

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I am becoming fat. I dare not tell anybody else but you. However, it is, sadly, very true: And, I am carrying a few spare tyres, round my waist, too. Because I want to remain as beautiful as I can for as long as I can, I went to see my doctor about the situation. I believe I told you of Dr Sirius Wong, before, didn't I? Well, after waiting for him at his surgery (I have, often, wondered as to the reason that a doctor's waiting room is called a surgery. Could it be a forebodement?) for about 15 minutes, in I went to face the music. Now, Dr Sirius Wong is a plump-looking fellow, also, you must understand, so, on being seated next to him, I remarked: 'Putting on weight, Doctor?' He looked up and smiled: 'No. But Betty, you certainly have! Now, what is your problem, today?' I admitted everything to him. He took my blood pressure, measured my body, here and there, and announced: 'You are gaining too much weight.' And, for this statement, it cost me \$HK1,600! 'Yes, I know,' I told him, 'but I am not eating more than I did 5 years ago. I am not a glutton. What am I to do?' He said: 'Eat less. You are what you eat, Betty.' I replied: 'If I eat less, I shall just pine away to nothingness. Tell me what to do.' He, then, started to write out a note to a dietitian and I noted in large letters: OBESITY!!! I raised my voice in objection: 'I am not obese. I am just slightly overweight. I shall not go to a dietitian. Second suggestion, Doctor.' After questioning me about some silly things, he said: 'Betty, how many meals do you eat each day?' 'Two,' I replied. Then added: 'Well, sometimes 3 meals if I am very unhappy ...'. 'So, how many meals, on average, do you eat each day?' 'OK, say, 3 meals per day.' 'Do you eat in-between meals? Little snacks, perhaps?' 'Rarely. Although, if I am with my friends and we go to a restaurant for a cup of tea and they eat a cake before lunch, I cannot be rude, can I?' 'How often do you have these mid-morning cups of tea and cakes – out of politeness, of course?' the doctor asked. 'Not more than 4 times per week – but only when we are shopping for clothes or when it is pre-sales's time.' I sensed, at this point, that the doctor's questions were akin to the way in which the 15th Century, Spanish Inquisition questioned alleged non-Catholics in Madrid. I laughed, inwardly: 'Will I be put to The Question (tortured), next?' At last, after writing something down in his chicken's feet language, he looked up at me and said: 'Betty, for your own good, stop eating in-between meals. If you feel that you have to eat, mid-mornings, eat a raw carrot, a raw cucumber, or a small apple.' 'But my stomach is not used to raw food! I am Chinese and Chinese do not eat raw vegetables.' Dr Sirius Wong was getting upset. I could see that. He spoke, again, this time with authority: 'You have come here for advice. Now, will you listen? It is time, at your age, to grow up.' Now, I was angry. 'You have no right to talk to me like this. I am your patient. Where is your bedside manner. I shall report you to ... (but I did not know to whom!!!).' 'You are not in bed, in the first place, and, in the second place, you are not sick. You are, simply put, fat ... fat ... fat. I am trying to help you. You may report me to anybody you like. The question is: Are you going to follow my advice and do what I tell you? Instead of exercising your jaw by talking to your friends while eating fattening cakes, try exercising your body by enrolling in a gymnasium and paying a personal trainer to get you back into shape.'

I left the surgery, my mind and self-esteem in tatters. I have never had the courage to return to consult Dr Sirius Wong. Of course, I did not eat raw carrots or any raw vegetables and, certainly, not raw apples. I am

*not a Bugs Bunny. As for exercising, every woman knows that shopping for clothes is a very tiring exercise. Also, I cannot stop eating in front of my friends because they may think that I am antisocial. I have come to realise that doctors, always, prescribe that patients have to suffer in order to get healthy. For what reason cannot doctors prescribe things that patients enjoy? Instead of eating raw vegetables and raw fruits, what about eating Shanghai dumplings, filled with pork? As for exercising, which woman does not exercise as she makes the bed in the morning and washes the clothes and, then, irons them? Women work much more than men, actually. According to Dr Sirius Wong, because I am getting heavier, my back is being strained and, if I am not careful, I will be a hunchback in due course. He said that I have to wear sensible shoes. But I do wear sensible shoes! And they are very expensive [Ferragama shoes](#), too, costing at least \$HK3,500 per pair. So how can I become a hunchback, wearing Ferragama shoes? He, also, said that I should stop eating as much as I did in the past and that I should eat sensibly. What twaddle! How can a person eat sensibly? A person either eats or a person does not eat. Sensibly? What does that mean in terms of eating? As it is, I am not eating as much as I did when I was very young except, perhaps, that I have a few more cakes ... per week. I asked him to give me some pills in order to bring down my weight, but he refused, stating that diet and exercise were the only thing that could help me. Well, I am sure that he is wrong and I am out to prove it. I am going to do some research on the subject and, then, write a book to be headlined: *How To Lose Weight Without Even Trying*. I do not know how I shall be able to do it, but I maintain that it must be a best-seller the moment that I discover the secret. After all, which woman of my age would not purchase the book if it promised results.*

Well, I must go now. It is nearly time for dinner and you know how my froglike husband likes his dinner. I am preparing bak chee gai () and kau yuk (). They are my favourite dishes. I am getting hungry just thinking of them. It is a lot of work, preparing these dishes. That is my exercise of the day.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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