

From the play
Asking Strangers About
The Meaning Of Life

(1W - 1M)

(A living room.)

(GUIDANCE COUNSELOR enters taking off her apron.)

COUNSELOR
(Disappointed)

You missed her!

THERAPIST

Who?

COUNSELOR

Martha Stewart!

THERAPIST

The cooking show personality?

COUNSELOR

I was making lunch and there was this knock at the door and I opened it and there stood, for real, Martha Stewart.

THERAPIST

Why would Martha Stewart come to our house?

COUNSELOR

She was passing by in her limousine and needed to use the bathroom.

THERAPIST

The bathroom?

COUNSELOR

You can understand, she's not the type to use a service station.

THERAPIST

And so she just knocked on a random door?

COUNSELOR

Apparently that's what she does. And then we got to talking and I made her lunch.

THERAPIST
 You're kidding.

COUNSELOR
 She even left us a gift. A signed copy of her latest book.
 Let me get it.

(COUNSELOR exits.)

THERAPIST
(Amazed)
 Wow. Martha Stewart.

COUNSELOR
(O.S.)
 Oh my God!

THERAPIST
 Everything okay?

COUNSELOR
(O.S.)
 Oh my God!

THERAPIST
 Honey, what?

(COUNSELOR enters shell shocked.)

COUNSELOR
 She... She...

THERAPIST
 Who?

COUNSELOR
 Martha Stewart. She left us a... gift.

THERAPIST
 So you said.

COUNSELOR
 No. A different gift. It's in the guest bathroom. She... How
 do I say this, forgot to...

(She pantomimes flushing.)

THERAPIST
 Flush?

COUNSELOR
(Grossed out)
 I was walking down the hall, and the guest bathroom lights
 were on and I went in to turn them off and there beside my
 brand new Martha-Stewart-living-handy-space-saving-bathroom-
 organizer I saw it... Staring back at me.

THERAPIST

Oh for God's sake. Let a man take care of this.

COUNSELOR

Flush but don't look.

(THERAPIST exits.)

COUNSELOR

(Pulling herself together)

Oh my. Oh my.

THERAPIST

(O.S. Grossed out of his mind)

Oh! My! God!

COUNSELOR

I said, don't look!

(THERAPIST enters paralyzed with fear.)

THERAPIST

How? How? How could one person do all that?

COUNSELOR

She asked to use the little girls room - Little did I suspect.

THERAPIST

(Amazed)

The length.

COUNSELOR

I thought my cooking was rather light and healthy.

THERAPIST

(Grossed out)

And she left the seat up. As if she were proud of her accomplishment.

COUNSELOR

(Weak kneed, light headed)

Oh God. Oh God.

THERAPIST

What's wrong?

COUNSELOR

(Breathing heavy)

I'm having a flashback. P.T.S.D.

THERAPIST

Oh come on you've seen it before, maybe not that much in one location, but you've seen it.

COUNSELOR
No, that's the first time I've looked in over a decade.

THERAPIST
You don't look before you flush?

COUNSELOR
Why would I?

THERAPIST
There's a lot of information there.

COUNSELOR
(Grossed out)
Oh my God, you look?

THERAPIST
It's not like I pull up a chair and study it.

COUNSELOR
(Grossed out)
Oh! Oh! Oh! Can't handle this - I married a man who looks.

THERAPIST
How do you do it?

COUNSELOR
Like a normal person, I flush while going. I don't think I can ever sleep with you again.

THERAPIST
What? Why not?

COUNSELOR
Cause they're located right next to each other!

THERAPIST
So?

COUNSELOR
It's a design flaw. It's the one thing I've never been able to deal with. That's why I don't believe in God.

THERAPIST
What does God have to do with this?

COUNSELOR
If God were a perfect being - he, she, or they wouldn't have designed the reproductive and waste removal systems right next to each other. And they'd look different.

THERAPIST
How would they look?

COUNSELOR
Yours wouldn't be so ridiculous.

THERAPIST

What?

COUNSELOR

You gotta admit yours does look like a first draft. Like it was designed by infant deity who made it and got frustrated and gave up. An intelligent designer would make it look more... more...

THERAPIST

More?

COUNSELOR

...Art deco.

THERAPIST

Art deco?!

COUNSELOR

And some feathers would be a nice touch. You know, form over function?

THERAPIST

If you don't mind, I'd like to keep a little functionality.

COUNSELOR

What I mean is "art for arts' sake."

THERAPIST

How would yours look?

COUNSELOR

Mine would look exactly as it does - only it'd have a convenient zipper.

THERAPIST

I'm compelled to ask - Where would an intelligent designer put the waste removal system?

COUNSELOR

The armpit.

THERAPIST

We'd poop from our armpits?

COUNSELOR

And it would come out differently.

THERAPIST

How would it come out?

COUNSELOR

...Deer pellets.

THERAPIST

What?

COUNSELOR

A perfect God would make them look like cute little deer pellets. Simple, non-assuming.

THERAPIST

Let me get this straight, you'd believe in God if we crapped deer pellets from our armpits.

COUNSELOR

Look how perfect bathrooms would be. No need for toilets, no forgetting to flush.

THERAPIST

How would we do it, litter baskets?

COUNSELOR

No. There'd be a little tube and suction system. And it would be hidden behind a secret panel.

THERAPIST

Where would these secret panels be located?

COUNSELOR

All over. Like in your car or in... in voting booths.

THERAPIST

Voting booths?

COUNSELOR

In other words convenient, private locations.

THERAPIST

You've obviously given this a great deal of thought.

COUNSELOR

I was five, my mother took me to a petting zoo and this little fawn walked up and I thought how beautiful, how perfect and meaningful the creation is. And then it pooped. And I thought, why? Why would God make deer poop so pretty, so perfect so... so... edible.

THERAPIST

Oh, my God you didn't!

COUNSELOR

They taste better than Tide laundry pods.

THERAPIST

Please move forward in the story, please.

COUNSELOR

And then I thought, why did God make ours look so... so... nasty. And then I thought, is there an afterlife? Or is it just a dark endless void. Do we dump memory? Are we just flushed and forgotten? At five years old it hit me... I could do better.

THERAPIST

Better than whom?

COUNSELOR

God. I could design a better creation.

THERAPIST

(Doubtful)

Could you now.

COUNSELOR

Yes. This creation is pretty awful.

THERAPIST

What would you change, people would poop pellets from their arm pits and...

COUNSELOR

Well, I'd leave out viruses.

THERAPIST

And?

COUNSELOR

Death. Come on admit it, you too could design a better creation.

THERAPIST

Could not. The creation is... is perfect. Wouldn't change a thing.

COUNSELOR

Really. You'd create parasitic bits of RNA or DNA, surrounded by a coat of protein that causes everything from cold sores to Ebola.

THERAPIST

Well...

COUNSELOR

And you'd allow Spina Bifida, and Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome.

THERAPIST

They must have a purpose.

COUNSELOR

What? To make us miserable?

THERAPIST

Then why are they here?

COUNSELOR

Good question, why?

THERAPIST

Because... God couldn't make the best of all possible creations - that's heaven.

COUNSELOR

So what did God do? Give us the fifty-seventh best possible creation? Is this the one-hundred and eighth best possible creation? This world isn't even close to the best of all possible worlds or we wouldn't need science, or therapy, or ventilators.

THERAPIST

I still say the creation is perfect.

COUNSELOR

Then why the hell are you wearing glasses?

(Beat.)

THERAPIST

Okay, perhaps I'd change a few things.

COUNSELOR

Like?

THERAPIST

...Banjos. I'd leave banjos out of the creation. No one likes banjos. You'll put up with a song or two but after that it gets old fast.

COUNSELOR

You're right, the creation would be better without banjos.

(A beat.)

THERAPIST

So what do we do?

COUNSELOR

Stop believing that we were born into a world that was made for us, and admit, at least from our point of view, it's a less than perfect design. And start creating a world that's right for us.

THERAPIST

That would bring meaning to life.

COUNSELOR

And to think, we owe this revelation to Martha Stewart.
(Beat) I'll go clean the kitchen.

THERAPIST

I'll clean the tube and suction system in the voting booth.

The End