

The Otter's Floating Book



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Pip the otter lived by a wide, winding river. Every morning he swam through the cool water, chasing minnows and watching dragonflies. One bright day, something bumped his paw. It was a small, waterproof book, floating all alone. Pip lifted it from the water and turned it over and over. "Where did you come from?" he whispered, his whiskers twitching with curiosity.



Pip carried the book to a flat sun-warmed stone and opened the cover. The pages were dry and strong, and pictures filled every page. There were drawings of wooden houses and little boats with sails. Words told about a busy river town where people laughed and traded goods. Pip's round dark eyes grew wide. "A whole town?" he said. "Right here by my river?"



Pip read on, his cream belly warm against the stone. The book told of a town that stood beside the river long, long ago. There were bakers and boat-builders and children who skipped along the shore. But the pages also said the town was lost. Where did it go? Pip hugged the book to his chest. He knew this was something special, something that must be saved.



Just then, a tall blue-grey heron landed on the bank. It was Mara, the wise old bird who knew every bend of the river. "What have you found, little otter?" she asked, her golden eyes sharp and kind. Pip held up the book. "It's about a town that used to be here," he said. "But I don't know where it went. Can you help me?"



Mara leaned close and studied the pages. Her long curved neck swayed as she read through her reed satchel. "These are old stories," she said softly. "I have heard whispers of this town. It was called Riverside, and it stood just around the bend. But the river changed its path, and the town was forgotten. The book is a memory-keeper. We must keep it safe."



Pip's heart thumped with excitement. "We have to tell everyone!" he cried. He and Mara hurried along the riverbank to find Bramble the beaver. Bramble was sturdy and strong, with thick reddish-brown fur and a wide flat tail. He was busy mending a dam with his wooden mallet. "A book about a lost town?" he said, scratching his head. "That's important. We need a dry place for it."



Bramble tapped his tool belt and thought. "The river can rise quickly," he said. "We need a shelter that will keep the book safe from rain and floods." Pip nodded, holding the book gently in one front paw. "We can build it together," he said. "But first, let's read more. The book might tell us how to save the town's stories."



They gathered around the book on the riverbank. Mara read aloud the older passages, her voice calm and clear. The pages told of a great flood that drove the townsfolk away. They left their homes and never returned. But they left this book behind, hoping someone would remember. "So the book is like a message," Pip said. "We can be the ones who remember."



Just then, a small furry head popped out of the water. It was Finn, Pip's younger friend, wearing a bright green leaf cape around his neck. "What are you reading?" he asked, his big amber eyes sparkling. Pip showed him the pictures. "A town called Riverside," he said. "It was lost long ago." Finn wiggled with excitement. "Tell me more!"



Mara turned the pages and showed Finn a drawing of children playing by the water. "The town had a school and a market and a bell that rang every morning," she said. Finn's tail splashed happily. "I wish I could have seen it!" he squealed. "But the stories are still here," Pip said. "And we're going to keep them safe, so everyone can enjoy them."



Bramble stood up and stretched his strong paws. "We'll build a shelter right here, high on the bank," he said. "A wooden box with a snug lid, so the book stays dry." The others cheered. "I'll gather reeds for the roof," said Mara. "I'll find stones to hold it down," said Finn. "And I'll keep the book with me until it's ready," said Pip.



They worked all afternoon. Bramble hammered and sawed, his flat tail slapping the ground with each thump. Mara wove reeds into a tight roof. Finn darted here and there, bringing small stones and twigs. Pip sat nearby, reading the book aloud so everyone could hear the town's history. The sun dipped low, and the shelter began to take shape.



At last, Bramble set the final piece in place. The shelter was a small wooden box with a snug lid and a little window for air. It stood high on the bank, safe from any flood. Pip carefully placed the waterproof book inside. "There," he said. "Now the stories of Riverside will never be lost again." His friends gathered round, proud of what they had done.



Mara smiled. "We should share these stories," she said. "Every animal in the river should know about Riverside." Pip nodded. "We can take turns reading the book aloud," he said. "And Finn can draw pictures to show the little ones." Finn bounced with delight. "I'll make a map of the old town!" he said. "And we'll have a story day every week."



Word spread quickly. Otters, herons, beavers, and even a family of ducks came to hear the tales. Pip held the book open while Mara read, and Finn acted out the parts with his leaf cape flapping. The riverbank filled with laughter and wonder. The town of Riverside was not lost anymore. It lived in the hearts and minds of the animals who loved its stories.



As the sun set, Pip sat beside the shelter holding the book. He thought about how a small otter had found it floating all alone. "Knowledge is like a river," he said softly. "It flows from one friend to the next, and it never runs dry." Finn nodded wisely, and they watched the stars twinkle above the river. The book was safe, and the stories would live on.