

Squinty, the Comical Pig

By Richard Barnum

Chapter 9: Squinty's Balloon Ride

This was the third time Squinty had run away. But not once did he intend to do any wrong; you see he knew no better. He just found his pen door open and walked out—that was all there was to it.

"I wonder what will happen to me this time?" thought the comical little pig, as he hurried along over the ground, toward the woods. "I don't believe Don, the dog, will find me here, for he must be back on the farm. But some other dog might. I had better be careful, I guess."

When Squinty thought this he stopped and looked carefully around for any signs of a barking dog. But he saw none. It was very still and quiet, for it was nearly supper time in the big house where Bob lived, and he and his sisters were waiting for the bell to ring to call them to the table.

But Squinty had had his supper, and, for the time, he was not hungry.

"And if I do get hungry again, I may find something in the woods," he said to himself. "Acorn nuts grow in the woods, and they are very good. I'll root up some of them."

Once or twice Squinty looked back toward the pen he had run away from, to see if Bob, his master, were coming after him. But Bob had no idea his little pet had run away. In fact, just then, Bob was wondering what new trick he could teach Squinty the next day.

On and on ran the comical pig. Once he found something round and yellow on the ground.

"Ha! That looks like a yellow apple," thought Squinty, and he bit it hard with his white teeth. Then his mouth all puckered up, he felt a sour taste, and he cried out:

"Wow! I don't like that. Oh, that isn't an apple at all!"

And it wasn't—it was a lemon the grocery boy had dropped.

"Oh! How sour!" grunted Squinty. "I'd like a drink of water to take the taste of that out of my mouth."

Squinty lifted his nose up in the air, and sniffed and snuffed. He wanted to try to smell a spring of water, and he did, just on the edge of the big wood. Over to the spring he ran on his little short legs, and soon he was having a fine drink.

"Now I feel better," Squinty said. "What will happen next?"

Nothing did for some time, and, when it did it was so strange that Squinty never forgot it as long as he lived. I'll tell you all about it.

He walked on through the woods, Squinty did, and, before very long, he found some acorns. He ate as many as he wanted and then, as he always felt sleepy after he had

eaten, he thought he would lie down and have a nap.

He found a place, near a big stump, where there was a soft bed of dried leaves, nearly as nice as his straw bed in the pen at home. On this he stretched out, and soon he was fast asleep.

When Squinty awoke it was real dark. He jumped up with a little grunt, and said to himself:

“Well, I did not mean to stay away from my pen so long. I guess I had better go back.”

Squinty started to go back the way he had come, but I guess you can imagine what happened. It was so dark he could not find the path. He walked about, stumbling over sticks and stones and stumps, sometimes falling down on soft moss, and again on the hard ground. Finally Squinty thought:

“Well, it is of no use. I can’t get back to-night, that is sure. I shall have to stay here. Oh dear! I hope there are no dogs to bite me!”

Squinty listened carefully. He could hear no barks. He hunted around in the dark until he found another soft bed of leaves, and on that he cuddled himself up to go to sleep for the night. He was a little afraid, but, after all, he was used to sleeping alone, and, even though he was outside of his pen now, he did not worry much.

“In the morning I shall go back to the boy who taught me tricks,” thought Squinty.

But something else happened in the morning.

Squinty was awake when the sun first peeped up from behind the clouds. The little pig scratched his ear, where a mosquito had bitten him during the night. Then he stretched first one leg and then the others, and said:

“Ha! Ho! Hum! Uff! Uff! I guess I’ll have some acorns for my breakfast.”

It was a very easy matter for Squinty to get his breakfast. He did not have to wash, or comb his hair, or even dress. Just as he was he got up out of his leaf-bed, and began rooting around in the ground for acorns. He soon found all he wanted, and ate them. Then he felt thirsty, so he looked around until he had found another spring of cool water, where he drank as much as he needed.

“And now to go back home, to the boy who taught me tricks,” said Squinty to himself. “I guess he is wondering where I am.”

And indeed that boy, Bob, and his sisters Mollie and Sallie, were wondering where Squinty was. They saw the open door of the pen, and the boy recalled that he had forgotten to lock it.

“Oh, Squinty is gone!” he cried, and he felt very badly indeed. But I have no time to tell you more of that boy now. I must relate for you the wonderful adventures of Squinty.

Squinty went this way and that through the woods, but he could not find the path that led to his pen. He tried and tried again, but it was of no use.

“Well,” said Squinty, at last, sitting down beside a hollow log, “I guess I am lost. That is all there is to it I am lost in the big woods!”

Oh dear! I almost wish Don, the dog, or the farmer would come and find me now."

He waited, but no one came. He listened but he heard nothing.

"Well, I might as well eat and go to sleep again," said Squinty, "Maybe something will happen then."

Soon he was asleep again. But he was suddenly awakened. He heard a great crashing in the trees over his head.

"Gracious! I hope that isn't a dog after me!" cried the little pig.

He looked up, Squinty did. He saw coming down from the sky, through the branches of the trees, a big round thing, like more than ten thousand rubber balls, made into one. Below the round thing hung a square basket, with many ropes, and other things, fast to it. And in the basket were two men. They looked over the edge of the basket. One of them pulled on a rope, and the big thing, which was a balloon, though Squinty did not know it, came to the ground with a bang.

"Well, at last we have made a landing," said one of the men.

"Yes," said the other. "And we shall have to throw out some bags of sand to go up again."

Squinty did not know what this meant. But I'll explain to you that a "landing" is when a balloon comes down to the ground. And when the men in it want to go up again, they have to toss out some of the bags of sand, or ballast, they carry to make the balloon so light that the gas in it will take it up again.

The men began tossing out the bags of sand. Squinty saw them, but he was not afraid. Why should he be? for no men or boys had ever been cruel to him.

"Uff! Uff!" grunted Squinty, getting up and going over to one of the bags of sand. "Maybe that is good to eat!" he thought. "If it is I will take a bite. I am hungry."

"Oh, look at that pig!" suddenly called one of the men in the balloon basket.

"Sure enough, it is a pig!" exclaimed the other. "And what a comical little chap he is!" he went on. "See the funny way he looks at you."

At that moment Squinty looked up, as he often did, with one eye partly closed, the other open, and with one ear cocked frontwards, and the other backwards.

"Say, he's a cute one all right," said the first man. "Let's take him along."

"What for?" asked his friend. "We'd only have to toss out as much sand as he weighs so we could go up."

"Oh, let's take him along, anyhow," insisted the other. "Maybe he'll be a mascot for us."

"Well, if he's a mascot, all right. Then we'll take him. We need some good luck on this trip."

Squinty did not know what a mascot was. Perhaps he thought it was something good to eat. But I might say that a mascot is something which some persons think brings them good luck. Often baseball nines, or football elevens, will have a small boy, or a goat, or a

dog whom they call their mascot. They take him along whenever they play games, thinking the mascot helps them to win. Of course it really does not, but there is no harm in a mascot, anyhow.

“Yes, we’ll take him along in the balloon with us,” said the taller of the two men. “See, he doesn’t seem to be a bit afraid.”

“No, and look! He must be a trick pig! Maybe he got away from some circus!” cried the other man. For, at that moment Squinty stood up on his hind legs, as the boy had taught him, and walked over toward the big balloon basket. What he really wanted was something to eat, but the men did not know that.

“He surely is a cute little pig!” cried the tall man. “I’ll lift him in. You toss out another bag of sand, and we’ll go up.”

The next moment, before he could get out of the man’s grasp if he had wanted to, Squinty felt himself lifted off the ground. He was put down in the bottom of the basket, which held many things, and, a second later, Squinty, the comical pig, felt himself flying upward through the air.

Squinty was off on a trip in a balloon.