

Jackie Yardley

FRY DAY

**‘Two fried eggs on toast twice,’**

I mumbled nervously, peeping over the greasy yellow counter.

**‘You’ll have to shout louder than that dearie,’**

muttered Betty.

I could barely see over the counter, being small in structure and only 12 years old.

The oily, yellow walls surrounded me with bacon flavoured aromas.

The matchstick men in the imitation, gold framed, picture frame on the grubby kitchen wall, stood like a metaphor of rigidity, as I tried to compose myself. (I later learnt this was a **Lowry** painting of an industrial community, on their way to work.)

I hid behind the counter, plucking up courage, flushing crimson red, whilst listening to **Procal Harems** *‘Whiter shade of pale’* on the old murky radio, in the corner.

I quickly called out again,

**‘Two fried eggs on toast twice’**

Hastily throwing the plate on the counter and rapidly escaping back to the Smokey kitchen, where my sister Carole was giggling nervously.

Our Dad was a welder and worked in a nearby factory.

**Joes’ café by Watford junction**, was where the workers acquired their breakfast and lunch.

Dad had procured this little Saturday morning job, whereby my sister, (2 years my senior) and I were paid 16 shillings each for 4 hours work. I was pretty fashion conscious at this time, and this money would buy me a couple of single records or a nice little tank top.

Our job was to fry eggs, bacon, and tomatoes on a large black griddle, to make up sandwiches by the order, then take them to the counter and call out.

Betty showed us the basics of breaking an egg, and placing it on the large black grill, allowing about 10 eggs at a time. We had a cracking time, with eggs all over the place.

During this time, we were being closely watched by the Queen. Her eyes followed our every move; Once I splashed egg on her face, I cleaned it off and apologised, and she smiled at me!

I loved this large picture of her, above the griddle, to me she was the Mona Lisa.

Charles, our future king was on the little black and white tv in the corner. The sound and picture were vague and squiggly, and I thought he was studying archery and ants, but later found out it was archaeology and anthropology, (which he later changed to history,) But I could see the resemblance to my Mona Lisa!

One particular egg I turned over and over until I thought it was cooked to perfection, sticking it between the doorstop bread. I was very dismayed when the customer returned it, declaring it burnt.

I remembered my Mum singing a song about a little black egg, and I couldn't get this out of my head. Mum said it was by the Nightcrawlers, and I imagined little burnt black eggs crawling around in the sandwich!

I had only ever made bread and butter pudding, rock cakes and apple pie, with my nan. She would take two of us, every other weekend, back to her lovely bungalow in Sarratt, where we would help with cooking, and gardening with Grandad. His potatoes, marrows, beans, onions, gooseberries and rhubarb were all weighed on the golden scales in the minty, basil smelling greenhouse, and then sold in our pretend shop in the tool shed.

As there were so many of us, Mum didn't consider it safe for us to help in the kitchen. Luckily, we had a massive, intriguing garden, where most of our pretend mud pie and grass cooking took place.

***'Fried eggs, fried bread, fried tomatoes'***

I shouted out, as I got more confident.

Only to observe, sitting in the corner, the meanest boy from down our street. I hoped he hadn't seen me!

*'Silence is golden'* by **the Tremeloes**, played, as I left for the morning, Luckily, I only worked from 8 to 12pm.

My friend Amy lived down the road, so I showered at hers, and we went into town, as we always did on a Saturday, passing the time. Looking at fashion shops and listening to the latest songs on the headphones in Musicland.

We would wonder from booth to booth, as the Foundations sang, 'Build me up Buttercup. The Archers, *Sugar Sugar*, and Marvin Gaye and Tammy terrals 'Onion song' played loudly.

Then we would head to the Wimpey bar, after listening to all these scrumptious food songs.

We later, stood outside with our long gold menthol cigarettes, trying to look mature and cool.

Suddenly, there he was!

*'She works at greasy Joes café'*

He yelled out, in his loud cockney dialect.

*'Fried eggs, fried bread, fried tomatoes'* he mocked!

Ruining my perfected, classy image!

Fortunately, this was a short-lived job, but I was pleased with myself for managing a whole year.

The early rise at 6.30 on a Saturday morning was torture, after the exhaustion of school all week.

However, I managed to learn a little about eggs and frying, which served me well, as my next job was in a fish and chip restaurant