

Ship Wrecks

by Harry Dunn
received 28-6-13

Recently, my doctor said "Your waistline's grown of late"
And warned me that I'm sure to die
Unless I lose some weight.
The Doc then carefully measured
My pot-belly and my height,
And looked with disapproval
At this woeful, sorry sight,
Saying "Have you ever heard of BMI
That's Body Mass Index?"
"Of course!" I answered with a smile,
And mine *could be* a trifle high,
For my age and height and sex."
"A *trifle* high," Scoffed Doctor G.,
As he folded his tape measure,
And checked a weight-chart on his wall;
"With that forty-four inch waist," he said
"You should be eight feet tall.

Now get out of here and lose that gut,
Diet 'til you faint, forget all about the booze;
You must exercise both night and day,
'Til you've nothing left to lose"
Fifteen k's in fifteen weeks is the target that he mentioned;
The man is mad, I thought,
Although no doubt well-intentioned;
I'll try to lose a pound or two,
But did not make it clear
That we were leaving on a ten-day cruise
To Vanuatu and Noumea.
On similar trips I've always found
That cruising puts on weight,
It's never been the other way 'round
And I'm already carrying freight.

It's five pm. on Friday
And we're down on Circular Quay,
Queuing up to board the ship -
That's Madam Lash and me;
I observe our fellow passengers,
The active and the passive,
And cannot help but notice
Quite a few of them
Are nothing short of massive.
It seems these ocean cruises
Attract a certain clientele,
Some of them in wheelchairs,
And some still on their feet,
Apparently, this cruising is a magnet

For those who live to eat,
As well as those who like to drink
To wash down all that meat.

A pair of great white sharks,
At least half a ton in weight,
Push us to one side
As they storm the boarding gate.
They're looking for the buffet,
That moving, soothing feast,
Wheezing, "where's the nearest food?
We hear they serve an all-day brunch
And we're absolutely starving,
We're both quite thin and getting thinner.
We've hardly had a bite to eat since lunch,
So we need a decent feed, right now
To take us through to dinner."

A largish, barge-ish lady,
Wedged tightly in a wheelchair,
-Motorised, of course-
Departs the fast-food counter,
With a feed to kill a horse;
Not just a plate or bowl, or even full-sized platter,
But a plastic tray stacked high with stuff,
Like pizzas, pies and chips, and sausages in batter.
She says her name is Ann - let's call her Tugboat Annie,
Quality seems not to count,
It's quantity that matters,
She settles back in her mobile seat,
And proceeds with reckless haste,
Intoning, "'Scuse me, 'scuse me,"
And runs over both my feet,
While the other diners scatter.

A tub of lard, with a man inside
Wobbles by, like a half-set jelly.
He staggers away from the Lido bar,
With an ice- bucket clutched to his belly.
He has just acquired another six-pack,
It's one of this bar's special offers,
You get six at a time, to avoid coming back,
Never mind what this does to your coffers.
With the six-pack comes free ice and a bucket
In effect he is now his own waiter,
And that bucket will come in quite handy,
When he regurgitates most of this booze,
Perhaps an hour or two later.

But the biggest eaters aren't *all* double extra O.S.,
A few remain trim as a willow;
These lucky souls seem free to indulge

Without ever adding a kilo.
How lucky are they who can do this,
They must be God's chosen people;
While the rest of us bulge when *we* indulge
They stay as straight as a willow.
But this tale is not about them-
The slim and the trim and the supple;
This story's about us - you and I
We who gain weight on our thighs and our bellies,
If we so much as look at a hot meat pie;
We're condemned to live on green salads and jellies.
"Now remember all that the good doctor said,"
Says Madam Lash, my conscience this trip,
"And don't let me catch you eating junk food
On this gluttonous, over-weight ship."
"Well, just to ensure that you're happy, my dear,
I'll live entirely on salads and soup,
And I'll walk 'round the top deck many times every day,
From for'ard to aft and to poop.
In fact I'm heading up there
Right now, as we stand here and speak,
To promenade deck number ten,
Where the decking is made of real teak."
But, alas, I am quite unaware,
Fat Jimmy's C-side Hot Barbie
Is located, mid-ships, on this floor,
And the smell of Fat Jimmy's cooking
Is a smell which I cannot ignore;
But I keep faith on my promise to Mother
By walking round that Promenade Ten,
Although in one hand I've a Fat Jimmy's burger,
And a can of V.B. in the other,
Me and three other puffing and pot-bellied men.

In addition to old Fat Jimmies,
Up there on Promenade Ten,
I'm tormented by the smell of fine food,
At the La Playa hot buffet, but then
I am drawn to the gastronome thrill,
Of dining in style, silver service,
At the Empire Restaurant grill.
And of course, if you fancy the best, at a price
There's always the Nouveau on tap,
With oysters and lobster and truffles,
Much better than that smorgasbord crap.
And there's a dozen more food-baited traps,
They're out there, wherever you go
They entice hungry ladies and chaps,
When their resistance is already set low.

And so, you ask, did *I* manage to avoid these temptations,
Given the urgent need to lose weight,

Well, no, not exactly - I didn't;
I gave in to temptation, I'm sad to relate,
Although I *did* manage to avoid at least one,
The one called Weight-Watchers Health bar and Grill,
The place where the dieters eat,
Serving wheat-grass and rocket and dill,
And tiny portions of unadorned meat.
I avoided this place like the plague,
So tasteless and bland was its stuff,
But I did indulge in some pizzas
From Pepe's Pizza Palace, next door,
Where a single large slice was never enough,
So I went back every time, and got more
Of that fabulous, fattening stuff.

Day ten, and the cruise is over,
We're back here on Circular Quay,
So, how fared the super-heavyweights,
Those leviathans of the sea,
They who were obese when they boarded,
Then ate to excess - just like me.
Looking out from my port-hole, while packing,
I see deck- cranes, fork-lifts and slings,
Removing them from this great liner,
With other inanimate things,
A few, sadly deceased, and now chilled
Packed in body-bags, leave the morgue,
Their destiny has been fulfilled.

And is that a motorised wheel-chair
I see dangling from overhead crane,
With an overweight body wedged in it,
A victim of rapid weight-gain.
Yes, of course it's poor Tugboat Annie,
Returning from her last ocean cruise,
At least Annie died out there in action, doing the thing she did best,
After all, she had nothing to lose,
And her chronic BMI problem
Has at last been, by nature, addressed.

And what of poor me and my diet,
And have I lost any weight?
Well, from the things which I've seen on this voyage,
I've decided my problem's not great,
For compared with my peers on this tub
I'm really in pretty good shape,
With my girth a mere forty-four inches,
I've nothing to fear - from a few glasses of beer
Down at the local pub,
And a hot meat pie won't cause me to die,
On pie-night, at the Bowling Club.

**No, clearly my gut's not a problem,
Although not a beautiful sight,
So, I've abandoned that odious diet,
And started serious work - on my height.**