

Chicken Story

By RT Manning

Here I am. Here I am, out of the Appalachian woods. The year 1958, I am just an eight year old boy and I am one of the few children that have superior literacy. I have to write this story because I am being disciplined for my malfeasance. Others were involved but they got off. I am the only one being punished - life is so unfair. What I did was really not all that serious; I just shot Mac in the keister with an air gun. I was brought in by the Sheriff, indicted by the Lexington County District Attorney and formal charges were made. I made a plea bargain during the arraignment, my father present. I confessed and asked for leniency. And, it was granted. And so I write this story as part of the deal. This is what I must do, to stay out of the boy's labor camp.

I live in Appalachia in rural Bluegrass country, where we raise livestock and grow chickens. It's not good place for children to be; my family and I are stone broke. If my family gets any income above our needs, it all goes to the church. I live a very indigent life. Anything I want or need I have to salvage or steal it. I have been in trouble before many, many times. I have a long chronology. I seldom act alone in my malfeasances; it's usually with other boys. I was at the general store in Bluegrassville ten days ago. I was very sneaky and low on the floor. I had to be careful because the keeper has a 12 gauge. I go and very quietly grab some Twinkies, by the time the keeper gets the 12 gauge, I am long gone. With the wire from a coat hanger, I break into cars to steal food. My brother showed me how to do it.

In my household, there is only one book, a tattered and torn King James Bible. There is some good reading in the Bible but I want to read other things besides a torn up and disheveled newspaper. Stealing books, both hardcover and comic I have done. We have no television set and I am not allowed to watch programs on one. It's the Devil's box, so the pastor of the Protestant church says, Pastor James Henry. I have gone to Sunday school and read the Bible, but I just don't understand nor believe; it is all fables and fairy tales. I keep my thoughts a secret, for if I should tell then I will be disciplined for sure. I have beliefs of my own, family and church will not change me. Religious dogma, when everything is said and done, is hot air and hypocrisy. Everything ever obtained comes from action and not by prayer. Prayer is for the birds.

Speaking of birds, there are those farm chickens. They fear me. I chase but rarely catch. The chickens, all they do is cluck and crap. They know what they are being grown for, that is, for their cooked flesh. Their instinct is to survive and thrive. And, thinking of this too, it's the same with me. I can chase them but they outrun me every time. It is best to go after those that are weakest and can't fend for themselves. It's Thursday, I haven't had a square meal in awhile. All I had is one of those ho cakes made from a mixture of flour and water and cooked in a pan on open flame. I need some real food. The chickens we have are for market only; and, I am not to eat, so I have been told by my father many, many times. But I am so hungry. I decide to go after the peeps. I can't outrun the hens. In this way, I make the hens come after me. I successfully capture one of the peeps. The hens come a running and one of them pecks me bloody. I grab the pecking hen by the talons and I decapitate her by biting her head off. She makes a loud agonizing cry of pain. A thick stream of blood rushes out as she goes into convulsions. The chicken is dead. I pluck the feathers off, eviscerate the carcass. I roast it over an open flame from a dry kindle wood fire and it makes a pleasant aroma. I get my nourishment and I am happy. With me, all good things must come to an end. My dad will find out and I will receive a good caning for this. But for now he is sedated with moonshine and he is with his pals.

I learn later that the ATF has arrested him along with his pals and confiscated the still used to make moonshine. The good news, I won't receive my caning today. No wilted behind, which is especially painful sitting on those hard oak school chairs at the single room school house. Teacher Miss Morgan sometimes comes in bruised and with a sullen depressed look on her face, I hardly know why. She may be getting abuse from family or maybe from the central school board. My father will get his bail and if I can cover things up maybe I can escape punishment. He won't even know. If he notices one hen missing, I say the raccoon got it.

The Kentucky Familial Service Bureau is not for me. I have no protection; I am the one which bird droppings fall and I will take it like a child. When I am eighteen, I will see the Army recruiter and the hard crap will fall and I will take it like a man.

That is my chicken story and it is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me god, your honor. With this exception, I don't believe in God.

This story is fictional and is for the sake of entertainment only.