

Otto's Tales



An

Let's Visit

AMERICAN FARM

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“Want to play tug-o-war?” Dennis offered his pal Otto a rope.

“Maybe later,” the lazy bulldog stretched in his bed. “I’m enjoying my nap.”



“Afraid you’ll lose?” Dennis teased.

“**Ruff Ruff!** No way!” Otto perked up. With a big yawn, he followed his best friend to the backyard...where they saw a strange sight.

A small, white kitten was surrounded by piles of dirt, dropping yellow seeds into the holes in the ground around her.





“Smidge, what are you doing?” Dennis was puzzled.

“Planting corn!” she exclaimed. “I’m planning a barbeque, and you can’t have a barbeque without corn.”

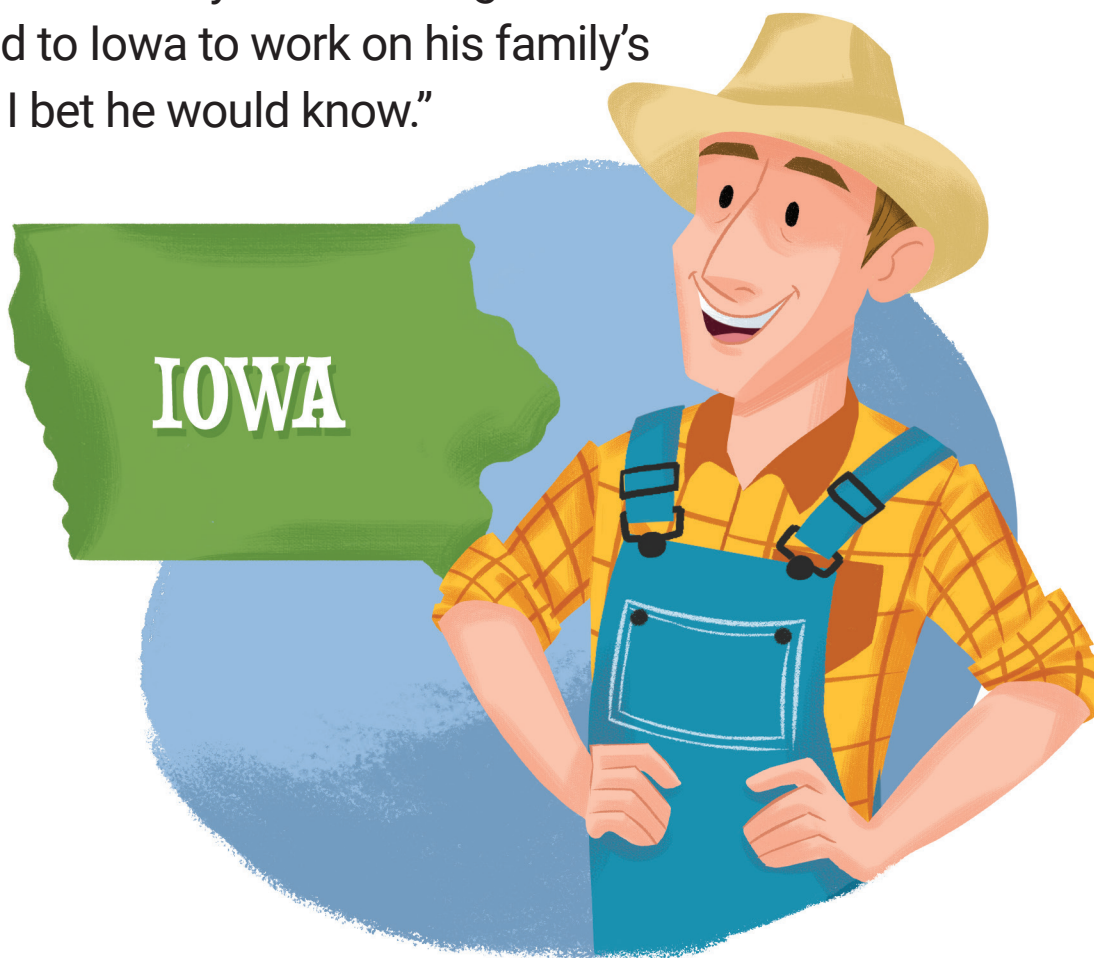
“Wouldn’t it be easier to just buy it at the store?” Otto suggested.

“It’ll take months to grow it in the yard,” Dennis agreed.



"MONTHS?!" Smidge's eyes widened. "I don't have time for that! The grocery store was all out, so what am I supposed to do? How can the grocery store be out of corn, anyways?"

“Hmm, good question,” Dennis considered. “Hey! Our old neighbor moved to Iowa to work on his family’s farm. I bet he would know.”



Smidge scratched her head. “Where’s Iowa?”

“I don’t know,” Otto shrugged. “But I think we should find out. Get your overalls, Smidge. We’re going to a farm!”



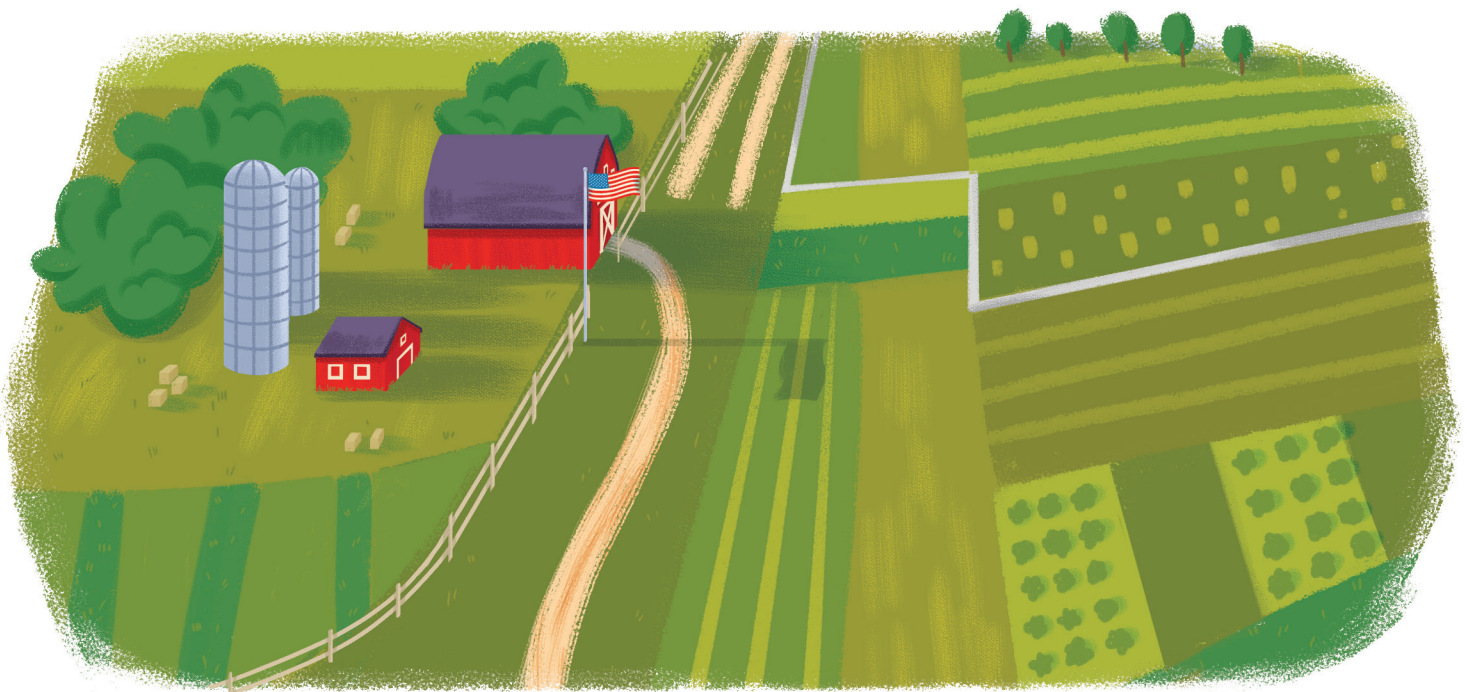


Otto navigated a hot air balloon through the evening sky.

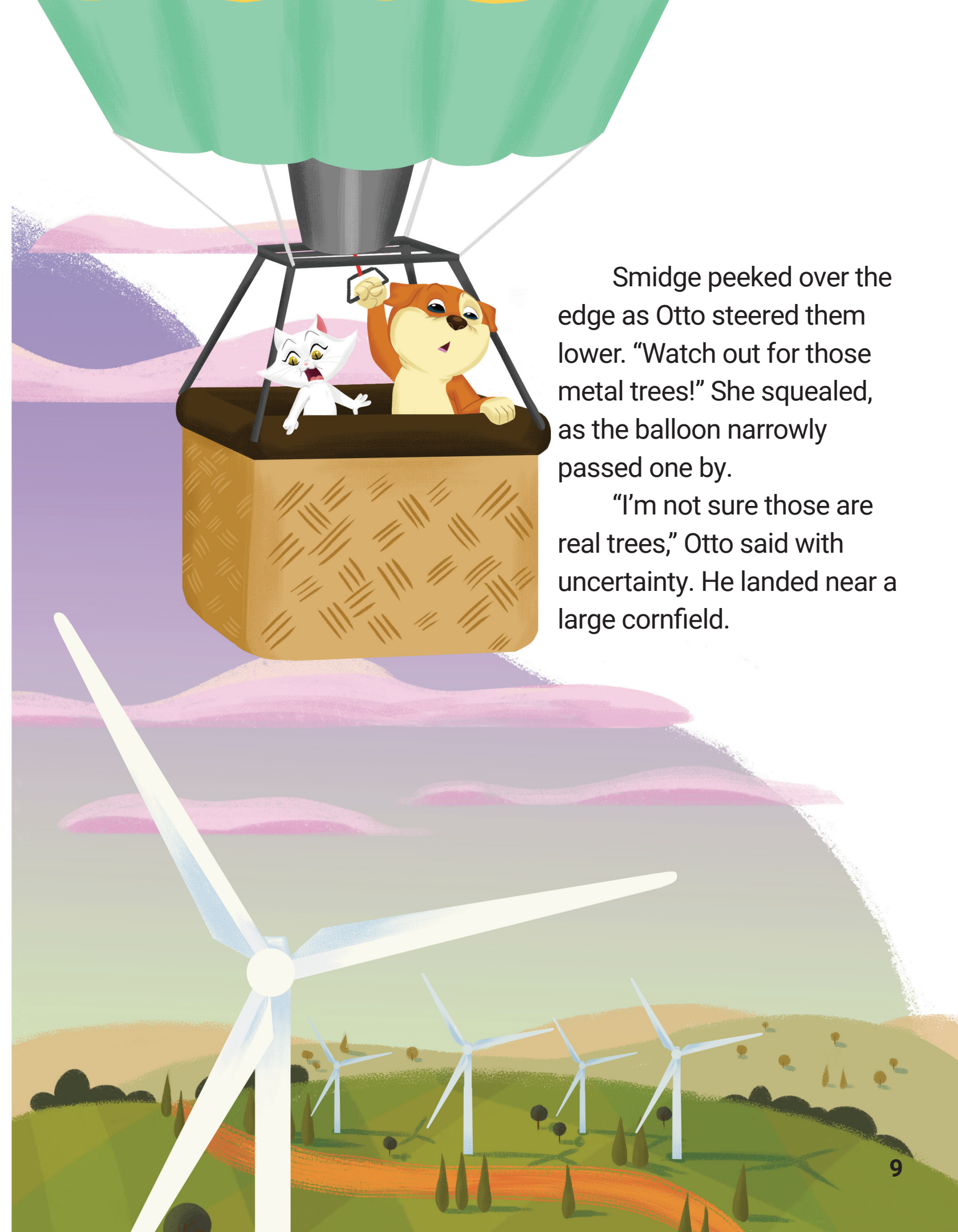
Smidge dug her claws into the basket of the balloon. “Are you sure you can fly this?”

“It’s not difficult,” Otto assured her. “And lucky for us, there are no tornadoes in the forecast.”

“Still, can you go closer to the ground?” The kitten ducked down to hide.

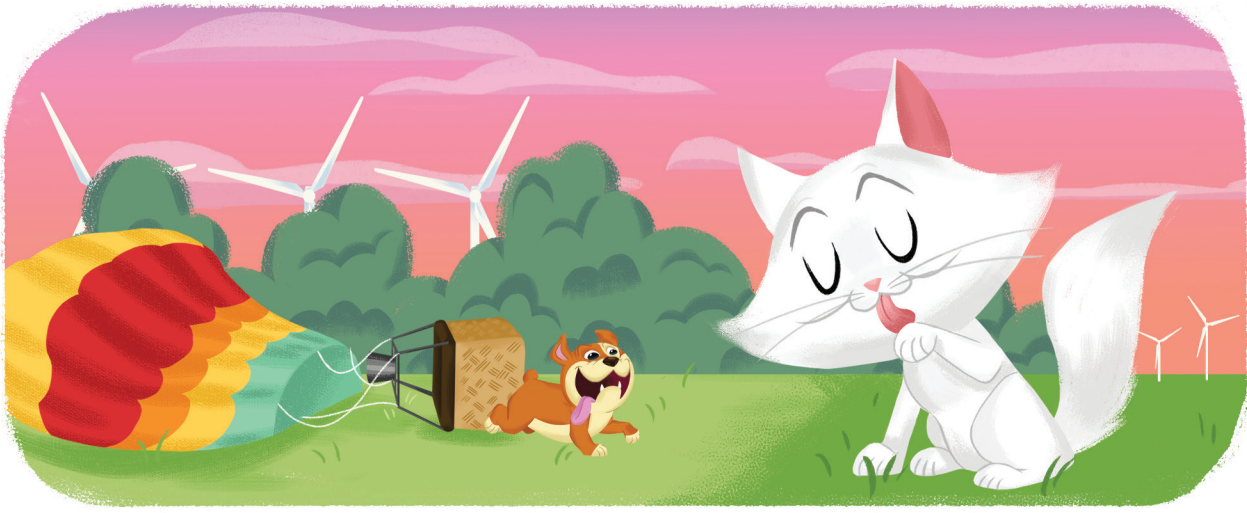


Otto grinned as the breeze hit his face. “You’re missing the view. Look at all that farmland below. It looks like a funny quilt.”

A hot air balloon with a green canopy is suspended in the air. Inside the brown wicker basket, a white cat with a pink bow and a brown dog are looking out. The dog is holding a small black device. Below them, a landscape features several white wind turbines on green hills under a sky with purple and pink clouds.

Smidge peeked over the edge as Otto steered them lower. “Watch out for those metal trees!” She squealed, as the balloon narrowly passed one by.

“I’m not sure those are real trees,” Otto said with uncertainty. He landed near a large cornfield.



“Well, they’re the ugliest metal trees I’ve ever seen.” Smidge leaped out of the basket and smoothed her windblown fur.

“I agree!” A gentle, steady voice welcomed the pair, and a spotted cow approached them. “My name is Greta. It’s nice to have visitors.”



“I’m Otto, and this is my friend Smidge,” the bulldog wagged his tail. “Why are there so many metal trees around here?”

Greta sighed. “They’re not trees. They’re **wind turbines**. The government pays many farmers to have them on their land, but we decided not to get them. Sadly, ever since our neighbor put them up, we don’t see many birds because they get hit by the blades. I almost thought you two were birds coming down from the sky!”



“Sorry to disappoint,” Otto said.

“Nonsense!” Greta laughed. “I’m so excited to have visitors. Mr. Acres will be delighted too. Right this way to Acres Farm.”

Otto and Smidge followed Greta eagerly.



When they arrived, Mr. Acres was on the porch of his farmhouse, cleaning off his boots. He waved as Greta led them over.

“Howdy, travelers! I’m Henry Acres,” the farmer greeted. “Come on in. Sun will be going down soon.”

“Thank you, Mr. Acres,” Otto wiped his paws on the doormat. “I’m Otto and this is Smidge. We’re friends of Dennis.”

“Wonderful! You’re most welcome here,” Mr. Acres smiled.

“Why did you move here, Mr. Acres?” Smidge asked, closing the door behind them. “There’s not a lot to do.”

Mr. Acres chuckled softly. “Actually, there’s more to do than anyone can handle alone. This farm has been in our family for generations, and my father is getting older, so I moved back here to help him.”





“Wow,” Smidge remarked. “How old is your farm?”

“Over one hundred and fifty years old!” Mr. Acres proudly declared. “**Agriculture** was an important part of our nation’s birth and success. Some of our **Founding Fathers**, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, were farmers too.”

“Really?” Otto was shocked. “I thought they were presidents.”

“Those men had *many* skills that helped America. George Washington even said he’d rather be on his farm than be emperor of the world.” Mr. Acres leaned closer. “I feel the same way.”

“No way,” Smidge gasped. “Being emperor sounds more exciting than being a farmer.”

“Well, you’ll find out tomorrow morning,” Mr. Acres winked.



“Tomorrow?” Otto asked. “Can’t you show us the farm today?”

The farmer stretched and yawned. “It’s about bedtime for me. I’ve got an early day tomorrow. Since you’re here, you two are welcome to help me.”



Smidge jumped up and down. “Will you show us how to grow food? I need to learn, so I can host the *best* barbeque ever!”

“Of course, but for now, I’ll show you to your rooms for the night.” Mr. Acres led them upstairs.





“Don’t forget to say your prayers,” he reminded them. “Pray the rain holds off until we finish our planting.”

Otto wrinkled his nose. “What does praying have to do with farming?”

“It takes **faith** to work the land. We’re at the mercy of nature, and we do what we can, but the rest—the weather, the **crop**, the **harvest**—we leave in God’s hands,” Mr. Acres explained.

“I never thought about that,” Otto admitted. “I’m happy to help by praying.”

“Me too,” Smidge added.

“Thank you.” Mr. Acres bid them goodnight. “Sleep well.”

“You too!” The bulldog and kitten chimed.

COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO! A rooster's booming crow echoed at sunrise.

Smidge barged into Otto's room and shook him awake. "Otto, get up! I dreamed that Mr. Acres let me drive the tractor, and it was so fun!!"



Otto groaned. "It's too early. I'm enjoying my sleep."

"Everyone else is up," Smidge pulled the bulldog off the bed, "and we agreed to help, so come on!"

Otto trudged after the energetic kitten, eyes still half-closed.



Outside, the farm was bustling with activity as everyone got to work.

The same rooster who woke them up scurried over. "I'm Mr. Hightail. Do you two have a task?"

Otto and Smidge shook their heads.

"Copy that." Mr. Hightail surveyed the farm. "You two will plant some new crops before the rain hits. Once that soil gets wet, we can't plant anymore, so we better get to it! I hope you said your prayers."

They nodded and quickly followed the rooster to a dirt field.





Otto and Smidge dove into their work, but it wasn't long before Otto stopped to take a break.

"This is hard work." Otto wiped sweat off his face. "How does Mr. Acres do this every day?"

Mr. Hightail appeared again. "It's not time for a break yet. We've got a schedule to keep."

"Mr. Hightail, I don't understand how this works. How do we get our food after we plant the seeds?" Smidge asked.



“Yes, of course,” the rooster paced as he explained. “It’s a detailed process. Once you plant a seed, you must care for it by pulling weeds, watering and **fertilizing** the crops, keeping the pests away, and that’s just while it’s growing! During harvest, you then have to prepare the crops to be sent to **distributors**, who get them to grocery stores.”

Smidge’s head spun. “That’s more work than I thought. I didn’t realize how important farmers are!”

Otto nodded. “All that work so we can easily go to the store and buy our food. Okay, Smidge, no more chatting! Let’s work!”

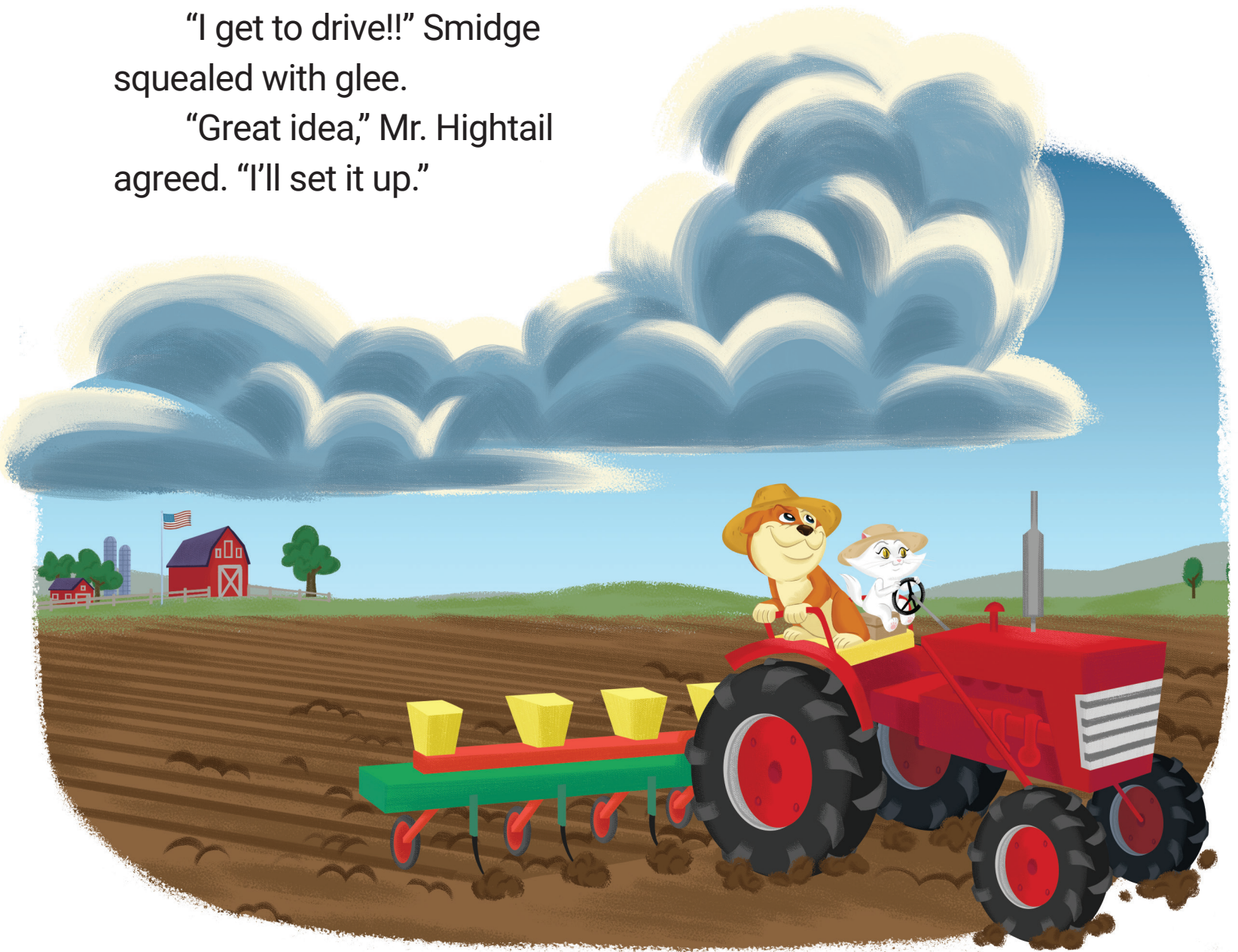


“That’s the spirit! Now, pick up the pace and get these seeds planted before the rain.”

Otto nudged Smidge. “I know what will make this go faster...a tractor!”

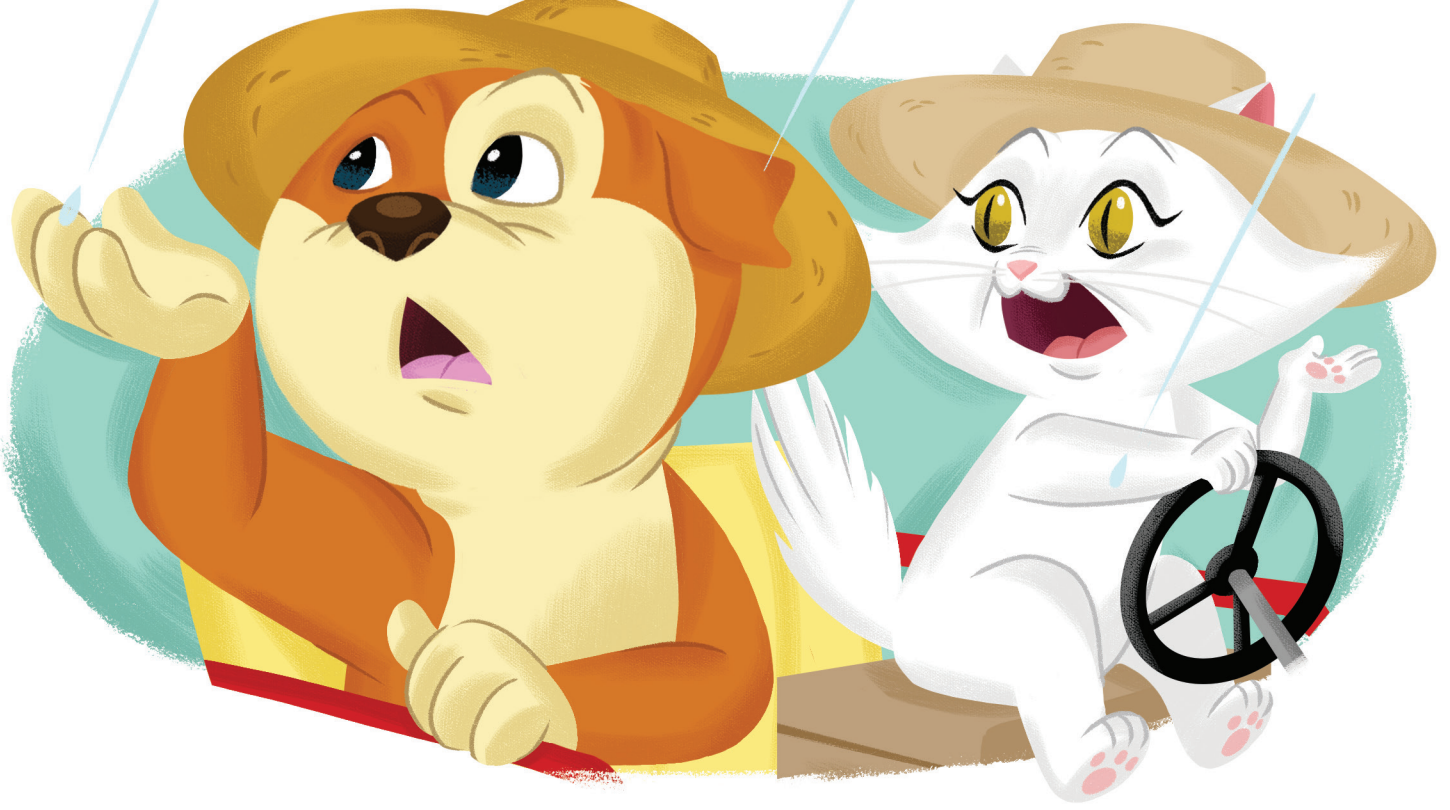
“I get to drive!!” Smidge squealed with glee.

“Great idea,” Mr. Hightail agreed. “I’ll set it up.”



With dark clouds looming, Mr. Hightail attached a **planter** to the tractor. Smidge and Otto drove it through the field, planting the seeds in neat rows.

“We’re going to get it done!” Otto cheered.



“I just felt a raindrop.” Smidge’s fur stood up.

COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO! Mr. Hightail crowed as they made it to the end of the field. “Just in time. Everyone is heading inside to eat while the storm passes through.”

“I think our prayers were answered, Smidge,” Otto said.

“Definitely,” Smidge replied. Rain began to pitter-patter against the ground.





Inside the warm farmhouse, a delicious aroma greeted them, and a feast stretched across the dining table.

Smidge nearly collapsed. "I'm so hungry!"

Mr. Acres gave a prayer of thankfulness for the food, and everyone dug in.



"Wow, that's the best milk I've ever had!" Smidge lapped the last drop from her cup.

"And these vegetables have so much flavor," Otto declared.

"It's all fresh," Mr. Acres reminded them.



“I want to grow my own fresh food,” Smidge decided. “I think I’ll start a garden when we get home.”

“A much neater garden this time,” Otto teased.

“Thanks for letting us see your farm, Mr. Acres. I can’t wait to try everything I’ve learned,” the kitten purred with pride.

Otto barked, “Thank you for letting us help and learn!”

“You two are welcome anytime,” Mr. Acres smiled. “I’ll give you some Acres Farm produce to take home too!”





As soon as the hot air balloon touched ground in the backyard, Otto and Smidge jumped out to greet Dennis. He gave them a big hug. "How was your trip?"

"It was so fun!" Otto howled. "But lots of hard work too. Mr. Acres is a kind man, and we learned to appreciate where our food comes from."

"Yeah, and I got to drive a tractor," Smidge jumped in. "There's so much that goes into growing food. I've decided to start my own garden."



Dennis was impressed. "I can't wait to see what you grow!"

"That was my favorite adventure yet!" Otto cheered.

"You say that every time, Otto," Smidge giggled.

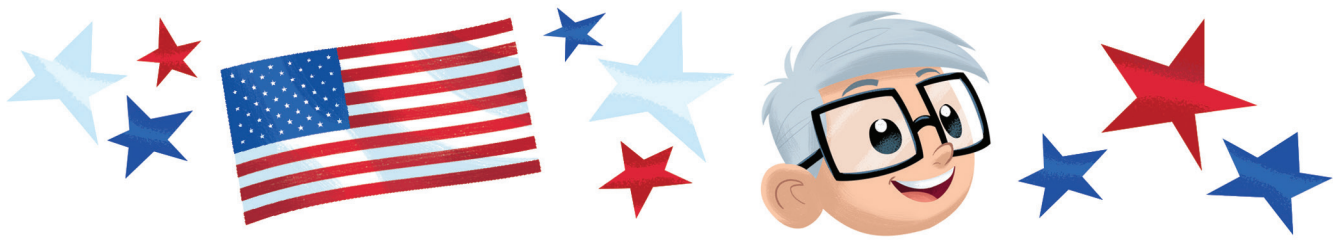
"Ruff Ruff!"



The bulldog and kitten unloaded the boxes of fresh food from the hot air balloon.

"You're all invited to my barbeque tomorrow. I hope you like corn!" Smidge's grin stretched ear to ear.





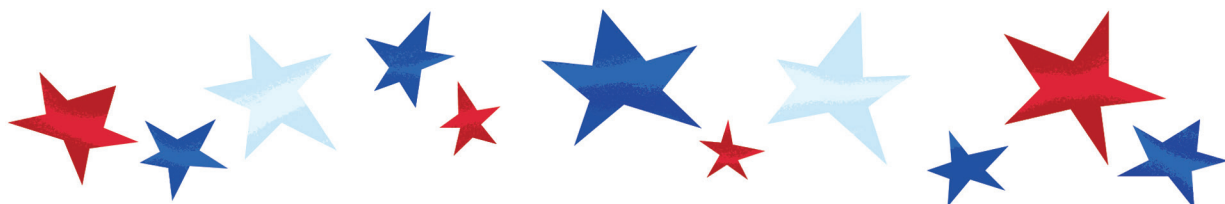
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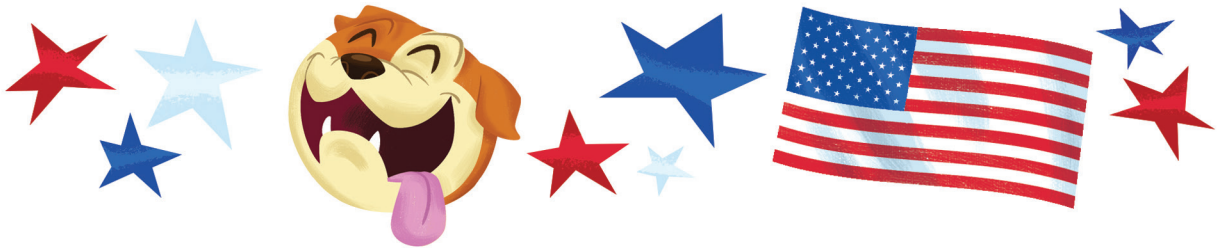
Wind Turbine: A machine with rotating blades that converts kinetic energy from the wind into electrical energy. A large group of these machines in one area is called a wind farm.

Agriculture: The science of farming, including the cultivation of soil for crops and the raising of livestock for food, wool, and other products. Agriculture was a key development in human civilization that brought surpluses in food and allowed people to live in cities.

Founding Fathers: The Founding Fathers, specifically of the United States, are the men who united the 13 colonies, led during the War for Independence from Great Britain, established the country, and created a framework of government to guide the nation. The following men are often recognized as Founding Fathers: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton.

Faith: Complete trust or confidence in someone or something. It is a belief accompanied by the strong conviction to live out what you believe.





Crops: Plants that are grown and harvested to be used as food or livestock feed. They can be grown in large quantities and are used for subsistence or profit. Food crops, such as fruits and vegetables, are harvested for human consumption.

Harvest: The time or season when the crops are ripe enough to gather and be used for food or livestock feed.

Fertilize: The process of providing crops or soil with nutrients to grow. Fertilizer can be any natural or manufactured substance that helps with plant growth and productivity.

Distributors: The distributors act as middlemen between farmers and consumers. The distributors provide the grocery stores the final product. This allows farmers to reach a wide group of customers and have multiple market opportunities to sell their food.

Planter: A farm machine that attaches to a tractor and is used to sow seeds in a field. The machine plants the seeds in a precise way along rows. The planters can vary in size from 1-54 rows.



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**See you in
our *next* adventure!**

- Dennis, Otto,
and Smidge

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TODAY IS
Celebrating American
holidays & traditions



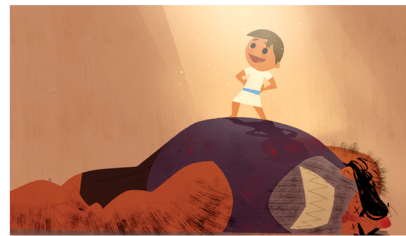
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