

More Adventures of Pickaninny

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ONE DAY, PICKANINNY, his mother and his sister, Nan, were sleeping high up on a beam inside the barn. Paddy, the mother, woke and stretched herself to make sure that she was really awake. She peeped through a crack in the wall. As she sat there watching she saw a mouse run from under the barn and crouch by a stone in the barnyard. In the next second there were several rats and mice scuddling about seeming to be terribly frightened.

"Come, children," said Paddy to her kittens, "there are many good catches down in the barnyard. Hurry!"

Paddy leaped to the floor and skimmed through the crack in the door like a flash. Pickaninny and Nan were close behind her. Once in the barnyard Pickaninny became so frightened and excited that he could not remember just what had happened. He saw rats and mice fairly running over each other to get away, an owl flew about making a frightful screech, a snake wiggled away so fast he looked like a green streak. The carabaos and the horse stamped and snorted. People were running and shouting, "Fire! Fire!"

Yes, right under the barn a fire had broken out. Pickaninny knew that a fire was no place for a cat. He forgot all about the rats and mice that would have made a good dinner. He ran as fast as his legs would carry him. He bumped into something but did not stop to notice what it was. By and by he was away from the noise and was running through some grass. He came to

a fallen tree trunk.

He crouched there for a while until he could breathe more quietly and his heart stopped beating so rapidly. He thought, "Where am I? Where is my mother? Where is the barn I left so hurriedly? My, my, I was frightened!" He remained there by the old tree trunk for a long time trying to think what to do next. It was hard to think. He was so confused. He stretched his neck forward with his ears perked to catch any sounds that might be near. He could hear nothing. He took a few steps away from the tree, keeping his tail dragging the ground and his body slunk as low as possible. He sat on his hind legs, put his head up as high as he could to twist his eyes and ears in every direction. Nothing happened. He gained a little courage and went a little farther keeping his eyes and ears on the watch out for any approaching danger. Pickaninny had been so frightened that he thought many things were after him.

"If my mother were only here nothing could happen to me," he thought. "Meow," he cried, hoping to get an answer from his mother or Nan. No answer came. "M-e-o-w, m-e-o-w, m-e-o-w," he wailed. He continued to walk and repeated his meows many times. He felt so lonesome.

After a while he noticed that he was near an acacia tree which he knew was not so far from the barn. He climbed up in it to try to get a view of what had happened in the barnyard. Most of all he hoped to get a glimpse of his family. Perched high in the tree he could see



nothing that seemed familiar. Where the barn had been, stood some posts that were black and smoking. When the breeze swept his way he felt the heat from the burning timbers that had fallen to the ground. This sight made him feel sick. What had become of his mother? He had been too excited to notice which way she went. What if she had been burned!

That night Pickaninny crawled down and walked all around the barnyard calling and meowing as loudly as he could. No answer came. He was so tired, hungry and lonesome. All the next day and night he lingered about hoping his mother would appear. He thought of the little girl who had taken him to her home once. He remembered that she had been kind to him. He wanted to see her. "I believe I can find her home again." He didn't know exactly which way to go, so he just followed his nose. After he had traveled for sometime he realized that he was under the mango tree where the dog had chased him during his adventure. There was no dog in sight now, but the memory of the big barking creature frightened Pickaninny so that he scampered up the tree again.

"Yes, yes," he said to himself, "this is the very spot on which I sat while the dog barked below." He thought and thought. "I remember that I crossed a

road not far from here. I do hope there will not be so many people and strange things traveling by."

It was dark when he reached the road. In the distance he saw something coming. He made a dash across and hid beside a stone. Here he rested and wished for something to eat. On he went through the grass in the darkness. He was glad it was dark as there did not seem to be so many things about to frighten him in the night as in the day.

When he was near the little girl's house he remembered the big cat in the neighborhood. He crouched. Slowly he went with his tail straight behind and his ears tilted forward. "There is the fence to the garden. I hope no one has mended it so I can get through the hole where I escaped when I was here before."

Early in the morning when Pickaninny heard the little girl's feet pattering about in the house he went to the back door and gave a long lonesome meow. The little girl ran to the door. "Look, mother, here is the nice black kitten again. You, poor dear," she said as she gathered him up in her arms, "you look half starved."

That was a happy day for Pickaninny. It was the first time he had felt safe and well fed for a long time.