

From 4a.m. by Jonathan Dorf

JAKE. To whom it may concern. I recently purchased your four-inch peeling knife. It was on sale, but just because it was on sale doesn't mean it should be worse than a knife that's not on sale. Right?

(Beat.)

You advertise it as—and I quote—“the chef's ultimate weapon. The ergonomically designed handle offers maximum comfort, giving way to a razor-sharp carbon steel blade.” You also note that it cuts through fruits and vegetables like hot butter, standing up to the demands of the busiest professional kitchens, with no need for sharpening for three to five years. Three to five years. Not weeks. Not months. Years! (Beat.) I've had your knife for six days. and in these six days, I've cut a half-dozen tomatoes, two onions, one each red, yellow and orange peppers, and two cloves of garlic. Not bunches—cloves, and not even big ones—and kind of goin' soft.

(Beat.)

And therein lies our problem. Last night, I take your knife, your knife that doesn't need to be sharpened for three to five years, and thirteen vegetables later, it punks out. When it comes to two puny wrists, your razor-sharp carbon steel isn't up to the job. It cuts like a butter knife, and the blood is dripping so slow it could be hours before I even lose consciousness. But my parents are the only parents I know that don't have a lethal pharmacy in their medicine cabinet, and they're out with the car, so that's not an option either, which means that now, because of your carbon-steel disappointment, I have to sit around and wait and hurt. The whole point of your knife is so I don't have to hurt anymore.

(Beat.)

Do you know what it's like to have people smear egg yolks on your lunch table just before you get there, so you don't have anywhere to sit? Don't worry—they didn't waste the whites: those went into my lunch bag. and both of those were better than the rotting mouse in my locker.

(Beat.)

I used to cry about it. I stopped. What's the point?—unless you're too busy crying to think

(Beat.)

That might be something

JAKE. I'm about to give up, when I hear this other voice. He's barely on a different band from the preacher, so I have to get the dial just right, (rolls up his sleeves to reveal taped wrists:) which is hard when you have two slashed wrists, but I finally get it, and he's like my age. (Imitating FRANKIE on the radio:) “Is there anybody out there? It's Frankie 4 A.M., and if

you're awake and alive, let me know. I've got a great show for you this morning and every morning, just tune in and let's begin."

(Beat.)

And I start to listen, and he does all these jokes that are kind of funny and kind of not, and interviews with imaginary celebrities— and you can tell he's doing all the voices and he's not entirely good all the time, but he's so much better than you. And then he starts doing commercials, and he does one for your knives—and he hates them too! At the end, it's so funny, 'cause he says, "Thank you for making such crappy knives," only he's making fun of you. But I think you get that.

(Beat.)

And the more I listen, I kind of forget I hurt, and I'm thinking, what's he going to do tomorrow, and how does he know about your knives, and does he take call-ins? There's a phone number, but I don't know if it's real. I want to find out and call him and maybe I can be on a radio show that nobody listens to, but it would still be kind of awesome. If the phone number doesn't work, there must be some way of getting in touch with him—I'll bet radio people are like a tribe, and somebody will know.

(Beat.)

I want to listen to a few more shows before I'm ready to try calling in. Get more familiar. But it's like with every minute I listen...it just makes 4 A.M.—and my life—a little easier to take.

(Beat.)

So this is kind of a thank-you note, because if your knives actually worked, I'd never have heard Frankie. So thank you. Thank you for making such crappy knives.