

TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS THAT STORIES ARE NICER WHEN THEY END WITH TEA

BY MATTHEW DORRELL

Jimmy was quite an attractive young boy. Look at our young boy, his parents would modestly brag, asking: is he not attractive? Quite attractive, was the usual reply.

While a still a boy, but not as young, Jimmy developed a love of sniffing gasoline - one he shared with a neighbourhood friend. One day Jimmy and his friend were floating happily around Jimmy's garage. Without thinking, his friend lit a cigarette while Jimmy was leaning over a gas can. A stray spark caught, and Jimmy's face was enveloped in flames. The severe burns horribly disfigured Jimmy who lost the majority of his nose as a result of the accident.

Even after extensive reconstructive surgery, he was still an unpleasant sight - a far cry from his formerly attractive self. He lost nearly all of his friends and never had a long term or successful relationship. Perhaps saddest of all was that his previously proud parents wanted little to do with him, unable to overcome their own revulsion at the sight of their formerly attractive son. Perhaps even sadder was that Jimmy did not live to see the movie *The Man Without A Face* starring, and directed by, Mel Gibson, which, had he seen it, would doubtless have been of some comfort to him. However, many times before his death Jimmy would take a little comfort in a nice cup of herbal tea.

In a small, poor village, far away from here, there lived a woman, named Alice, with seven kids to care for. Her husband had been killed in the war, and she herself was unable to work because of a debilitating injury. It was very difficult for her to care for her young family - every day was a struggle. The family might not have been so badly off, except that in addition to her injury, the woman also had a severe addiction to gambling.

Things became truly desperate when the government threatened to repossess the land upon which the family home sat, as Alice had not paid her taxes in many years. Not insensitive to her pleadings, the government granted her four

months to find the money she needed, so Alice vowed not to spend another penny on gambling and, with the exception of a small lapse now and then, she managed to follow her plan.

Despite her perseverance, on the night before the government was to take ownership of her land, Alice still did not have the money required to pay the taxes she owed. When she woke the next morning she was fraught with fear for her families' future. As she prepared what little breakfast they were to have during what was to be their last morning in their home, Alice listened to the lottery numbers being drawn on the radio, as she did every morning. Amazed and astounded, she realized she had won! All the families' problems were solved! They could now pay their taxes and move into an even nicer home in a better neighbourhood! Money would never again be a concern. As Alice brewed herself a nice pot of strong, dark tea to celebrate her good fortune, she suddenly realized the last number on her ticket was 13, not 15.

Reading in bed one night I decided that the overhead light was much too bright. I rose from bed to rectify the situation. Upon switching off the overhead light, which was located by the door, the room was blanketed (more like enveloped really) by darkness. Not being able to see, I had to walk slowly towards the desk upon which my lamp rested, feeling in front of me for the said lamp. Normally my desk is situated at a level somewhat below the midsection. Being more or less immobile, and certainly not able to move of its own accord this was true at the time at which this story takes place, and is likely still true even as you read this. However, in searching for the lamp in the dark I was leaning and slightly crouched. Thus it came about that my groin met with the corner of the desk. Met with the corner of the desk somewhat forcefully. The desk did not give. I crumpled to the floor clutching myself and writhing in some amount of agony, crying like a small child. The next day I would recount the story to an uninterested and unsympathetic friend over a lukewarm mug of tea.