



## Personal Reflections

Sue Easun, editor

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### Stealing Sips of Tea

Sue Easun

Henry James knew. "There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea." Such a comforting statement, reminiscent of a time when caffeine was not expected to fuel one through the day but to lend pause to its ebb and flow. Yet there is hope, for does not Jean-Luc Picard, that venerable Captain of the Enterprise, invariably imbibe his "Earl Grey. Hot." in 24th-century repose? According to my mental math, it should only take us 500 years to regain our senses.

Well, I for one cannot wait that long. Too often my days are punctuated with exclamation marks when what I crave is a semi-colon. But now... ah, now I have a column, an outlet, an excuse, for reclaiming that agreeable hour on a quarterly basis. However, unlike friend Caterpillar pictured above, my refreshment is drawn from a simple white porcelain pot, married with a little milk and sugar, and joined on this occasion by a piece of the Cook's **carrot cake**. And I shall increase its agreeableness by writing for the pure pleasure of committing thought to print, nicely steeped thoughts, the dregs of which will test my strength of foresight. And why not? I am my own publisher, after all; I have only my Editor to fear (though fearsome she can be!)

Put another way, this column suits me to a T.

Does my inaugural title sound familiar? It comes from *Little Women*:

"Didn't they steal sips of tea ... didn't they each whisk a captivating little tart into their tiny pockets, there to stick and crumble treacherously, teaching them that both human nature and a pastry are frail?"

At first glance, you might suppose you had stumbled into **MaD hATteR** territory. But no, you have come to the right place. The frail pastries of which I will speak are intellectual delicacies, lacking the gastronomical gusto at which HiS mAdNeSs excels. For I am a creature poised between the Academy and the Great Beyond and, this next year especially, it is not clear which side will claim me as its own. (A certain Fearsome Editor worries that my use of the term "Great Beyond" may startle you into supposing I contemplate a fatal jump from the Ivory Tower. However, she seemingly has no qualms about startling me with her morbid take on my emotional stability!!) That said, watch for the sadness in the direction of my gaze, the humour in the lift of my eyebrow, the fleeting moment of wide-eyed innocence. For these expressions are the pockets in which I have stored my ideals... "captivating little tarts" that they are!... to preserve them from crumbling.

It will not have escaped your notice that the subject of my first column is myself. This is only to be expected, since there is no more personal reflection than the sight of oneself. Today, I delight in my mirror, as I delight in my tea and cake. Another time, I may be disgusted by what I see. Either way, I will not flinch. Rest assured, I shall not insist upon being called the fairest of them all. I will not "loose the chain, and down [me] lay," should its shining countenance show a crack or two.

I trust you will indulge me if I conclude with one last tannin-inspired quote, this time by that Bear of Very Little Brain, Winnie-the-Pooh: "A Proper Tea is much nicer than a Very Nearly Tea, which is one you forget about afterwards." Heaven forbid I should be forgotten (although in my experience, improper things have always seemed more memorable). So by all means, let us be proper. If I forget to crook my little finger, you had best look askance.

Though what I shall do about those captivating little tarts, I can't imagine.

**Next issue:** Sue explores *The Unreluctant Years*



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