

THE DIET CENTER

by Robert L. Crowe



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At open, both actors are on stage. Karen works for the Center and Dot is a potential client.

KAREN: *(to Dot)* Welcome to the Delightful Diet Center. My name is Karen. I'll be conducting your personal first weight-loss session. First, let me tell you about the Delightful Diet Center ...

DOT: Oh ... not necessary. I've been here four times before. I'm Dot. ... as in dot, dot, dash *(giggles)* It's somebody's code. Maurice, I think. Anyway, in school ... they used to have fun in P.E. when I had to run. They'd yell, "Dash, Dot, Dash!" *(giggles)*

KAREN: *(stares with no expression)* OK. So you are ready for the *fifth* session in our series?

DOT: No, I've never been past the first session. I've started the program four times but your system never works. But, I want to try again. Is the first session still free?

KAREN: Yes, but what do you mean "the system never works"?

DOT: Every time I leave here I just continue eating like I did before. I haven't lost a pound.

KAREN: Look, Miss Dash ...

DOT: You can call me Dot.

KAREN: Dot. How can you lose weight if you continue eating like before?

DOT: I can't.

KAREN: *(pause)* Yes ... Why don't you step over here and let's weigh-in, shall we? Just step up here on the scale and we'll get the very first reading. *(The scale is one of those like in a doctor's office. She adjusts weight bar and makes a note.)* Thank you. Why don't we sit down and have a chat.

DOT: I wore my sneakers. Aren't we supposed to do jumping jacks and that junk? I've tried to do push-ups but most of my body parts refuse to leave the floor.

KAREN: I think it important to first set a framework. Your frame could use the work but let's chat instead.

DOT: Oh, this is good. Every other time I've been here they wanted to exercise. I'd rather talk. You start.

KAREN: Yes. Since this is my first day on the job, I'm going to read directly from the training manual. *(She reads from the manual and she is not an especially good reader.)*

"My guess is that you are like most people and have tried a number of different diets without any exercise. I'm going to make a series of statements and you answer if they are true."

DOT: True!

KAREN: You're supposed to wait until I make the statement.

DOT: True.

KAREN: *(takes deep breath of patience, reads.)* "Your exercise is limited to jumping to conclusions." *(She looks at Dot and waits for a response. She points at Dot to indicate that it is her line. Dot points back.)* You were supposed to say "true" there.

DOT: Oh. Can we try it again?

KAREN: No. We'll press on. *(reads)* "Your exercise is limited to beating around the bush." *(Dot doesn't move.) (Karen motions her to speak and when she doesn't, Karen says:)* True.

DOT: Was I supposed to say that? I thought we weren't starting over.

KAREN: I didn't start over, that was a different statement. Hold on. I think we'll skip this chapter.

DOT: OK. I thought it was kinda fun.

KAREN: Oops, there's the telephone. Someone else will get it. *(waits) (waits)* Excuse me, no one else seems to be

answering. *(picks up the phone)* Weight Loss Hotline. *(slight pause)* Yes, your friends are right, there are indicators that you need weight loss help. What? Your driver's license says "picture continued"? Yes, we would call that an indicator. *(pause)* The seafood diet? No, I'm not familiar with that one. Oh. When you see food you eat it. Uh, look, we have your number on caller ID. I'll have someone call you back. I'm in therapy *(looks at Dot)* ... uh ... conversation ... right now. Yes, thank you. *(to Dot)* Now. Where were we?

DOT: Therapy.

KAREN: True. We were talking about diets. Have you tried commercial diets?

DOT: Yes, I did Weight-Watchers, Jenny Craig, Slim Fast and South Beach.

KAREN: And how long were you on each diet?

DOT: Those were all in the same week. I was on one for a few days, called the Atkins Diet. I think it was named after a country music singer, Chet Atkins or Tracy Atkins ... something like that ... but every time I heard a country song I had a hankering for biscuits and gravy.

KAREN: So, nothing has worked for you.

DOT: I tried the 30-Day Diet and it worked. I lost 15 days. Can't find them anywhere. Can't remember where I was or what I did. So, I'm not doing that diet anymore. You lose half your life. When you're 25 you think you're only 12 ½.

KAREN: True. Would you excuse me just a minute?

DOT: Sure.

(Karen takes her manual stage right and thumbs through the pages looking for help. Dot walks to the doctor's scale and steps up. She moves the weight bar, then jumps up and down, then moves the weight bar again. She shrugs and returns to her seat. Karen returns.)



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