

## Every Vote Counts – A Fractured Fable

JD got back to the farm well after midnight when everyone was sleeping. The bed of the dump truck rose, he slid down and out, the back-flap banging. He rolled to the side of the dirt road, rankled that the foreman at the pork factory took one look at him and said, “Too fat, not enough meat to be worth the bother. Get him out of here!” The dust from the road, settling on his head, tasted bitter.

He had plenty of time to think on the ride home. *I’ll let on it was a hush-hush, rush-rush job for the government. “TOP SECRET. Can’t say more!” First thing in the AM, get this farm back in working order – heck, need to check with Charlie about elections. Going to solidify my throne one way or another.*

When Barry, the bat, had told him that Charlie was “filling in” in his absence, he snorted, “That’s a lot of *juanaoop!*” Barry flew off muttering, “*Jaunaoop?* JD’s a nincompoop but you have to work with what you got.”

JD sniffed the air and changed the direction he was heading. Smiling, he crashed into his old sty. “I’d know that smell anywhere.”

He was up extra early. Grunting his way to the barn, he banged on the outside corner, waking the donkey.

“Hey, JD, is that you? Heard you might be coming back. How’re your trotters?”

“Never mind, what’s this I hear about elections?”

“Thought Barry told you. Charlie’s got a convention coming up and heads up our ticket. We’re calling ourselves the Orange Orchard Party. Said there’d be plenty animals on the other farms still liking you and your orange doo and would vote for him. Didn’t think you’d be coming back.”

“He didn’t, did he?”

“Nope. Had some posters printed up; one’s on the side of the coop. Sign says, ‘*No chicken in any pot! Vote for Charlie; he’s not only for the birds!*’”

JD was furious. “Vote for Charlie? I’ll show him.” He got up from his considerable haunches and made for the chicken coop. Seeing the poster, he rubbed against it until it was shredded. By the time he finished, all the chickens were out in the yard squawking.

Charlie saw smoke coming out JD’s snout; his front paws were still stomping on a remnant of the poster.

“Relax, JD. I was just getting things set up for you. You’re the biggest and the best. No way could anyone think I was going to replace you.”

“So what’s this about voting?”

“Sleight of hand, just had to keep things open. We’d make money on all the endorsements we could do in the run-up. Elections make things look legit. Not to worry. This chicken’s got things locked and loaded.”

JD thought for a while and then thought for a while longer. “OK, this is a one-time thing. We control the vote and the count. And when I’m crowned, we announce that it was such an overwhelming victory that they’ll be no need to vote again for maybe 20 years or maybe even never more. Yeah, I kind of like that idea. Barry’s in charge of the tallying, I’m sure.”

Charlie swallowed. “Yeah, and he’s got those owls in his coat pocket. They’ll OK whatever you say.”

PROVING that when a pig gets rolling, better count the votes carefully.

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