

THE GEFILTE FISH

by Isaac Cohen

I remember it well. It was Passover. We usually celebrated Passover Eve at our home; that particular Passover evening we all went to my mother's family.

Before we went, my mother warned us all: "Remember now, we are going to be guests, and you must eat everything they serve!" In our house, she used to cook for each one separately; most times there were on the dinner table five different dishes. Each one got his favorite food.

So we went to the family gathering.

It was a very nice atmosphere, plenty of jokes, funny and not so funny remarks, and, as on all Jewish holidays, the main event was...the food.

When they began to serve the food, they didn't seem to finish. The first dish was a gefilte fish, a kind sweet fish -- my most hated dish. So hated that still today, no one can make me even try it. And there it came, in all its glory, to the bunch of hungry people. Beside me, the only other one who never tried it was my father. My mother and sisters loved it. You can imagine the excitement of the whole family when the gefilte fish was served.

"Oh, Gefilte fish!"

"It's wonderful!"

"Who made it?"

"Just the right taste"

"Don't fill the stomach, there's plenty of food to come!"

The Jewish people love to eat and they make sure they have plenty of opportunities to do so. Especially in family gatherings and holidays, and especially in Passover night. I love to eat, too. A lot! Everything except gefilte fish!

While they were serving and chewing and praising the gefilte fish, the rumor spread around the table that I wasn't eating the poor gefilte fish.

"Doesn't eat?"

"Why?"

"Eat, eat!"

"Try it."

"Try a small piece."

"Oh! It's Delicious!"

"Leave him alone!"

"Let him try a small piece, he won't die."

Don't mention death at the table..."

My father began: "Honey, I don't..." But I saw the look in my mother's eyes: Don't you dare!

Then I saw but could not believe my eyes. My father, who never ate any kind of fish, not even tuna or sardine, was actually trying the gefilte fish.

I withstood the pressure of those 20 hungry, happy noisy eaters.

Other dishes were served. The dinner continued. A few minutes later, I asked to be excused, and when I passed the other side of the table, I passed my father.

"Sambi," he whispered, "Throw this away," and handed me a cloth napkin. I wanted to open it but he stopped me. In the bathroom, I opened the napkin and saw the pieces of gefilte fish.

I returned to the room in high spirits and sat down beside my father.

"Eat! Eat!" He said. "In this place one has to eat everything they serve!"

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