

Squinty, the Comical Pig

By Richard Barnum

Chapter 11: Squinty and the Merry Monkey

"Where do you live, Squinty?" asked Slicko, the jumping squirrel, as she skipped from one tree branch to another, and so reached the ground near the comical little pig.

"Oh, I live in a pen," answered Squinty, "but I'm not there now."

"No, I see you are not," spoke Slicko, with a laugh, which showed her sharp, white teeth. "But what are you doing so far away from your pen? Or, perhaps it is close by, though I never saw you in these woods before," she went on, looking around as if she might see the pig pen under one of the trees.

"No, I have never been here before," Squinty answered. "My pen is far from here. My master is a boy who taught me to do tricks, such as jumping rope, but I ran away and had a balloon ride."

"What's a balloon?" asked Slicko, as she combed out her tail with a chestnut burr. Squirrels always use chestnut burrs for combs.

"A balloon is something that goes up in the air," answered Squinty, "and it has bags of sand in it."

"Well, I can go up in the air, when I climb a tree," went on Slicko, with a jolly laugh. "Am I a balloon?"

"No, you are not," said Squinty. "A balloon is very different."

"Well, I know where there is some sand," spoke Slicko. "I could get some of that and put it in leaf-bags. Would that make me a balloon?"

"Oh, no, of course not," Squinty answered. "You could never be a balloon. But if you know where there is some sand perhaps you know where there is some sour milk. I am very hungry."

"I never heard of sour milk," replied the girl squirrel. "But I know where to find some nuts. Do you like hickory nuts?"

"I—I guess so," answered Squinty, thinking, perhaps, they were like acorns. "Please show me where there are some."

"Come on!" chattered Slicko. She led the way through the woods, leaping from one tree branch to another over Squinty's head. The little pig ran along on the ground, through the dry leaves. Sometimes he went on four feet and sometimes he stood up straight on his hind feet.

"Can you do that?" he asked the squirrel. "It is a trick the boy taught me."

"Oh, yes, I can sit up on my hind legs, and eat a nut," the squirrel girl said. "But nobody taught me. I could always do it. I don't call that a trick."

"Well, it is a trick for me," said Squinty. "But where are the hickory nuts you spoke of?"

"Right here," answered Slicko, the jumping squirrel, hopping about as lively as a cricket, and she pointed to a pile of nuts in a hollow stump. Squinty tried to chew some, but, as soon as he took them in his mouth he cried out:

"Oh my! How hard the shells are! This is worse than the sand! I can't chew hickory nuts! Have you no other kind?"

"Oh, yes, I know where there are some acorns," answered Slicko, "but I do not care for them as well as for hickory nuts."

"Oh, please show me the acorns," begged Squinty.

"Here they are," spoke Slicko, jumping a little farther, and she pointed to a pile of acorns in another hollow stump.

"Oh, these are fine! Thank you!" grunted Squinty, and he began to eat them. All at once there sounded through the woods a noise like:

"Chat! Chat! Chatter! Whir-r-r-r-r!"

"My, what's that?" cried Squinty, turning quickly around.

"That is my mamma calling me," said Slicko, the jumping squirrel. "I shall have to go home to my nest now. Good-by, Squinty. I like you very much, and I hope I shall soon see you again."

"I hope so, too," spoke Squinty, and while he went on eating the acorns, Slicko ran along the tree branches to her nest.

The little comical pig was rather lonesome after Slicko had left him, but he was no longer hungry, thanks to the acorns.

So he walked on and on, and pretty soon he came to a road. And down the road he saw coming the strangest sight.

There were a lot of big wagons, all painted red and green and gold. Many horses drew each wagon, the big wheels of which rattled like thunder, and beside the wagons there were many strange animals walking along—animals which Squinty had never seen before.

"Oh my!" cried Squinty. "This is worse than the balloon! I must run away!"

But, just as he turned to run, he saw a little animal jump out of one of the big wagons, and come toward him. This animal was something like a little boy, only, instead of clothes, he was covered with hairy fur. And the animal had a long tail, which Squinty knew no boy ever had.

Squinty was so surprised at seeing the strange animal that the little pig stood still. The hairy animal, with the long tail, came straight for the bush behind which Squinty was hiding, and crawled through. Then the two stood looking at one another, while the big wagons rumbled past on the road.

"Hello!" Squinty finally exclaimed. "Who are you?"

"Why, I am Mappo, the merry monkey," was the answer, as he curled his long tail around a stick of wood. "But I don't need to ask who you are. You are a pig, I can see that, for we have one in our circus, and the clown rides him around the ring, and it is too funny for anything."

"Ha, so you are a monkey?" asked Squinty. "But what do you mean by a circus?"

"That's a circus," answered Mappo, pointing with one paw through a hole in the bush, at the queer animals, and the red, gold and green wagons. "That is, it will be a circus when they put up the big tent, and all the people come. Didn't you ever see a circus?"

"Never," answered Squinty. "Did you ever ride in a balloon?"

"Never," answered Mappo.

"Well, then we are even," said Squinty. "Now you tell me about a circus, and I'll tell you about the balloon."

"Well," said the monkey, "a circus is a big show in a tent, to make people laugh. There are clowns, and animals to look at. I am one of the animals, but I ran out of my cage when the door flew open."

"Why did you run away?" asked Squinty.

"Oh, I got tired of staying in a cage. And I was afraid the big tiger might bite me. I'll run back again pretty soon, before they miss me. Now you tell me about your balloon ride."

So Squinty told the merry monkey all about running away, and learning tricks, and having a ride in the queer basket.

"I can do tricks, too," said Mappo. "But just now I am hungry. I wonder if any coconut trees are in these woods?"

"I don't know what a coconut is," answered Squinty, "but I'll give you some of my acorns."

The comical little pig and the merry monkey hid under the bush and ate acorns as they watched the circus procession go past. It

was not a regular parade, as the show was going only from one town to-another. Squinty looked at the beautiful wagons, and at the strange animals, some with big humps on their backs. At last he saw some very big creatures, and he cried out:

"Oh, Mappo! What are those animals? They have a tail at each end!"

"Those are elephants," said Mappo, "and they do not have two tails. One is a tail, and the other is their trunk, or long nose, by which they pick up peanuts, and other things to eat, and they can drink water through it, too."

"Oh, elephants, eh!" exclaimed Squinty. "But who is that big, fierce-looking one, with two long teeth sticking out. I would be afraid of him."

"Ha! Ha! You wouldn't need to be," said Mappo, with a merry laugh. "That is Tum-Tum, the jolliest elephant in the whole circus. Why, he is so kind he wouldn't hurt a fly, and he is so happy that every one loves him. He is always playing jokes."

"Well, I'm glad he is so jolly," spoke Squinty, as he watched Tum-Tum and the other elephants march slowly along the road on their big feet, like wash tubs, swinging their long trunks.

Then Mappo the monkey, and Squinty, the comical pig, started off through the woods.