

THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

CHAPTER 6: FARMER BROWN'S BOY IS PUZZLED



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Farmer Brown's boy was whistling merrily as he tramped down across the Green Meadows. The Merry Little Breezes saw him coming, and they raced over to the Smiling Pool to tell Billy Mink. Farmer Brown's boy was coming to visit his traps. He was very sure that he would find Billy Mink or Little Joe Otter, or Jerry Muskrat, or perhaps Bobby Coon.

Billy Mink was sitting on top of the Big Rock. He saw the Merry Little Breezes racing across the Green Meadows, and behind them he saw Farmer Brown's boy. Billy Mink dived head first into the Smiling Pool. Then he swam over to Jerry Muskrat's house and warned Jerry. Together they hunted up Little Joe Otter, and then the three little scamps in brown hid in the bulrushes, where they could watch Farmer Brown's boy.

The first place Farmer Brown's boy visited was Jerry Muskrat's old log. Very cautiously he peeped over the edge of the bank. The trap was gone!

"Hurrah!" shouted Farmer Brown's boy. He was very much excited, as he caught hold of the end of the chain, which fastened it to the old log. He was sure that at last he had caught Jerry Muskrat. When he pulled the trap up, it was empty. Between the jaws were a few hairs and a little bit of skin, which Jerry Muskrat had left there when he sprung the trap with his tail.

Farmer Brown's boy was disappointed. "Well, I'll get him to-morrow, anyway," said he to himself. Then he went on to his next trap; it was nowhere to be seen. When he pulled the chain he was so excited that he trembled. The trap did not come up at once. He pulled and pulled, and then suddenly up it came, all covered with mud. In it was one little claw from Little Joe Otter. Very carefully Farmer Brown's boy set the trap again. If he could have looked over in the bulrushes and have seen Little Joe Otter and Billy Mink and Jerry Muskrat watching him and tickling and laughing, he would not have been so sure that next time he would catch Little Joe Otter.

All around the Smiling Pool and then up and down the Laughing Brook Farmer Brown's boy tramped, and each trap he found sprung and buried in the mud. He had stopped whistling by this time, and there was a puzzled frown on his freckled face. What did it mean? Could some other boy have found all his traps and played a trick by springing all of them? The more he thought about it, the more puzzled he became. You see, he did not know anything about the busy day the Minks and the Otters and the Muskrats and the Coons had spent the day before.

Old Grandfather Frog, sitting on his big green lily-pad, smoothed down his white and yellow waistcoat and winked up at jolly, round,

red Mr. Sun as Farmer Brown's boy tramped off across the Green Meadows.

"Chugarum!" said Grandfather Frog, as he snapped up a foolish green fly. "Much good it will do you to set those traps again!"

Then Grandfather Frog called to Billy Mink and sent him to tell all the other little people of the Smiling Pool and the Laughing Brook that they must hurry and spring all the traps again as they had before.

This time it was easy, because they knew just where the traps were, so all day long they dropped sticks and stones into the traps and once more sprung them. Then they prepared for a grand feast of the good things to eat which Farmer Brown's boy had left, scattered around the traps.