

# Essay on the Reactions of Man to a String of Misfortunes

When Jimmy opened his eyes, he saw a row of fluorescent lights. Very neatly arranged, he thought. Just like the ones in his office. His office! What was he doing lying down in his office?

He looked around and saw a group of nurses chatting away a few meters away, a tube was attached to his hand and he had an awful headache. Nurses! tube! Good Lord, he was in a hospital! He tried to get up but blackness enveloped him.

When he awoke, he could hear voices and see a few uniformed figures beside him.

"Ah, you are awake," said a voice.

"Where am I?" he muttered. "What's happening to me?"

"You are not well, but soon will be," replied the voice. "Just like it easy and you'll be okay." Jimmy felt the prick of a needle entering his flesh and then he was unconscious again.

Over the next few days, Jimmy began to accept the fact that he was badly injured in a motor accident. He could not remember how the accident happened but he had to admit that he drove his car into a lorry resulting in his serious injuries and his son's death. it was not easy to accept the reality of the situation but the fact was that he was in the intensive Care Unit of the hospital. His whole body ached and his right leg was in a huge white cast. in short, he was immobilized, totally dependent upon the nurses and doctors around him.

He pondered very hard about how the accident happened and why his three-year-old son had to die. His only child, so young, so full of life, so much future ahead it was so unfair!

Such bouts of depression, regret and tears were with him most of the time, except when Joan, his wife came to visit him. What a wonderful woman she was. The trauma of the accident, even though she was not directly involved in it, showed clearly through the lines on her face and the bags beneath her eyes. Yet she always had a smiling face for Jimmy, encouraging him to get well soon so as to rebuild the shattered pieces of their lives together again.

An agonizing six months later, Jimmy hobbled out the hospital on crutches. His face looked like a badly drawn picture and his right leg was two inches shorter than his left. With Joan, they hailed a taxi which took them home.

When they reached home, the full consequences of his carelessness finally got through to him. He was without a job because his previous boss did not want a cripple who looked like an ogre in his company. Joan had to sell some of her valuables to pay for his long stay in the hospital, and because she did not have much, she had to mortgage the house. She even began working as a clerk in a nearby firm to support themselves. Worse of all, their little boy was gone forever, no more laughter, nor tears, nor the chubby little face that radiated so much warmth and innocence. What do they have now? Nothing, except themselves and the whole situation that looked so unreal and impossible to have happened. Jimmy wanted to believe it was a bad joke and he would wake up from this incredible dream; but it was neither a dream nor a joke, it was a reality.

To Jimmy, the whole world suddenly seemed very cruel. How could fate be so unkind to him? As if losing a son and a job was not enough, he

had to go through life now with a bad leg and a face that people cringe from. His depression became worse and he spent his days lamenting and pining about things that were no longer his. His relationship with Joan gradually became strained and he could not care less anymore what the outcome was. He felt that there was hardly any point in living anymore.

A few weeks later, Jimmy plucked up enough courage to venture into the local park. He wore a pair of sunglasses to hide his gruesome face. As he sat on a park bench looking straight down on the grass between his feet, he imagined that they were all staring and laughing at him. The tension rose until he could not bear it anymore. He gave a yell of anger, got up from the bench and started running awkwardly toward his house. Alas, sunglasses at seven in the evening did not enable him to see very well. One moment he saw a blur in front of him, the next moment he was falling head over heels over someone -who gave a soft cry of pain.

When Jimmy brought himself to a sitting position, he found himself looking at the withered face of an old man. His sunglasses had fallen from him and he could see clearly the calm face of an old man who, despite being knocked down, was still smiling.

"Are you alright?" asked the old man.

"Yes, yes I'm okay," Jimmy replied. "I'm sorry, come let me help you up."

Jimmy got onto his feet and began to pull the old man's hand. He felt that the old man was very heavy. How could a withered old man be so heavy? No matter how hard he pulled the old man would not stand up.

"Look, I said I'm sorry," Jimmy pleaded in exasperation. "I'll ...." He

stopped dead in mid-sentence, his mouth agape. He could not believe what he saw. The old man had no legs! He could only make out two stumps that were cut off above the missing knees.

“Yes, my son,” I lost them many years ago in an accident. Would you like to buy some flowers?” the old man held a bouquet of red roses in his hands.

For a long time, Jimmy stared at the beautiful roses and the thin wrinkled hand that held them. Then he said, “You’re selling flowers?”

“Yes, been doing so for years now, Got to earn a living you know.” the old face beamed.

“You mean you have no family?”

“None whatsoever ”

A wave of understanding overwhelmed Jimmy. There was an old legless man courageously living his life the best way he could. There he was wasting his life away. He still had two legs, a wonderful wife and a whole future ahead of him. What a fool he had been. Self-pity was not going to help him in any way.

Jimmy took out his wallet, fished out a ten-ringgit note and gave it to the old man.

He thanked the old man and with roses in hand, he skipped happily towards his house where his lovely Joan waited.