

Fighting For Glory

I gazed at the at pictures of the King and Queen, maps of countries in the British Empire such as India along with our artistic and literary accomplishments spread across my classroom walls and merit stars assigned to those efforts considered the best by the teacher. I didn't care about merit stars. As I continued to day dream my imagination soon became engaged with fighting pygmies, running from lions in darkest Africa and sailing the high seas with Horatio Hornblower, when through the mists of a cloud in my head, I heard the teacher's voice.

"Imagine you have a bag of sixteen nuts and you gave one quarter of them away and then lost two, how many would be left in the bag? Dowden, do you know the answer?"

"Nuts, quarters?" what was she talking about. "Uh, six Miss."

"You stupid boy, go stand in the corner, face the wall and pull your socks up."

"Yes, Miss"

That's nothing, I thought, no punishment at all, but what about the patches sewn onto the seat of my pants by my mother, I hoped they were still in tact. Appearances, in regard to whether you could be considered one of the poor kids mattered and no one wanted to be embarrassed, especially in front of the girls who always seemed cleverer than me.

I dribbled past some kids and eventually scored. "Goal" I shouted.

"Nah, that wasn't a goal you missed." Big Harold argued against the goal I had clearly scored. As if it was not bad enough haven't to play with the second string, now I had to put up with him. I was pissed off.

"Get lost, course it was a goal" I said.

"Nah it wasn't, you're not having it" he shouted while making the mistake of pushing me in the chest. I quickly loosed off an uppercut under Harold's chin and down he went. Everyone stopped, aghast. Until that point, no one, but no one, had taken Harold on. Up he got and I put him down again just as the teacher stopped the first string game and came running across the field while blowing his whistle. Harold got up and I was readying myself for the onslaught which never came.

"Both of you report to the headmaster's room" the teacher said.

"I'll get you after school, you're going to have to fight me" Harold hissed menacingly as we strode across the playing field.

Enclosed in a circle of shouting kids, with our hands still stinging from two strokes of the headmaster's cane, we moved around each other. Harold was about three inches taller than me and seemed as large as an elephant but my father's lessons in boxing and fighting and my scraps around the prefab estate where we lived, had prepared me well. I quickly figured out Harold, moved in and out and around him rapidly punching him hard in the face as he kept swinging and missing. With lips swelling and a bloody nose I could tell that Harold was about to quit when slap, slap a burly man had grabbed hold of poor Harold and while slapping him was shouting "fight someone you're own size, ya big bully, stop picking on the little kid".

The fight broke up, and Harold, crying, his hands covering his face, slouched home with his cronies. And, I took off, knowing that tomorrow in class things would be different.

"Hi Harold how's it going." I said as I walked into his Fish & Chip shop with my girlfriend.

Harold who was still large and fat with a round jovial face grinned. "Great Glyn, your looking good" and handed me a bag of fish and chips. We were both thirteen years older and I wondered whether he was pretending to like me the same as I pretended to like him. Who knows I thought; if I had lost the fight, maybe it would have been me wrapping fried fish and Harold holding my girl friend's hand.

Glyn Dowden