

Squinty, the Comical Pig

By Richard Barnum

Chapter 10: Squinty and the Squirrel

Up, up, and up some more went Squinty, the comical pig. At first the fast motion in the balloon made him a little dizzy, just as it might make you feel queer the first time you went on a merry-go-'round.

"Uff! Uff!" grunted Squinty. He was so surprised at this sudden adventure that, really, he did not know what to say.

"I wonder if he's afraid?" said one of the men.

"He acts so," the other answered. "But he'll get used to it. How high up are you going?"

"Oh, about a mile, I guess."

Squinty cuddled down in the basket of the balloon, between two bags full of something, and shivered.

"My goodness me!" thought poor Squinty. "A mile up in the air! That's awfully high."

He knew about how far a mile was on land, for it was about the distance from the farmhouse, near where his pen used to be, to the village church. He had often heard the farmer man say so.

"And if it was a mile from my pen to the church, and that mile of road was stood straight up in the air," thought Squinty, "it would be a terrible long way to fall. I hope I don't fall."

And it did not seem as if he would—at least not right away. The basket in which he was riding looked good and strong. Squinty had shut his eyes when he heard the men speak about going a mile up in the air, but now, as the balloon seemed to have stopped rising, the little pig opened his eyes again, and peered all about him.

"Look!" exclaimed one of the men with a laugh. "Hasn't that pig the most comical face you ever saw?"

"That's what he has," answered the other. "He makes me want to laugh every time I look at him, with that funny half-shut eye of his."

"Well," thought Squinty, "I'm glad somebody is happy and jolly, and wants to laugh, for I'm sure I don't. I wish I hadn't run away from the nice boy who taught me the tricks."

Then, as Squinty remembered how he had been taught to stand up on his hind legs, he thought he would do that trick now. He was hungry, and he imagined, perhaps, if he did that trick, the men would give him something to eat.

"Look at the little chap!" cried one of the men. "He's showing off all right."

"Yes, he's a smart pig," said the other. "He must be a trick pig, and I guess whoever owns him will be sorry he is lost."

"Hu! I'm sorry myself!" thought Squinty to himself, as he walked around on his hind legs.

"I wonder if these men are ever going to give me anything to eat," he went on. He looked at them from his queer, squinting eye, but the men did not seem to know that the little pig was hungry.

On and on sailed the balloon, being blown by the wind like a sailboat. Squinty dropped down on his four legs, since he found that walking on his hind ones brought him no food. Then, as he made his way about the basket, he saw some more of those queer bags filled with something. There were a great many of them in the balloon, and Squinty thought they must have something good in them.

Squinty squatted down beside one, and, with his strong teeth, he soon had bitten a hole in the cloth. Then he took a big bite, but oh dear!

All at once he found his mouth filled with coarse sand, that gritted on his teeth, and made the cold shivers run down his back.

"Oh, wow!" thought poor Squinty. "That's no good! Sand! I wonder if those men eat sand?"

Of course they didn't. The sand in the bags was "ballast." The balloon men carried it with them, and when they found the balloon coming down, because some of the gas had leaked out of the round ball above the basket, they would let some of the sand run out of the bags to the ground below. This would make the balloon lighter, and it would rise again.

"Squee! Squee! Uff! Uff!" grunted Squinty, as he wiped the sand off his tongue on one of his legs. "I don't like that. I'm hungry."

"Why, what's the matter with the little pig?" asked one of the men, turning around and looking at Squinty.

"He must be hungry," said the other. "See, he has bitten a hole in one of our sand bags. Let's feed him."

"All right. Give him something to eat, but we didn't bring any pig food along with us."

"I'll give him some bread and milk," the other man said. "We won't want much more ourselves, for we are nearly at our last landing place."

"Squee! Squee!" squealed Squinty, when he heard this. He watched the man put some bread and milk in a tin pan, and set it down on the floor of the basket. Then Squinty put his nose in the dish and began to eat.

And Oh! how good it tasted! Of course the milk was sweet, instead of sour, for men do not usually like sour milk. Squinty had a good meal, and then he went to sleep.

What happened while Squinty slept, the little pig did not know. But when he woke up it was all dark, and he knew it must be night, so he went to sleep again. And the next time he awakened the sun was shining, so he felt sure it was morning.

And then, all of a sudden, something happened. One of the men called out:

"There is a good place to land!"

"Yes, we'll go down there," agreed the other. Then he pulled a string. Squinty did

not know what it was for, but I'll tell you. It was to open a hole in the balloon so the gas would rush out. Then the balloon would begin to fall.

And that is what happened. Down, down went the balloon. It went very fast, and Squinty felt dizzy. Faster and faster fell the balloon, until, at last it gave such a bump down on the ground that Squinty was bounced right over the side of the basket.

Right out of the basket the comical little pig was bounced, but he came down in a soft bed of leaves, so he was not hurt in the least. He landed on his feet, just like a cat, and gave a loud squeal, he was so surprised.

And then Squinty ran away. Almost anybody would have run, too, I guess, after falling down in a balloon, and being bounced out that way. Squinty had had enough of balloon riding.

"I don't know where I'm going, nor what will happen to me now," thought Squinty, "but I am going to run and hide."

And run he did. He found himself in the woods; just the same kind of woods as where he had first met the two balloon men, only, of course, it was much farther off, for he had traveled a long way through the air.

On and on ran Squinty. All at once, in a tree over his head, he heard a funny chattering noise.

"Chipper, chipper, chipper! Chat! Chat! Whir-r-r-r-r-!" went the noise.

Squinty looked up in the tree, and there he saw a lovely little girl squirrel, frisking about

on the branches. Then Squinty was no longer afraid. Out of the leaves he jumped, giving a squeal and a grunt which meant:

"Oh, how do you do? I am glad to see you. My name is Squinty. What is your name?"

"My name is Slicko," answered the lively little girl squirrel, as she jumped about. "Come on and play!"

Squinty felt very happy then.