

THE EIGHTH HOLIDAY BOOK

Enid Blyton



-HILDA ROSWELL-

A few dates for you	89
10. Think Hard, Boatman	90
Illustrations: Mary Brooks	
Story: Sunny Stories No.418 Nov 28, 1947	
Make a Pretty Flower for your dress	96
11. Tubby Makes a Mistake	97
Illustrations: Grace Lodge	
Story: Sunny Stories No.370 Dec 28, 1945	
12. What Happened on Christmas Eve	108
Illustrations: Robert MacGillivray	
Story: Sunny Stories No.419 Dec 12, 1947	
Make this little toy mouse	117
13. A Spell for a Lazy Boy	118
Illustrations: Dorothy Hall	
Story: Sunny Stories No.335 Aug 25, 1944	
A hidden words puzzle	125
14. It's Going to Rain!	126
Illustrations: Cicely Steed	
Story: Sunny Stories No.409 Jul 25, 1947	
15. Adventure in the Afternoon	131
Illustrations: Mary K. Lee	
Story: Sunny Stories No.437 Aug 20, 1948	
16. It Serves You Right, Jumbo	142
Illustrations: Mary Brooks	
Story: Sunny Stories No.437 Aug 20, 1948	
A desk for your doll's house	147
17. The Little Chatterbox	148
Illustrations: Mary K. Lee	
Story: Sunny Stories No.321 Feb 11, 1944	
Can you do this?	157
18. Mrs. Muddle's Scarf	158
Illustrations: Hilda McGavin	
Story: Sunny Stories No.384 Jul 12, 1946	



SPLASH, the ferryman, lived in a tiny house beside the river. He had a gay little boat painted blue, and his oars were orange. The boat was called *Here-we-go!* and everyone liked going across the river in it.

Splash was really a very busy little man. He took the postman across to deliver his letters to the farms on the other side of the water. He took old Mrs. Dumble to and fro every day when she went shopping. He took four little children over and back each day too, because they went to Dame Little's School up the hill.

He sang as he rowed his boat to and fro:

*Over the river and back I go,
My little gay oars a-flashing,
Watch me ferrying to and fro,
Here-we-go, here-we-go, splashing!*

When he sang the word " splashing " he dashed his oars hard into the water and made a terrific splash. Everyone liked that very much except old Mrs. Dumble, who said that it made her jump and wetted her shawl.

Splash never refused to take anyone. Even when Mighty-One the wizard came, he didn't say no, though he shivered and shook all the time in case the wizard might suddenly work a spell and take the boat off to the moon, or some other peculiar place.

And when Fat-One, the giant, wanted to be rowed across the river, even then Splash didn't say no! But he was so afraid that the giant would

weigh down the boat too much at his end that he put a big stone just beside his own seat, so that the boat wouldn't tip too much.

It made the rowing very hard, because the boat was heavy then, with the giant and the stone. Still somehow Splash managed, and he made it quite a boast that he had never said no to anyone who wanted to go across the river, or wanted goods rowed across to the other side.

But wait a minute! There was a time when Splash very nearly *did* say no! It was when old Witch Grim told him she was going to leave him some goods to take across for her. Splash didn't know what the goods were, but he didn't like the sound of them.

" You've got to be careful about my goods," the witch said. " If any get damaged I shall make you pay for it, Splash. In fact, I might even take your boat away! "

" When will you leave the goods to be taken across? " asked Splash. " And what are they? "

" Two animals and a nice big bag of carrots," said Witch Grim. " Mr. Quick will bring them in his cart this evening."

Well when Mr. Quick came with his cart, Splash happened to be the other side of the river with old Mrs. Durable. Mr. Quick hailed him loudly.

" Hey, Splash! Here are the goods from Witch Grim. I can't wait, so hurry up and fetch them before they damage one another."

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" Well now ! " said Splash, scratching his head and looking at the goods.
" I can't possibly take more than one of you across at once. "

Splash rowed back as fast as he could, and there, waiting for him on the other side, were the goods.

One red fox, all alive-oh!

One white rabbit, scared of the fox.

One bag of carrots that made the rabbit feel very hungry indeed.

" Well now! " said Splash, scratching his head and looking at the goods. " I can't possibly take more than one of you across at once. You'd be too heavy for me, because I'm tired now. Which shall I take first? "

" Take me! " said the rabbit. " I'm scared of the fox. Take me, Mr. Splash, and leave me safely on the other side. Then row back and get the carrots. "

" Right, " said Splash. Then he stopped and scratched his head again. " Ah, but wait a minute! If I take you across—and then fetch the bag of carrots and leave it with you, you'll nibble the lot! I know you, Rabbit! "

' Well, take the rabbit across, and then take me, and take the carrots last, " said the fox.



Splash sat down on a tree-stump and scratched his head again.

" Right," said the boatman. But the rabbit gave a loud squeal.

"Oh no, Mr. Splash! If you do that you will have to leave the fox alone with me on the other side whilst you go back for the carrots — and he'll eat me! "

"Take me across first then," said the fox.

"Aha — and leave the carrots and the rabbit together on this side! " said Splash. "Not if I know it, Red Fox! "

"Well, what are you going to do then?" said the red fox. " Either the rabbit and I are left together on one side or the other, or the rabbit and the carrots."

Splash sat down on a tree-stump and scratched his head again. He thought very hard indeed. He simply must *not* leave rabbit and fox together, or rabbit and carrots. The fox would eat the rabbit, the rabbit would eat the carrots — and then Witch Grim would be very angry and take his boat away.

The red fox sat down too and grinned at Splash. " It's no good," he said. " Work it out how you will, Splash, *something's* going to be eaten. *And you're* going to get into trouble! "

Think hard, boatman! Think hard! There's a way to do it, if only you'll think hard.

What, you don't think there is? Think again. Yes, Splash, you can do it, and nothing will be eaten, but just think hard and find out how!

Splash thought so hard that his eyes disappeared under an enormous frown. Then he jumped up and smacked his hands together loudly. The fox and rabbit jumped.

" I know how to do it! " said Splash.

' You don't," said the fox, disappointed.

"I do! " said Splash. " Rabbit, get into the boat! You're the first to go across."

The rabbit got in, looking very doubtful. Splash rowed him across to the other side and left him there. He rowed back to where he had left the fox and the carrots. He popped the carrots into his boat and rowed back to the rabbit.

" Hey ! " called the fox. " The rabbit will eat the carrots if you leave them over there with him."

But Splash didn't mean to do that. Oh no! He threw out the bag of carrots and called to the surprised rabbit to get back into the boat again—and he rowed him back to the fox!

" Now get out," he said to the rabbit, " and you, Red Fox, get in! I'm leaving you on this side again for a bit, Rabbit. I'll be back to fetch you soon."



He threw out the bag of carrots, and called to the surprised rabbit to get back into the boat again.



“ There ! ” he said. “ I’ve done it—and nothing’s eaten ! And here comes Witch Grim to fetch you all ! Hey, Witch Grim, my fee, please ! ”

He rowed the fox across to where he had left the carrots and made him get out. " The carrots will be safe enough with *you!* " he said. " Now I'm off to get the rabbit! "

And back he went to get the rabbit. He rowed him over to the fox and the carrots. " There! " he said. " I've done it—and nothing's eaten! And here comes Witch Grim to fetch you all! Hey, Witch Grim, my fee, please!"

" What! You managed to get these goods across safely! " said Witch Grim. " Splash, you're very, very clever. I quite expected either the rabbit or the carrots would be eaten! "

Splash *was* clever, wasn't he ? Would *you* have thought of that way, do you think ?