

# *LUCY!*

**You got some  
'Splainin' to do!**



**Why Stealing From  
The Homeless  
Is a Bad Idea.**

BY GEORGE

I love Lucy.

What's not to love about the four foot nothing Filipina with a gregarious laugh, darting about the kitchen with an energy that would make the Eveready battery bunny rabbit appear lazy.

Lucy worked her ass off. She had to. For her boss, the head cook at our homeless shelter, was probably as lazy as they come, Perhaps it was his Caribbean heritage that lent to the obvious malaise. Lucy picked up the slack and happily carried the mail for him. Lucy loved her job.

With a polite shy giggle, Lucy blushingly denied while accepting endless well-meaning accolades attesting to her physical and spiritual beauty from most if not all, of the more than seventy odd, entirely male residence.



The glint of mischievous and fond reflection that lit up the sparkling dark eyes served well to reveal and suspend the chuckle of memories evoked by the more than respectful teasing.

Being new to homelessness and the 'Shelter-Game', I recognized very early that it would not hurt to go out of ones way to be nice to the person that controls your food. Immediately I discovered that obvious seemingly inexplicable, unethical and indeed unlawful practices of prejudice and preference were being committed with astonishing frequency.

I thank the Lord and my Mother for the wisdom and knowledge of when to;

## Shut The Fuck Up



One of the things that I discovered about myself was that I will probably do just about anything to survive. I basically have two rules. Never beg. Never steal. I'll not burden this tale with details of how I have managed to adhere perfectly to only one of the aforementioned. Suffice that I have never begged and pray that I will never feel that I have to steal again.

My Dad was Navy; Royal Canadian 1950's/ '60's and '70's Navy, through and through.

They had a lot of rules. My Dad had a lot of those rules for his wife and five kids; (hereinafter forever labelled 'Navy Brats') and even added a slew of his own. Paramount to me and my four female siblings emerging existence were two very simple rules that were absolutes.

The first was, 'We do not lie.' The second yet tantamount observance being; 'We do not steal.' Failure to adhere to these simple tenants resulted in the gravest of consequences as he may deem necessary to instantly remind the spirit of a gregarious unruly lad that it would be in his absolute best interest to keep an even keel whilst navigating the rolling seas of 1960's son of a RCN sailor boyhood. The bar of expectation was set incredibly high. 'A tight ship is a happy ship.' He'd say. I'd say 'A tight ship is ... just a tight ship.'

It was the best of times; It was the worst of times. Recanting more would be a digression from the current focus.

Everybody Loves Lucy.

When Lucy arrives each morning bubbling with enthusiasm the energy level in the building seems to swell like a Fundy Tide. Through the gate-keepers, into the morning TV commons room on into the main dinner hall and kitchen area, where cresting in a buoyant cascade of salutations to all and any she would encounter. Lucy loved her job. Especially on Saturdays.

To day is Saturday. Of varying significance to most of us in the shelter.

To some comes the palpable relief of not having the administrators on site.

Even the gate-keepers were more inclined to joviality.

To Lucy it meant that she gets to work without her boss. On Saturdays, she's the man. Queen of her kitchen.

To the majority of us it is all that. It is also Hockey Night in Canada.

Anywhere in Toronto you were expected to be a Leafs fan. Sacrilegious otherwise.

Show up at the room wearing a Red Wings sweater or a Gretzky Los Angeles and it could very well be on before the end of the third period. Largely dependant on how the team in blue and white are doing. The springtime can be very treacherous. It has been a little while.



I was alive when this last happened. Most that were are no longer. I guess that says two things. If you can name everybody in that picture, congratulations, you are probably older than me.

Hockey night is kinda a big deal at the shelter.

Chef Albert will allot a considerable amount of food-stuffs to further the enhancement of the enjoyment of the game.

Fully half or the residents will make their way to the dining hall's TV. The center tables with the best view of the screen will be occupied with ardent Leaf fans. Several garbed in jerseys and regalia of blue and white. Others, less fervent will mill about, coming and going throughout the game.

Almost all will be nearby when the staff bring out snacks that are above and beyond the usual fare provided on non-hockey or other events. A couple of fellows, those generous and with a few bucks to spare will produce potato chips and peanuts. On rare occasions someone will order a few large pizzas. The usual week-day evening snack was almost always comprised of nothing more than simple baked goods. On hockey night, viewers are treated with platters heaping with cold cuts, cheese, pickles and pepperoni sticks nestled atop a bed of lettuce collared by a ring of cherry tomatoes all garnished with sprigs of parsley prepared by Lucy and her assistant's loving hands.

There has been considerable murmuring and quiet discussion of late on the gradual and noticeable decrease the amount of choice deli goods atop the platters. It has always been the case that sometimes there's a little more of this and a little less of that. But always there was an ample amount of the good stuff.

It's nearing six o'clock and puck drop will be shortly after seven. Several hockey guys are about to ensure that the dishes and meal cleanup are well in hand and there will be no question that the chores will be completed in time for face-off. Lucy and her assistant having finished their tasks and having locked up the knives, are about to take their leave. As she bids her adieus, grinning broadly, Lucy dons her outerwear and gathers up several cloth shopping bags, each bulging and obviously heavy. Now, a couple of the fellows had made mention that those cloth bags arrive in the morning folded and tucked under Lucy's arm and they now begin to wonder why she leaves with them so heavy that she is more than gently struggling under the burden.

As she passes through the main commons room, mere meters from the door and gate-keepers, two guys cut her off and ask; "Whatcha' got in them bags Lucy?"

She's so surprised and shocked that she offers only minor resistance as they relieve her of the green Dollarama bags. They proceed to dump the contents onto a nearby table in view of the half dozen residents waiting for the TV's to be turned on.

Bags and bags of cheese, grapes, ham, pepperonis and other quality foodstuffs; all intended for and properly property of the shelters residents. Before a small gathering and in full view of the gate-keepers and cameras one asks; 'Why are you stealing our food Lucy?'

Flustered and traumatized by her discovery, Lucy mumbles incoherently as she turns and bolts through the doors exiting the homeless shelter. We didn't see Lucy for a month as she served the suspension. When she did return, gone was the jubilation and sunny disposition. To be replaced by a bitter vengeful woman that thereafter served up plates of substandard fare to the hockey guys every opportunity she could. Lucy was a tremendous actress as revealed by the exposure of her actually being a vengeful little thief.

That employees of a non-profit secure personal advantage with resources intended for their disadvantaged clients is disgusting. Much the same as it was at my current non-profit administered housing arrangement, when as I entered our kitchen, a well paid staff member was exiting with arms laden with several containers of food provisioned and rightfully intended for residents.

My bitter chagrin is further amplified when I open the refrigerator to find it empty. Any organization that allows such pilferage by any individual making twenty dollars plus per hour at the nutritional expense of those they are pretending to serve; and who ought to be able to afford to buy their own lunch, is as disgusting and phony as Lucy.

Food taken out of the mouths of those for which it was intended leaves a very, very bitter aftertaste.