritated servers. George and his girlfriend Patty—after devouring their entrees without so much as a breath between bites, then made their way around the dining room, picking at the remaining appetizers spread throughout. Billy and I watched in horror and amazement. The couple glided through the room like a pair of sharks. Circling and eating. Circling and eating.

At the end of the meal, the only thing that ached more than my ass was my stomach. No one sitting at our table of eight could imagine taking one more bite. I looked around to the other tables. Everyone seemed to be stuffed. Even George and Patty had finally taken a seat and seem satiated. Their sticky fingers had been licked clean, along with their silverware, and maybe even their plates. The table looked as if no one had ever sat down. George and Patricia weren’t sharks. George and Patricia were vacuum cleaners.

The staff party continued, as we replaced eating with drinking. Our focus was no longer how much George could eat, but how much the rest of us could chug. The restaurant grew tired of us the more we drank, and a handful of Clarity workers—Billy and myself included—decided to continue the party at a local dive bar.

Billy helped me as I limped down the stairs of the restaurant and out onto the freezing sidewalks of Wrigleyville. We stayed a few steps behind the rest of the group, me with my inflatable donut in hand, Billy teasing me lovingly about it the entire way. We took our time, despite the cold, because we had no choice. I was mobile, but barely. We walked by the Cubs stadium, decorated for Christmas alongside many of the other businesses and storefronts. I balanced my donut on one arm, and my purse on the other. Billy wedged himself somewhere into the mix, switching sides, depending on when I winced or let out a pained cry.

The cold was unbearable, but since we were forced to walk so slowly, we tried to enjoy the walk. I looked into each shop, bar, or restaurant, trying hard to find something pretty to alleviate the sting of the weather, and the sting of my ass. I even looked into the corner McDonald’s, watching people eat their McChicken sandwiches off the dollar menu, feeling slightly guilty about my expensive Christmas meal. That’s when I saw it.

By golly, it was my very own Christmas Miracle. A weird and gross miracle, but a wonder, nonetheless. Sitting in plain view of us was George and his girlfriend Patty, feeding one another fast food sandwiches. *Sensually*.

I stopped to observe the erotic beasts in their natural habitat. It was if my eyes were set on zoom. I saw grotesque close-ups of George's fingers being suckled by Patty's moist lips as he fed her a sweet piece of burger bun. I watched as George wiped the remaining crumbs into his hair, and shook his head slightly, shooting Patricia his best, sexy look. I imagined I was a crumb, sitting atop George's scalp. I imagined the forest of other greasy bits, nestled in George's mop. Half hair, half McDonald's. I tried to look away, but I could even *hear* the couple as they ate. I imagined the smacks, the groaning, the sighs and heavy breaths taken between oversized bites. I alerted Billy and together we counted. 1...2...3...4,5...6,7...8 Big-Mac wrappers total.

We stared in amazement; our mouths wide open. Billy turned to me, for only a moment, letting go of my arm.

"I am totally imagining them having sex right now," Billy laughed, "Eww, Etch-a-Sketch," he said, shaking his head back and forth rapidly, trying to rattle the image from his mind.

I was also imagining them having sex, and it was too much. I started to slip backward, my knees buckling atop my four-inch party heels. Watching the couple eat was one thing, but imagining them suckling one another's greasy, postcoital fingertips was beyond.

"Ouuhouhhh," I let out an awkward cry, reaching for Billy as I fell.

"Oh no you don't," he said, catching me just in time.

I readjusted my purse and donut, and straightened my dress as he lifted me back into place. I shimmied and shook off the near fall, nodding my head in the direction of the dive bar. I checked to see that I hadn't scuffed my stilettos.

"Girl. Buy yourself some snow boots already," Billy said as we continued on, carefully, toward the bar.