

The Tale of Brownie Beaver

CHAPTER 15: JASPER JAY'S STORY

by Arthur Scott Bailey

After the blinding flash of light and the queer click had sent Brownie Beaver hurrying home from his partly gnawed tree, he stayed in his house for a long time before he ventured out again.

Indeed, the night was half gone when he at last he stole forth to find Grandaddy Beaver and tell him about his awful fright.


Brownie found the old gentleman resting after several hours' work upon the big dam. And when young Brownie told Grandaddy what had happened, the old gentleman didn't know just what to think.

"It couldn't have been a moonbeam," he said, "because there's no moon tonight. And I don't see how it could have been a gun, because there was no roar. Did you hear a sort of whistle?" he asked. "Anything that sounded like a bullet passing over your head?"

Brownie Beaver shuddered at the mere mention of a bullet.

"I heard nothing but that odd click," he replied.

"That's what a gun sounds like when it's cocked," said Grandaddy Beaver. "But with a gun, the click comes first, the flash next, and the roar last of all. And here you tell me the flash came first, the click next, and there was no roar at all. What's a body a-going to think, I'd like to know? It wasn't a gun—that's sure. And if you want to know what I say about it, why—I say that it was a very strange thing that happened to you. And I'd keep away from that tree for a long time."



“I had made up my mind that I’d do that,” Brownie told him. And then he went home again. But he never went to sleep until almost noon the following day; for whenever he closed his eyes he seemed to see that blinding flash of light again.

When Jasper Jay came on Saturday afternoon to tell Brownie Beaver what had happened in the world during the past week he had an astounding piece of news.

“Here’s something about you,” Jasper told Brownie, as soon as he could catch his breath. Jasper had flown faster than usual that day, because he had such interesting news. “Your picture,” he told Brownie, “is in the photographer’s window, way over in the town where Farmer Green goes sometimes.”

Brownie Beaver gave Jasper a quick look.

“I’ve often suspected,” he said, “that you don’t always tell me the truth. And now I know it. I’ve never been to the photographer’s in my life. So how could he have my picture, I should like to know?”


“But you don’t have to go to the photographer’s to have your picture taken,” Jasper Jay retorted. “Why couldn’t the photographer come to you?”

“I suppose he could,” Brownie Beaver said. “But he’s never been here.”

Jasper Jay gave one of his loud laughs.

“That—” he said—“that is just where you are mistaken. And when I explain how I came by this news, maybe you’ll believe me.”

“Tommy Fox told it to me,” Jasper went on, “and old dog Spot told it to him. Everybody knows that old Spot sometimes goes to town with his master. They



were there yesterday. And Spot saw your picture himself. What's more, he heard the photographer tell Farmer Green that he came up here almost a week ago, hid his camera in some bushes, and set a flashlight near a half—gnawed tree. And when you started to work on the tree that night you brushed against a wire, and the flashlight flared up, and the camera took your picture before you could jump away.... Now what do you say?" Jasper Jay demanded. "Now do you think I'm telling you the truth?"

Brownie Beaver was so surprised that it was several minutes before he could speak. Then he said:

"Grandaddy Beaver was right. It wasn't a gun. I was just having my picture taken." Brownie was actually pleased, because he knew he was the only person in his village that had ever had such a thing happen to him.

After that he was ready to believe everything Jasper Jay told him. So Jasper related some wonderful news. And it would hardly be fair for anyone not present at the time to say that it wasn't perfectly true—every word of it.