



Jimmy
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"Fire!" yelled Jimmy and hoped that that would empty the classroom and get him out of the test. No dice. Instead his mean old teacher gave him her standard mean old look which meant that he'd be going to the principal's office one more time this week. "Dang," Jimmy thought as he looked up at the clock, "I thought for sure that'd work." But it didn't, and it was now a certainty that Jimmy would have to take the test, a test he knew for sure he was going to fail.

Not that failure bothered Jimmy. In fact, he didn't mind it one bit. "How can you ever try anything new if you can't just try it out?" Jimmy would say with cheerful exuberance, not mindful at all of the fact that his thoughts didn't quite make sense to all of the adults around him.

Jimmy sat and thought for a minute about what his options were. He knew he'd have to take the test. He knew he'd fail, because he hadn't studied, and he didn't care about geography anyway. So, he decided that he'd try to make the best of it and spent the entire 20 minutes drawing an elaborate picture of a rocket ship blasting off for the moon.

"Time's up," Mrs. Fitzhugh barked, "please put down your pencils and turn your papers over." Jimmy kept on drawing, looking very serious as he put the finishing touches on the star and "J" that graced the side of his rocket ship. "Jimmy," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, "that means you, too." Jimmy looked up with a grin of satisfaction. He had finished his drawing and he thought it was a good one.

"Please pass your papers to the front," Mrs. Fitzhugh directed. Jimmy admired his work one last time, and passed it forward. After he had turned it in, Jimmy faintly remembered that it was supposed to be a geography test. Mrs. Fitzhugh collected the papers from his row. She flipped through the stack and then frowned. "Jimmy," Mrs. Fitzhugh said in her mean old voice, "I want to see you after class."

"Dang," thought Jimmy "I must have the meanest teacher in the whole school." He furrowed his brow in contemplation of the evils that awaited him in that meeting. It was either going to be writing sentences on the blackboard or staying after and cleaning up all the desks in the classroom. Jimmy couldn't decide which was worse. In the end, he decided that cleaning up the desks would be better. Sometimes Tommy Pearson drew funny pictures of Mrs. Fitzhugh on his desk, and Jimmy could at least take a peek at them before he cleaned them off.

The rest of the afternoon was slow agony for Jimmy. He tried to keep himself busy by paying special attention to his long division problems, but it wasn't working. It seemed like every time he looked up from his

desk, Mrs. Fitzhugh was glaring at him. "Dang," Jimmy murmured to himself, "she's gonna tell Mom for sure."

At 2:30 the bell finally rang. Mrs. Fitzhugh stood in front of the desks and supervised the cleanup of the day's lessons. "Put your workbooks inside your desks children," she said, then reminded Elizabeth not to forget her sweater like she did yesterday. Jimmy thought she had forgotten about him, but then she looked straight at him.

"Jimmy Peterson, you stay here." Her voice was loud enough for all the kids to hear. "The rest of you may go home now."

Mrs. Fitzhugh waited until the room was empty then told Jimmy to come to her desk. "Just what am I supposed to do with you young man?" she asked. "You are just about the laziest, slowest boy I've ever laid eyes on." Jimmy looked down at the floor tiles. He began to imagine playing a giant checkers game, with him as a red piece. The loud voice of Mrs. Fitzhugh tore him away from his little daydream. "You listen to me when I talk to you Jimmy Peterson," Mrs. Fitzhugh fairly screamed.

Jimmy looked her in the eye. Then he pointed one finger at her and stamped his left foot three times. Mrs. Fitzhugh started out from behind her desk. She had had enough, and was going to grab Jimmy's ear and give it a good twist. Just before she could get to him, Jimmy closed his eyes and recited his magic words: "Shalumum, balamum, bipsuumum, palamum."

When Jimmy opened his eyes, Mrs. Fitzhugh was standing there with the meanest old look ever. Then she turned and scurried off into a gap between the bookshelves. Jimmy had to giggle, because even as a mouse, she still looked a little like Mrs. Fitzhugh. "Dang," thought Jimmy. "I was hoping for a rabbit." "Oh well," he said to himself as he walked out the door, "how can you ever try anything new if you can't just try it out?"

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