

Squinty, the Comical Pig

By Richard Barnum

Chapter 7: Squinty Learns a Trick

Squinty, the comical pig, tried to look out through the slats of the box, in which he was being taken away, to see in which direction he was going. He also wanted to watch the different sights along the road. But the sides of the farm wagon were so high that the little pig could see nothing. He stretched his fat neck as far as it would go, but that did no good either. Squinty wished he were as big as his papa or his mamma.

"Then I could see what is going on," he thought.

But just wishing never made anyone larger or taller, not even a pig, and Squinty stayed the same size.

He could hear the farmer and the children talking. Now and then the boy who had bought Squinty, and who was taking him home, would look around at his pet in the slatted box.

"Is he all right?" one of the girls would ask.

"He seems to be," the boy would say. "I am glad I got him."

"Well, he acts real cute," said another girl, who was called Sallie, "but I never heard of having a pig for a pet before."

"You just wait until I teach him some tricks," said the boy, whose name was Bob. "Then you'll think he's fine!"

"Ha! So I am to learn tricks," thought Squinty in his box. "I wonder what tricks are, anyhow? Does it mean I am to have good things to eat? I hope so."

You see Squinty, like most little pigs, thought more of something to eat than of anything else. But we must not blame him for that, since he could not help it.

Pretty soon the wagon rattled over some stones, and then came to a stop.

"Here we are!" called the children's father. "Bring along your little pig, Bob. Here comes the train."

"Ha! It seems I am to go on a train," thought Squinty. "I wonder what a train is?"

Squinty had many things to learn, didn't he?

The little pig in the box felt himself being lifted out of the wagon. Then he could look about him. He saw a large building, in front of which were long, slender strips of shining steel. These were the railroad tracks, but Squinty did not know that. Then all at once, Squinty heard a loud noise, which went like this:

"Whee! Whee! Whee-whee!"

"Oh my! what a loud squeal that pig has!" exclaimed Squinty. "He can squeal much louder than I can, I think. Let me try."

So Squinty went:

“Squee! Squee! Squee!”

And then the big noise sounded again, louder than before:

“Whee! Whee! Toot! Toot!”

“Oh my!” said Squinty to himself, snuggling down in the straw of his box. “I never can squeal as loud as that. Never!”

He looked out and saw a big black thing rushing toward him, with smoke coming out of the top, and then the big black thing cried out again:

“Whee! Whee! Toot! Toot!”

“Oh, what a terrible, big black pig!” thought Squinty. And he was a bit frightened. But it was not a big black pig at all. It was only the engine drawing the train of cars up to the station to take the passengers away. And it was going to take Squinty, also.

Squinty thought the engine whistle was a pig’s squeal, but it wasn’t, of course.

Pretty soon the train stopped. The passengers made a rush to get in the cars. Bob, the boy, caught up the handle of Squinty’s box, and, after some bumping and tilting sideways, the little pig found himself set down in a rather dark place, for the boy had put the box on the floor of the car by his seat, near his feet.

And there Squinty rode, seeing nothing, but hearing many strange noises, until, after many stops, he was lifted up again.

“Here we are!” the little pig heard the children’s papa say. “Have you everything? Don’t forget your pig, Bob.”

“I won’t,” answered the boy, with a jolly laugh.

“Well, I wonder what will happen next?” thought Squinty, as he felt himself being carried along again. He could see nothing but a crowd of persons all about the boy who carried the box.

“I don’t know whether I am going to like this or not—this coming to live in town,” thought the little pig. “Still, I cannot help myself, I suppose. But I do wish I had something to eat.”

I guess the boy must have known Squinty was hungry, for, when he next set down the box, this time in a carriage, the boy gave the little pig a whole apple to eat. And how good it did taste to Squinty!

“Are you going to make a pen for him?” asked one of the boy’s sisters, as the carriage drove off.

“Yes, as soon as we get to the house,” said the boy.

By this time Squinty was thirsty. There was no water in his cage, but, a little later, when he saw through the slats, that he was being carried toward a large, white house, he was given a tin of water to drink.

“I’ll just leave him in that box until I can fix a larger one for him,” the boy said, and then, for a while, Squinty was left all to himself. But he was still in the box, though the box was set in a shady place on the back porch.

All this while Mr. Pig and Mrs. Pig, as well as the brother and sister pigs, in the pen at home, were wondering what had happened to Squinty.

"Where do you think he is now, Mamma?" Wuff-Wuff would ask.

"Oh, I don't know," Mrs. Pig answered.

"And will he ever come back to us?" asked Twisty Tail.

"Perhaps, some day. I hope so," said Mrs. Pig, sort of sighing.

"Oh, yes, I think he will," said Mr. Pig. "When he gets quite large the boy will get tired of having him for a pet, and perhaps bring him back."

"Were you ever carried off that way, Papa?" asked Grunter, as he rubbed his back, where a mosquito had bitten him, against the side of the pen.

"Oh, yes, once," answered Mr. Pig. "I was taken away from my pen, when I was pretty large, and given to a little girl for a pet. But she did not keep me long. I guess she would rather have had her dolls, so I was soon brought back to my pen. And I was glad of it."

"Well, I hope they will soon bring Squinty back," Wuff-Wuff said. "It is lonesome without him."

But, after a while, the other pigs found so many things to do, and they were kept so busy, eating sour milk, and getting fat, that they nearly forgot about Squinty.

But, all this time, something was happening to the comical little pig.

Toward evening of the first day that Squinty had been put in the new little cage, the boy, who had not been near him in some time, came back to look at his pet.

"Now I have a larger place for you," the boy said, speaking just as though Squinty could understand him. And, in fact, Squinty did know much of what was said to him, though he could not talk back in boy language, being able to speak only his own pig talk.

"And I guess you are hungry, too, and want something to eat," the boy went on. "I will feed you!"

"Squee! Squee! Squee!" squealed Squinty. If there was one word in man-talk that he understood very well, it was "feed." He had often heard the farmer say:

"Well, now I must feed the pigs."

And right after that, some nice sour milk would come splashing down into the trough of the pen. So when Squinty heard the word "feed" again, he guessed what was going to happen.

And he guessed right, too.

The boy picked Squinty up, box and all, and carried him to the back yard.

"Now I'll give you more room to run about, and then I'll have a nice supper for you," the boy said, talking to his little pig just as you would to your dog, or kitty.

With a hammer the boy knocked off some of the slats of the small box in which Squinty had made his journey. Then the boy lifted out the comical little pig, and Squinty found himself inside a large box, very much like the pen at home. It had clean straw in it, and a little trough, just like the one at his "home," where he could eat. But there was nothing in the trough to eat, as yet, and the box seemed quite lonesome, for Squinty was all alone.

"Here you are now! Some nice sour milk, and boiled potatoes!" cried the boy, and then Squinty smelled the most delicious smell—to him at least. Down into the trough came the sour milk and potatoes.

"Squee! Squee!" yelled Squinty in delight. And how fast he ate! That was because he was hungry, you see, but pigs nearly always eat fast, as though they were continually in a hurry.

"Oh, isn't it cute!" exclaimed a voice over Squinty's head. He looked up, half shutting his one funny eye, and cocking one ear up, and letting the other droop down. But he did not stop eating.

"Oh, isn't he funny!" cried another voice. And Squinty saw the boy and his sisters looking at him.

"Yes, he surely is a nice pig," the boy said, "In a few days, when he gets over being strange, I'm going to teach him some tricks."

"Ha! There's that word tricks again!" thought Squinty. "I wonder what tricks are? But I shall very soon find out."

For a few days Squinty was rather lonesome in his new pen, all by himself. He missed his papa and mamma and brothers and sisters. But the boy came to see Squinty every day, bringing him nice things to eat, and, after a bit, Squinty came to look for his new friend.

"I guess you are getting to know me, aren't you, old fellow?" the boy said one day, after feeding Squinty, and he scratched the little pig on the back with a stick.

"Uff! Uff!" grunted Squinty. That, I suppose, was his way of saying:

"Of course I know you, and I like you, boy."

One day, about a week after he had come to his new home, Squinty heard the boy say:

"Now I think you are tame enough to be let out. I don't believe you will run away, will you? But, anyhow, I'll tie a string to your leg, and then you can't."

Squinty wished he could speak boy language, and tell his friend that he would not run away as long as he was kindly treated, but of course Squinty could not do this. Instead, he could only grunt and squeal.

The boy tied a string to Squinty's leg, and let him out of the pen. The comical little pig was glad to have more room in which to move about. He walked first to one side, and then the other, rooting in the dirt with his funny, rubbery nose. The boy laughed to see him.

"I guess you are looking for something to eat," the boy said. "Well, let's see if you can find these acorns."

The boy hid them under a pile of dirt, and watched. Squinty smelled about, and sniffed. He could easily tell where the acorns had been hidden, and, a moment later, he had rooted them up and was eating them.

"Oh, you funny little pig!" cried the boy. "You are real smart! You know how to find acorns. That is one trick."

"Ha! If that is a trick, it is a very easy one—just rooting up acorns," thought Squinty to himself.

Squinty walked around, as far as the rope tied to his leg would let him. The other end

of the rope was held by the boy. Once the rope got tangled around Squinty's foot, and he jumped over it to get free. The boy saw him and cried:

"Oh, I wonder if I could teach you to jump the rope? That would be a fine trick. Let me see."

The boy thought a moment, and then lifted Squinty up, and set him down on one side of the rope, which he raised a little way from the ground, just as girls do when they are playing a skipping game.

On the other side of the rope the boy put an apple.

"Now, Squinty," said Bob, "if you want that apple you must jump the rope to get it. Come on."

At first Squinty did not understand what was wanted of him. He saw nothing but the apple, and thought how much he wanted it. He started for it, but, before he could get it the boy pulled up the rope in front of him. The rope stopped Squinty.

"Jump over the rope if you want the apple," said the boy. Of course Squinty could not exactly understand this talk. He tried once more to get the apple, but, every time he did, he found the rope in front of him, in the way.

"Well!" exclaimed Squinty to himself, "I am going to get that apple, rope or no rope. I guess I'll have to get over the rope somehow."

So the next time he started for the juicy apple, and the rope was pulled up in front of him, Squinty gave a little spring, and over

the rope he went, jumping with all four legs, coming down on the other side, like a circus man jumping over the elephant's back.

"Oh, fine! Good!" cried the boy, clapping his hands. "Squinty has learned to do another trick!"

"Uff! Uff!" grunted Squinty, as he chewed the apple. "So that's another trick, is it?"