

# A WINDOW INTO THE STOMACH

## A skit about the discovery of digestion

### Cast:

Alexis St. Martin, a Canadian voyager (he rowed big cargo canoes loaded with furs)

Dr. Beaumont, a United States Army surgeon

Two trappers

Store manager

Nurse

Moderator

Cue card holder

### Scene 1: *The American Fur Company store on Mackinac Island, Michigan*

*Two trappers are standing with Alexis, admiring guns and furs. The store manager is behind the counter, or somewhere nearby.*

**Cue card:** AMERICAN FUR TRADING POST AT MACKINAC ISLAND, 1822

**Alexis:** *(To the store manager, while admiring a pistol)* Monsieur, how much iz zees gun?

**Store manager:** That's hand carved by one of our local experts. I reckon it'd set you back about 50 furs.

*Alexis continues to look at gun while others talk.*

**Trapper 1:** How much for this shotgun?

**Store manager:** Be careful. That one's already loaded for duck hunting this afternoon.

**Trapper 2:** You heard the man, Joe. Don't be foolin' with a loaded gun, you're liable to...

**BANG!!!** *(It's up to you how to do the big bang-- cap gun? paper bag? someone yelling off stage?)*

**Cue card for audience:** Ahhh!

*The gun goes off, while it is pointed right at Alexis. Alexis falls down, holding his stomach area.*

**Store manager:** Someone call the army doctor! He's got to be nearby!

**Trapper 1:** His shirt is on fire! *(He smacks it to put out the fire.)*

*Trapper 2 runs out, and immediately comes back in with Dr. Beaumont.*

**Trapper 1:** I think it's too late, doc.

**Dr. Beaumont.** Wow, this man has a condition that we doctors call... "a huge hole in his chest."

**Cue card:** Chuckle

**Dr. Beaumont continues:** I don't know what I can do for him, but I will try my very best.

*Dr. Beaumont works on the patient.*

**Dr. Beaumont:** This is awful. Bits of splintered rib everywhere. Holes through half his organs. Half his chest was blown away. A gaping hole right into his stomach.

**Cue card:** Eww!!!

**Trapper 2:** Will he live?

**Dr. Beaumont:** Today, yes. Tomorrow,... probably not.

**Cue card:** Aww....

**Scene 2:** *Alexis lying in an army bed.*

**Nurse:** Doctor Beaumont, your patient is still alive. It's been over a week now and he's still alive.

**Dr. Beaumont:** Quite remarkable. Let me examine him.

*He looks at this stomach wound.*

**Dr. Beaumont:** I can't believe these wounds are healing.

**Alexis:** Zer iss one beeg problem wiss my stomach.

**Nurse:** Yes, doctor, he's right. There is a major problem. Everything he eats come right out the hole and onto his lap. Breakfast goes in, breakfast comes out. *(She uses hand motions to indicate coming out the hole in his stomach.)*

**Cue card:** Chuckle

**Dr. Beaumont:** Well, just plug it up.

**Nurse:** You mean with a cork?

**Dr. Beaumont:** Yes, sort of. Maybe a rag wadded up into a ball and stuck into the hole.

**Cue card:** Eww!!

**Alexis:** Cannot you just sew eet shut?

**Dr. Beaumont:** Well, theoretically..... technically, maybe... but, well, let's just see how the plug works first, okay?

**Nurse:** Yes, doctor.

**Dr. Beaumont:** I'll check in again tomorrow.

**Cue card:** NEXT DAY

**Scene 3:** *Same bedside scene*

*Alexis is in bed with the nurse attending. Dr. Beaumont comes in.*

**Nurse:** We tried the plug idea and it worked perfectly!

**Dr. Beaumont:** Good! Let me take a look.

*He removes the plug and peers into Alexis's stomach.*

**Dr. Beaumont.** This is amazing. I can see right into this man's stomach. There is breakfast still sitting there. I can see pieces of bacon right next to some yellow slop that's got to be eggs

**Cue card:** Ewww!

**Dr. Beaumont:** This hole is so big I can put my finger right into it. *(He does)*

**Alexis:** *(pulling his finger back out)* I do not vant to add feenger to my diet. Bacon iz enough!

**Dr. Beaumont:** Monsier St. Martin, you and your stomach hole could be the best thing that has happened to science in a long time.

**Alexis:** How ees that?

**Dr. Beaumont:** Do you realize that your stomach could reveal the secrets of digestion to the world?

**Cue card:** Wow!

**Alexis:** How much do you pay?

**Dr. Beaumont:** Pay? Well... I... well, you could join the US army and be given the job of being my personal assistant. Let Uncle Sam pay the bill.

**Cue card:** Chuckle.

**Nurse:** You really should do it, Alexis.

**Alexis:** But one condition--

**Dr. Beaumont.** Yes?

**Alexis:** I eat anything I like.

**Dr. Beaumont:** It's a deal.

*They shake hands.*

**Scene 4:** *Alexis is sweeping. Dr. Beaumont walks in.*

**Dr. Beaumont:** Excellent. It's clean enough. Now for your next chore.

**Alexis:** Yes, sir?

**Dr. Beaumont:** Sit down.

*Alexis sits down. Beaumont goes over to him.*

**Dr. Beaumont:** Now don't move. This won't hurt a bit.

*The doctor takes out a stick with a piece of bread on the end. He sticks the bread into the hole, and waits.*

**Alexis:** This is a chore?

**Dr. Beaumont:** Yes.

**Cue card:** Eww!

*When he pulls it out, the bread has changed.*

**Dr. Beaumont.** Fascinating! Absolutely fascinating. I wonder what will happen to meat? He sticks in a piece of meat, then waits,

**Alexis:** I feel like a human test tube!

*He then pulls it out.*

**Cue card!** Eww!

**Dr. Beaumont:** This is wonderful. I can see digestion as it takes place minute by minute. I must write down all my observations so I can write a book about it someday.

**Alexis:** A book about the hole in my stomach?!

**Dr. Beaumont:** No, a book about the very nature of digestion itself! A topic always shrouded in mystery because there was no way to watch what happened. It's always been guesswork up until now.

**Alexis:** But now zee hole!

**Dr. Beaumont:** Yes! Zee hole! A window into the stomach!

**Scene 5:** *A medical conference where Dr. Beaumont is giving a report.*

**Moderator:** Our last speaker today will be Dr. William Beaumont, a US army surgeon who has been researching digestion. And now, Dr. William Beaumont will read to us from his latest book, called "A Window in the Stomach."

**Dr. Beaumont:** Thank you.

"The interior of the stomach, in its healthy state, is a light pink color, varying its shades according to its full or empty state.

When food enters the stomach, small points of fluid can be seen arising from the walls of the stomach. This fluid is an acid.

The fluid then mingles with the food. The fluid begins to break the food apart until the food becomes a thick paste.

During digestion, the stomach muscles are continually contracting in a slow, regular way. These contractions continue until the stomach is perfectly empty and not a particle of food remains.

The average amount of time to digest an ordinary meal is about three hours."

*Dr. Beaumont bows.*

**Moderator:** Thank you for attending today's conference. I hope you all learned something about digestion.

**Cue card:** Applause.

**Cue card:** THE END