

THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

CHAPTER 8: GRANDFATHER FROG

WATCHES HIS TOES



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Grandfather Frog sat among the bulrushes on the edge of the Smiling Pool. Over his head Mr. Redwing was singing as if his heart would burst with the very joy of springtime.

“Tra-la-la-lee, see me! See me!
Happy am I as I can be!
Happy am I the whole day long
And so I sing my gladsome song.”

Of course Mr. Redwing was happy. Why shouldn't he be? Here it was the beautiful springtime, the gladdest time of all the year, the time when happiness creeps into everybody's heart. Grandfather Frog listened. He nodded his head. “Chugarum! I'm happy, too,” said Grandfather Frog. But even as he said it, a little worried look crept into his big goggly eyes and then down to the corners of his big mouth, which had been stretched in a smile. Little by little the smile grew smaller and smaller, until there wasn't any smile. No, Sir, there wasn't any smile. Instead of looking happy, as he said he felt, Grandfather Frog actually looked unhappy.

The fact is he couldn't forget what Jerry Muskrat and Little Joe Otter had told him—that there was something the matter with the Smiling Pool. He didn't believe it, not a word of it. At least he tried to make himself think that he didn't believe it. They had said that the water in the Smiling Pool was growing

lower and lower, just as it did in the middle of summer, in the very hottest weather. Now Grandfather Frog is very old and very wise, and he had never heard of such a thing happening in the springtime. So he wouldn't believe it now. And yet—and yet Grandfather Frog had an uncomfortable feeling that something was wrong. Ha! he knew now what it was! He had been sitting up to his middle in water, and now he was sitting with only his toes in the water, and he couldn't remember having changed his position!

“Of course, I moved without thinking what I was doing,” muttered Grandfather Frog, but still the worried look didn't leave his face. You see he just couldn't make himself believe what he wanted to believe, try as he would.

“Chugarum! I know what I'll do; I'll watch my toes!” exclaimed Grandfather Frog.

So Grandfather Frog waded out into the water until it covered his feet, and then he sat down and began to watch his toes. Mr. Redwing looked down and saw him, and Grandfather Frog looked so funny gazing at his own toes that Mr. Redwing stopped singing long enough to ask: “What are you doing, Grandfather Frog?”

“Watching my toes,” replied Grandfather Frog gruffly.

“Watching your toes! Ho, ho, ho! Watching your toes! Who ever heard of such a thing?”

Are you afraid that they will run away, Grandfather Frog?” shouted Mr. Redwing.

Grandfather Frog didn’t answer. He kept right on watching his toes. Mr. Redwing flew away to tell everybody he met how Grandfather Frog had become foolish and was watching his toes. The sun shone down warm and bright, and pretty soon Grandfather Frog’s big goggle eyes began to blink. Then his head began to nod, and then—why, then Grandfather Frog fell fast asleep.

By and by Grandfather Frog awoke with a start. He looked down at his toes. They were not in the water at all! Indeed, the water was a good long jump away.

“Chugarum! There is something wrong with the Smiling Pool!” cried Grandfather Frog, as he made a long jump into the water and started to swim out to the Big Rock.