

The Beaver's Birthday Boat



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Down by the wide, slow river, where the willow trees leaned over the water, lived a young beaver named Benny. He wore blue overalls with a pocket full of nails, and a red bandana around his neck. Benny loved his grandmother more than anything. Her birthday was coming soon, and he wanted to give her something truly special. Something nobody else could give.



Benny sat on a flat rock and thought and thought. His flat brown tail went tap, tap, tap. Grandmother loved the river more than anyone he knew. She said the water sang to her in the mornings. Then Benny had an idea so big it made his whiskers wiggle. He would build her a boat! A boat of her very own, to ride the river whenever she pleased.



Benny ran to the woodpile behind his dam. He pulled out long branches, smooth planks, and a roll of strong vine rope. His big front teeth chattered with excitement as he chewed and shaped the wood. He worked all day, and the sun crossed the sky twice before he finished. At last, a little wooden boat sat on the riverbank.



The boat was beautiful, but it was narrow. Very, very narrow. Benny pushed it into the water and climbed in. It wobbled. It tipped. His knees bumped the sides, and his tail had nowhere to go. "Oh dear," said Benny. "This is not comfortable at all." The boat was too skinny for a nice, long river ride with Grandmother.



Just then, two sleek heads popped up from the water. It was Marty the Muskrat in his green work vest, and Millie the Muskrat in her orange apron with a little mallet tucked inside. Marty looped his yellow measuring tape over his shoulder. "That boat looks a bit tight," he said, tilting his head. "Who is it for?" Benny sighed. "My grandmother. But it is all wrong."



Marty climbed right in and measured the sides with his yellow tape. "Too narrow," he said. "A grandmother needs room to sit and stretch her paws." Millie tapped the wood with her mallet and nodded. "And it needs cushions," she said. "Soft ones." Benny looked at his friends, and his worried face slowly turned into a smile. "Will you help me fix it?" he asked.



"Of course!" said Marty and Millie together. They pulled the boat onto the grassy bank. Marty drew a new plan in the dirt with a stick. Wider here. Longer there. A little seat in the middle. Millie gathered soft moss and dry leaves for cushions. Benny chewed new planks with his strong front teeth, and the work began.



All afternoon, the three friends worked by the river. Benny chewed and shaped. Marty measured and checked. Millie hammered and tucked moss into every corner. The sun grew warm, and their paws grew tired, but nobody stopped. "A little wider," said Marty. "A little cozier," said Millie. Benny chewed and chewed until his jaw ached.



At last, they pushed the new boat into the water. It floated, steady and calm. Benny climbed in and sat down. There was room for his knees, room for his tail, and the moss cushions felt soft as a cloud. "It is perfect!" he cheered. Marty and Millie splashed their tails happily. The boat was wide, cozy, and ready for a birthday ride.



That night, Benny painted the boat with river clay and tied a bright ribbon on the front. He tucked a bunch of river flowers near the seat, just the way Grandmother liked them. He thought about her wrinkled, kind face and her warm dark eyes behind her little round glasses. Tomorrow would be her special day, and everything was ready.



On birthday morning, the sun sparkled on the water. Benny led Grandmother down to the riverbank, her lavender shawl wrapped snug around her shoulders. When she saw the boat, she stopped and put a paw to her mouth. "Oh, Benny," she whispered. "Did you make this for me?" Benny nodded so hard his ears flopped. "With help," he said.



Grandmother climbed in slowly and settled on the soft moss cushions. There was plenty of room for her round, comfortable self. Marty and Millie gave the boat a gentle push. It glided out onto the shining river, smooth as a leaf. Grandmother laughed, and her laugh sounded like bells. "This is the coziest boat on the whole river!" she said.



Benny swam beside the boat as it drifted past the willows. Grandmother trailed her paw in the water and smiled at the flowers by her seat. "A gift made with such care," she said softly, "is the best gift of all." Benny's heart felt warm and full. All the chewing, measuring, and hammering had been worth every single minute.



When the ride ended, Grandmother hugged Benny tight. "Next time," she said, "you can ride with me." Marty and Millie cheered from the bank. They all shared a picnic of sweet river roots and berries. The sun went down, painting the water gold. Grandmother wore her little flower, and her smile never once faded.



Benny learned something that day, sitting beside his grandmother's cozy boat. A thoughtful gift takes effort—chewing, measuring, fixing, trying again. But when friends help, the hard work turns into fun. Marty and Millie had made the boat better, and the day sweeter too. Benny decided he would always share his big ideas with his good friends.



And if you ever float down that river, past the leaning willows and the old beaver dam, you might see a wide, cozy boat with flowers by the seat. Grandmother Beaver rides it on sunny mornings, her lavender shawl fluttering. Benny swims beside her, and sometimes two muskrats splash along too. That boat, made with love and friends, still sails happily ever after.