

An excerpt from

FatLand

a novel

by

Frannie Zellman

Dedicated to the members of the Fat Underground

Prologue

2010 THE CENTER FOR HEALTH MATTERS recommends that any woman of childbearing age, defined as the years from 18–50, whether or not she intends to get pregnant, adhere to the following recommendations:

- No alcohol • No premarital sex • No weight gain • No unhealthy foods in large quantities
- Foreign travel only for business purposes and for stays of less than three weeks...

*excerpt from Surgeon General's Committee
Recommendations on Health & Weight*

2012 THE CENTER FOR HEALTH MATTERS recommends that a series of Pro-Health Laws be passed according to CHM guidelines. Recommendations for food intake and weight categories follow.

- Every person who is considered overweight according to these guidelines must begin a reduced-calorie regimen immediately or risk mandatory enrollment in a Pro-Health Re-education Program if he or she has not seen a health professional.
- Every person who consumes more than the allowed daily or weekly portion of certain foods risks mandatory enrollment in a Pro-Health Re-education Center.
- Every person who avoids or tries to avoid the Non-Approved Food Tax while buying or ordering the foods specified below, which are taxable according to the Non-Approved Food Tax Statutes, is subject to mandatory confinement in a Pro-Health Re-education Center.
- No person who is over the allowed weight limits is to be considered healthy, even if he or she meets the requirements of any or all other criteria for overall and comprehensive health according to tests and evaluations...

*excerpt from Surgeon General's Committee
Recommendations on Health & Weight*

2014 I CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE.

I am fat. I am not a criminal. I am not ashamed of being fat. I am tired of wondering when the doctors are going to order me to have so-called "corrective surgery" that not only does not correct, but makes me sicker in the name of making me healthy.

Worse yet, I don't want my children to worry about their weights. I want them to be happy and healthy, whatever their body types happen to be. I don't want them to have to worry about everything that goes into their mouths. I don't want them to face bullying and harassment or, even worse, the shattering of their dreams.

We are tired of being mistreated and mocked and having our self-esteem taken away from us, tired of being considered criminals when all we did was to have bodies that metabolize food differently than thin people.

If you wish to join us, please call or email the following for more information...

*post on FatHelp Blog:
A Blog for the Fat Community of the USA*

JOANN AND REEVIE sat in a sunny kitchen with yellow walls and a porcelain plate under a rooster clock. Joann poured coffee into two Wedgewood cups and they leaned back.

“I don’t know what to do,” Joann said, sipping judiciously at the Brazilian blend. Her long black hair cascaded down pale plump shoulders just visible under the light green print of her robe. “It’s keeping me up nights, but I didn’t want to worry Ed. I have to turn in this financial report tomorrow, and he has to finish those soil tests. But it all seems—” She bit her lip and tried, fairly successfully, not to cry. “Okay, this is the problem. Mira—well, she just doesn’t seem to gain weight.”

“Is she eating?” Reeve asked, setting her cup down. Her almond-colored eyes, several shades lighter than her rich brown skin, gave her the look of a pampered cat. She stretched slightly in her seat, her round breasts and belly shifting as she raised her firm thick arms.

“Of course. She eats even more than Jesse, and he’s filled out quite nicely.”

“Well, look at it this way,” Reeve said. “There are kids, and adults, too, who remain thin all their lives. We can’t help it. They can’t help it. It’s not as if she doesn’t get enough to eat.”

“But it’s so embarrassing,” Joann said. “I’m so afraid her classmates will start making fun of her. And she’s already having trouble getting clothes. Even today her Phys Ed teacher asked her if she could speak with us. And another teacher asked her if both of her parents came from here, from FatLand. She was so angry. She said to him, ‘My parents have been here longer than you have.’ It’s lucky the principal is an old friend of Ed’s from high school, or it might have been worse.” She bit her lip again. “What did I do? Why is my child so thin? Reeve, where did I go wrong?”

“You didn’t go wrong anywhere,” Reeve said, taking Joann’s hand across the table and squeezing it. “Mira happens to be thin. It could be any number of things. But none of them have anything to do with you.”

Reeve sighed as she left Joann’s house and walked the six blocks to her own spacious Cape Cod. She could understand Joann’s worries, although she didn’t have the same problem with her own children, Aimee and Jenna. They were both lovely, voluptuous—a bit spoiled, yes, but totally engaging. Aimee wanted to major in dance therapy, while Jenna wanted to go into theater arts. *Another achievement of FatLand*, she thought, and one of the reasons she’d moved here—no field was off-limits to anyone because of his or her size.

She remembered how it had been for her when she had been a drama major at a well-known university on the “Other Side,” as FatLanders called the country adjoining FatLand on its eastern borders.

First her professors had laughed. One well-meaning instructor had urged her to take up smoking to lose weight. Another one had given her a lecture on why “heavy” black women would never make it in the theater or on TV or in the movies. Especially in the movies. And now what did she see? At least one movie a month featured a substantial black woman—*fat*, yes, *fat*, she reminded herself. You were supposed to use the word “fat” in FatLand. Not in bitterness, not in pride, but to describe what you were, and what the great majority of the inhabitants were.

We are fat. Say it, Reeve. Say it simply. Say it for all the times you were told to starve and they called it a diet. Say it for all the times someone told you—some man, since she was straight—that he loved you, but if you would just lose thirty pounds...

Then again, there were the men who took her to bed and loved it, but wouldn’t speak to her the next day.

She remembered how she had argued with her husband twenty years ago before she had been able to convince him to move to the brand new territory called FATLAND, which stood for Fat Acceptance Territory Lease Accession Non Dated. (The correct name would have been Fat Acceptance Territory Lease In Perpetuity, but that first Governing Board

perceived correctly that people might not be wild about living in a place called FATLIP).

Her husband, a general practitioner at the time, had married her quite selfishly because, as he told her two dates after they met, “You make me feel as if I could fly and I want to lean against your breasts forever.” He admitted to buddies that he liked “big women,” and since he was far and away the most successful of his friends, they didn’t tease him about his preferences.

It was when Aimee, the first of their girls, was born and started to become adorably chubby that FatLand came into existence. Founded in the second decade of the twenty-first century with twenty-four couples and twenty proud singles, FatLand had mushroomed into a country-state of 400,000, with growth of 20 percent in its past four years. It stood to become a million-person entity in the next five years, maybe sooner.

She and Alvin moved here when Jenna came along. Even her husband had noted the increase in fat-baiting and fat-hatred at the same time that more Americans were becoming fat and yet living longer. It was as if the fat-baiters refused to accept that they had been fed a diet of lies about fat people by the media and still clung to their desperate need to scapegoat some group.

Ironically, in the media on the other side, fat people—especially women, for some reason—started to appear regularly. A culture war was being fought between those who felt that fat people did not need regulating and those who felt they needed to reduce their body sizes “for their own good.”

Then, of course, the Pro-Health Laws had begun.

From being apathetic on fat issues her husband had quickly become a staunch activist, so much so that he was now one of the two medical representatives on the Governing Board of FatLand.

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by Frannie Zellman

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