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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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How The Rabbit Tried To Coast

Once upon a time, the Rabbit lived in the woods in a lodge with his old grandmother. Summer was a fat time for the two, but things went very badly with them in the winter. Then, ice and snow covered up the berries, and there were no juicy, green shoots to be had.

The Rabbit might have hunted, or gone to a field and dug down through the snow to find some buried ears of grain. But he was a lazy young fellow and disliked the cold. His grandmother had a hard time filling the dinner pot, and their cupboard shelves were more often empty than full.

The Rabbit wished very much that he might find some easy way of making a living in the winter. With this thought in mind he went one frosty day to the lodge of the Otter, just before dinner time.

The Otter lived in a lonely wigwam by the side of a river. It was quite a long distance from the regular camp of the animals. But the Otter seemed to be well fed and to have no trouble in getting his dinner. The Rabbit watched him.

The Otter put his dinner pot full of water over the fire. Then he took his fish line and hooks and went outside. He had built a long, smooth ice slide that went from his door down the bank of the river. He slid down this, diving into the water through a little hole in the ice. In

a very short time the Otter was up again, and carried a long string of fat eels up to the bank to his lodge. He popped these into his dinner pot and invited the Rabbit to stay and share the feast with him.

It was the first hot meal that the Rabbit had eaten in a long while. Instead of saving some of the food for his grandmother, he ate of it greedily. He tried to think how he could imitate his friend's way of getting a living. He was off as soon as dinner was over, for he had a plan in his head.

As soon as the Rabbit reached his lodge, he told his grandmother to put on her blanket and tie the kitchen pots together with a piece of deer thong. He said that they were going to move. She begged him to think it over. It was deep winter, she told him, and she, herself, was an old rabbit. But the Rabbit took down the lodge poles while she was talking, and they started away through the forest to the river beside which the Otter lived. He set up his lodge on the opposite bank from that of the Otter. As the weather was crisp and cold, the Rabbit had no trouble at all in making an ice slide from his door to the river, just like the Otter's slide. Then the Rabbit told his grandmother to build a fire, and hang the dinner pot, and make ready for a great feast. He had invited the Otter to take dinner with him. The Rabbit's grandmother threw up her paws.

"What shall I cook?" she asked. "There is no food of any kind in the house."

"I will attend to all that," the Rabbit said. Then he started out with his fishing line to catch a mess of eels

as the Otter had. He stood a moment at the top of his ice slide, and then he started down it. But, oh, it was hard for the Rabbit, who was used to hopping, to keep a straight course on the ice. He went from one side to the other, and then turned head over heels, growing quite dizzy. Then he struck the ice cold water, and went under, numb with cold. He did not know how to swim a stroke. He was almost drowned before he rose to the surface and was able to cling to a cake of ice. From this he struggled over to the bank. He crawled up wet, his teeth chattering, and his fur freezing all over in tiny icicles.

The Otter had come across the river to the Rabbit's dinner party and he stood laughing on the bank as he saw the Rabbit. "What ails him?" the Otter asked of the Rabbit's grandmother.

"He saw somebody fishing," she explained, "and he tried to do the same. He never thinks for himself."

The Otter laughed harder than before, as they helped the Rabbit into the lodge and warmed him beside the fire. Then the Otter caught a mess of eels. The Rabbit's grandmother cooked them, and they had quite a merry dinner after all. But the Rabbit was very much ashamed of himself. He learned how to hunt in a rabbit's way, after that, and took good care of his grandmother all the rest of the winter.

