

False Friends by Shirley Lee



Among the constant changes of my homes over my young life I spent the longest time in one area of Langley Prairie, British Columbia on McDonald Road. While living at our McDonald Road home my little sister and I played between the fields in a pie shaped wedge of land that led to the highway.

At the point in the wedge lived my sister's play pal whose parents had a chicken farm. While playing there we would find many eggs just like having an Easter egg hunt. They had a few free range hens running loose as well as a large building where they raised chicks for the community farmers.

One day, I found a chick half hatched and flopping around in a half shell in the tall grass. We took the eggs and the chick to the lady of the house. She thanked us and asked if I would like to keep the chick I had found. I was so excited because I had no pet, so off my sister and I went down the road to our house.

Mom was kind of taken aback I think but, she proceeded to tell me how to raise it by the kitchen stove in a high box and if need be we could put a light bulb over the box at night. This chick got the best of food and was the centre of attention until she got big enough to jump up too high for the box. I missed her being in the house, but mom and dad said she belonged outside now and I could put her out with mom's other hens.

She grew up to be the biggest and most beautiful hen. Shiny dark brown feathers that would glisten like oil slick in the sun and she would strut like a queen. But, of course through the eyes of a child I may have been a little prejudiced. I could not wait to collect her first egg and it seemed to take forever. Finally, mom told me to go check out her nest. Off I went to see and although I could see this big egg, which turned out to be a double yolker, to my dismay she would not let me look at it or have it. She just pecked me hard until I was afraid to try anymore.

From that day through her old life she would fight everyone who tried to take her eggs. I quit trying, but mom and dad just treated her different I guess so I left it up to them and she earned the name of "Meanie." She turned into moms best brute hen and layer but the ungrateful beauty never liked me. I guess if I learned a life lesson from this it was like a beautiful wall plaque that a friend gave my mother. "True friends are like diamonds precious and rare. False friends are like autumn leaves found anywhere," even in the animal world!