

The Solid Table Fallacy

by Alison Wells

Morrison always cracked his knuckles at a quarter to three. He ate his sandwich at ten past one in the dusty cathedral of the carpet roll display area. Back at the invoice booth he wrote poetry on the back of envelopes, or rather little slips of lines and titles that he was afraid of losing '*The platitudes and the knives*', '*Lovestruck Asylum*' '*I felt a funeral in my brain*'. He'd often remember them just as he walked in the front door of his parents' house, (where he lived despite being thirty) and in the morning they'd be spirited away by the cleaner. Delicacy of feeling crushed in the refuse lorries metal mouth.

Morrison worked with an MP3, a Daily Mail and an Android Smartphone. Of the three the Daily Mail was the more visibly morose. He heaved himself tragically off his swivel chair at the large mahogany desk he had appropriated as the customer service point, his shoulders and jowls met and his gait was dromedary. He went mental if the Android Smartphone misplaced the swatches or if the MP3 mixed up her feet with her metres or her feet with the extent of reality. She never seemed to look up. She had a curtain of fairish brown hair, the colour of underlay in fact.

'Couldn't get the paper, there's some Lego promotion on, snotty nosed middle-class kids collecting tokens for their free sets,' said the Daily Mail.

'Did you get my ciabatta?' asked the Android Smartphone.

'What? Nah, I got you a packet of crisps instead' he said, chucking them onto the table.

'Smokey bacon?' remarked the Android picking them up with the tips of his fingers.

Morrison laughed, looked up and saw an oasis of customers within the vast desert of tables. The group consisted of a man, serious, with the kind of chin one rubbed ponderously and lips that seemed permanently let down. There were two little girls but Morrison didn't understand the concept of children. They would no

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doubt try out the bunk beds and fight about who went up the ladder first. But perhaps not. They presently showed no signs of mania. If their mother had been wearing skirts, they would have been hiding in them.

'Can I help you?' said Morrison

Well yes okay,' the woman answered, backing away slightly, 'we're looking for a table'

'Dining? Kitchen?'

'Dining,' she said, although to Morrison it sounded like 'dying'.

'We have a large selection of tables, pine, oak, even iroko,' he told her.

'Iroko effect' mumbled the husband.

'I'm looking for something solid,' said the woman.

Morrison gestured expansively to a nearby oak table with a set of beautifully crafted, — well serviceable enough — matching chairs. Her children didn't look like the kind who would lean back on the legs.

The woman put the palm of her hand on the table. Her face took on a kind of peace. Morrison looked at her.

'Do you know that tables aren't actually solid?' he said suddenly. 'I mean there's loads of space in the molecules that make up wood or whatever. The only reason we can't push through them is because of the force.'

Nearby the Android called up his light sabre app.

'The force?' asked the woman.

'The resistance in the molecules. It's stopping us putting our hand through. At the right temperature all the resistance disappears. So you could travel right through a table, hypothetically, according to the scientists.

'Yeah,' said the MP3 on her way to Storage, hearing through her headphones. They did it with a glass thing on the telly. All the helium fell through.

'Yeah,', said Morrison nodding, 'it was as as trippy as listening to Riders on the Storm.'

The youngest girl put her finger in her mouth and leaned back against her mother.

'What's that man saying?' said the eldest.

'Something stupid,' muttered her father.

'Stoopid,' said the tiniest girl. Morrison had no idea about ages, the child looked like she might topple over at any time. 'Stoopid, stoopid.' Morrison pretended not to hear.

'I like the grain in this,' said the woman, tracing it with her finger. She looked up at Morrison and she seemed somehow....happy. Molecules dancing. Helium through a glass. She appeared closer.

'For God's sake Emily, it's only a table,' said the husband.

The woman he now knew as Emily looked at her husband. Morrison watched the lift and fall of her shoulders, the exhalation. 'We'll leave it for now' she said, *Emily*, said.

'He won't be getting any tonight...' remarked the Daily Mail looking glumly at the Irish Times crossword.

Morrison saw that they were already going. The children had not jumped on the beds or climbed on the sofas. The husband had not demonstrated the pull out sofa bed. They had not all sat down together on a corner suite, leaned backwards and smiled.

'Here, Morrison, help me with this one, she's one of yours I think....' The Daily Mail continued staring at the paper, pen aloft. *'I felt a funeral in my brain/And mourners to and fro' Poet, last name Dickinson, first name 5 letters.'*

Morrison was still watching them leave the showroom, the father far ahead, a lovely six legged creature following on behind — the girls conjoined to their mother's hips. That woman. 'Emily' he said out loud.

Mentally he was back home, on his single bed, all thumbs in the book of her collected works.

