

Squinty, the Comical Pig

By Richard Barnum

Chapter 5: Squinty and the Boy

Did you ever have a little brother or sister who ran away from home, and was very glad to run back, or be brought back again, by a policeman, perhaps? Of course your little brother or sister may not have intended to run away, it may have been that they only wandered off, around the corner, toward the candy store, and could not find their way back again. But, when he or she did get home—how glad you were to see them! Weren't you?

It was just like that at the pen where Squinty, the comical pig, lived. When the farmer picked him up, and dropped him down among his brothers and sisters, in the clean straw, Wuff-Wuff, Squealer, and Curly Tail, and the others, were so glad to see Squinty that they grunted, and squealed and walked all over one another, to be the first to get close to him.

"Oh, Squinty, where were you?"

"Where did you go?"

"What did you do?"

"Weren't you awfully scared?"

"Where did the dog find you?"

"Did he bite you very hard?"

These were some of the questions Squinty's brothers and sisters asked of the little runaway pig. They pressed close up to him, rubbing their funny, wiggling, rubber-like noses against him, and snuggling up against him, for they liked Squinty very much indeed.

Then, after the young pigs had had their turn, Mr. Pig and Mrs. Pig began asking questions.

"What made you run away?" asked Squinty's papa.

"Oh, I wanted to have an adventure," said Squinty.

"Well, did you have one?" asked his mamma.

"Oh, yes, lots of them," answered the little pig. "But I didn't find very much to eat." Squinty was very hungry now.

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Pig. "You are just too late for supper. It is all eaten up. We did not see that you were not here until too late. It's too bad!"

Squinty thought so himself, for the smell of the sour milk that had been in the feeding trough made him more hungry than ever.

Squinty walked over and tried to find a few drops in the bottom of the wooden trough. These he licked up with his red tongue. But there was not nearly enough.

"Ha! I guess that little pig must be hungry," said the farmer looking down in the pen, after he had put some more stones and a board over the hole where Squinty had gotten out. "I guess I'll have to feed him, for the others have had their supper."

And how glad Squinty was when the farmer went over to the barrel, where the pigs' feed was kept, and mixed a nice pailful of sour milk with some corn meal, and poured it into the trough.

"Squee! Squee!" cried Squinty as he made a rush over to get his supper.

"Squee! Squee!" cried all the other little pigs, as they, too, made a rush to get more to eat.

"Here! Hold on! Come back!" cried Mr. Pig. "That is Squinty's supper. You must not touch it. You have had yours!" and he and Mrs. Pig would not let Squinty's brothers and sisters shove him away from the trough. For sometimes pigs are so hungry that they do this, you know. Being pigs they know no better.

So Squinty had his supper, after all, though he did run away. Perhaps he should have been punished by being sent to bed without having had anything to eat, but you see the farmer wanted his pigs to be fat and healthy, so he fed them well. Squinty was very glad of that.

"Now all of you go to sleep," said Mrs. Pig, when it grew darker and darker in the pen. So she made them all cuddle down in the straw, pulling it over them with her nose and paws, like a blanket, to keep them warm. For only part of the pen had a roof over it, and though it was summer, still it was cool at night.

But Squinty's brothers and sisters had no notion of going to sleep so soon. They wanted to hear all about what had happened to him when he had run away, and they wanted him

to tell them of his adventures. So they grunted and whispered among themselves.

"What happened to you, Squinty?" asked Wuff-Wuff.

"Oh, I had a fine swim in a brook," said Squinty.

"I wish that had happened to me," said Wuff-Wuff. "What else?"

"I found a nice field of corn," went on Squinty, "but I did not like the taste of it. I got lost in the cornfield."

"That's too bad," said Wuff-Wuff. "Did anything else happen?"

"Yes, I found some pig weed, and ate that, and some little potatoes."

"Oh, how nice!" exclaimed Twisty Tail. "I wish that had happened to me. Did you do anything else, Squinty?"

"Yes," said the comical little pig. "I saw something I thought was a potato, and it jumped away from me. It was a hoptoad."

"That was funny," said Squealer. "I wish I had seen it. Did anything else happen?"

"Yes," said Squinty. "I thought I saw another potato, but when I bit on it I found it was only a stone, and it hurt my teeth."

"That's too bad," said Wuff-Wuff. "I am glad that did not happen to me. Tell us what else you saw."

But just then Mrs. Pig grunted out:

"Come, now! All you little pigs must keep quiet and go to sleep. Go to sleep at once!"

So Squinty and the others cuddled closer together, snuggled down in the soft straw, and soon were fast asleep. Now and then they

stirred, or grunted during the night, but they did not wake up until morning. They were running around the pen before breakfast, squealing as loudly as they could, for the farmer to come and feed them. But the farmer had his cows and horses and chickens to feed, as well as the pigs, and he did not get to the pen until last. And when he did, all the pigs were so hungry, even Mr. and Mrs. Pig, that they were squealing as hard as they could.

"Yes, yes!" cried the farmer, as though he were talking to the pigs. "I'm coming as fast as I can."

Soon the farmer poured some sour milk and corn meal down into the trough, and how eagerly Squinty and the others did eat it! Some of the smaller pigs even put two feet in the trough, they were so anxious to get their share. Squinty had an especially good appetite, from having run away, so perhaps he got a little more than the others.

But finally the breakfast was all gone, and the pigs had nothing more to do until dinner time—that is, all they had to do was to lie down and rest, or get up now and then to scratch a mosquito, or a fly bite.

"Well, I guess none of you will get out again," said the farmer, after a while, as he nailed a bigger board over the hole by which Squinty had gotten out. "Don, watch these pigs," the farmer went on. "If they get out, grab them by the ear, and bring them back."

"Bow wow!" barked Don, and that meant he would do as his master had told him.

For several days after this nothing happened in the pigs' pen except that they were washed off with the hose now and then, to clean them of mud and make them cool. Once in a while the farmer would take a corn cob and scratch the back of Mr. or Mrs. Pig, and they liked this very much. The other pigs were almost too little for the farmer to reach over the top of the pen.

One day the pigs heard merry shouts and laughter up at the farmhouse. There were the sounds of boys' and girls' voices. Then came the patter of many feet.

"Oh, look at the pigs!" someone cried, and Squinty, and his brothers and sisters, looking up, saw, over the edge of the pen, some boys and girls looking down on them.

"Oh, aren't they cute!" exclaimed a girl.

"Just lovely!" said another girl. "Pigs are so nice!"

"I wonder if any of them can do any tricks?" asked a boy who stood looking down into the pen.

"These aren't trained circus pigs," spoke one of the girls. "They can't do tricks."

The boy and the girls stayed for a little while, watching the pigs. Then the boy said:

"Let's pull some weeds and feed them."

"Oh, yes, let's!" cried the girls. The pigs were glad when they heard this, and they were more glad when the boy and the girls threw pig weed, and other green things from the garden, into the pen. The pigs ate them all up, and wanted more.

After that, for several days, Squinty and his brothers and sisters could hear the boy and the girls running about the garden, but they could not see them because the boards around the pig pen were too high. The boy and the girls seemed to be having a fine time.

Squinty could hear them talking about hunting the hens' eggs, and feeding the little calves and sheep, and riding on the backs of horses.

Then, one day Squinty looked up out of the pen, and, leaning over the top board he saw the farmer, the boy and another man.

"Oh, Father!" exclaimed the boy, "do let me have just one little pig. They are so nice!"

"A pig!" cried Father. "What would you do with a pig in our town? We are not in the country. Where would you keep a pig?"

"Oh, I could build a little pen for him in our yard. Look, let me have that one, he is so pink and pretty and clean."

"Ha! So you want that pig, do you?" asked the farmer. The boy and his father and sisters were paying a visit to the farm.

"Yes, I want a pig very much!" the boy said. "And I think I'd like that one," and he pointed straight at Squinty. Poor Squinty ran and tried to hide under the straw, for he knew the boy was talking about him.

"Oh, see him run!" cried the boy. "Yes, I think he is the nicest pig in the lot. I want him. Has he any name?"

"Well, we call him Squinty," the farmer said. "He has a funny, squinting eye."

"Then I'll call him Squinty, too," the boy went on. "Please, Father, may I have that little pig?"

"Well, I don't know," said his father slowly, scratching his head. "A pig is a queer pet. I suppose you might have him, though. You could keep him in the back yard. Yes, I guess you could have him, if Mr. Jones will sell him, and if the pig will behave. Do you think that little pig will be good, Mr. Jones?" asked the father of the farmer man.

"Well, yes, I guess so," answered the farmer. "He has run away out of the pen a couple of times, but if you board up a place good and tight, I guess he won't get out."

"Oh, I do hope he'll be good!" exclaimed the boy. "I do so want a little pet pig, and I'll be so kind to him!"

When Squinty heard that, he made up his mind, if the boy took him, that he would be as good as he knew how.

"When can I have my little pig?" asked the boy, of his father.

"Oh, as soon as Mr. Jones can put him in a box, so we can carry him," was the answer. "We can't very well take him in our arms; he would slip out and run away."

"I guess so, too," laughed the boy.