

A Bear Among the Pigs

By Janet S. Porter

The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook, p. 17-18
Using the words of Phineas Wolcott Cook

CHARACTERS (9 – 6 males, 2 females and a bear)

Phineas Wolcott Cook (PWC)

Phineas Sr. (his father)

Irene (his mother)

Mary Ann (his sister)

Neighbor Judson

Neighbor Woodruff

Neighbor Hooker

Neighbor Murray

The bear

(PWC and Phineas Sr. are working at center stage.)

PWC: Pa, I'm glad you're well so we can take down the chimney together. I didn't know how I would take it down alone while going up and down the ladder with this heavy sod.

Phineas Sr. I'm glad too. I never thought I'd be happy to see bricks, but after living with a sod fireplace for two years, I'm happy to see bricks for a new chimney.

(Neighbor Judson runs across the stage)

Judson Phin, come quickly, there's a bear among my pigs. I'll go get Murray to bring his dog Beve.

(Judson exits and Irene comes in with a broom)

PWC: Pa, we'd better go help. That bear will eat all his pigs and then he'll start on ours.

Phineas Sr. We have no gun. I'll get our long carving knife. Look there's David Hamburg with a club.

Irene: I have a broom. That bear won't get past this door, I'll warrant.

Mary Ann: I think I'll just stand here and watch. This is as close as I want to be.

Phineas Sr. grabs a knife and he and PWC leave. The whole scene can be pantomimed if you have enough characters, while Mary Ann describes it)

Mary Ann: Look, the bear was afraid of Murray's dog Old Beve, and he treed on the fence. Now he's running for the woods.

(PWC comes back in)

PWC: I think we're rid of that bear. Wait, he's passing through Neighbor Woodruff's yard.

Mary Ann: He's being assailed by a fresh recruit of men and dogs.

PWC: His majesty is trying to run up one corner of the barn, but men and dogs are coming from every direction.

Mary Ann: Some have corn stocks and whips and all sorts of weapons.

(Several people and the bear come onstage. The bear could stand on a table or chair and roar. All characters gather around except Irene who stands guard with her broom.)

Judson: The bear went up the tree. Shoot him while he's up there. He'll come back and finish off all the rest of my pigs. And then he'll start on yours. We have to kill him or he'll keep coming back .

Woodruff: But be careful. There's too many men standing around that tree. Esquire Hooker, you take aim while we all back away. I'll give the signal.

Hooker: (Takes aim) Okay, I'm ready.

(Everyone backs away from the bear. PWC and Mary Ann stand off to one side.)

Woodruff: Now! (Someone claps or slaps a book on a table to make a bang.)

Hooker: I got him. I got him.

PWC: You probably won't want to see this, Mary Ann. Finding him vanquished, they'll all take a share of the bear meat for supper.

Mary Ann: You're right, I won't watch this part.

Phineas Sr. Look, the meat is stringy and bad. He's so poor he's not fit to eat.

Woodruff: Then cut up the carcass and I'll give it to my hogs.

Judson: The next thing is to divide the bear skin. How many of us are there?

Hooker: There are 12 of us.

Murray: Wait, Wait. Don't cut it up. I'll pay 50 cents to every man for his share. That way I can keep the hide in one piece.

(Everyone leaves the stage as Murray gives them a coin. He gives a coin to Phineas Sr. but not to PWC. Only PWC and Mary Ann stay)

PWC: I think peace is again restored to the neighborhood.

Mary Ann: And they're returning all to their respective employment.

PWC: Everything is as it was.

Mary Ann: Except for the bear.



