

The Little Mudskipper



Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

The Little Mudskipper

Aysel Banu YAVUZAL



In the warm, squishy mudflats where the river meets the sea, there lived a little mudskipper named Muddy. He had glossy olive-green skin speckled with brown, and big round golden eyes that sat on top of his head like periscopes. Muddy loved to skip across the mud with his strong front fins, which worked just like little arms. Every day he explored the tidal flats, looking for new adventures.



One sunny morning, Muddy met a fiddler crab named Snappy. Snappy had a sandy-orange shell and one huge, bright claw that he waved in the air. His tiny black eyes sat on the ends of thin stalks, swiveling this way and that. "Hello!" said Muddy. "I'm Muddy. Do you want to play?" Snappy grinned. "I'm Snappy," he said. "I can dig tunnels and wave my big claw. What can you do?"



Muddy showed Snappy how he could skip over the mud. He leaped and hopped, his little fin tail flipping behind him. Snappy was amazed. "You're so fast!" he said. "And you can see far away with those periscope eyes." Muddy smiled. "And you can dig with your big claw," he said. "We make a great team!" They decided to explore the mangrove maze together, where the tall trees made twisting paths.



The mangrove maze was a tangle of roots and shadows. Muddy skipped ahead, his eyes scanning for the best path. Snappy scuttled behind, his big claw held high like a flag. "Wait for me!" Snappy called. "My legs are short." Muddy waited patiently. "I'll go slow," he said. "We're a team." They moved deeper into the maze, where the trees whispered and the mud squelched under their feet.



Soon they came to a place where the roots formed a wall. "I can't get through," said Snappy. "But you can dig!" said Muddy. Snappy dug with his big claw, scooping mud and sand. His tiny claw helped too. Muddy cheered him on. In no time, Snappy had made a tunnel. "After you," he said. They crawled through and found themselves in a new part of the maze.



On the other side, they saw a strange sight. The path split into three directions. "Which way?" asked Snappy. Muddy climbed onto a root and looked around. "I see water sparkling that way!" he said, pointing with his fin. "Let's go there." They followed the path until they reached a small pool. "We're getting somewhere," said Muddy. "I can feel it."



But the pool was too deep for Snappy. "I can't swim," he said. "I'll carry you," said Muddy. "Hold on to my back." Snappy climbed onto Muddy's back, and Muddy skipped across the water, his front fins paddling. Snappy held tight with his big claw. "Wheee!" he shouted. "This is fun!" They crossed the pool safely and continued on their way.



As they went deeper, the trees grew thicker and the light grew dimmer. "I'm getting tired," said Snappy. "Me too," said Muddy. "But we can't stop now. We have to find our way home." Snappy waved his big claw. "I can dig us a resting hole," he said. He dug a small hole in the mud, and they both squeezed inside. It was cozy and safe.



While they rested, Muddy's periscope eyes spotted something shiny above. "Look!" he said. "There's a gap in the roots up there. Maybe we can see where we are." He climbed up and peeked through. "I see a garden!" he exclaimed. "A hidden tidal garden with flowers and pools!" Snappy was curious. "Can we get there?" he asked. "I think so," said Muddy. "Follow me!"



They squeezed through the gap and found themselves in a beautiful tidal garden. There were colorful sea flowers, tiny shrimp swimming in pools, and soft moss under their feet. "It's magical!" whispered Snappy. "We found it together," said Muddy. They played in the garden, chasing little bubbles and skipping over mossy stones. But then the sky grew dark. "We should go home," said Muddy. "But which way?"



They looked around, but the garden was surrounded by tall mangrove roots. "I don't remember the way back," said Snappy, his stalk eyes drooping. "Don't worry," said Muddy. "We'll figure it out." He climbed a root and looked around. "I see the river!" he said. "But there's a big puddle between us and it." Snappy thought. "I can dig a path through the mud," he said. "And I can wave my claw to signal for help if needed."



Snappy dug with all his might. His big claw scooped mud, and his tiny claw shaped the path. Muddy helped by skipping ahead and calling out directions. "A little to the left!" he shouted. "Now straight ahead!" They worked together, and soon they had a clear path. "We're almost there!" said Muddy. "I can see the river!" They hurried along the path, excitement in their step.



Suddenly, Snappy's big claw got stuck in a thick root. "Help!" he cried. Muddy skipped over. "I'll pull you out!" He grabbed Snappy's tiny claw with his front fin and pulled. Snappy wiggled and twisted. With a pop, he was free. "Thank you, Muddy!" said Snappy. "You're a true friend." Muddy smiled. "That's what friends do," he said. They continued on, closer to home.



Finally, they reached the edge of the mangrove maze. The river sparkled in the distance. "We made it!" cheered Snappy. They skipped and scuttled back to the mudflats, where their families were waiting. "Where were you?" asked Muddy's mother. "We found a hidden tidal garden!" said Muddy. "And we helped each other find our way home," added Snappy. Everyone was happy to see them safe.



From that day on, Muddy and Snappy were best friends. They explored the mudflats together every day, using their different abilities to help each other. Muddy would skip ahead and spot danger, while Snappy would dig holes for shelter and wave his big claw to signal. They learned that having different abilities wasn't a problem—it was a gift. And they knew that with friendship and teamwork, they could do anything.



So if you ever visit the muddy banks where the river meets the sea, look for a little mudskipper with periscope eyes and a fiddler crab with one big claw. You might just see them skipping and scuttling along, best friends forever, proving that teamwork makes everything better. And maybe, if you're lucky, they'll show you the hidden tidal garden too.