

BILLY MINK'S SWIMMING PARTY

Billy Mink was coming down the bank of the Laughing Brook. Billy Mink was feeling very good indeed. He had had a good breakfast, the sun was warm, little white cloud ships were sailing across the blue sky and their shadows were sailing across the Green Meadows, the birds were singing and the bees were humming. Billy Mink felt like singing too, but Billy Mink's voice was not meant for singing.

By and by Billy Mink came to the Smiling Pool. Here the Laughing Brook stopped and rested on its way to join the Big River. It stopped its noisy laughing and singing and just lay smiling and smiling in the warm sunshine. The little flowers on the bank leaned over and nodded to it. The beech tree, which was very old, sometimes dropped a leaf into it. The cat-tails kept their feet cool in the edge of it.

Billy Mink jumped out on the Big Rock and looked down into the Smiling Pool. Over on a green lily pad he saw old Grandfather Frog.

"Hello, Grandfather Frog," said Billy Mink.

"Hello, Billy Mink," said Grandfather Frog. "What mischief are you up to this fine sunny morning?"

Just then Billy Mink saw a little brown head swimming along one edge of the Smiling Pool.

"Hello, Jerry Muskrat!" shouted Billy Mink.

"Hello your own self, Billy Mink," shouted Jerry Muskrat, "Come in and have a swim; the water's fine!"

"Good," said Billy Mink. "We'll have a swimming party."

So Billy Mink called all the Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind, who were playing with the flowers on the bank, and sent them to find Little Joe Otter and invite him to come to the swimming party. Pretty soon back came the Little Breezes and with them came Little Joe Otter.

"Hello, Billy Mink," said Little Joe Otter. "Here I am!"

"Hello, Little Joe Otter," said Billy Mink. "Come up here on the Big Rock and see who can dive the deepest into the Smiling Pool."

So Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat climbed up on the Big Rock side of Billy Mink and they all stood side by side in their little brown bathing suits looking down into the Smiling Pool.

"Now when I count three we'll all dive into the Smiling Pool together and see who can dive the deepest. One!" said Billy Mink. "Two!" said Billy Mink. "Three!" said Billy Mink.

And when he said "Three!" in they all went head first. My such a splash as they did make! They upset old Grandfather Frog so that he fell off his lily pad. They frightened Mr. and Mrs. Trout so that they jumped right out of the water. Tiny Tadpole had such a scare that he hid way, way down in the mud with only the tip of his funny little nose sticking out.

"Chug-a-rum," said old Grandfather Frog, climbing out of his lily pad. "If I wasn't so old I would show you how to dive."

"Come on, Grandfather Frog!" cried Billy Mink. "Show us how to dive."

And what do you think? Why, old Grandfather Frog actually got so excited that he climbed up on the Big Rock to show them how to dive. Splash! Went Grandfather Frog into the Smiling Pool. Splash! Went Billy Mink right behind him. Splash! Splash! Went Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat, right at Billy Mink's heels.

“Hurrah!” shouted Mr. Kingfisher, sitting on a branch of the old beech tree. And then just to show them that he could dive, too, splash! He went into the Smiling Pool.

Such a noise as they did make! All the Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind danced for joy on the bank. Blacky the Crow and Sammy Jay flew over to see what was going on.

“Now let's see who can swim the farthest under water,” cried Billy Mink.

So they all stood side by side on one edge of the Smiling Pool.

“Go!” shouted Mr. Kingfisher, and in they all plunged. Little ripples ran across the Smiling Pool and then the water became as smooth and smiling as if nothing had gone into it with a plunge.

Now old Grandfather Frog began to realize that he wasn't as young as he used to be, and he couldn't swim as fast as the others anyway. He began to get short of breath, so he swam up to the top and stuck just the tip of his nose out to get some more air. Sammy Jay's sharp eyes saw him.

“There's Grandfather Frog!” he shouted.

So then Grandfather Frog popped his head out and swam over to his green lily pad to rest.

Way over beyond the Big Rock little bubbles in three long rows kept coming up to the top of the Smiling Pool. They showed just where Billy Mink, Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat were swimming way down out of sight. It was the air from their lungs making the bubbles. Straight across the Smiling Pool went the lines of little bubbles and then way out on the farther side two little heads bobbed out of water close together. They were Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter. A moment later Jerry Muskrat bobbed up beside them.

You see, they had swum clear across the Smiling Pool and of course they could swim no farther.

So Billy Mink's swimming party was a great success.

Source:

Burgess, Thornton W. “Billy Mink's Swimming Party.” *Old Mother West Wind*. Electronic.

JERRY MUSKRAT'S PARTY

All the Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind were hurrying over the Green Meadows. Some flew this way and some ran that way and some danced the other way. You see, Jerry Muskrat had asked them to carry his invitations to a party at the Big Rock in the Smiling Pool.

Of course every one said that they would be delighted to go to Jerry Muskrat's party. Round Mr. Sun shone his very brightest. The sky was its bluest and the little birds had promised to be there to sing for Jerry Muskrat, so of course all the little folks in the Green Meadows and in the wood wanted to go.

There were Johnny Chuck and Reddy Fox and Jimmy Skunk and Bobby Coon and Happy Jack Squirrel and Striped Chipmunk and Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter and Grandfather Frog and old Mr. Toad and Mr. Blacksnake—all going to Jerry Muskrat's party.

When they reached the Smiling Pool they found Jerry Muskrat all ready. His brothers and his sister, his aunts and his uncles and his cousins were all there. Such a merry, merry time as there was in the Smiling Pool! How the water did splash! Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter and Grandfather Frog jumped right in as soon as they got there. They played tag in the water and hid behind the Big Rock. They turned somersaults down the slippery slide and they had such a good time!

But Reddy Fox and Peter Rabbit and Bobby Coon and Johnny Chuck and Jimmy Skunk and Happy Jack and Striped Chipmunk couldn't swim, so of course they couldn't play tag in the water or hide and seek or go down the slippery slide; all they could do was sit around to look on and wish that they knew how to swim, too. So of course they didn't have a good time. Soon they began to wish that they hadn't come to Jerry Muskrat's party. When he found that they were not having a good time, poor Jerry Muskrat felt very badly indeed. You see he lives in the water so much that he had quite forgotten that there was anyone who couldn't swim, or he never, never would have invited all the little meadow folks who live on dry land.

“Let's go home,” said Peter Rabbit to Johnny Chuck.

“We can have more fun up on the hill,” said Jimmy Skunk.

Just then Little Joe Otter came pushing a great big log across the Smiling Pool.

“Here's a ship, Bobby Coon. You get on one end and I'll give you a sail across the Smiling Pool,” shouted Little Joe Otter.

So Bobby Coon crawled out on the big log and held on very tight, while little Joe Otter swam behind and pushed the big log. Across the Smiling Pool they went and back again. Bobby Coon had such a good ride that he wanted to go again, but Jimmy Skunk wanted a ride. So Bobby Coon hopped off of the big log and Jimmy Skunk hopped on and away he went across the Smiling Pool with little Joe Otter pushing behind.

Then Jerry Muskrat found another log and gave Peter Rabbit a ride. Jerry Muskrat's brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins found logs and took Reddy Fox and Johnny Chuck and even Mr. Toad back and forth across the Smiling Pool.

Happy Jack Squirrel sat up very straight on the end of his log and spread his great bushy tail for a sail. All the little Breezes blew and blew and Happy Jack Squirrel sailed round and round the Smiling Pool.

Sometimes someone would fall off into the water and get wet, but Jerry Muskrat or Billy Mink always pulled them out again, and no one cared the tiniest bit for a wetting.

In the bushes around the Smiling Pool the little birds sang and sang. Reddy Fox barked his loudest.

Happy Jack Squirrel chattered and chir—r—r—ed. All the muskrats squealed and squeaked, for Jerry Muskrat's party was such fun!

By and by when Mr. Sun went down behind the Purple Hills to his home and Old Mother West Wind with all her Merry Little Breezes went after him, and the little stars came out to twinkle and twinkle, the Smiling Pool lay all quiet and still, but smiling and smiling to think what a good time every one had had at Jerry Muskrat's party.

Source:

Burgess, Thornton W. "Jerry Muskrat's Party." *Old Mother West Wind*. Electronic.

LITTLE JOE OTTER'S SLIPPERY SLIDE

Little Joe Otter and Billy Mink had been playing together around the Smiling Pool all one sunshiny morning. They had been fishing and had taken home a fine dinner of Trout for old Grandfather Mink and blind old Granny Otter. They had played tag with the Merry Little Breezes. They had been in all kinds of mischief and now they just didn't know what to do.

They were sitting side by side on the Big Rock trying to push each other off into the Smiling Pool. Round, smiling red Mr. Sun made the Green Meadows very warm indeed, and Reddy Fox, over in the tall grass, heard them splashing and shouting and having such a good time that he wished he liked the nice cool water and could swim, too.

"I've thought of something!" cried Little Joe Otter.

"What is it?" asked Billy Mink.

Little Joe Otter just looked wise and said nothing.

"Something to eat?" asked Billy Mink.

"No," said Little Joe Otter.

"I don't believe you've a thought of anything at all," said Billy Mink.

"I have too!" said Little Joe Otter. "It's something to do."

"What?" demanded Billy Mink.

Just then Little Joe Otter spied Jerry Muskrat. "Hi, Jerry Muskrat! Come over here!" he called.

Jerry Muskrat swam across to the Big Rock and climbed up beside Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter.

"What are you fellows doing?" asked Jerry Muskrat.

"Having some fun," said Billy Mink. "Little Joe Otter has thought of something to do, but I don't know what it is."

"Let's make a slide," cried Little Joe Otter.

"You show us how," said Billy Mink.

So Little Joe Otter found a nice smooth place on the bank, and Billy Mink and Jerry Muskrat brought mud and helped him pat it down smooth until they had the loveliest slippery slide in the world. Then Little Joe Otter climbed up the bank to the top of the slippery slide and lay down flat on his stomach. Billy Mink gave a push and away he went down, down the slippery slide, splash into the Smiling Pool. Then Jerry Muskrat tried it and after him Billy Mink. Then all did it over again. Sometimes they went down the slippery slide on their backs, sometimes flat on their stomachs, sometimes head first, sometimes feet first. Oh such fun as they did have! Even Grandfather Frog came over and tried the slippery slide.

Johnny Chuck, over in the Green Meadows, heard the noise and stole down the Lone Little Path to see. Jimmy Skunk, looking for beetles up on the hill, heard the noise and forgot that he hadn't had his breakfast. Reddy Fox, taking a nap, woke up and hurried over to watch the fun. Last of all came Peter Rabbit.

Little Joe Otter saw him coming. "Hello, Peter Rabbit!" he shouted. "Come and try the slippery slide."

Now Peter Rabbit couldn't swim, but he pretended that he didn't want to.

"I've left my bathing suit at home," said Peter Rabbit.

"Never mind," said Billy Mink. "Mr. Sun will dry you off."

"And we'll help," said all the Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind.

But Peter Rabbit shook his head and said, "No."

Faster and faster went Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat and old Grandfather Frog down the slippery slide into the Smiling Pool.

Peter Rabbit kept coming nearer and nearer until finally he stood right at the top of the slippery slide. Billy Mink crept up behind him very softly and gave him a push. Peter Rabbit's long legs flew out from under him and down he sat with a thump on the slippery slide. "Oh," cried Peter Rabbit, and tried to stop himself. But he couldn't do it and so away he went down the slippery slide, splash into the Smiling Pool.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Billy Mink.

"Ho! ho! ho!" shouted Little Joe Otter.

"He! he! he!" laughed Jerry Muskrat and old Grandfather Frog and Sammy Jay and Jimmy Skunk and Reddy Fox and Blacky the Crow and Mr. Kingfisher, for you know Peter Rabbit was forever playing jokes on them.

Poor Peter Rabbit! The water got in his eyes and up his nose and into his mouth and made him choke and splutter, and then he couldn't get back on the bank, for you know Peter Rabbit couldn't swim.

When Little Joe Otter saw what a dreadful time Peter Rabbit was having he dove into the Smiling Pool and took hold of one of Peter Rabbit's long ears. Billy Mink swam out and took hold of the other long ear. Jerry Muskrat swam right under Peter Rabbit and took him on his back. Then with old Grandfather Frog swimming ahead they took Peter Rabbit right across the Smiling Pool and pulled him out on the grassy bank, where it was nice and warm. All the Merry Little Breezes of Old Mother West Wind came over and helped Mr. Sun dry Peter Rabbit off.

Then they all sat down together and watched Little Joe Otter turn a somersault down the slippery slide.

Source:

Burgess, Thornton W. "Little Joe Otter's Slippery Slide." *Old Mother West Wind*. Electronic.