

EMILY

But....surely you don't mean to say that...what you're wearing is, well, is all you have?

NATASHA

Oh, yes. And what's more, where I come from, I am considered one of the *lucky* ones. My underwear?—has elastic band. Is most amazing thing. Keeps panties where they belong. I am envy of neighborhood!

FRED

Well, can't they just go to the store and buy some clothes?

NATASHA

Sure. Only two problems. First, no money to buy clothes. Second, no clothes to buy. No elastic underwear, anyway—that's for sure.

EMILY

Well, isn't that just the craziest thing you ever heard of?! I'll tell you what we're going to do. I'm going to talk to my bowling league and see if they can't just round up a few hundred pairs of underwear to send to Russia.

NATASHA

It will do you no good. K.G.B.—they open everything.

FRED

Uh...isn't that called something else these days?

NATASHA

Different name, same organization. Secret police is secret police, no?

EMILY

But.....but, surely you don't mean to say they'd actually steal somebody's .....panties?

NATASHA (*shrugging*)

Why not? K.G.B need underwear, too.

FRED

Uh....Emily, isn't that your casserole I smell burning?

EMILY (*running out*)

It had better not be, Fred Sheets! You were supposed to be keeping an eye on it.

NATASHA (*To FRED*)

This....casserole. This was dinner, no?

FRED

Yeah, 'fraid so. But it's not really burning. I just said that to get her out of the room for a second. I had to warn you. This casserole of hers?

NATASHA

No good?

FRED

Well....let me put it this way. Last week, I finally got smart. I picked up a burger on the way home from work?—I work for a sheet metal factory just a five minute drive from here?---well, anyhoo, when I got home and Emily served me her casserole, I scooped it all into a paper napkin when she wasn't looking and took it out back to Belzebub—that's our dog—and she tore into that like there was no tomorrow.

NATASHA

Poor, defenseless creature!

FRED

Yeah, well...better her than me. Anyway, I just wanted to tell you, so....

EMILY (*re-entering*)

Well, here we are! Make way! Emily Sheets' famous casserole delight has arrived. And Fred, you were wrong again. It wasn't burnt—not even close.

FRED

Mmmm....I could've sworn I smelled something awfully peculiar!

EMILY

Sorry about takin' so long. I was out back checkin' on our dog, Belzebub, poor thing. She's been on the sickly side since last Thursday. I don't know what in the world could be the matter with her.

NATASHA (*whispering to FRED*)

The casserole!

EMILY

Well, come on everybody, gather around! Natasha, you sit right here. Fred, sit yourself down now, don't dawdle.

*(They both sit, reluctantly)*

Now then, everybody, ready? All right, Fred, it's your turn to say grace.

*(They hold hands. NATASHA looks very uncomfortable)*

FRED

But I said it last time.

EMILY

Fred! Are you or are you not the head of this household?

FRED

Yes, dear.

*(FRED and EMILY bow their heads. NATASHA looks at them quizzically)*

Dear lord, for the bounty we are about to receive, may we all be truly grateful. Amen.

EMILY

Amen. Dig in everybody!

NATASHA

What did you just do?

EMILY

Why....we were thanking the good lord for this bountiful feast which has been laid before us!

NATASHA

But...I thought *you* cooked dinner.

EMILY

Oh, my God! Fred, I think she's one of the atheists! We're going to have to take you to Sunday school so's that you can repent...or you're just going to find yourself in a heap of trouble come judgment day. But don't worry—we don't blame you.

NATASHA

Thank you.

EMILY

Not at all. Think nothing of it. No, it's them communists, is what it is. Where do they come off telling people God don't exist? It's really an abomination, that's what, but like I say, don't worry....we'll set you straight. Why, on Sunday, we'll even give you a little something for the collection plate. Not much, you understand, but.....well, eat up, honey! I declare, you're just pickin' at your food.

NATASHA

I...I don't think I'm really very hungry.

EMILY

I knew it!

FRED *(nervous)*

I didn't say anything!

EMILY

Her stomach is shrinking, is all I was going to say. Will you quit acting so skittish all the time. You'd think you were afraid of me or sumpin'. No see, what I was saying is that the stomach muscle, it actually kinda shrinks when it goes for a long time with no food.

FRED (*trying to be helpful*)

Could be worms.

EMILY

That's right, Fred—look at the bright side!

FRED

So, Natasha—have you given any thought to what you wanted to do your first night in America?

NATASHA

Oh, yes. I wish to see the Empire State Building. I want to climb to the top and spit off roof, then pick up good looking American boys.

(*pause*)

FRED

Oh oh.

NATASHA

And, of course, I'm not without culture. Well, I am from Russia, no? I would love to see a ballet at Lincoln Center, as well as viewing the works of art at the Metropolitan, which, although is nothing like our own Hermitage Museum, it is nevertheless superior by Western standards.

EMILY

Well, Fred, should you tell her or should I?

FRED

Uh.....Natasha, when they told you that you were going to stay for a year in Manhattan .... did they by chance tell you.....*which* Manhattan?

EMILY

No. I thought there was only one. New York City. The Big Apple.

EMILY

Well, honey...this is Manhattan, *Kansas*. The *Little* Apple.

NATASHA

What is....Kansas?

FRED

You've never heard of Kansas?!?

NATASHA

I'm sorry. I am foreign.

EMILY

Yeah, she's foreign, Fred. You're just a moron.

NATASHA

New York was my number one choice.

EMILY

Well, it looks like you got number two, honey...but don't feel too bad about it. Kansas is a whole lot better than them big cities with all the smog and traffic....why here in Kansas we got your rolling fields of wheat and....and bowling alleys as far as the eye can see.

NATASHA

What is this...bowling?

EMILY

You've never--!? Good God, Fred, she's never been bowling! Well, honey, are you in luck tonight! Right after supper, we're all going to pile in to the station wagon and head on over to Town and Country Bowl!

FRED

Bowling?! Are you crazy? On her first night here?

EMILY

Fred, need I remind you this is Thursday night? Bowl two lanes for the price of one?

FRED

But Natasha doesn't want to go bowling.

EMILY

Well, she sure as hell doesn't want to go to some stupid professional wrestling match which is what I'm sure you were going to suggest.

FRED (*Quietly*)

Something wrong with professional wrestling?

EMILY

No, not all. Not if you like to watch a bunch of sweaty, pot-bellied morons rollin' around on top of each other like there was no tomorrow.