

# **GORGEIOUS**

**A Journey of the Body**

**By Anna Furse**

**A Play for Teens that Explores the  
Serious Truth About the Perfect Body**



**The New Conservatory Theatre  
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*Alice at an enormous oval table which is part of the huge rosebud crinoline dress she is wearing and which forms the entire stage setting. Her floor length hair is half plaited about her shoulders. The image is doll-like, ultra-feminine, mysterious and theatrical. The surface of the table now bears a book with a clasp, a quill pen and inkstand. Later, we will discover that the surface in fact consists of many apertures through which ALICE will find – or be confronted with – various objects, dolls, foodstuffs, cosmetics, etc.*

*All other character's voices speak through ALICE.*

*As the audience enters, the sound of birds chirping.*

*ALICE is asleep. Lightly snoring.*

*As the performance begins, an eerie rhythmic sound which mutates to the sound of a quill pen scratching on paper. This corresponds to the action onstage. ALICE slowly comes to life. She is writing in her journal.*

ALICE: Dear Diary, Today is my birthday! And the first day of Spring. Everything outside is quite bursting with life. Clean green shoots are pushing up through the earth and there's buds on the willows furry as newborn kittens. The cherry tree is frothing with blossom and the river is nearly bursting its banks. I feel...quite light-headed. And curiously hot. I ran with joy – well, tried to, only my shoes got caked in mud and the hem of my skirt too and then I tripped and fell flat on my face and the whole of me was oozing with the wet brown stuff. So, I turned back and tried to avoid Mother but she caught me on the stairs and said

MOTHER'S VOICE: Alice Goodbody!! You are a disgrace! When will you learn young lady that you are no longer a child! You are 15!! You cannot cavort about like some unbroken pony. You must learn to be more ladylike. Restraint Alice! Restraint! Or no man will ever wish to marry you! Go upstairs immediately and change your clothes. Put your muddy ones straight into cold water and scrub! And I want to see them hanging on the line within the hour. Leave your shoes till the mud dries and then brush it off. They are probably ruined. But if you keep your skirts over your feet as you are supposed then no-one need know. Be off with you! And do your hair!

ALICE: So you see dear Diary I am a disgrace. I shall never learn to be a proper woman. I shall be on the shelf. Like Auntie Zarie. Unmarried and dependent on

my brother to take care of me. Sewing. Trying to make myself useful round the house. But basically *useless*. No parties, no dancing, no swooning. No babies, because the stork only brings them to married girls. I shall just get tighter and tighter and drier and drier until one my one my teeth fall out and...Oh but how can I talk so of Auntie Zarie whom I love and who has been so good to me. Almost like a mother. Grphew! I try to be good and quiet and still like Mother says. But then I get this urge to move to run to shout and laugh out loud. I sill want to climb trees and lift my skirts to jump over streams...Ouch! *(she suddenly clutches her belly)* What was that? Twinge...ache...it feels like something is dragging me, pulling down...its gnawing now, tugging and gnawing...and my back hurts...

MOTHER: *(as if calling from another room in the house)* Alice! Have you washed your dress?

ALICE: *(shouting as if to another room)* Yes Mother!

MOTHER: And what are you doing now?

ALICE: *(hurriedly snapping her diary shut and hiding it and the inkwell, pen.)* I...I'm doing my hair, Mother. I'm trying to plait it and pin it up like you showed me... *(she frantically begins to do this)*

MOTHER: Good. Remember, it is more becoming and practical coiled tight and then pulled over the ears. You don't need to fuss with it then.

ALICE: Yes Mother!

MOTHER: Oh and Alice!?

ALICE: Mother?!

MOTHER: Remember, God is watching you!

ALICE: *(fearful now, cowering, eyes upwards)* Yes Mother...

*ALICE has finished her hair and has furtively taken out her journal again. She writes:*

ALICE: Dear Diary, I resolve: not to be a disgrace to my family. Henceforth I will not rush about. I will not lose a sense of restraint. I shall be dignified. I shan't talk about myself or my feelings to anyone (except you). I shall interest myself more in others and put my own interests second. I shall work seriously. I shall be restrained. I shall, I shall, both in conversation and in my actions. I shall try to think before speaking and speak before doing. I shall not let my thoughts wander. I shall try not to be clumsy and boyish. I shall strive to be ladylike. I shall. I wish to improve myself for the sake of my Mother, a widow and a brave and resourceful woman, and all she has done for me in teaching me to be a woman and helping me to approach my adulthood with grace and virtue...oops! Oh heavens! *(she has spilt the inkwell in her writing fervor. It has spilt on her. She looks helplessly at her inky fingers resists the impulse to rub them on her dress, admits that she has, again, messed up and wails):* Oh I will try, I will hear me God! It was an accident....Ohhhhhh...

*Suddenly a pair of HANDS appear from within the tabletop. They are proffering a white sanitary towel. ALICE, alarmed but curious, dabs at it. The hands beckon. They are saying: "use this". ALICE gingerly wipes her hands on the towel which is now stained blue. Suddenly the magic hands swipe it away and close the lid so that the table is as it was before.*

ALICE: Curiouser and curiouser. I thought...Oh my goodness! ~~Oh~~...I thought...It looked just like...only Mama's are...cotton cloth. I know because I've seen them on washdays and asked about them and she told me I might soon be wearing them too. When *(with great difficulty)* my *m e n a r c h e* comes. *(whispering)* Eve's curse. The sweet secret. I mean...maybe it wasn't ...Oh! The shape, oh goodness, oh...Dear God! *(flustered, scribbles in her diary)* I think I have

just started my...I think I have just become...I believe I have just passed the threshold from girlhood to womanhood...I...Oh gracious! This is the menstrual 'flower' Mother has warned me about. She told me about how like flowers we are. How we need this, this 'issue', so as to become mothers ourselves. Oh. My hands are shaking! Ow! As I look out of the window I see the lilacs blooming. Just as I have been told they do. They bloom and fade. They produce flowers, and then fruit and then seeds which scatter to be...to...to enter the earth once more in order to germinate and make roots downwards and shoots upwards. Oh my goodness! I'm perspiring! What shall I tell Mother? She will now, for sure, restrict my diet. No more pickles, meat or cloves, for fear they...excite me. Oh, I am so frightened. And I hurt. My lower region is aching. I think I want to lie down. Drink tea. Do nothing. I have a headache! I feel sick. And so huge. As if I had drunk a barrel of water. Maybe I can skip my tea party. I shall say that I am...indisposed. From now on I shall mark this occasion simply with the letter "X".

*HANDS appear from another part of the table top. They offer ALICE a booklet. ALICE takes it and reads it out loud. Her eyes grow wide.*

ALICE: No! It can't be possible! I cannot believe that there can be such things! (*reads*) Oh gracious! There's even a diagram of...No. No!!!! This is surely not for my eyes. I can't look! "tam – pon". What on earth? It looks so...unpleasant. So peculiar. Like a telescope. No! Not right. It can't be right. No I could never, never; I think I'll be sick! Ohh... (*flicks the pages and scrutinizes the back cover*) "copyright 1999"!

*She gasps in horror, throws the booklet. HANDS catch it. Make it vanish. HANDS produce a large watch. A time-traveling cacophony of ticking and whirring during which ALICE moves her upper body as if she is tumbling (cf Alice in Wonderland's fall). During this HANDS throw up various objects, pieces of clothing from different apertures in the tabletop. When this is over, the table is strewn with teenage girl objects of fetish. ALICE surveys them one by one. She picks up a magazine with a picture of Di Caprio.*

ALICE: “Leonardo – true love, the true story” *(She picks up a pair of Calvin Klein women’s boxer-short knickers. Admires them.)* “I think Mother might approve of these. Well, they’re white. Cotton. Unadorned. Except perhaps they’re a bit short. Maybe they belong to someone very small. *(reads)* “C.A.L.V.I.N. K.L.E.I.N.” Hmm. That doesn’t sound like a girl. *(drops them)* Maybe they’re not girls’. Oh! What if they’re boys’? *(picks them up fearfully and reads the label.)* “One size. Washing instructions: machine wash warm and tumble dry...?” Machine???? Tumble??? Why would Calvin want anyone to know these things about herself, or himself? *(she picks up a pair of platform shoes)* Ooooooh. I’ve seen pictures of these in my book about Greek Drama. *(picks up a wonderbra)* What on earth could this be? *(finds label and reads)* “Wonderbra” what a strange word... “34B cup”...must be some cooking thing. For measuring ingredients? Maybe for cheese making? You could put the curds in here and hang it over...Certainly couldn’t drink out of it. Feels nice. Reminds me of something but I cannot think what. *(finds a make-up purse)* Ah! I know what this is. Well, at least I think I do...no, maybe not... *(she opens lipsticks, blushes, eyeliners, mascaras and reads all the names and descriptions, puzzled and very interested eg)* “Titian Red”, “Charcoal”, “Iridescent Rose Madder”...Maybe its some artist’s bag. Wait a minute: *(opens a powder compact)* I think I know what this might be *(she sniffs it, dabs her fingers on it, crumbles it in her fingers)* Yes! I knew it! Powder paint!! Maybe Calvin is an artist. Maybe Leonardo is Leonardo Da Vinci and Calvin is his pupil...Maybe Calvin helped mix the colors for the Mona Lisa! Maybe he fell in love with her! But why the knickers? *(finds a mobile phone)* Gracious! What extraordinary material. Sort of like coal. No. Iron. No. I’ve never felt anything quite like it. Oh! It’s got numbers on it... *(explores the keys. Accidentally punches a stored number and gets through).*

FUTURE ALICE: Hello. This is Alice’s cell phone. Please leave a message after you hear the beep saying who you are and when you called and I’ll get back to you when I can. Bye...

*ALICE is amazed.*

ALICE: It, it can't be...it sounds so familiar.

*ALICE slams the phone down. Then cautiously picks it up and tries again. This time, after the voicemail message comes on again:*

FUTURE ALICE: Hello. This is Alice's cell phone. Please leave a message after you hear the beep saying who you are and when you called and I'll get back to you when I can. Bye...

ALICE: Who are you? Are you in there? Can you hear me? I'm Alice. I'm Alice Goodbody. And I'm very confused. I have just had the most extraordinary sensation of falling. Everything looks just the same, only different somehow. Only there are all these strange objects strewn around and, well, I am, well, feeling unwell, a little...unwell, I can't really talk about it but let's just say I'm indisposed. A woman who is indisposed. A woman, yes, woman. Young woman, er as it were, well, maybe that's why I feel so confused. Maybe that's why I feel like I have fallen. I don't know who you are but I feel I know you. If you're a ghost I'm not frightened of you. Surprisingly. So maybe you'd like to put the matter straight and make yourself known to me. I'm here now. I'm not going anywhere, so I think you'll find me. Here, where I always am...

*There's a loud tone and then a click. ALICE has run out of message time. She doesn't understand this. She's puzzled.*

*Suddenly the phone in her hands rings. She's alarmed. She explores it as if it were an archeological find. Trying to understand what the noise is and its provenance. Then, by accident, discovers the answer button. FUTURE ALICE'S voice now speaks:*

FUTURE ALICE: Alice! Hiya! It's me. Got your message. It's awesome to hear from you. I've been like doing this project at school and I been thinking what it must be like to be living like a hundred years ago and now...you've arrived! Oh isn't it such a relief we got our period at last?! I was nearly the last in the class. I really thought there was something wrong with me. D'you know

what I mean? I'm psyched we've started our period. I want everyone to know, everyone! I can't wait to tell the girls at school. They'll stop calling me fried eggs now. D'you know what I think? I think they should throw a party for us to celebrate. I do! My friend Shani says that in Ghana the Asante tribe put a girl who's just started under an umbrella and sing and dance in her honor. What do we get? A lesson in hygiene and a box of kotex. It's so not right! Well from now on I'm going to have big tits and wear a push up wonderbra on Saturday nights! Although right now they feel like someone's been using them for a punching bag so maybe I'll leave it a week! Oh it's so cool to hear from you! Welcome to the future, to the new millennium. We are going on a journey into our womanhood. You know how you found our boxers and make-up? What you thought was paint? It's face-paint...make-up you know? Well, you probably don't but never mind. The "cheesecloth"? That's a bra. Size "34B" means we're not exactly Britney but we're, well, sort of sporty.

ALICE: Size? What do you mean? I don't have a size. I'm just me.

FUTURE ALICE: So, where d'you get your clothes from, and how do you know what size to buy? Hm?

ALICE: I or Mother make my clothes by hand.

FUTURE ALICE: Wow. So like you'll never know if you're 'the wrong size'. That's sooooo cool. I like it. I hate sizes. And manufacturers seem to make them up as they go along so shopping can be a nightmare. D'you know what? Half the time I want to rave all night in my platforms and the other half I want to curl up in Mom's lap sucking my thumbs and have her feed me trays of gooey chocolate brownies. There's so much pressure. To look great. To do well at school so as to get a job or even go to college. To attract boys. Safe sex...

*ALICE shrieks and drops the phone. Starts gagging.*

FUTURE ALICE: *(whispering)* Alice! Relax. I know. That word. Scary eh? We're terrified of it all...our skin's breaking out. Acne. Spots. Blackheads. Ugh! And hair. In the wrong places. Bikini lines, and legs and armpits and face! And blood. Terrified of this bleeding. That it might show. Terrified of changing, of being touched, of having to get it on with boys so that our friends think we're really cool. Terrified of being laughed at for our boobs, our butt, our legs, our nose, our hair, our mouth, our teeth, our face. Terrified of being dissed. Of being crap at school. Of people thinking I'm not smart. Of what I'm gonna do with my life. Of not getting a job. Of getting a job. Of getting married. Of not getting married. Of getting pregnant...

ALICE: Yes! Yes! Yes!

FUTURE ALICE: You know what we need right now?

ALICE: *(into the mouthpiece)* What?

FUTURE ALICE: A cheeseburger, fries and a large coke.

ALICE: A what?

FUTURE ALICE: Whenever I get like this I just need to eat.

ALICE: I don't know what you're talking about. This cheese what's-it.

FUTURE ALICE: What? Alice! A cheeseburger is the best invention since sliced bread. Ground meat in a bun, cheese on top and fried potatoes. Anyways, you put lots of ketchup on it and it's hella good. And coca cola is a fizzy brown drink that tastes...well, I can't describe it...but there's really only one brand that's the real thing.

ALICE: I want some!

*HANDS produce a complete burger meal on a plastic tray. There is a big sign on it: EAT ME. DRINK ME. ALICE is fascinated. Starts to eat and drink. Guzzles. Make approving sounds and speaks with her mouth full:*

ALICE: Gracious me this is good!!!! Mother wouldn't approve at all! She wants me to stop eating meat for fear it makes me...excited...and as for this sweet beer stuff...it's...so...funny. Feels like I've swallowed a balloon full of air. Oh how do you make this food? Aren't you clever! I want the recipe. Let me write it down now. *(takes her diary and pen)*

FUTURE ALICE: Fast food Alice! Junk food, quick and cheap and over-the-counter – I – can't – wait food! I can't give you the recipe! It's a trade secret! Remember Alice, this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century! Food's ready to eat. You just have to buy it, that's all. You just walk in and buy it.

ALICE: You mean I don't have to learn how to cook?

FUTURE ALICE: Nope. Not really. Except a bit of microwaving I spose...

ALICE: So what do I do all day if I'm not planning and preparing meals?

FUTURE ALICE: I dunno. Live your own life. Dream your dreams...

ALICE: Of perfection?!!

*This thought disturbs ALICE.*

*HANDS produce a mirror. ALICE takes it and scrutinizes her face.*

ALICE: Eurgh! A blemish! Another one! Oh no! Blackheads! My face is so...fleshy!! Pudgy! I've never really looked at it closely before! *(pinches her*

*cheeks, under her chin) I'm ugly! (scans the rest of her upper body with the mirror) disgusting. This dress is too tight! I hate myself! I hate myself! I want blue eyes! No green! No brown! No grey! I want to be fair-skinned! No dark! I want to be taller! No shorter! I want straight hair, curly hair, black hair, blonde hair! I want bigger boobs, smaller boobs, no boobs. I want a flat stomach! I want...I want...I want another cheeseburger!*

*HANDS produce another tray of food. This time there's a sundae.*

ALICE: On second thoughts, I want you, whatever you are, soft pink creamy sweet pudding that you are! Mmmmmmm....

*ALICE eats. As she does so, HANDS produce a naked Barbie doll. ALICE stops eating. Is embarrassed but fixated. The more fixated she is on Barbie the more she eats. She feels Barbie is watching her...*

BARBIE: A minute on the lips, a lifetime on the hips.

ALICE: I beg your pardon?

BARBIE: It's full-fat pudding and double whipped cream. It's a naughty naughty naughty sinful naughty dessert. Are you really sure you want it?

ALICE: Who are you?

BARBIE: Hi! I'm Barbie! Diva of the doll-world. I'm a bestseller!! 2 of me are sold each minute! If you laid all of me in the world end to end I'd circle the earth 7 times! I'm 44 years old and I still look as young and pretty and impossible as I did in 1959. Do you know I was the first doll with breasts? At first this meant that I didn't sell well but then folks got kinda used to my cute little pointy things and well, the rest is history. I'm actually an anatomical impossibility. Like most classical nude paintings of women as a matter of fact. I mean Botticelli's Venus couldn't stand up if she tried!! Proportionally my feet

are equivalent to a toddler's shoe-size. And my waist, well, it's even smaller than those lovely corseted 17 inchers you gals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century loved so much. The thing about me is my total flexibility. I have had no less than 500 makeovers in 40 years! See I keep up! I'm always NOW! I can adapt my style, my fashion-sense, even my ethnicity to whatever the current market might be. Folks can never get enough of me! Kids go wild for me! So does Ken actually. Have you met Ken? He's my bendy-legged toy-boy, boy-toy, boyfriend, fiancé, husband, colleague...

*HANDS produce a naked Ken doll. ALICE hides her eyes and peeps through her fingers.*

BARBIE: We've both got our own lives and interests but there's lots we do together. We date all the time. Oh sorry. Ken and I are both real relaxed about nudity, even though we both have such extensive wardrobes. You will note that Ken has no er...real, bump at the front. That's because everybody out there just didn't want the real thing you know. Like I don't have any pubes! I guess that might be one reason why we both keep smiling!!! (*BARBIE giggles*) None of that nasty down below stuff to get in the way of a lovely, outfit-filled, hobby-happy life of style and fantasy...

ALICE: It's very nice to meet you but please put some clothes on please!!

BARBIE: Sure!

*HANDS produce BARBIE and KEN outfits. ALICE realizes she is supposed to do the dressing and does so, deeply curious but ashamed at her interest in their bodies.*

ALICE: What on earth are these supposed to be?

BARBIE: "Hot Surfers". My thong bikini sure gets some approval let me tell you and Ken, well, he's just sooooo hot in his Bermuda print surfing shorts... (*her voice gets muffled by ALICE pulling things over her head*)

ALICE: If Mother could see me know she'd die! Absolutely die! I've never seen a boy naked. I've never seen myself naked. It's...it's wrong I mean it's unattractive and should never be allowed. When I get married, my husband will never be allowed to see me naked. Never! I should die of shame! And I never, never want to see him in...in...the flesh as it were. I think you are both immoral. I think you have no shame. No sense of decorum and what's proper. I think your 'dating' is quite outrageous. I think you're obscene, outlandish and...and...quite...gorgeous!!

*ALICE throws the dolls down. HANDS whip them away.*

ALICE: Please come back!

*HANDS produce an array of Barbies of all ethnicity and styles. ALICE handles them all.*

ALICE: You're all the same really. Same face shape, eyes, everything, just different skin tones. And you're always blonde, whatever the color of your hair!! Even you (*she picks up an asian model*) and you (*she picks up a black model*) have the same features. You are cute, all-american, cheesecake white girls. What did I just say? What do those words mean? I look at you and then myself. I can only see difference. There's nothing about you that looks like me. I touch your taugth limbs, your tiny waist, your tight breasts and you feel like some miniature unbreakable dream of hard body and daintiness. You're a plastic princess. Epic womanhood. You're everything and everyone and everywhere. I dress you and I dream of the world in which you live, of fun of appliances and of jobs being all about wearing the right clothes and smiling a lot. When I play with you I'm playing with a dream. A serious dream. A dream of career and boyfriend and wide-eyed beauty. Your beauty is my shame. I'll never be you. I can only admire you. I want more and more of you in my hands. I want to belong to your world. I want to be a part of your worldwide corporation. I'll buy you. I'll dress you. I will I will!! And I will visit your website at [www dot Barbie dot com](http://www.dot.Barbie.dot.com) and I will

never never stop loving you! I'm so hungry! I'm dying to eat! I need some chocolate now!!!!

*HANDS produce chocolate. ALICE munches. Begins to cry.*

ALICE: This is hell. I hate being here, being me, here. Sweet sweet creamy melt-on-my-tongue and smell-of-angels food! Can't get enough! What's happening to me?!!!!!!!

BARBIE (Nurse or doctor doll): *(smug, treacly)* Chocolate has a chemical in it that replaces the chemical lost in tears when we cry. That's why when you're unhappy you think of chocolate. And when you've got your period you lose a lot of iron. Chocolate contains a lot of iron. So when you have your period and you want to cry and eat chocolate it means you're unhappy and low in both iron and that weep chemical. I guess you could say chocolate and tears well, just go together for women...

ALICE: Shut-up!!!!!!!!!!

*She wallops the Barbie on the table to cut her off. She is evidently strung out and screams an enervated scream. When she stops she's astonished and at first delighted. Then she suddenly glances around, nervous.*

ALICE: Oh I'm so sorry! I don't know what came over me. I just lost control. I'm really truly sorry. Please forgive me. *(shakes Barbie who doesn't speak anymore.)* Oh goodness! Are you dead?! Are you alive? You're just a doll! I think I am going mad! I feel a kind of hysteria rising in my throat. Desperate. Alice? Are you there? I need to find myself!! Where am I just when I need myself? *(picks up phone and dials but doesn't get any joy)* Shit! Gracious! Who said that? Gracious oh...I think I'm beginning to see where it's going. Where I'm going. No more other-Alice. Just this Alice, this me. Shit shit shit!!! I'm the

past and the present all rolled into one. I'm a time traveler and a shape-shifter. I have a magical body. I'm shifting shape...

*ALICE is now surrounded with 'dead' Barbies and Kens and some of the detritus of foodstuffs and clothing from before. Chaos in other words.*

ALICE: I'm growing! I'm becoming huge! My neck is streeeeetching. My head can touch the ceiling. I can hardly see my feet anymore. I'm blowing up now like a hot-air balloon. Getting bigger and bigger and bigger. I'm feeling strong now. And powerful. I'm taking up space in the space around me. I'm a huge me. No one can ignore me. No one dare insult me. I'm the life and soul of the party. Everyone loves me. That Alice they say, she's soooo strong and Amazonian. She's a goddess. She's hilarious. She's invincible. I'm a larger-than-life woman. Really here. Not floating in some frilly meringue of wispy girlishness. I'm muscle and strength and deep voiced and earthed and really connected. No? No? That's not right? That's not the story? Then what is the story? I get it. I get it now. Oh. This is big me: No waist, no hips. Just a huge mass of blubber. I'm disgusting? A wobbling mound of jelly. My flesh hangs in folds from my chin to my knees. It tumbles, like rolled dough, fold upon fold, now melting into itself, now separating. My surface is moist with perspiration. I'm all hot and heavy. My thighs rub against each other, my buttocks dance a silly bouncing dance behind me. I'm all soft and squidgy. A blob. Grotesque. Shapeless. A human mountain. I am a rhino an elephant a pig. I'm a pig I'm a pig I'm a pig!!!! Nobody loves me. I hate myself!!!! I've got to eat!!!! I'm disgusting! I've got to eat! Something to fill this emptiness inside! I'm a great guzzling cave! I want to fill-up with food. Stuff myself! Fill every crevice of me with food. Feed me!! Love me!

*All kinds of VOICES now taunt ALICE who is in a reverie:*

Fatty!

Fat slob!

Bouncing Bertha!  
Lump of lard!  
Have you got someone stuck to you?  
Slimfast works you know, you should try it!  
King Kong!  
Fatgirl!  
Miss Piggy!  
Bigboobs!  
Whales belong in the sea!  
Flubber!  
Pigface!  
Lazy fat cow!

*ALICE suddenly breaks out of her reverie*

ALICE: I hate myself! I need to get a grip. Take control. Show them. You are what you eat. I'm eaten up with hating this. I'll make them eat their words. Choke on them.

*She cries. Then stops*

ALICE: Soooooooooo, simple: calorie control is fat control. From now on I'll count *(takes diary and mutters as she writes eg:)*

Chicken soup (canned) 1 cup

Potato chips

Burger

White bread roll

One tablespoon tomato ketchup

1 pint chocolate ice cream plus fudge sauce calories +

1 extra large coke, the real thing, = grand total of... *(stops muttering)*

Jesus! I've just dreamed of eating a pound of flesh!!! What's a pound of flesh? 3600 calories, that's what. Ok start again Alice. Reduce Alice. Eliminate. Cut down. Lighten. Diminish. Look for fat-free, sugar-free, low-cal solutions to life. Burn it off. Match input to output. No increase output to input. Diet. Exercise. Slim. Trim. Look for a new you. Start today!

Ok Ok

1 cup chicken broth

1 burger, no roll, low sugar ketchup

1 low-fat sugar-free yogurt

1 diet coke zero zero zero. Total: 531

There. That's better. Much better. Much more like it. If I just eat one meal a day like this I'll burn up to 2000 calories which is... *(pause)* I'm famished!!!

*HANDS produce RUBY – a voluptuous doll.*

ALICE: Who are you? You're ridiculous! Yuk!

RUBY: *(over sincere)* I'm Ruby. I was made because Barbie is ridiculous. I'm here to tell you, you look just fine as you are. A woman's curves, her shape, any shape she chooses, is a natural part of who she is. Most women don't conform to standard ideals of beauty as promoted by fashion models and Barbie dolls. Most women are...

*ALICE can't take this piety*

ALICE: Shut up will you! I'm on a journey of self-improvement and no one's going to stop me! I'm losing weight!! I'm reducing. I'm starting to find my bones again, under my skin. See? I can just poke my tummy lightly and it bounces back. I'm a size 12, 10, 8, going down. I simply eliminate food. So what I do is first I fantasize about everything I want to eat. Then I add it all up.

Then I calculate exactly what I can eat each day that's under 1000 calories. That way I will lose two-thirds of a pound a day which is roughly 5 pounds a week which is twenty pounds a month which is, well, great, just great.

RUBY: Alice, you're beautiful, just as you are...

*ALICE pushes RUBY away. HANDS produce a lettuce and a bottle of low-cal/fat-free dressing.*

ALICE: I've begun. I'm melting. It's divine. I love vanishing! They're starting to praise me out there now. They say "wow" You look great. Really great. I see envy in their eyes. It spurs me on. Here's what I do when I really get into this thing. I get light headed just talking about it. When I do this, I'm an angel. I'm good. I'm reaching for perfection. I'm in control. I measure time in mouthfuls. My every minute is devoted to achieving my goal of perfection. See. Here's some of my very own special recipes: First 'Turning over new leaves': Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. A toilet will do, where you can lock the door and be sure of no interruptions. Then, sit comfortably, cradling your (washed) lettuce. Open a bottle of lo-fat salad dressing and one by one dip the leaves in the dressing until you've eaten all the lettuce and drunk the whole bottle. It's so great! It can take hours. You can really make it stretch. And it's only a total of 250 calories. Then there's the now-you-chew-it-now-you-don't. For this you need a packet of sweet chewing gum. Chew the sugar out of it and spit. Perfect for those gnawing sugar-craving moods when you could eat your own arm. Calories? (No cheating) Zero. And finally 'raw illusion': slice one apple, with peel (81 calories) and one stick of celery (6 calories) into tiny shards. Caress these in your mouth for as long as you possibly can before biting. It's the best and healthiest and lowest calorie meal you can get away with in this disgusting world full of food food food where everybody eats and eats and eats around you. Fat dribbling down their faces! Mouths full of cake! Chewing and spitting crumbs when they talk. And laughing with their mouths full! It's repulsive! It shouldn't be allowed! Not in public! Eating should be a private affair!!

VOICES:

Painfully thin!

Stick insect!

Boy-girl!

Skinny!

Who ate all the salad then!

Needs tape to stick herself together!

Bone-woman!

Wasting away!

Achwitz!

Unwomanly!

Frigid!

Thin!

Bird!

Skinny!

Walking skeleton!

Bone-bag!

ALICE: No! No! That's crap! You don't understand anything! You're blind! Use your eyes! Look at me!!!! I'm still fat! Cant' you see? I'm still fat and I need to keep working on improving myself. Anyway. This way I get to stop my periods which is some relief I can tell you. And boys stop looking at me like they want to...to...do things with me. And women admire me. I know they do. They think to themselves "I wish I was as in control as Alice. I wish I had her determination, her willpower". Every time I deny myself something to eat and they have some I feel great and they feel guilty. I look at you all and you seem...how shall I put it? Fleshy. Yes. And it makes me feel so virtuous. And funnily enough it makes me want to feed you even more. It makes me want to bake for you, little scones and bread and cakes and all those things I might pretend to eat with you but I'm really spitting into my napkin or vomiting up

afterwards because I can do that too you know? It's easy that bit. Great for binges. It's always best to start with something bright and colorful like tomato juice. That way you'll know when you got it all up. So you start with the color-marker as it were and then eat and eat and eat, ten thousand calories if you like. Then it's fingers down throat in the toilet and magic!! It's all out and you can forget it ever went in and down in the first place. If you don't like vomiting, laxative will work almost as well. Except it can be really painful.

MOTHER: Alice if you go on like this you're going to die!!

ALICE: Exercise is the key, Mum. You can always measure the calories you eat against those you use to move about. I never take an elevator. I run up stairs. I do pull ups and jog for hours each day. The important thing is to keep moving.

MOTHER: Alice you're killing yourself!

ALICE: I take tablets too. Chemical warfare on my insides. Stuff to make my system speed. Gobble up the calories. Tick tick tick. There's a ball of adrenaline stuck in my throat. It's all go go go!!!

MOTHER: Alice! You're dying!

ALICE: *(suddenly paying attention to MOTHER's voice)* I can't anymore! I collapse in the street, faint at school. I've shriveled to a crisp. I'm dry as a twig. I could snap at any moment. I stink! I stink of my disappearing act. My teeth have crumbled. There's baby-hair all over my body. On my face. But the hair on my head's falling out. My skin is dry. It's lost all elasticity, all tone. My bones hurt. They're bruised from sitting and lying. My eyes stare out of my skull like a lemur. They stare at you all and say "what are you looking at?!" Is this good enough? No. There's just no thing as perfection! I tried I tried I tried! It started because I felt so big. No I feel so very very small. "You're very small" said the

elephant to the mouse “I know” said the mouse “I’ve been ill”. I’ve been ill. Help someone please. I’m terrified of putting on weight, but I know I must. Please talk to me. Talk to me and help me. Help me! I don’t want to be a woman! I want to keep away from you all! Hide away! I repulse you don’t I?

*HANDS produce magazine. She flips it.*

ALICE: “Get rid of unwanted flesh fast. Cosmetic surgery may be the answer to your dreams. The Lissom Clinic offers free confidential advice on most types of surgical procedures including liposuction and collagen injections.” Yes! Yes! That’s the answer! The knife! Suction! Anything! I’ll have it cut off, vacuumed out. I’ll have a nose job, ear job, breast job, tummy job, buttock job, thigh job. I’ll remodel the whole lot of me. Nothing will stop me! Nothing! No-one! I want to be gorgeous! I want to be gorgeous! I’ve got to be gorgeous! Gorgeous! Gorgeous! (*ALICE swoons into a kind of trance*)

*HANDS produce FERAL-CHERYL doll*

FERAL CHERYL: Hey doll. Get a life. It’s ok. You’re fine. What’s with all this high-tech medical crap hmh? You’re gorgeous just as you are you know. And bright. You should try spending more time feeding your brain you know. Look at you sitting there all laced up, wishing you were someone else, dreaming the impossible. Face yourself! You’re the product of Western Civilization’s own worst hang up: the beauty industry!

ALICE: What on earth are you?

FERAL CHERYL: I’m a friend. I’m Feral Cheryl. I’m 13 ½ inches tall with brown hair, brown eyes and a realistic body shape. I have pubic hair (why are people so shocked by this?) I am made in Australia in a cottage industry, unlike Barbie who is the product of the third world sweatshop industry. I represent a

simple lifestyle. See? Simple clothing. I don't need that excessive wardrobe and all those accessories. Touch me. (*reluctantly ALICE does so*)

ALICE: You're very confident aren't you?

FERAL CHERYL: Dunno. But I guess you could say I'm content with my lot. In control of my life.

ALICE: Lucky you. You'll never catch on you know. You're silly. And you sound like my mum's hippy friend. And I don't like what you're wearing. People want glamour...

FERAL CHERYL: Yeah. I know. But as it happens there's a bit of a cult-following about me from Manhattan to the Shetland Isles actually. I have my own website and I've been on TV in London and in California. So watch-it miss smug-features.

ALICE: Ok. Really? TV Huh? By the way, I really like those things on your arms. What are they?

FERAL CHERYL: Tattoos. Primitive body-art. Incredibly fashionable all over the world. A little bit of pain (quite nice actually) and the ink goes in the flesh to produce the image of your choice, permanently.

ALICE: I want one. A snake. On my ankle. And a butterfly on my shoulder. And I want a pig on my belly!! No! I've got it! Medusa. I want Medusa tattooed all over me. Medusa with her head of coiling snakes. Medusa who was so hideous that people turned to stone when they looked at her! And I want what you've got through your ears. What's that?

FERAL CHERYL: Pierced my dear. Hey. Maybe you could get some piercings? Most people start with ears. But you can get your belly-button done, or your nose...Oh, I could go on...eyes, lips, tongues, and and...

ALICE: Yes, yes, yes I want to have pierced everything! I want my tongue full of diamonds. I want my eyes fringed in rings. I want silver studs all over my ears and my nose. And I want scars. I want to suffer the pain and the ecstasy of needles breaking open my flesh. I want to feel! I want to feel everything. The blood. Savor the moment I mark my own flesh, press ink and metal into it, inscribe it with my own story. I want to own my own body! I want to make myself mine mine mine! I won't care what people think! They'll think I'm ugly and stupid anyway. But this way at least they can admire my guts. "Did Alice really go through all that pain to look like that!?" Yes! Yes! Yes she will! And I want to emerge from my ordeal, proud of my endurance. A terrible beauty. The beauty of my power, the power of suffering...I want to be a saint. An angel! (*screams*) Pierce me!! Cut me!! Paint me in needlepoint! My flesh! My flesh! My flesh is me! I want to be free!!!!!!!!!!!!

FERAL CHERYL: Hey doll! Come back! Wake up and smell the big beyond. Like you could go backpacking you know. See the world. Sunset in Bali. The Great Coral Reef. The Eiffel Tower, Statue of Liberty. Wake up Alice! Wake up! Alice! Alice! Alice?

*ALICE in deep sleep. CHERYL'S voice mutates to MOTHER'S. VOICES singing "Happy Birthday" to ALICE and over this MOTHER'S voice calling:*

MOTHER: Alice! Alice! Alice! Where are you? What are you doing Alice? You'll be late for your own birthday! Everyone's waiting for you. There's cake! Put your new earrings on! We're wait...ting! Come down now! Alice?!

ALICE: (*slowly coming to, calls out*) I...I'm coming!!! I'm coming down!

MOTHER: What on earth has taken you this long? What have you been doing?

ALICE: (*calling*) Nothing! I think I just fell asleep that's all! (*to herself. Puzzled. Dazed still.*) Nothing. Just...getting ready...that's all...

END