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# The Impressive Egg: A Short Barnyard Story

S. C. Langham

“What are you waiting for?” the chicken asked the egg.

The egg wiggled a bit, settling further into the soft pile of dust it was resting on. It was quite a large egg, light tan with dark brown speckles.

“I’m not ready,” said Egg.

The chicken jerked its head back and hopped twice. “What? Of course you are! Don’t be silly!”

“I’m not sure what you mean,” said Egg.

“All of the other eggs have hatched already,” said the chicken.

“Have they?” Egg said. “Really?”

“Yes. Every last one!”

“Except me,” said Egg slowly.

“Except you,” said the chicken.

“Well,” said Egg. “I’m not ready yet.”

“Well!” said the chicken in lofty tones. “I’m not sure you realize, but I happen to be a chicken.”

“What does that mean?” asked Egg curiously.

The chicken scratched at the dust and pecked the ground hard several times. “It means I am an egg expert!”

That sounded impressive to Egg. “I’m an egg! What do you think of me?”

The chicken’s breast feathers fluffed up. “Hm. Hm. Let me see.” The chicken strutted around the egg several times.

“What do you think?” asked Egg anxiously.

“You are quite a large and impressive egg,” pronounced the chicken. “If I do say so myself.”

“Really?” said Egg. “Thanks!”

“Yes,” said the chicken. “An impressive egg. You have a lot of potential. Except—”

“Except what?” asked Egg.

The chicken tapped its beak lightly on Egg’s shell. “Isn’t it obvious?”

Egg rocked back and forth in agitation. “No. What’s wrong?”

“You’re late,” said the chicken with a cackle. “Yes, quite late.”

“I am?” said Egg, slightly worried. “When was I supposed to hatch?”

The chicken flapped its wings and shook its head several times. “There are no dates for hatching! It’s not that there’s an exact date!”

“Then what does late mean?”

The chicken clucked, and clucked. “I’m an egg expert! And when an egg expert tells an egg it’s late, then it’s late!”

“Oh.” Egg was confused. “So...so should I hatch, then?”

“Absolutely.” The chicken eyed a bug and ate it in one peck. “Yes. What are you waiting for?”

With a mighty crack, Egg broke open. But something wasn't right, no not right at all! Bright orange—yellow yolk spilled out, its color fading as it leaked into the dust. "Oh—ohhh!" wailed Egg, trying in vain to heal the cracks in the shell. Egg looked for the chicken, but the chicken was nowhere to be found.

"Help!" Egg cried. "Help!"

A nearby pig heard Egg's pitiful yelps and trundled over. The pig looked over the rapidly failing Egg and shook its head. "You listened to a chicken, didn't you?"

"Mm-hm," said Egg.

"That wasn't very smart," said the pig.

Egg sighed a very small sigh. "Yeah. It certainly isn't any fun either."

"The chicken isn't an egg any more, you know. And even if the chicken *was* an egg, it wouldn't be the same." The pig snorted. "You can't just count on chickens to tell you these things."

"Oh," said Egg. "I didn't know."

"And what do you know now?" prompted the pig.

Egg sighed again. "Don't count on chickens before you're hatched."