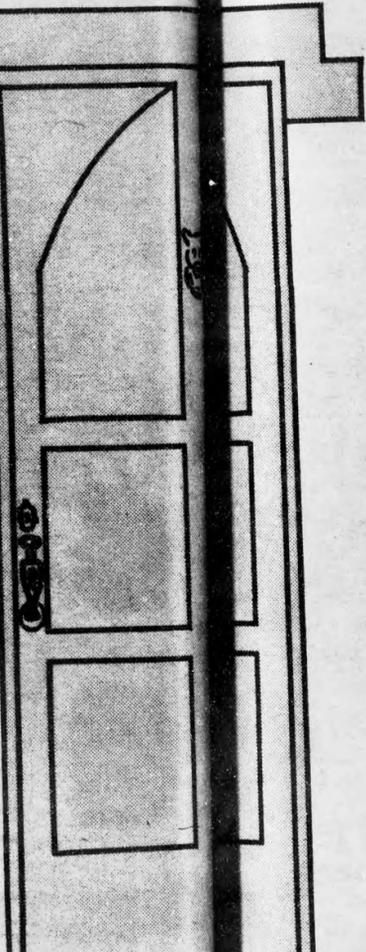


**
**HIS
 LITTLE
 PIGGY"**



welc

**short story
 G.K.
 ROBERTS**

opened and he was greeted by 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. Richards envisioned a dining room with a well set table of china, glass and silverware with large plates of sliced pork, potatoes, and vegetables.

"I saw you coming!" said the old woman, as if apologizing for opening the green door before he had even knocked.

Torn from the dining room back to the green-doored porch, Richards now regarded the old woman.

"I'm Detective Richards of Scotland Yard", he stated, showing her his credentials, at which the old lady only glanced, "I would like to ask you a few questions regarding young Tasson, if you don't mind?"

"Oh, no! No! Please come in!", the old woman melodied.

Wiping his feet on the WELCOME mat at the door, the detective said "Thank you!", and crossed into the hallway of 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.

"Won't you please come in?", the woman asked, showing Richards into a spacious and well decorated drawing room.

"Thank you!", Richards said, sitting down in a plush Victorian armchair.

The old woman sat down opposite him on a heavily embroidered sofa. She smiled at him and, resting her hands on a cane in front of her, asked the detective how she could be of service to him.

Taking his eyes from the large, pighead-shaped knob on the top of the old woman's cane, Richards returned her smile and told her that he only wanted to ask her a few questions regarding Tasson's habits, friends, etc.

"Anything, in fact, that will give me a clue as to his whereabouts", said Richards to the smiling woman.

"Well, I'm afraid that I can't be of much help to you. Mr. Tasson only stayed here for three days. He was quiet and stayed mainly in his room. The only real time I saw him and had a chance to speak with him was at supper."

And as if she had pronounced some magic word of command, her butler appeared at the doorway of the drawing room and announced that supper would be served shortly.

"Thank you, Henry", said the old woman, and turning to Richards, inquired as to whether or not he would do her the honour of staying for supper.

Richards, realizing that she was probably a very lonely old woman who did not receive much company, felt that he could not refuse her simple request. Besides he had not, as of yet, obtained from her any clues about young Tasson.

"I would be delighted, Madam!", said Richards.

At this the old woman smiled with obvious joy and, ringing a little silver bell on the table, showed Det. Richards into a gracious and indeed well set dining room.

She showed him to his place at the end of a long, candlabrummed table, which was expertly laid in bone china, crystal glassware, and antique silverware. Richards stood respectfully until the old woman was seated, with some help from the butler, at the opposite end of the table. The butler then withdrew, only to return almost immediately with a large silver platter on which rested a whole roast pig, which Richards immediately recognized as the source of that delicious, warm aroma that had greeted him at the green door. While the butler carved the pork, a maid, who had entered the room, heaped the plates with portions of potatoes and vegetables. A sparkling red wine was poured. The old woman then gave both butler and maid a nod to retire. They did so quietly and immediately, closing the dining room doors after them. Det. Richards thus found himself alone with the smiling old woman who leaned on her pig-headed cane even while eating. Being quite hungry, Richards ate with gusto. Their conversation at the beginning was not of young Tasson, but rather about the old, green-doored Victorian house. They also discussed Richards and his homelife and work. Richards found the talk

highly enjoyable and had almost forgotten his purpose of coming to 44 Markham St., when his gaze happened to alight on the face of the roast pig that lay, a bright red apple protruding from its mouth, on its silver platter in the center of the table. Something bothered him about the pig's face.

Perhaps, he thought, it is those accusing eyes. They make me feel so guilty. Can't say that I blame it though. After all, it's one thing to eat an animal, and another to eat it in front of itself.

Smiling at the wittiness of his thought, Richards poured himself some more wine and proceeded to stuff a large piece of pork in his mouth as if in defiance of the pig's incessant stare. Still, something bothered him about the pig's face. It was almost as if he recognized it. Throughout his conversation with the old woman he kept glancing at the pig's face. He was almost sure there was something familiar about it. Whenever he took his gaze from the pig, it was only to meet the old woman's smiling face. His head began to spin.

Too much wine, he thought.

He forehead began to perspire and he reached into his jacket pocket for his handkerchief to wipe it. Doing so, he accidentally pulled from the pocket his note pad and a small folder containing, among other things, a picture of young Tasson. The picture slipped to the floor when the folder fell to Richards' lap. He bent down to pick it up. Then he saw the face.

He quickly straightened himself up. His head was spinning terribly and the room danced about him. The light from the candles glistened off the crystal glasses and the pighead-shaped knob on the old woman's cane. He tried to focus on the pig's face, trying to put things together in his mind. Then he noticed it—the dark mole on the pig's snout. He glanced in awakening disbelief at the pig's face and then at the picture of young Tasson. Then he knew where he had seen the pig's face before. It was young Tasson's! He looked up at the smiling old woman leaning on her pig-headed cane and knew her words even before they left her lips.

"Yes, Mr. Richards. It is young Mr. Tasson!"

With that, Det. Richards' head spun into unconsciousness, but not before he had had one last look at young Tasson.

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The young man with a large travelling bag stopped before the iron gate. He read the number 44 on the sign and checked it against the number in the ad section of the newspaper he carried. It was obviously the right place. He opened the iron gate, which squeaked with objection, and made his way up the cobblestones to the old, green-doored, Victorian house. He had the feeling that he was being watched and thought he had caught sight of a figure in one of the upper windows, but it had disappeared as he drew near the house. He climbed the porch steps and grasped the pighead-shaped brass knocker which hung in the upper center of the door and knocked.

Almost immediately the green door opened and he faced a smiling grey-haired woman. But stronger than the smiling face of the old woman was the delicious, warm aroma of roast pork the wafted through the open doorway.

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