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## The Plagues of Egypt Lea

by Marion Umney

We've lived on Egypt Lea Estate for twenty years. Don't know why it's called that. Some folks say it's where the Gyppos had their summer fair in medieval times, but who knows. It's an OK place to live. Got rougher over the years, but where hasn't?

This year; well it's been one thing after another: floods, storms. They blame climate change, but who knows? Portents of doom for us that's for sure. The storms seemed to last for days. Not just rain, but hail like rocks, and it was so dark and bleak. Then the river broke its banks and brought that hideous red mud with it, over the fields and the allotments. It stank. Rotting carcasses of animals brought downstream, flies, midges. The animals carried some skin disease they said, and people got it too, carried by the flood water maybe. The surgery was packed with folks who couldn't stop scratching. Then the press of course; after; like a plague of locusts.

The kids. They didn't care. They still wanted to go out. We made them wait until we were sure about this skin stuff, but you can't keep them home for ever can you. They were down by the pond when I spotted them putting something in a bag and giggling.

*"What you kids up to?"*

Why is silence so worthy of suspicion? I knew they were up to no good when they just stared at me – caught in the act; but they'd dropped the bag and the frogs started jumping out.

*"What you doin' with them?"*

*"Nothin'"*

*"Really?"*

They knew they wouldn't get away with that.

*"We're doin' the plagues of Egypt at school so we thought we'd take these in to show Miss Dean. That's all"*

*"Show her or scare her?"*

"She won't be scared Mum. She's a teacher after all". His grin gave him away.

*"Just you make sure you don't finish up laughing on the other side of your face my lad".*

I turned, hiding a smile – kids!

When I answered the door they were silent, but their uniform and their faces told me. I thought, why is silence so worthy of suspicion? I could feel the dread rise in my gullet. I felt sick, giddy, held onto the door for support. No, please, not that.

He died laughing. Laughing at that bullying thug screaming about the frog in his shoe. 10 stab wounds for laughing. My darling first-born son.