

# PIG



Once upon a time, in the city of New York, a beautiful baby boy was born, and his joyful parents named him Lexington.

The mother had just returned from hospital carrying Lexington in her arms when she said to her husband, 'Darling, now you must take me out to a most wonderful restaurant for dinner.'

Her husband kissed her and told her that any woman who could have such a beautiful baby as Lexington deserved to go anywhere she wanted. So that evening they both dressed themselves in their best clothes and, leaving little Lexington in the care of a trained nurse who was costing them twenty dollars a day, they went out to the finest and most expensive restaurant in town.

After a wonderful evening, they arrived back at their house at around two o'clock in the morning. The husband paid the taxi driver and then began feeling in his pockets for the key to the front door. After a while, he announced that he must have left it in the pocket of his other suit, and he suggested they ring the bell and get the nurse to come down and let them in. A nurse who was costing them twenty dollars a day must expect to have to get out of bed occasionally in the night, the husband said.

So he rang the bell. They waited. Nothing happened. He rang it again, long and loud. They waited another minute. Then they both stepped back on to the street and shouted the nurse's name up at the nursery window on the third floor, but there was still no answer. The house was dark and silent. The wife began to become frightened. If the nurse couldn't hear the front doorbell, then how did she expect to hear the baby crying?

'You mustn't worry. I'll let you in.' He was feeling rather brave after all he had drunk. He bent down and took off a shoe. Then, holding the shoe by the toe, he threw it hard and straight through the dining-room window on the ground floor.

'There you are,' he said, laughing. He stepped forward and very carefully put a hand through the hole in the glass and undid the lock. Then he raised the window.

'I'll lift you in first, little mother,' he said, and he took his wife around the waist and lifted her off the ground. Then her husband turned her round and began moving her gently through the open window into the dining room. At this moment, a police car came driving silently along the street towards them. It stopped about thirty meters away and three policemen jumped out of the car and started running in the direction of the husband and wife. The policemen were all holding guns.

'Hands up!' the policemen shouted. 'Hands up!' But it was impossible for the husband to obey this order without letting go of his wife. If he had done this, she would either have fallen to the ground or would have been left half in and half out of the house, which is a very uncomfortable position for a woman; so he continued to push her upwards and inwards through the window. The policemen, all of whom had received rewards before for killing robbers, shot at them immediately. Although the policemen were still running, they hit both bodies several times and killed both of them.

So, when he was no more than twelve days old, little Lexington became an orphan.

The news of this killing was brought to all the relatives of the dead couple by newspaper reporters, and the next morning the closest of the relatives got into taxis and left for the house with the broken window. They gathered in the living room and sat around in a circle, smoking cigarettes and talking about what should be done with the baby upstairs, the orphan Lexington.

It soon became clear that none of the relatives wanted responsibility for the child, and they talked and argued all through the day. Everybody declared an enormous desire to look after him, and would have done so with the greatest of pleasure but their apartment was too small, or they already had one baby and couldn't possibly afford another, or they wouldn't know what to do with the poor little child when they went abroad in the summer, or they were getting old, which would surely be very unfair on the boy. They all knew, of course, that the father had been heavily in debt for a long time and that there would be no money at all to go with the child.

They were still arguing at six the next morning when suddenly, in the middle of it all, an old aunt (her name was Glosspan) arrived from Virginia. Without taking off her hat and coat, without even sitting down, she announced firmly to the gathered relatives that she herself intended to look after the baby boy. She would take full responsibility, she said, for the boy's education - and all the costs - and everyone else could go home. She went upstairs to the nursery and took Lexington and went out of the house with the baby held tightly in her arms. The relatives simply sat, stared, smiled and looked content.

And so the baby, Lexington, left the city of New York when he was thirteen days old and travelled southwards to live with Great Aunt Glosspan in the State of Virginia.

Aunt Glosspan was nearly seventy when she took Lexington to Virginia, but you would never have guessed it. She was as youthful as a woman half her age. She had a small, but still quite beautiful face and two lovely brown eyes. But she was a strange old woman. For the past thirty years she had lived alone in a small cottage high up on the slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains, several kilometers from the nearest village. She had three cows, some fields for them, some land for growing vegetables, a flower garden and a dozen chickens.

And now she had little Lexington, too.

She was a strict vegetarian and thought that eating animal meat was not only unhealthy and disgusting, but cruel, too. She lived on foods like milk, butter, eggs, cheese, vegetables, nuts and fruit, and she was happy to think that no creature would ever be slaughtered for her sake.

She did not know very much about babies but that didn't worry her. At the railway station in New York she bought some things for feeding the baby and a book called *The Care Of Infants*. What more could anyone want? When the train started moving, she fed the baby some milk and laid it down on the seat to sleep. Then she read *The Care Of Infants* from beginning to end.

Strangely there wasn't any problem. Back home in the cottage everything went well. Little Lexington drank his milk and cried and slept exactly as a good baby should, and Aunt Glosspan was filled with joy whenever she looked at him and she kissed him all day long. By the time he was six years old, young Lexington had become a most beautiful boy with long golden hair and deep blue eyes. He was bright and cheerful, and already he was learning to help his old aunt in all sorts of different ways around the farm, collecting the eggs from the chicken house, making butter, and digging up potatoes in the vegetable garden. Soon, Aunt Glosspan told herself, she would have to start thinking about his education.

But she could not bear the thought of sending him away to school. She loved him so much now that it would kill her to be separated from him for long. There was, of course, that village school down in the valley, but it was a horrible-looking place, and if she sent him there, she was sure they would start forcing him to eat meat as soon as he arrived.

'You know what, my darling?' she said to him one day when he was sitting in the kitchen watching her make cheese. 'I'll teach you myself.'

The boy looked at her with his large blue eyes, and gave her a trusting smile. 'That would be nice,' he said.

'And the first thing I should do is to teach you how to cook.'

'I think I would like that, Aunt Glosspan.'

'You're going to have to learn some time,' she said. 'Vegetarians like us don't have nearly so many foods to choose from as ordinary people, and so they must learn to cook doubly well.'

'Aunt Glosspan,' the boy said, 'what do ordinary people eat that we don't?'

'Animals,' she answered with disgust.

'Do you mean live animals?'

'No,' she said. 'Dead ones.'

'Do you mean that when they die they eat them instead of burying them?'

'They don't wait for them to die, dear. They kill them.'

'How do they kill them, Aunt Glosspan?'

'They usually cut their throats with a knife.'

'But what kind of animals?'

'Cows and pigs mostly, and sheep.'

'Cows!' the boy cried. 'You mean like our cows?'

'Exactly, my dear.'

'But how do they eat them, Aunt Glosspan?'

'They cut them up into little bits and they cook them. They like the meat best when it's all red and bloody and sticking to the bones. They love to eat cow's flesh with the blood running out of it.'

'Pigs, too?'

'They love pigs.'

'Lumps of pig's meat,' the boy said. 'Imagine that. What else do they eat, Aunt Glosspan?'

'Chickens.'

'Chickens? Feathers, too?'

'No, dear, not the feathers. Now go outside and play, will you?' Soon after that, the lessons began. There were five subjects, including reading and writing, but cooking was the most popular with both teacher and pupil.

In fact, it soon became very clear that young Lexington was a talented cook. He was clever and quick. In so young a boy, this surprised Aunt Glosspan and she could not quite understand it at all. But she was very proud of him and thought that the child would have a wonderful future.

'How good it is,' she said, 'that I have such a wonderful little fellow to look after me when I'm old.' A couple of years later, she left the kitchen forever, and put Lexington in charge of all household cooking. The boy was now ten years old, and Aunt Glosspan was nearly eighty. Alone in the kitchen, Lexington immediately began experimenting with dishes of his own invention. There were hundreds of new ideas in his head. Hardly a day went by without some wonderful new dish being placed on the table. There were many delicious inventions. Aunt Glosspan had never tasted food like this in all her life. In the mornings, before lunch, she would go outside the house and sit there in her chair, thinking about the coming meal. She loved to sit there and smell what came through the kitchen window.

Then he would come out, this ten-year-old child, a little smile of pleasure on his face and a big steaming pot of the most wonderful food imaginable in his hands.

'Do you know what you ought to do?' his aunt said to him, eating the food. 'You ought to sit down and write a cookbook.'

He looked at her across the table, eating slowly.

'Why not?' she cried. 'I've taught you how to write and I've taught you how to cook, and now you've only got to put the two things together. You write a cookbook, my darling, and it'll make you famous all over the world.'

'All right,' he said. 'I will.'

And that same day, Lexington began writing the first page of that great book on which he worked for the rest of his life. He called it *Eat Well And Healthily*. Seven years later, by the time he was seventeen, he had recorded over nine thousand different recipes, all of them original, all of them wonderful.

But now, suddenly, his work was interrupted by the death of Aunt Glosspan. She was ill during the night and Lexington found her lying on the bed screaming with pain. She was a terrible sight. The boy wondered what he should do. Finally, to cool her down, he fetched a bucket of water from the river and poured it over her head, but this only made her worse, and the old lady died in an hour.

'This is really too bad,' the poor boy said, pinching her several times to make sure that she was dead. 'And how sudden! Only a few hours ago she seemed in the very best health. She even ate three large portions of my newest mushroom dish and told me how good it was.'

After crying bitterly for several minutes, because he had loved his aunt very much, he carried her outside and buried her in the garden.

The next day, while he was tidying up her things, he found an envelope that was addressed to him in Aunt Glosspan's handwriting. He opened it and took out two fifty-dollar notes and a letter. The letter said:

Darling boy, I know that you have never been down the mountain since you were thirteen days old, but as soon as I die you must put on a pair of shoes and a clean shirt and walk down into the village and find the doctor. Ask the doctor to give you a death certificate. Then take this to my lawyer, a man called Mr Samuel Zuckermann, who lives in New York City and who has a copy of my will. Mr Zuckermann will arrange everything. The money in this envelope is to pay the doctor for the certificate and for the cost of your journey to New York. Mr Zuckermann will give you more money when you get there, and it is my wish that you use it to continue your work on that great book of yours until you are satisfied that it is complete in every way. Your loving aunt, Glosspan

Lexington, who had always done everything his aunt had told him, put the money in his pocket, put on a pair of shoes and a clean shirt, and went down the mountain to the village where the doctor lived.



'Old Glosspan?' the doctor said. 'Is she dead?'

'Certainly she's dead,' the boy answered. 'If you come home with me now I'll dig her up and you can see for yourself.'

'How deep did you bury her?' the doctor asked.

'Two or three meters down, I think.'

'And how long ago?'

'Oh, about eight hours.'

'Then she's dead,' the doctor announced. 'Here's the certificate.'

Lexington now left for the city of New York to find Mr Samuel Zuckermann. He travelled on foot, and he slept under bushes, and he lived on berries and wild plants, and it took him sixteen days to reach the city.

'What a place this is!' he cried, as he stood staring around him. 'There are no chickens or cows anywhere and none of the women looks like Aunt Glosspan at all.'

Lexington had never seen anyone like Mr Zuckermann before, either.

He was a small man with a large nose, and when he smiled, bits of gold flashed at you from lots of different places inside his mouth. In his office, he shook Lexington warmly by the hand and congratulated him on his aunt's death.

'I suppose you know that your dearly loved aunt was a woman of great wealth?' he said.

'Do you mean the cows and the chickens?'

'I mean five hundred thousand dollars,' Mr Zuckermann said.

'How much?'

'Five hundred thousand dollars, my boy. And she's left it all to you.' Mr Zuckermann leaned back in his chair. 'Of course, I shall have to take 50 percent for my services,' he said, 'but that still leaves you with two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.'

'I am rich!' Lexington cried. 'This is wonderful! How soon can I have my money?'

'Well,' said Mr Zuckermann, 'luckily for you, I know the people at the city tax office and I'm confident that I'll be able to persuade them to forget about any taxes that your aunt owed.'

'How kind you are,' said Lexington.

'I shall have to give some people a small tip, of course.'

'Whatever you say, Mr Zuckermann.'

'I think a hundred thousand would be enough.'

'But how much does that leave for me?' the youth asked.

'One hundred and fifty thousand. But then you've got the funeral expenses to pay out of that.'

'Funeral expenses?'

'You've got to pay the funeral company. Surely you know that?'

'But I buried her myself, Mr Zuckermann, in the field behind the house. I never used a funeral company.'

'Listen,' Mr Zuckermann said patiently. 'You may not know it but there is a law in this State which says that no one can receive any money from a will until the funeral company has been paid.'

'You mean that's a law?'

'Certainly it's a law, and a very good law, too. Funerals are one of our country's great traditions. They must be protected at all costs.' Mr Zuckermann himself, together with a group of doctors, controlled a large funeral company in the city. The celebration of death was therefore a deeply religious affair in Mr Zuckermann's opinion. 'You had no right to go out and bury your aunt like that,' he said. 'None at all.'

'I'm very sorry, Mr Zuckermann.'

'It's completely un-American.'

'I'll do whatever you say, Mr Zuckermann. All I want to know is how much I'm going to get in the end, when everything's paid.'

There was a pause.

'Shall we say fifteen thousand?' he suggested, flashing a big gold smile. 'That's a nice figure.'

'Can I take it with me this afternoon?'

'I don't see why not.'

So Mr Zuckermann called his chief clerk and told him to give Lexington fifteen thousand dollars. The youth, who was delighted to be getting anything at all, accepted the money gratefully and put it in his bag. Then he shook Mr Zuckermann warmly by the hand, thanked him for all his help, and went out of the office.

'The whole world is in front of me!' Lexington cried as he went into the street. 'I now have fifteen thousand dollars to help me until my book is ready. After that, of course, I shall have a lot more.' He stood in the street, wondering which way to go. He turned left and began walking slowly down the street, staring at the sights of the city. 'I must have something to eat. I'm so hungry!' he said. The boy had eaten nothing except berries and wild plants for the past two weeks, and now his stomach wanted solid food.

He crossed the street and entered a small restaurant. The place was hot inside, and dark and silent. There was a strong smell of cooking-fat. Lexington seated himself at a corner table and hung his bag on the back of the chair. This, he told himself, is going to be most interesting. In all my seventeen years I have tasted only the cooking of two people, Aunt Glosspan and myself. But now I am going to try the food of a new cook and perhaps, if I am lucky, I might get a few ideas for my book.

A waiter came out of the shadows at the back and stood beside the table. 'Do you want the roast pork and potatoes?' he asked. 'That's all we've got left.'

'Roast what and potatoes?'

The waiter took a dirty handkerchief from his trouser pocket and shook it open. Then he blew his nose loudly. 'Do you want it or don't you?' he said, wiping his nose.

'I don't know what it is,' Lexington answered, 'but I'd love to try it. I'm writing a cookbook and...'

'One pork and potatoes!' the waiter shouted, and somewhere in the back of the restaurant, far away in the darkness, a voice answered him.

The waiter disappeared and soon returned carrying a plate on which there lay a thick grey-white piece of something hot. Lexington leaned forward anxiously to smell it.

'But this is absolutely heavenly!' he cried. 'What a smell! It's wonderful!'

The waiter stepped back a little, watching the youth.

'I have never in all my life smelled anything as wonderful as this!' Lexington cried, seizing his knife and fork. 'What is it made of?' But the waiter was moving backwards towards the kitchen. Lexington cut off a small piece of the meat and put it into his mouth, beginning to eat it slowly, his eyes half closed.

'This is wonderful!' he cried. 'It's a fine new flavour! Oh, Glosspan, I wish you were here with me now so that you could taste this dish! Waiter! Come here at once! I want you!'

The waiter was now watching him from the other end of the room.

'If you will come and talk to me, I will give you a present,' Lexington said, waving a hundred-dollar note. 'Please come over here and talk to me.'

The waiter came cautiously back to the table, seized the money and put it quickly into his pocket.

'What can I do for you, my friend?'

'Listen,' Lexington said. 'If you will tell me what this dish is made of, and exactly how it is prepared, I will give you another hundred.'

'I've already told you,' the man said. 'It's pork.'

'And what exactly is pork?'

'Have you never had roast pork before?' the waiter asked, staring.

'Just tell me what it is.'

'It's pig,' the waiter said. 'You just put it in the oven.'

'Pig?'

'All pork is pig; didn't you know that?'

'You mean this is pig's meat?'

'Of course.'

'But... but... that's impossible,' the youth said. 'Aunt Glosspan said that meat of any kind was disgusting and horrible, but this is without doubt the most wonderful thing I have ever tasted. How do you explain that?'

'Perhaps your aunt didn't know how to cook it,' the waiter said.

'Is that possible?'

'It certainly is. Especially with pork. Pork has to be very well cooked or you can't eat it.'

'That's it!' Lexington cried. 'That's exactly what must have happened. She cooked it wrong!' He handed the man another hundred-dollar note. 'Lead me to the kitchen,' he said. 'Introduce me to the man who prepared this meat.'

Lexington was at once taken to the kitchen, and there he met the cook, who was an old man with large, unpleasant red patches on his skin.

'This will cost you another hundred,' the waiter said.

Lexington was happy to pay, but this time he gave the money to the cook. 'Now listen to me,' he said. 'I am really rather confused by what the waiter has been telling me. Are you quite sure that the dish I've been eating was prepared from pig's flesh?'

The cook raised his right hand and began scratching his neck.

'Well,' he said, winking at the waiter, 'all I can tell you is that I think it was pig's meat.'

'Do you mean you're not sure?'

'One can never be sure.'

'Then what else could it have been?'

'Well,' the cook said, speaking very slowly and still staring at the waiter. 'There's just a chance that it could have been a piece of human flesh.'

'Do you mean - a man?'

'Yes.'

'Good heavens!'

'Or a woman. It could have been either. They both taste the same.'

'Well - now you really surprise me,' the youth said. 'One lives and learns.'

'In fact, we've been getting a lot of it recently from the meat factory in place of pork,' the cook declared.

'Have you really?'

'The trouble is, it's almost impossible to tell which is which. They're both very good.'

'The piece I had just now was wonderful.'

'I'm glad you liked it,' the cook said. 'But to be quite honest, I think that was a bit of pig. In fact, I'm almost sure it was.'

'You are?'

'Yes, I am.'

'In that case we shall have to believe you,' Lexington said. 'So now will you please tell me - and here is another hundred-dollar note for your trouble - will you please tell me how you prepared it?'

The cook, after taking the money, told Lexington how to cook pork, while the youth, not wanting to miss a single word, sat down at the kitchen table and recorded every detail in his notebook.

'Is that all?' he asked when the cook had finished.

'That's all, but you must have a good piece of meat and it must be cut right.'

'Show me how,' said Lexington. 'Kill one now so I can learn.'

'We don't kill pigs in the kitchen,' the cook said. 'The meat you've just eaten came from a slaughterhouse.'

'Then give me the address!'

The cook gave him the address, and Lexington, after thanking them both many times for their kindness, rushed outside and went by taxi to the slaughterhouse.

It was a big brick building, and the air around it smelled sweet and heavy. At the main entrance gates, there was a large notice which said: VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT ANY TIME. Lexington walked through the gates and entered a yard which surrounded the building itself. He then followed some signs (THIS WAY FOR THE GUIDED TOURS) and came to a small hut near the main building (VISITORS'WAITING ROOM). After knocking politely on the door, he went in.

There were six other people in the waiting room. There was a fat mother with her two little boys aged about nine and eleven. There was a bright-eyed young couple and there was a pale woman with long white gloves, looking straight ahead, with her hands folded in front of her. Nobody spoke. Lexington wondered whether they were all writing cookbooks, like himself, but when he put this question to them aloud, he got no answer. They just shook their heads and smiled.

Soon the door opened and a man with a pink face came into the room and said, 'Next, please.' The mother and the two boys got up and went out. About ten minutes later, the same man returned. 'Next, please,' he said again, and the couple stood up and followed him outside.

Two new visitors came in and sat down - a middle-aged husband and a middle-aged wife, the wife carrying a basket.

'Next, please,' said the guide, and the woman with the long gloves got up and left. Several more people came in and took their places on the wooden chairs. Soon the guide returned for the third time, and now it was Lexington's turn to go outside.



'Follow me, please,' the guide said, leading the youth across the yard towards the main building.

'How exciting this is!' Lexington cried.

First they visited a big area at the back of the building where several hundred pigs were wandering around. 'Here's where they start,' the guide said. 'And over there is where they go in.'

'Where?'

'Right there.' The guide pointed to a long wooden shed that stood against the outside wall of the factory. 'This way, please.'

Three men, wearing long rubber boots, were taking a dozen pigs into the shed just as Lexington and the guide arrived, so they all went in together.

'Now,' the guide said, 'watch how they catch them.'

Inside, the shed was simply a bare wooden room with no roof, but there was a metal wire with hooks on it that kept moving slowly along the length of one wall. When it reached the end of the hut, it suddenly changed direction and climbed upwards through the open roof towards the top floor of the main building. The twelve pigs were brought together at the far end of the hut. They stood quietly and looked anxious. One of the men in rubber boots pulled a length of metal chain down from the wall and advanced upon the nearest animal from the back. Then he bent down and quickly put one end of the chain around one of the animal's back legs. The other end he put on a hook on the moving wire as it went by. The wire kept moving and the chain tightened. The pig's leg was pulled up and back, and the pig itself began to be dragged backwards until it reached the end of the hut, where the wire changed direction and went upwards. The creature was suddenly pulled off its feet and was carried up. The pig's cries filled the air.

'Truly interesting,' Lexington said.

The rubber-booted men were busy catching the rest of the pigs, and one after another the animals were hooked on to the moving wire and carried up through the roof, crying loudly as they went.

At this point, while Lexington was staring upwards at the last pig, a man in rubber boots came up quietly behind him and put one end of a chain around the youth's own leg, hooking the other end of the chain to the moving belt. The next moment, before he had time to realize what was happening, Lexington was pulled off his feet and dragged backwards along the floor of the hut.

'Stop!' he cried. 'Stop everything! My leg is caught!'

But nobody seemed to hear him, and five seconds later the unhappy young man was pulled off the floor and lifted up through the open roof of the hut upside down, panging like a fish.

'Help!' he shouted. 'Help! There's been a mistake! Stop the engine! Let me down!'

The guide took a cigarette out of his mouth and looked up at the youth hanging from the chain, but he said nothing. The men in rubber boots were already on their way out to collect the next pigs.

'Oh, save me!' Lexington cried. 'Let me down! Please let me down!' But he was now nearing the top floor of the building, where the moving belt entered a large hole in the wall, a kind of doorway without a door; and there, waiting to greet him, in dark-stained rubber clothes, the slaughterer stood.

Lexington saw him only from upside down, and very quickly, but he noticed the expression of absolute peace on the man's face, the cheerfulness in his eyes and the little smile. All these things gave him hope.

'Hi, there!' the man said, smiling.

'Quick! Save me!' Lexington cried.

'With pleasure,' the man said, and taking Lexington gently by one ear with his left hand, he raised his right hand and quickly cut the boys throat with a knife.

The belt moved on. Lexington went with it. Everything was still upside down and the blood was pouring out of his throat and getting into his eyes, but he could still see a little. He thought he was in a very long room, and at the far end of the room there was a great smoking pot of water, and there were dark figures half hidden in the steam. These figures were dancing round the edge of the pot and they were holding long sticks. The belt seemed to be travelling right over the top of the pot and the pigs seemed to be dropping down one by one into the boiling water and one of the pigs seemed to be wearing long white gloves on its front feet.

Suddenly Lexington started to feel very sleepy, but it was not until his good strong heart had pumped the last drop of blood from his body that he passed out of this, the best of all possible worlds, into the next.

- THE END -

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