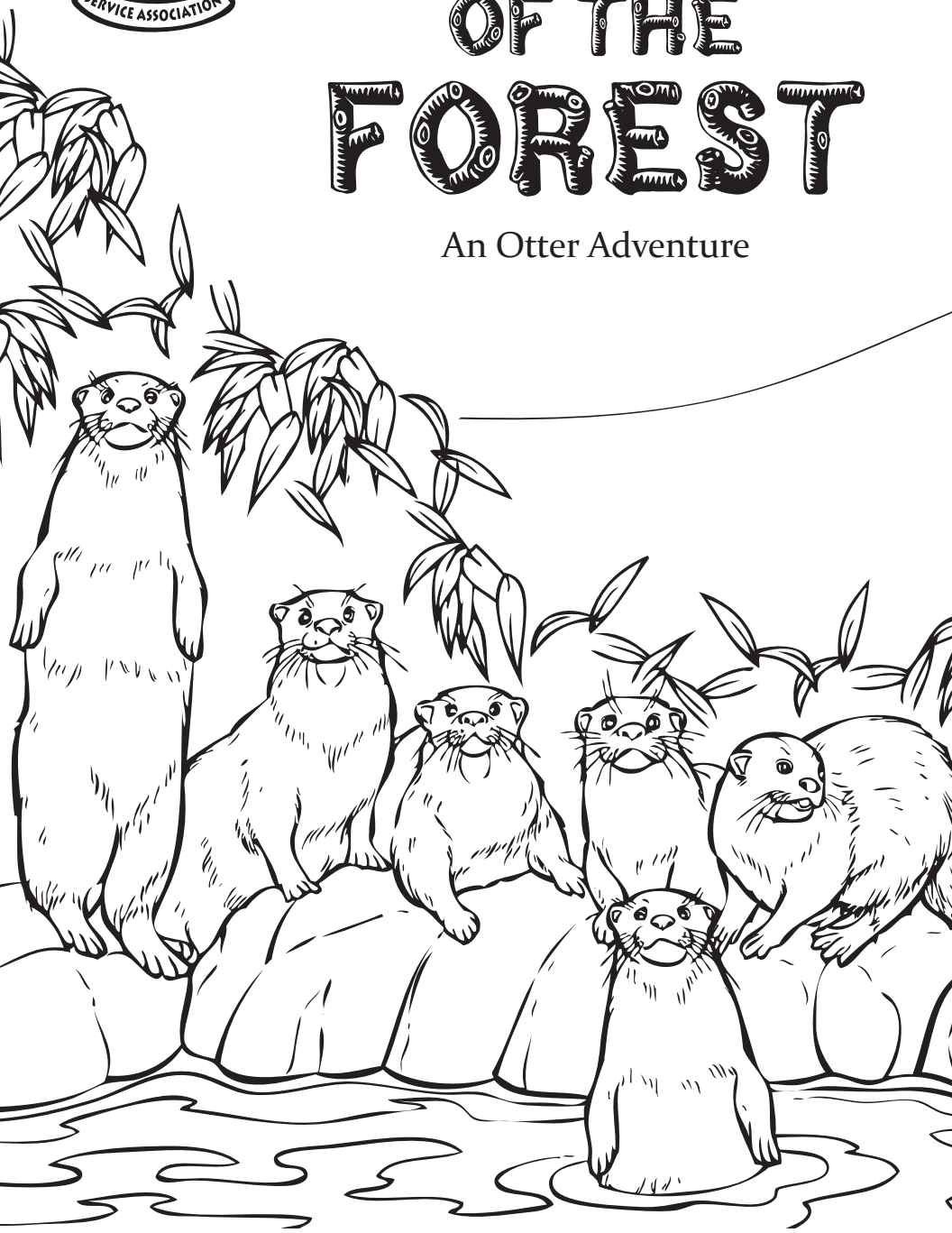




FRIENDS OF THE FOREST

An Otter Adventure



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OF THE
FOREST**

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THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

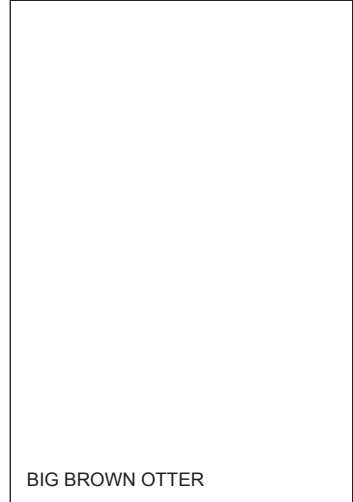
Meeting New Friends

Big Brown Otter had a very important announcement to make. Swimming to the middle of the pond, he sounded a shrill whistle three times. *Screech! Screech! Screech!*

Hearing his sharp signal, all the other otters in the pond wondered, “What do you suppose is happening?”

From all over the pond, otters, young and old, swam quickly to Big Brown Otter. He was such a wise animal, and he knew so much about the forest and the pond. All of the other animals and birds in the forest were his friends.

“Big and little otters,” Big Brown Otter announced. “Some people have come to live in the clearing along the river bank. Tic Tac, the squirrel, told me they are called the Jones family. They seem very friendly. When I called you, they all waved to me. If they are to be our friends, we should go and give each of them a forest name.”



There was much excitement amongst the otters as they swam from the pond down the river to the forest clearing where the Jones family lived.

At first, none of the Jones family saw the otters who were quietly peeking over the side of the riverbank.

Then, one of the taller people finally noticed the otters' brown heads and whispered, "I think we have some otter visitors. Don't turn around too quickly, or we might frighten them away."

The other five family members slowly looked around and saw the otters watching them. With a big smile, one of the people said, "Didn't I tell you that we would meet



THE JONES FAMILY

new friends in the forest? There must be an otter raft in the pond near the river.”

The otters watched carefully to see if they could pick a name that would describe each member of the Jones family. Finally, a loud screech from Big Brown Otter signalled that it was time to return to the pond.

Later, as the otters sat inside their den, they began to share everything they had seen at the clearing. They began to suggest their ideas for forest names for the members of the Jones family.

“Otters, do you remember the tall person who saw us first?” asked Big Brown Otter. “He must have eyes as sharp as a hawk’s. Let’s call him ‘Hawkeye.’”

“Oh, that’s a splendid name!” chorused all the other otters.

Chip and Chatter, the otter twins, remarked, “When we saw the one who was wearing the clothes of many colors, we thought of the beautiful rainbow that arches over the forest after a rainstorm. Why don’t we call her ‘Rainbow?’”

“Wonderful!” cheered the otters. “I saw a person who moved by using a chair with wheels. He seemed very clever to be able to do that,” observed another Otter.

“Then why don’t we call him ‘Ringtail’ since he’s as clever as a racoon,” suggested several otters.

When the smallest otter began to talk, everyone became quiet and still so they could better hear each of her words.

“One of the people had such sparkling eyes, and when she smiled, her smile made me feel so warm and good inside. Could we name her ‘Sunshine?’”

“Warm as sunshine,” agreed the Otters. “Yes, let’s name her that.”

“And then there was the person having so much fun splashing her feet in the water,” observed one of the Otters. “We could call her ‘Bubbles’ .”

“Yes, yes. And don’t forget the one whose hair was the colour of a red fox,” shouted yet another otter. “He could be called ‘Rusty.’” And so it was that the pond’s otters named the people in the Jones family so they could be friends of the forest.

The Otter Law

An Otter is always busy and bright and helps other people by doing a good turn every day.

That same evening, as the members of the Jones family were getting ready for bed, they heard the sound of raindrops striking the roof. Throughout the entire night while the family slept, the rain continued to fall. As the sun rose in the morning, its rays glistened on the raindrops that clung to the leaves and grass.

When the Jones family were seated around their breakfast table, Rainbow frowned and said. "I'm worried about our new otter friends. Last night's rain will have flooded the river quite badly. Why don't we all go and see how our otter friends fared?"

After putting on rubber boots and their jackets, the family trudged up the forest trail in the direction of the otters den. Whenever a muddy part of the path made it difficult for the wheels on Ringtail's chair to turn, Rusty and Bubbles would help him.

Arriving at the river, Rainbow saw that she had been correct. The rising water had washed away part of the

otters' den.

“Look!” said Sunshine. “The den is broken. What can we do to help?”

“I don't think we'll have to do anything to help,” replied Rainbow. “Let's just sit on those big rocks over there and watch carefully.”

Even as they went towards the rocks, the family saw the first otter appear. Just like a little builder, the otter examined the den. Quickly, she was joined by several other otters each carrying sections of trees or their branches, and they began to work together to fill the break in the den. As the otter repaired the den, each new branch seemed to fit like a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. Again and again the otters would return with tree sections or branches, and gradually the den was rebuilt. The otters learned that by working hard and helping their family and friends, even a big, tough job, like fixing a den, could get done and still be lots of fun.

“Well,” said Hawkeye. “Now I know why they're called ‘Busy and Bright.’”

“Yes,” laughed Rusty. “That's a good motto for them.”

“Oh, look at that little pup over there!” exclaimed Sunshine. “The one pushing the big log.”

“What's a pup?” Bubbles asked.

“A pup is a young otter,” Ringtail replied. “Once pups learn how important it is to help one another, they

REBUILDING THE DEN

become ‘Busy and Bright’. By pushing that big log into place, that pup is learning how to be helpful to the other otters in the raft.”

The otters continued to push more and more branches and logs into the gap in the den. When they were done, the otters waited for a few moments to make certain that their den was truly repaired, and then, taking a big breath of air, they all dove to the bottom of the pond where the entrance to their otter den was located. After swimming up the tunnel connecting their den to the pond, the otters rested, safe and warm.

Walking back down the trail towards home, the Jones

family talked about how the otters all seemed to work together. “You know,” said Hawkeye. “Repairing the den would have been very hard work for just one otter. And it would have taken that one otter an awfully long time to finish such a big job. But when all of the otters, even the smallest, helped, the hole in the den was fixed quickly, and all the otters were happy.”

“Maybe we could work like otters in our home,” suggested Rusty. “We could share in doing things like cooking and cleaning up after meals or keeping the house neat and tidy.”

“And by working together,” said Rainbow, “we could make doing the hard jobs fun and get them done quicker.”

“And then everyone would have more time for playing,” suggested Sunshine.

“Or swimming!” added Bubbles.

“And eating cookies!” shouted Ringtail.

“Hurray!” shouted everyone in the Jones family as they continued down the trail.

The Otter Motto

Busy and Bright

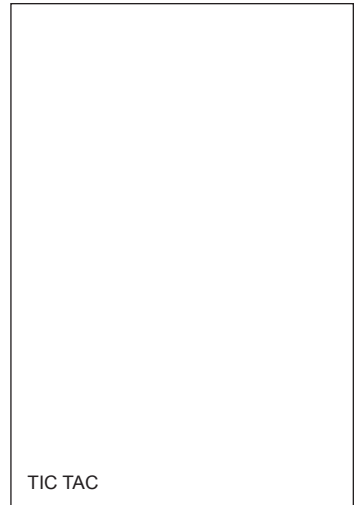
Sitting on a branch of the great oak tree which overlooked the pond, Tic Tac, the squirrel, could not believe his eyes. Below him, all of the raft's otters were busily working together gathering fish and crayfish for dinner.

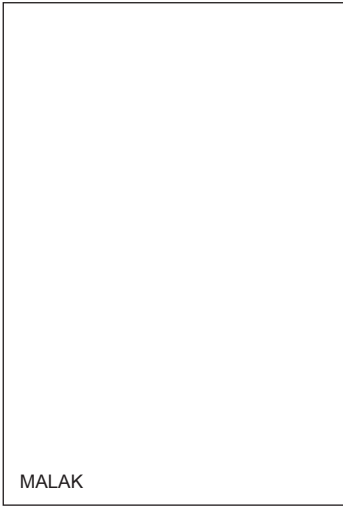
"I can't understand it. I simply can't understand it!" exclaimed

Tic Tac, his bushy tail flicking back and forth.

"Why do otters share all this work? Why don't they just behave like squirrels and each collect food just for himself and not bother with the others?"

Chattering to himself, Tic Tac ran back and forth along the branch of the tree until he decided he needed to talk to someone about this strange behaviour of the otters. Tic Tac wondered if perhaps Malak, the great wise owl, awake at his perch atop the tall oak. Running up the rough trunk





and then scampering from branch to branch, Tic Tac finally arrived at the top of the tree where he found Malak, the owl, peacefully asleep.

“Wake up, Malak! Wake up!” scolded Tic Tac.

Slowly opening one eye and then the other, Malak yawned. “Whooooo is it?”

“It’s me, Tic Tac, the squirrel! Why do they do it? Why are they doing that?”

“Why are whooooo doing what?” asked Malak, ruffling his feathers and slowly stretching one wing and then the other.

“The otters!” Tic Tac chattered. “The otters are sharing all the work. I watched them gathering all the food together. I don’t understand why they do that.”

“Oh, that’s whooooo you are talking about, Tic Tac,” said a now thoroughly awake Malak.

“When I go out and gather my food, I hide it in little piles all over the forest,” explained Tic Tac. “And so do all the other squirrels. We each keep our own supply of food. But not the otters. They work together, and they share everything. I suppose all the otters share their food too?”

“Indeed they doooo,” said Malak. “Those busy otters

are very smart. If you watch them closely, you'll see some of them working on the den, and some of them will be teaching the younger otters how to swim. Look down over there, Tic Tac. Can you see Big Brown Otter teaching the pups how to feel the mud of the riverbank for hiding crayfish? They share their work, they help each other learn, and they share their den. Helping each other's such a happy way of living."

"Mmmmmmm. An interesting idea," said Tic Tac thoughtfully. "I wonder if sharing would work for other animals like squirrels? I'll have to think about that. Thank you, Malak." Tic Tac scurried back down the tree, chattering to himself as he went.

Before Malak dozed off again, he looked down smilingly at the otters busily working below. "Yes, they're pretty smart, those otters. They know how to work, and how to play, and how to share together. Whoooo-hum," he yawned. "If I weren't an owl, I think I might like to be an otter!"

Keo and the Magical Light

While Big Brown Otter was a very large otter, he was not the biggest otter in the pond. That otter was Keo. When Keo swam across the pond, his passage made waves that would lap noisily against the shore.

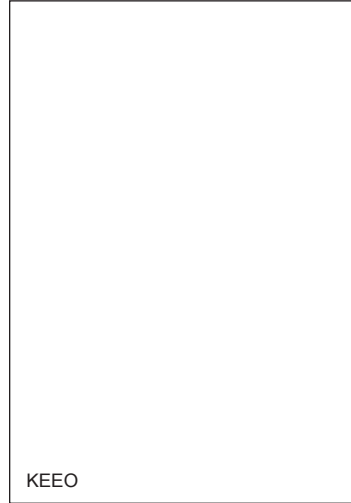
Today though, the waves were not being caused by Keo's

swimming. Instead, a storm appeared to be sweeping across the forest towards the pond.

As Keo looked up at the quickly approaching clouds, he remembered the recent heavy rain which had flooded the pond and carried away part of the den. Because the otters had just finished repairing their den, Keo did not want any more floods.

Just then in the distance, Keo saw a bright flash of light and heard a distant rumbling.

“Well,” thought Keo as dark clouds began to cover the



sky. “The pond is going to have another storm.”

As it often does just before a storm begins, the wind began to grow stronger. When tree branches began to whip about and white tipped waves rolled across the pond, all of the otters scurried to take shelter. Keeo quickly checked to make sure that each and every pup was safely inside the den.

Suddenly, another brilliant flash lit up the sky, but it wasn't really lightning, nor was it a bright ray of sunshine.

As Keeo was soon to find out, there was something magical about it. The light illuminated the log on which Keeo was sitting, bathing the huge otter in its wonderful



KEEO SEES A FLASH OF LIGHT

glow. Keeo felt strange. Somehow he knew something magical had happened to him. Glancing down, he discovered that all of his brown fur had turned completely silver! And then he realized something even more strange had occurred. To his great surprise and amazement, Keeo found he was thinking not just in otter words but also like a person!

When the storm passed, the pond's otters all gathered around the now silver coloured Keeo. In otter language, Keeo told them what the magical flash of light had done. He even spoke a few words of people talk just to show the otters what he could now do. Keeo also told the otters about the other magical powers he now seemed to have.

But Keeo wondered why he was able to speak both the otter language and that of the people. So he asked all of the otters, "Why do you think I can speak our otter language and also the language of the people?"

The otters thought and they thought, and then they thought some more until finally the littlest otter said in a tiny voice. "You can speak to both people and otters because it is up to you, Keeo, to talk with the Jones family on behalf of all the animals of the forest, and especially us otters. Then we animals can learn from our people friends, and they can learn many important things about nature from us. You, Keeo, will be able to help all of us learn how to take better care of the world than we could

before.”

Keeo knew that the littlest otter’s words were true, and he was both excited and a little bit scared. He wondered if he could do such an important job. How would the Jones family react to his new ability to talk? But because he was now a special, magical otter, Keeo realized that this was the beginning of much new and exciting fun.

An Invitation for Fun at the Pond

As Keeo slowly swam down the river towards the home of the Jones family, he thought nervously, “How will I be able to go up to people and just start talking to them?”

He considered all the things he might first say to them and finally decided, “I’ll just tell them who I am, and then we’ll see what happens after that.”

When Keeo reached the clearing that contained the home of the Jones family, he saw Hawkeye and Sunshine standing near the riverbank.

“Look!” exclaimed Sunshine in a surprised voice. “A silver otter!”

Before Hawkeye had an opportunity to reply, Keeo spoke up boldly. “Hello there. My name is Keeo. I’m a magical otter!”

Sunshine and Hawkeye both looked at each other as if to ask, “Did I really hear a large silver otter speaking to me?” When neither Sunshine nor Hawkeye appeared

prepared to say anything, Keeo added, “I’ve come to visit with you.”

Though Sunshine was still not completely certain that she was really hearing a talking silver otter, she decided to be polite. “Well, hello to you too, Keeo. I’m pleased to have you visit.” And with those words, she stuck out her left hand and shook Keeo by the left front paw.

“Hey, everybody!” shouted Hawkeye. “Come quickly and meet our new friend!”

When the rest of the family members were gathered about, they had many questions for Keeo, the first one being, “How did you get to be a magical otter?”



KEEO MEETS THE JONES FAMILY

Throughout the evening, Keeo answered all of the family's many questions. He told them the entire story about the bright light and how his coat turned silver and his surprise at discovering that he could talk like people.

He went on to explain how the otters had given each of the Jones family members a special forest name.

Keeo was very pleased when he discovered that everyone liked their new names.

At one point when Keeo was telling his story, his stomach made a long, low rumbling sound like that thunder makes when it is far away. Keeo realized that it had been several hours since he had last eaten. When Ringtail heard the sound coming from Keeo's belly, he recognized what it meant, for his own stomach sometimes made a similar sound.

"Keeo?" asked Ringtail. "Would you like something to eat? You can share the rabbit I caught yesterday."

In his whole life, Keeo had never tasted, or even seen, a rabbit. He took the meat that Ringtail offered him and cautiously bit into it. "Mmmmmmm," he thought as he chewed, "Quite tasty, but not as soft as the fish I had earlier."

And so Keeo spent most of the night talking and having fun with the Jones family.

When the sun began to rise behind the trees, he knew it was time to return to the pond and to the other otters in

the den. Shuffling back to the river, Keeo suddenly had an idea and so he asked, “Would all of you like to come to the otter den tonight and meet all of the other otters?”

“What a great idea!” said Rainbow. “We would love to visit you. We’ll meet you at the pond early in the evening.”

That day, sleep was slow in coming to the members of the Jones family and also to the otters snuggled in the den. They thought about the magical things that were going to happen next.

The Magical World of the Otters

That evening, as the sun sunk slowly over the pond, each of the otters in the raft was busily bustling about. In fact, there was so much excitement that Big Brown Otter had to call all of the otters together in an attempt to calm them down.

“Big and little otters,” he announced. “Because the Jones family will be here soon, let’s check to be absolutely certain that everything is completely ready. Now, is the otter den all cleaned and tidied for our visitors?”

“Yes!” replied the otters enthusiastically. “And do we have something to offer them to eat when they arrive?” asked Big Brown Otter.

“Fish!” chorused the otters.

“Oh!” said Keeo. “I don’t know if people eat raw fish. I do believe we need to think of something else.”

“Now, just one last question,” said Big Brown Otter. “Have we made the underwater entrance bigger so that the people can swim in?”

“Yes!” shouted the otters. “We shared in doing the work, and so absolutely everything is ready.”

“Well done, otters,” said Big Brown Otter proudly.

“Then we are all ready. It won’t be long now before the Jones family comes up the trail.”

The otters were not the only ones who were excited that evening. The entire Jones family, not used to sleeping during the day, had awakened early. Dinner was quickly eaten, and then the family was happily hiking along the trail towards the pond.

Reaching the pond’s shore, the family greeted Keeo with shouts of, “Hello!”

“Welcome,” said Keeo. “I hope you are ready to play in the pond with us.” The Jones family members looked at each other, and then an embarrassed Ringtail said, “Oh, I’m afraid we’re not dressed for swimming,”

“That’s all right,” smiled Keeo. With my magical help, you will be able to swim and act exactly like an otter. Just do as I say. First, hold hands and gather around me in a circle. That’s right. Now, take your first two fingers and straighten them to look like otter ears. Squat down as if you’re ready to jump in after a fish. Get set, for once I say the magic words, you’ll be able to dive into the pond like real otters. Is everyone ready?”

“Yes!” shouted each member of the Jones family.

“All right,” said Keeo. “Here we go.” And with that, he

chanted the magic words.

“Otters, Busy and Bright!”

Jumping up with a HURRAY!, the Jones family members dove into the water after the silver otter. “Wow!” exclaimed Rusty. “We’re just like otters.”

As Keeo swam ahead as their guide, tiny air bubbles clung to his whiskers and to his thick silver fur as he glided through the water. “Look at all the fish,” gurgled Ringtail.

“Yes,” replied Keeo. “Besides the fish, our pond is home to many other animals such as ducks and geese and frogs and turtles. We all depend on one another to keep the pond safe and clean.”

Turning towards the den entrance, Keeo gave a final grunt and swam through the wide tunnel opening.

THE JONES FAMILY VISITS THE DEN

One by one, each member of the Jones family followed Keeo through the passage until, with a slight push upwards, their heads surfaced inside the otter den.

“Hurray!” exclaimed all the otters as they recognized their new friends. When everyone in the Jones family was comfortably seated, the littlest otter came forward and said, “We wanted to share some of our food with you, but Keeo said he didn’t think you would like raw fish. We finally decided that wild apples from a tree in the woods would be fine because it doesn’t matter if they get wet.”

“That’s true,” said Ringtail. “What good thinking.” Looking around the den, Rusty marvelled at how its walls

were made of strong branches and mud. “Gee, your den is large,” said Rusty. “it’s wide enough for me to lie down in, and I could even stand up and not hit my head on the roof.”

“When you’re in here,” asked Hawkeye, “can you hear the noises of the forest?”

“No,” replied Keeo. “Except for the sounds of the water, we rarely hear anything. When Ringtail and Rainbow come in their canoe, we can hear their paddles splashing in the water, and we can hear you when you all go swimming.”

“Well,” commented Rainbow, “your den must certainly be a peaceful place then.”

The Jones family stayed in the den for a long time and they told the otters many things about the lives of humans. Finally though, it was time to return to their home in the clearing. With Keeo once again acting as their guide, they slipped out of the den and swam toward the pond shore. Following a wave of his paw, Keeo left them to become people once again.

Watching Keeo glide away, Sunshine remarked, “You know, I never realized until now how much otters give to the forest.” “Yes,” replied Hawkeye. “Their pond provides homes for many plants, insects, birds and other animals.” “I feel we should give the otters something in return for all they give us, but I can’t think of anything,” said Rainbow

sadly.

Pointing to an old, rusty tin can that Bubbles had picked up, Ringtail suggested, “I know what we can do. We can help keep the pond and forest clean of things that other people leave behind. That way the pond will stay a safe place for all the animals to use.”

“And we can build nesting boxes for ducks and swallows that can’t find a home around the pond,” suggested Rusty. Everyone began to talk excitedly about all the fun projects they could do to help keep the otters’ pond a beautiful, magical place.

As Keeo watched the Jones family disappear down the trail, he knew that these people had now become best friends of the forest. And that was the greatest magic of all.

Remembering the Otter Promise

Dawn was rising, and now, with all the excitement of the Jones family visit past, the otters finally began to feel sleepy. As they lay snuggled together, they thought of all the day's happenings.

Looking up with heavy eyes, one of the otters asked, "Big Brown Otter, are all otter rafts as happy as we are?"

"Yes, I think they are," replied Big Brown Otter. "You see, as otters, we have learned what it truly means to share. We have learned how important it is to work together as a raft. Everyone, from the pups right up to the oldest otter, shares in the work. Our new friends, the Jones family, also know what sharing is. They listen to each other and help out whenever they can. They work as a family to have fun, and that is why they are a happy family."

"And," added Keeo, "what also makes otters happy is to make new friends as we have done with the Jones family. As otters, we shared all we know about nature with the

Jones family. In turn, they have told us about doing your best. Just as animals in the pond have learned to help one another, the Jones family have told us about how people everywhere do their best.

Together, we can all promise to do our best and to obey our leaders and our parents and to be a good otter.”

As the otters began to yawn, Big Brown Otter hushed them to bed with a low shhhhhhh. “Sleeping, sleeping, sleeping,” he whispered as each otter curled up to sleep. With one last soft grunt, he gently murmured, “Good night, and busy building tomorrow.”

“Good night Big Brown Otter,” the other otters softly replied. And, nodding off to sleep, each otter said goodnight to the rest of the forest.

“Good night trees.”

“Good night bees.”

“Good night logs.”

“Good night frogs.”

“Good night air.”

“And goodnight to otters everywhere.”

Swimming up

As the evening light shimmered on the pond, the older busy otters were the first to awaken. Being both bigger, and stronger than the pups and older than the other otters, they had more energy and curiosity. Often they asked Keeo about what went on in the world beyond the pond, and this evening was to be no different. Tumbling over the still sleeping Keeo, they began to shout their questions into his ears, “Please, Keeo, tell us about what goes on in the bigger world?”

Keeo woke up and smiled at them. He knew the time had come for these otters to discover for themselves the answers to their questions, and so, with a twinkle in his eye, he said, “If you older otters are ready to learn about the world beyond the pond, then follow me.”

“Hurray!” shouted the older otters, for they knew that Keeo only asked the oldest otters to follow him and they felt very proud and grown up.

As the younger otters cheered and waved, Keeo and the older otters dove out of the den and began to swim up the river. Using his magical powers, Keeo gradually

transformed the forest into a lush, green jungle.

The older otters began to smell, hear and see things they had never experienced before. All these new odors, sounds and sights made them a wee bit nervous, and they began to wish they were back in their warm, cozy den.

As they swam, the older otters began to hear a playful howl that echoed from the jungle. “Ooo-woooo, come jump with us. Ooo-woooo, come run with us,” it seemed to say. The inviting call excited the otters with its mystical charm. As they continued to swim along, the howling appeared to be coming closer. Seeing shadows running between the trees sparked the older otters’ curiosity even more. And so on they swam until they saw a steamy clearing along the bank of the moonlit jungle river.

When Keeo had gathered the otters around him on the shore, he asked, “Older otters! Before we go on, tell me, what have you learned from being part of the raft?”

“How to share,” replied one otter.

“How to have fun, work hard and help family and friends,” added another.

“And to do good turns and to help take care of the world,” said still another otter.

“Very well done,” said Keeo proudly. “You are now ready to learn about life beyond the pond.”

As the sounds of Keeo’s words died away, the otters began to feel their fur tingle and their whiskers twitch.



TIMBERWOLF PACK

Suddenly, there was a bright flash, and a magical light enveloped the otters.

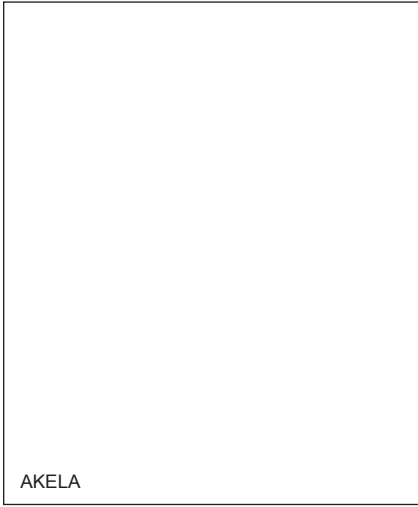
Staring at one another, the otters realized that their long tails and webbed feet had been replaced by bushy tails and strong legs. In a blink, they had changed from otters into timber wolves. Keo, they saw, had also been changed and was now an older timber wolf.

Eager to try their new feet, the new chums jumped about, but, after just a few hops and bounds, each was yelling, “Ouch! Eeech! Ouch!” As otters, they had been used to walking on the soft mud around the pond. The tender skin of their new paws was not prepared for the

jungle floor's sharp sticks and hard rocks.

Amidst all their excitement, the new chums did not notice the silent arrival of the jungle timber wolf pack.

As the pack made a circle around them, a large wolf padded forward and spoke to Keeo. "Are these the new chums, Keeo, who wish to explore the jungle and all it has to offer?"



"Yes, Akela, leader of the timber wolf pack," responded Keeo. "They have learned their lessons well."

Turning to the tenderpads, as all new chums are called, Akela said, "Look well, oh tenderpads. You are

welcome to run with our pack and learn the ways of the jungle."

"But," asked the tenderpads, "how can we run with you if our feet hurt?"

"Keeo and the older timber wolves will help you find the soft paths to follow at first," replied Akela. "And, if you remember always to do your best, then soon your feet will be as tough as ours. You will then be able to run not only with the pack, but also on your own adventures."

The other timber wolves in the pack first cheered in agreement and then howled, “Ahhh-keh-hh-laaaa, we’ll do our best,” to welcome the new tenderpads.

And, with Keeo and the older timber wolves helping the new tenderpads along the way, Akela and the pack slipped softly into the jungle where more exciting timber wolf adventures lay ahead.

The Beginning!



Friends of the Forest

Baden-Powell Service Association, 2016.

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