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"this little piggy went to market,
this little piggy stayed home,
this little piggy had roast beef,
this little piggy had none,
and this little piggy went ..."

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The young man in a neat and obviously expensive grey suit walked slowly down the street counting the house numbers.

"38, 40, 42, 44 ... ah, yes, this is it!"

Stopping, he checked the newspaper advertisement to make sure. His finger slid down the page.

Wanted: Quiet, respectable young man to occupy room. Dinner provided. \$15.00/weekly. Inquire - 44 Markham St.

He glanced once more at the number plate on the cast-iron gate and then, folding the newspaper under his arm and straightening the knot of his tie, opened the old gate, which squeaked with objection, and made his way up the cobblestone walkway to the house. It was an old house, of obvious Victorian disposition, with a large green door. Large elms surrounded it, their leafy arms almost obscuring the upper storey. The whole house gave an appearance of being newly painted, or if not, to at least have been carefully kept. As the young man approached the house and was about to climb the steps of the porch, he glimpsed the movement of curtains in one of the upper windows and the blur of someone moving away from view, as if someone had been watching him and fled upon his approach.

The young man hesitated at the top of the stairs. Something about the idea of being watched from that upper window didn't please him and he felt the urge to turn and leave. But he had been walking most of the day, so that now, in the drowsiness of late afternoon, he felt both tired and hungry. And besides, he thought, there was nothing unusual about someone looking out a window of their own house. Whoever it was who had been in the window had probably been looking out the window long before he came up the walkway, and had probably watched his progress with the natural curiosity that anyone would have on observing a stranger approach their house. The figure had presumably left the window in order to greet him at the front door. Rationalizing thusly, though he still felt uneasy, the young man crossed the porch and grasped the large pighead-shaped brass knocker that hung in the upper center of the green door. He raised the pighead in his hand and gave the door three solid raps and waited.

As he waited on the old Victorian porch, he thought about himself and his life. He was young, in fact, only twenty-seven years old, and quite good looking, except for a large mole on the side of his nose, something which he, realizing that he had to live with such a god-sent disfigurement (something which his religious mother had impressed upon him), thought rather that it accentuated the natural handsomeness of his youthful face. He was tall, thought he would have liked to have been taller, and of medium build. Beneath a shock of wavy black hair, a pair of dark contemplative eyes, a large but straight nose (distinguished by that dark mole), and a broad sensitive mouth gave his face a mysterious but inviting appearance.

He felt rather proud of himself today. He thought smilingly of how he had stood up to his tyrannical uncle earlier that day, had exerted his independence, and been promptly shown the door. His uncle was very old and something of a tight-fist with money. He controlled his nephew's financial resources, a large sum of money willed to him by his father, who had died several years ago in an auto accident. His uncle had delved out funds to him only on rare occasions, and even then not to any great amount. In fact, the argument this morning which resulted in his new freedom, had come about due to his asking his uncle for a large sum of his money to invest in stocks and bonds. His uncle had refused outright and declined to discuss the matter any further with his nephew. The young man had then expressed his wish of leaving his uncle's home, setting up a residence of his own, and in future controlling his own finances, etc. This had been the spark to the

gunpowder. The heated argument that followed had, in fact, resulted in his obtaining his wish, although not in the friendly and mature manner in which he had hoped. Nevertheless, he was free from his uncle now. He made a mental point that he would consult a lawyer tomorrow upon the matter of obtaining his money from his uncle's control. He smiled as he pictured the expression on his uncle's face when he was served a court order to hand over to his nephew the sum of that nephew's financial liabilities remaining to him. But for the present, it remained to find a temporary residence until he came into his destined wealth and could establish himself in a small but adequate mansion. He was about to picture himself as a young swell to do aristocrat living a life of ease and splendor when his day dreaming was interrupted by the unlatching of the green door.

The green door opened. The young man saw a smiling, grey-haired woman. But stronger than the smiling woman's face was the delicious, warm aroma of roast pork that wafted through the open doorway. It immediately reminded him of how hungry he was, since he had been shown the door of his uncle's house just prior to breakfast. It was thus with some enthusiasm that he regarded the elderly lady and inquired about the room.

"Yes, I've come to see about the room you had advertised in the paper", he said, showing the old woman the newspaper.

"Oh, yes, please come in!", said the woman in a soft, almost melodious voice. "I was just getting supper ready. I'll show you the room and then we can discuss it while we eat."

"That would be fine!", stated the young man, and with a brushing of his feet on the WELCOME doormat, he entered the old, green-doored, cooked-pork-smelling, Victorian house. Behind him the smiling old lady closed the green door with the heavy, pighead-shaped brass knocker.

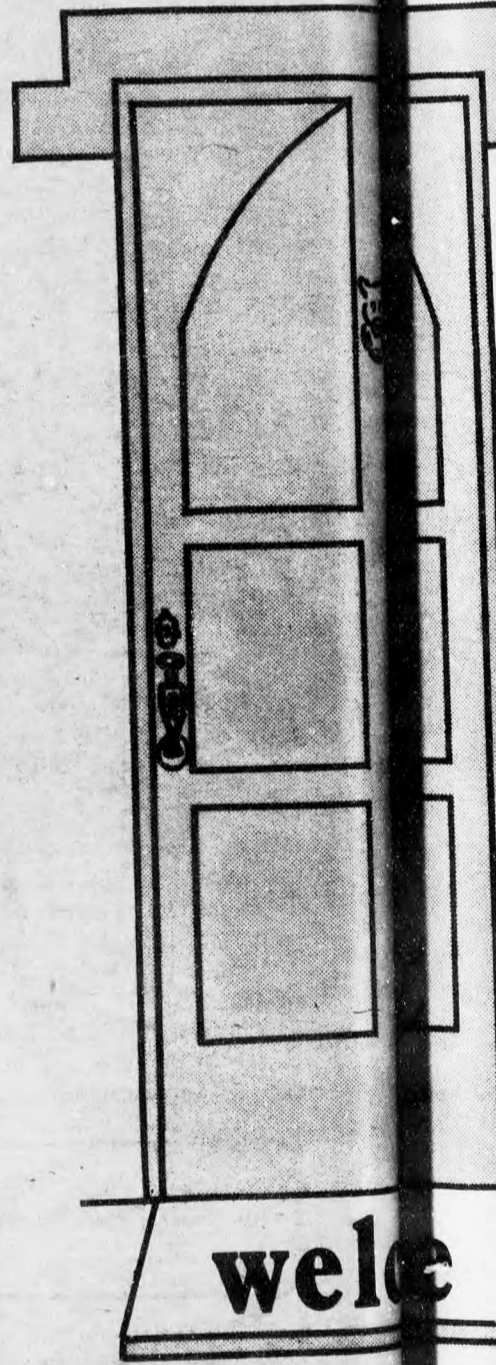
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He walked up the grey cobblestone walkway towards the old, green-doored, Victorian house, checking his note pad where he had penciled the address 44 Markham St. His name was Richards and he was a detective from Scotland Yard. He had been called in earlier in the week to investigate a missing person claim. The supposed missing person was James Tasson, a young man of a reputable London family. Young Tasson had recently made the news when he had brought about a financial dispute between himself and his uncle, a well-known London business man. Tasson had subsequently been subpoenaed before the district court to present his case. He had failed to show up at the appointed time and the following inquiry into his absence had failed to produce even a trace of James Tasson. Scotland Yard had been called in and Detective Richards assigned to the case. All subsequent investigation had produced nothing. Richards had only one remaining scrap of evidence with which to even hope of finding young Tasson. A letter mailed to Tasson's uncle by his nephew had contained a return address - 44 Markham St. Richards now proceeded up the walkway of 44 Markham St., hoping to find some evidence as to where young Tasson was. The investigation following Tasson's absence in court had of course, having knowledge from Tasson's own hand as to where he was then residing, already been to see the owner of the old, Victorian house at 44 Markham St., one Mrs. Circe, an elderly lady of substantial means living in retirement with only several servants in attendance. She disclosed that young Tasson had resided there, but only a few days, leaving quite unexpectedly one morning, paying an extra week's rent and leaving no forwarding address. The court's investigation had ended here. Det. Richards' was to begin here.

As he climbed the porch steps, Richards was half-aware of a figure in an upper window watching him. But as he raised his head to look, the curtain fell back in place and the figure disappeared from view. Smiling, Richards ascended the remaining steps and crossed to the green door. His eyes were immediately captured by the pighead-shaped brass knocker that hung in the upper center of the door. He was just about to lift it and knock when the green door

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"THIS LITTLE PIGGY"



welcome
a short story
by
ROBERT

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