

Meldy Frees the Pigs

By Mr Sproulle and Mrs Sproulle

Meldy was having lunch at school with some of her friends.

“Have you got the vegetarian samosas?” asked Becca.

“Aren’t they brilliant?” replied Meldy.

“Are they? I haven’t tried them yet,” said Tamzin.

“I don’t like this spring roll,” stated Clemency.

“Do you ever eat meat?” asked Meldy.

It turned out that the four friends were all vegetarians.

“I stopped eating meat when I saw this old film, “Babe”. Did you see it?” asked Becca “It even made my sister think about it as well but she said that her school makes rubbish vegetable dishes.”

“My mother makes a fantastic vegetable parmigano: courgettes, tomatoes, eggs, herbs and cheese. My twin sisters are both vegetarians as well now. My dad has to cook his own food if he wants meat!”

The friends talked for awhile then Meldy said, “Did you hear about those pigs that escaped and hid in some woods? They tried to catch them but they couldn’t.”

“I remember! They went to live on this farm, didn’t they? You can visit them,” said Becca.

“Why don’t we do that? We could find some pigs and let them go!” exclaimed Clemency.

“There’s a farm down the lane from us,” said Meldy. “They’ve got pigs. We could go down there and free them.”

“Yes, let’s!” chorused the others.

Becca thought for a bit. “We could do it but we need to have a look first. Where are they kept? Could we open a gate or would we need to cut a fence? I’ve seen pigs that seem happy lying in mud all day. Would they want to escape if a gate was left open?”

“We could leave a trail of food to encourage them. I’ve seen them do that on ‘Country File’,” said Meldy.

“We need to have a look!” insisted Becca. “How far is it from your house? Could we walk there? We could come over then sneak out like we did when we went to look at the witch over the road.”

On Saturday morning three girls were dropped off at Meldy’s house. The twins groaned as the four friends ran around the garden.

“Why can’t they be quiet?: asked Kick.

“Why don’t we go next door to see Eustace?” said her sister, Popster. “It’ll be quieter there.”

The twins set off to see Eustace while his younger brother, Nicky, crept through a gap in the hedge. He had heard the girls and wanted to join in their game, whatever it was.

“What are you doing?” he asked when he found them.

“Shhh!” whispered Meldy. “Follow us!”

He followed them into the shrubbery.

“We’re going to help some pigs escape!” chorused the girls.

“Why?” asked a rather confused Nicky.

“Because they want to be free like us!” said Tamzin.

“And it’s cruel to keep them locked up!” said Clemency.

“They’re not our slaves!” said Meldy.

“Are you with us or not?” asked Becca.

Nicky thought for a moment. He liked adventure but wasn’t fussed about helping pigs to escape. If he wasn’t with them, they’d do it anyway so he’d miss out.

“Yes! I’m with you!” he promised.

They formed a line and crept through the shrubbery to the lane. There was no one about so they ran off in the direction of the farm. Fifteen minutes later they were standing by a fence looking at some pigs.

“Aren’t they sweet!” chorused Tamzin and Clemency as the pigs scampered off across the grass.

“Where’s the mother pig?” asked Meldy.

“They’ve been separated because they’re old enough to live on their own,” said Nicky.

“But they aren’t really that big yet,” pointed out Becca.

“There’s an electric fence keeping them in,” said Tamzin, “we can cut it!”

“But we could get a shock!” said Meldy, who knew a bit about electricity.

“It would be so funny! Your hair would stand on end!” laughed Clemency.

So, they had a plan. The five ran back to Meldy’s garden and, once safely in the shrubbery, Nicky suggested that they think of a name for their group.

“What about ‘Quinqueco’?” asked Becca. “Quinqu from Quinque - that’s Latin for five - and eco from Ecology.”

The others agreed so ‘Quinqueco’ they became.

They crept back through the shrubbery and set off down the lane with a pair of rubber gloves, some pliers and a bag of chopped carrots. There was no one around when they reached the pigs.

“We can put down a trail of carrots on this track towards those woods,” suggested Becca. “They’ll be happy there!”

First, Nicky put on the rubber gloves, then he cut the wire which broke the electric circuit. Next he bent the wire back around one of the posts. The group laid the trail of carrots towards the trees then ran back down the lane to Meldy’s shrubbery.

As they caught their breath Becca said, “that was exciting!”

“Did they go for the carrots?” asked Meldy.

“I’m not sure, I was looking around for the farmer!” exclaimed Tamzin.

“I’ve lost the pliers, we’ll have to go back!” exclaimed Nicky.

“Not me!” chorused the others. They had enough adventure for one day.

The pigs were curious. What was going on? Who were these strangers giving them such tasty carrots? They munched their way through them as they left their pen and headed towards the trees. When the carrots ran out, they looked around, looked again at the trees and then, as if of one mind, made a dash for it. You see, pigs are very intelligent. They might not appear to be but they are!

Two days later Nicky's mother, Mrs Berrington, sat at her desk looking out at her pride and joy, her garden. The flowers had blossomed and the colours were at their best. At one side there was a row of hollyhocks and foxgloves that looked particularly beautiful.

As she was watching, some hollyhocks at the back started to bend sideways and a snout appeared. The owner of the snout moved out to allow other snouts to move forward and enjoy the bounty of the flower bed. A horrified Mrs Berrington leapt up and ran to the door.

"Shooo! Shooo!" she shouted.

Six pigs looked up from their feast and peered out from under floppy ears.

"Shooo! Shooo!" she shouted again.

This time the pigs realised they weren't welcome and slunk back through the flowers into the shrubbery. The flowers that got in their way were flattened.

Next door the twins were playing badminton on their lawn.

"There's something in the shrubbery," said Popster.

"Probably Meldy again," said Kick.

"It looks like ... It's a pig!"

"That's not a very nice thing to say about our sister!"

"There's more of them!"

This time Kick looked round and saw a group of pigs foraging in the bushes. She followed Popster into the house.

"Mum! We've got pigs in the garden!"

Mrs Wagley came out to have a look. "They look like Iron Age pigs," she said as the animals rooted around in the shrubbery. "Don't they keep them at the farm down the lane?"

“How do you know so much about pigs?” asked Popster.

“I’ve seen them on ‘Country File’. I always watch that - it’s so relaxing. I’ll ring up the farmer and see if he’s lost any.”

It didn’t take the farmer long to appear. “Yep, they’re mine. I thought someone had stolen them. It looks like animal rights protesters again!”

Mr Wagley came out of his study to see what was going on. “So, you’ve been targeted again, have you?” he asked.

“Yep. I lost six pigs but I got a nice pair of pliers in exchange.”

“How come?”

“They cut the electric fence and left their tool behind. Good quality as well!”

“That’s a coincidence! I lost my pliers a few days ago,” said Mr Wagley.

“Maybe they took yours to do it!” joked the farmer. “I’ll get them and show you.”

He went out to his truck to get the pliers and, sure enough, they were Mr Wagley’s.

“How on earth.....? Meldy!”

Meldy had seen the farmer arrive and had crept upstairs to her room. At that precise moment she was hiding under her bed.

“Are you in here, Meldy?” asked Mrs Wagley as she looked in at the door. She knew Meldy well enough to have a quick look under the bed as well.

“Meldy! Come downstairs. We need to have a talk,” said her mother as she left the room.

Meldy slunk down to the hall to be confronted with her parents, her smirking sisters and the farmer.

“Meldy, we’re waiting!” said her father.

Meldy was silent for a short period then it all came out. “It’s not fair! Those poor pigs are going to be killed for bacon! Why can’t they be free to live in the woods! There’s plenty of room!”

“Meldy,” said the farmer. “Those pigs are an ancient breed that was rescued from near extinction. They are only here today because they provide food. If they didn’t, they wouldn’t be here. I had a call from your next door neighbour who watched them destroy part of her flower garden. There isn’t space for thousands of pigs to roam around destroying crops and gardens.”

Then the rest of the story came out. When Meldy had finished Kick said, “They’re an ancient breed? Why can’t they go to the Anglo Saxon village? We went there from school a few years ago.”

“Could they? Please! Please!” begged Meldy.

The parents of the Quinquenco gang all contributed to the cost and the farmer took the pigs to the Anglo Saxon village. They’re still there but much bigger now, happily lazing away in their very muddy baths.