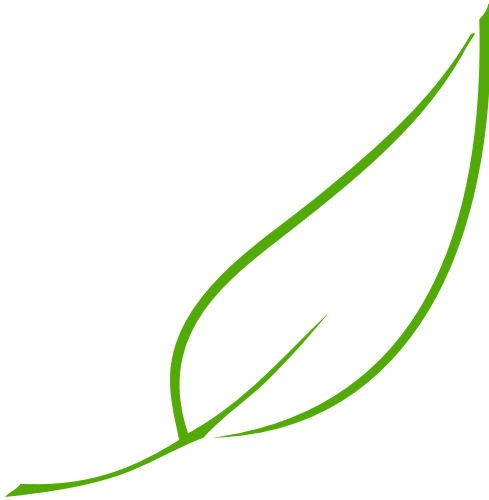


THE PECKING ORDER

by Robert L. Crowe



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When I was in elementary school, our class went on a field trip to a farm. As we stood around the cage that enclosed a bunch of chickens, the teacher was telling us about the little building where the chickens roosted.

“Hey! What’s the matter with that one?” I asked, pointing to a small chicken that was missing most of its feathers.

The teacher explained to me that the chicken was at the bottom of the pecking order. You see, chickens establish an order of importance for themselves. Not one pecks the leader but the leader pecks any one it wants. Then, each chicken pecks on another chicken that is weaker. The weakest animal is fair game for all of the others. The chicken I was watching was pecked-at and picked-on by all the others. It was the weakest ... the bottom of the pecking order.

I stared at the scrawny chicken for some time. Even though it was a warm day, a chill came over me. You know what I thought? That chicken was me! I looked down at my own clothes with holes and stains that looked like torn or missing feathers. As I watched the ragged little chick I wanted so much to take it home and care for it.

As I sat alone on the bus ride back to school, I couldn’t get the thought of that chicken out of my mind. Until I saw that chicken it never occurred to me ... but it did make sense. There was a *people* pecking order.



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PECKING ORDER

by Robert L. Crowe.

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