

# The Number 165: Emily Hyatt

by [Paul Martin Freeman](#) (February 2023)



*Marcella*, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1910

Now this is a story that all those should heed  
Who think the sole gustatory pitfall is greed.  
For read now what happened to Emily Hyatt  
Whose pleasure in life was by contrast to diet.

Miss Em of South Hornchurch was not overweight  
Nor even disliked what she found on her plate,  
But since she was tiny and having to scavenge  
Had come to see shortage of food as a challenge.

To live on as little as ever she might  
Was what kept Miss Em up excited at night.  
And even to dine on what none could she thought  
Perversely the purpose in life that she sought.

She'd tried all those diets that you see on the telly,  
Recoiling from nothing revolting or smelly.  
Yet none could her thirst for a challenge appease:  
Not camel's head, eyeballs, nor maggot-filled cheese.

And so she gave all human victuals a pass  
And started exclusively feeding on grass.  
Yet soon even herbage Miss Em found a bore  
And quickly thereafter showed methane the door.

The next of the foodstuffs that Emily tried  
Was cardboard compostables, roasted and fried.  
Recycled materials were just to her taste,  
Their fibres though left her a mountain of waste.

To leather now therefore Miss Em turned her mind  
Until she'd devoured every shoe she could find.  
And thus did she go through the things on her list  
While always nutrition her slender frame missed.

And so it continued with Em growing thinner

As ever such items she'd choose for her dinner.  
She wasted and wasted and wasted away,  
Her thirst for a challenge no fare could allay.

But one day she noticed a change taking place  
When into the mirror she looked for her face.  
It seemed to be lower than where she expected:  
A difference in height had indeed she detected.

She peered at the new-looking person before her:  
Without any doubt she was half a foot shorter.  
How odd, thought Miss Em, though not really concerned  
For yet to continue her exploits she burned.

And so it went on and she carried on shrinking  
Because of her habits of eating and drinking.  
Whenever herself in the mirror she checked  
A lessening in stature she'd ever detect.

Then one afternoon when she went to the mirror,  
Excited to see how she'd grown even thinner,  
She found that she couldn't look in it at all  
As where she staring was only the wall.

The mirror was now somewhere over her head,  
So little on nutritive food had she fed.  
Yet still she continued her rigorous diet  
As we do our tale of Miss Emily Hyatt.

In fact, there is really not much more to tell  
As nor of Miss Em was there either as well.  
She soon disappeared altogether from view,  
Head down in a meal of linoleum stew.

And so we conclude with a nourishing moral:  
A point with which nobody ever should quarrel.  
While dieting's rewards are undoubtedly big,  
Remember please sometimes to eat like a pig!

## [Table of Contents](#)

Paul Freeman is an art dealer in London. The poem is from *The Bus Poems: A Tale of the Devil*, currently in preparation. His book, *A Chocolate Box Menagerie*, is published by New English Review Press and is available [here](#)

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