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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Dr. Dolittle and the Rock (19/21)

Every morning they woke up in their silk beds and then went up on deck. Jip would smell the wind for half an hour, and then he would go to the doctor and shake his head. "I don't smell any snuff tobacco yet," he would say. "We have to wait until the wind turns to the east." But even when the east wind came, the dog couldn't pick up the scent of snuff tobacco. The little boy was terribly disappointed and started crying again because no one could find his uncle. But all Jip said to the doctor was, "Tell him that when the wind turns to the west, I'll find his uncle, even if he's in China, as long as he's still taking snuff tobacco."

On a Friday morning, the west wind came. A fine mist of rain lay on the sea like a thin fog, and the wind was warm and wet. As soon as Jip woke up, he ran up on deck and stuck his nose in the air. Then he got terribly excited and rushed back down to wake up the doctor. "Doctor!" he cried. "I've got it! Doctor! Doctor! Wake up! Listen! I've got it! The wind is coming from the west, and I smell nothing but snuff tobacco. Come up and start the ship, quickly!"

The doctor tumbled out of bed and went to the helm. "I'll stand at the front of the ship, and you follow my nose. The man can't be far away with a scent as strong as this."

So all morning, Jip stood at the front of the ship, sniffing the wind and pointing the way, while all the animals and the little boy watched in amazement.

Around lunchtime, Jip asked Dab-Dab to tell the doctor that he was getting worried and wanted to speak to him. So Dab-Dab went to fetch the doctor from the other side of the ship, and Jip said to him, "The boy's uncle is hungry. We need to get to him as soon as possible."

"How do you know he's hungry?" asked the doctor.

"Because I only smell snuff tobacco," said Jip. "If the man was cooking or eating something, I would smell that too. He doesn't even have fresh water to drink.

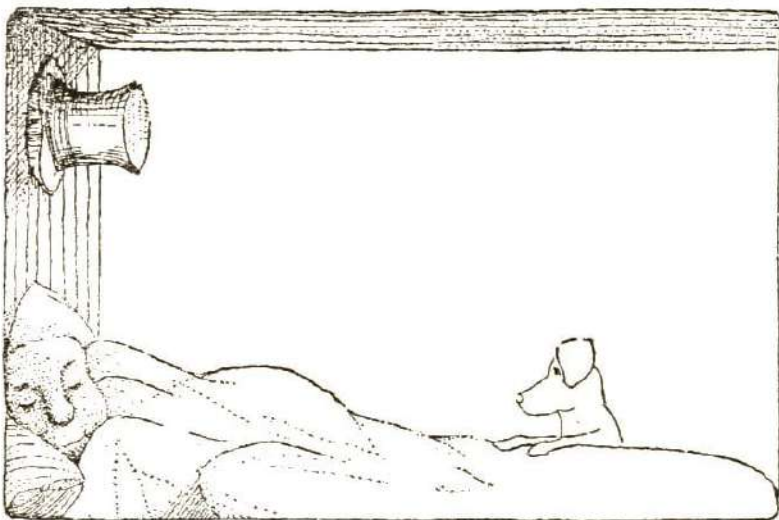
We're getting closer to him because the scent is getting stronger. Let's sail as fast as we can. I'm really sure the man is hungry."

"Very well," said the doctor, and he sent Dab-Dab to ask the swallows to tow the ship, just as they had done when the pirates were chasing them. The brave swallows came down and pulled the ship along again. The boat now raced over the waves at great speed, so fast that the fish had to jump out of the way to save their lives.

All the animals stood excitedly along the railing, scanning the horizon for the starving man. Hour after hour went by, and the ship raced on over the sea, but no land came into view. The animals grew quiet now, because they were starting to worry. The little boy became sad again. And Jip was worried too. Finally, late in the afternoon, just as the sun was setting, everyone was startled by the hooting of the owl, Too-Too.

"Jip! Jip! I see a big rock in the distance, look, the sun is shining on it like gold. Is the scent coming from there?" And Jip shouted back, "Yes, that's where the man is. Finally, finally!"

As they got closer, they saw that the rock was very large and completely bare. It looked like the back of a turtle. The doctor sailed the ship around the rock, but there was no man to be seen. There was no living creature in sight, not even a seagull or a starfish or seaweed. Everyone was silent and listening intently, but the only sound they heard was the gentle lapping of



the waves. Then they all called out, "Hello, hello," but only an echo answered back.

And the little boy burst into tears again and said, "I'm afraid I'll never see my uncle again!"

What should I tell them when I go back home?"

But Jip called out to the doctor, "He must be here, the scent doesn't go any further. He must be here, I'm sure of it. Sail the ship close to the rock and let me jump on the rock."

So the doctor brought the ship as close as he could and dropped anchor. Then he and Jip stepped out of the ship onto the rock. Jip ran with his nose to the ground in all directions, and the doctor ran after him until he

was out of breath. Finally, Jip barked loudly and sat down. When the doctor ran over to him, he discovered that the dog was staring into a large, deep hole in the middle of the rock.

"The boy's uncle is down there," said Jip. "No wonder those stupid eagles couldn't see him. It takes a dog to find a man."

The hole turned out to be a kind of cave that went a long way underground. The doctor lit a match and made his way through the dark passage, with Jip following behind him. Finally, the doctor arrived in a kind of room. And there, in the middle of the room, was a man with red hair, fast asleep. Jip sniffed at something lying next to the man on the ground. The doctor picked it up, and it was a huge box of... snuff tobacco!