Piggy Peter Learns to Swim

by Mike Muirhead

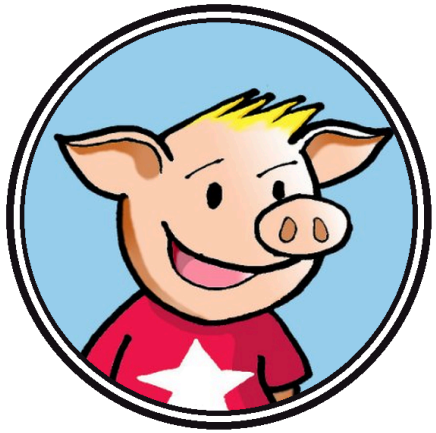


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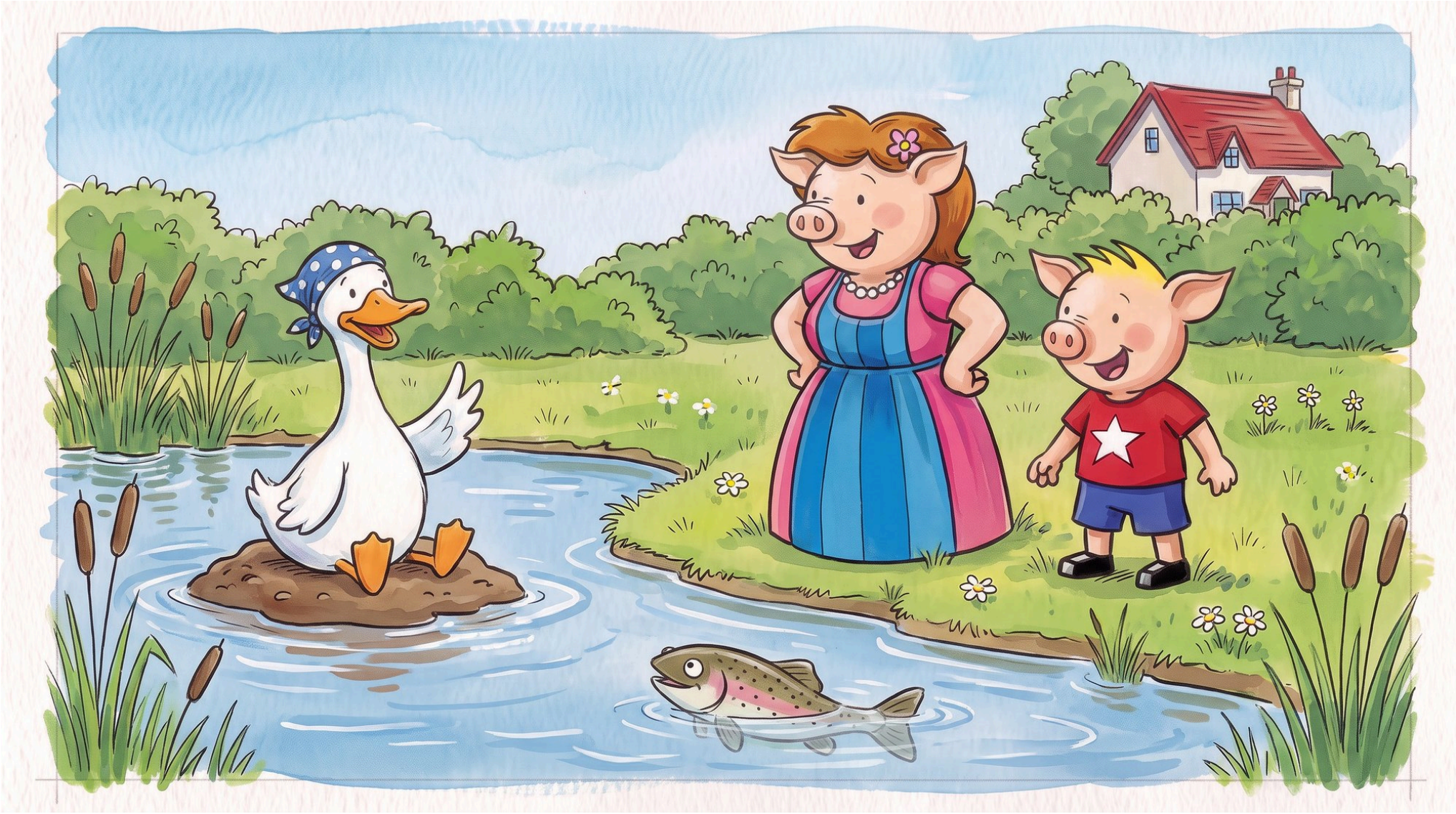


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Story by Mike Muirhead

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At the bottom of the Piggies' field there is a little stream. It runs down to the big lake, where Timmy Trout lives. Dora Duck has her nest in the reeds at the water's edge.

Piggy Peter has always been told that he must never go into the water. "Not until you are older and have learned to swim," says Momma. "The lake is very deep, and very cold, and very dangerous."

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It is a very hot day. Peter and Spikey are playing football in the field with their friend Bill Badger.

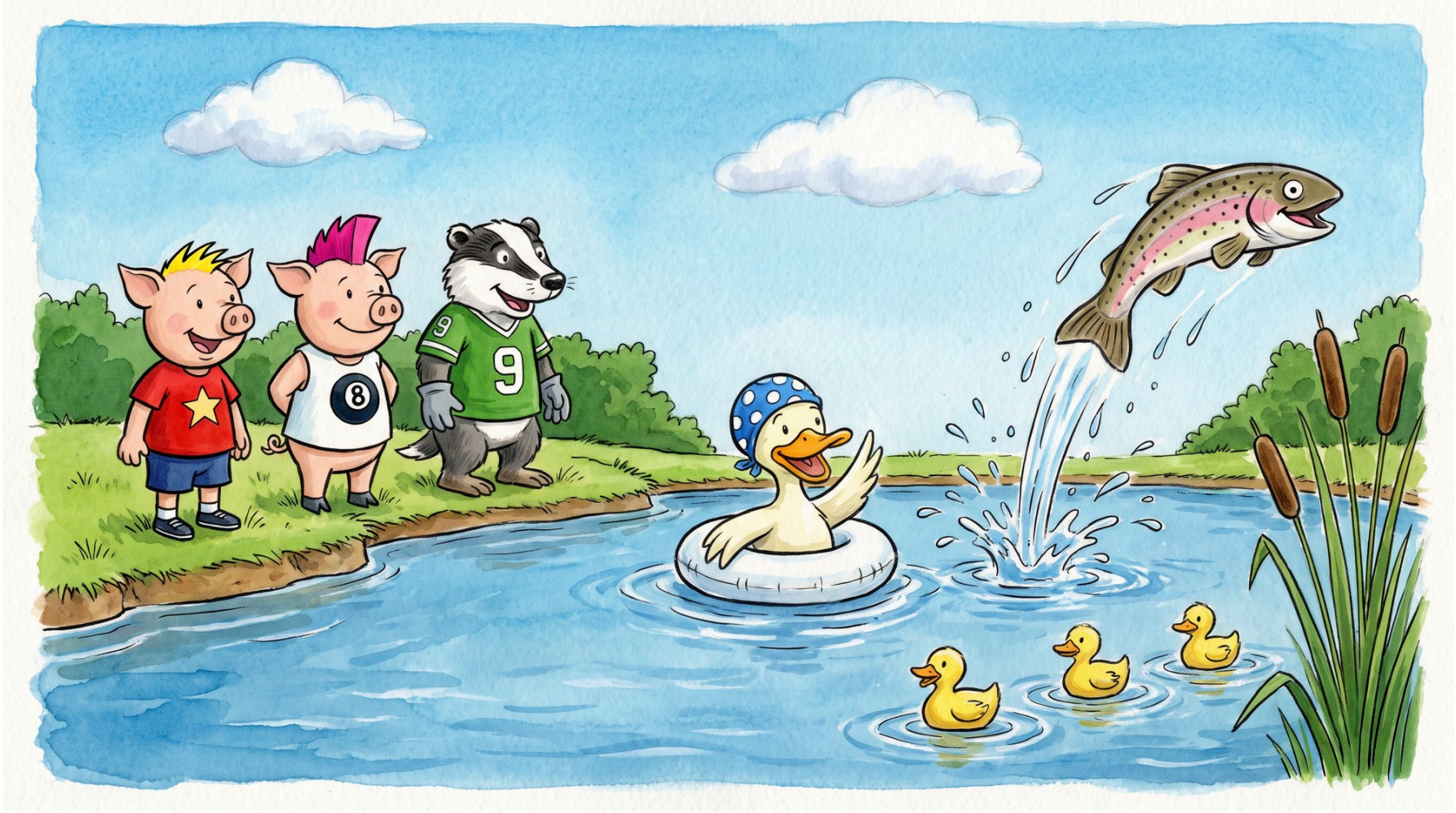
Peter gives the ball an enormous kick. It flies over Bill's head and lands with a SPLASH in the lake.

"Oops," says Peter.

Spikey finds a long stick, lies down on the bank and carefully hooks the ball back to the edge. He puts it on the grass to dry.

The three friends are hot and tired now, so they all flop down in the shade for a rest. Piggy Peter looks at the cool, sparkly water. "I wish I could jump in," he says.

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Just then Dora Duck waddles past with her three fluffy ducklings in a line behind her.

“We are going for a swim,” she quacks. “Why don’t you come and join us?”

“Don’t be silly,” says Peter. “Piggies can’t swim.”

“But it’s so easy!” says Dora, and she glides into the water, followed by her ducklings. Down they go, bottoms in the air, to say hello to Timmy Trout, and up they pop again.

Timmy Trout leaps right out of the water. “It’s lovely and cool in here!” he calls. “Do come in!”

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The three little ducklings paddle round and round in circles. “Look, Peter!” they peep. “Even we can do it!”

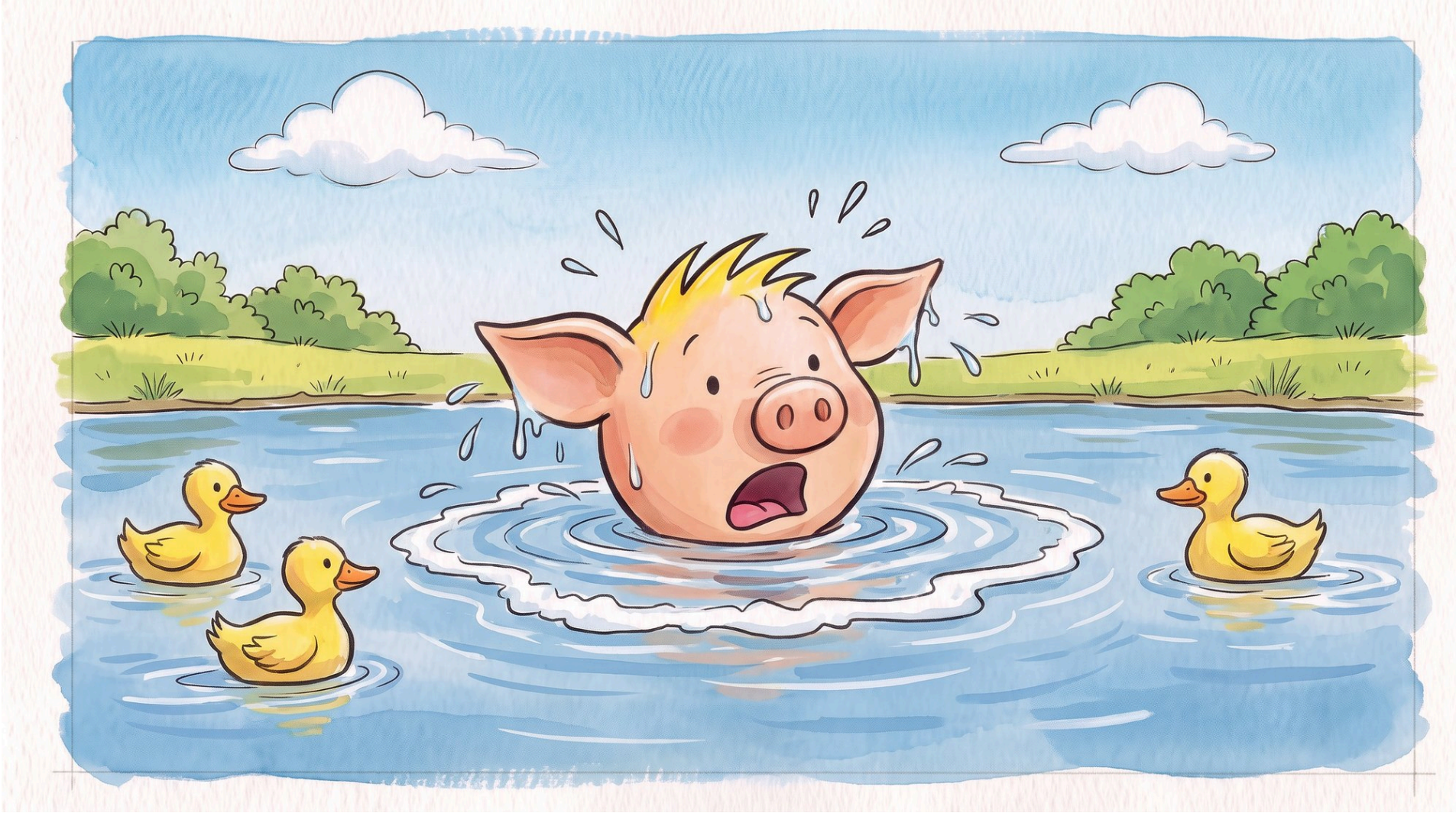
“You just sit on the water,” says Dora, “and paddle with your feet.”

Peter watches them very carefully. “It does look easy,” he says to himself.

Then Bill Badger rolls over in his sleep and knocks the football. It rolls down the bank and plops into the lake again.

Without stopping to think, Peter runs to the edge and jumps in after it.

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SPLASH!

The water is much colder than Peter expected. It takes his breath away. His trotters can't touch the bottom, and down he goes.

He comes up again, coughing and splashing. "Help!" he gasps. "I can't swim! I can't swim!"

Then down he goes again.

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“I’m coming, Peter!” shouts Spikey, and he runs to the water’s edge.

“NO!” quacks Dora Duck. “Stay on the bank, Spikey! If you jump in, there will be two of you in trouble. Shout for help, and throw him something that floats!”

Spikey grabs the football and throws it as hard as he can. It lands right next to Peter.

“Hold on to the ball, Peter!” calls Dora. “Lie back and float on your back like a starfish!”

Bill Badger shouts “HELP!” as loudly as he can. Willy Wasp, who has been buzzing round the reeds, zooms off to fetch Poppa. “I’m the fastest flyer on the farm!” he buzzes. And Bill runs as fast as his legs will carry him to find Momma.

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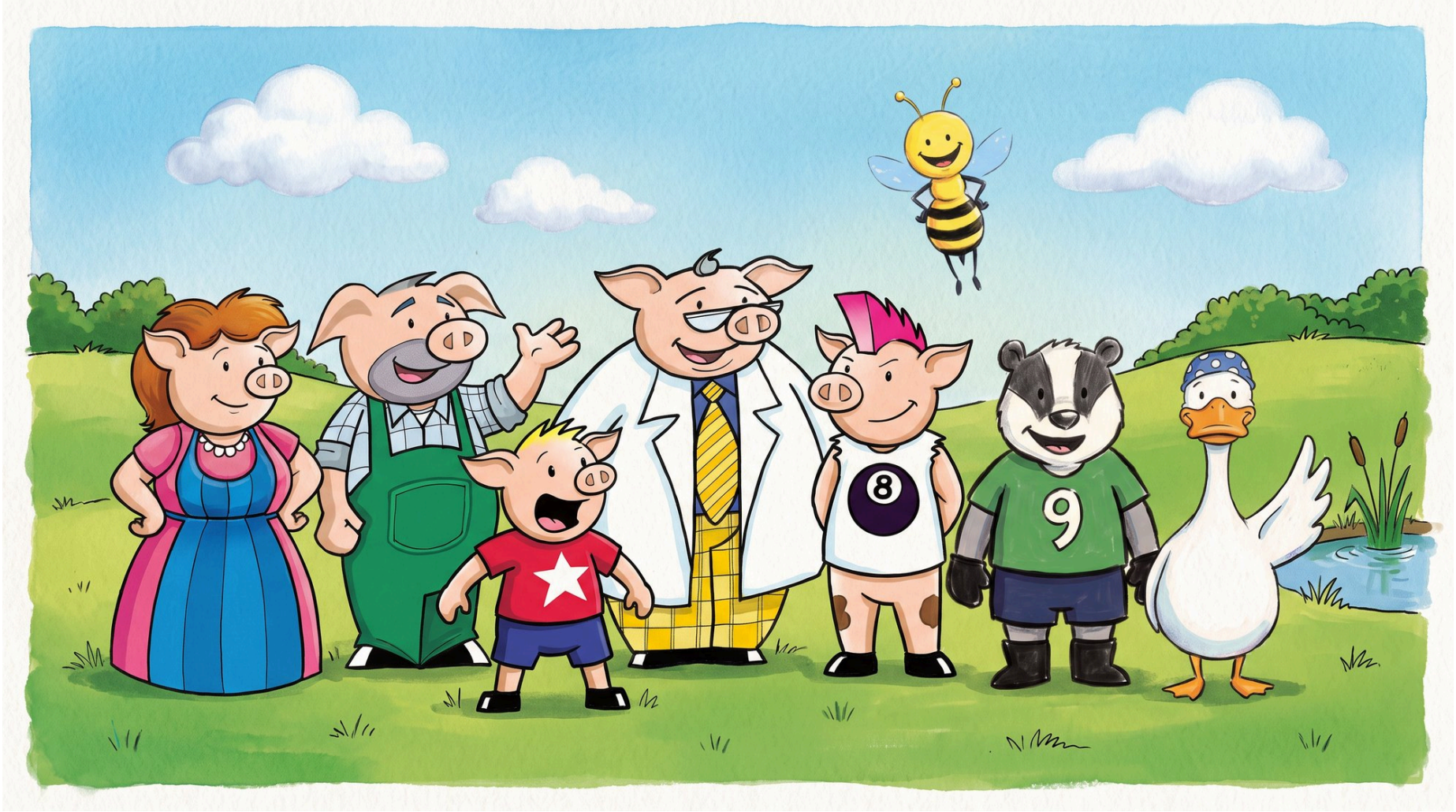
Peter grabs the football and holds on tight. He leans back, spreads out his arms and legs like a starfish, and floats. Slowly he gets his breath back.

Timmy Trout swims underneath him and gently nudges him towards the bank.

Poppa Piggy comes running down the field. He lies down flat on the bank, so that he won't fall in too, and reaches out with Spikey's long stick.

"Grab hold, Peter!" Peter grabs the stick, and Poppa pulls him safely out of the water.

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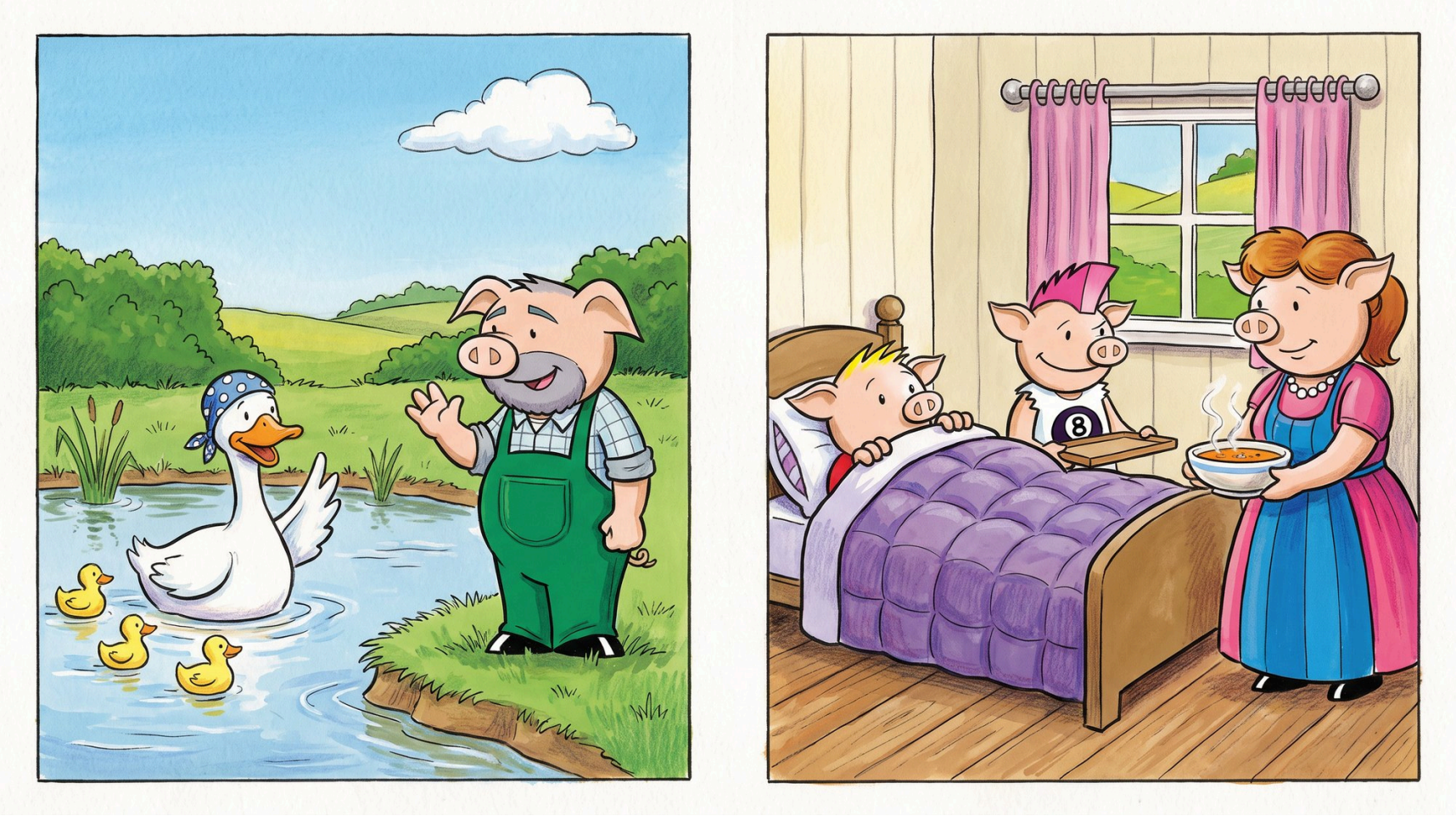


Peter lies on the grass, coughing and spluttering and shivering. Poppa holds him close. “You’re safe now,” he says.

Momma comes running with a big warm blanket and wraps him up snugly. “I have telephoned Doc Hogwell,” she says. “He is on his way.”

Doc Hogwell listens to Peter’s chest with his stethoscope. “He has swallowed some water, and he has had a nasty fright,” he says. “He must go home to bed and keep warm, and I will come and see him again tomorrow. Anyone who nearly drowns must always see a doctor, even if they feel better.”

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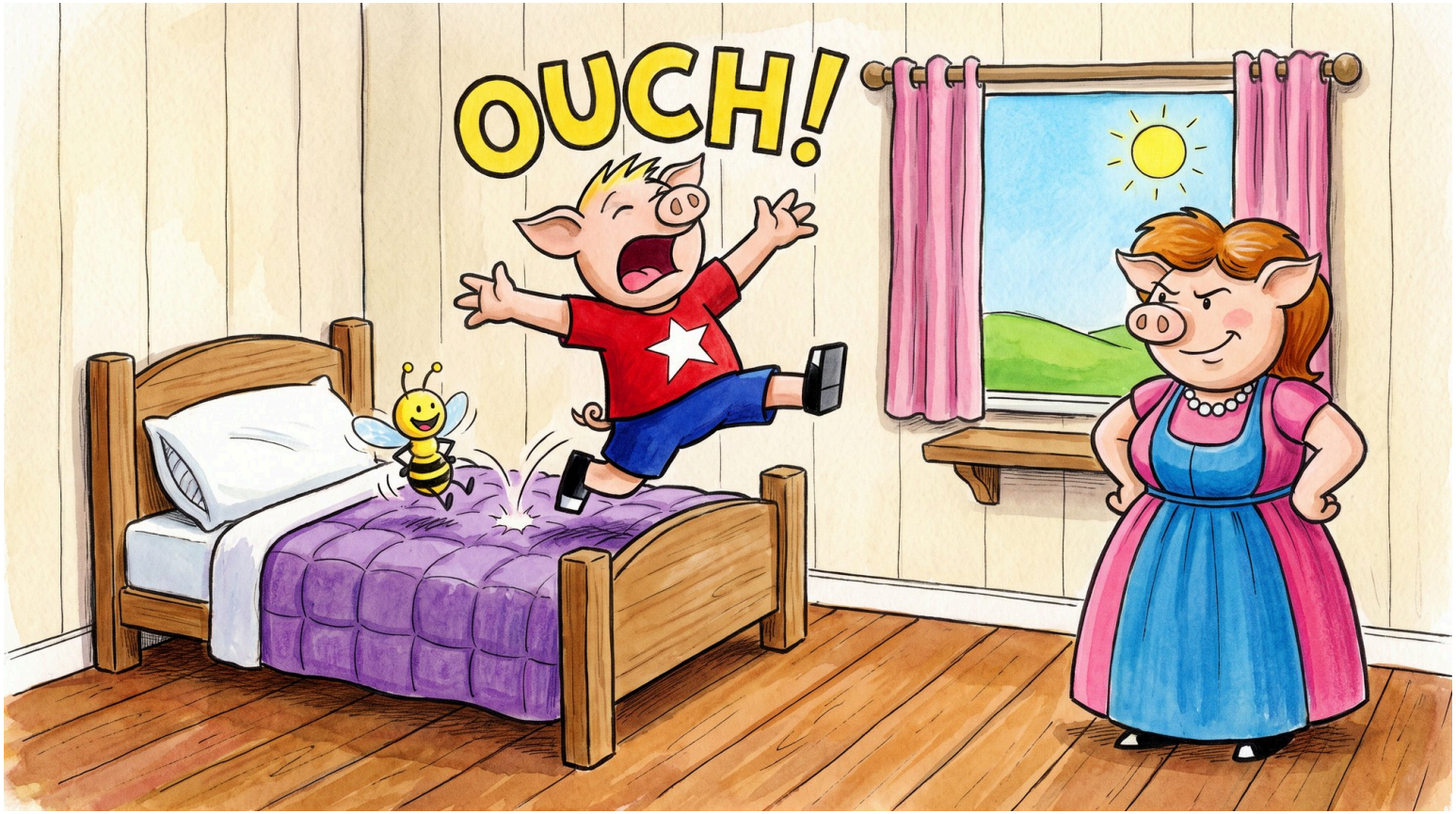
Dora Duck hangs her head. “I am so sorry,” she says. “It was very wrong of us to tell Peter to come in. Swimming is easy for ducks.”

“Ducks and fish are born knowing how to swim,” says Poppa kindly. “But piggies have to learn. And you were very clever to tell Spikey not to jump in, and to tell Peter to float.”

“And Spikey,” says Momma, “throwing the football was exactly the right thing to do.”

Piggy Peter has to stay in bed for two whole days. Momma brings him warm soup, and Spikey reads him his favourite comics. Peter feels very sorry for himself, and very lucky too.

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By the third morning Peter is feeling much better, but he is enjoying breakfast in bed far too much to get up.

“Peter, are you still in bed?” calls Momma.

“I’m still poorly,” says Peter, and he pulls the covers over his head.

Just then Willy Wasp flies in through the window to see how Peter is. He lands softly on the bed to say hello… and Peter rolls right over and sits on him.

“OUCH!” yells Peter, and he shoots out of bed like a rocket, rubbing his bottom.

“Sorry!” buzzes Willy. “You sat on me!”

Momma peeps round the door and smiles. “Well,” she says, “you certainly look better now.”

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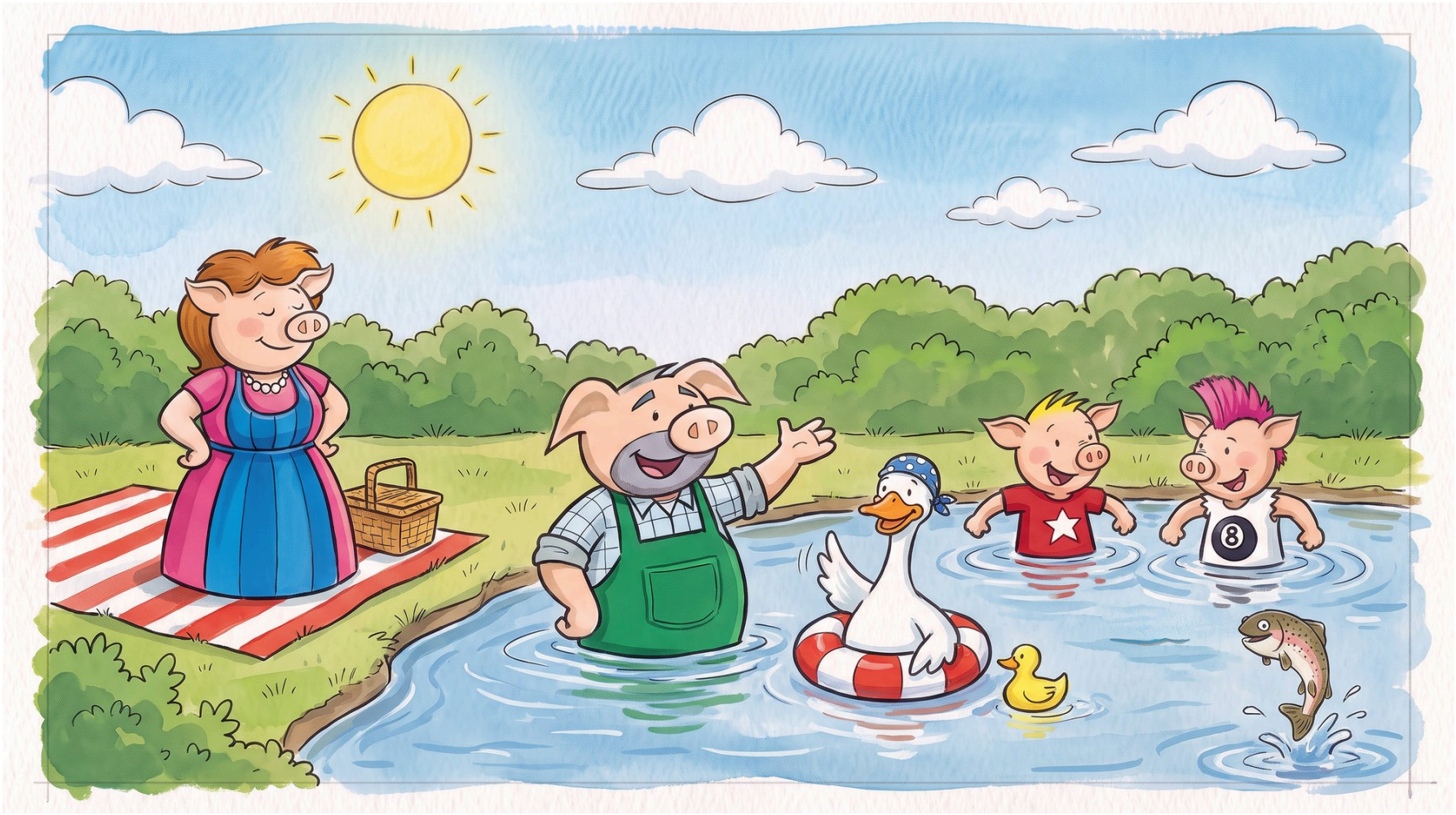
When Peter is better, Poppa takes all the little Piggies to the swimming pool in Byford.

Ollie Otter, the swimming teacher, is waiting by the pool. “Before you learn to swim,” he says, “you must learn to float. Lie back, spread your arms and legs like a starfish, and keep calm.”

Every week the Piggies practise in the shallow end, where they can all stand up. They learn to float, then to kick, then to paddle.

By the end of the summer they can all swim from one side of the pool to the other, and Ollie Otter gives each of them a shiny swimming badge.

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On the last hot day of the summer, Momma and Poppa take the Piggies for a picnic by the lake.

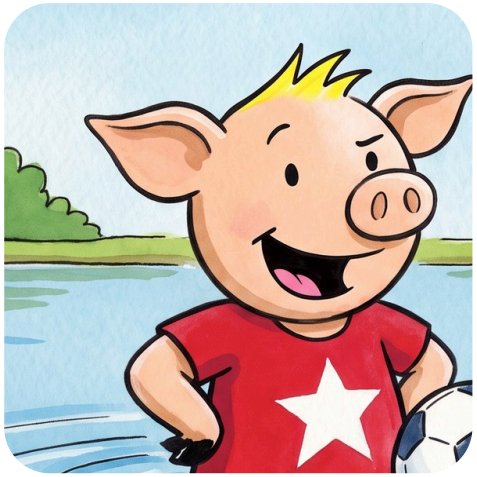
Poppa wades in to where the water is shallow and calm, and the little Piggies paddle and swim around him, while Momma watches from the bank. Dora Duck and her ducklings quack and cheer, and Timmy Trout leaps for joy.

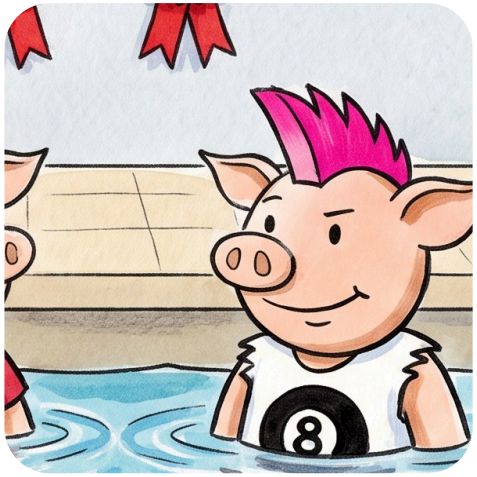
“Can we swim with Dora now, all by ourselves?” asks Peter.

“Only ever when Momma or Poppa are with you,” says Poppa. “Now, can you remember the rules?”

“Yes, Poppa!” say Peter and Spikey together.

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The End

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Poppa's water safety rules

1. Never go near water without a grown-up.
2. Learn to swim at a swimming pool, with a teacher or lifeguard.
3. Only swim where it is safe, and always with a grown-up.
4. If you fall in, keep calm. Float on your back like a starfish, and shout for help.
5. If a friend falls in, never jump in after them. Shout for help, and throw them something that floats. Ask a grown-up to call 999.

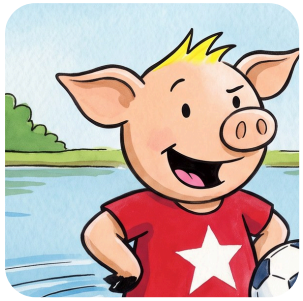
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Talk about it

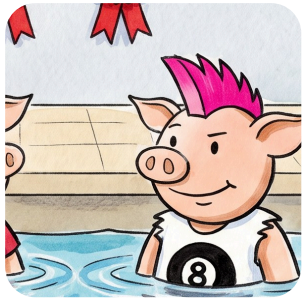
1. What should Peter have done when the football rolled into the lake?
2. Why did Dora tell Spikey not to jump in?
3. What did Spikey throw to Peter, and why did it help?
4. What does “float like a starfish” mean? Can you show me?
5. Who should you always have with you when you are near water?

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Meet the characters



Piggy Peter



Spikey



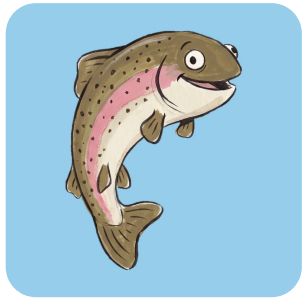
Momma Pig



Poppa Pig



Dora Duck



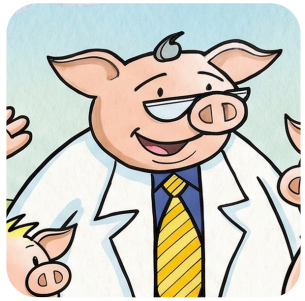
Timmy Trout



Bill Badger



Willy Wasp

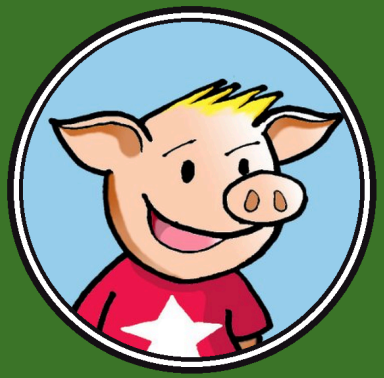


Doc Hogwell



Ollie Otter

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It is a hot summer day, and the big lake looks so cool. But piggies can't swim! Will Peter learn how to stay safe near water?

Float like a starfish. Shout for help.

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