

## Word-lifting

by Terry Baum [from 'Dos Lesbos']

V.O. Ever had that situation where you wanted to confront someone, but couldn't find the words?

GRACE: Uh-huh

V.O. Ever thought of the perfect rejoinder ten minutes after you should have said it?

GRACE: Too right.

V.O. Ever had the right words on the tip of your tongue, except you couldn't fish them up from the sludge in your brain?

GRACE: That's me!

V.O. You know what you need?

GRACE: No. What do I need?

*[PEG appears with a large dictionary]*

PEG: You need the Charlene Atlas Course in Word-Lifting.

GRACE: Word-lifting?

PEG: That's right! Through a series of gradual exercises, you train yourself to talk back, to lift those heavy, heavy words that get stuck in the back of your throat.

GRACE: Mine seem to stay somewhere down in my diaphragm.

PEG: Why do you need a diaphragm? You're a lesbian.

GRACE: Pardon?

PEG: Lesbianism comes with built-in birth control.

GRACE: Not that kind of diaphragm. Down here. *[She indicates]*

PEG: That's serious!

GRACE: It is?

PEG: But not to worry! Charlene Atlas will teach you to bench press those snappy comebacks, lifting them from deep down in your diaphragm, up through your oesophagus, past your vocal chords – and actually say them to someone.

GRACE: Really? This sounds like the answer to my prayers.

PEG: Are you tired of having insults kicked in your face at the office?

GRACE: I am.

PEG: Are you sick of innuendos being hurled at your head in the street?

GRACE: You're telling me!

PEG: Are you fed up with ignorant arseholes trampling on your tenderest feelings?

GRACE: My feelings are punch-drunk!

PEG: Then Charlene Atlas has the answer for you! Her guaranteed, fool-proof course in Word-Lifting.

GRACE: But what will it cost?

PEG: Absolutely nothing except your inhibitions.

GRACE: When can I start?

PEG: Right now. First, close your eyes and say, "I am a lesbian."

*[GRACE closes, then opens, her eyes.]*

GRACE: Done it!

PEG: No, not to yourself.

GRACE: I thought I ought to know.

PEG: OK, so now you know. Now let other people know.

GRACE: Who?

PEG: No one in particular. The world. Say it out loud.

GRACE: *[Looking round, apprehensive, mumbling]* I am a lesbian.

PEG: I don't think anyone heard you.

GRACE: I AM A LESBIAN.

PEG: Well, they certainly heard that. Now look at me when you say it.

GRACE: *[In love]* Darling, I am a lesbian.

PEG: *[Softening]* Really?

GRACE: Yes.

PEG: What a coincidence! So am I.

GRACE: That's nice.

PEG: Very convenient, really.

*[GRACE goes to embrace PEG.]*

PEG: Break it up, break it up. We're not here to enjoy ourselves. Now, imagine that we're sitting in the park having lunch. I'm your straight work colleague.

GRACE: What's in the sandwiches?

PEG: I don't know. Cheese and beetroot?

GRACE: I hate beetroot.

PEG: OK, pickle.

GRACE: Can I have camembert?

PEG: Will you concentrate? It doesn't matter what's in the sandwiches. You can have anything you like.

GRACE: Bacon and avocado. Yumm. I'm ready now.

PEG: Will you look at those two over there?

*[GRACE is non-plussed.]*

PEG: This is role play. We're having roles.

GRACE: I haven't got a roll, I've got a sandwich.

PEG: Are you being deliberately obstructive? Look, I am being Nancy Nice from the office. You know, the one who puts air freshener down her underpants to disguise her nasty female smells. We're in a park, there are people on all the benches. "Will you look at those two over there"? Take it away, Grace,

GRACE: Which two?

PEG: Those two women wrapped around each other.

*[GRACE goes gooey.]*

PEG: Shouldn't be allowed. Making an exhibition of themselves in public. Now if it was a man and a woman, that would be different, if you know what I mean. *[She bears down]* If you know what I mean. You do know what I mean when I say, if you know what I mean?

GRACE: Whoa! *[She fends PEG off like a traffic policeman holding up a motorist.]* What's wrong with a woman and a woman? Do you think everyone in the office is too refined to have ever done IT with a woman? Let me tell you, I'm not refined at all, and there's another half a dozen women I can tell you who aren't either. I am a bad girl, a nasty girl and I do IT with women all the time. Look – er – what did you say my name was?

PEG: Nancy Nice

GRACE: Look, Miss Nancy Nice, will you get it into your lacquered permed head, I AM A LESBIAN! And I don't like you making disparaging remarks about it, if you know what I mean.

PEG: Congratulations! You've passed!

GRACE: I have!

PEG: You are now an uppity dyke!

GRACE: I am? *[Clutching herself, ecstatic]* I'm an uppity dyke, I'm an uppity dyke...

PEG: You are now qualified to bring up a host of unpleasant subjects in daily conversation, such as your own homosexuality...

GRACE: I'm an uppity dyke!

PEG: A woman's right to choose...

GRACE: I'm an uppity dyke!

PEG: And various other topics that people would really rather not even talk about.

*[GRACE takes up a Presidential pose]*

GRACE: My fellow Amurrcans, I am an uppity dyke.

PEG: Enough, already. You've passed. My brain hurts.

*[Another pose from GRACE: John F Kennedy]*

GRACE: I take pride in the words, "Ich bin eine Uppetydyke."

PEG: What have I unleashed here?!

**BLACKOUT**