

## **The Importance of Mothers**

We had quite a big backyard in our city house with a small area sectioned off with a wire fence for the chicken-run. Inside the chicken-run was a neatly built red brick henhouse with a corrugated iron roof and rows of broad wooden perches for the dozen or so hens and the cocky, mean spirited rooster to roost in at night. Abutting the henhouse was the crude concrete coop with its twin openings some two foot off the ground filled with soft straw for the hens to lay their big brown eggs.

It was a fun place for a kid to go each day to collect eggs. The only problem was the rooster. He did not like people, with the exception of my mother. He enjoyed sinking his sharp beak into the back of your heel and so it became quite a challenge to get inside the chicken-run, remove the eggs and escape with them without him spotting you. The chicken-run was L shaped and the "foot" of the L was sectioned off from the rest with a small opening for the hens to go through. The rooster liked this part of the chicken-run and if you threw some corn on that side, and if you were lucky, you could keep him occupied with fighting the hens off to peck at the corn and thus become totally distracted from keeping his eye on the coop.

So with the enamel bowl under my arm I collected a handful of corn from the bag in the shed and flung the yellow kernels across the sandy floor of the "foot" of the L. The rooster woke from his one-eyed doze under the peachless peach tree as the corn hit the ground and he flapped his wings angrily at the hens who were clucking excitedly and as he bent his head for his first peck of the corn I lifted the latch to the rickety gate to the chicken-run.

Once inside, I tip-toed to the coop and as I put my hand inside the straw and it closed over a warm brown egg I saw him out of the corner of my eye. It was not my lucky day. He'd seen me and he was coming for me through the opening between the two sections. I dropped the egg back into the straw, the enamel bowl clattered to the floor, and I scrambled up onto the coop. Squawking, he followed me, and I leapt upwards, my arms landing on the corrugated iron, and I heaved myself up with my forearms onto the roof of the henhouse scrapping my knees along the rough edges of the red bricks. With just an inch to spare, I saved myself from the rooster's treacherous beak. Now I was trapped on the top of the henhouse with the rooster strutting around importantly, waiting for me to come down and my knees burning and bleeding.

This is where mothers become really important! "Mom .....Mom ....."

*by Pamela McMonagle © 2008*