

The Tale of Brownie Beaver

CHAPTER 4: THE FRESHET

by Arthur Scott Bailey



The rain had fallen steadily for two days and two nights—not just a gentle drizzle, but a heavy downpour.

For some time it did not in the least disturb Brownie Beaver and his neighbors—that is to say, all but one of them. For there was a very old gentleman in the village known as Granddaddy Beaver who began to worry almost as soon as it began to rain.


“We’re a-going to have a freshet,” he said to everybody he met. “I’ve seen ‘em start many a time and I can always tell a freshet almost as soon as I see it coming.”

Granddaddy Beaver’s friends paid no heed to his warning. And some of them were so unkind as to laugh when the old gentleman crawled on top of his house and began to mend it.

“You young folks can poke fun at me if you want to,” said Granddaddy Beaver, “but I’m a-going right ahead and make my house as strong as I can. For when the freshet gets here I don’t want my home washed away.”

All day long people would stop to watch the old fellow at work upon his roof. And everybody thought it was a great joke—until the second day came and everybody noticed that it was raining just as hard as ever.

But no one except Granddaddy Beaver had ever heard of a freshet at that time of year. So even then nobody else went to work on his house, though some people did stop smiling. A freshet, you know, is a serious thing.



As the second day passed, the rain seemed to fall harder. And still Granddaddy Beaver kept putting new sticks on the roof of his house and plastering mud over them. And at last Brownie Beaver began to think that perhaps the old gentleman was right, after all, and that maybe everybody else was wrong.

So Brownie went home and set to work. And all his neighbors at once began to smile at him.

But Brownie Beaver didn't mind that.

"My roof needed mending, anyhow," he said. "And if we should have a freshet. I'll be ready for it. And if we don't have one, there'll be no harm done."


Now, all this time the water had been rising slowly. But that was no more than everyone expected, since it was raining so hard. But when the second night came, the water began to rise very fast. It rose so quickly that several families found their bedroom floors under water almost before they knew it.

Then old Granddaddy Beaver went through the village and stopped at every door.

"What do you think about it now?" he asked. "Is it a freshet or isn't it?"

In the houses where the water had climbed above the bedroom floors the people all agreed that it was a freshet and that Granddaddy Beaver had been right all the time. But there were still plenty of people who thought the old gentleman was mistaken.

"The water won't come any higher," they said. "It never has, at this time of year." But they looked a bit worried, in spite of what they said.



“It’s a-going to be the worst freshet that’s happened since you were born,” their caller croaked. “You mark my words!”

When he came to Brownie Beaver’s house Granddaddy found that there was one person, at least, that had taken his advice.

“I see you’re all ready for the freshet!” the old gentleman remarked. “They laughed at me; but I was right,” he said.

“They laughed at me, too,” Brownie Beaver told him.

“There’s nobody in this village that’ll laugh again tonight,” Granddaddy said very solemnly, “for there’s a-going to be a flood before morning.”