

IT BEGAN IN BROOKLYN by Vito Altavilla

EXCERPT

All the children were gathered in the living room ready to celebrate Selma's eleventh birthday party when her mom entered the room and told them all to follow her to their newly finished decorated basement. This was the time when neighbors were all trying to outdo each other. I believe the expression was keeping up with Joneses.

SONNY was at the end of the line holding the birthday gift his mom had bought. As he passed through the living room, he noticed a fruit bowl in the middle of the dining room table. He had never seen such beautiful ripe fruit like this. He didn't know what possessed him, but he only knew he had to take a bite out of one of those apples. He figured if he took one bite only, he could the put it facedown and no one would notice.

He had to be quick, so he grabbed an apple and bit down hard. It was wax! It was stuck in his mouth up to his gums! He couldn't dislodge it and his mouth was starting to hurt. He finally squeezed a finger on either side of the apple and with a yank dislodged it. There was still a big piece missing which was still in his mouth. He put the missing piece in his pocket returned the apple face down in the fruit bowl. The missing piece was invisible. However, SONNY had another problem. He could feel a waxy residue on his teeth and as he walked toward the basement he noticed a mirror, smiled then got very nervous. His teeth were red. The wax coating was now on his teeth. He tried to scrape it off but to no avail. His only solution was to eat birthday cake and ice cream with the slightest mouth opening he could muster. It seemed to work. No one said anything, although they did look at him strangely when he was singing happy birthday since he sang, "Abby birthday oo oo and Abby birdday oo oo, etc." They just never thought that SONNY had a speech impediment.

The party was over and SONNY said goodbye with his lips only slightly open and his head down.

The following week Selma came up to SONNY and asked him if he saw anyone bite her mom's wax apple. She was upset since it was expensive. SONNY said, "No, he hadn't seen anyone bite her apple, but if he had he would have told her.

SONNY didn't feel that he was lying. After all, for him to have seen someone he would have had to be looking in the mirror when he bit it.