

*The Tale of Brownie Beaver*  
CHAPTER 14: WAS IT A GUN?

by *Arthur Scott Bailey*



Everybody in the village where Brownie Beaver lived was very much upset. Most people were angry, too. And no doubt it was natural that they should feel that way, because while they were taking their midday naps a man had come and paddled about their village in a boat.


Brownie Beaver was the first to hear him and he quickly spread the alarm. There was a great scurrying as all the villagers stole out of their houses and swam away under water to hide in holes in the bank of the pond and in other places they knew.

Toward night, when they all came back again, the man had gone. But Brownie and his neighbors were still angry. You must remember that their rest had been disturbed and they were feeling somewhat sleepy.

So far as they could see, the man had done no damage either to their houses or to the dam. But people felt a bit uneasy just the same, until old Granddaddy Beaver looked all around and reported that the man had set no traps. You see, Granddaddy knew a great deal about traps. He had been caught in one when he was young. Luckily, he managed to get away; and he learned a few things that he never forgot.

Now, Brownie Beaver had begun to cut down a tree the night before. Something had interrupted him and he had left the tree not quite gnawed through and needing only a few more bites to bring it down. He was intending to finish his task soon after dark—which was the time he liked best for working.

Accordingly, after Brownie had finished his supper and had called at every house in the village to talk over the visit of the strange man, he swam to the



shore of the pond and made his way to the slanting tree, which stood a short distance from the water.

It was quite dark. And that was what Brownie liked, because he could work without being disturbed—at least, that was what he thought.

Since he could see quite well in spite of the dark he had no trouble in finding his tree. And he lost no time in setting to work on it again.

He began to gnaw at it once more. But he hadn't moved more than half-way around the tree-trunk when something happened that almost frightened him out of his skin.

Right out of the darkness came a blinding flash of light. And at the same time a queer click sounded in the bushes close by.

Just for a moment Brownie Beaver was stiff with fear. But when the darkness closed in upon him again he ran for his life toward the pond. And plunging into the water he swam quickly to the bottom and hurried up his winding hall into his bedroom, where he crouched trembling upon his bed, wondering whether he had been shot.

Brownie knew that at night a gun made a flash of light. But this gun (if it was a gun) made no roar such as was made by the guns Brownie had sometimes heard at a distance in the woods. He wished that old Granddaddy Beaver was there. For he did not doubt that the old gentleman could tell him exactly what had happened.