

Mugga's Beating
by Justin McGonigle

I wanted to see how serious Mugga was. She told me that if I did anything else, I'd be in big trouble. Mugga was my neighbor. She had 3 daughters and a husband who could make sounds like a duck and a motorboat. I was at their house a lot. They lived right down the street from us. I was 10 at the time.

"Do anything else and you're in trouble. I'll be right in the house, so I can see you." Mugga said to me. Me and Mugga's girls were horsing around outside in the driveway. Their house was a long, one story structure that always smelled of goats. They had goats and would insist that I try goat's milk, which I did one day and it wasn't bad.

This day, however, there wasn't much to do. I think the game I was playing was 'see how much fun I could have throwing stuff' or something like that.

I picked up a piece of bark from the ground and threw it at the youngest girl. It was a bullseye, right in her face.

Before I could laugh, out came Mugga from inside the house. She had the look of a crazy person and a thick leather belt was in her right hand. She came straight for me.

I dogged her and ran into the house. My plan was to run from one side of the house to the other side of the house and jump on my bike, which was leaning on the big maple tree outside.

I ran for my life through the dark house, a house that was always dark, even on a sunny day, and headed for the bright screen door on the other side of the damp living room. Mugga was on my heels.

I made it outside and to my bike, but before I could get on and ride away, she landed the first blow. Wack! Right on my back. Seconds later, another blow. Thwack! A direct hit. Before she could land the third blow, I was on my bike, heading home, which was only a stone's throw away.

I ran into the house to get my parents and I dragged them outside to show them what Mugga had done. I lifted my shirt. My back was covered with fresh welts and had grown numb and stiff.

"See what Mugga did." I said to them. Surely there would be some justice now!, I thought.

"Oh, that looks terrible. What did you do to make her do that?" My Father asked.

"Do?" I said. "Is there anything you can do?"

"Well, it's not really our business." They said.

"Oh." I said, and said nothing more. My parents went inside and I began to cry.

I remember feeling helpless and hopeless. It stuck with me for a long time. There wasn't much to laugh about after that happened.

I called Mugga many years later. I still remembered the phone number. I asked her if she felt that what she did was wrong and would she do it again, given the chance. She said no. I said OK and hung up. I called her early on a Sunday morning, I knew she'd be up.