

## *A week that won't be remembered*

Monday morning. Tom wakes up in his bed, next to his wife Lisa. Even after only being conscious for a few seconds, a worried look creeps over his face. He turns to Lisa, who is still half asleep. He starts to tug at her shoulder, saying "Lisa. Lisa. Are you awake?" She wakes up and turns towards him. "I am now" she says. Tom stares into her eyes with an expression of pure horror. Lisa's own expression starts to worry. "What's wrong honey?" she said. Tom continues to stare for a few moments before saying "Did you know that 2.7 billion people live in poverty?" His statement changes Lisa's look of worry into annoyance. "Why yes, Tom, I did know that. You read it in a book yesterday and told me about it." Tom's expression does not change; "did you also know that 10% of the earth's population controls 85% of its resources?" Lisa becomes even more annoyed, and said "You told me that also, go get ready for work."

Tom goes through his morning routine, keeping his pained expression. While walking to the car he passes his next door neighbour, who is busily working on his garden (as he does every morning). Tom watches him work; "Hey neighbour, I have something I'd like to ask you." The neighbour looks up, smiles, and speaks in a voice that conveys only friendliness. "Sure thing, go right on ahead." Tom appreciates the openness of his neighbour. "Were you aware that 2.7 billion people today live in poverty?" His neighbour lets out a little bit of a laugh, "I sure did, they mention it in the paper every now and then..." Tom doesn't let him finish, "Yes, and 10% of the world's people control 85% of the resources." Attesting to his character, the neighbour's smile does not disappear; "Is that so? Don't get all communist on me now. Have a nice day at work, you hear?"

Tom drives to work, in traffic, and starts to crunch the numbers. During lunch he joined a few of his friends who were in the middle of a conversation. "Hey guys, sorry for interrupting, but were you aware that 2.7 billion people live in poverty?" His workmates' expressions drop a little. One of them says "Hey Tom, we're trying to talk here, be quiet with all of that stuff. It's depressing." Knowing that this fact depressed his friend also felt like a relief for Tom. "I know, hey! Did you also know that 10% of people control 85% of the planet's resources?" His friends start to get impatient, another one of them says "seriously, Tom, get the hell out of here. We're trying to have a pleasant lunch."

Tom returns home, again in traffic, and prepares dinner with his wife. After setting the table, they eat their meal.

“Hey Lisa, did you know that 2.7 billion people live in poverty?”

Lisa snaps, “God, Tom, what the hell is wrong with you. This is the third time you’ve told me, and it’s the third time I’ve given you a very negative response. Just leave it alone.”

Tom doesn’t flinch, “I know, Lisa, but after reading about this I’m not sure what I’m supposed to do. I don’t want it to be true, I can’t handle it being a known fact. No one seems to care about it when I’ve told them.” Lisa interrupts and says “Tom, the reason they don’t get surprised is because they already know. You’re not the only person to ever read or hear about world poverty.” Tom thinks on this for a while, and then says “Their reaction makes no sense to me. How can they be so calm and relaxed while knowing this?” Lisa doesn’t bother to respond.

Tuesday morning. Tom wakes up with the same expression on his face. Tom could hear the shower going. Apparently Lisa was already awake. He gets up and yells into the bathroom “Hey Lisa, 2.7 billion people live in poverty every day, and 10% of the world’s population controls 85% of its resources.” No response. “Hey Lisa, 2.7 billion people live in poverty every day, and 10% of the world’s population controls 85% of its resources.” Tom doesn’t bother to shower before work. He passes his neighbour, who was gardening like always. Tom doesn’t even begin with a greeting. “2.7 billion people in poverty, and the richest 10% own 85% of the world’s resources.” The neighbour doesn’t look up, says “Yep”, and keeps gardening. Tom goes to work; his co-workers try to avoid him at lunch. Tom follows them to their new table. “Hey guys, 2.7 billion people in poverty, I can’t believe it. What the hell are we doing here?” The guys ignore him, and continue their discussion about some celebrity affair.

The night at home was quiet. Lisa had become so sick of Tom that she went berserk every time he mentioned the two facts he could not get out of his mind. Tom found another way to express himself, however, through a journal. He wrote things like “2.7 billion people in poverty, who knew?!” , “How did these 10% of people find a way to have 85% of the resources?” , “I wonder if my family knows about this?” , and “Perhaps it isn’t shocking enough because the figure is only expressed with two numbers, perhaps if it were written like 2,700,000,000,000.”

Wednesday morning. Tom wakes up and watches his wife walk to the bathroom. He yells “2.7 billion” at her over and over. He walks to his car and notices his neighbour was not out gardening. Tom decides to get out some paper, write “2.7 billion” on 50 different sheets, and then lay them on various parts of his neighbour’s garden. At work he filled every status

report with these two pieces of information. He was yelled at, and forced to promise never to do it again. When relaying this to his wife she made him sleep on the couch.

Thursday morning. Tom says to Lisa "I'd like to have an intelligent discussion about this with someone; someone who will appreciate the depravity of it." Lisa ignores him. He notices the 50 pages of paper were dumped on his own garden, assumedly by the neighbour himself. He goes to work and largely behaves. He briefly mentioned to someone that "I know numbers, and 10% owning 85% does not make much sense." He goes home and writes in his journal that the world would be a better place if people weren't in poverty and if 10% controlled 10%.

Friday morning. He wakes up and makes small talk with his wife. The look of worry is gone, replaced with one of contentment and satisfaction. He passes his neighbour, gives him a quick wave, and hurries to work. It was a busy day; his thoughts are consumed by the task at hand. He goes home tired and wanting to vegetate. People around him are nice once more. Occasionally he'll see people arguing on TV that poverty should be reduced, and he will nod in agreement.

By Timothy Neal

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