

FredCraigWayne put the cup back on the saucer, upside down as usual. At least this time the cup was empty. Not like last time when he did it absentmindedly and got tea all over Aunt Gemima's brand new white carpet. He still ducked every time she walked past.

The aliens, sitting on the couch watching him, nodded in approval. They had taught him this trick - way back before he was old enough to remember; even before he was old enough to drink tea. When the cup was turned over it automatically alerted them that the tea-drinking process was concluded and it was safe for them to start their interrogation.

"What did it taste like?" the larger of the two aliens asked.

FredCraigWayne frowned and looked at the upside down cup. He couldn't remember. What did it taste like? Did it taste like anything? It probably didn't taste like chicken.

"I don't know," he answered, "perhaps it tasted like tea."

The aliens looked at each other pleased as punch. Tea! He had said it tasted like tea.

"Would you be willing to attend the council of future tea leaders and testify to that," the smaller alien asked.

"Goodness, no!" FredCraigWayne exclaimed in shock. What if he was wrong? What if he didn't really know what tea tasted like? What if it tasted like coffee, or worse, like chicken instead?

The aliens sighed, unfolded their limbs and flew off through the closed door. Door shuddered as usual. It was most upsetting when beings flew through him. His life's task was to open and close and if someone didn't need him to be either open or closed well then his life was pointless. He might as well set himself alight and end it all. Being slammed was one thing, but someone simply ignoring the fact that he was a door was a bit much.

FredCraigWayne looked at Door. Was he okay? Was it even a he? The three previous doors had demanded to be chopped up as firewood and until they had voiced their demands he hadn't even known that they could talk. But not giving in to their demands resulted in them opening and closing themselves at the most inopportune times. Once they opened to expose SuzyAmandaEliza doing something unmentionable and another time they'd refused to close when it was freezing cold outside and he woke up to a house full of icy stalactites.

SuzyAmandaEliza was FredCraigWayne's eldest sister. Their parents suffered from the inability to choose, so they ended up giving their children all the names they had considered. His youngest sister got it the worst, they had decided that she was going to be the last so she got all the names they hadn't yet used up. The only problem was, nobody got them right, or at least not in the right order. And she'd refused to leave her room until someone called her by her proper name. Next week, Tuesday, it would be a full 12 years that she'd been in that room.

FredCraigWayne went to the kitchen to make himself a cup of tea. He loved tea. It was his favourite drink, in fact it was the only thing he liked to drink. It was just that he could never remember what it tasted like after he'd drunk it. Then he'd make another cup and he'd remember... for a few seconds. He had a job once but it had really interfered with his ability to drink tea so he had fired his job - or they had fired him - he couldn't remember which.

Bartholomew Matthews the Third placed his cup upside down on the saucer, frowned, sighed and turned the cup the right way around. At least it had been empty this time. Not like last time, when he had poured hot tea all over himself. He had taken many showers and had slept all alone until the burns healed and he certainly didn't want to go through that again. He looked at the aliens sitting across from him.

"It tasted exactly like tea," he said.

"We know," the tallest alien answered. "But what kind of tea?"

"Normal black tea," Bartholomew said sighing again. "What was it meant to taste like, this time?"

"Exactly like that," said the Alien, "with a hint of freshly picked blackberries and a slight lingering taste of wet sand."

"It's tea! For heaven's sake, it's just plain tea. Get out!" Bartholomew hesitated for one fly-wing flutter and then shouted: "WAIT!" Quickly he ran over and opened the door before the Aliens could fly out through the closed door. It freaked him out when they did that, he didn't know why, but it freaked him out. At first it was simply their presence that had freaked him out but he'd long ago gotten used to their presence and the fact that nobody ever believed him.

Even when he showed them the strange brew they'd just sniff it and say: "It's tea, Bartholomew, just plain tea. You can buy it at almost any store. This is not an alien thing."

Closing the door Bartholomew looked intently at the door. It was made of glass. Was that the problem? Should he change it to wood? Would that keep them out? Or plastic, or steel or perhaps if he just bricked it up? They always entered through the door, what was wrong with that door that it couldn't keep them out? Frowning he picked up the cup and saucer and placed them in the dishwasher next to the other three perfectly placed cups and saucers. It was the only dishes he had and he couldn't remember where he had gotten them. Everything else was disposable, but the tea cups and saucers, they were porcelain. Where had he gotten them?

Macedonia, named after the place in Greece, unlike her sister, Macedonia who was named after the place next to Greece, threw the cup against the wall where it shattered into a million pieces, spilling its dark liquid all over the place, again.

"I'm not going to drink anymore of your concoctions. Go away!" she shouted at the two aliens sitting peacefully and watching her perform. She had aimed the cup at them but as usual it was deflected. They did it with their eyes, their limbs never moved. She wished that she had that power. Then she would deflect them right out of her house; out of her life; out of her planet.

"It's very nice. Are you sure you wouldn't like some?" the shortest alien said while a second cup of tea appeared on the edge of the coffee table.

"Go probe yourselves or something!" Macedonia shouted kicking the coffee table which groaned under the pressure but decided not to shatter, this time. Coffee Table wasn't happy. She hadn't done anything wrong, it wasn't fair that she had to bear the burden of Macedonia's temper. That wasn't the worst of it either, soon they were going to leave through the closed door and, as usual, Macedonia was going to open the door and slam it closed afterwards just to prove a point. Poor Door was going to be crying about that all night again and she'd have to listen to that pity-party. So what, he got slammed. Couldn't he just get over it? Why did he have to go on and on about it the

whole night? Wasn't he used to it? What did he expect her to do? Coffee Table sighed and wished the Aliens would take her away with them. But of course, they never even looked at her; she was only there so they didn't have to put the cup of tea on the floor.

Shivering Shirley sat in the corner shivering.

"Go away, shrink away, you're not real! I know you don't really exist. It's just my mind playing tricks on me." Shaking her head furiously from side to side she continued, "No, no, no, my therapist says this is not happening, it's all in my head. I don't believe you're real and I don't believe you're here."

"That's okay," the cute alien said while trying to look even cuter. "But could you just drink the tea anyway?"

Shirley looked at the cup of tea. It didn't exist, of course not. Everybody said it was impossible. But why did tea rain down on her when she threw it up into the air? Why did it taste precisely like tea? Why was it hot? How did her brain become so damaged that she could touch, feel, smell and taste an object that simply didn't exist? She briefly wondered if the aliens were touchable, smelled and could be ... no, she didn't even want to think about it. She closed her eyes and rocked back and forth, back and forth, back and forth ...

"She's not going to drink it," the not-so-cute alien said.

"It doesn't look like it. That's the tenth time. I guess she's off the list."

With that they stood up, flicked the tea cup into the air where it simply disappeared, walked towards the door, opened it, walked through and closed the door behind them.

"What now?" asked the tallest alien.

"The tea experiment isn't going very well," replied the shortest alien.

"Yes, it's strange how uncooperative the people are. It's not like we're asking them to drink something unpleasant ... like ... like coffee for instance," replied the smaller alien.

"And it is rather a waste of good tea," said the larger alien.

"Let's discuss it over some tea," the cute alien suggested.

The not-so-cute alien turned and glared at the cute alien, slowly counting backwards from 50, it took a deep breath, lifted its finger and pointed information at the cute one's head where it would hopefully intersect with some type of thinking organ:

"How on earth are we supposed to drink tea when we haven't discovered what a perfect cup of tea tastes like, yet?"