

THE ADVENTURES OF JERRY MUSKRAT

CHAPTER 25: PADDY THE BEAVER

DECIDES TO STAY



BY THORNTON W. BURGESS

"The fair Green Meadows spreading wide,
The Smiling Pool and Laughing Brook—
They fill our hearts with joy and pride;
We love their every hidden nook."

So said Jerry Muskrat, as he climbed up on the Big Rock in the middle of the Smiling Pool, with Paddy the Beaver beside him, and watched the dear Smiling Pool dimpling and smiling in the moonlight, as he had so often seen it before the great trouble had come.

"Chugarum!" said Grandfather Frog in his great deep voice from the bulrushes. "One never knows how great their blessings are until they have been lost and found again."

The bulrushes nodded, as if they too were thinking of this. You see their feet were once more in the cool water. Paddy the Beaver seemed to understand just how every one felt, and he smiled to himself as he saw how happy these new friends of his were.

"It surely is a very nice place here, and I don't wonder that you couldn't bear to leave it," said he. "I'm sorry that I made you all that trouble and worry, but you see I didn't know."

"Oh, that's all right," replied Jerry Muskrat, who was now very proud of his big cousin. "I hope that now you see how nice it is, you will stay and make your home here."

Paddy the Beaver looked back at the great black shadow which he knew was the Green Forest. Way over in the middle of it he heard the

hunting-call of Hooty the Owl. Then he looked out over the Green Meadows, and from way over on the far side of them sounded the bark of Reddy Fox, and it was answered by the deep voice of Bowser the Hound up in Farmer Brown's dooryard. For some reason that last sound made Paddy the Beaver shiver a little, just as the voice of Hooty the Owl made the smaller people of the Green Forest and the Green Meadows shiver when they heard it. Paddy wasn't afraid of Hooty or of Reddy Fox, but Bowser's great voice was new to him, and somehow the very sound of it made him afraid. You see, the Green Meadows were so strange and open that he didn't feel at all at home, for he dearly loves the deepest part of the Green Forest.

"No," said Paddy the Beaver, "I can't possibly live here in the Smiling Pool. It is a very nice pool, but it wouldn't do at all for me, Cousin Jerry. I wouldn't feel safe here a minute. Besides, there is nothing to eat here."

"Oh, yes, there is," Jerry Muskrat interrupted. "There are lily-roots and the nicest fresh-water clams and—"

"But there are no trees," said Paddy the Beaver, "and you know I have to have trees."

Jerry stared at Paddy as if he didn't understand. "Do—do you eat trees?" he asked finally.

Paddy laughed. "Just the bark," said he, "and I have to have a great deal of it."

Jerry looked as disappointed as he felt. "Of course you can't stay then," said he, "and—and I

had thought that we would have such good times together.”

Paddy’s eyes twinkled. “Perhaps we may yet,” said he. “You see I have about made up my mind that I will stay a while along the Laughing Brook in the Green Forest, and you can come to see me there. On our way down I saw a very nice hole in the bank that I think will make me a good house for the present, and you can come up there to see me. But if I do stay, you and Grandfather Frog and Spotty the Turtle must keep my secret. No one must know that I am there. Will you?”

“Of course we will!” cried Jerry Muskrat and Grandfather Frog and Spotty the Turtle together.

“Then I’ll stay,” said Paddy the Beaver, diving into the Smiling Pool with a great splash.

And so one of Jerry Muskrat’s greatest adventures ended in the finding of his biggest cousin, Paddy the Beaver.