

Short Story - Prohibition

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I heard the clatter of falling dishes in the kitchen as I leapt the last two steps to the landing. Rachel, my older sister sat nearby sewing and scowling at me. I knew how much she hated it when I jumped stair steps. She had told me countless times that one of these days I was going to get hurt. *Sisters!* I mumbled under my breath and hurried into the kitchen.

Mom stood there, staring out the window with a worried expression. One of her best plates lay at her feet in shattered pieces.

Shoving my hands in my pants pockets I quietly walked up to her.

“What’s the matter Mom?”

She whirled around like a scared rabbit.

“Jefferson Osborne you know better than to scare me like that.”

I shrugged sheepishly.

“What’s going on outside?” I asked, hoping to divert her attention to something other than me.

I moved to the kitchen window and looked out. Down the street, near Mr. Grover’s general store I saw a group of men trying to force the doors.

“More prohibitionists.” Mother said quietly, wiping her hands on her apron. “And you father isn’t even here to try to reason with them.

I thought about my Dad. A former marine during the Great War. In our small town he acted somewhat like a peacemaker between warring factions.....well as warring as people could become in a place called Good Town.

Most recently there had become more and more prohibitionist running rampant, and stealing and destroying Mr. Grover’s deliveries of liquor that he sold to the bar in Gina’s restaurant.

At first I hadn’t cared what they did. As long as they didn’t bother us. All too soon I begin to realize that these prohibitionists weren’t just interested in store owners and their liquor, but anyone who had any alcohol anywhere. I was beginning to side with the prohibitoists. Wouldn’t it be good to get liquor out of here? My best friend Tommy’s dad was constantly coming home drunk, and using up all the family’s income on drinks at Gina’s.

Suddenly I got an idea. I should find out more about this. I glanced to see where Mom had gone and saw her in the pantry. Grabbing my hat from the hook near the door I quietly slipped out of the house and down the street. It couldn’t hurt to ask these prohibitionist people what they really thought.....Or could it?

I hurried down the street, hoping Mom wouldn’t glance out the window anytime soon. The men had finally succeeded in busting into Mr. Grover’s store, and I slipped in after them, staying in the back. I watched in fascination.

Poor Mr. Grover was cowering behind his checkout counter, a big frying pan in his hands.

Without even a second look, a few of the prohibitionist pushed their way into the back storeroom. I could hearing banging and crashing sounds, but didn't dare go back there. If Mr. Grover saw me he would most certainly inform mother of my whereabouts.

The rest of the prohibitionist were starting to wreck things in the store. Throwing delicate chinaware on the floor, tearing the fabric of clothing for sale, and destroying baking supplies.

I felt sick. I thought these men were trying to "help" people stop drinking and ruining their lives, not destroying stuff that didn't belong to them.

Suddenly from the back of the store the other men rolled a barrel out between the counter. They were all laughing, making as much of a mess as they could as they made their way through the store.

The men rolled the barrel right out the front door and started down the street. I ran after them. This wasn't their property. They had stolen it from Mr. Grover!

"Hey!" I shouted, catching up to a burly young man. "Your stealing! Your stealing Mr. Grover belongings!"

The young man threw his head back and laughed. "Why looky here---A little preacher trying to accuse us." The others laughed and I felt my cheeks redden. "Looky here preacher man---We're trying to help people stop drinking this stuff---"

"By destroying Mr. Grover's property?" I smirked. I shouldn't have done that. The young man let his fist fly right into my left eyes. I stumbled backwards, dizzily watching them roll the barrel away. At the end of the street, a man busted the barrel open and the whiskey begin to pour out.

Laughing and pounding each other on the backs, the so called prohibitionist disappeared around the corner, leaving the barrel to drain of it contents.

Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder. Still dizzy, I looked up to see my Dad standing there.

"Got yourself into quite a scrape Jeff. Here let me look at that eye." He tilted my head back and gently touched the skin around my eyes. I squirmed. "Let's get back home and put some ice on that."

He squeezed my shoulder and started to guide me home.

"I'm proud of you son. Although I don't like how you snuck away from the house without telling your mom. I proud that you were willing to stand up for Mr. Grover." I felt proud, I liked when Dad treated me like a man.

"I don't get it dad. These men think they're helping to stop people from drinking whiskey, but they purposely destroyed Mr. Grover's property to do it. I don't think that's right."

"No, it isn't Jeff. These men might think they're doing good, and they might partly be doing good, but they shouldn't be doing it at the expense of Mr. Grover's property."

I nodded vigorously. “They made such a mess Dad! They ruined a lot of stuff.”

“I know son. In trying to “help” people clean up their lives, these men aren’t much better than the people who drink whiskey. There are other ways to go about this more peacefully.”

I stood up tall, trying not to wince from the pain in my eye and smiled at Dad.

“And I’m going to be the one to do it!”

THE END.....