

The Fortune of an Accident

by Nathaniel Tower

Staring at her horribly disfigured face, I envied her. Scars ran long and wide like rivers through canyons across both sides. As she stood there, watering her lush, elaborate garden in front of her multi-million dollar home, I couldn't help but wish I had her fortune.

The water spewed in a symmetrical cone from the nozzle, the droplets delicately falling upon the leaves, flowers and soil. Behind her was the colonial mansion one could only dream of owning. Three magnificent stories with towering steeples atop the roof. A wrap-around porch on each level. Intricate wood carvings placed tastefully along the framework. Everything about the home was perfect.

It was the product of an accident, the very accident that had created those hills and valleys on her discolored face. The home was her settlement, although it hardly seemed as if she had settled.

I suppose she could have used the money to repair her face, to restore it to the natural beauty the thirty-one year old woman had just moments before the car crash. From the looks of the home, every penny had gone into her belongings rather than her looks. I understood. Looks are fleeting.

What luck to be involved in such an accident. She was not killed, had no life-threatening injuries, had no permanently damaged muscles or bones. The driver of the other car, an SUV, had been exceedingly wealthy. Rather than be sued for

all he was worth, he decided to share some of that wealth with the woman. All she really had to sacrifice was her face.

What I wouldn't give to trade my handsome face for such property.

Yes, her husband had left her shortly after the accident. And why should he have? She was, after all, a completely different person. One only had to look at her to determine that. The man hadn't even sought any of her newly acquired wealth. And he stayed until he was sure that she had the means to exist alone.

Many times I had contemplated how I might get into such a fortunate accident. There were many options that I foresaw, but most involved insurance fraud, and I wasn't sure it was worth the risk.

But looking at how happy she looked in front of her palace, attending to the flowers that were likely better and more reliable company than any spouse could ever be, I decided I had to do it. I had to stage an accident that would earn me such a settlement.

Of course the accident would have to look as if it were not my fault. And there were some very potential hardships associated with any accident, for I would not be in complete control over what would happen to me. At best, I would become disfigured. At worst, I would die..

After brainstorming all of the potential accidents and their risks, I opted for the one that I thought was the surest thing.

I created a small gas leak in my home by making the tiniest of punctures in a gas line. When the smell of gas had fully

saturated my home, I called the emergency line at the gas company, pleading with them to come out as quickly as possible, that the overwhelming scent of gas was nearly making me collapse.

They rushed indeed to my home, quickly located the problem, in patched up the gas line. It took only a few minutes, but they claimed the fix would last a long time. I should call them again if I smelled any gas.

Almost immediately after they left, I punctured the exact spot where they had patched the line. Again I waited for the house to fill with that putrid scent of intoxicating gas. Standing near a window that I could use for a quick yet dramatic escape, I lit a match in that gas-filled home. The sparks created between the match and the book were all that was necessary to start the explosion. The house went up so quickly that I barely had time to escape. As I jumped through the window with my body engulfed in searing flames, I managed a smile in spite of the nearly unconquerable pain.

When I woke up, I was in the hospital, as I figured I would be, bandages covering my body. The burn had been more extensive than I had thought, but surely that would only mean a larger settlement.

I'm not sure how they knew, but they came and arrested me as I was being discharged from the hospital. At first I thought they were the men offering me my millions of dollars. Instead I learned they were the men charging me with arson and fraud.

As I sit here in jail, my body a vast network of rivers, creeks and tributaries that flow between jagged hills and rocks, I think of that woman and her elaborate house and flowers. All

**I can do is envy the fortune that she had that I could not find
in my accident.**

