

Revenge is a Dish Best Served Battered Up and Deep Fried

by *Mona Desselle*

I remember it was hot outside. Kid hot, which meant you knew it was hot, but it didn't bother you too much. Adult hot is being miserable in the heat and complaining about something called humidity.

I was with my grandma in her garden, not too far from the house. The garden was under a big old pecan tree with wonderful thick shade. The garden had beautiful black earth. I was probably around five years old so I didn't know much about dirt, but I could tell this dirt was black and beautiful and grew a lot of goodness. There were earthworms too just under the soil, always a good sign I was told.

When grandma finished working and picking the garden, she picked me up and sat me on the tailgate of the truck. It was pretty warm on the back of my legs where the shorts ended and the skin started.

Grandma's name was Edna, but all her life she had been called "Tootsie." She was a little bitty thing and in all my memories I don't recall her ever sitting still unless she was praying.

As I sat on the tailgate, Grandma smiled and handed me something I would only get at her house. A wonderful half melted Hershey bar with almonds and a Pepsi in a glass bottle. Pretty much the only time I got candy is when I would come and visit in Weimar, Texas. The house didn't have air conditioning, so the candy bars were never in a solid state during the summers. That made it even creamier with the added pleasure of then having to lick it off your

fingers. Next you would get hit with the burning, fizzing sensation as that cold Pepsi hit your throat. Heaven!

Grandma then told me it was now time to walk over to The Golden Acres, which meant a walk past the chicken house (watch out for the chicken snakes) and through the pasture, where I liked to talk to the cows but knew to stay away from the ones with the new babies. They didn't care for nosey little girls trying to touch their fresh little calves, even though I thought their babies were one of the sweetest things in the whole wide world.

Papa and Grandma had bought the small farm next to them. They called it "The Golden Acres" on account of when they bought it, the ground was covered in golden flowers which the cows ate and then immediately became sick. I guess that's one way to name a place.

It had a nice deep tank with a wooden pier. They used the small house for fish fries and parties. There were always a million kinfolk that could be gathered up and entertained. I always thought The Golden Acres looked magical because it seemed to be cocooned in shade and barns and to be separate from the rest of the world. In the springtime, wisteria bloomed high in the trees making it even more wonder like. Off the back porch of the tiny house was a dirt yard which contained the real magic of the place. An ancient live oak tree that had at some point in its life been struck by lightning and split its huge self down the middle. It still continued to grow and was now made for little girls to climb all over it. It didn't allow any bright sun to touch the area between the house and the barns. I loved it there.

Just out of the yard, between the barns, Grandma had another vegetable garden here at The Golden Acres. I enjoyed helping in the garden but enjoyed playing with the animals more.

The chickens roamed free here instead of living in a hen house. They were as interested in me as I was in them.

There was a beautiful rooster who Grandma warned could be mean, so I gave him a wide berth. That rooster kept giving me the evil eye and would try to charge me! Who did he think he was?! I was the precious little grandchild. I was in my magical cocoon at The Golden Acres. I was just trying to talk to the hens and was ignoring him. He apparently didn't appreciate the gravity of the situation or who I was. He charged at me again, and this time managed to get in a good strong peck that drew blood on my finger. It was just a small spot of blood, *but come on!* I screamed the indignant and wounded high pitch scream that only a small girl could fully deliver. Grandma came rushing over, and while shedding incredulous tears, I presented my finger with exactly one drop of blood on it. I screeched at her wanting to know what possible reason the rooster could have for leveling such an unwarranted attack on me! She said that rooster was mean and hateful and proceeded to chase him off while yelling at him. Grandma then told me I wouldn't have to worry about him anymore.

We quit The Golden Acres for the day and headed back home. I had lingering feelings of hurt and anger toward that rooster and did not want him to diminish the memory of my magical happy place in my mind.

Back at home, it was time to call the men folk in from the fields for dinner, which was called lunch when I was back home in the city. To call in the men folk you had to take a white dish towel and wave it over your head while hollering as loud as you could. Needless to say, I

loved participating in this activity. Soon my PaPa and uncles would see this and know it was time to take a break from farm work and clean up to eat.

The dinner table was a loud and rambunctious place to be and listen to a lot of grown-up conversation. Little ears could always learn something new there. We were all seated at the table ready to dig in, and Grandma brings out a big plate of fried chicken. Yum! She looks at me and smiled and says, “I told you that roster wasn’t gonna bother you again.” I knew I was the special and protected one!