The Fox's Little Submarine

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In a cozy den at the edge of the woods, a clever fox named Rusty tinkered with bits of wood, glass, and a tiny motor. His bright orange fur was smudged with grease, and his blue canvas overalls had rolled cuffs. In his chest pocket, a tiny wrench peeked out. Rusty loved to build things, and today he was building something special: a little submarine.

Rusty worked all morning, humming a happy tune. He fitted a round glass window at the front and a small propeller at the back. He checked every screw and tightened every bolt with his pocket wrench. The submarine was just big enough for one small fox. It had a periscope on top and a soft seat inside. Rusty smiled. It was almost ready!

Just beyond the woods lay a sparkling pond. Rusty had always wanted to explore its deep, green water, but he knew it could be dangerous. That's why he built the submarine, and that's why he needed help. He needed someone who knew the pond well. Someone who could swim fast and check things out. Someone like his friend Ollie the otter.

Ollie the otter lived by the pond. He had glossy brown fur, a cream-coloured belly, and long whiskers that twitched when he was curious. He wore a green waterproof swim vest with a small brass whistle on a cord. When Rusty arrived, Ollie was juggling pebbles. "A submarine?" Ollie said, his dark eyes shining. "Let's test it!"

Rusty explained his plan. "Before I dive in, I need you to swim around the submarine and make sure it's safe. Check the propeller, the window, and the hatch. Look for leaks. Can you do that?" Ollie nodded eagerly. "Of course! I'll be your test pilot." He blew his whistle once, and they carried the submarine to the water's edge.

Ollie slipped into the pond with a splash. The water was cool and clear. He swam a full circle around the little submarine, his broad flat tail steering him smoothly. He checked the propeller. It spun easily. He tapped the glass window. It was tight. He tugged on the hatch. It held firm. "So far, so good!" he called to Rusty.

Next, Ollie dove underneath. He looked at the bottom of the submarine. No leaks. He swam up and around the periscope. Everything was in place. He surfaced and gave a thumbs-up with his webbed paw. "It looks great, Rusty! But let's test it in deeper water. I'll swim beside you and watch for anything strange."

Rusty climbed inside the submarine. His fluffy tail with the white tip tucked in last. He pulled the hatch shut. It clicked. He looked through the round window. Ollie was waiting outside, giving a cheerful wave. Rusty took a deep breath. Then he turned on the motor. The propeller began to spin. Slowly, the submarine sank beneath the surface.

Down, down, down went the little submarine. Bubbles rose in silver streams. Rusty watched them through the window. Ollie swam alongside, his whiskers twitching. He checked the propeller again. He looked at the hatch. Everything was working perfectly. Rusty felt safe and excited. He steered the submarine deeper into the green water.

Soon they reached the middle of the pond. Fish darted by in flashes of gold and silver. Long green plants waved like ribbons. Bubbles floated up from the muddy bottom. "Wow!" Rusty said, though no one could hear him. He wished Ollie could see this too. Then he remembered: Ollie was right outside, swimming along and keeping watch.

Rusty steered the submarine around a big rock. Then he saw something strange: a thick tangle of old branches and roots. It was a perfect place to get stuck! Rusty slowed down and turned the steering wheel carefully. Ollie noticed too. He swam ahead and pulled the branches aside with his strong paws. He gave a little whistle to say, "All clear!"

Rusty guided the submarine through the gap. Then he saw a shiny object on the pond floor. It was a lost toy boat! He gently scooped it up with the submarine's little grabber arm. "Ollie will like this," he thought. But then he noticed the submarine was getting harder to steer. The motor was slowing down. Something was wrong.

Rusty looked at the propeller. A piece of pond weed was wrapped around it! The submarine began to drift. Ollie swam up close. He saw the problem right away. He reached out with his webbed paw and carefully unwound the weed. The propeller spun freely again. Rusty gave a thankful wave. "Good thing you were here, Ollie!" he said, though Ollie couldn't hear.

Rusty decided it was time to go back up. He steered the submarine toward the surface. Ollie swam beside him, checking the propeller one last time. Up they went, past the fish, past the plants, past the bubbles. Then—pop!—the submarine broke through the surface. Rusty opened the hatch and took a deep breath of fresh air.

Ollie climbed onto the bank, water dripping from his green swim vest. "That was amazing!" he said. "You did it, Rusty!" Rusty climbed out and hugged his friend. "We did it," he said. "I couldn't have done it without you. You tested everything and kept me safe." Ollie blew his whistle happily. "Let's do it again tomorrow!"

Rusty smiled and put his arm around Ollie. "Exploring is more fun when you get ready first," he said. "And it's safest when you have a good friend to help." They sat together on the sunny bank, watching the pond sparkle. Rusty knew they would have many more adventures—and with careful preparation, every one would be happy and safe.