

The Little Otter's Letter



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Little Otter lived in a cozy burrow by the river. He had soft chocolate-brown fur, a creamy-tan chest, and big amber eyes. Around his neck, he wore a small red neckerchief. In his tiny canvas satchel, he kept his most special treasures: a smooth blue pebble, a shiny fish scale, and a crumpled map of the river. Every morning, he sat on the bank and watched the water flow by.



Once, a young beaver lived just around the bend. He had thick reddish-brown fur, a flat leathery tail, and a friendly, rounded face. He and Otter had built dams, told stories, and shared many happy days. But one spring, Beaver moved far away to another bend of the river. Now the bend was quiet, and Otter felt a little wistful. He missed his friend very much.



One morning, Otter decided to do something brave. He took out a piece of bark-paper and a tiny charcoal stick from his satchel. 'Dear Beaver,' he wrote slowly, 'I miss you. The river is quiet without you. Please write back.' He folded the letter neatly and sealed it with a dab of honey. But who could carry it all the way down the river?



Just then, a flash of turquoise and orange darted over the water. It was Kingfisher, a cheerful bird with a long, pointed beak and a small leather letter-pouch strapped over one shoulder. 'Hello, Little Otter!' chirped Kingfisher. 'You look worried. What's wrong?' Otter held up his letter. 'I need to send this to my friend Beaver, but he lives far away.'



Kingfisher's eyes sparkled. 'I can help!' she said. 'I fly along the river every day. I know every bend and every stone. I'll deliver your letter to Beaver!' Otter's heart lifted. He carefully placed the letter in Kingfisher's pouch. 'Thank you!' he said. 'Follow the river past the old willow, then past the tall reeds, and you'll find Beaver's lodge.'



Kingfisher nodded and zipped away, her wings flashing bright in the sun. Otter watched until she was a tiny speck. Then he sat on the bank and waited. The river seemed to whisper as it flowed by. Otter thought about his friend and smiled. He knew that Kingfisher would fly true and fast. The day felt full of hope.



Far down the river, Kingfisher darted over the water. She passed the old willow, its branches dipping low. She passed the tall reeds, where dragonflies hovered. At last, she saw a sturdy lodge made of sticks and mud. Beaver was outside, patting mud onto the walls. 'A letter for you!' called Kingfisher, landing on a flat rock. Beaver looked up, surprised and happy.



Beaver opened the letter with his strong paws. His large orange front teeth showed in a wide smile as he read. 'My friend Otter misses me!' he said. 'I miss him too.' He invited Kingfisher to rest on his green woven vest, which had a special pocket for letters. 'I'll write back right away,' Beaver said. He found a smooth piece of bark and began to write.



Beaver wrote about his new home. 'Dear Otter,' he wrote, 'I miss you too. My new lodge is cozy, and the river here is wide. But I think of our old dam every day. Tell me, how is the old willow? Do the dragonflies still dance over the reeds?' He folded the letter and gave it to Kingfisher. 'Please take this back to Otter,' he said. 'And thank you.'



Kingfisher flew back up the river, her pouch carrying Beaver's letter. Otter was waiting on the bank when she arrived. 'A letter for you!' she chirped. Otter's amber eyes grew wide. He opened the letter and read every word. He laughed at Beaver's questions. 'The willow is fine!' he said. 'And yes, the dragonflies still dance.' He hurried to write a reply.



From that day on, Kingfisher became the river's messenger. She carried letters back and forth, her bright wings a cheerful sight. Otter and Beaver shared stories about the river: Otter told of a family of ducks, and Beaver told of a midnight feast of fresh bark. They sent little gifts too, like a shiny pebble or a perfect feather. Each letter made them feel close.



One day, Beaver wrote, 'Your stories make me feel like I'm right there with you. I have an idea: let's each write a story about the river, and we can share them.' Otter loved the idea. He wrote about a brave little fish who swam to the sea. Beaver wrote about a wise old turtle who knew every secret of the water. They sent their stories to each other.



When Otter read Beaver's story, he felt warm inside. He realized that even though they were far apart, they were still close friends. It took a little effort to write letters and send them down the river, but it brought big happiness. Otter tied his red neckerchief a little tighter and smiled. He knew that friendship is worth every bit of effort.



Kingfisher continued to visit, and sometimes she stayed to listen to Otter's stories. Otter told her about the time he and Beaver built a slide out of mud and slid into the river with a splash. Kingfisher laughed, her bright chest shining in the sun. 'You two have the best stories,' she said. Otter nodded. 'And now you're part of them,' he said.



As the seasons changed, Otter and Beaver kept writing. They shared news of spring floods and summer sun, of autumn leaves and winter ice. Each letter was a little piece of friendship, carried by a flash of turquoise and orange. Otter learned that staying close to a friend takes a little effort, but that effort brings big happiness. And the river carried their words, always connecting them.



One evening, Otter sat on the bank and watched the sunset. He thought of Beaver, far away but always near in his heart. He took out a fresh piece of bark and began a new letter. 'Dear Beaver,' he wrote, 'today the river is gold and pink. I wish you could see it. But I know you're with me in every story we share.' He sealed the letter, ready for Kingfisher's next flight.