

Sassy Pants

LEARNS
About Strange Creatures

Written by
Carol A. Brown

Illustrations by Nada Serafimovic



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Summers Island Press
Thorne Bay, Alaska

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ISBN-13: 978-0-9964953-5-6

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Published in the United States by
Summers Island Press
P.O. Box 19293 Thorne Bay, Alaska 99919

Website: www.SummersIslandPress.com
For information contact: info@summersislandpress.com

Summers Island Press is an imprint of the Wilderness School Institute, a non-profit educational organization that offers outdoor youth activities in wilderness settings, including training in wilderness skills and nature studies, as well as the publication of curriculum on related subjects, through the Wilderness School Press, and their children's imprint Summers Island Press.

*Dedicated to Connor,
who has encountered many critters different from
himself...and learned how to get along.*

Noteworthy..

"Carol A. Brown has created the most adorable little pink pig who is doing her best to make good on that "second chance!" With just the right touches of personality, fears and curiosity, Sassy Pants will steal your children's hearts. Brown's novel will teach the youngsters--in a fun way--that being strange-different isn't bad and that you can not only make new friends, but learn to conquer your fears. I heartily recommend this book. It's a good, educational one that will delight children wherever they live."

*Carole Brown, award winning author of
The Redemption of Caralynne Hayman*

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Strange Different or Strange Dangerous?

What Happened at the End of This Story

A bit about
Farmer White's Farm
and **What Happened Before This Story**



An interesting thing happened every spring on a woody little farm backed right up to the state forest, tucked away in the hills, not very far from the old Mississippi River. Most of the state of Iowa is flat like a pancake, but this farm was in the one spot the glacier missed when it slid off the North Pole and flattened everything in its way.

Here, it left behind hills, valleys, little creeks, and rivers. A peaceful, quiet place where animals with frazzled nerves came to heal. Farmer White said the farm would have been much larger if it was not standing on end!

Even the animals were different on Farmer White's farm. Sometimes, they seemed almost human. Each spring all the new ones gathered around the water hole where the clearest, coolest water bubbled up from an underground spring. New little pigs, sheep, kittens, chickens, ducks, and so on, as well as any new grownup animals that Farmer White brought to the farm. There was lots of talk, and lots of stories.

There was an old sheep (from the Merino wool family) who kept things in order by telling stories about all the young ones. Some were good, and some not-so-good. Smart young animals could learn how to avoid trouble by listening to her lessons.

Sassy Pants hoped she was one of the smart ones, but she wasn't sure, yet. Miss Merino had already told a lot of stories about her. Some good and some not-so-good. The good ones made Sassy Pants smile, and feel "proud as a pig," all over. But the not-so-good ones made her frown and say, "Oh, hooey!"

Then she would try to find something better to do for next time. There was a lot of excitement over a Sassy Pants story, because you could learn something from it, either way. And she was always up to something unexpected.

Miss Merino taught a lot of manners and rules of the farm, that way. But—since she was the best storytelling sheep in Waukon County—nobody minded. And since she always gave a little tease about the next story on the tail of the last one, everybody wanted to hear what happened next before they even got started.

"Are we ready?" She pushed her glasses a little higher on her nose.

A chorus of voices sang out, "Yes! Yes!"

"Yeah—what happened when Sassy Pants apologized to the big Boss Hog?" someone asked. "Did she get in more trouble than last time?"

"Well . . ." Miss Merino waited till everyone settled down (she always did that). "Last time, Sassy Pants was on her way to apologize to the big Boss Hog, wasn't she? But

I'm afraid she never got there."

A gasp, and then some whispers like "Why not?" and "What happened?" went up from the listeners.

"Oh, Hooey!" whispered Sassy Pants to herself. Was this going to be a good story, or a not-so-good one? Then she just had to speak up. "But I meant to find him. And I did, sort of. Right, Miss Merino?"

"Yes, she did eventually." Miss Merino always told a story like you weren't the one that was there. In fact, you had to listen hard to see what really happened to you. "But not that day. Because—I'm sorry to say—she got sidetracked. Does anyone know what that means?"

This time, it was one of the older lambs that answered. "You forget you're supposed to do something because you get interested in something else."

"That's exactly right," said their barnyard instructor. "Remember I said Sassy Pants ran into the strangest-looking creature she had ever seen?"

"When I saw him I stopped still, like a statue!" Sassy Pants interrupted, again. "Scary prickles ran down my back and made the hair stand up! That thing was as tall as a cow, but it looked like a sheep. No, not really. It had a long neck like a horse. Well, not exactly. And ears like a rabbit, or maybe like a donkey. Sort of. It was a straaaaaaange creature!"

"Now, we're getting ahead of the story, Sassy Pants," said Miss Merino. "But to be perfectly fair, we should probably begin a little further back than that. Because you really did start out to find the big Boss Hog, that day, and I have to agree he's scary enough all by himself . . ."



Chapter One

Bad News

Sassy Pants was hiding. She squeezed under the big blackberry bush at the very end of the lowest pasture on the farm. The bush was so big it lived on both sides of the fence at the same time. Sassy Pants lay in the soft black dirt beneath a covering of prickly vines, and tried to be very still and quiet. Because she was waiting for the big Boss Hog to pass by. But being very still wasn't easy.

Every time she laid her snout down to wait, she could smell something good and delicious under the ground somewhere. So delicious, her nose—which was just right for digging—began to root and turn over the soil, looking for whatever that delicious thing was. She couldn't help it. Sassy Pants loved to dig. She even dreamed about digging. There was only one thing she liked better, and that was eating. So, finding something delicious to eat

while she was digging was the most wonderful thing of all.

So wonderful that it wasn't long before she forgot all about hiding and Boss Hog, and began to make happy snorting sounds every time she dug up another delicious blackberry root to munch on. That's why she almost jumped out of her skin when she heard a giant snort somewhere very close to her. Oh, no! The big Boss Hog was here!

Sassy Pants froze like a statue and tried not to move. Not even when a tickling clump of dirt toppled off her nose. She stayed very still and quiet, peeking out from under the blackberry leaves as he went by. The Boss Hog was the biggest pig on the farm. He had huge fangs—called tusks—that curled up from his lower jaw. Sassy Pants had heard that he once tossed a wild stranger-dog high up into the air with those scary things, when he had sneaked in through a hole in the fence. He was the boss of all the pigs on the farm. He was the one who decided which pigs got to stay, and which ones had to go, when Farmer White came to separate their herd. There were a

lot of pigs on the farm, and Boss Hog was everybody's dad.

Sassy Pants did not know him very well, though, because she was the smallest pig in her litter. With too



many brothers and sisters for one mom to feed, she had been taken to the Big House, where Farmer White's children had fed her, and spoiled her, and played with her like she was a people. Just like them. For a long time, Sassy Pants thought she was a people. Not a pig. And that's what started all the trouble.

Sassy Pants had caused a lot of trouble on Farmer White's farm, and that's why they named her Sassy Pants. Most of those troubles got straightened out (along with her tail!) but she had to learn the hard way. Then she had to spend a lot of time trying to fix all the friendships she broke, and it was hard work. Because when you break something as special as a friendship, it isn't enough just to say you are sorry. Sometimes you have to make amends. Which is a fancy word she learned from a horse named, Old Clyde, that means doing more than just paying for the trouble you caused. It is making what is important to the one you hurt, important to you. It helps their heart trust you again. Now, she had made amends with almost everybody.

Except her mama and the Boss Hog.

What if he didn't accept her apology? Or, what if he already decided she was too much trouble and would have to be separated from the herd? What if he took one look at her, remembered all the bad things she did, and just tossed her up into the air the way he'd tossed that stranger-dog? Halfway to Waukon county (according to Sir Reggie, the father of all the lambs).

Sassy Pants did not know where Waukon county was but she was pretty sure she didn't want to go there. So, she didn't say one word when the big Boss Hog passed by. Not even hello. Even though she knew better. In fact, she did not want to dig in his favorite pasture anymore, either.

Instead, she decided to go dig in the pasture next to the walnut trees. One of the lambs had said something about little patches of late strawberries growing along the fence, over there. Sassy Pants loved strawberries so much; she ate the whole plant—the leaves and the roots, and everything. Besides that, only Old Clyde was over there right now, and he was friends with everybody. Even little runty pigs like Sassy Pants. He usually made her feel



better when she felt bad. She knew she should have talked to Boss Hog but could not make herself do it!

So, as soon as the Boss Hog was far enough away to care more about where he was going than where he had been, she took off at a trot in the opposite direction. She hurried along the fence line, making quick little furrows in the dirt whenever she smelled something delicious under the ground. Sometimes she found something good to munch on, and sometimes she didn't. Soon, she was making happy snorting sounds, again, and forgot all about her apologies to the big Boss Hog.

She did not forget about the Great Separation, though. She thought about that all the time. Because being separated meant she would have to leave the pigpen and go somewhere else. Somewhere far away from Farmer White's farm. She didn't want to leave the pigpen, now. No, she did not! But every morning that passed with the pigs being let out into the pastures to forage, instead of herded into the waiting pens that were specially made for separation day, she knew it would not be that day.

That's how she knew the Great Separation was not today.

So, there would be plenty of time to eat delicious strawberries. But she better hurry or someone else would find them first. She thought about all these things as she moved along the outer fence at a fast trot, hardly stopping anywhere in-between.

"Sassy Pants," said a deep voice from very high up. She froze like a statue.

"Where are you off to in such a hurry?"

She lifted her head to look straight up into the friendly face of Farmer White's favorite workhorse. "Hello, Old Clyde. I'm headed for... um... the walnut trees." Horses liked strawberries, too, so she didn't want to say that word. "There might be some...uh...good digging down there."

"Maybe there is, and maybe there isn't. But there's something else down there you should know about."

"Walnuts? I love walnuts!"

"No, it's still too early for walnuts. It's Juan Ortiz Hernandez Perez-Gutierrez."

"What?"

"A llama. All the way from the Andean Highlands."

"I never ate one of those."

Old Clyde blew out his nose like maybe some grass had tickled it, and shook his head. "Not something you eat, Sassy Pants. A llama is a creature. From the high mountains."

"Friendly or strange? Different or dangerous?" Sassy Pants had to ask these important questions so she would know whether to run past this new creature, or hide. Maybe even go somewhere else, instead.

"Well, it's a bit of bad news. You see, something happened to Juan that made him sort of strange, and—"

"One? One what?" asked Sassy Pants.

"No, not "one! Juan. Juan Ortiz Hernandez Perez-Gutierrez. That's his name."

"That's the BIGGEST, STRANGEST name I ever heard! What is he—a giant? Can I just call him, Mister One?"

"Maybe, and maybe not," said Old Clyde. "Names are important in the Highlands. They don't just tell who you are, but where you came from. That name just sounds

strange to you because it's in a different language, called Spanish. The llama is very proud of his name. But this thing that made him strange in another way is why you should try your best to be polite to him. Because if you don't . . . "

"I know—I know," she huffed. "I'll break something else and have to make more amends."

"You won't get a chance to break anything. Because he spits. If something scares or annoys him, he will spit. And since this terrible thing happened to him, he's scared of everything. I thought I should warn you."

Sassy Pants sat down in the tall grass with a sudden thump. A strange creature with a giant name, that SPITS AT EVERYTHING?

"Old Clyde? Mister One might be scared of everything, but I'm scared of him. I don't think I want to see him. So, I better go somewhere else."

"You don't need to be scared Sassy Pants, just careful. Don't sneak up on him—that could make him jump or kick."

"Uh-oh. I do not like jumping, or kicking, or spitting.

No, I do not!"

"Then you better not get too close. But you can talk to him. He might even like that, since he's so far away from his own home. He's just different than you. That's the kind of strange I'm talking about, not the dangerous kind of strange."

"Dangerous strange? You mean like the stranger-dog Sir Reggie was telling us about?"

"Yes, dangerous strange like that."

All this talk of danger and strangers! Somehow, she wasn't in such a hurry anymore. Not even for strawberries. Maybe she would go over to the sheep pasture and play with the new lambs, instead. Except the hole in the fence to get over there was also under the walnut trees.

But if she was very quiet, and hurried on past while the strange creature was looking the other way...

"How fast can that Giant Critter-Spitter run, Old Clyde?"

"Faster than a pig," the horse warned.



Chapter Two

The Giant Critter-Spitter

There were no blackberry bushes to hide under on this side of the pasture. Only a little rolling hill Sassy Pants had to get up to see down the other side. She went along careful and quiet, and stayed close to the fence. Sometimes she could smell delicious things under the ground as she passed, but she didn't stop to dig. She was too worried about not being able to run fast enough to get away from the Giant Critter-Spitter, if she ran into him.

There were a lot of strange things happening on the farm! The big Boss Hog making decisions, the Great Separation, and now a strange new creature living right in Old Clyde's pasture. It was getting more and more dangerous for pigs out here! Maybe staying in the



pigpen wasn't so bad, after all. It might be the safest place on a farm for a little pig to be. With the barnyard on one side of it, and pastures all around for bigger animals, dangerous creatures couldn't even get close. Yes, Sassy

Pants was starting to like the pigpen!

Just when she was thinking about all that, a big furry head rose up on a long neck and peeked over the top of the hill. It hovered so close to Sassy Pants she either had to stop or run right into it. She stopped. In fact, she froze like a statue.

"Oh-la!" said a voice that sounded like singing. "Alee-tel peeg!"

"Hello, Mister . . ." Oh, dear . . . what was that big long name, again? Sassy Pants was so scared, she could feel her legs shake. But she gave it her very best try. "Mister Juan Ortiz Hermon Perri-Guuuti? Oh, hooey! Can I just call you Mister One?"

"One? What eeze a One? It tells me nothing. What does a One do? Tell me that! No, lee-tel peeg, a name must tell us eh-something. What eeze your name?"

"It's Sassy Pants."

"I car-RUMBA! Then you must work very-hard to make eh-something good out of that!"

Then he was quiet for so long, Sassy Pants heard the sound of a horse fly buzzing in for a landing on top of a

nearby fence post. She watched it for a minute, thinking she maybe could slip past Mister One and get to the hole in the fence, when—ker-SPLAT! A gob of slippery, slimy spit the size of a water balloon landed right on top of that fly!

Mister One tossed his head and stomped his two back feet. "Did you eh-see that?" He stretched his long neck closer to Sassy Pants. "An eessier name you may call me eeze Yama-lama-critter-spitter! Si?"

"I did see it," Sassy Pants was amazed. "I never saw such good aim. You're the first critter-spitter I ever met. Old Clyde says you come from Hi-Land. We say hi a lot around here, too."

"Hi a lot? No, we don't say hi. We say Oh-la. It eeze eh-Spanish. We eh-speak eh-Spanish in the high mon-tan-yas. That is eh-Spanish word for mountains." He blinked his long eyelashes at her—she had never seen such long eyelashes on a creature!

"What's a mountains, Mister One?"

"What's a mountains? It eeze like these lee-tel hills we are eh-standing on. Only very beeg and high."

"Oh, that kind of high. Is it higher than trees?"

"So high, no trees live on top. To know llamas you must know mountains. We are famous for carrying heavy loads along dangerous trails of the mountains." Mister One straightened his neck to stand tall and proud. "We are also known for our fine wool. Juan Ortiz Hernandez Perez-Gutierrez—that ees me—was the lead pack llama for a man I worked for."

He stopped talking, shook his head, and then went on. "Packing een-to the montañas and carrying the heavy loads was my life, my gloria! That's eh-Spanish word for glory. The other pack animals were my familia. I mean, my family." Mister One gave a big sigh. "But those days are gone."

The great llama's shoulders slumped, and his big head went down. He was so sad and quiet that Sassy Pants thought it might be best to leave. Then he whispered to himself, "Eef I cannot lead and walk on narrow dangerous ledges, then who am I? What am I? Just a shell, and me vida—that ees eh-Spanish word for life—if I cannot lead the pack train, then life has no meaning!"

Sassy Pants could see that Mister One was far away somewhere in his mind. But after a while, he shook his head, again, and looked like he just woke up. He sort of "got hold of himself." Or maybe came back from that place he was remembering.

Then he looked down his long furry nose at Sassy Pants and asked, "What do you do, lee-tal peeg?"



Chapter Three

The Nightmares

Mister One started to wiggle his lips like he was getting ready to spit one of those giant water balloons, again. Sassy Pants didn't wait to find out where. Instead she hollered, "Goodbye, Mister Yama-lama Critter-Spitter!" and trotted back down the hill so fast, she forgot all about trying to slip through that hole in the fence. Next thing she knew, she almost tumbled into Old Clyde who was now grazing at the bottom of the hill next to the fence.

"Clyde—Old Clyde!"

"My goodness, Sassy Pants. Slow down! What happened? Did he spit on you?"

"No, but I think he drowned a horsefly. I never saw so much spit come out all at the same time in my whole life. Then something happened to him. One minute we were

talking, and the next minute, he was gone somewhere in his mind. After that, it looked like he was going to spit, again, so I ran off."

"Did you say something that wasn't very nice?"

"I don't think so. I was trying really hard to be nice. He was telling me about mountains, and then he stopped talking—right in the middle—and went to sleep with his eyes open. What's wrong with him?"

"Maybe he was having nightmares. Sometimes they happen at night, and sometimes in the daytime."

"I didn't see any other horses walking around."

"Nightmares aren't horses walking around, Sassy Pants. They're scary dreams that wake you up in the night. But it can also happen in the daytime, too. Juan seems to be remembering some bad thing that happened to him. It's sort of like being in a scary place you can't get out of."

"Oh. That happened to me after Farmer White brought me back to the pigpen. Not fun. No they are not! Did some bad thing happen to Mister One, too, Old Clyde?"

"I heard he had an accident. When he was on lead for

some pack animals carrying supplies into the mountains. A lot of rain had loosened the soil. So, when he stepped onto a ledge to go around a corner, it came loose from the mountain, and down he went."

"Oh, no!" Sassy Pants had a picture in her mind of him falling off a high mountain and it was not good.

"Some of the other animals following him tumbled down, too," Old Clyde went on. "And some people were hurt. He thinks he should have known that ledge wasn't safe, and refused to walk on it. So, he feels responsible. But it was just a bad accident. His owner hopes a good rest on our farm will make him feel better."

"He should just stop thinking about it. That's what I did."

"He doesn't want to think about it, either. But sometimes just a sound, a word, or a smell can make him feel like he is back in that place, again. Then—BOOM!—the nightmares come. Not doing what he does best, anymore, makes him sad, too."

"That reminds me, Old Clyde, does everyone do something?" Sassy Pants was always full of questions.

"He asked me what I do here. I know cows make milk and sheep make wool, and hens lay eggs . . . what do pigs do? I don't do anything do I, Clyde? Except find new holes in the wire fences and I quit doing that. Is that why Farmer White keeps some animals here, because of what they do?"

"No, Sassy Pants, I don't believe Farmer White has us all here just because of what we do for him. Some animals are here for what he can do for them." Old Clyde went back to grazing, after that, and she knew he was done talking.

But all this talking and thinking had given her a very good idea. If she could find something helpful to do, to make up for all the trouble she had caused, she might become a very valuable pig. A pig even Farmer White would like to have stay. But what sort of things could a pig... a little runty pig... do besides digging holes and pushing through fences?

She headed back to the barnyard to think about that some more. Besides, it was almost naptime, already. In fact, just thinking about her favorite spot next to the water hole, where a lovely wet spot made the dirt all cool and

soft and squishy—such a perfect place for a nap—helped her decide to save any more thinking until later.

Instead, she took off at a trot along the fence line, and headed back toward the barnyard. Sassy Pants always traveled along the fences because of all the delicious things that grew under the dirt there. And because there was a chance of spotting a new hole in the wire, too. Oh,



but she was trying not to look for new holes anymore because it was too tempting to go through them. She couldn't be valuable and break rules at the same time. She was pretty sure about that.

The first animal she met on her way to the barnyard was Georgia, one of the dairy cows. She was settled down

for a rest, and busy chewing all the grass she had nibbled throughout the morning. "Hey Georgia, can I ask you a question?"

Georgia looked down at her. Even lying down, the cow was much bigger than a little pig. "What is it, Sassy Pants," she asked.

"Does Farmer White keep you here—because you know how to make milk? How did you find something so valuable to do?"

"Do?" Georgia looked confused for a moment. "I don't give milk just so Farmer White will keep me. I give milk because I am a cow. I am a cow and cows give milk. It's a relief to be rid of it. If he can use it, he is welcome to it. I am glad to contribute, and grateful to be relieved of it." Then she shook her head and asked, "Why are you so interested in what I do?"

But Sassy Pants was already off and running, on her way to talk with Reginald Ram, the father of all the lambs. Sir Reggie (that's what she called him) was down behind the hay barn mowing the grass between the barn and the Upper Creek. She skidded to a halt just in time to keep

from colliding with him.

The ram snorted with surprise at her sudden appearance and abrupt stop.

"Hey, Sir Reggie!" She forgot her manners and began without even saying a proper good morning. "Let's talk about what you do!"

"Do? What do you mean, do?" He had the same wondering look on his face the cow had.

Sassy Pants took a deep breath. "I've been talking with Mister One. That strange new critter-spitter. He says he carries heavy loads—that's what llamas do. Then I thought about what I do and I could not think of anything except finding new holes in wire fences, and I quit doing that. If cows give milk, and sheep make wool, I decided Farmer White must keep us here because of what we do."

"Ah, I see," said Sir Reggie. "Keep talking."

"Well," said Sassy Pants, "It didn't take a whole lot of thinking to figure out if I don't do anything but make trouble, maybe he won't keep me. Maybe I will have to go on the Great Separation whenever that happens. I may live in the pigpen instead of the Big House, now, but this

farm is my home. I have to figure out something special to do, so Farmer White will let me stay." Sassy Pants said all this in a great rush. "How did you figure out how to grow wool, Sir Reggie?"

A sparkle came into Sir Reginald's eyes. "Sassy Pants, I didn't figure out how to grow wool! Sheep just have hair that needs to be cut every now and then. The haircut benefits me. He can have the hair, I am glad to be rid of it. You grow hair, too, Sassy Pants. Did you figure out how to grow that?"

"No, I sure don't know how I grow hair."

"Nor do I," declared Sir Reginald. "However, it pleases me a great deal to learn that Farmer White has a use for the stuff. I am glad to contribute. He works very hard to keep the fences, grow the grain, and cut the hay from which we all benefit. I am happy to contribute." He returned to his grazing.

Sassy Pants stood silent for a while, thinking about all this, then continued on her way to the pigpen. It seemed nobody really knew how they did what they did. They just happened to have something to contribute,

and they didn't mind doing it. How amazing! Maybe if she looked very hard, she might already have something to contribute, too.

Then—just before she was about to slip into the pigpen to head for her favorite nap place—she stopped in her tracks, and froze like a statue. There was ANOTHER strange creature. Oh, no! Was she starting to have nightmares, too?



Chapter Four

Who Cares?

The strange creature stared at her a few moments, then made a smart sharp turn and continued on, like he was measuring off the boundaries of the whole farm. He wheezed and grunted as he walked, and every few steps he accompanied himself with an awful-smelling toot. Sassy Pants blinked two times, just in case she needed to wake herself up.

But the strange creature was still moving along the fence. For a few moments she just stood there, staring. Was that thing the dangerous kind of strange, or just a different kind? How could she tell?

He had a nose that looked all pushed in, and long flappy lips that hung down on both sides of his mouth. His face was all wrinkly, and his lower jaw stuck out. But the strangest thing of all was he only had three and a half legs! The last half was wooden! Sassy Pants had never

seen anything like it.

Oh, dear! That was too much in one day for one little pig. So, as soon as the strange creature was far enough ahead not to care what was behind, Sassy Pants slipped back into her pigpen, squished herself into her comfy spot near the water hole, and closed her eyes.

In fact, she spent the rest of the day in the pigpen. Just sleeping, and doing pig things. Her pigpen didn't feel like such a bad place to be, anymore. Not really. Especially if you were a pig. Tomorrow would be soon enough to think about strange creatures... apologizing to the big Boss Hog... and the coming of the Great Separation.

She didn't give those things another thought. At least, not until after breakfast the next day. All the way up until the time she saw Old Clyde moving slowly along the other side of the fence, trimming some of the long sweet grass around a post where the pigpen and the pasture joined together. He had known about the critter-spitter, so, maybe he would know about the creature with a wooden leg, too.

"Old Clyde!" She called out to him before she even got close enough to say hello. "You will never guess—there's another strange creature on this farm!"

The barnyard counselor looked through the fence at her. "Did it have three and a half legs, and a scrunched up nose? And did it grunt when it walked, and toot every other step?"

"How'd you know?"

"I have eyes and ears, Sassy Pants."

"Oh, yeah. And a nose, too. Peee-oooo!"

"Now, why would you care what he smells like? You being a pig."

"I know I smell like a pig, Old Clyde, but this is different. Pigs don't smell that bad!"

"Don't they?"

"Pig smell is part of our barnyard. Look how many of us there are. I'm glad there's only one of THAT strange creature. He's so ugly, he's scary! Could be he eats little pigs for supper."

"Sassy Pants, where are your manners?"

"I dropped them somewhere, I guess."

"Remember how I told you some animals that come to Farmer White's barnyard need a second chance at something? Now, wasn't that good news to you when you needed a second chance?"

Sassy Pants did remember what good news that was. Especially on the day she had "learned the hard way" and thought she broke every friendship she would ever have. If she hadn't had a second chance she might have been lonely for the rest of her life! Oh, yes. That's when she learned about fixing friendships, and how to make amends.

She was quiet for a while, just remembering all that, when she suddenly got a brilliant idea! "Old Clyde?"

The horse stopped trimming the grass and looked through the fence, again.

"Maybe that strange creature broke some of his friendships, too."

"Maybe. He is all by himself. He walks the whole fence line of the barnyard, every day at the same time, and he's always alone. So, even if he has friends somewhere else, he doesn't seem to have any here."

"Old Clyde, you think telling someone how to fix their friendships would be a valuable thing to do?"

"Only if they cared about fixing them. Nobody really likes to be told what to do."

"I have to find something valuable to do! It might help me stay here on the farm instead of going on the Great Separation, whenever that happens."

"Then maybe it would be a good idea to talk to him. You might learn something. Like when you talked to the llama, yesterday. This one might not be such a strange creature, either. Just someone else who needs a second chance." The horse went back to trimming the sweet grass around the fence posts.

"You mean actually talk to that... that stinky-poo? I'm not sure I want to talk to somebody who smells like that."

"Just make sure the wind is blowing the other direction." Then Old Clyde laughed. "That's what I do whenever I want to eat this nice sweet grass that grows so close to the pigpen."

That's how Sassy Pants made up her mind to give it a try. But it seemed the stinky creature had disappeared.

Then, just before naptime, when she was headed over to her comfortable muddy place near the water hole, again, she heard the strange creature's wheezy grunting and tooting. He was coming! She ran to the gate, ready for him to pass by. Except the closer he got the worse he smelled.

He stopped and looked at her for a minute, just like the day before. This time, she was going to say something, and not just stare. "Hello, Stray-ger." She meant stranger, but trying to talk and not breathe through her nose at the same time made all of her n's disappear. "I'b Sassy Pats." It made her m's disappear, too.

"Eh? Oh, right! Um, Winchester the Third, at your service mum." He made a polite salute with his wooden leg. The effort, of course, made him toot and the morning breeze blew the smell right into the little pig's face.

"I saw you out wah-kig, yesterday." She sounded stuffed up in her head, trying to talk without breathing. "So, I thought we should get to doe each other." Oh, hooley—she really meant get to KNOW each other.

"Quite. Care to join me on my patrol?" He sure was polite for someone in his condition. "I find it helps my old constitution to be regular with my walks. No matter where we are in the world—my Captain and I—I make sure



to take a walk."

Sassy Pants pushed on the gate until there was enough space to squeeze through, and trotted out to join Winchester. Just to be friendly, not to cause trouble. That was her excuse for slipping out of the pigpen, this time.

"Do you visit lots of places? Where do you live?" Now that she was beside Winchester she was glad the wind was in her face because he didn't smell so bad from that angle.

"London is home. But my Captain and I were in Her Majesty's army for many years, and we traveled all over. India, Hong Kong, Madagascar, and Saudi Arabia. When we retired, he decided to visit his cousin, Farmer White. So, here we are." They turned and walked past the machine shed, the milking barn, a manure pile, and the chicken coop.

Then they made another turn, which took them south along the western boundary of the barnyard—almost to Mrs. White's garden. After that they turned to the east, and ended up at the pigpen, again. Well. That hadn't been so hard. In fact, it had been sort of nice to

have someone else to walk along the fence with. Sassy Pants even had a bit of time to dig up a few tasty roots everytime Winchester stopped for a rest. Which was a lot. So, they agreed to meet the next day, too, for another walking patrol.

Sassy Pants was the star attraction at the water hole that afternoon and every day that followed, as she repeated the stories Winchester told her while they were out on patrol. Everybody liked those stories about all the places he and his captain had visited, with all of their strange-sounding names. But when Sassy Pants suggested they come listen for themselves... the geese were alarmed. They didn't know what to think. They had never seen an animal with three-and-a-half legs with the other half made of wood before. Especially one that smelled as bad as Winchester.

All the chickens were soon cackling about it and wondered where the old dog, Shep, was. And why wasn't he running the stranger right off the farm? No, the other animals never really took to Winchester, even after several days passed. He was just too different for them.

The horses didn't say anything about him, but whenever he walked past, their nostrils flared. They stomped their feet and raised their heads as high as they could. Sassy Pants was sure they were a little disgusted. The cows looked up with curiosity when he went by, but kept chewing their cud as if they were way too busy. It takes a lot to rile a cow, but they didn't like that smell, either.

The sheep gave him plenty of room.

The other pigs didn't notice, and they didn't care. They were too busy just being pigs, and running around in the pigpen. Or digging. Or taking naps. But not Sassy Pants. She perked her ears up at every wheezy grunt and bugle-like toot. Each afternoon she slipped out the pigpen gate (hardly thinking it was wrong anymore) and kept up with Winchester's quick pace. Left, left, left-right, skip, Left, Left.

"Hey, Winchester?" she asked him one morning, "Why do you call all this walking, being on patrol?"

"Oh, no reason, really. I suppose it's a leftover from our years in Her Majesty's army. Seemed like we were

always pulling one patrol duty or another wherever we went. And since we retired, we take our daily walk (our constitutional we call it) on the same schedule as before. Always walk the same area, too. When I can manage it. Just like the old patrols. Keeps one fit, you know."

"I like to hear about all your adventures. What happened to your paw? Or were you born that way? I never saw anyone with only three-and-a-half legs before."

"Ah, that! Now that was a tough bit of business. Some learn the easy way, and some learn the hard way, eh?"

"I had to learn the hard way, once, too," she admitted.

"So, you understand. It happened when we were on the London Patrol. London is a busy, noisy city, with lots of traffic—people, and cars in all directions. On that route there was one street I could never resist. The smells coming from it were fantastic. I wanted to explore that street in the worst way.

"Wanted to see what all the noise, and action were about. But Captain would never allow it. I tried to lean into my leash and pull him in that direction, but he always



kept a firm hand. "Then, one day, Captain and another chap were talking and paying no attention to me. "Cap was fully into his story and talking with both hands. Well, I saw my chance. I slipped around the corner and was on

my way to adventure! Sniffing out every exciting smell I came across. Having a grand time! Then I caught the scent of a juicy sausage and my mouth began to water."

Sassy Pants looked up from digging in the dirt when he said that part, and thought she saw his nose wiggle, like he could almost smell that sausage, again.

"I wanted to sink my teeth into it!" he went on. "My head was so full of thoughts about sausage I didn't see the trolley-car coming down on me. Cap'n always said pound-for-pound I had the most amount of fight in me. But I could not "out muscle" that trolley. It took my foot clean off."

"That had to hurt!" Sassy Pants felt a little trickle of fresh dirt fall off her nose when she looked up at him, again.

"Worse than that, it was a mistake I couldn't take back. I thought Captain was keeping me from having fun—I was hard on him in my heart. Thought he was mean not letting me run around and smell anything I wanted. I even started to distrust him—when really he was protecting me. Trying to keep me safe. Now when he says

'No,' I wait. Because I know he knows something I don't."

"And you always get to do it sooner, or later?"

"Not at all. Sometimes, I never get to do it. But I trust him completely, now. When he whistles, I come. I always did have a habit of leaping into things before I had all the facts. That's another reason I take daily patrols—so I can get the lay of the land and know what's what. Keep a good eye out for what's different, and all that. Have to admit I had to pay a lot to learn that lesson. Consequences, you know. That's how I came to have this wooden leg."

All of a sudden, Sassy Pants froze like a statue. Everything was starting to make sense! In fact, there seemed to be a reason for everything. If you did good things, then good things would happen to you. But if you did bad things—

"How did you get your nose squashed?" She wanted to know what he learned that time. "Did you have to pay a lot for that lesson, too?"

At this, old Winchester laughed so hard he coughed and wheezed and tooted until he was out of breath entirely. His old bowed legs couldn't hold him up under

such excitement, so, he sat down to rest and recover for a while.

When he finally got his breath again, he wheezed, "Oh, my! That's a good one! No, my snout didn't have an accident. I'm afraid this is the face I was born with. All English Bull Dogs have faces like mine—wrinkles, snout, and all. And, because our noses are all pushed up this way, we wheeze like freight trains. Nothing wrong with our lungs, we just sound this way."

He took a breath after that long speech. "But now my tail, that's another story. The vet bobbed it when I was a bit of a pup. Just snipped it off before I knew what was happening. Some silly fashion or another. Humans have funny ideas sometimes. What happened to yours?"

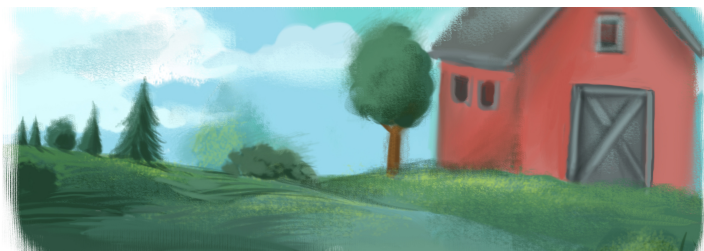
Sassy Pants told him how she ran into an electric wire, while trying to dig under a fence one day. Shocked the curl right out of it, and burned the hair black. She had to learn not to dig under fences the hard way. It was why she only looked for holes to squeeze through, instead. Except she was trying not to do that, anymore.

Winchester nodded with understanding.

"Consequences," was all he said about that.

Sassy Pants heard a sharp whistle, and Winchester's ears went up. Then, he jumped to his feet, and ran off to meet his captain, without even saying goodbye. Yes, when his captain called, he didn't hesitate. She never saw him move so fast. No, he didn't even say goodbye.

The next afternoon, she stood waiting for him by the pigpen gate for a long time. He had never been late before. He told her all those years in the military gave him



the habit of being on time. So, she decided Winchester's visit on Farmer White's farm must be over. He and his captain had gone home.

She felt sad that he wouldn't be there to walk the fence line and talk to her anymore. They had become good friends. Why, she didn't even care that he smelled so bad, either. In fact, there was something special

about Winchester, now that she knew him better. Sure, he was different, but it was a good different! Not a scary or dangerous different. Others might not care if that smelly old dog was gone, but Sassy Pants cared.

Come to think of it, she cared about a lot of things, lately.

Which was why she decided to keep making patrols all by herself. To make sure there were no new holes in the fence that dangerous creatures could sneak through. There were a lot of new little pigs on the farm who didn't know about such things. Somebody had to watch out for them, and maybe she could do that. The Big Boss Hog, who watched out for the whole herd, lived out in the pasture next to the pigpen. Could be he didn't have time to watch out for all the little ones, too.

That might be a valuable thing to do.

She might even try talking to that Yama-llama-critter-spitter, again. He was a pretty interesting animal. Especially when he told stories about climbing in the high mountains. He might be different, but he might be a friend, too. Just like Winchester had turned out to be. As

long as she stayed out of kicking and spitting range. She had to admit it came in pretty handy for keeping bugs away, though. And he almost always hit what he aimed at.

She just hoped it wouldn't be her, today.

A thought that made her stop, and freeze like a statue. But only for a minute. Wasn't making another good friend more important than the chance of being hit with one of those giant water balloons? She decided it was. She also decided spit couldn't really hurt anyone.

Right?



Chapter Five

The Right Decision

Sassy Pants found him lying down with his legs tucked up under him. But with such a long neck, he could still see over the fence. And his big eyes spotted her, right away.

"Hello, Mister One!" She called out before she got too close, just in case he mistook her for something to spit at.

"OH-la, lee-tel peeg. Where have you been?"

"Out on patrol like my friend Winchester. Did you meet him?"

"No, but I eh-smelled eh-heem."

"He was a stinky-poo, all right. But I learned a lot from him. Especially how important it is to go on patrol and to notice if anything is different. Now, that he's gone I still go on patrol every day."

Sassy Pants suddenly smelled something delicious



under the ground next to the fence, and began to dig with her nose so she could find out what it was.

"I do not mees that eh-smell." He spit a big water balloon at a potato bug she turned up with some dirt and the loud ker-SPLAT made her jump out of the way without finding that tasty root she was looking for.

Well, at least it wasn't her he was aiming at, it was the bug. Even so, she moved farther off and began to dig somewhere else. "I miss all his stories. I learned about consequences, too. It was the first time I ever learned something without having to learn the hard way."

"What ees to learn about consequences? They happen." He sighed and slowly shook his big head. "Then you are never the same."

"That's what I thought, too. Until I heard Winchester's sausage story."

"An eh-sausage story? I, Juan Ortiz, Hernandez, Perez-Gutierrez, do not eat eh-sausages. Eh-so, I would not care for that eh-story."

"I think you might like this one, Mister One. It tells how important it is to do the right thing, even if you feel

like doing something else." Then she told him—in the best way she could remember—what happened to Winchester's paw, and her own electrified tail.

"Get it? We both had our heads too full of something that shouldn't be there. He had his head too full of sausages, and I had my head too full of going back to the Big House, with Farmer White and his family. We could not see what was best for us, even though it was right in front of us. Both of us broke the rules, and boy, did we get consequences! He lost a paw and I got a straight tail with the hair burned black."

The llama suddenly stood up, and looked taller than a tree to Sassy Pants. So she moved farther off, again. Just in case he got worried, or afraid of something, and didn't know where to spit.

"Are you okay, Mister One?" she asked.

"I car-RUMBA!" He shook his head and stomped his two back feet for a moment. "That what you just eh-said! About having your head so full you could not eh-see! That ees exactly what I have been doing for so many weeks! Mi cabeza—that is eh-Spanish word for my head

–ees filled with pictures of the accident, instead of seeing what is in front of me today! I, too, have not been able to eh-see what ees een front of me. Instead, I keep eh-seeing the accident over and over!"

"That is not good—not one bit," declared Sassy Pants. "It's too scary!"

"When eet happened, I felt pain and fear as I rolled hoof over pack, down the mountain. I could not eh-stop my own fall, nor anyone else from falling. Every time I think about eet, those feelings come, again, and . . . and . . ." He danced in a circle so he could think better. "How do you eh-say eet? They fill my head weeth eh-sausage!"

"Then you can't see anything else," Sassy Pants agreed.

"I feel like my life ees over—but am I dead? No! Am I eh-still falling down that mountain? No! I am here on Meester White's good farm, weeth new friends to meet—but I mees them because of too much bad memories I have brought along."

Then he swung his long neck down close to Sassy

Pants. "I—Juan Oriz Hernandez Perez-Gutierrez, do not like bad memories! I do not choose to think about them! Anymore."

"Sounds like a good idea to me, Mister One." Sassy Pants watched him high-step and prance over to the fence and back. She had never seen him with so much energy. What a difference!

"Instead, I eh-shall be filling my head with many other good trips. The trips that were full of joy and we were happy to be together! My life ees dee-fer-ent. Si? But . . ." He stopped prancing and swung his head back close to Sassy Pants, again. "Dee-fer-ent is not always a bad thing. Si'?"

"I do see," said Sassy Pants. "Especially if we can look past the different things to see good things, instead. That's how I learned to like living in the pigpen instead of up in the big house. I actually like it better, now, even though it's different. Maybe things could be different for you, too, Mister One."

"Oh, si, I would like that very much! I did not know I had a choice, before today. Thank you for telling me. And

you must tell me one more thing." He leaned his big head down close to Sassy Pants. "How did such a lee-tel peeg get so smart?"





Chapter Six

Strange Different or Strange Dangerous?

A few days later, when Sassy Pants was on patrol, she noticed something that wasn't right. It happened when she was digging for delicious tidbits to eat, and making sure nothing was out of place, anywhere. But there was! That old hole in the wire fence behind the big blackberry bush (that lived on both sides), was a lot bigger than the last time she looked. Big enough for even a baby lamb to get through. If they tried very hard.

Maybe the big Boss Hog would like to know about that. Especially since he was way too big to squeeze under the blackberry bush and see it for himself. But first she would tell Sir Reggie—the father of all the lambs—so none of his kids went missing. Baby lambs liked to crawl under fences and squeeze through holes almost as much as she did.

Sassy Pants was thinking about all this after she saw that hole. And she really meant to do something about it. Except right at the same time, she found a treasure! It was a nest of acorns some squirrel must have buried for



winter food, last year, and then forgot about. But they were buried so deep, she nearly missed smelling them. So, by the time she dug them all up, and had happily eaten every last one...

There was a pretty big hole under the blackberry bush. Oh, dear! She hadn't meant to do that. Why, it practically went all the way beneath the fence. And now, there was a piece of wire showing from under the last pile of dirt she pushed aside. Oh, no—another electric wire! Suddenly, she remembered the terrible day she tried to dig out of the pigpen, and ran into one of those.

That wire had shocked the curl right out of her tail. It was the day she had to learn the hard way. The one she didn't even like to think about. No, she did not! In fact, the minute Sassy Pants saw that wire, she went running off—lickety split—right back to the pigpen where she belonged. Then she spent the rest of the day worrying Farmer White might guess exactly who dug that big hole.

He might decide she hadn't learned anything, at all, and was still a trouble-maker. Then—since she already used up her second chance—she really would have to be

separated from her wonderful farm. Which was a very big worry for such a little pig. So, she forgot to tell anyone about the stretched-out hole in the fence. She didn't tell the big Boss Hog, Sir Reggie, or even Old Clyde.

She didn't tell anyone.

Because she was too busy thinking about that giant hole she accidentally dug, and watching for Farmer White to walk by. Looking through the wire fence from her muddy spot near the water hole, she could just see the top of the blackberry bush, all the way across the pasture. In fact, she fell asleep there, when he didn't come by all day long. Then she dreamed a nightmare...

At least she thought it was a nightmare. First she heard a familiar sounding Boing! the fence made after she squeezed through the wire and it sprung back into place. Then she opened her eyes and blinked twice, trying to remember where she was.

Oh, yes. She had fallen asleep by the water hole, and now everything was dark all around. But there was the shadowy top of the big blackberry bush so far across the pasture. She could even see the fence posts stretched

with wire at the very end. But there...what was that?

Something... a kind of strange creature was sneaking along the fence. Oh, no! It must have come through the hole under the blackberry bush that she forgot about! But what was it? It looked like one of the barn cats. But not



really. This creature was much bigger than those. And it had huge pointy ears, with tufts of hair sticking out at the ends.

Next, something very unexpected happened to Sassy Pants. First, the short bristly hairs on her back stood



up like a current of electricity had just run through. Then, all at once, she knew—she just knew—that creature was dangerous! It might even be looking for someone to eat! Maybe even a little pig!

"SQUEEEEEEEEEEE!" Sassy Pants surprised even herself with that loud warning squeal that popped out of her mouth. She had no idea she could make such a noise! Why, folks probably heard it all the way to Waukon County!

The first one to come running was the big Boss Hog, himself. He came running—lickety split—from across the pasture, and tossed that dangerous creature up into the air with his big strong snout and curved tusks. Right over the fence!

Everything happened too fast to figure out. Then BOOM! went Farmer White's shotgun as he ran across the yard of the big house in his pajamas. Firing up into the air to scare the creature away if it wasn't scared enough, already.

Now, everybody was awake. Chickens and geese were squawking, dogs were barking, and all the pigs in

the barnyard were squealing at the same time. After all that commotion, it took a long time for everybody to settle down enough to count all their babies.

That's when it was happily discovered that not even one was missing. They were all safe! The pigs gathered around the big Boss Hog to thank him, but he said it was really Sassy Pants who had saved the night. He had only recognized her squeal, and come running.

That really surprised Sassy Pants. Because just knowing the big Boss Hog had come the minute she called, made her feel she must have something valuable inside her, after all. Something she hadn't even known about. It made her never want to hide from him, again.

What Happened at the End of the Story

It took a long time to settle down after so much excitement.

But it was still the first thing the barnyard animals talked about when they were back at the water hole. They all wanted to hear the story of what happened, over and over, again. Why, Sassy Pants guessed she must have told that story of the bobcat (that's what the big Boss Hog called it) twenty-six times by the end of the day.

That's another reason she came to be such a famous pig on Farmer White's farm. There were even rumors that the good Farmer would never send her off on the Great Separation—she might grow up to be a valuable protector. But of course, she would have to wait and see about that.

The best thing about it was that she didn't have to sneak through the pigpen fence to get into the pasture, anymore. Now, Sassy Pants was allowed out with the older pigs, when Farmer White opened the gate for them every morning.



Just so she could go on her patrol, and keep an eye out for any more holes in the fence other dangerous creatures could sneak through. Something that was very valuable, now that she knew the difference between dangerous strange, and just different strange!

The End



What's Next?

Too many pigs in a mud hole until...




Sassy Pants

LEARNS

Who's the Boss?

(It isn't who you think)



Other Books by
Carol A. Brown...

Sassy Pants
Sassy Pants Makes Amends

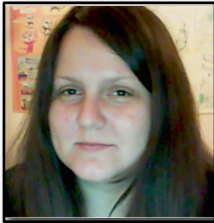
About the Author



Carol A. Brown grew up on a farm not too different from the one in this story. She, rode horses bareback, milked cows, learned to cook on a wood burning stove, and make delicious pancakes. As an adult, she taught elementary school, college and university, as well as graduate level courses. Now, she writes books that teach vital truths to to both adults and children. You can visit with her over at:

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About the Illustrator



With a master's degree in book design and illustration, **Nada Serafimovic** has worked on books for many different countries. She also loves animals, singing, and playing the flute. She believes children's books should not only be fun to read, but add something good to their personalities. With an amazing talent for bringing characters to life on the page, she is wonderful at making that happen. You can see more of her art over at:

<https://www.facebook.com/colourfulshadow/?fref=ts>

