

Teacher stole my sweets

By Michael Gilbey [[email](#)]

When I reflect back on my school life at the various teachers who educated me I must admit they were all very good bar one. This was the same female teacher who tried to force me to eat a disgusting mashed potato concoction at a [school dinner](#) with disastrous results. I was now about eight years old and my previous class teacher, a male maths master and a wonderful educator had moved on to pastures new. Our new teacher was also new to the school and as such an unknown factor.

The class experienced our new teachers qualities on her first day. Our previous exercise books were withdrawn and new ones issued. The difference between the quality of the two books was like the difference between chalk and cheese. The pages of our previous book were smooth and ideal for practising our scrawlish writing when composing an essay. The paper of the new books was rough and lumpy almost the same consistency as woodchip wallpaper and a similar amount of ingrained lumps. Our pens were the standard issue wooden handled pen with a steel nib that looked similar to a dart. These pens always left everyone's fingers ink-stained when used. Even if some children could afford fountain pens they were not allowed to use them. The unsuitability of our new exercise books became obvious the first time we wrote in them. The absorbency of paper was similar to blotting paper and one could almost hear the sound of the ink being sucked from the pen into the paper with the consequent growing ink blot. The rough particles within the paper also caused the points of the pen nib to split in two depositing even more ink on the paper. I don't suppose the occasional dart practice with the pens on the wooden back of an open desk top helped much, but the pens were remarkably durable. Our new teacher berated everyone for sloppy disgraceful work without considering for a moment that she was the real cause of the problem. For children who up to this moment had a degree of pride in the progress of our handwriting skills, the admonishment was quite disheartening. My classmates were not rebellious by nature but we all experienced a permanently unhappy mood with the new teacher and even small children can foster dreams of sweet revenge.

The year was now 1954 and I was eight years old. As strange as it may seem I had never tasted a sweet in my life. In post-war Britain, sugar was still rationed until 1953 as were sweets. Although I cannot remember how many sweets it was possible to buy each week, I think it would have been a derisory amount. I suspect my mother swapped her sweet ration coupons with other people in exchange for other more common sense things like butter or meat coupons. As for myself, I never missed sweets simply because it is difficult to yearn for something you have never had.

During the course of 1954, classmates started bring sweets to school as they came off the rationing system. These sweets were never shared but our so called classmates would take great pleasure at slowly devouring one during

playtime and showing their envious friends how much they were enjoying it by the looks of relish on their faces. As with all children, some of my classmates had something I did not and I felt I should have them too. I delicately raised the question of sweets with my mother by blurting out loudly something like, "Mum can I have some sweets"? It was only with the nagging persistence that all children seem to possess that my mother finally relented and came home one day with some sweets just for me. I will always recall them, they were a tube of sweets known as Refreshers. These were like a hard tablet that fizzed and dissolved in the mouth and tasted really nice. To me these were not just any old sweets, they were "my" sweets, the first sweets I had ever owned in my life and as such were to be treasured. My mother told me to save the sweets until playtime at school the following day.

I recall the very next day feeling as proud as a peacock as first thing the next morning at school, sitting next to my classmate on our double seated desks, pulling this unopened tube of sweets from my pocket and showing him my treasure. It was as I was doing this a hand descended from the heavens like the hand of God and pulled the tube of sweets from my grasp. I looked around to see our female class teacher looming over me and scolding me for producing sweets in class. My teacher told me in a stern voice that the sweets were confiscated. It was not like I had ever had sweets before to make flourishing sweets in class a regular habit. In my childish ways I felt I had been unjustly treated. What was worse, the first sweets I had ever possessed in my first eight years of existence were gone in a flash, unopened, uneaten and untasted. Come playtime, the thoughts I had of tasting the first sweets in my life were completely dashed.

By this stage of my life, I was no longer required to remain for school dinners and could go home for lunch. At home my mother asked me how I liked the sweets and I told her my tale of woe. All my mother said was "I see" and then carried on with her chores. My mother was never a great person for telling anyone her thoughts.

During afternoon lessons everyone including myself was in deep concentration as we attempted to scrawl an essay into our ink thirsty, blotting paper type, exercise books. Everyone nearly jumped out their seats as a sudden crash of thunder tore through the classroom. The door to the classroom was located in a corner of the room and laid flat against the wall when opened. The noise of the sudden crash was caused by the door being forcefully thrown open and banging against the wall. As we all looked up I froze in horror as I saw my mother framed within the doorway. My mother quickly looked around the room to get her bearings and then without hesitation strode towards my bossy teacher who was standing at her desk and help out her hand with the words "My sons sweets please". It was not a polite timid request, it was more of a forceful demand. I stared in disbelief as my teacher without saying a word, meekly opened her desk and handed my tube of sweets to my mother. All mother said was thank you as she turned and walked out of the room.

Somehow my mothers thank you had an entire lecture of admonishment tied up in both her tone and those two words. I imagine the statement "Don't you ever dare touch my sons sweets again" were somehow compressed into that

simple thank you but my teacher was certainly under no misapprehension of the forcefulness of my mothers intentions.

As my mother disappeared I wished the earth would open up and swallow me. I was under no illusion that I was now to feel the full wrath of my teacher. To my surprise, she was for once nice to the class and especially nice to me. On reflection in later years I suspect she was nice rather than nasty just in case my mother returned. To me and my classmates my mother was something of a hero and I am sure we would have hung a medal on her had one been available. During the afternoon playtime we all giggled at this brief spectacle of a uneven clash of adult titans. I think we all felt pleased too that our bossy schoolteacher had got her long overdue comeuppance. They say revenge is sweet, for schoolchildren, revenge is sweeter than real sweets.

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