

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

Don't repeat this, but I am gaining weight. I seldom dare to stand on scales because I do not trust them. Usually, if I stand on scales, I do so when the lights are turned off ... or very low. But I could not help myself, standing on scales while getting dressed in the ladies' changing room of my spa, yesterday. During the past year or so, I have gained 5 pounds! God help the meek! I have been telling Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, that my clothes are old and that they shrink with repeated cleaning. I lied: The clothes are not shrinking; I am growing ... dare I say, fatter? Interestingly enough, I do not eat a great deal (at least, I do not think so) and I do not drink alcohol to excess. I always eat slowly because a dietitian, some years ago, told me to eat slowly so that I could fool my stomach into thinking that I had had enough to eat. I assumed that the same logic would hold true for drinking alcohol. So, I drink it slowly in order that it will not cause me to gain weight. But the truth is out, now: I am getting fatter. Of course, there is some solace in this strange and very unusual phenomenon: I can go to buy some more lovely dresses at my favourite boutique. But that is only to soothe and becalm me, during this period of terrible guilt. I care little about a long life, but I do want to live a life of quality. If the quality of my life is not up to scratch, how can I wear sables, in the cold winter months, and diamonds, around my neck, in order to make me feel good. Also, without a good quality of life, how can I wear high heels to match the latest creations from Italian and French couturiers? And being a fatty is not my idea of quality. I shall go to a new, registered dietitian for some advice on the subject. I know only too well that exercise, linked with a healthy diet, is the way to slimline. It is so difficult to follow diets, however, because it means that I have to sweat my heart out in a gymnasium and, at the same time, cut out all of the foods that I, really, love to eat. No more cream cakes at those lovely 5-star hotels in Central and Pacific Place and, of course, in Tsimshatsui at that hotel that has been the 'queen' of Hongkong since 1929. I talked to The Frog about the matter and, in his opinion, it is a complete waste of time to go to a gymnasium because, as he put it: 'Age, my dear. You have to die with it. Getting fat is the beauty of life. You live with fat; you die with starvation. Forget the gymnasium. Forget diets. You can exercise with me, on the horizontal if you really want it so much.' The filthy Frog! Such nonsense! I grow old gracefully, not like 'it' – my husband of the past 'few' years. The key to ageing, gracefully, is to keep working at maintaining a level of weight that is in proportion to one's stature. I know my body shape so I know what should be my optimum weight level at this time of my life. I am going to permit an increase in weight of about one pound per year, from now on. But, first, I have to lose about 10 pounds and pull back 10 years. In order to accomplish this feat, I have instructed The Frog that he must bear with me in this endeavour. He has tried to balk at the idea, but I am resolved: If I have to lose weight, then, so must The Frog.

When we married – a 'few' years ago – he promised to love, honour and to obey. Well, now is the time for The Frog to obey – me. The Frog is at least 40 pounds too heavy, as far as I can see. He has to lose that fat, quickly. No more Shanghainese food for The Frog. No more Champagne for The Frog. If he does not obey me, then, no more nooky for The Frog. For a man, nooky is important so The Frog knows that I mean business when I tell him what he has to do in order to regain his rights as my husband. My Dear Grandchild, we have the key to do whatever we want with the men in our life. We hold all of the trump cards

and can be tough in our gentle, inimitable way. It goes like this: 'You say that you want a restoration of your conjugal rights, do you? OK, then, I want mine, too. You are not the man that I married. The present man, who stands before me, is not at all like the sample that I married. The present manifestation of a male is very different from the original sample. I want the sample back not that which I see, sprawled on the settee, every evening, awaiting his dinner as he watches television.' This is insulting, I know that, but how else does one intimidate a man who resembles, more and more as the days go by, a fat, croaking frog. Don't be afraid of hurting your husband's feelings because, most of the time, men are too stupid to have feelings, anyway. All they think about is nooky, nooky, and more nooky. That is the nature of man. But strong, lean, muscular men, standing straight as a tall kauri tree, with biceps bulging, buttocks as firm and smooth as marble, and a thorax, displaying chiselled, rippling abdominal muscles, tends to invite nooky in a healthy, clucky woman, does it not? Who wants to sleep with a slug? So, to the gymnasium you must go, my dear fat Frog, on the grounds that, if I have to suffer, so must you. It is called, marriage.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady (of The Frog)

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