

1-UP

by Shawn Misener

"I believe in the redemptive power of bacon. I believe in the redemptive power of pork," says the Rooster, backing me into the corner of the pen, his pink eyes glowing through the reflection of an Eastbound dust storm.

Behind me the pigs huddle together, shivering collectively. The air smells like dream, like farm shit, like the salty stalling of evolution. There is a small ax in my left hand, but I don't intend to slaughter with it. I don't even want it, yet the Rooster chills me so intensely that before he can sidle any closer I fling it at him, splitting him clean in two. The pigs squeal and vomit, as do I, as does the sky, dust rushing in sooner than expected.

From the parted and equal halves of the Rooster a shiny cartoonish green mushroom sprouts, WOOBWOOBWOOBWOOB! It glides along the mud of the pen, bouncing off the fence as the pigs laugh and give chase.

I don't need another life. This one is enough. Walking away I idly kick a turtle, who retreats into his shell, flops on his back, and speeds away, knocking out three other strolling turtles on his way to the flagpole.

