

A spotlight reveals PEGGY, an overweight young woman in her early-twenties, standing centre stage holding a book in her hands. PEGGY stares out at the audience with a proud, intrepid expression on her face.

PEGGY

(In a defiant announcement.)

I weigh 276 pounds and I love every single God-given one of them!

(Pause.)

I don't, actually. Not if I were being honest. But that's what you're supposed to repeat, according to the instructions in the book.

(Beat.)

It's called, "The Bigger the Better." Written by...

(Beat.)

Oh...isn't that odd. I can't recall his name. Ordinarily, I could quote you from here to eternity on just about anyone, but at this precise moment I'm drawing a complete blank on the author. An American, I think. Oh well...

(Holding the book before her.)

It's meant to empower you, apparently – repeating this mantra. They suggest standing completely naked in front of a full-length mirror under overhead lighting and repeating at least twenty times before going to bed, "I weigh 276 pounds and I love every single God-given one of them." Not that it says "276" of course. It just leaves a blank space for you to plop in whatever it is you're lugging around. Then you're supposed to wake up the next morning feeling completely at peace with your physical being and the world in which it moves...or lumbers...or words to that effect. Whatever the case, it's not working. I'm not sure if it's because I hate my body or because I don't believe in God...though I suspect the latter. At any rate, I've a feeling I was had.

(Beat.)

As Nietzsche so adroitly put it, "Does wisdom perhaps appear on the earth as a raven which is inspired by the smell of carrion?"

(Beat.)

Perhaps yes, perhaps no. But I did buy the book.

(Beat.)

Maybe I'll write a book someday. I'd title it: "How to Hate Your Bloated Carcass, Yet Still Continue to Enjoy a Relatively Happy, Healthy and Productive Life...Barring One or Two Exceptions...Especially When Sitting Alone on a Saturday Night with a Bottle of Vodka and a Bellyful of Bile." Or something like that.

(Beat.)

I think I'd need an editor.

(Pause.)

I've always been big. I was born big. I was a big baby. Still am in some respects. In fact, one of the earliest memories I have is of my Aunt Nester staring down at me, her thin lips contorted into a forced expression of adoration, saying to my mother, "My word, you've got a big girl there, haven't you, Georgie."

(Beat.)

She's dead now. Not my mother – my Aunt Nester. A severe stroke whilst pruning her beloved roses in her front garden. She fell into them face first, the thorns of her pride and joy gashing open her wizened face in her moment of need. They did a good job, though – at the mortuary, that is. She looked quite regal, all dished up and served before us, there in her casket. I stared hard at her face but I couldn't see even the trace of a scar. Mum fell apart. Sadly, all I felt was a slight twinge of guilt as I contorted my not-so-thin lips into a forced expression of loss.

(Beat.)

And so it goes.

(Pause.)

I think self-hatred is vastly underrated, don't you? I mean, everyone seems to have such a negative view of it. But if you really think about it, it makes life so much easier in so many ways. For a start, you don't have to bother giving yourself all those tiresome confidence-building pep talks inside your head every time you look in the mirror or step outside the front door. You can simply hate what you see before you, shrug your shoulders and get on with your business. And if someone insults you or shoots you a disdainful glare, it doesn't sting or chip away at your delicately crafted shell of self-confidence – it just lands harmlessly in that boggy pit of everything you already despise and fizzles out with barely a flicker. You don't wrestle with it, you just absorb it. It can save an awful lot of time in this fast-paced world of ours. Think about it.