

My Autobiography: page 162

By Jacqueline Herrlin

It was a typical March day. We sat at our usual window side table in Steamworks, the local coffee shop. I sipped slowly at my mocha latte while watching the cars whip down the busy street, spraying brown slush onto the sidewalks, dirtying what remained of the almost melted white snow.

“You know you really could,” Aundrea chattered on, trying to entice me. “I’m not saying you should, or would, or anything like that. I’m just saying you could. You’ve got the brains, the detail oriented mind, and there is just no way you would ever be caught. You’re just too innocent looking.”

This was not the first time someone told me I would make an excellent bank robber. Nor would it be the last. So I just sat back and smiled, silently laughing to myself as I licked the whipped cream off the top of my frothy, steaming beverage, thinking, ‘if only she knew, if only she knew about my illicit past.’

The incident took place eight years prior. Everyone had their assignments, the six of us were ready to go, ready to fulfill our dream, the perfect crime. Tasha, Gina and I, the distraction, emerged from the room first, creeping stealthily away until we rounded the corner. The hairs on the back of my neck prickled, knowing Kayla and Erin would soon follow to serve as lookouts, and finally Emma, the thief.

The three of us walked confidently toward the front desk, although I’m sure not just I felt a queasy spinning sensation in my stomach. My hands shook with nerves and

excitement as we approached the staff members, and other children. The plot was underway.

“Hey everybody! Watch our skit!” we yelled, and immediately threw ourselves into a Stouge like comedy, accidentally hitting each other, falling down, and slipping on our clothes as we tried to get back up again. This type of behavior being typical for our crew went unquestioned; it was only the secret motives behind it, and our missing, but unnoticed, companions, that made the situation all together unique. The moronic scene lasted a sufficient sixty seconds, and then we finished it off with a grand finale group fall and crawled hurriedly away.

As we entered the hallway, and out of sight we jumped to our feet and ran back to the recreation room, our rendezvous point. We entered in a fit of giggles trying to catch our breath, smiles across all our faces. However, these smiles soon faded as we saw our playmates huddled together whispering urgently.

Erin whipped around, a look of horror upon her face.

“She actually did it!” she exclaimed, in disbelief.

“What?” I questioned, almost yelling, while the others tried to quiet me. I felt as unconvinced as Erin sounded, but then I saw it. There before my eyes stood a box of Oreos.

“You guys told me too,” Emma complained in defense. “Well do you want them or not?” How could we possible eat stolen cookies? What if we were caught? Would we go to prison?

“Well fine then, I’m putting them back,” Emma said huffily, and left the room.

Still in disbelief that our scheme had been carried out, and successfully nonetheless, we all sat in a state of stupor, staring blankly into one another’s faces.

“I can’t believe she actually did it,” I repeated, over and over. After a good five minutes of sitting, we all realized something was amiss.

“Where is she anyways?” Erin asked, trying to be casual. The daycare’s kitchen lay twenty feet away, making it inconceivable that Emma should take this long to replace the cookies and return. So where was she?

As risky as it seemed to leave the safe haven of the rec room we had no choice, we would have to go and look for her.

With the rick of great peril we ventured toward the vicinity of the adults at the front desk, and came across the most horrific scene. Emma was on time out! With only one possible explanation we all knew, she had been caught.

They must have seen her in the kitchen with the cookies, I thought to myself, and of course assumed she was taking them, not putting them back. Even if she did try to tell the truth there were sure to punish her for having stolen the cookies in the first place, and now she was on time out. What if they told her parents? What if they grounded her, and forbid her from watching T.V. and eating desert? What if they sent her to reform school? And it was all our fault. We had no choice left, we had to confess.

As I gazed into the others’ eyes we all seemed to come to this conclusion at once, and with that we jumped into a torrent of admission, spewing out every last detail from the initial idea, the various roles played, our guilty consciences, and our final attempt to set things right by returning the cookies. We poured our souls out down to the very last drop and then began to beg for mercy for our dear friend Emma who had been wrongfully put on time out.

“It’s our fault. We should be punished. Take us instead!” we all cried, and as we finished this final plea a silence engulfed the room.

The silence persisted for several moments as the staff looked us up and down with confused quizzical stares. Then Jamie, a tall buff man who emitted an essence of cool no other daycare worker could ever possess, laughed a little and said

“I put Emma on time out for running in the hall.”

What? I thought.

It turned out that Emma, after returning the cookies, so full of nervous energy, dashed from the kitchen, back toward the rec room, when Jamie spotted her, and stopped her for a mere speed violation. Our confession was superfluous.

I took a deep breath and held it as I braced myself for the lashing to ensue.

However, it did not come. Instead, something quite unexpected happened. They all began to laugh. Every last one of them. Not until years later would I understand why we did not get in trouble, but we did not and that was all that seemed important at that moment.

“I don’t think I could do it,” I told Aundrea earnestly. “I crack under pressure. I would probably end up turning myself in,” I stated, holding back a smile.