



A Banquet of Consequences

a theme in progress

by Saffron Swansborough

Things you have done to be thin include

Forcing a pint of salted water down your throat sitting by the toilet

Going vegan for a year – never have you been in so much digestive discomfort

Self-medicated with liquid paraffin

Fasted on Sundays, nil by mouth

Fasted all day and in the evening eaten

Exactly one-thousand calories in one sitting,

Such as a salad, washed down with a hundred gram bar of chocolate

Or healthy foods weighed out from all the approved groups

Or one pizza

Cut out carbs leading to huge mood swings -

Plus the usual: smoking / meal replacement shakes / fingers down the throat -

And you tried to find the secret to stopping your periods

As this can be a measure of dramatic weight loss.

What made you overweight ranged from
Puberty, over-eating, a break-up,
Comfort food binging, breakfasting on an entire cake
Dining on packs of apple-cream horns
Then not being able to stay on diets
But mostly an internal fight against puppy fat
Which Nature gives to some teenage girls
To prepare them to carry children.

Things that made you slim consist of
Calorie-controlled diets and going to the gym 6 days a week
But these were unsustainable
Then the breakthroughs came
One, at university, the first real break up
After which you chewed on heartbreak, cottage cheese, tinned pineapple
And 10 Silk Cut a day for months, shedding 2½ stone which has never
come back
And Two, as an adult, a colleague suggested you drink water and tea
Metabolism-boosters
(You never drunk anything as a kid unless it was a treat)
This educated you to know if you were hungry or thirsty
And from there, you got the hang of the alchemy
Of sensible portion control.

What drove you to want to be thin was
Puberty, naivety and society
As your body jiggled out of childhood
Popstars, models and actresses were your idols
But only the thin made it

Jutting out hipbones said Beauty, Success
Everyone subscribed to this view back then
It was The Norm
Whenever you lost weight
People said “you look great!”
Yet now you are healed, you are still raging at the messages
The media force-fed you
Putting you at war against your own body

Everything you ate - or didn't - had consequences
You don't consider that you had an eating disorder,
Because you weren't successfully bulimic or anorexic,
But you have learnt that puberty is a dish best served with sensitivity,
And if you listen to your body
It will tell you what it needs.