

THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

CHAPTER 17: WHO HAD MADE THE STRANGE POND?



BY THORNTON W. BURGESS

Who had made the strange pond? That is what Spotty the Turtle wanted to know. That is what Billy Mink wanted to know. So did Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat and Grandfather Frog, when they arrived. So did Ol' Mistah Buzzard, looking down from the blue, blue sky. It was very strange, very strange indeed! Never had there been a pond in that part of the Green Forest before, not even in the days when Sister South Wind melted the snow so fast that the Laughing Brook ran over its banks and the Smiling Pool grew twice as large as it ought to be.

Of course some one had made it. Spotty the Turtle had known that as soon as he had seen the strange pond. All in a flash he had understood what that wall of logs and brush and mud across the Laughing Brook was for. It was to stop the water from running down the Laughing Brook. And of course, if the water couldn't keep on running and laughing on its way to the Smiling Pool, it would just stand still and grow and grow into a pond. Of course! There was nothing else for it to do. Spotty felt very proud when he had thought that out all by himself.

"This wall we are sitting on has made the pond," said Spotty the Turtle, after a long time in which no one had spoken.

"You don't say so!" said Billy Mink. "How ever, ever, did you guess it? Are you sure, quite sure that the pond didn't make

the wall?"

Spotty knew that Billy Mink was making fun of him, but he is too good-natured to lose his temper over a little thing like that. He tried to think of something smart to say in reply, but Spotty is a slow thinker as well as a slow walker, and before he could think of anything, Billy was talking once more.

"This wall is what Farmer Brown's boy calls a dam," said Billy Mink, who is a great traveler. "Dams are usually built to keep water from running where it isn't wanted or to make it go where it is wanted. Now, what I want to know is, who under the sun wants a pond way back here in the Green Forest, and what is it for? Who do you think built this dam, Grandfather Frog?"

Grandfather Frog shook his head. His big goggly eyes seemed more goggly than ever, as he stared at the new pond in the Green Forest.

"I don't know," said Grandfather Frog. "I don't know what to think."

"Why, it must be Farmer Brown's boy or Farmer Brown himself," said Jerry Muskrat.

"Of course," said Little Joe Otter, just as if he knew all about it.

Still Grandfather Frog shook his head, as if he didn't agree. "I don't know," said Grandfather Frog, "I don't know. It doesn't look so to me."

Billy Mink ran along the top of the dam

and down the back side. He looked it all over with those sharp little eyes of his.

“Grandfather Frog is right,” said he, when he came back. “It doesn’t look like the work of Farmer Brown or Farmer Brown’s boy. But if they didn’t do it, who did? Who could have done it?”

“I don’t know,” said Grandfather Frog again, in a dreamy sort of voice.

Spotty the Turtle looked at him, and saw that Grandfather Frog’s face wore the far-away look that it always does when he tells a story of the days when the world was young. “I don’t know,” he repeated, “but it looks to me very much like the work of —” Grandfather Frog stopped short off and turned to Jerry Muskrat. “Jerry Muskrat,” said he, so sharply that Jerry nearly lost his balance in his surprise, “has your big cousin come down from the North?”