The sun hung low in the western sky, and shadows from an orchard spread across the clovered pasture toward the father and son standing at a pig enclosure. They were watching Turnbuckle the Wonder Pig take his evening meal. A flock of chickens examined a wooded area at the edge of the enclosure and pecked at what they discovered. An aged black lab ignored them as did the two younger dogs. They had been chicken trained with a rolled up newspaper soon after the chickens arrived on the farm.

“Secrets aren’t bad things in and of themselves, Wes,” said the father, continuing at a vein he’d been working for some time now. “It’s just that a person isn’t supposed to need very many of them. If you do then that’s a sign there’s something wrong.”

The boy stood just beyond the father’s reach. He sighed. “Dad …”

The boy gave up on an answer and turned his attention to the pig, which, having devoured a number of avocados, now nosed glumly at some cabbages and bell peppers. It made noises that the father heard as soft grunting. But the son heard, “Tell him to see if he can get more avocados next time.”

“Please be quiet,” said Wes.

The shadow from the orchard fell over the father’s face. “Wes, you don’t talk to your Dad that way!”

“He can’t just go in and ask for whatever he wants,” said Floydarina, a yellow tabby cat who strolled the top of the fence. “They only give him the vegetables people don’t want to eat anymore. Anything else he has to pay for.

“Jim’s so smart!” declared Beaufore black lab. “He asked the man if he could have stuff for his pork, and the man said he could”

“I wish you wouldn’t call me a ‘pork’, said Turnbuckle. “It’s a bit disturbing.”

“They Mighty Mart is where it all comes from! Oh, what a place it is! You go in, and there are tables and tables piled high with delicious treats. And all you have to do is wag your tail and they toss you whatever you want.”

“You’ve never been to the Mighty Mart,” said Floydarina. “Or any other grocery store.”

“I’ve been to the pet shop,” said Beaufore.

“And did people toss you things from tables?” asked Floydarina.

“Jim’s so smart,” said Beaufore. He lay down and went to sleep.

“Why does he keep calling me ‘Pork’, anyway? Turnbuckle asked Wes.

“Don’t tell him!” said the chickens, speaking as a unit.

“Just don’t worry about it.”

“Know what?” asked Turnbuckle?

“Son,” said Jim. “Where does this come from? I’ve seen the TV shows you watch. There’s not one where a kid orders his dad to keep quiet. Pretty sure it doesn’t happen in any video games either.”

The two young dogs chimed in. “We know! We know why he calls you pork!”

“No!” cried the chickens. “A pig must not learn his fate.”

“Dad, will you please just go inside?” pleaded Wes.

“… and you don’t just order your Dad inside. You know what? I’ve got an idea. You go inside! You go to your room and stay there until I come and get you for dinner!”

“Dad, please! I need to be here.”

“You need to learn how to treat your dad is what you need!”

“Just a few more minutes …”

“Now! Son!”

“I’ll do anything!”

“Son, I’m your Dad and I just told you to go to your room. I hate for it to come to this, but if I have to chase you to your room with a belt, that’s what I’ll do!”

Wes burst into tears. “I hate you.”

“This is your Mom doing this,” shouted Jim.

“Don’t you talk about my Mom!”

“Dread and despair!” cried the chickens.