

A MELLANZANA ON TONY'S ROOF

by JOSEPH ZECCOLA

CHARACTERS

PAULIE: A Middle-aged Italian-American

MARIE: A Middle-aged Italian American

BIG JOEY: An Old, Fat Italian American

SETTING

Marie and Joey's apartment in the Bronx. Their living room and kitchen.

GLOSSARY

Mellanzana (Pronounced and spelled Moo-lin-yan in the script) means eggplant. The word can, and unfortunately is, often used to describe African-American persons. *Bambini al Maledetto* means roughly--children of the damned.

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A MELLANZANA ON TONY'S ROOF

[Lights up on MARIE, who enters, carrying a wrapped box of pastries. The refrigerator door is open, a figure can be seen crouching inside. She looks back out the door as she enters.]

MARIE

[To herself]

Bambini al maledetto! *[Yelling outside]* Ya friggin monsters, get away from me!
Get away!

[She slams the door shut.]

PAULIE!

PAULIE

[Speaking with food in his mouth]

WHAT?

MARIE

You see that? Ha? Friggin kids. I swear I'm gonna kill Loraine. She was at the store. Meanwhile her kids--little friggin nightmare children that they are--go running around, breaking open fire hydrants, torturing cats ...and throwing tomatoes at me--I swear Paulie, those kids are from the devil.

PAULIE

Who hit you with a tomato?

MARIE

Will you get your head out a the friggin fridge?!

[PAULIE gets up and closes the door, a canoli is stuffed in his mouth. He is wearing only a tank-top tee shirt. We can see that he has a broken leg and, although he is not a large man his stomach is bulging abnormally--he seems too large for his clothes. He hobbles toward his chair.]

MARIE

You like that canoli? Does it taste good?

PAULIE

You don't look like you got hit with a tomato.

MARIE

They missed. So you like that canoli?

PAULIE

It's alright.

MARIE

So you don't like it.

PAULIE

Its ALLRIGHT!

MARIE

I mean if it isn't, I got this whole box here!

[She throws down the box of pastries.]

If that's no good paulie, I got news for you. You're friggin outta luck. There ain't no more bakers left in the Bronx! You hear me Paulie! There ain't one friggin baker left in this whole friggin borough. You tried every single canoli in the area, and I ain't going out no more!

PAULIE

That's fine.

MARIE

You shoul'da seen Lorraine when I was down Arthur Avenue. Her and her friend--you know the one with the chest as big as Ethiopia--they was laughing.

PAULIE

Why was they laughing?

MARIE

You don't know? Oh wait, let me remember--it was something about being the husband of a crazy friggin lunatic.

PAULIE

Oh.

MARIE

You figure it out now, Paulie? So I says, "At least my husband doesn't have nose hairs growing down to his ankles!"

PAULIE

That's a good one, baby.

MARIE

Yeah. Ya like that. ... Ya like that. ... It wasn't as good as her response, however.

PAULIE

What?

MARIE

It seems you was wrong. Someone saw you.

PAULIE

Saw me? When?

MARIE

Do I look friggin stupid to you, Paulie? Quit breaking my chops, will ya?

PAULIE

So. Someone saw me.

MARIE

So, that someone happened to be Gregory. You know that kid goes to school at fordham? The one with the mouth as big as my sister's Buick.

PAULIE

Oh.

MARIE

Yeah, "Oh." ... So you could imagine my surprise when Lorriane said, "At least my husband didn't break his leg running out in the rain at three in the morning to the only twenty-four hour bakery in friggin New York city to get a friggin box a canoli."

[Silence.]

So you're quiet now, are ya. *[Pause]* This has got to stop, Paulie.

PAULIE

What?

MARIE

It's got to stop.

PAULIE

WHAT?!

MARIE

You got a fixation, Paulie. One a them "oral fixations". Ever since--

PAULIE

You know what the problem in the world today is?

MARIE

Paulie...

PAULIE

Do you know?

MARIE

What. Paulie?!

PAULIE

Propensity.

[Silence.]

MARIE

Did you watch *Jeopardy* today, Paulie?

PAULIE

What?

MARIE

Did you watch *Jeopardy*?

PAULIE

You got propensities, MARIE.

MARIE

Now it's the plural.

PAULIE

Yes you do. You got propensities.

MARIE

Well, you know what, Paulie? I don't know what that means. I have no friggin idea what the hell you're talking about.

PAULIE

I'm talking about Propensity, Marie.

MARIE

I don't know what that means! *[Pause]* What does that mean, Paulie?

PAULIE

It means you keep doin things Marie. Them friggin kids, they keep throwin tomatoes at you, and you, you keep naggin me about my eatin. You got a propensity ta--

MARIE

And what do you do? You keep eatin friggin canoli, left and right you keep eatin. You're trying so hard to find a replacement for your motha's--

PAULIE

Enough! Don't you speak of my mother! Not a word, you hear me! You speak ill a my mother and I'll wrap you in the head!

MARIE

Ya never hit me in your life, Paulie! Who you kidding? And if you did it'd be the most attention you paid me in a month. You don't care no more.

PAULIE

I don't want to hear this.

MARIE

You're gonna hear this! Paulie you don't touch me no more. You don't love me no more. When we made love? Two months ago? Three? Ever since--

PAULIE

Aaaah!

MARIE

Paulie, I feel like that moo-lin-yan caught up on Tony's roof.

PAULIE

What the hell you talkin about? The one Tony wrapped in the head with the crowbar?

MARIE

I feel just like him.

PAULIE

What the fuck are you talkin about, Marie? That guy was breakin into their house. He was a stranger!

MARIE

I feel like a stranger! Everyday I walk in here.

PAULIE

What is that one a them metaphor things? What the hell does that mean?

MARIE

It means Paulie, all you do is eat. All day long. When are you and I gonna be married again?

PAULIE

I stop eatin when I'm full. I ain't full. [Pause] What? You wanna go in the bedroom and make nice. Let's go.

MARIE

We can't no more, Paulie. You'd friggin crush me.

PAULIE

And what is that supposed to--

MARIE

That means all you do is eat. All day long. Your gettin so big, Paulie, I could park my car between your legs.

PAULIE

What do you want, one a them new-age, woman-on-top relationships? You ain't gonna get it.

MARIE

I want you to stop friggin eating. I want you to lose some a that fat friggin stomach a yours. Your mother, she's--

PAULIE

I don't wanna hear it.

MARIE

You got a fixation, Paulie, an oral--

PAULIE

An you got a propensity to piss me off!
[There's a loud bang at the door.]

MARIE

It's big Joey. He thinks he's dyin again.

PAULIE

Oh christ. Now he's gonna break my balls for a half-hour with soul-saving bullshit. I can't take this. Go down to the corner and get me a sandwich will ya?

MARIE

More food?
[There is another bang at the door.]

PAULIE

Just go, will ya?

MARIE

I'm goin!
[Marie exits, opening the door and BIG JOEY, a very large man, enters as she leaves.]

BIG JOEY

How ya doin, Paul?

PAULIE

Fine, Joe. Will ya grab me them cannoli?
[BIG JOEY comes over to PAULIE'S chair, bringing with him the cannoli. Paulie starts to eat ravenously.]

BIG JOEY

How's it hanging?

PAULIE

My wife's bustin my ass--says everyone's teasin her on-a count a me fallin last week, the friggin neighbor's kids're bustin her ass by throwin stuff at her, she won't get me friggin food without complainin and I still can't find a good cannoli. But you know me, I can't complain.

BIG JOEY

Doctor says I got six months, Paulie.

PAULIE

You know that aint true, Joe--

BIG JOEY

It is true, it is. Now listen to me, Paulie, it's not too late for you. You can still change your ways--

PAULIE

You know Joey, you got a propensity to break my balls about this stuff.

BIG JOEY

And you got a propensity to throw food down your throat like there's no tommorow. Your ass's getting bigger by the minute! *[Short pause.]* Yeah I was watching Jeopardy today, too. *[Pause]* Your wife's right, kid. You got an oral fixation.

PAULIE

What the fuck does that mean?

BIG JOEY

It means you miss your motha, kid. And you eat like a friggin cow outta guilt!

PAULIE

I don't wanna hear no more about my mother! May she rest in peace. She was a good woman!

BIG JOEY

This is about you kid! You were addicted to her god-damn cooking. Now you're searching the earth for the right friggin cannoli.

PAULIE

Her cannoli was one of a kind, you hear me! It's irreplaceable.

BIG JOEY

I know. So why don't you stop eatin so much?

PAULIE

There might be one that's close, though. I gotta find it.

BIG JOEY

No. You gotta stop. Your motha's dead kid, God love her. I wouldn't stop smoking after my wife died, now look at me. My lungs are as black as Denzel Washington. I'm a dead man--

PAULIE

You're not--

BIG JOEY

I'M DEAD! That's it. I'm dead. [Pause] But you're still alive, kid. Stop eatin, you fat bastard. You're gonna look like me if you don't.

[MARIE enters abruptly.]

MARIE

Could you excuse us, Joe.

BIG JOEY

Sure. *[Pause]* You listen to me, kid.

[PAULIE grumbles as JOEY exits.]

MARIE

It's been two months since your mother died.

[No response.]

And you know who I haven't seen in two months?

[No response.]

Millie. She was in florida since the funeral. Visiting her grandkids. I just bumped into her down on the corner.

PAULIE

You get me that sandwich.

MARIE

No I didn't.

PAULIE

Marie! Go get me a fuckin sandwich!

MARIE

No.

PAULIE

MARIE! I said--

MARIE

I ain't getting you no more sandwiches and no more cannoli, you hear me! You got a propensity not to listen, so you better be hearing me!

PAULIE

I want a--

MARIE

You know what your gonna get! Do you know? *[Pause]* Your mother's cannoli.

PAULIE

What does that mean, Marie?

MARIE

It means I'm making you cannoli, myself.

PAULIE

How could you...?

MARIE

Millie asked your mother for the recipe last year.

PAULIE

She did?

MARIE

She did.

PAULIE

You're kidding? *[Pause]* It still won't be right. It won't.

MARIE

We're gonna find out. We are. And when we're done eating. You're gonna lay down on that bed and we're gonna have a new-age relationship for at least fifteen minutes do you hear me? Do you!

[No response.]

And then I'm going to make you some more cannoli. And they're gonna taste just like your mother's.

PAULIE

Wouldn't it be funny is that was the truth.

END of PLAY