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Mama Never Lied

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Mamma

James C.

Never

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Lied

The wind bucked through the trees, casting small branches to the ground. Mexican oaks and buckeye trees bent before the wild wind. A scruffily dressed farmer leaned into it and navigated his way from his barn to his house. Pushing the door open with a firm grip on the knob, so as not to lose the door, he entered the kitchen. His brother sat at the small table, sharpening his knife against an oil stone. Yellowed newsprint kept the oil off the pecan table. Bill looked up at his older brother for a moment, then said, "Bob, finish sharpening these kitchen knives for me. You know I'm afraid of knives. It's like Mama said, ever since I was a little boy and swallowed a magnet in the kitchen department at the hardware store..."

"Shut up, Bill, you're just using that for an excuse to do nothing around this farm."

Bob stood against the door for a moment as if he hadn't quite finished some plan, and then he said to his brother, "He's getting mean, Bill. I guess we're gonna have to kill him."

"He wouldn't be getting mean if you'd have listened to me, Bob. Besides, what about the money we've been collecting? You know nobody is gonna want to come around and look at a dead pig, even if it is a giant."

"Well, maybe we can stuff it and sell it to the fair grounds or the city museum."

"I dunno, I think we'd have to give it to them. They ain't gonna want to buy nothing like Meleager, even though he's worth over \$100. Besides, it'll cost a fortune for us to have it stuffed."

"Well, maybe we can kill it and just leave it out in the field and let the ants pick its bones clean. Then at the end of summer, after the sun has bleached the bones, we can round them up and stick 'em back together."

"That might not be such a bad idea, Bob."

The two brothers stopped talking for a moment. Bill wiped the oil off the sharpened knives. He wrapped the oil stone up in the yellowed newsprint. His brother fidgeted with his overall buttons, then said, "I tell you, Bill, we've got to do something with him. He's tearing up stuff. We can't keep him tied up on the back side of the barn. You know it's making him mighty mad being hitched like that."

"I know it is, Bob, but what else can we do with him? You know if we let him go off the rope, he'll end up in some other county again."

Bob looked out the window at the sumac bushes shaking in front of the fence. "Do you really think the wind is blowing that hard?"

"Heck, Bob, the last time he got away it wasn't blowing half this hard, and you know it."

"Well, he wasn't as big then as he is now. Damn it, Bill, you're just making me mad. We wouldn't have had all the trouble we've had with that pig lately if you'd of done like I said and left it tied up in the first place."

"I was just gonna take it back to its pen."

"No you wasn't, you wanted to play with it. You should have been helping me bale hay."

"You know I'm afraid to get around that hay baler, ever since I was a little kid, like Mama said, when I fell asleep in the field during harvest time."

"Bill, it's just another one of your excuses to do nothing around here. I don't believe a word Mama ever said. Now we gonna have to do something about that pig. Ever since it blew into Mrs. Vetch's barnyard, it's had a strange look in its eye."

"Maybe it hit its head."

"No, Bill, it's got the look of a wild animal that just figured out that it's in a cage. You

know no pig should ever figure out that they're in a pen, waiting for a barbeque."

"Bob, you're just gonna have to kill it before it gets any bigger."

"Whoa, what do ya mean, I'm gonna have to kill it. I'm already doing everything else around here. Where were you when I had to put up the electric fence around his pen after he got seven feet tall?"

"You know where I was. I was in bed with the fever I got when you hit me in the head with that shovel."

"Hey, that was two weeks after I hit you that you come down with that mystery fever."

"Well geeze, Bob, it was an electric fence and electricity in it, and you know how afraid I get around electricity."

"Ever since you were a little boy, Bill, and I still don't know why. Never seen a grown man afraid to plug something in or going around using a wooden spoon to turn the light switch on or off."

"It ain't my fault, you know. You remember what Mama said about me getting caught up in that kite string as a little baby during a thunder storm."

"I don't believe it. Never believed a word Mama said. Not after she said we come from the briar patch. Then when I went out there looking for a replacement for you, I got all cut up in the thorns, and she ended up using a whole bottle of iodine on me. Never did find a replacement for you."

"Gee, Bob, you sure don't know how to treat your little brother. You're getting as mean as that ol' pig is."

"Maybe I feel about as tied down as that pig is. Maybe I want to fly away, just like it wants to." Bob glared at his brother as he

picked up the knives and newsprint on the table. Bill edged towards the door as he eyed the knives in his brother's fist. Bob put them in their drawer then looked his brother in the eye.

"Maybe I ought to just go let it loose and let the wind carry it where it may. I'm tired of dealing with all the problems around this place, and I'm tired of dealing with you. I'm gonna let that pig go."

With a clenched hand on the top of his hat, Bob turned on the worn heels of his boots and stomped past his brother through the kitchen door and off towards the barn. Bill dogged behind him, yapping at his heels about why they ought to kill the pig, then sell the bones to the museum. Bob tried to ignore him. As he rounded the corner of the barn, Bob abruptly stopped. Even though he had seen this pig every day of its life, the size of it still amazed him. It seemed to be growing faster and faster.

Although it couldn't move around much because of the ropes that secured its bathtub-sized hooves to two tractors and a truck, the pig had pulled the ropes tight and was busily scratching its back on the corner of the barn roof. A dozen dislodged shingles were scattered beneath it.

"Now dang it, there's something else that's gonna need some fixin', and I ain't gonna do it this time."

"Bob, don't let the pig go."

"It's too late, Bill, I'm lettin' it go, and you're fixing the roof."

"But, Bob, you know I'm afraid of heights. Ever since I was a little kid. You remember what Mama said. I had followed her out into the cotton field when she was choppin' cotton. She set me in the basket of cotton, and a vulture thought I was a baby lamb and swooped down and..."



Corpus Christi Birds by Julie Barbeau

"Bill, I don't believe it. Now get out of my way." Bob pushed his brother aside and slowly approached the giant pig.

"Meleager, it's me, Bob!" he yelled to the pig. It stopped scraping against the barn and eyed him with angry red eyes. Milk white spittle frothed like a barber's shaving cup between its yellow teeth. Its neck was like iron, its bristles like spears. It snorted and dug the ground with its black hoof.

"I ain't gonna hurt you," Bob said a little nervously. "Now you hold still while I loosen these ropes."

Bill started to speak but, deciding against it, silently watched his brother release the hog.

When the ropes dropped away from its tree trunk ankles, the pig backed away from the two brothers. It looked at them, then it looked at the puffy clouds that whisked across the sky. Turning, it trotted around the barn to the windy side.

The wind blew into the pig's face, smoothing its ears along the sides of its head. The pig stuck his head into the air. The wind blew into the caves of its snout and he grunted with pleasure. He turned and looked at Bob and Bill, who had come around from the back of the barn. Then the pig began to run into the

wind, not too fast at first, as if running were something new. But as he made his way through the front gate and started down the long drive to the highway, he ran faster and faster. The mountains of muscle and fat rippled across his frame with every thunderous downstroke of polished pig feet, his pink flesh becoming redder and redder as the gallons of blood circulated under its skin. Now the pig was running faster than the brothers' Ford truck had ever driven down their drive. Just before the drive ended at the highway, the pig leaped into the air. The wind lifted it high, then swung it around in the direction of Bill and Bob. They watched in silence as it rose into the sky a hundred feet over their heads, becoming a speck in the sky and then lost in the clouds.

"It could of waved or something," Bill said quietly.

"Oh shut up, Bill, and go cook some dinner."

"You know I can't do that, Bob. I've been too afraid of cooking ever since I was a little kid. You remember what Mama said about me falling asleep in the cook stove when I was a baby."

Bob stopped and looked at his brother. His grip tightened on the coil of rope he held in his hand. "Bill, I don't believe a word Mama said."

Interview with **David Najjab**, PROFESSOR OF APPLIED GRAPHIC DESIGN.

QUESTION: PLEASE DISCUSS THE USE OF COMPUTERS IN ART.

"IT IS JUST ANOTHER TOOL, JUST ANOTHER MEANS BY WHICH TO PRODUCE ART. THAT'S WHY IN OUR CLASSES WE TEACH DESIGN AND AESTHETICS ALL THE WAY THROUGH, BECAUSE THE COMPUTER IS NOT GOING TO BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR CREATION. ALL IT IS GOING TO BE IS A DIFFERENT MEANS FOR CREATION."