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Title of Work: "Hog Killing"

Sub-Category: Life Experience

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HOG KILLING

Growing up in the Blue Ridge Mountains during the 1950s, I befriended the farm animals. I gave the critters names and petted them. There were: Cathy, the cow; Goofy, the goat; Terry, the tom turkey; Polly, the pony; Dodger, my dog; and a nameless pig.

Mama wouldn't let me name the pig. He was so cute with his curly tail and pink ears. I wanted to pet him, but Mama forbid me to touch him in his pen.

"Don't get attached to the pig," she said. "Don't talk to him. Don't look at him."

"Why not, Mama? Why won't you let me love him?"

Mama's cornflower blue eyes filled with tears. She hugged me and whispered, "Because I don't want you to get hurt."

I stiffened my body and pulled from her embrace. She puzzled me. I thought she liked animals, but she despised this pretty pig.

"Oink! Oink! Oink!" resounded the pig as he gobbled food from the trough. He had gained weight since Daddy got him a month ago.

One afternoon Daddy came home from work and got a toe sack from his old black Ford. It wiggled and squealed.

I jumped back. What was in it? Daddy untied the sack and I peeked inside. An adorable pig touched my hand with its soft, pink nose. That moment my heart melted.

Another farm animal to pet and claim as my own. I skipped to the hog lot and wondered, *What will I name him? Pal. Pete. Pinky.*

Now I peppered Mama with questions. “Why are you being mean to the pig? Why did you let me name the other farm animals, but not piggy?”

“Honey, you don’t understand. Piggy won’t live long. Come Thanksgiving they will butcher him for our food.”

“Oh, no!” I cried. “I’ll never eat my pig. I love him too much.”

The sad, terrible day arrived on Thanksgiving Day. The weather had turned cooler and it was hog killing time. Daddy and my brother got a rifle and shot the pig. He squealed, and squealed.

Mama and I clung to each other in the house. “He’s having a hard time dying,” moaned Mama. We both sobbed and trembled as our beloved hog died.

Today I rarely eat pork or bacon. It still brings back painful memories of that sweet animal. Just a pig? No, he was the pet that Mama and I adored.

THE END