

# Reggie

*Another 'Maggie' story. I need to state quite clearly that the characters in this story are entirely fictional, and bear no resemblance to any living person. Except for Josie. And she's not a person, so she doesn't count*

.....

Reginald is so cute! I think I've fallen in love with him. I love it when his little rear end wiggles as walks down the hall! He's like, totally adorable!

Lest you get the wrong idea about me, I should point out that Reginald Jake McPig is in fact ... a pig. A baby pot-bellied pig, to be exact.

I inherited Reggie from a friend on the last day of school. Her family was moving away, and she gave him to me. As I took him into my arms, his big brown eyes looked up at me imploringly, as if to say "*Look how cute I am!*" I had to promise to look after him and, like, love him forever. How could I say no?!

Unfortunately my mother had other ideas. More on that later.

I named him Reginald because of a character in a story I'd just finished reading. He just seemed like a 'Reginald'. And the 'Jake' is after my brother. There's a little resemblance there ... I think it's the whiskers. Don't tell him I said that.

The first few days with Reggie were great. Both my parents were at work, and my pig and I had, like, the run of the house.

It's possible that our cat Josie may have had a nervous breakdown sometime around then ... I'm not entirely sure, because she seems to have disappeared.

In the evenings Reggie lived in a box under my bed. No-one ever goes under there. At least, not since my mother was looking for dirty laundry and found a couple of sandwiches that had been there for a month or two. Anyway, we assumed they were sandwiches ... hard to tell, really, with all

the green stuff growing on them. Since then she is pretty careful about reaching into dark places.

But I couldn't keep Reggie hidden forever. One evening we were sitting on my bed playing Trouble. Reggie was beating me pretty badly. I was so intent on the game that I didn't notice my mother standing at the now open doorway.

*"Maggie ... what is that ... thing ... on your bed??"*

*"What thing, mama?"* You may have noticed that I am unfailingly polite to my mother. Especially when there is an unexplained pig sitting complacently on my bed.

*"That ... that ..."* She choked on whatever other words she may have been trying to get out.

I've never known my mother to be at a loss for words. Quite the opposite, in fact, as most people who know her will tell you. But the sight of Reginald Jake McPig sitting on my bed with his paw on the board, about to make a move, was just too much for her.

*"This is Reggie. He's a pig. He's going to stay with us for a while".*

*"Maggie, WHY IS THUR A PIG ON YUR BED!?"*

My mama's southern accent seems to get stronger when she's upset. And apparently she'd found the words she'd been missing. Also, she does have an awfully loud voice ... we think it may be from growing up in Mississippi. Poor Reggie must have jumped a foot in the air, and with a small 'oink' of fear he burrowed under the blanket.

*"Maggieeee ..."* There was no mistaking that voice. It was accompanied by a look that would have frozen Mary Poppins in mid-air ... and in a tone that probably could have melted several arctic icecaps.

*Have you noticed that I've been working on my descriptive writing? My teacher says I'm very good at it. I think I'm especially good at deliciously dangerous and mouth-wateringly morbid adjectives. But I digress.*

My mother was waiting, rather impatiently, I thought, for some sort of explanation. So I told her everything. I especially told her how my friend had entrusted me with Reggie's care, and that there was no possible way of giving her back.

*"But, Maggie ..."*

I wasn't finished yet. I was on a roll. *"Mama. Reggie is just a tiny little pig. He's really no trouble. He loves cat food, and he's already learned to use Josie's litter box!"*

I didn't mention that Reggie would only eat the cat food under protest, if you coated it liberally with peanut butter. And while it was true that Reggie was using the litter box, his poops were ... rather large and smelly. But we could deal with that. Later.

*"Maggie, he may be a little pig now ..."*

Reggie was poking his snout out from under the blanket and snuffling inquisitively. I could sense my mother's resolve weakening.

*"But he's going to grow into a huge adult pig. We already have a fifty pound cat to look after ..."*

I thought that was rather cruel. Josie is our cat, and while she is rather large, I'm sure she doesn't weigh more than forty pounds. She has big bones.

*"And pigs are ... smelly!"*

I knew she was softening. Besides, I'd been giving Reggie a good dousing with my father's aftershave every morning. There was no way he was stinky.

*"And Maggie ... don't forget I have allergies ..."* That was true. My mother was allergic to dogs. Probably squirrels. We also suspected an allergy to dish water, but we couldn't prove it.

*"You're not sneezing, mama!"* She tried to work up a sneeze, and failed. We both knew it was faked. Finally, she laughed.

*“OK, you can keep him for tonight. But tomorrow I want you to phone the SPCA and see if they’ll take him”.*

Well, that wasn’t the result I’d hoped for, but I could work with it.

The next morning I called. I talked to a nice lady and told her about Reginald. Wouldn’t you know it ... they were full up ... no room for pigs or any other four-footed creatures! But I had trouble getting off the line; she kept trying to convince me to take several cats and a hamster. I told her that we already had a cat that ate more than we did, and that I was afraid of hamsters.

So for the next few days at least, Reginald Jake McPig became a part of our household. He slept on my bed with me, and hardly snored at all. My father taught him to chase a tennis ball, and once in a while he would even bring it back. Mama let him sit in the window and snuffle at the birds out on the lawn, a spot formerly reserved for Josie, who seemed to be spending a lot of time in the far corner of the basement. At least she was eating less.

I knew I’d won my mother over when she cooked a special meal one evening, telling us how pigs need special treats once in a while. The corn bread was delicious (Reggie had two pieces) and the grits were ... well, not much you can say about grits. But Reggie turned his nose up at the okra. Probably too slimy.

It was my sister who ruined everything.

She’d stopped in for a visit, and when she saw the little snout peeking out from under the end of the couch, she laughed out loud.

*“A pig! You have a pig! Mom, are you crazy? You hate pigs!”*

My mother replied, a little taken aback: *“Well, that’s not strictly true. I’d just never gotten to know one very well”.*

Hah! Next she’d be explaining how getting Reggie was all her idea!

*“When y’all were growing up, nobody had pigs for pets. Although, come to think of it, our next-door neighbor Cletus used to keep hogs in his living room ...”*

Mama was always making Mississippi jokes. We all knew she was kidding. Like the time she explained how most of the places they’d lived still had outhouses in the back yard. We didn’t fall for it ... Mississippi has had indoor plumbing for at least ten years now ...

*“He sort of grows on you ...”* My mother was definitely getting fond of Reggie. So was my Dad; he loved to throw a basketball to the little guy. Reggie could catch a ball better than I could.

My sister interrupted: *“I was thinking I could take him for a while. Just borrow him. For a visit. The boys will love him!”*

I should mention that my sister has three boys. They are adorable, but very ... energetic. Sort of the way a tornado is energetic.

*Come to think of it, I have been described as ‘adorable, but very energetic’. But not recently. Possibly because I am now thirteen.*

There was no dissuading my sister. When she has her mind set on something, she usually gets her way.

*“I’ll just keep him for a few days. You can come over and visit him whenever you want!”*

I wasn’t happy. But the thought of seeing the expressions on the boys’ faces when they got to meet Reggie won me over.

*“OK. But you have to take his bed”. I’d made a bed out of an old cardboard box, and lined it with towels. “And he doesn’t really like cat kibbles, but if you coat each one with a lot of peanut butter ...”*

*“Maggie!”* That was my mother. I’d forgotten to tell her that part. The peanut butter had been disappearing a little more rapidly than it usually did, and she’d been blaming my father.

*“And he likes it if you read him a story just before he falls asleep ...”*

My sister picked up Reggie from where he'd been sitting quietly behind my Dad's chair. She held him close to her face. Reggie snuffled. And then I remembered. "*Oh, and one more thing ...*"

Too late. My sister's nose wrinkled. "*Ohhh ... is that ...ewww!!*"

I had discovered, almost from the first day, that Reggie had one rather annoying habit. He liked to pass gas. Frequently, blatantly, and without any warning or remorse at all.

Actually, we hadn't noticed much ... he sort of fit right in with our family. But let's not go there.

"*Well. I suppose I can live with that. After all ...*" She wanted to say that she lived with three small boys and a husband, and that occasional bad smells came with the territory. But she was too polite to say any more.

So that's how Reggie the pig came into my life, and left again. I still see him quite often when we visit my sister. When I babysit, the boys and I have a great time dressing him up in overalls and a t-shirt, and he takes it rather well.

And Josie is back, and looking healthier than ever! She must be down to thirty pounds or so, and hardly ever hides in the basement. Except when my mother tries to feed her corn bread.