

THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

CHAPTER 19: JERRY MUSKRAT HAS A BUSY DAY



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There was the strange pond in the Green Forest, and there was the dam of logs and sticks and mud which had made the strange pond, but look as they would, Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter and Jerry Muskrat and Grandfather Frog and Spotty the Turtle could see nothing of the one who had built the dam. It was very queer. The more they thought about it, the queerer it seemed. They looked this way, and they looked that way.

“There is one thing very sure, and that is that whoever built this dam had no thought for those who live in the Laughing Brook and the Smiling Pool,” said Grandfather Frog. “They are selfish, just plain, every-day selfish; that’s what they are! Now the Laughing Brook cannot laugh, and the Smiling Pool cannot smile, while this dam stops the water from running, and so —” Grandfather Frog stopped and looked around at his four friends.

“And so what?” cried Billy Mink impatiently.

“And so we must spoil this dam. We must make a place for the water to run through,” said Grandfather Frog very gravely.

“Of course! That’s the very thing!” cried Little Joe Otter and Billy Mink and Jerry Muskrat and Spotty the Turtle. Then Little Joe Otter looked at Billy Mink, and Billy Mink looked at Jerry Muskrat, and Jerry Muskrat looked at Spotty the Turtle, and af-

ter that they all looked very hard at Grandfather Frog, and all together they asked: “How are we going to do it?”

Grandfather Frog scratched his head thoughtfully and looked a long time at the dam of logs and sticks and mud. Then his big mouth widened in a big smile.

“Why, that is very simple,” said he, “Jerry Muskrat will make a big hole through the dam near the bottom, because he knows how, and the rest of us will keep watch to see that no harm comes near.”

“The very thing!” cried Little Joe Otter and Billy Mink and Spotty the Turtle, but Jerry Muskrat thought it wasn’t fair. You see, it gave him all of the real work to do. However, Jerry thought of his dear Smiling Pool, and how terrible it would be if it should smile no more, and so without another word he set to work.

Now Jerry Muskrat is a great worker, and he had made many long tunnels into the bank around the Smiling Pool, so he had no doubt but that he could soon make a hole through this dam. But almost right away he found trouble. Yes, Sir, Jerry had hardly begun before he found real trouble. You see, that dam was made mostly of sticks instead of mud, and so, instead of digging his way in as he would have done into the bank of the Smiling Pool, he had to stop every few minutes to gnaw off sticks that were in the way.

It was hard work, the hardest kind of hard

work. But Jerry Muskrat is the kind that is the more determined to do the work the harder the work is to be done. And so, while Grandfather Frog sat on one end of the dam and pretended to keep watch, but really took a nap in the warm sunshine, and while Spotty the Turtle sat on the other end of the dam doing the same thing, and while Billy Mink and Little Joe Otter swam around in the strange pond and enjoyed themselves, Jerry Muskrat worked and worked and worked. And just as jolly, round, red Mr. Sun started down behind the Purple Hills, Jerry broke through into the strange pond, and the water began to run in the Laughing Brook once more.