

FAT LOT OF GOOD!

By Tamaso Lonsdale

He was fat! Not just fat but gross! Grossly obese! Repulsive! So repulsive in fact that she could hardly bear to keep looking at him after the first glimpse through the restaurant window. There he was! Sitting in the corner lounge sunk into the plush cushioning which so matched his bulging flesh and wearing the blue jacket with the red carnation in the buttonhole, just as he had said he would be.

But could this monstrosity of a man be the same rich mellow voice that had enthralled her on the phone every night since last Saturday when he had rung her number in error? That same throaty chuckle that had greeted her little witticisms? That same caring concern when she had told him about losing her beloved cat?

It had to be him. There was no possible doubt. The time, the restaurant, the corner booth, the jacket, the red carnation. Everything just as he had arranged. Through the window she could see him sitting there studying the menu, his eyes mere slits in the folds of his bulbous pink face. There was no neck, simply ridge after ridge of flesh like a multitude of chins. And his nose! A great wad of pink putty! It gleamed in the flickering candlelight. His podgy fingers holding the menu looked like raw sausages but she noted that his nails were neatly manicured.

His hair looked wonderful. Steely-grey, thick and wavy but carefully trimmed around his ears. Nice ears, flat and shapely, seemingly moulded into his balloon of a head.

She couldn't say she hadn't been warned. He had told her he was fat.

'So what?' she had laughed. 'So am I!'

It was true. She was fat herself. Always had been. At school she'd been mercilessly teased with such names as 'Tubsy', 'Fatso' and the horrible 'jelly-belly'. But this man would dwarf her. Could she overcome her revulsion and actually sit with this grotesque freak? Could she pretend not to notice the stares and titters of other customers? What would her friends say? Those friends who were always telling her about new diets, wonder health foods

and urging her to go to Weight Watchers. They would throw up their hands in horror if they saw her with this man.

It was now or never! She didn't think he had seen her yet. She could walk away and not have to meet him. But what would she say when he rang for an explanation? She could plead a sudden illness but then he would want another appointment. Better not to answer the phone or maybe just leave it off the hook. But for how long? He would keep ringing, she was sure. And she loved his calls. They had added the spice of excitement to her life. She had so wanted to meet the owner of that beautiful voice.

But now, what a disappointment! She should leave quickly before he looked up and saw her watching through the window. She should run home to the safety of her lonely little room, lonelier than ever now that the cat had died.

'How sad for you,' he had said in genuine concern. The memory of his voice hit her like a thump in the gut.

She raised her head, took a firm grip of her shoulder bag and strode confidently through the door. There was music and someone singing 'Hey there, Georgie Girl'. Heads turned at her entrance, they had obviously already been speculating about the big man in the corner lounge.

He rose to greet her and once again she was revolted at his size as his huge belly wobbled over the belt of his trousers.

'Hello, beautiful girl!' he said. His voice, warm with welcome, thrilled her once again. 'I wondered if that was you sneaking a look through the window.' He began to laugh. 'I thought you might turn tail and run.' He laughed some more, his rich deep chuckle bouncing his belly around like a kid's soccer ball.

The joke caught up with her and she laughed with him, a great ocean of laughter overtaking them both. Falling into each other's arms they danced together.

The other customers broke into a round of applause.

Bio

Tamaso has been writing most of her life. She was first published at the age of nine in the Sunbeams children's section of the Sydney Sun and also read her stories on 2GB and 2SM radio stations' children's programs.

She is the author of nine teenage novelettes for 'reluctant readers', four books on Australian birds, several published short stories and poems and has self-published one book Skye's the Limit, a story about a young girl's fight to save a rainforest.

She has recently completed the third novel in trilogy form. The first book, Brothers? Uncles! Sister? Aunt! was published in 2002. The second book The Missus was published in 2010 and the third Beyond Darkness in 2012.

Also in 2012, a book of short stories Out of My Mind was published.

Tamaso has lived in Nimbin northern NSW for twenty years, during which time she has been a volunteer worker at Nimbin News Magazine and presented a Writers' Program on NIM-FM. Community radio. She now edits the literary magazine Beyond the Rainbow.

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