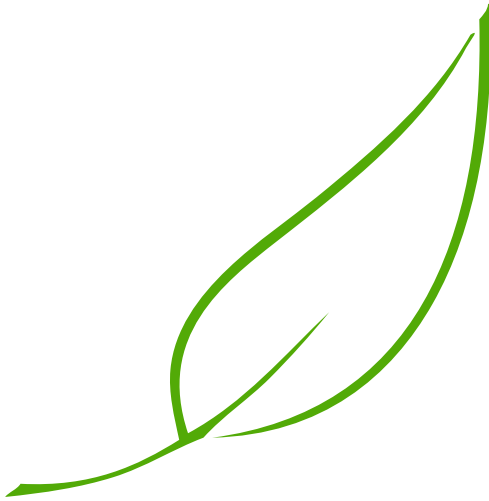


BAM 'EM, LIZZIE, BAM 'EM

by Ken Bradbury



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Did I miss something? When I was about three years old I was running through Grandma's kitchen, burning up time while waiting for a Sunday dinner to begin. I rounded the intersection of Front Porch and Kitchen Table when my nose picked up the distinctive aroma of fresh strawberries. The smell brought me to a halt right in front of Aunt Lizzie, who sat stemming the little red delights for Sunday dinner.

Being only three years old ... and about half wicked at the time ... I reached out and grabbed one of the strawberries. Aunt Lizzie looked down her nose, through her glasses and straight to where I was standing. I grabbed another and popped it into my mouth. Just as I was grabbing for the third berry, Aunt Lizzie's hand shot out and clamped mine in mid-air. "Did I hear you ask permission?" she said. Being uncommonly brave at the time ... or more likely, extremely stupid ... I reached out with the other hand and grabbed another strawberry.

Aunt Lizzie popped me so hard I not only dropped my final berry but nearly spit out the one still rolling around my mouth. As far as I can remember, I have asked permission ever since. So what's happened to the rest of the world ?

Some time ago, I was talking on the phone to my friend Louise when the receiver started beeping in my ear. I often hear strange sounds when talking to Louise but this is one I'd not encountered before, As the day went on, two or three more conversations got beeped in mid-chat and I just assumed that



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