

Squinty, the Comical Pig

By Richard Barnum

Chapter 3: Squinty is Lost

This was the second time Squinty had run out of the pen and into the farmer's garden. The first time he had been caught and brought back by Don, the dog. This time Squinty did not intend to get caught, if he could help it.

So, after crawling out through the hole under the pen, the little pig came to a stop, and looked carefully on all sides of him. His one little squinty eye was opened as wide as it would open, and the other eye was opened still wider. Squinty wanted to see all there was to be seen.

He cocked one ear up in front of him, to listen to any sounds that might come from that direction, and the other ear he drooped over toward his back, to hear any noises that might come from behind him.

What Squinty was especially listening for was the barking of Don, the dog.

"For," thought Squinty, "I don't want Don to catch me again, and make me go back, before I have had any fun. It will be time enough to go back to the pen when it is dark. Yes, that will be time enough," for of course Squinty did not think of staying out after the sun had gone down. Or, at least, he did not imagine he would.

But you just wait and see what happens.

Squinty looked carefully about him. Even if one eye did droop a little, he could still see

out of it very well, and he saw no signs of Don, the big dog. Nor could Squinty hear him.

Don must be far away, the little pig thought, far away, perhaps taking a swim in the brook, where the dog often went to cool off in hot weather.

"I think I'll go and have a swim myself," thought Squinty. He knew there was a brook somewhere on the farm, for he could hear the tinkle and fall of the water even in the pig pen. But where the brook was he did not know exactly.

"But it will be an adventure to hunt for it," Squinty thought. "I guess I can easily find it. Here I go!" and with that he started to walk between the rows of potatoes.

Squinty made up his little mind that he was going to be very careful. Now that he was safely out of the pen again he did not want to be caught the second time. He did not want Don, or the farmer, to see him, so he crawled along, keeping as much out of sight as he could.

"I wish my brothers, Wuff-Wuff or Squealer were with me," said Squinty softly to himself, in pig language. "But if I had awakened them, and asked them to run away with me, mamma or papa might have heard, and stopped us."

Squinty did not feel at all sorry about running away and leaving his father and mother,

and brothers and sisters. You see he thought he would be back with them again in a few hours, for he did not intend to stay away from the pen longer than that. But many things can happen in a few hours, as you shall see.

"I won't eat any pig weed just yet," thought Squinty, as he went softly on between the rows of potato vines. "To pull up any of it, and eat it now, would make it wiggle. Then Don or the farmer might see it wiggling, and run over to find out what it was all about. Then I'd be caught. I'll wait a bit."

So, though he was very hungry, he would not eat a bit of the pig weed that grew near the pen. And he never so much as dreamed of taking any of the farmer's potatoes. He did not yet know the taste of them. But, let me tell you, pigs who have eaten potatoes, even the little ones the farmer cannot sell, are very fond of them. But, so far, Squinty had never eaten even a little potato.

On and on went the little pig, looking back now and then toward the pen to see if any of the other pigs were coming after him. But none were.

And there was no sign of Don, the barking dog, nor the farmer, either. There was nothing to stop Squinty from running away. Soon he was some distance from the pen, and then he thought it would be safe to nibble at a bit of pig weed. He took a large mouthful from a tall, green plant.

"Oh, how good that tastes!" thought Squinty. "It is much better and fresher than the kind the farmer throws into the pen to us."

Perhaps this was true, but I imagine the reason the pig weed tasted so much better was because Squinty was running away.

Perhaps you know how it is yourself. Did you ever go out the back way, when mamma was washing the dishes, and run over to your aunt's or your grandma's house, and get a piece of bread and jam? If you ever did, you probably thought that bread and jam was much nicer than the kind you could get at home, though really there isn't any better bread and jam than mother makes. But, somehow or other, the kind you get away from home tastes differently, doesn't it?

It was that way with Squinty, the comical pig. He ate and ate the pig weed, until he had eaten about as much as was good for him. And then, as he saw one little potato on the ground, where it had rolled out of the hill in which it grew with the others, Squinty ate that. He did not think the farmer would care.

"Oh, how good it is!" he thought. "I wish I had not eaten so much pig weed, then I could eat more of those funny, round things the farmer calls potatoes. Now I will have to wait until I am hungry again."

Squinty knew that would not be very long, for pigs get hungry many times a day. That is what makes them grow fat so fast—they eat so often. But eating often is not good for boys and girls.

Squinty had now come some distance away from the pen, where he lived with his mother, father, sisters and brothers. He wondered if they had awakened yet, or had seen the hole

out of which he had crawled, and if they were puzzled as to where he had gone.

"But they can't find me!" said Squinty, with something that sounded like a laugh. I suppose pigs can laugh—in their own way, at any rate.

"No, they can't find me," thought Squinty, looking all around. All he saw were the rows of potato vines, and, farther off, a field of tall, green corn.

"Well, I have the whole day to myself," thought Squinty. "I can do as I please, and not go back until night. Let me see, what shall I do first? I guess I will go to sleep in the shade."

So he stretched out in the shade of a big potato vine, and, curling up in a little pink ball, he closed his eyes, the squinty one as well as the good one. But first Squinty looked all around to make sure Don, the dog, was not in sight. He saw nothing of him.

When Squinty awakened he felt hungry, as he always did after a sleep.

"Now for some more of those nice potatoes!" he said to himself. He liked them, right after his first taste. He did not look around for the little ones that might have fallen out of the hills themselves. No, instead, Squinty began rooting them out of the earth with his strong, rubbery nose, made just for digging.

I am not saying Squinty did right in this. In fact he did wrong, but then he was a little pig, and he knew no better. In fact it was the first time he had really run away so far, and he was quite hungry. And potatoes were better than pig weed.

Squinty ate as many potatoes as he wanted, and then he said to himself, in a way pigs have:

"Well, I guess I'll go on to the brook, and cool off in the water. That will do me good. After that I'll look around and see what will happen next."

Squinty had a good nose for smelling, as most animals have, and, tilting it up in the air, Squinty sniffed and snuffed. He wanted to smell the water, so as to take the shortest path to the brook.

"Ha! It's right over there!" exclaimed Squinty to himself. "I can easily find the water to take a bath."

Across the potato field he went, taking care to keep well down between the rows of green vines, for he did not want to be seen by the dog, or the farmer.

Once, as Squinty was walking along, he saw what he thought was another potato on the ground in front of him. He put his nose out toward it, intending to eat it, but the thing gave a big jump, and hopped out of the way.

"Ha! That must be one of the hop toads I heard my mother tell about," thought Squinty. "I must not hurt them, for they are good to catch the flies that tickle me when I try to sleep. Hop on," he said to the toad. "I won't bother you."

The toad did not stop to say anything. She just hopped on, and hid under a big stone. Maybe she was afraid of Squinty, but he would not have hurt her.

Soon the little pig came to the brook of cool water, and after looking about, to see that there was no danger near, Squinty waded in, and took a long drink. Then he rolled over and over again in it, washing off all the mud and dirt, and coming out as clean and as pink as a little baby. Squinty was a real nice pig, even if he had run away.

"Let me see," he said to himself, after his bath. "What shall I do now? Which way shall I go?"

Well, he happened to be hungry after his swim. In fact Squinty was very often hungry, so he thought he would see if he could find anything more to eat.

"I have had potatoes and pig weed," he thought, "and now I would like some apples. I wonder if there are any apple trees around here?"

He looked and, across the field of corn, he thought he saw an apple tree. He made up his mind to go there.

And that is where Squinty made another mistake. He made one when he ran away from the pen, and another one when he started to go through the corn field.

Corn, you know, grows quite high, and pigs, even the largest of them, are not very tall. At least not until they stand on their hind legs. That was a trick Squinty had not yet learned. So he had to go along on four legs, and this made him low down.

Now he had been able to look over the tops of the potato vines, as they were not very high, but Squinty could not look over the top

of the corn stalks. No sooner had he gotten into the field, and started to walk along the corn rows, than he could not see where he was going. He could not even see the apple tree in the middle of the field.

"Well, this is queer," thought Squinty. "I guess I had better go back. No, I will keep on. I may come to the apple tree soon."

He hurried on between the corn rows. But, though he went a long distance, he did not come to the apple tree.

"I guess I will go back to the brook, where I had my bath, and start over again from there," thought Squinty. "I will not try to get any apples to-day. I will eat only potatoes and pig weed. Yes, I will go back."

But that was not so easy to do as he had thought. Squinty went this way and that, through the rows of corn, but he could not find the brook. He could not find his way back, nor could he find the apple tree. On all sides of him was the tall corn. That was all poor Squinty could see.

Finally, all tired out, and dusty, the little pig stopped, and sighed:

"Oh dear! I guess I am lost!"