

The Little Otter's School



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Once upon a river bend, where the water sang over smooth stones, a young otter named Ollie lived in a cozy den. Ollie wore a small blue vest with a yellow button and a silver whistle around his neck. He loved to swim and splash and dive. But sometimes, when the sun was high, Ollie wished he had someone to share his days with.



One morning, Ollie met a turtle named Tilly on the riverbank. Tilly was old and wise, with a green patterned shell and warm amber eyes. She wore round glasses and a red scarf, and carried a small satchel of drawing sticks. 'Good day,' said Tilly. 'I am looking for a place to teach drawing and storytelling.' Ollie's eyes lit up. 'And I could teach swimming!'



So Ollie and Tilly decided to open a river school. They found a quiet bend with a sandy bank and a big flat rock for a classroom. Ollie hung a sign that said 'River School' with a picture of a fish and a pencil. Tilly set out her drawing sticks and a stack of smooth leaves for paper. 'Everyone is welcome here,' they agreed.



The first animal to arrive was a little duckling named Dilly. She wanted to learn to swim, but she was afraid of the deep water. Ollie smiled and said, 'We will start right here in the shallows.' He showed her how to paddle her feet and keep her head up. Dilly tried, but she kept tipping forward. 'It's okay,' said Ollie. 'Every swimmer starts somewhere.'



Next came a young rabbit named Ruby. She wanted to learn drawing, but her paws were twitchy and her lines wiggled. Tilly gave her a smooth stick and said, 'Let's draw something you love.' Ruby drew a carrot, but it looked like a squiggle. 'It's a start,' said Tilly gently. 'Art takes practice, and practice takes time.' Ruby sighed, but she kept trying.



On the second day, a shy mole named Moe came to the river school. He wanted to learn storytelling, but he was nervous about speaking in front of others. Tilly sat with him under a willow tree and said, 'Tell me a story about your underground home.' Moe whispered about dark tunnels and wiggly worms. Tilly listened and smiled. 'That's a wonderful story,' she said. 'You just told it perfectly.'



As the days went by, more animals came to the river school. Some learned quickly, like the frog who jumped right into swimming. Some learned slowly, like the snail who took all morning to draw a single circle. But Ollie and Tilly never rushed anyone. 'Everyone learns in their own way,' said Tilly. 'And that is just fine.'



Ollie noticed that Dilly the duckling was still afraid of deep water. So he made a special lesson just for her. He tied a floating log to a rope and let her hold on while she paddled. 'You can do it,' he cheered. Dilly paddled and paddled, and soon she was swimming all by herself. 'I did it!' she quacked. Ollie blew his whistle happily.



Tilly saw that Ruby the rabbit was frustrated with her wiggly lines. So she gave Ruby a stick with a softer tip and showed her how to draw big, slow circles. 'Let your paw move like a cloud,' said Tilly. Ruby tried, and her circles became rounder. 'Look!' she squealed. 'It's a sun!' Tilly nodded. 'You found your own way to draw.'



Moe the mole still felt shy about storytelling. Tilly suggested he tell his stories to a friendly rock. Moe practiced every day, whispering to the rock. Slowly, his voice grew louder. One day, he told a story to the whole class about a brave mole who saved a lost beetle. Everyone clapped. Moe beamed. 'I did it!' he said.



One afternoon, a big storm rolled in. The river rose, and the school's flat rock was covered with water. The animals were worried. 'What will we do?' asked Dilly. Ollie and Tilly looked at each other. 'We'll work together,' said Ollie. 'We can move our school to higher ground.' All the animals helped carry the drawing sticks and leaves to a dry spot under a big oak tree.



The storm passed, and the sun came out. The river school was safe on higher ground. But now the animals faced a new problem: the path to the water was muddy and slippery. 'How will we practice swimming?' asked Ruby. Tilly smiled. 'We can build a path of stones.' So everyone worked together, placing stones one by one. Even the snail helped by finding small pebbles.



With the new stone path, the animals could reach the water safely. Ollie taught swimming in the calm shallows, and Tilly taught drawing and storytelling under the oak tree. The school was busier than ever. 'We made it better than before,' said Ollie. 'Because we all helped,' said Tilly. And they blew the silver whistle to start the day.



As the seasons changed, the animals learned and grew. Dilly became a confident swimmer, gliding across the river. Ruby drew beautiful pictures of the riverbank, full of flowers and butterflies. Moe told stories that made everyone laugh and think. And each new animal who came to the river school found a lesson made just for them.



Ollie and Tilly watched their students with proud hearts. 'Everyone learns differently,' said Ollie. 'And that is just fine,' said Tilly. They knew that some animals learned fast and some learned slowly, but all of them were welcome at the river school. The little otter and the wise turtle had created a happy place where every animal could grow.



And so the river school by the bend remained a joyful place. The water sang over smooth stones, and the willow tree swayed. Ollie wore his blue vest and silver whistle, and Tilly wore her red scarf and glasses. They welcomed every animal who came to learn. Because at the river school, everyone learns in their own way, and that is just fine.