

The Tale of Brownie Beaver

CHAPTER 7: A NEWFANGLED NEWSPAPER

by Arthur Scott Bailey

After Mr. Crow flew back to Pleasant Valley to gather news for him, Brownie Beaver carefully counted each day that passed. Since Mr. Crow had agreed to be his newspaper, and come each Saturday afternoon to tell him everything that had happened during the week, Brownie was in a great hurry for Saturday to arrive.

In order to make no mistake, he put aside a stick in which he gnawed a notch each day. And in that way he knew exactly when Saturday came.

That was probably the longest day in Brownie Beaver's life. At least, it seemed so to him. Whenever he saw a bird soaring above the tree-tops he couldn't help hoping it was Mr. Crow. And whenever he heard a caw—caw far off in the distance Brownie Beaver dropped whatever he happened to be doing, expecting that Mr. Crow would flap into sight at any moment.

Brownie had many disappointments. But Mr. Crow really came at last. He lighted right on top of Brownie Beaver's house and called "Paper!" down the chimney—just like that!

Brownie happened to be inside his house. And in a wonderfully short time his head appeared above the water and he soon crawled up beside Mr. Crow.

"Well, I am glad to see you!" he told Mr. Crow.

"Peter Mink caught a monstrous eel in the duck pond on Monday," Mr. Crow said. Being a newspaper, he thought he ought to say nothing except what was news—not even "Good afternoon!"



“Mr. Rabbit, of Pine Ridge, with his wife and fourteen children, is visiting his brother, Mr. Jeremiah Rabbit. Mrs. Jeremiah Rabbit says she does not know when her husband’s relations are going home,” Mr. Crow continued to relate in a singsong voice.

“Goodness gracious!” Brownie Beaver exclaimed.

“Fatty Coon—” Mr. Crow said—“Fatty Coon was confined to his house by illness Tuesday night. He ate too many dried apples.”

“Well, well!” Brownie Beaver murmured. And he started to ask Mr. Crow a question. But Mr. Crow interrupted him with more news.

“Mrs. Bear had a birthday on Wednesday. An enjoyable time was had by all—except the pig.”

“Pig?” Brownie Beaver asked. “What pig?”

“The pig they ate,” said Mr. Crow. And he went right on talking. “On Thursday Mr. Woodchuck went to visit his cousins in the West. Mrs. Woodchuck is worried.”

“What’s she worried about?” Brownie inquired.

“She’s afraid he’s coming back again,” Mr. Crow explained.

“I have heard he was lazy,” Brownie said. “What happened on Friday?”

“Tommy Fox made a visit. But he didn’t have a good time at all,” Mr. Crow reported, “and he left faster than he came.”



Brownie Beaver wanted to know where Tommy Fox made his visit.

“At Farmer Green’s hen-house,” Mr. Crow explained.

“Why did he hurry away?” Brownie asked.

“Old dog Spot chased him,” Mr. Crow replied. “But you mustn’t ask questions,” he complained. “You can’t ask questions of a newspaper, you know.”

“Well—what happened on Saturday?”

“There you go again!” cried Mr. Crow. “Another question! I declare, I don’t believe you ever took a newspaper before—did you?”

Brownie Beaver admitted that he never had.

“Then—” said Mr. Crow—“then don’t interrupt me again, please! I’ll tell you all the news I’ve brought. And when I’ve finished I’ll stop being a newspaper and be myself for a while. And then we can talk. But not before!” he insisted.

Brownie Beaver nodded his head. He was afraid that if he said another word Mr. Crow would grow angry and fly away without telling him any more news.

“On Saturday—this morning, to be exact”—said Mr. Crow, “there came near being a bad accident. Jimmy Rabbit almost cut off Frisky Squirrel’s tail.”

Mr. Crow paused and looked at Brownie Beaver out of the corner of his eye. He knew that Brownie would want to know what prevented the accident. But he was in no hurry to tell him.

For a few moments Brownie waited to hear the rest. But a few moments was more than he could endure.



“Why didn’t Jimmy cut off his tail?” Brownie asked eagerly.

“There!” said Mr. Crow. “You’ve done just as I told you not to. So I shall not tell you the rest until next Saturday... You see, you have a few things to learn about taking a newspaper.” And he would give Brownie no more news that day. To be sure, he was willing to talk—but only about things that had happened where Brownie Beaver lived.