

Thou shalt not snack



BY AMOS ARTHUR HOLMES

Once again, with malice toward everyone, I have started a diet. This small test of willpower, that I have failed at for over 20 years, will again bring forth the weakest constitution in the United States.

My stomach is a disaster area. It is huge and bloated and ugly. It sags and wallows and bulges. It covers my thighs and knees, and sometimes (when I overeat) my shoelaces. Each time I pass a mirror I feel disgust. Women, who once found me attractive, never look at my broad shoulders or muscular arms. They simply stare at that gigantic blob surrounded by my 82 inch belt. I passed two women recently and both of them couldn't take their eyes off my mid-section. As they passed, one woman turned to the other, and said, "Elsie, did you see that poor, poor man with that 200 pound tumor?" It is all very embarrassing and is giving my life an almost obscene depression.

And so, this morning, I started another diet. What is so great about defeating that compulsion to eat? Why shouldn't I be able to conquer the sin of gluttony? I was tired of being a mouse, of letting appetite overcome reasoning,

and I was determined to regain that colossal figure that once palpitated so many female hearts.

At breakfast I had one-half of a grapefruit. A grapefruit, for those who do not know their medieval tortures, is a poisonous substance eaten by masochists. It has no taste, no food value, but it has almost no calories. And while I sat looking at this inedible blob I noticed my wife. She was sitting across the table from me and on her plate sat fried potatoes, scrambled eggs, lean strips of bacon, toast and homemade raspberry jam. The smell of those fried potatoes curled from her plate and drifted lazily across the table and up my nose. I damn near fainted.

The grapefruit was smiling at me. Only those on a diet can tell when a grapefruit is smiling. It is a devil's grin, a hateful grimace, and you jab your spoon into the grapefruit with determination and vengeance. A thin, acidic stream of juice spurts wickedly and accurately into your eyes. Your wife is splashing raspberry jam over her toast and your stomach is rumbling and howling and hurting.

Thank the Lord, breakfast is over. You are empty and very near death as your wife pats her stomach and burps.

There is a small dab of raspberry jam clinging to her nose and you wonder if your wife would mind if you licked it off. Would she think it was just an affectionate little kiss that had missed the lips, or would she think it the most uncouth thing she had ever experienced? Betting all my money on the uncouth part I refrained from lashing my tongue across her face.

I went into the living room and watched a soap opera. The soap opera was so depressing it momentarily took my mind off my own problems, but soon there was a bilious roar from my stomach and I was reminded, once again, that I was dying from malnutrition.

Sixteen eternities later it was lunch time. Sitting before me, in satanic glee, was a grapefruit. My wife sat across from me and her plate was filled with fried potatoes, pork chops, asparagus with a heavenly sauce, and a slab of blueberry pie the size of Mt. Rushmore. The sweet, delicate, overpowering, thunderous odor of fried potatoes came wafting up my nose and I reached across the table and slapped my wife violently across the face.

I will never know how I got through the afternoon. I did one feeble exercise,

prayed, sat in the corner and cried, and prayed some more. My stomach was screaming...YOU DIRTY RAT...YOU FINKY CLOD...FEED ME...FEED ME...FEED ME. By golly, I did hate being a clod and a fink. Shouldn't I satisfy my good friend, my lovely small stomach, with a microscopic radish...a leaf of lettuce...or maybe...maybe...that chocolate éclair I knew was resting in the refrigerator?

It was seven o'clock and dinner was announced. You guessed it...a bitter, creepy, nasty, poisonous, deadly grapefruit. It was smiling again and I hissed at it. Somehow I got through the ordeal. Hell! Dieting wasn't so bad after all. Certainly there was a degree of suffering. Of course the stomach rumbled and protested, but one simply had to be strong. To resist temptation. To ignore the fear that you might die suddenly and permanently. I went to bed. I was a bulwark. A man. A defeater of temptation and gluttony.

At three o'clock in the morning I got up and went into the kitchen. I fried me a huge platter of potatoes. I ate six pork chops, ten strips of bacon, two loaves of bread, a plump breast of chicken....

And that lovely, delicious chocolate éclair.