

The Number 151: Teatime in Cheam

by [Paul Martin Freeman](#)



Gluttony (after Pieter Bruegel), Laurence Smith

Now this is a story of two little girls;
The older had pigtails, the younger one curls.
They lived in the wonderful village of Cheam
And both were addicted to chocolates and cream.

And ever these sisters would rival the other,
Encouraged and helped by their worshipping mother.
For each enjoyed probing her appetite's limits
At teatime with gateaux and sugary biscuits.

They had their own system for taking their tea:
They'd sit down at table precisely at three.
And there they'd remain at their business till late,
Consuming whatever was put on the plate.

Their mother would ply them with goodies galore,
And then when they'd finished she'd ply them with more.
And all would they eat and demolish with zeal,
And that was the pattern at every day's meal.

And so the years passed and the girls put on weight,
But still they persisted and greedily ate.
And each one expanded; her waistline increased,
As urged on each day they continued to feast.

And so it went on and the girls grew and grew,
To all form and shapeliness bidding adieu.
Their arms and legs shortened, their torsos enlarged,
As with carbohydrates their bodies they charged.

It seemed they were plugging the gaps in their shapes,
Employing each space to accommodate cakes.
No contour too even, no dimple too small
It couldn't be filled with a coconut ball.

And on rolled the years with the sisters ballooning
With nary a thought for the tragedy looming.
Each meal they devoured as though eating their last;
Not once did they pause or consider a fast.

But then came the evening when destiny called;
And here I warn readers who might be appalled.
What happened that teatime may tender souls shock:
It took place precisely at seven o'clock!

That day more than usual they'd eaten their fill,
Disposing of biscuits with consummate skill.
But that's when the vessel they sailed came aground,
For now these two darlings were perfectly round.

No hole was there left to accommodate cakes;
They'd plugged all the gaps in their mountainous shapes.
From every direction each girl was a sphere;
No wrinkles remaining, not even an ear.

Detectives would work out the course of events
By piecing together the marks and the dents.
The newspapers also would carry the story,
Indulging their readership's taste for the gory.

It seems that some buns were the triggering culprit,
As darkly the vicar would warn from his pulpit.
With neither possessing a smidgen of room
It's then that it happened: that thunderous boom!

The curls hit the ceiling, the pigtails the floor!
That perfect rotundity smashed through the door!
The girls had exploded with terrible force
And all kinds of physics stuff now took its course!

Those limits they'd probed for they'd finally reached
As each of the girls her circumference breached.
What exited plastered the walls of their home
With stomachs and livers and kidneys and bone.

But then a strange slurping sound followed that day
As bits of them now started peeling away.
They peeled from the ceiling; they peeled from the walls,
All mixed up together with coconut balls.

And so ends our tale of these two little girls,
The one with her pigtails, the other her curls,
The moral of which we need hardly repeat:
At teatime you really ought not overeat!