

Chapter 1

It was a lovely spring day. All four members of the Lofty family were headed for a picnic in the country. James and Susan Lofty sat in the front seat while their children, little Jimmy and Susie, occupied the rear of their shiny forest green Mountain Ranger. The new vehicle was just one of Mr. Lofty's many precious possessions and he smiled to himself as he drove along the winding country road. It was, indeed, a lovely day. The grass was green, the sky was blue and it looked as though he was a shoe-in for Mayor. And why not, when he was doing everything in his power to insure his political success? He had married his high school sweetheart, (after finishing college, of course), and they had together proceeded to have a handsome son and a beautiful daughter, now nine and six respectively. They had a grand house with a big yard and a swing set for the kids. They even went to their local

church every Sunday without fail. The Loftys were indeed upstanding members of their community.

Mr. Lofty's reverie was interrupted by the sudden squealing of his daughter from the back seat and he winced as her high-pitched voice sliced through his pleasant thoughts. "Jimmy, stop it! Mommy, Jimmy keeps pulling my hair! Make him stop, Mommy. Make him stop!"

Mrs. Lofty sighed and turned a reproachful gaze on her son. "Now, Jimmy, I thought I told you to be nice to your little sister. You know it gives me a headache when you children argue." She emphasized her point by gently massaging her temples. Jimmy looked indignant.

"But, Mom, she started it. I was just sitting here minding my own business when Little Susie Shrieks-A-Lot started kicking me!" Immediately, Susie began to whine, causing Mr. Lofty to finally take charge of his children, much to the appeasement of his beleaguered wife. Glancing momentarily over his shoulder, he spoke in his most authoritative tone:

"Jimmy, Susie, that's enough. What would it look like if people were to see my two children upset on such a beautiful day? We're supposed to be having a good time." Sensing this technique may not be having quite the desired effect, he decided to switch to distraction instead. "Susie, why don't you start looking for a nice place for us to stop and have our picnic?"

Still sniffing, but feeling somewhat better now that she had a delegation, Susie looked out the window and began to scan the countryside for the perfect picnic place. Jimmy was just glad to have her distracted for the time being, but just as he began drifting off into his own little world again, Susie shrilled, "Mommy, Daddy, look!" Jimmy was immediately on the defensive once more.

“I didn’t even touch her, I swear!” But for once, Susie was calling her parents for some other reason than to tell on Jimmy. She was excitedly pointing out the window and bouncing up and down in her seat and repeating, “Mommy, Daddy, look!” continuously so that it began to sound to Jimmy as though the phrase was just one long word set to cycle endlessly.

Mrs. Lofty followed her daughter’s gaze to a large tent set up just off the main road in the middle of the lush, green grass of a beautiful meadow. There was a colorful sign in front of the tent that read: “RACING PIGS”. Mrs. Lofty touched her husband’s arm.

“James, stop the car. Let her take a look if she wants.” At her husband’s look of impatience, she persisted, “James, dear, what can it hurt to let her watch some cute little pigs run around?” When he still looked doubtful, she appealed to her husband’s rational side. “Well, at least it will get them out of the car for a while and maybe even tire them out a little before lunch.” This did seem to appeal to Mr. Lofty, and he obediently pulled over to the side of the road and stopped the car.

“Yea!!” Susie squealed as they all piled out of the car. “I get to see the piggies! I get to see the piggies!” Jimmy gave his sister a disgusted look.

“With the way you eat you’d better be careful they don’t mistake you for one of the ‘piggies’!” He made his voice as high-pitched as Susie’s for the word ‘piggies’ and she showed him quite a nasty face in return as the Lofty family proceeded toward the big tent.

Inside the tent, the race was about to begin. There was a large racing ring in the very middle and lined up in a row at the starting gate were five small pigs. They were each wearing a tiny vest with a different number on each one. All of the pigs were black except for one. He was pink with a very curly

tail and he wore the number five on his vest. He was closest to the inside rail. Standing near the starting gate was a rather burly man dressed in cut-off trousers and an old striped shirt. He was smoking a cigar and the smoke curled up and circulated around the tent, making Susie cough. The big man seemed to be the one in charge of the racing pigs, and, quite frankly, somewhat resembled them. Suddenly, a bell rang and the gates were opened. All the pigs scrambled out of the gate except the pink one. He had somehow managed to get his vest caught in the gate and was struggling to get loose. He squealed in fright as the big man yelled and ran to try to free him. Just as the man was reaching for him, the little pig wriggled free and took off at a dead run. Although the other pigs were far ahead of him, he had fear to spur him on. Running at full tilt, he cut in front of the other pigs at the turn, heading for the green field he could see outside the musty tent. The other pigs had to pull up short to avoid him and ended up bumping into each other instead. They landed in a piggy-pile in the middle of the track, squealing and grunting all the while. "Stupid pig!" the burly man yelled. He shook his fist in the air and took off after the pig. Looking back over his shoulder, the little pig saw the big man running after him and this sight seemed to send him into high gear. By the time the man was able to get through all the laughing people and out of the tent, the pig had a good head start. But the pig looked back one time too many and ended up tripping on a rock. He fell face forward and skidded across the grass, finally coming to rest in the flowery meadow with mud all over his snout.



Before he had time to get to his feet, the man had caught him and held him up by the collar of his little racing vest. The man shook the little pig and yelled at him,

“This was your last chance, pig! I’m tired of you always upsetting my races. Now you’re going to the butcher!” The big man was surprised by a sudden squealing, which he at first thought was emanating from the little pig, and he was quite shocked at being able to understand what the pig was saying. The words which were being squealed sounded like, “Make him stop, Daddy! Make him stop!” But he soon realized that it was not the little pig who was talking at all, but a very pretty little girl with a very high-pitched voice who had been watching the proceedings with a look of abject horror on her sweet little face. The big man turned, still holding the pig, and faced the

little girl standing behind him. Normally, he wouldn't have given her the time of day, but her father was there, too, arms folded and frowning, and so he thought better of his plan to drop-kick the pig into the next town. Thinking quickly, he gently lowered the pig and cradled it in his arms, smiling pleasantly all the while.

“Now, don't you worry, Missy,” he said sweetly to the little girl, “I would never harm a cute little pig! Why, I just didn't want him to get lost, that's all.”

Susie wasn't buying it. She marched right up to the big man and kicked him squarely on the shin. He quickly dropped the pig and muttered something very bad under his breath while gingerly rubbing the spot where the little girl had kicked him.

Susie picked up the pig and hugged him close. She looked up at her father with her huge blue eyes full of tears and pleaded, “Please, Daddy, can't we keep him? I promise to take good care of him, Daddy. Please, Daddy, PLEASE!”

What father could resist his daughter's heart-felt plea? Especially James Lofty. Especially when he could already see the headline in tomorrow's paper: “MAYORAL CANDIDATE JAMES LOFTY AND FAMILY TAKE IN ORPHAN PIG.” It would do wonders for his campaign. Even though he was a sure-bet, a little extra insurance never hurt.

“Well, of course we can keep him, honey,” James Lofty said sweetly to his daughter, much to the chagrin of his near-fainting wife. Then, pulling the big man aside and slipping him a \$50 bill, he said, “I assume you won't have a problem with that, my good man?” The big man pocketed the money and said,

“No, sir, not at all.”

So, James Lofty and Susie and the pig and the rest of the family all went home together. On the way back, they tried to decide on what to name him. “I want to call her ‘Petunia,’” Susie said, stroking the little pig and holding him close. Jimmy rolled his eyes.

“You can’t call him ‘Petunia,’” he said in utter disgust. “He’s a boy. You should name him something like ‘Duke’ or ‘Major.’” Susie said,

“He’s my pig and I can call him whatever I like.” And she stuck her tongue out at her brother. Trying to make peace once again, Mrs. Lofty attempted to cajole her quarreling children by suggesting,

“Why don’t you give him a name that could be for a boy or a girl, like ‘Rusty?’” At their mother’s suggestion, both children looked appalled. With a sudden burst of inspiration born of complete exasperation, Mr. Lofty spoke up next.

“Well, what does it really matter what you call him? I mean, he’s not a dog. It’s not like he’s going to come when you call him, no matter what his name is. He’s just a pig, and he’s the only one we’ve got, so why bother to name him at all? Why not just call him...well...‘Pig?’”

This suggestion seemed to sit well with everyone. At least no one could think of an objection. So, the pig became known as ‘Pig’, which was perfectly fine with the pig since anything seemed better to him than a hard life of racing. He was taken home and given a bath. The family even purchased a little piggy-bed for him with “PIG” sewn into the front and he slept in Susie’s room next to her big canopy bed. His new home was much grander than his previous one and he didn’t have to worry about fighting with the other pigs

for his meals. And the very best thing about this new home was that the burly man with the cigar who always yelled at him wasn't anywhere to be seen. Nestling into his little bed at night, the pig thought he would live in style and comfort forever.

