

THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

CHAPTER 3: THE ORACLE OF THE SMILING POOL



BY THORNTON W. BURGESS



Grandfather Frog sat on his big green lily pad with his eyes half closed, for all the world as if he knew nothing about the meeting at the Big Rock. Of course he did know, for there isn't much going on around the Smiling Pool which he doesn't see or at least hear all about. The Merry Little Breezes, who are here, there, and everywhere, told him all that was going on, so that when he saw Jerry Muskrat and Little Joe Otter swimming towards him, he knew what they were coming for. But he pretended to be very much surprised when Jerry Muskrat very politely said: "Good morning, Grandfather Frog."

"Good morning, Jerry Muskrat. You're out early this morning," replied Grandfather Frog.

"If you please, you are wanted over at the Big Rock," said Jerry.

Grandfather Frog's eyes twinkled, but he made his voice very deep and gruff as he replied: "Chugarum! You're a scamp, Jerry Muskrat, and Little Joe Otter is another. What trick are you trying to play on me now?"

Jerry Muskrat and Little Joe Otter looked a wee bit sheepish, for it was true that they were forever trying to play tricks on Grandfather Frog. "Really and truly, Grandfather Frog, there isn't any trick this time," said Jerry. "There is a meeting at the Big Rock to try to decide what to do to keep Farmer Brown's

boy from setting traps around the Smiling Pool and along the Laughing Brook, and everybody wants your advice, because you are so old and so wise. Please come."

Grandfather Frog smoothed down his white and yellow waistcoat and pretended to think the matter over very seriously, while Jerry and Little Joe fidgeted impatiently. Finally he spoke.

"I am very old, as you have said, Jerry Muskrat, and it is a long way over to the Big Rock."

"Get right on my back and I'll take you over there," said Jerry eagerly.

"I'm afraid that you'll spill me off," replied Grandfather Frog.

"No, I won't; just try me and see," begged Jerry.

So Grandfather Frog climbed on Jerry Muskrat's back, and Jerry started for the Big Rock as fast as he could go. When all the Minks and the Otters and the Coons and the Muskrats saw them coming, they gave a great shout, for Grandfather Frog is sometimes called the oracle of the Smiling Pool. You know an oracle is one who is very wise.

Bobby Coon helped Grandfather Frog up on the Big Rock, and when he had made himself comfortable, Mrs. Muskrat told him all about Farmer Brown's boy and his traps, and how Jerry had been caught in one by the tail,

and she ended by asking for his advice, because they all knew that he was so wise.

When she said this, Grandfather Frog puffed himself up until it seemed as if his white and yellow waistcoat would surely burst. He sat very still for a while and gazed straight at jolly, round, red Mr. Sun without blinking once. Then he spoke in a very deep voice.

“Tomorrow morning at sunrise I will tell you what to do,” said he. And not another word could they get out of him.