

# THE MAN FROM ICK

Once there was a town called Ick. The people of Ick had a problem. They were icky.

For some unexplained reason, everyone who was born in Ick ended up icky. Scientists, doctors, and experts from all over the world had tried to analyze the people of Ick, and although they all agreed that the people of Ick were icky, no one could agree on a cure. In fact, there was no cure.

The scientists, doctors and experts agreed that the only thing they could do would be to give people suggestions on how to cope with their ickyness. But experts or no experts, everyone learned to cope in his own way.

Some pretended they weren't icky. Some tried to keep busy and forget their ickyness. Others decided that being icky was better than not being icky . . . and they got ickier. Some just didn't care. Usually, if you were able to get a person from Ick to be honest, they really didn't like being icky.

Well, you can imagine how many people arrived in Ick with a "cure" for ickyness. And you can imagine how many people were always willing to try each new "cure" that came along. And strangely enough, some of the "cures" seemed to work . . . for a while. But eventually, the cure would stop working and everyone would be icky again.

One day something happened that would radically change the people of Ick.

A long-time resident of Ick began to suggest publicly that he had a cure for ickyness. It was very difficult for the people of Ick to believe that a person who lived in Ick himself could have a real cure for ickyness.

But then something strange happened. One of the ickiest people in all of Ick believed in this cure and was changed. He simply wasn't icky anymore. Everyone thought it was just temporary and waited. But it didn't go away and before long, lots and lots of people started believing the man from Ick...and everyone who believed was cured.

It was incredible and one would think that the people of Ick were overjoyed.

But the people weren't overjoyed and soon a town meeting was called. The fact of the matter was, the business community of Ick had been built around the basic fact of people's ickyness.

And with more and more people losing their ickyness, the economic future of Ick was threatened. After an extremely heated discussion, it was generally agreed that what appeared to be a cure for ickyness was probably like all the other so-called cures and would soon turn out to be a hoax. And since so many people were being misled and since it was possible that many more people could be misled, and since a person who would perpetuate such a hoax on a community like Ick could affect the stability of Ick, the "savior" of Ick was asked to leave.

He refused. He continued to cure people and each day those responsible for the "stability" of Ick became more and more concerned. One day the "savior" of Ick disappeared. It caused quite a commotion and no one to this day knows what happened. Some say he had been done away with. Others said they had actually seen him the day after he disappeared. But what was strange was that even though the "savior" of Ick was gone, people who believed in him and his cure would suddenly find their ickyness gone. And even though the majority of the townspeople agreed that this "savior" was, in fact a hoax, all those who had believed in him were still cured.

The people who had lost their ickyness thought everyone would jump at the chance to be cured. They were sadly disappointed. Very few were even interested. So the ex-icky people did what they could to convince the icky people that their cure was not a hoax and every once in a while someone would believe.

Apparently, and this is only hearsay, a small group of ex-icky people began to worry that if they or their children associated too much with icky people, they might be contaminated or become icky again.

It wasn't long before these people banded together and moved to the top of Ick Hill, an isolated spot on the edge of town. They would work, shop, and go to school in downtown Ick and then return to Ick Hill for their evenings and weekends. But it wasn't long before the people of Ick Hill became so fearful of contamination that they built their own school, market, gas station, and shopping center.

A few more months went by. And one morning the people of Ick woke up to see Ick Hill covered by a large glass bubble. Ick Hill was now a completely self-contained community with everything completely under control.

One particularly cold morning, an icky person in the city of Ick noticed that there was no visible activity going on inside the glass bubble of Ick Hill. A rescue party was sent to see if everything was alright.

After breaking through the glass bubble, they were shocked to find the entire population of Ick Hill dead. Autopsies were ordered and the cause of death was the same for all: suffocation.