

An overweight, brilliantly funny High School student secretly crushes on her best friend... a boy in her stand-up comedy class. When a new student ruins her theory that beautiful skinny girls can't be funny – she takes drastic measures to reclaim both her spot at the top of the comedy food chain and the boy she loves.

Fat Is Funny

By Michelle Wendt and Wendy Braff

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The book cover features a watercolor-style illustration of a person's lower body. The person is wearing light blue denim jeans and black high-top sneakers with white laces. To the left, a microphone on a stand is visible against a red brick wall background. The floor is a bright yellow color. The title 'Fat is Funny' is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font across the center of the image. Below the title, the text 'a novel' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the authors' names 'written by Michelle Wendt and Wendy Braff' are listed in a black, sans-serif font.

Fat is Funny

a novel

written by
Michelle Wendt and
Wendy Braff

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CHAPTER ONE

The Killer Set

“Hi, my name’s Charlie. So, I know what you’re all wondering, and the answer is no. I am not currently dating anyone.”

At 200 pounds plus, I get a laugh just off the set-up. Mr. Harris is taking notes. And smiling. That’s a good sign since he’s the best stand-up teacher in Manhattan. My class (the teen class) is held every week in an actual comedy club. Seriously, the mic smells like beer and flop sweat. It’s awesome.

“I’m not for everyone, I get it. So I’m thinking of joining one of those sites that cater to men who like girls like me...”

I gesture to my body with a sweep of my right hand before adding the punchline...

“underage.”

Huge laugh. I pick up the microphone stand.

“I’m gonna move this so you guys can see me.”

Another solid one. It’s five hundred degrees up here on stage. Can the class see my underboob sweat?

“I’ve always been fat. They had to induce labor on my mom because I wasn’t coming out. I can’t remember, but I know I was thinking, ‘Stay put, Thanksgiving’s in two weeks.’”

Medium laugh. Okay, they can’t all be gold.

“I remember the first time I realized I was fat. The biggest bitch in kindergarten said ‘Why are you so fat?’ And I didn’t have an answer.. When you’re five, your weight is like the death penalty: you’re too young to have an opinion about it.”

They laugh loudly again. Damn, it’s hot up here. Should I take a sip of water? I can’t risk dry mouth. I should write a joke about water just so I can drink some on stage. But what the hell is funny about water? Oh my God, Charlie! Just focus!

"I live with my mom in Yonkers. Just the two of us. When I was five, my dad said he was going out for a pack of cigarettes and never came back. I know in my heart that he ran away, but there's still some part of me hoping ... he was hit by a truck."

Another medium. Gotta work on that one. I take a deep breath. Thank God I'm remembering my set. How's my pacing? I soldier on. Next joke.

"Uh, I'll tell you a little about my dad. Because that's how much I know about him. He took off when I was five. My mom says not to blame myself and I'm like, okay, what the hell did you do, then?"

Solid. I head for home plate.

"This sounds horrible, but sometimes I think he ran away because I was a fat kid. What's really sad about that is that I would kill to get back to the weight I was when I was five. I mean, I could do it. I'd only have to lose ten pounds."

It lands. Big. I lock the mic and make my way to my seat. Mr. Harris gives me a thumbs up. The class is still clapping. Some of them even mean it. The rest stare daggers at me because I killed it so hard. Jealous bastards.

As I take my seat all I can see is George. Clapping and smiling. He hugs me when I sit down. “That was fantastic,” he says. “Hysterical. I love the new bit about the death penalty. When did you come up with that?”

“In the shower. My brain loves sending me new ideas when I can’t possibly write them down. I almost killed everyone in Driver’s Ed last week.”

George snorts a laugh, wrinkling his nose in that way that melts me. He leans in close. “I have some new stuff I want to pitch to you. Can we get together this week?”

I nod, trying to make it a casual “Sure, whatever” nod and not an “absofreakinglutely and please wear that blue T-shirt that is just a little tight on your upper arms and makes me die” nod.

“George, you’re up,” Mr. Harris says.

George nervously checks his notebook one last time. I squeeze his arm for luck.

“You’re going to kill it,” I tell him. He smiles, relieved but unconvinced.

One of the highlights of class—hell of my entire week—is getting to watch George walk up to the stage. No, you pervs. It isn't to check out his ass.

Okay, it's a little bit to check out his ass.

But that's only part of it. First of all, he's seventeen. Secondly, he's always wearing his prep school uniform because he comes here straight from school. Please picture khakis, untucked pale blue button-down, navy blazer, and loosened tie. As he takes the mic he always runs his hand through his hair and smiles this crooked little smile at me.

See? I told you it wasn't only about his ass.

“Hey, I’m George. You know, like Washington. But I sure as hell wouldn’t have taken the heat for that cherry tree shit. I would have been all ‘Donny was over. He wanted to show me his new axe.’”

A few pity chuckles. Not proud to say I'm one of them. A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do.

“So my ex-girlfriend retweeted something I posted last night. What the hell is that about? You said you never wanted to talk to

me again. Either you accidentally sat on your phone after cyber-stalking my Twitter or you're interested in re-tweeting more than my post."

Slightly bigger laugh. Nothing to write home about.

"Even worse is the psycho ex that just can't get it into their head that it's over. How many more ways do I have to say it? Do I need to get a megaphone? A billboard? A restraining order? I don't care what anyone says. Girls want it just as much as guys do. Have you ever heard the stuff that girls talk about when guys aren't around? It's filthy. I have a sister. And she has slumber parties. I almost dropped the glass I was holding up to the wall."

Finito. He gives the audience a little wave as he locks the mic, then heads back to his seat, head down.

Some weak applause. I try to beef it up but there isn't much I can do. I feel bad for him. I do.

Not everybody is blessed with a sense of humor from birth. Or a body that creates a never-ending wealth of material. Most girls would be miserable that they're fat. Me? I thank God every day.

“You did great,” I lie. He doesn’t believe it for a second.

“No, I didn’t. I suck.”

Mr. Harris goes up to the mic. “Nice job, everybody. Some really good stuff in there. Remember, the more personal the better. That’s the soul of good comedy.”

I smile. I know he means me.

“Now, before I do notes,” he continues, “I wanted to let you know about this.”

Mr. Harris holds up a flyer that reads: CHUCKLE CELLAR TEEN COMEDY COMPETITION. My heart skips a beat. First of all, it’s held at The Chuckle Cellar, which is where legends regularly perform. Second of all, the winner gets a regular slot at the club.

“Two of you will be taking an all-expense-paid trip to ... about ten blocks from here. I’ll be letting the lucky pair know by the end of the course.”

My heart skips several beats. I don’t care if it’s a trip to that creepy well in *The Ring*—all that matters is that George and I are there together. Which means he needs to seriously up his comedy game. Which means *I* need to seriously up his comedy game.

Challenge accepted.

“Okay, notes,” Mr. Harris says with a sigh. A lot of these aren’t going to be a surprise. “Rob, you need to work on your delivery. Your material is good but you’re going too fast. We’re missing a lot of the payoffs. It isn’t a race. Marcy, let’s work on your confidence. On stage, you have to let them know you’re in charge. You never hear a doctor walk into the operating room and say ‘I’m going to try and do this open-heart surgery.’”

“And if you do, it’s your own fault for using a Groupon,” I call out. Even Mr. Harris laughs.

Everyone but me is furiously taking notes. I’m in my element. Comedy has been part of my life from the minute I was born. I remember getting my first *real* laugh like it was yesterday. I couldn’t have been older than two. I know that because my mom and I were crammed into that tiny apartment in Queens. My dad was—well, back then let’s just say he could have been anywhere. Well, anywhere there was alcohol. He would just disappear for days at a time. Sometimes weeks. Once I got old enough to ask, Mom would tell me he was away for work.

But I knew.

Mom had just come home from another grueling day at her public school job. Rosa, the elderly Hispanic woman across the

hall who watched me during the day, had made us tamales. She would help Mom out all the time with the little luxuries that we couldn't afford, like food and clothes.

So there we were, eating tamales at a table the size of an airplane bathroom and my mom just started crying. She was trying to conceal the fact behind her hand, but this was the kind of shoulder-shaking sobs that you can't hide. Like "just finding out a loved one got crushed by a building" crying. The real deal. So I did the only thing I could think of.

I leaned forward and smashed my entire face into my plate of tamales. Then I sat up, putting my little arms out like *ta da* as the meat and cornmeal fell off in chunks onto the table.

And just like that, she laughed. It wasn't a pity laugh; wasn't a polite laugh. It was like a curtain had lifted and she threw back her head and laughed for what seemed like forever. My mama, who just a minute ago was broken, was fixed. And it was all because of a joke. From that point on, comedy has been the focus of my life.

"George ..." Mr. Harris says, bringing me back to reality.

Mr. Harris shakes his head, disappointed. "You have confidence, pacing—everything but the material. You need better stuff."

“Oh, is that all?” George shoots back sarcastically. “That’s like telling someone they could be an Olympic swimmer if they only had ...” He searches for the joke. “A pool?”

A few twitters from the group.

“Arms,” I volunteer.

The class cracks up yet again.

Mr. Harris makes an impassioned plea. “Find the stuff that you hide from the world, George. The stuff you would die if anyone found out about. Then bring it up with you on stage and shine a big light on it.

“Like, Charlie,” he says, smiling at me.

And then it’s time for my critique. “Charlie, you’ve got great stuff. Material is sharp and the pacing is right on. The only note is that you feel a little rooted up there. It’s okay to move around a little.”

“Technically, that’s exercise,” I grumble. The class laughs. George snort #3.

“I try to avoid exercise as much as possible,” I continue. “Unless I’m running after a grilled cheese food truck.” Another solid laugh. I’m writing that one down.

And now I want grilled cheese.

“Oh, one last thing,” Mr. Harris says as we gather our stuff together to leave. “We’re getting a new student next week. She just moved here from South Carolina.”

After class, George and I walk towards our trains together. We do it every week and sometimes he slips his arm in mine. I try to remain upright.

So remember how I said my dad was an asshole? (I know, you’re supposed to hate the disease, not the person, but I’m perfectly comfortable hating them both.) Well, he did *one* good thing.

When I was about ten, once I understood that he was gone forever, I went into the basement to smash the shit out of whatever of his he left behind. I opened this old suitcase and inside were like a thousand old videotapes. Immediately I was horrified, assuming they were porn or something. I pulled one out and saw the word *Caddyshack* carefully printed on the spine.

Still worried it might be porn, but too curious to die never knowing, I cautiously put it into the VCR my mom could never bring herself to get rid of for some reason.

And there it was. The golf course, that song, it was magical. I sat there for the next hour and thirty-eight minutes laughing

until I cried. When it was over I ran back to the suitcase and started pulling out tape after tape. Movies, old sitcoms, it was like a course in classic modern comedy, and I couldn't get enough.

Did he leave it for me on purpose? Sometimes when I hate myself for missing him, I pretend he did.

"I got the most amazing eBay score," I tell George, excitedly. "Someone managed to find the episode of *Saturday Night Live* when Charles Rocket said 'fuck' on air! You should come over and watch with me."

His eyes light up. I melt again. How can one guy be so cute, so funny, and so into things like old-school *SNL*? It makes no mathematical sense. But crushes never do.

I've had crushes before. When I was little, I was convinced I was going to marry Cartman. Something about his brazen outlook on life spoke to me. Plus, he was really cute in his little spherical way. He was going to whisk me away to South Park, where we would have adorable little foul-mouthed babies together.

The feelings I have for George surpass my feelings for Cartman. Plus, George is a non-fictional, three-dimensional human being that I actually *know*, which is a huge plus.

I remember the moment I knew George was *The One*. It was so romantic. He had given me his cell number because I told him I could help him with his material outside of class. I texted him, “*Yeah, I’m going to have to go ahead and ask you to come over on Saturday*” and he texted back “*Okay, but first I have to fill out all these TPS reports.*” And I was gone.

I’ll tell our kids that story someday. And then we’ll all pile on our living room couch together with a ton of buttered popcorn and watch *Office Space*.

“I was watching *The Best of Will Ferrell* the other day and I swear to God I almost peed my pants,” George says, laughing.

“Almost?” I say. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“I’m never going to be one-tenth as funny as he is,” George says, looking at the ground.

“You’re funny,” I say.

“I don’t know; I just got slammed in class.”

“Yeah, but it’s the best stand-up class in New York City. High standards.”

He looks at me and sighs. “Can you imagine how bad I’d embarrass myself at a national comedy competition? I’ll be cheering my ass off for you, though,” he says with a proud grin.

“I don’t *know* that I’ll be one of the two,” I say, feigning modesty.

He calls bullshit with a single look.

I change the subject. “What was the new stuff you wanted to pitch me?”

“I was thinking maybe something about Fortnite,” he says. “You do know what Fortnite is, right?”

Of course I know what Fortnite is. Anything he loves I know about. Which has meant hours watching ESPN (boring), reading Japanese manga comics (oh God, so boring), and watching hours of YouTube videos of guys playing video games (somebody kill me). But I do it happily because of these shared moments.

“You should do a bit about how excited the American Dental Association was to see #flossing trending” I say, grinning.

His face lights up and he grabs his spiral notebook, spins me around, and uses my back as a writing table.

“That is perfect!” he gushes. “Hang on. Just let me make some notes.”

Technically, it’s a backrub. From the man I love. We can stay like this forever as far as I’m concerned. But too soon we go back to walking.

“Here’s the thing, though,” I tell him. “You need to listen to what Mr. Harris is telling you. Focus on material that’s more personal. The things about you that nobody would believe. Like how you love watching the Food Network. Or have a My Little Pony doll.”

“*Action figure*,” he corrects me under his breath.

“That stuff—the embarrassing stuff—would be killer,” I say. “Nobody would believe a ridiculously good-looking guy like you would ...”

I stop. Did I say that out loud? From the look on his face, apparently, I did.

“Did you just call me ‘ridiculously good-looking’?” he asks with a sly smile.

I try to shrug it off nonchalantly.

“I mean that in the broadest of definitions. No offense, but it isn’t something I’ve given much thought. I don’t hang out with you for your looks. I hang out with you for your off-the-charts B.O. and superior flatulence capabilities.”

“Awww.” He lets one rip. “Just for you, Chuckles.”

“Now I feel bad. I didn’t get you anything.”

He throws back his head and laughs. To hell with the laughter of children or the first cry of a newborn baby. His delight is the most beautiful sound in the universe.

We get to where we part ways to go to our separate trains and he grabs me in a bear hug to say goodbye, effortlessly lifting me off the ground like I'm a piece of paper, and I'm in heaven but what I'm also thinking is ...

I really want that grilled cheese.

I can't stop staring at the businesswoman across the aisle from me on the train. She has to be 5' 8" or taller and she doesn't weigh more than a buck twenty-five soaking wet. She is nursing what I am just going to assume is a non-fat latte from Starbucks, that I am also going to assume is her dinner, and she taps her foot repeatedly. I once read that fidgeting can burn up to five hundred calories a day. Her jacket hangs off her bony shoulders, falling in perfect shape. She looks thin, elegant, wealthy ... and absolutely miserable.

By comparison, I weigh close to 200 pounds (I don't weigh myself on any regular basis—once you pass 180 you just naturally fall into the “fat” category and can relax about the whole numbers game). I am eating a grilled cheese sandwich

that must have a full stick of butter incorporated into it. My clothes don't hang on me so much as just *hang on*—creating various bulges and bumps that each have their own personality and purpose.

There's the upper belly roll (we'll call it Roll A) that hangs over the top of my pants. It's useful for balancing my cell phone when I need my hands free.

Then the lower belly roll (hereafter referred to as Roll B), which is the section under my waist. It is useful for protecting my modesty should I ever be naked.

The back fat that my bra creates (Rolls C and D) doesn't have any particular use yet, but I remain optimistic.

Then there is the upper back/lower neck roll (Roll E), which I believe would give my brain stem extra protection in case of a rear end collision, and the under chin roll (Roll F) which allows me to do an absolutely killer Jabba the Hut impression simply by tilting my head down.

Do I wish I could go into any store and pick out any outfit I see and look effortlessly breezy and beautiful in it? Sure. Would I trade it for naturally having a goldmine of comedy material at my fingertips?

Hell no.

I get off the train at Yonkers and walk the five blocks to my house. It's the most exercise I get daily and I hate every minute of it. If God had meant for us to walk he wouldn't have invented hoverboards. Finally, I arrive finally at my home's tiny porch, unlock the front door, and drop into the nearest chair, winded. I hear the neighbors fighting next door. When you live in a semi-attached two-family house you hear everything.

The other thing I hear is the sound of the television from my mom Rachel's room, which tells me she's asleep. How do I know? Because it's on *Dancing with the Stars* and that means she fell asleep after *Jeopardy* and didn't change the channel when *Wheel of Fortune* came on.

Mom hates *Wheel of Fortune*. It's Vanna's fault. My dad used to watch it every night and comment on how effortless and elegant she was in her fancy gowns and high heels as she turned the illuminated letters. No woman needs to hear that shit after a day of working and looking like crap and just wanting to crawl into a housecoat and pass out on the couch.

I go into my mom's room and there she is, as suspected, asleep on the bed, remote in her hand, empty wineglass on the bedside table.

I watch her for a moment. She has the slightest smile on her face. I don't know what she's dreaming about, and I hate to take it away from her.

But she has to eat. I gently take the remote and turn off the TV. She wakes with a start.

"Oh, hi baby," she says, stretching. "I was just taking a little nap. I didn't have a chance to make dinner."

"That's okay," I say, climbing in next to her. "I'll make us something. What do you want?"

"Oh, whatever. Doesn't matter," she answers, sadness in her eyes. I know she wishes she were the kind of mom that had dinner ready for me when I got home every night. The kind who keeps the house spotless and goes to yoga and has "movie night" with her friends. But we don't always get what we want in life. Mom does the best she can and I do ... everything else.

I actually love cooking. I know, shocking. I would love it even if I wasn't fat. There's something about taking a bunch of ingredients that are singular and boring and combining them in a way that makes something extraordinary. That whole "being greater than the sum of its parts" thing.

It's the same with comedy. When I'm writing jokes, I have access to the same twenty-six letters as everyone else. It's how I combine them that make them special.

"You must be starving," Mom says, getting out of bed.

"I could eat." Yes, I had a grilled cheese. This is Dinner 2—The Sequel. I wish I could say two dinners is a personal best. It isn't. As long as there are buffets there is no cap on the amount of dinners one can eat. Trust me.

"I know exactly what I'm going to make us," I tell her. "Tamales."

Our kitchen looks like it came directly from the set of some 70s sitcom. Between the orange wallpaper, the almond appliances whose finishes are hanging on for dear life, and the Formica countertop that is a museum of pot burns and unresolvable stains, it isn't going to be featured in *Elegant Kitchens* magazine any time soon. It is truly the armpit of kitchens.

And I love it. It has its own personality—from the stove that won't light if the oven is on ("You want me to do two things at once? What am I, some sort of magician?") to the fridge that creates a symphony of sound (usually between the hours of 1 and 5 a.m.), and a drain that only works sporadically (and

sometimes only after you talk nicely to it, which believe me, I've done). Our kitchen is frustrating, not pretty to look at, and full of love.

We have a lot in common.

One of the things I love about cooking is that I have my own cooking show. You heard me right. Right there in my kitchen, for an audience of none, I am the star, producer, and writer of my own cooking comedy show. And it's awesome.

"Welcome to today's show," I say to the nonexistent camera. "Today we're going to be making tamales. Tamales is a Spanish word for 'food that looks like presents.'"

I get started on the actual cooking. "First, you have to soak the corn husks. Then you brown the meat and while that is cooking you prepare the dough."

My mom comes in. Sits at the table.

"We have a special guest tonight," I announce proudly. "Rachel Pearlman. She's a librarian doing her part to combat this country's shameful problem with adult illiteracy, by letting adults who can't read surf the Internet. Hey, whatever keeps them from breaking into cars."

Mom actually smiles. That's rare nowadays. She gets a fresh wineglass out of the cabinet, pulls a box of wine out of the fridge, and pours herself a glass.

"Just one," she tells me, averting eye contact.

"Mom, you don't have to keep saying that. You've had that box of wine for ages. Jesus made it himself."

"I know, I know," she says. "I just don't want you to worry about—"

I turn to her. "Listen to me. You bust your ass every day for a bunch of snotty kids who wouldn't know a good book if it bit them in the ass. You work overtime for no extra pay, and if you want a glass of wine when you come home then have a damn glass of wine. Hell, you deserve a bong rip."

"Charlie," she admonishes me.

"My point is, you deserve to relax. You can handle it." I look her right in the eyes. "You aren't him."

She nods gratefully. Takes a sip.

I try to pretend it doesn't bother me but I know that's the second box of wine this week. I'm not blind.

I go back to my show.

"Now you knead the dough," I tell the audience. "Dough is awesome. Dough makes everything better. Why can't everything

be covered in dough? Do you realize how much better life would be if all things were dough-covered?

“Think about it. Kale? Edible. Vitamins? Ten, please. That guy in math class who keeps making that annoying clicking sound with his tongue? *Boom!* Can’t hear a thing.”

I wish dinner at our house was like dinners in sitcoms. Sitcom dinners are fun and lively and everyone talks about their day and all the funny things that happened. People come in and out of the swinging door that leads to the kitchen.

But dinner at our house is quiet. Very somber. Or at least it would be if I didn’t do anything about it. So I try to talk about my mom’s day at work (full of ungrateful illiterates) or my day at school (full of ungrateful illiterates).

“I did a great job tonight at class,” I share proudly. “Mr. Harris called it solid. I am *comedically strong, like bull,*” I say, using a random Russian accent, which is pretty much just Borat.

“You’ve always been funny,” Mom says. “At your cousin’s tenth birthday you got up in front of everybody, grabbed the mic out of the DJ’s hand, and did an entire set on *Yo Gabba Gabba*.

“Oh, my God,” I say, cringing. “That was such beginner material. Please kill me. My world revolved around DJ Lance,

my Bratz dolls, and Cinnamon Toast Crunch cereal. I remember my bit about it—something about how more desserts needed to be miniaturized for children’s breakfast cereals.”

“You were fearless,” she says, picking at her food. I can tell what she’s thinking. There isn’t a lot of fearlessness at her end of the table.

“Yeah, well, when you look like this you can either hide, which isn’t easy, or you can stand up and yell as loud as you can. Which isn’t easy either. But it’s a hell of a lot more fun.”

I help myself to another serving of tamales. They are fantastic.

“So, your birthday is coming up ...” Mom says, quietly.

I keep eating.

“Do you want to have a party?” she asks.

I know the answer she wants to hear. Luckily, it’s the only answer I can give her.

“Nah. Parties are lame. Nobody has parties anymore. Besides, I don’t really have a lot of people to invite,” I say, helping myself to a large spoonful of Spanish rice.

“Well, you could invite the kids from your comedy class,” she offers helpfully.

I shake my head.

“A few of them are cool,” I admit, “but most of them are annoying to the point that they should consider *that* as a career path. Some people need to stay as far away from a microphone as humanly possible. They serve no purpose in life. We might as well just hunt them. ‘*Not a human being that’s armed, but a clever, a clever human being who knows the jungle. Or the woods.*’” I say, quizzing her. She looks back at me, confused.

“The movie, Mom. What quote is that movie from?”

“You know I don’t know that stuff, Charlie.”

“Take a guess. I talk about it all the time. Starts with a ‘W’ ...”

“*Willy Wonka?*” she guesses.

I groan. “Mom, it’s from *Wedding Crashers*. How can one person know so little about the classics? It’s disgraceful. Seriously, I may have to call Child Protective Services.”

We go back to eating. “I was thinking that for your present...”

I stop her right there. “Mom, you know the only thing I want: to keep going to stand-up classes. It’s all I need. And thank you.”

She sighs. Knows it’s no use arguing.

“More importantly, what’s for dessert?” I wonder out loud.

“I could make some baked apples,” she offers.

I cringe. Calling a baked apple dessert is like calling Kim Kardashian an actress. There may have been a camera in the room but let’s not get crazy.

“Sure, Mom. Sounds great.”

I should mention I’m a pretty good actress, too.

“So Mr. Harris told us about this comedy competition,” I say.

She stiffens. “What does it cost?”

“Nothing,” I continue. “Two people from the class would be going. And, not to brag, but I’m pretty sure I’m going to be one of them. And George is going to be the other if I have anything to say about it.”

She looks at me, concerned.

I know what’s coming. Just like I know that after the next glass of wine she’s going to be too tired to clean up dinner and so I’m going to have to do it. It’s okay—it isn’t like I have a metric ton of homework to do. Oh wait, yes I do.

“Charlie,” she says, looking me straight in the eyes. “I know you think that you and George are going to magically end up together someday.”

“Maybe I do. I’m not allowed to want that?”

“No,” she tells me curtly. “It’s unrealistic.”

Deep down I know she's trying to protect me from getting hurt. But it's like saving someone from being hit by a car by throwing them off a bridge. They're still going to die. And, as a matter of fact, they might have a better chance of surviving the car.

My mom never had to worry about her weight. She was always naturally skinny. As a matter of fact, sometimes I have to convince her to eat. No, my weight problem comes from my dad. One more thing to put on the thank-you card I would love to shove down his throat someday.

My mom had guys like George throwing themselves at her her entire life. She has no idea what it's like to be me.

"I just don't want to see you get hurt," she says, softly, feeling guilty about being so honest with me.

"George might be out of my league," I respond. "but at least he's a good guy. At least I didn't pick some drunk loser who dumped me and my kid."

Oooh, that hurt. And I instantly feel bad about it. But it's out there. And more importantly, it's true.

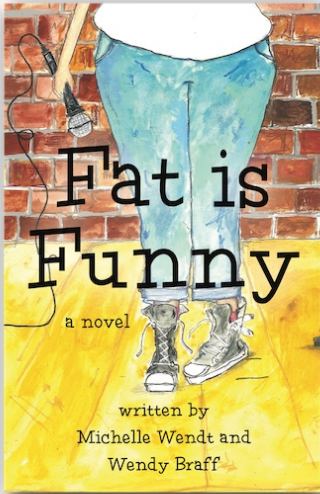
"Your father wasn't a loser when I met him," she tells me, coldly. "Somewhere along the way something changed. Maybe it was the pressure of being married. Or having a kid."

Okay, now I know she's a little drunk. Did she just insinuate it was my fault? Jesus Christ on a tamale.

“George *gets* me,” I say, standing up from the table. “Which is more than I can say for you.”

I march out of the kitchen, then reenter a moment later to grab my plate. Nothing like ruining a great exit.

But, you know—tamales.



An overweight, brilliantly funny High School student secretly crushes on her best friend... a boy in her stand-up comedy class. When a new student ruins her theory that beautiful skinny girls can't be funny – she takes drastic measures to reclaim both her spot at the top of the comedy food chain and the boy she loves.

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