

The day Mother vowed Granny must die....

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An Easter present has consequences

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This is a true story. This all takes place in a small rural town in Indiana in 1950. I was about three and half years old at the time. But first, I must give you some background to explain why my mother said what she did. My mom and dad had just moved into a two-bedroom house shortly before my birth. The reason they moved was this house had recently had indoor plumbing installed. Older houses back then did not have a designated bathroom. They had a front parlor, sitting room, kitchen and the bedrooms. So there was no room designated the bathroom. In order to accommodate the toilet, it was placed in the basement. There was no partitions or walls around the commode. It just sat there in the basement with the furnace and the laundry, out in the open. In order to take a bath at this time, a large galvanized tub was set in the middle of the kitchen. Mom would fill it with hot water and we would all use it to take our bath one at a time. This house also had a garage. Which in those days was a luxury, but it never had power drawn to it. Attached to the garage was a chicken coop. You were allowed to have some livestock within the city limits at this time. Poultry were one of the animals you are permitted to keep. My paternal grandmother shows up on the Saturday before Easter. She brings in a large box and hands it to me. This box was making all sorts of wondrous noises. When I opened it I found that there were one dozen baby chicks in the box. Oh joy, oh joy, I thought. Granny had just given me one of the best gifts a boy could get for Easter. My mother had other ideas. That spring the weather proved my mother's worst fears were well-founded. My grandmother's intent was that we place the chicks in the coop and in a little while we would benefit from fresh eggs. However, that spring was one of the coldest on record. The temperature dropped to below freezing every night up until Memorial Day. This meant if the chicks were be kept in the coop they would need some type of incubator. Generally a light bulb in a box would suffice. However again, there was no power going to the garage, which had the coop attached to it, which meant an incubator couldn't be used. So the only place the chicks could be kept warm in was the basement. Mom and dad did their best to corral

the chicks into one corner. Thinking this would lessen the cleanup. But the chicks soon formed an escape committee and were roaming about the basement. Mom would fix the holes where they got out and then put the chicks back in the little pen. Of course the chicks would have none of that and each time they were put back, they found yet another way to escape. My mother in desperation finally just gave up with trying to keep the chicks penned. During the time that she was chasing the chickens around and putting them back into their little basement pen, the chicks imprinted on my mother. So now every time my mother went down, they seemed to surround her. This wasn't so bad except, every time she went into the basement to use the commode, she was surrounded by 12 little peeping pin-feathered baby chickens. That was the day she vowed that Granny shall die, if she ever gave me another batch of chickens again. The day finally came when it was warm enough for the chicks to go out to the coop. This is when we learned about Granny's second mistake. Apparently in her rush to pick up the chicks and bring them to me, she had neglected to tell the clerk at the hatchery that she wanted hens. What we had were 12 little roosters. Or in other words, 12 feathered alarm clocks going off every morning. Needless to say, this did not please our neighbors. They were relieved to see, periodically, one of the chickens were being invited to the house for dinner.