

# Pecking Order

*by* A. E. Ivey

My first time all started with the girl on the bench. She had those perfect eyes, you know the ones, where you see them and you just can't help wanting to take everything she has on her. Those kind of eyes. And I saw them first. I was the first one there that morning at the park. I had got up early to beat the heat of the day, I won't lie. Better early than later, later there was no one at the park. They all went home until evening, and then usually the exhaust from the city was more than even I, a youngin, wanted to endure for long periods of time.

But the point is...I saw her first. That means first dibs on whatever she had on her, whether that be chips, bread, donuts, or even just some good old fashioned crackers. Mike knows what first dibs means, he's been around this block longer than I have, and I grew up here! I was waiting for the girl to open her knapsack, she was getting ready to, she wanted to see how close I would get. That's when Mike showed up, and behind him came Harry and Windslow.

"Hay, yous gettin' n'ethin from that brod?" Mike asked.

"Back off Mikey, I seen her first. She ain't moved yet." I said hastily.

"Hay hay hay, there's always plenty to go around, ain't that right Harry?" Mike replied.

"Yeah, yeah, you ain't lyin Mikey." Harry said.

Windslow got up in my face at this point, he was looking for crumbs, I knew what he was thinking, he was thinking I had already had first dibs and was trying for a second filling. He didn't believe in "plenty to go around", he believed in plenty for Windslow and so help him back off till he's done. I'd gotten in a few scraps with him, and lately he'd gotten worse. Lately he'd been going on about some hen up town that wanted him to help out feeding the kids. Windslow don't feed no kids though, Windslow feeds Windslow.

"You already ate yet?" Windslow said in a gruff voice, still looking over my face.

"I jus got here, get up off me Windslow!" I said and threw my head forward at him.

He flew back some mumbling to himself. I watched the others carefully, while still inching closer to the girl to make sure that I got the first dibs of the meal. She started playing roughly and intently with some square thing in her hand, all the kids had them these days. They talked into them, they pushed on them, they would hold them up in the air and then you'd hear this distinct *click*. Who knew how long I'd have to try to ward off the advances of the other guys now that she was taking her sweet time with her toy. I wouldn't be able to keep Harry away forever, he was already getting that crazy look in his eye like he might take a jab at me any moment now just because he was getting impatient, he wanted first dibs just as much as anyone else did.

"Yo Mikey," Harry said. "Yous seen them girls eyes? Look at them eyes Mikey, she gots those special eyes, you know she ain't been here before. She don't know."

"Nah I think yous right Harry, I ain't never seen the likes of this one before." Mikey replied and cocked his head at her.

"Too bad for both of you, I saw her first." I said.

And then it happened, the girl set down her toy and reached into her knapsack. She pulled out a sandwich and took a bite, then tore off the crust and tossed it. Windslow tried to push me aside as we all rushed at it but I got it first, it was big though and he snapped at the bit hanging out of my mouth. Harry jabbed at my side.

I swallowed it down quickly, first dibs meant I had the say in how much everyone else got, it meant I would get more than they would because I was in charge of this raid.

"What now?" Harry said flapping at me.

"You know you can't eat no bag, wait till she ain't got no food in her lap so we know we get all of it." I said back to him.

She tore off more of the crust and tossed it in little bits at her feet, Windslow pecked hard at her toe, and she recoiled her feet from the sidewalk with a surprised, "Ow! Bad birdie!"

"I said wait you stupid old bastard!" I said to Windslow flapping him away from her.

Windslow stepped back and bumped into Mikey. "Hay, hay, watchit Windy!" Mike said.

Windslow wasn't listening, he started calling. Within seconds 5 more guys had shown up. I knew these guys, they stayed in the same building that I stayed in. It was fine, but I was in charge, and Windslow was just trying to show off. He knew how this worked, he was out of line, and today just might be the day he pays for that kind of behavior.

"Hay hay!" I yelled at him. "Windslow you know the deal, yous ain't in charge ova here. She ain't even finished her breakfast yet, you gonna spoil dessert!"

"Yeah yeah he's right Windy, " Mikey said. "You gottsa play by da rules like everyone else 'round here."

I looked around and noticed how surrounded we were now, or rather how surrounded the girl was. She was talking now, but no one could hear her over the coos and feather flutters. But I was close to her, and I had gotten impatient now. I pecked her leg. Harry flew up and landed on the back of the bench. He pulled her hair repeatedly. That's when her eyes changed, now she knew, now she was starting to panic. There were nearly 50 of us by that point, sitting on the bench next to her, on the back of the bench, under her feet, beside her legs, flapping around and eager. I fly up on the bench and hoped into her lap, she was screaming now. I looked at her face, then reached out and bit her cheek. That was all it took, in a moment the rest of the guys were on her. But I had gotten out and stayed back, I had a mind for Windslow, and he was on the ground by her feet. I flew at him and grabbed his eye with my claw. Old Windslow never knew what hit him, but rules are rules. I had first dibs, that means I had first call. He spoiled the wait, and in the midst of the frenzy

there was no one to help him out. I pecked at his eye, pulled it out,  
and swallowed it.

