



The Little Beaver's Apprentice

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Little Beaver lived in a cozy lodge by the pond. His fur was warm brown, and his belly was soft tan. He had bright amber eyes and a wide flat tail. Every morning, he watched the older animals work and wished he could learn something new. 'I want to build something wonderful,' he said.



One day, Little Beaver saw Old Muskrat tending a tiny patch of green in the shallow water. Old Muskrat wore a woven grass hat with a red band and carried a small wooden trowel. 'What are you making?' asked Little Beaver. 'A water garden,' said Old Muskrat. 'Would you like to be my apprentice?' Little Beaver nodded so fast his round cheeks wobbled.



Old Muskrat smiled and handed Little Beaver a soft reed satchel. 'First, we gather plants,' he said. They paddled to the muddy bank, where reeds and water lilies grew. Old Muskrat showed him which stems to pick and which to leave. Little Beaver tried to help, but his paws were clumsy, and he pulled up more mud than plants.



'Oops!' said Little Beaver, looking at the mess. Old Muskrat chuckled gently. 'That's all right. Every good gardener starts with muddy paws.' He showed Little Beaver how to hold the stems just right. Little Beaver tried again, and this time he gathered a small bunch of reeds without any mud. 'I did it!' he cheered.



Next, Old Muskrat taught Little Beaver how to shape the mud. 'We pat it into little walls to hold the water,' he explained. Old Muskrat used his wooden trowel to smooth the mud, and Little Beaver copied him with his flat tail. But his tail was too big, and he smacked the mud flat. 'Oh no!' he cried. 'I ruined it.'



Old Muskrat didn't laugh. 'You didn't ruin it,' he said kindly. 'You just made it a different shape. Let's pat it back together.' Together they worked, side by side, until the mud walls were firm. Little Beaver's tail was covered in mud, but he was learning. 'Teamwork makes it easier,' said Old Muskrat. Little Beaver nodded and smiled.



Then came the hardest part: guiding the water. Old Muskrat showed him how to dig a tiny channel so the pond water could flow into the garden. 'Just a little at a time,' he said. Little Beaver dug with his paws, but the water rushed too fast and washed away a mud wall. 'I'm not good at this,' he sighed.



Old Muskrat put a gentle paw on his shoulder. 'Mistakes are how we learn,' he said. 'Let's try again, slower.' They rebuilt the wall and dug the channel a little at a time. This time, the water flowed gently, just where they wanted it. Little Beaver's amber eyes shone. 'I did it! Well, we did it!'



Days passed, and Little Beaver practiced every morning. Sometimes he still made mistakes, but Old Muskrat always encouraged him. 'You're growing, little friend,' he said. Little Beaver gathered plants, shaped mud, and guided water. His reed satchel was full of soft green leaves. He was proud of his muddy paws and his patient heart.



One afternoon, a sudden rainstorm made the pond water rise. The little water garden was in danger! Little Beaver panicked. 'What do we do?' he cried. Old Muskrat stayed calm. 'We work together,' he said. 'You gather rocks to hold the walls, and I'll guide the water away.' They hurried to save their garden.



Little Beaver scurried to find small rocks, his flat tail splashing behind him. He placed them carefully along the mud walls. Old Muskrat dug a new channel to lead the extra water away. The rain was loud, but they worked as a team. When the storm passed, the water garden was still there, a little muddy but safe.



Little Beaver looked at their garden. The plants were bent, and the mud walls needed repair. 'We can fix it,' said Old Muskrat. 'Remember, patience and practice.' They worked side by side, patting mud and straightening reeds. Little Beaver didn't give up, even when his paws were tired. Slowly, the garden began to look neat again.



Weeks later, the water garden bloomed. Bright green leaves floated on the pond, and tiny white flowers opened to the sun. Little Beaver stared in wonder. 'We did it!' he whispered. Old Muskrat nodded. 'You did it, Little Beaver. You learned to gather, shape, and guide. And you never gave up.' Little Beaver felt warm and proud inside.



All the pond animals came to see the water garden. 'It's beautiful!' they said. Little Beaver smiled at Old Muskrat. 'Thank you for teaching me,' he said. Old Muskrat tipped his woven hat. 'A good mentor helps young learners grow,' he said. 'And you grew tall and strong, like a reed in the sun.'



From that day on, Little Beaver helped care for the water garden. He even taught a younger duckling how to gather plants. 'Mistakes are okay,' he told her. 'Just keep trying.' Old Muskrat watched from the bank, his dark eyes twinkling. Little Beaver had become a mentor too, and the pond was full of kindness and teamwork.



Little Beaver learned that good mentors encourage growth. With patience, practice, and teamwork, even a clumsy little beaver can build something wonderful. And every time he looked at the blooming water garden, he remembered Old Muskrat's gentle words: 'Keep trying, little friend. You are growing every day.'