

**ESMERALDA**

**PIG**



**BOOK TWO**

**ESMERALDA**

**AND**

**ERMENTRUDE**

**Colin Whittemore**

You will remember that Esmeralda pig lived by the farm kitchen door and was very fond of food. Nathaniel's father got a husband for her – Horrid Harold – but Esmeralda had other ideas and escaped into the wild wood where she met Vladimir, a rather fierce wild pig. As is the way of things they fell in love. Harold meanwhile was waiting for Esmeralda in the pig field, but, now she had Vladimir's piglings inside her, Esmeralda was not interested in Harold. Nathaniel's father did not know this, and because he thought that Esmeralda was a 'good-for-nothing', he gave the butcher a ring. Esmeralda was due to be made into sausages! Nathaniel though had different ideas and it was Horrid Harold that ended up as sausages! Nathaniel's plan had worked, but he was frightened that his father would be cross, so he ran away to the wild wood where he met Vladimir. Vladimir did not like the idea of children in his wood, so he charged at Nathaniel, but Nathaniel was saved by the sheep dogs and Yap dog who arrived just in time. Vladimir ran off back into the deep dark wood with Yap dog hanging on to his tail. Esmeralda was allowed back to her home by the kitchen door and her pigling grew bigger and bigger inside her. One of those piglings was Ermentrude.

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17 EH46 7DJ

[colin.whittemore@bitinternet.com](mailto:colin.whittemore@bitinternet.com)

[colinwhittemore.uk](http://colinwhittemore.uk)

## Ermentrude

Esmeralda had had a difficult few weeks while she was the only one who knew that she had Vladimir's piglings growing inside of her. Nathaniel's father found another boar, and brought him back to the farm for her, but Esmeralda was not interested in any new husbands – why should she be? They were not much interested in her either. *They* knew Esmeralda already had piglings inside her, even if the stupid human people did not.

Nathaniel's father gave up on her, and once again stopped calling her 'Esmeralda', and started calling her 'The Pig'. Only Nathaniel's constant pleading kept his friend from suffering the same fate as Horrible Harold – being turned into sausages by Oswald Slaughter, the butcher.

"Nathaniel", said his father, "That pig of yours is a very expensive pet. Rats and guinea pigs is one thing, but a full grown sow is quite another. Besides, she's greedier than ever, she's eating



enough food to feed half-a-dozen pigs, not just herself.”

Which, of course, she was – but Nathaniel’s father had not realised that yet, because he did not know of Esmeralda’s secret goings-on in the Dark Wood with her wild boyfriend Vladimir. “Just look at the size of her! Her belly is growing bigger and bigger and getting nearer and nearer the ground every day!”

“Maybe she has got piglings inside?” Suggested Nathaniel.

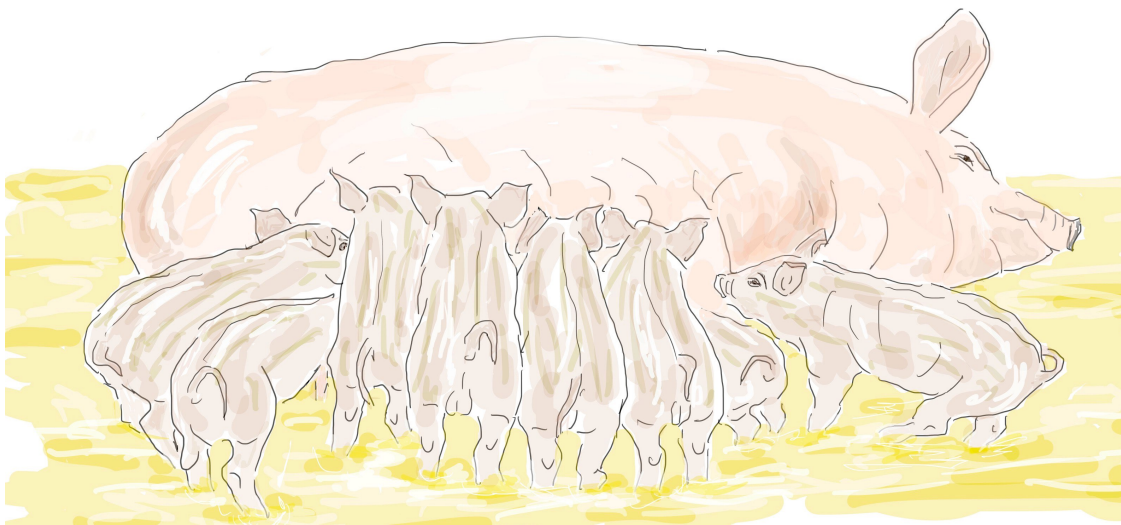
“Well, something’s up, that’s for sure”, his father replied.

Meanwhile, Esmeralda ate and ate more and more swill from the kitchen bucket and grew and grew until exactly three months and three weeks after her adventure in the woods with Vladimir, Esmeralda began to chew up straw and make a nest. “That Pig needs more bedding”, said Nathaniel’s father, “Nathaniel, go get her a bale of straw.”

Then three days after that, Esmeralda gave birth to eight fine stripy piglets. And, as Nathaniel could not help but notice, a lot of other stuff came out too. But Esmeralda did not seem to mind

about all the mess. The piglings arrived one at a time, easy as anything, one about every five minutes. As each one plopped out Esmeralda gave a tweak of her tail, but paid no attention at all to her new born family until the very last (the littlest) was safely delivered. Then she made sure each one had a nipple to get their first feed.

The piglets did not need any encouragement. No sooner were they squeezed out, like broad beans from the pod, than they struggled round Esmeralda's rear end to find her warm soft pink udder; the complete milk bar, vanilla shakes with added cream ready to go.



The stripy piglings were sucking their breakfasts as soon as maybe. The first ones feeding away even before the last one was born. The little new-borns arranged themselves in a neat row to suck from Esmeralda's, now rather large, udder.

Each little pig had its own special nipple, which it knew was its own and nobody else was ever allowed to suck on it.

“Well, I’ll be darned”, said Nathaniel’s father, “Where did they come from? Those little guys are never from Horrid Harold. Not with stripes on. There’s only one way a little pig gets stripes down its back. And that’s when their Dad’s a Wild Boar. I bet that boar from the wood – the one that would have had Nathaniel in his jaws a while back if it wasn’t for the Yap Dog – I bet that wild boar got into Esmeralda’s field one night and had his way with her.”

But that wasn’t right either, because it was Esmeralda who was the one that had gone out of *her* way to find Vladimir, not the other way around. Well, actually it was the truffles she was after, but she got a love match instead. Which was OK even if very much second best.

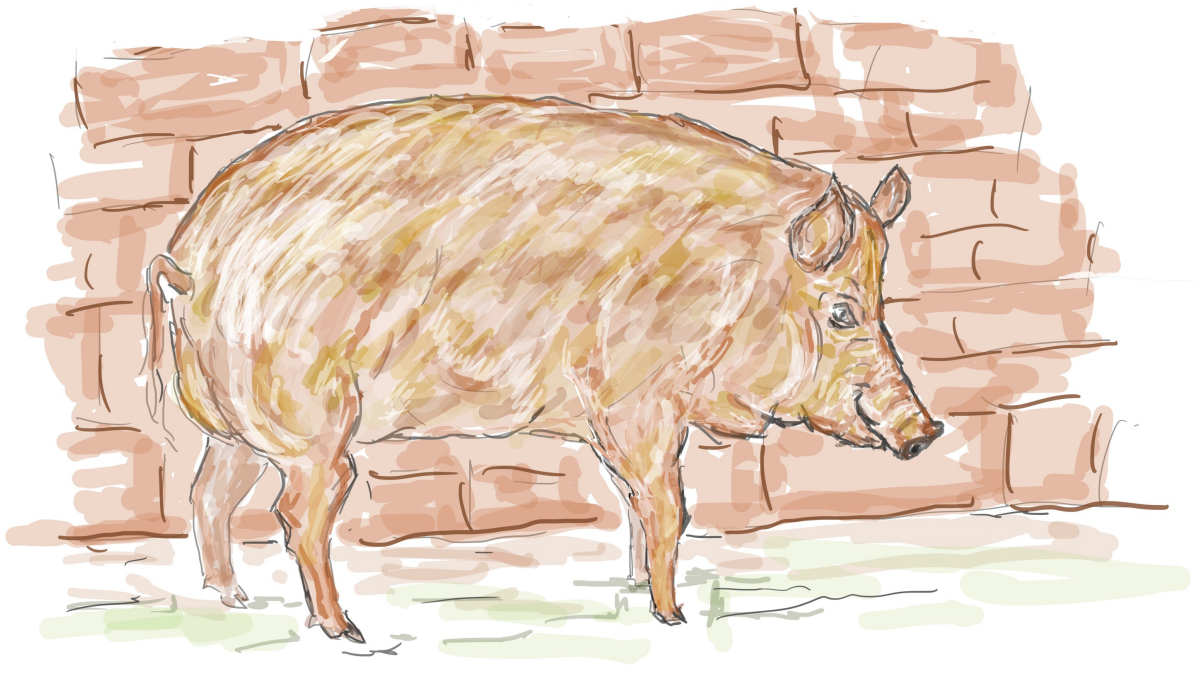
Esmeralda was proud of her litter of piglings and fed them really well so they all grew really fast into strapping little pigs. Nathaniel said to his father “We should give the piglings names, Father, what do you think?”

“Names?” said his father, “I don’t think so. If we names eight more pigs, as well as Esmeralda,

the place'll get covered in pigs eating us out of house and home for ever, just getting bigger and bigger; no use to God nor man. We doesn't need any more pigs. I'm not a pig farmer. Once they've grown big enough they'll get sold and make themselves useful. Pigs are sent to us by The Lord for good purpose; so they can be useful. And useful means giving us something to sell for money, or to eat – whichever. Pigs eats swill, we eats pigs. Simple. That's what pigs is for."

Nathaniel knew what not giving names to Esmeralda's piglings would mean. Either his father would be selling them to some other farmer, or to Oswald the butcher-man who would make them all into bacon, pork chops and sausages. Much as he liked to eat pork for his supper, Nathaniel did not much like that idea, so he chose one piglet with particularly nice dark stripes and called her Ermentrude.

Nathaniel, being a knowing child, did not especially tell anyone about it. He just made sure that he always talked about feeding Esmeralda *and Ermentrude*, and it being *Ermentrude's* pig sty by the kitchen door, and how it was that *Ermentrude* liked to have her back scratched and her tummy tickled.



Nathaniel's mother and father got the message after a little while, and in due time when the piglets had grown quite large enough, and there was no more space for them in the pig house by the kitchen door, and everybody had got tired of feeding them and mucking them out (and if the truth be known, of putting up with the smell), Nathaniel's father called Oswald Slaughter the butcher, on the telephone, and asked him to come around to the farm to have a look at some pigs that he might be 'interested in'.

Nathaniel's father made sure that the butcher's visit with his big white van was fixed-up while Nathaniel was away at school for the day. He did not want any more of Nathaniel's **Grand Plans**

happening, and the wrong animals – like his best sheep or maybe a few cows – ending up going down the road instead of pigs.

Oswald came at ten-thirty precisely in the morning in his white van with the red writing on the side. He backed up to the pig sty by the kitchen door, turned off the engine and knocked on the kitchen door.

“Now then Oswald,” said Nathaniel’s father, “Come away and look at these and tell me what you think.”

The two of them went to Esmeralda’s sty – Esmeralda *and* Ermentrude’s sty that is – and looked over the wall at one big sow and eight healthy young porker pigs. Some of the stripes the porkers had had at birth could still just be seen on their brown hairy bodies. When Oswald saw Esmeralda’s fine grown pigs in the sty he was amazed that they were not pink like Esmeralda, but a lovely reddy-brown colour – like red clay Spanish cooking pots or beech leaves fallen to the ground in the autumn.

“Well I never!” Exclaimed Oswald. “I thinks I can do maybe something a bit special with they. By the looks o’ them, could be they could be said to be *wild*. Like they’re not, but even if they be only

half wild I could say they *wus* wild, then they could be sold for summat extra. Like half-wild is same as all-wild because if you're half-wild you're *totally* wild ain't you? My brother Jeremiah has pigs. He sends me his porkers and I sells the chops and roasting leg of pork to the fancy places where people likes something different, something special, for their dinner. Sometimes I sells the pig in a oner – whole like – for a hog-roast. I'll tell you what, I'll have a word with Jeremiah and I'll be back straight after lunch and pick them up."

Oswald Slaughter returned to his van and drove off. When he was back in his butchers shop, true to his word, he gave his brother a ring.



“Jerry, I’ve got some half wild pigs. You interested? What are they worth?”

Jeremiah told his brother three most interesting things about Esmeralda’s fine family. One, they were worth three times as much money as ordinary pigs. Two, he would have *all of them* right away and keep them for breeding, so he could say he had a herd of Wild pigs. And three, he’d have as many as could be got, because breeding Wild pigs was good business with lots of money to be made. When it came to making money, Oswald and Jeremiah were two-of-a-kind. Oswald was always thinking about ways he could get a little extra money from out of his customers.

Oswald got into his van again and drove back up the road to Nathaniel’s farm. He could not get out of mind what his brother Jeremiah had said; “Worth three times as much as ordinary pigs.”

That afternoon, Oswald’s white van was back at the pig sty, ready to load up pigs. In no time at all there were eight porkers shut up in his van and Oswald was back down the farm road once more. He went straight to Jeremiah’s farm, had a word with his brother about how the porkers were to be paid, then dropped off five pigs into

Jeremiah's pig field. He was back to his butcher's shop with the three others before tea time. A good day's work – eight pigs at three times the usual price, and three still in the back of his van ready for making into pork chops of the most expensive kind.

When he got back to the butcher's shop Oswald telephoned Nathaniel's father. "My brother Jeremiah is right pleased with they pigs. He says he'll take as many as you can supply him with, because he wants to make a pig herd of wild pigs just like your ones. I've got a good price for you. I'll be able to pay you twice as much as the normal."

"Twice as much!" Declared Nathaniel's father, "My, that's good! Thank you Oswald, it's really kind of you to do such a good deal for me with your brother. Seems to me the sooner Esmeralda is got pregnant again the better!"

Nathaniel's father had a lot to think about all of a sudden. The cows and the sheep were not making much money for the family, and something new, like selling wild pigs, to earn some cash would be really good. Even Aunty Margaret would be pleased!



“I was thinking,” he said to Nathaniel’s mother over a cup of tea and a piece of cake at the kitchen table, “How about we got a few more of these stripy pigs. If they’re worth twice as much as other pigs, we could make some money, maybe even enough to be able to afford to go on a holiday to the seaside.” Nathaniel’s mother liked the sound of that.

“How do we do that then, Father?” she asked.

“Not easy,” replied Nathaniel’s father, “but we would make a start by getting Esmeralda and Ermentrude pregnant with stripy little piglings

inside them, and that would mean catching a Wild Boar!”

“You can’t catch a Wild Boar!” exclaimed Nathaniel’s mother as she spilt her tea over the table cloth.

“Hmmm,” said Nathaniel’s father, “We’ll need to put our thinking caps on; we be needing a Plan, a *Grand Plan*, I thinks.”

So he could think better about piggy sorts of things, Nathaniel’s father went out the kitchen door with his mug of tea to lean over the pig sty wall and scratch Esmeralda’s back. Maybe that would give him inspiration! Nathaniel’s father knew that Oswald had been back to pick up the porkers, and he expected to find the pigsty a lot emptier. But it was only when he started talking to Esmeralda that he realised it was even emptier than he had bargained for! All eight porkers had gone. Ermentrude as well! The only thing in Esmeralda’s sty apart from Esmeralda was the rooster; sat on the wall crowing his head off (which was all he ever seemed to do). Nathaniel’s father had quite forgotten to tell Oswald about Ermentrude! It wasn’t just that Ermentrude was a named pig and Daniel’s special one with the darker stripes, and Nathaniel would be devastated at Ermentrude’s loss, it was

also that Ermentrude had been going to be a really useful part of the Grand Plan.

Now that disaster had struck and Ermentrude was gone, Nathaniel's father suddenly got awfully busy all at once. As soon as he realised what had happened he rushed back into the kitchen, which meant even more tea got slopped onto the kitchen table cloth. "Mother! Ermentrude's gone – Nathaniel will be beside himself."

"She were a named pig an' all," Mother said "She can't go. You'll needs get her back right quick. Here's yer jacket, get up that road in the truck and rescue that pig."

Nathaniel's father was on the phone straightaway to Oswald to get directions to his brother's farm. Which for some reason, Oswald was not much wanting to give. Then, once he had the directions, he was up the road and away to see Jeremiah Slaughter.

Jeremiah, who was quite like his brother in many ways, opened his farmhouse door to a tall, lean, rather stressed and out-of-breath man in a cap and jacket. Nathaniel's father blurted out; "Those pigs your brother Oswald brought to you this afternoon. They're mine."

“Nope.” Said Jeremiah, “They’re mine now, they *were* yours – this morning that was. Now, this afternoon that is, they’re mine. Paid for. Deal all done.”

Nathaniel’s father thought he had better start again, take a deep breath and explain things a bit better, a bit slower and a bit clearer.

“Come on inside the kitchen.” Jeremiah wasn’t too bad a sort underneath, even though he did have Oswald for a brother. “I’ll put the kettle on for a cup of tea.”

After all the explanations were done, Jeremiah stroked his beard (by way of having a beard, he was also different from his brother), took off his glasses and laid them on the table, supped his tea and made a suggestion.

“Tell you what, as it’s your little lad’s pig, I’ll see if I can sell you one back. Mind the lad’s pig might be the one of the ones that’s gone, cause three of them Oswald kept in his van to take back to his butcher’s shop. Let’s go to the pig field and see what’s what.”

And there, snuffling about in the mud and the soil were six rather happy red-brown pigs, one

slightly darker than the others – Ermentrude! It most certainly was her, because she rolled over to have her tummy tickled. Nathaniel’s father picked her up (a good job he was a strong man, because she was heavy) and took her back to the pick-up truck. He heaved a huge sigh of relief!

“Now then,” said Jeremiah, “You’ll need to pay me for that pig, ’cause it’s a really nice one and those pigs are worth three times normal price.”

Nathaniel’s father wasn’t too happy to be hearing that. “It was an honest mistake, my fault I admit, that your brother took all eight porkers, not just the seven. But I don’t think I should be paying extra. I’ll be happy, of course, to give you what you paid your brother. Which was, if I recall, not three times usual price, but twice usual price.”

“Nope,” said Jeremiah quietly, “Three times is what I paid and three times is what I need.”

Nathaniel’s father had a longish think about that. “Oh! alright then, if that’s what you paid it’s only right that’s what I give you!” They shook hands on it and Nathaniel’s father made his way thoughtfully home to the farm with Ermentrude grunting happily in a pile of straw in the back of the pick-up.

When Ermentrude had been reunited with her mother in the pig sty by the kitchen door, Nathaniel's father was on the phone straightway to one Oswald Slaughter, butcher, with whom he had a rather serious bone to chew! "I've got my pig back, Oswald. That's good. I had to pay for her though." Nathaniel's father spoke the next words very slowly and very carefully, "Paid the same price as you charged your brother." There was silence from the other end. Oswald was saying nothing. "So," continued Nathaniel's father "I reckons you might be owing us some nice fresh pork meat. I understand that you might have some of that half-wild *Wild* pork, just fresh in this afternoon. That would be nice, Oswald."

After a long pause, Oswald spoke back down the phone "I'll be round tomorrow with chops, a joint and a short string of sausage. As it's yourself, and we're old friends, like, there'll be no charge. Consider it a favour."

Nathaniel's father grunted and put down the phone.

"That was a close one!" muttered Nathaniel's mother.

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Nathaniel got home late from school that day. He had been kept back and made to stay in detention because the teacher said he had been naughty. Nathaniel had *not* been naughty, not 'as such' but he *had* climbed up onto the roof of the school lavatory.

He was rescuing a baby rabbit that he had spied up there, stuck and bewildered, bobbing about. Nathaniel could not understand how a baby rabbit had got to be hopping about over the rusty corrugated iron school lavatory roof, but fact was it was there, and needed help.



Now, what had really happened was a buzzard had picked it up from a nearby tussocky grassy field where the little rabbit had been hiding, and was flying back to its nest with the baby bunny in its sharp claws when the rabbit struggled and the bird dropped it. And that was how a rabbit got to be on the school's lavatory roof.

By the time the teacher had seen Nathaniel up there on the tin roof, the bunny had been caught and stuffed into Nathaniel's pocket, squirming about and squeaking at the indignity of first being carried through the air, then dropped onto a lavatory roof, and now being pushed into a school blazer pocket.

Nathaniel knew it was no good trying to explain to a teacher something that no teacher would ever believe – like a bunny on a lavatory roof. Besides, if he let on that there was a rabbit in his pocket the teacher would most certainly have demanded to confiscate it – then what would have happened? Whatever would happen, it would not be anything good for any baby bunny.

So Nathaniel stayed silent when asked why it was that he was up on the lavatory roof. So he had been put into detention and made to do extra maths. Nathaniel did not mind the maths, which

he quite liked, but he *did* mind not getting home in time to feed Esmeralda, Ermentrude, and her seven other growing piglets with their swill for their tea. Nathaniel, of course, being at school knew nothing of all the goings-on with Oswald and his brother Jeremiah through the day.

As he was late back, Nathaniel was given his supper and packed off straight to bed. Instead of doing his homework, Nathaniel had put the bunny safely into a cardboard box filled with green hay and hid it under his bed. The bunny liked that better than being in a bird's claws or being on a roof or living in a pocket. But what all this meant was that come the morning, Nathaniel's home work from the day before wasn't yet done. He was having a really bad time! So that was all of breakfast-time taken up and no sooner was the homework done than he was off back up the farm road to be at school before nine; or if he was late he would be in even more trouble. Nathaniel had not been able to give Esmeralda and her children their swill for their breakfast either!

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That next day, Oswald the butcher, with a very grumpy sour face delivered the pork that was due. Nathaniel's father always kept his word,

and a deal was a deal. So he paid Oswald what was agreed. But next time, he told the butcher it would not be twice the normal price for wild pigs, it would be three times from now on!

By the time Nathaniel had got back again from school that next day (without any more detention) and did his homework and fed his bunny and his rats and his guinea pigs and had his tea, he had still not visited Esmeralda's pig sty to spend time with Ermentrude and see his mates for two whole days. He did not of course know that Oswald Slaughter had been and gone and come back again to pick up the porkers and take them all off down the farm road.

Nathaniel's mother had given him pork for his tea. Nathaniel always liked pork, but this pork seemed to be especially delicious. He even said how really good it was.

Nathaniel did not often say anything about his food because his Aunty Margaret said it was impolite and bad manners to talk about the food put on the table. It was enough that Aunty Margaret said Grace and thanked The Good Lord for the food that He had sent. After all, if God had sent it, it was not at all proper to be commenting upon whether it was either good or bad. It should just be gratefully accepted.

Nonetheless, on this occasion, Aunty Margaret had bustled out of the room in a huff on account of Nathaniel's father giving the Yap Dog scraps from his plate (which was definitely not good manners). So, with the dreaded Aunty Margaret not there, Nathaniel had bravely declared that the pork chop was so good that he would like to have another one – that was, if there was another one to be had.

There was not. And the reason for this was that Nathaniel's mother and father thought the pork was extra specially good too, and Nathaniel's father had already picked up the last chop in his hands and eaten it with his fingers, and then even licked his fingers as well (Aunty Margaret not being there to see it and all).

“That was really good pork chops”, said Nathaniel. “That wasn't Horrid Harold chops was it? Harold chops are horrid, just like Harold was.”

“Well, it's interesting you say that, Nathaniel”, said his father, not really thinking much about how he said things (but then he never did), “'Cause that was one of Esmeralda's piglings. They went to the butcher's yesterday. That pig of yours has at long last made herself useful.”

“Oh No! ... No!” Howled Nathaniel. “....  
**ERMENTRUDE ... Oh NO!**”

Nathaniel was demented with frustration and anger. He had not been able to save his friends this time! He rushed out of the kitchen door and into the pig sty to see the worst with his very own eyes, before either his father or mother could utter another word.

But to his amazement, no sooner was Nathaniel burst through the pig sty door and into all the pig muck (the pen had still not been properly cleaned out since there were nine pigs in it), than he heard the happiest ever of happy noises – the grunting of pigs in straw. Piggy grunts. From the dark corner at the back of the pig sty there was definitely a piggy grunt. And then another. Two grunts. One low grunt, a motherly sort of grunt, and the other a higher grunt, more of a porkly sort of grunt. Nathaniel knew those grunts.

Out from under the straw came two piggy shapes – one big and pink the other a little more brown. Esmeralda and Ermentrude. Nathaniel hugged Esmeralda joyfully round her big fat neck and Ermentrude got a special scratch all the way down her back from the tip of her long nose to the top of her curly tail.



He was so busy and so happy that his friends were still alive and in the sty, and not sausages after all, that Nathaniel did not notice his mother and father leaning side-by-side over the pig sty wall watching him.

His father spoke, “We wouldn’t have sent those two down the road.” “Would we Mother? We would never have let Ermentrude be taken away.” Nathaniel’s mother gave his father a very dirty look, but kept her peace. She might need to blackmail him over that one sometime in the future.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” complained Nathaniel, “I thought they were gone.”

“We didn’t get the chance”, his mother said, “Besides, I have my rules, we never sell animals down the road which have been given names. So how could we have lost Esmeralda or Ermentrude?” “We knew well enough which one was Ermentrude,” added his Father, “She’s the one with a better scratched back, a better tickled tummy and much fewer black lice behind her ears than the others.”

“The other ones? Have they gone? The other seven piglings? They’ve all gone?”

“Oh yes”, said Nathaniel’s father, “They have to be useful. Four are down at Oswald’s brother Jeremiah’s farm. They’ll be grown bigger before being made useful. They’ll have to be useful. Otherwise there would be no sense in pigs being born and having a life at all!”

Nathaniel’s mother chipped in, in a meaningful sort of way, “Yes Nathaniel, on the farm everything has to earn its keep. The girls have youngsters, and the boys grow big to give us our food.” Nathaniel got to thinking about that, but for the life of him he could not think if why his mother kept the rooster.



