

Stealing an Egg

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1931 - Stealing an Egg

I entered into a writing competition for seniors only. The subject supposedly had to be a true happening, and about 'Stealing'. This was the third time that I have entered the competition, and it was the third time that I have not received a prize, or even a 'mention'. The entry fee has always been fifteen dollars, which is about the right fee. More than this I would not enter. At this price, I spend a couple of enjoyable days writing a story, then a few months of eagerly awaiting the results. When I receive them, and up to date they have been without my name in the winners circle, its a few curses, and a vow I will not enter again. However, by the time the next competition comes around, I am ready to start once again. Here is my story about 'stealing', in a period of time that seems so long ago.

The year was 1931 when this story took place in the East End of London, England.

For your interest, the East End was a working class area, shared by many poor people. It was here that Charles Dickens produced his works, it was here that Jack the Ripper produced his works. No King or Queen, nor any of their followers were ever known to live there, indeed it was always home to the working class and the poor.

At the eastern part of the East End, is the Docklands, the huge man-made docks that received ships from around the world, as they brought in their cargoes for the benefit of the huge London area population. Squeezed in between the Docklands and the River Thames, was a small community named Silvertown with its 2000 people. One of them was myself, a young male aged ten, and as part of a family I lived at 24 Gem Street.

My house was a small one, in fact all the houses in Silvertown and the whole East End were small, the end result being that any large family that lived here did so under very cramped conditions.

Another East End fact was that most young people were of a lean posture, a result of the food supply not being too plentiful. This certainly is contrary to our youth of today whose major problem is obesity. Within the time frame of seventy five years, one group didn't get enough, the other group got too much.

Recapping so far then, here we are in the 1930's, in a working class neighbourhood called Silvertown, in the East End of London, England, where the house is small, and so were the portions of food.

At 24 Gem Street, we were a large family of mum, dad, five sisters, and a brother (myself). In seniority, I was near the bottom, with one sister below me. Our living space was confined, food was always a problem, my male arrival did not help matters, but it was a happy family.

Now having reached the thinking age, I began to realise, that I was on a good number. The chores were never directed my way, but always to my sisters, likewise the household rules rarely applied to me, and if they did, by using a tearful face, I could manoeuvre around them. All I had to do was play my cards right, not screw up, and I had it made.

Unfortunately, there was one hitch in this paradise and that was sister #2. She dominated the siblings below her, which included me. Because of this domination, #3, #4, #5 sisters and myself, were afraid of her. If it's possible to have an ogre in the family, then we had one in sister #2.

1931 - Stealing an Egg

One of her many annoying acts towards me was to encourage the cat into the kitchen late at night, where I slept on a makeshift bed on the kitchen table. Without fail it would jump up onto the bed and scare the wits out of me. I knew she was the culprit, for I could hear her ogre laughter.

OK, so now that I have brought you up to date about life at 24 Gem Street lets get to the stealing.

Always on a Sunday morning, *as* a weekly treat, breakfast consisted of an egg. Let me correct this statement, I mean an egg for mum, dad, #1 and #2 sisters, and a half egg for the remainder, #3, #4, #5, and myself.

On this Sunday morning, the three half-egg sister's had eaten their halves and departed the house. Upon completion of my half, I was all set to follow when I heard a faint voice calling me and it was coming from the only egg left, presumably the one for either #1 my elder sister, or for #2 my ogre sister. It was a gentle voice that kept telling me we were meant for one another and for me to eat it. Honestly, that's what it said!

Well, I did what it told me to do, I ate it and it was very tasty.

Now, as it slowly inched its way down to my stomach, I began thinking as to who it belonged to? With sister #1 away for the weekend, it must belong to sister #2. Oh my! What have I done? When she realises what's happened, she'll be on the war-path seeking revenge, and if she catches me I am doomed.

One of her favorite punishments was hanging me by my suspenders on the large hook, screwed into the shed door. Once she'd hung me up for a half an hour just for the pleasure of hanging me up. With this in mind, and that I had just enjoyed her breakfast, my punishment could be the hook through out the night, or maybe forever!

What shall I do? Well, rather than the hook, I'll leave home, and either join the French Foreign Legion, or hide in the park somewhere.

Not knowing how to join the French Foreign Legion, I went to the park, and hid behind a tree. After a couple hours, my Dad came and took me home. I cried and apologised to him, declaring I would never steal an egg again.

He couldn't figure out my ranting and explained that #2 sister had left the house early without eating, and my Mum, dear Mum, decided to leave the egg for the benefit of who ever wanted it.

So it could be argued that on this memorable Sunday morning, as I was not told the egg was up for grabs, my taking it was not stealing. However, on the other hand, the fact that I did take it, assuming it to belong to sister #2, makes me guilty of egg stealing.

Although the whole incident was dismissed by my Mum and Dad, guilt has accompanied me over the years. Even now, when confronting an egg, I can be seen mumbling an apology to it, for making it a scapegoat in a false story I once concocted.

Coming back to the present, #2 sister is now 93 years of age, and I meet up with her on my annual visit to England. She is the ideal sister, is very proud of her only brother, and eagerly awaits my arrival each year. We always reminisce about our early years living in Silvertown, with my favorite subject being about ogres who become nice people at a later age, and hers about a spoilt boy stealing an egg. Reflecting on her days as an ogre, she contends that if I had taken her egg that Sun-

1931 - Stealing an Egg

day morning, whenever she caught up with me, the hook time would have surpassed all other hook times.

May I add that the small community of Silvertown disappeared forever with tremendous loss of life during the biggest German bomber raid of WW2 on September 7th, 1940. It was never rebuilt, and my roots had gone.

Of my three family members there on that terrible day, my Mum, Dad and young sister, (sister #5,) all were thrown by bomb blasts on two occasions, with my young sister breaking her collar bone, and my mother shook up to the point she never recovered.

As an add on, my dear ogre sister recently passed into God's hands, and will be sorely missed by me on my next visit.