

Boiled Eggs

In a colossal house with five bedrooms and a dazzling ocean view lived one friendless, old man. He had a sumptuous home all to himself, where the dusky aroma of gumtrees wafted through the air and the sky stretched over the horizon, but nature did not interest him. He also had three dear, plump hens, but he didn't have a speck of affection for them either. The only love that existed in his hard heart was love for the eggs that those hens laid each morning.

A boiled egg breakfast (never fried, never pouched) was part of his daily routine. The old man held great value in the art of routine. Every day of his remote life, he would wake up at 8:17 am, put on his grey, checkered slippers and shuffle out to collect his eggs. "My, my," he would exclaim with approval, "what perfect, flawless eggs!" He'd gleefully rub his frail fingers together, cradle the eggs in his arms and carry them up to the house, humming the tune of Polly Wolly Doodle, which was the only song he respected.

After his breakfast, he would take a short walk from the dining room to the sofa and watch the 9:00am channel on the benefits of yoga. He detested yoga and everyone who did it, but it was part of his routine. Afterwards, he would mow his lawn, even if he had mowed it the day before, then proceed to sit at his window so that he could shake a fist at anyone who stepped on it. He did not mind his lawn being spoiled; he just found frightening passers-by rather pleasurable.

There was a long stretch of bushland behind the old man's house, and somewhere in there lived a fox. You cannot disagree with the fact that foxes have a reputation for being sly, manipulative creatures who kill for pure amusement. They are called leisure hunters for a reason.

One night, this fox felt bored. Following the scent of live chickens, he sniffed his way into the unsuspecting old man's backyard. His mischievous eyes glinted at the sight of three fat hens, sitting as still as rocks in their pen. One pounce was all it took. In the

ominous glow of the moonlight, the mangled remains of the hens lay strewn on the ground, along with a scattering of feathers and a few fox droppings.

Not much detail is needed to describe what the old man saw the following morning on his trip to collect his beloved eggs. He immediately identified the droppings as a fox's due to its musky scent and bones sticking out. "I guess I'll have to starve this morning, and every single morning after that too. Stupid, stupid fox," he snarled, "my hens are dead, and dead hens can't lay eggs!" With that, he stomped into the house vehemently to the beat of Polly Wolly Doodle. He didn't have the heart to sing. His heart was too busy churning with anger greater than a lion's whose nose had been poked.

That day, instead of mowing his lawn, he marched up to his neighbor Bessie's door and knocked loudly. Bessie emerged wearing an alarmingly green nightie and at least 20 curlers in her frizzy, brown hair. "Just warning you lady, there's a fox going around the place. It might be after that rabbit of yours," murmured the old man, who was not used to socializing with anyone, let alone a talkative young lady. Bessie let out a disbelieving giggle. "Are you talking about my little bunny Piranha?" she scoffed, "She's lived 4 years as a free-range rabbit, and no fox has ever harmed a hair on her head." The old man shrugged awkwardly and escaped back to the safety of his own home. He felt that he had been humiliated.

That very night, little Piranha was snatched for a late-night dinner. By daylight, the only evidence left of her was a few tufts of grey hair that had floated into the old man's garden. Bessie staggered to his house wailing. "You were right!" she sobbed heartbrokenly, "I should have believed the words of a wise old man." The old man was so pleased at being called 'wise' that he didn't even say 'I told you so.'

Now comes the bright side of this tragic story. Left with nothing to eat, the old man took a reluctant walk to the local grocery store. For some unknown reason, he didn't feel like doing things the way he had always done them. "Perhaps I'll have fried eggs instead," he mumbled as he picked a carton of eggs from the fridge. He purchased some tomato sauce to go with them as well. Outside the store, he saw a piece of paper that was sticky-taped to the wall. It read; 'Baby rabbits available for adoption. Looking for a loving home.' "I

suppose I'll take it for Bessie," he thought, as he slipped it into his bag. He had spent so little time outside that he didn't know you were not meant to take notices home. He hadn't the slightest idea what a barcode was, and didn't own a phone to scan it with anyway. On the walk back, he also had a lovely chat about the 9:00am yoga channel and how terrible it actually was, with another elderly lady.

After pondering on it for a few days, the old man came upon a life-changing decision. Life without routine was a better life, and fried eggs...

weren't so bad after all.