

THE ONE AND ONLY.... CHOPPER



A Story for Children
by
Colin Charles

*(This story can be read from beginning to end in roughly 30 minutes.
It is also divided into chapters, with the idea that one chapter can
be read to children each night for five nights.)*

Chapter One

It was mid-summer in the forests of northern Canada, and down at the beaver pond on the south shore of Tadpole Lake, things were getting very busy indeed.

Summer is the time when Canadian beavers set to work building their dams and lodges, and no beavers worked harder at that job than little Chopper Beaver's family.

This year, the family project was to build more room onto the old family lodge, and fix the roof so it wouldn't leak as it usually did when the snow melted in the Spring. And they also needed to put more wood on the dam, which had been partly broken up at the same time. It was a big job, but Chopper's family was very close, and they all loved to work together.

Except for little Chopper, that is.

As the youngest member of the family, Chopper's only chore was to gather the simplest and smallest twigs. But alas, Chopper didn't like to work. In fact, he didn't like being a beaver very much.

He wanted to be a bird.

"Birds can fly," Chopper would sigh, to no one in particular. "I wish I could fly."

And so, when he should have been working, Chopper would spend most of his time just looking up at the sky, at the birds.

"Chopper!" his father would shout. "You've got to stop daydreaming and get on with your work. We'll have a very damp and uncomfortable house if you don't gather up those twigs for the roof."

But Chopper didn't hear his father.

He was listening to the bird calls drifting across the pond, over the tops of the trees. It seemed there was a new sound every day, as different birds would come and go from different places all over the world.

“I’d make a wonderful bird,” Chopper thought to himself. “And I’d visit lots of new places. If only I could fly.”

Of course, just about everybody – including you, and me, *and* Chopper – knows that beavers can’t fly.

“If God wanted beavers to fly,” Chopper’s Dad would say, “He would’ve given us wings. But He didn’t. So we don’t.”

“God gave us teeth to cut down trees,” he’d say, “and strong claws to carry the wood and build our dams and our lodges. And He gave us these wonderful wide tails for swimming, and warning other beavers of danger from bigger animals.

“But He didn’t give us wings, Chopper. So we... don’t... fly.”

But all that wise talk didn’t mean much to little Chopper.

“Building dams. Swimming. Phooey!” the youngster said to himself, and anyone who cared to listen.

“I want to fly. I want to go places. I don’t want to pick up twigs for the rest of my life!”

As far as Chopper knew, there were only three things that could fly. Birds, of course. And bugs. And airplanes, which he would see every now and then flying way up high in the sky, leaving a trail of white vapour behind them.

One day, in the early Spring, just as the leaves were starting to come out, an airplane had flown right down over the beaver pond and landed right in the middle of Tadpole Lake. What an amazing sight!

Chopper thought that he might go and visit that airplane and see if it could teach him how to fly, but it took off again before he could get to it. No one

knew for sure what the airplane had landed on the lake for, mainly because everyone was so scared that they ran away from it.

A jackrabbit, who had very good eyesight, said that he saw two humans carrying an empty cage back to the plane just before they flew away. But no one knew why, and soon it was summer, and everyone was too busy building and gathering food to investigate any further.

Well, here it was late July, and it happened one morning that Chopper was off in the forest all by himself, and even working hard at it for a change. This particular day, he wasn't thinking about birds or flying at all, when suddenly, he heard quite a noise in the branches overhead.

He looked up. But all he could see were two pretty ordinary looking brown squirrels chasing each other around the branches of a tall maple tree.

Now ordinarily, Chopper wouldn't pay much attention to squirrels. And he was just about to ignore these two when the strangest thing happened.

The squirrels were both *flying* from one tree to another!

Not jumping, *flying*!

Chopper couldn't believe it.

"Hey!"
he yelled with excitement.

"Who said that?" one of them stopped, and called back.

"Down here," said Chopper. "Hey was I just dreaming, or did both you guys just fly through the air over to that tree you're sitting in?"

"Nope, you weren't dreaming," the other squirrel said. "We're flying squirrels."

"What do you mean, *flying* squirrels?" Chopper asked, disbelieving.
"Squirrels can't fly. Only birds, bugs, and airplanes."

“Unnh-unnh,” said the other one. “We’re a special kind of squirrel. We have these wings, see?”

“Well, how come I’ve never seen you – or even heard of you – before?” asked Chopper. “You don’t live around here, do you?”

“Nope,” said the first squirrel.

“Remember that airplane that flew in here a few weeks ago?” asked the second squirrel.

“Yeah,” said Chopper.

“Well, that plane brought us here. The people in that plane were from the National Wildlife Council, and they put these tags on us, and they’re going to see if we can find our way back to the mountains where we live.”

“Yeah,” said the other squirrel. “We’ve hung out here for a few weeks but now we’re ready to get going home. We go this way.”

“No we *don’t*,” said the first squirrel. “It’s *that* way!”

“Wait, guys!” said Chopper. “Could you – I mean, would you – teach me how to fly?”

“You don’t have wings, silly,” said the first one.

“Maybe he could grow some,” said the second.

“Naw,” said Chopper. “My Dad says God didn’t give us wings on purpose. I’ve tried other things, though. I even tried using a big maple leaf for a parachute. But nothing works.”

“You can swim, can’t you?” the first one asked, after a moment’s pause.

“Well, sure,” said Chopper. “Beavers can swim almost as well as fish.”

“Well what’s wrong with that? Swimming’s cool,” suggested the second squirrel.

“Yeah, it’s okay I guess,” said Chopper, “but you can’t go very far swimming. And you can’t see all that much underwater.”

“So how do you swim without fins and gills?” asked the first squirrel.

“We use our tails,” said Chopper. “Like a propeller.”

“Well there you go,” suggested the second squirrel. “Use your tail to fly, like a propeller.”

“Yeah,” said the first. “Give it a whirl... so long!”

“Hey wait – “ said Chopper. But being squirrels, they were gone in an instant, and Chopper again gazed in wonder as they soared from tree to tree.

But they had also given him an idea...

“Use your tail as a propeller,” they’d said. “Give it a whirl.”

Chopper remembered that the airplane that had brought the squirrels to the forest had a big propeller on the front. That propeller made the plane go.

“Maybe the squirrels are right,” he thought out loud. “Maybe I should...”

But just as he began to stick his rear end in the air, Chopper’s father’s voice rang out through the forest, and the little beaver knew it was time to get back to his work.

Chapter Two



It wasn't until after dinner that very night that Chopper was able to try out his tail as a propeller. He had worked as hard as he could all afternoon, picking, cutting and sorting strong twigs from sticks, because he knew that if he gathered up a good pile, his Mummy and Daddy would let him play outside until dark, as a special reward for his effort.

So he cleaned off his dinner plate, washed it and dried it without even being asked, and out of the lodge he went.

When he was a good distance away from the back door, he stopped and looked around to make sure no one was watching. After all, even Chopper figured it would look pretty silly for a beaver to be caught standing all alone, trying to spin his tail around and around.

But that's just what he started to do.

And it wasn't easy.

For one thing, spinning a tail around and around quickly is not something beavers are used to doing.

Chopper found that he couldn't spin his tail with his four paws on the ground. The end of his tail would keep brushing the dirt and slow down, even get stuck in the mud.

The only way Chopper's tail could do a proper spin was if he stuck his entire rear end up in the air. And he could only do that if he supported himself with his two front feet.

What was worst of all, he found that the only way he could get his tail spinning was if he gave it a little kick with one of his hind legs, suspended as it was in mid-air!

But he tried it. And after a couple of kicks, the tail actually began to spin. And spin.

Chopper concentrated and concentrated as hard as he could to get that tail going as fast as he could. Round and round it went, faster and faster, and it reached such a speed that Chopper could see the fern leaves beside him starting to rustle.

Round and round went the tail, as fast as Chopper could make it go, when suddenly –

GALUMP!

Chopper's entire rear end came slamming down to the ground in one great, big thud.

"What on earth made that happen?" he asked himself out loud as he brushed the dirt from his posterior.

"Counterrevolutionization, dumbbell," said a voice unexpectedly.

Chopper looked straight up.

"Who said that?" he shouted.

"Me," said the voice. "Up here."

Chopper turned his head and looked up to a tree branch about ten feet above the ground. It was a bird, one that humans call a magpie – jet black in colour, and about half the size of a rooster. And from the look of him, this magpie was clearly a grownup, who looked like he'd been places. He was wearing a tiny little baseball cap with a blue jay's face on it, and chewing on a mangy old toothpick.

“Do you *mind*?” Chopper said, quite impatiently. “It’s very rude to spy on people, you know.”

“Yeah?” said the magpie. “Well, it’s not very polite to imitate people, either, chum,” he said.

“Imitate? What do you mean, imitate?” asked Chopper.

“Well, you’re trying to pretend you’re a bird, like me, right?’ the magpie said. “I don’t think that’s so polite. How often do you see birds chopping down trees and building dams, like beavers?”

“Besides,” he said, “you’re not doing it right.”

“Not doing what right?” asked Chopper.

“Your tail,” said the bird. “You’re spinning it to go in reverse. So instead of going up, you start going fast enough, and your bum takes a nosedive into the ground. Scientifically, we call it ‘counterrevolutionization’.”

“I guess it just won’t work then, will it,” sighed Chopper sadly, and quite forgetting that someone had figured out what he was up to.

“No, no, chum,” answered the magpie, “you’ve just got to spin it the other way.”

“The other way?” Chopper exclaimed. “I don’t think I could. I mean, beavers only spin their tails this way.” And he spun it around for the bird to see again.

“I suppose, though...” Chopper began to think out loud, “I mean, there’s really no reason why... that is, it’s not impossible... to try to spin it... this... way...”

And with that, Chopper gave his tail a gentle tap in the other direction.

To his complete delight and surprise, it worked! And it didn’t hurt a bit.

Slowly, it picked up speed. Then, gradually, faster. And faster. And faster.

Chopper's entire face was scrunched up from the effort he was making to get that tail to go round. He could feel the draft from the tail's motion, he could hear the fern leaves rustling. Even the tail itself was beginning to hum like a machine.

But Chopper didn't dare open his eyes, he was concentrating so hard.

This went on for what seemed like five minutes, when suddenly, the magpie spoke.

"Uh, don't stop what you're doing there, pal," said the bird, quietly, "but, uh, if you get a chance, maybe open one of your eyes..."

Chopper heard the magpie's voice only faintly through his concentration. But he did as the bird suggested. Slowly, carefully, he opened his right eye...

There seemed to be dust flying all around, and at first he had to squint. He could see the fern leaves swaying. Then, he saw the top of a white flower in the middle of the ferns. Then, below him, the top of a juniper bush over on his left.

Suddenly, it dawned on Chopper...

He was four feet off the ground! **CHOPPER WAS FLYING!!**

Chapter Three



Four feet off the ground!!

Chopper was amazed that he had done it. But he didn't dare let up for fear that he'd come crashing back down to the ground again.

"How... how do I get down?" Chopper asked the magpie in the tree above.

"You gotta learn to slow your tail down, gradually," said the bird. "Speed it up to go up, slow it down to go down."

Chopper closed his eyes and began to spin his tail a little more slowly. Soon, he could feel his toes touching the ground.

"Phew!" he exclaimed. "That was amazing."

The bird agreed. "I gotta admit it, kid, I didn't think you could pull it off. I don't think any beaver ever did what you just did. You should practice – you could get real good."

That was just the kind of encouragement Chopper needed. Flush with success, he began to spin his tail in the right direction again. This time, it seemed easier somehow. And with just a little extra effort, Chopper lifted himself in the air, right up to the branch where the bird was perched.

“Hi,” said Chopper, staring at the bird face-to-face. “What’s your name, anyway?”

“My friends call me Sid, kid,” the magpie replied, with a smile. “Tell you what – you can, too.”

“You don’t mind me imitating you?” asked Chopper.

“Nahhh,” said Sid. “To tell you the truth, I think it’s kind of flattering. I’ll tell you something else. I figure all you need to do is kinda lean forward a bit, stick your propeller – I mean your tail – out a little more, and you could actually start flying forward, instead of just up and down.”

“You mean, like this?” said Chopper, as he tilted his head down. Immediately, he began to take a nosedive toward the ground, until he quickly brought his tail up further to correct his fall. Suddenly, he began to fly forward!

“You got it, kid!” yelled Sid, who jumped off his branch and started to fly down alongside his new friend. “Let’s say we take a little spin around the treetops.”

“Oh gee, Sid, I don’t know. It’s getting kind of dark,” said Chopper. “I’m surprised my Mum and Dad haven’t come out looking for me already.”

“Yeah,” replied Sid, “maybe you’re right, kid.”

“How about tomorrow?” asked Chopper. “Will you be around?”

“Uh, gee, I dunno, kid. I mean, maybe... that is... well, yeah, sure. Sure. I’ll fly with you. Right after breakfast. You want to join me for an early worm?”

“Yecch,” said Chopper, touching back down on the ground. “Why don’t I just meet you here, after the dew’s dried on the leaves...”

And so they arranged to meet the next morning.

Chopper quickly hurried along back to the lodge, avoiding the temptation to fly all the way. He thought about whether he should tell his mother and father, and brothers and sister, about his new-found skill.

No, he thought, maybe this has all been a dream. Maybe I'd better make sure I can do it again tomorrow.

And no sooner was he in the door of the house than he was curled up on his soft bed of birch leaves, and falling into a deep, sweet sleep.

Next morning, Chopper arrived early at the place where he was to meet Sid the magpie.

And just for fun, he decided to play a little trick on his new friend.

Sid arrived shortly after and landed on the same branch he'd used the night before.

"Hey, kid," he called out, quietly. "You there?"

"Over here, Sid," said Chopper.

Sid turned around and there was Chopper, sitting on a branch in the tree behind him. Both of them started to laugh.

"Guess how I got here?" Chopper giggled.

"Say, kid," said Sid, "you think maybe you ought to let the world know about this? I'll bet you fifty feathers you're the first beaver that ever flew in the air."

Chopper thought for a second. "I guess you're right," he said, "but first, I better tell my Mum and Dad. Will you come with me, Sid? I don't think they'll believe their eyes unless you're there to tell them it's true."

And off they both flew. Quite a sight they were – a small black magpie wearing a baseball cap and chewing a toothpick, and a pint-sized beaver spinning his tail so fast you could barely see it.

Back at the dam, Chopper's parents were both outside, taking in a little early morning sunshine before beginning the day's work.

Chopper and Sid flew in behind them, down low, just above the ground.

"Mum, Dad, I'd like you to meet a new friend of mine," said Chopper, now hovering a few feet in the air, behind his parents' back.

"That's nice, dear," said Mrs. Beaver, not bothering to turn around.

"That's fine, son, bring him over when you'd like to," said Mr. Beaver, also not turning to look.

"No, no, he's here," said Chopper. "We're, uh, playing together."

Mrs. Beaver calmly turned around.

"OH MY HEAVENS! CHOPPER!" she screamed. "Milton! Catch Chopper, he's going to have a terrible fall!"

Chopper's father leapt to his feet, turning. "Great thundering jack pines!" he shouted. "Chopper! My Boy!" And he lurched over to catch his son.

"It's okay, Mum, Dad!" Chopper shouted with glee. "Look – I can fly!" And with that, he circled their heads.

"You wha – nononononono!" said his father, chasing around in a circle, trying to bring the boy down. "You *can't* fly. Beavers can't fly. And even if you *could* fly, you can't. I won't allow it!"

"But Dad," said Chopper, "I *can* fly. My friend Sid here taught me how... Sid, and these two flying squirrels I met. It's easy. And it's fun!"

Chopper's mother, who was in a state of shock, nevertheless spoke as sternly as her husband. "Chopper Beaver! You get down here this instant!"

"I can't, Mum. Not right now," replied Chopper. "I'll talk to you about it later," he said, flying off toward the far shore. "I want to show my friends what I can do..."

And with that, Chopper and Sid winged off to the eastern bank of the lake. And for the rest of the morning, Chopper demonstrated his new-found flying technique to his friends, their parents, and most of the other animals in the forest nearby.

Pretty soon he was putting on an exhibition of aerial stunts. He did loop-de-loops, cartwheels, dives and spins. Sid acted as Master of Ceremonies.

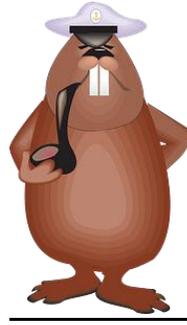
Everyone was amazed that a beaver could fly – especially little Chopper himself, who hadn't shown much talent at anything before. All of the younger animals were thrilled, and were peppering Chopper with questions on how to do it.

Chopper promised he'd teach anyone who wanted to learn, the next day. The whole exhibition caused a commotion that's never been seen before or since in the forest at Tadpole Lake.

Eventually, Chopper's parents joined in with the audience, and started to beam with pride at their son's new celebrity.

But nobody realized at that moment that Chopper's flying was going to create some serious problems... very, very soon.

Chapter Four



By the end of the very next day, just about every beaver within a five-mile radius of Tadpole Lake had decided to take up flying.

Most of them, especially the younger ones, found that they too could spin their tails just like Chopper. And many of them were able to lift themselves off the ground. Some quickly learned how to fly forward.

Chopper helped as many beavers as he could. But some of the older animals were very concerned about all this flying. They were like Chopper's father had been.

"If God wanted beavers to fly," they said, "He would've given us wings."

At first, they were as excited as all the others. But it soon became clear that, with everyone learning to fly, work on beaver dams and lodges would not get done. Work schedules were quickly falling behind.

Not only that, but with so many beavers flying around, it was getting very dangerous. Already, four or five accidents had happened. Gus Beaver had flown straight into a tree trunk and knocked himself out for a short period. Bert Beaver and his wife Gladys had bumped into each other on takeoff, causing Gladys to drop like a stone, and bruise her snout severely. And Philo Beaver – better known as "Tubby" because he was more than slightly overweight – had had a problem staying in the air, and fell back down on the ground, right on top of his little brother Ernie, who suffered a broken arm.

It got so bad that some of the older beavers came by to speak to Chopper's parents.

“Milton,” said wise old O’Leary, “it’s wonderful that your boy Chopper has discovered the secret of flying. And very generous that he’s shared his secret with so many others.

“But we think it’s got to stop.”

“Somebody’s going to get killed,” said Cora Beaver. Cora was the wife of Claude Beaver, the Mayor of the Tadpole Lake beaver colony, who sat twitching nervously at his wife’s side. “Isn’t that right, dear?” Cora asked her husband.

“Oh. Uh, oh, yes dear. Somebody might even die. We, uh, we should do something about it,” said the Mayor, who didn’t seem to have any idea of what to do.

“The rest of us won’t be ready for winter if we don’t get the young ones back to work,” said Henderson. “I think we should order all flying to stop.”

To the elder beavers’ surprise, Chopper’s father agreed with them.

“You’re right,” he said. “It’s gotten out of hand. I must admit, I’m proud of Chopper, but I agree with all of you – flying isn’t natural for beavers, and it’s got to stop.”

As the elder beavers discussed the problem, Chopper and Sid were listening behind a clump of bushes.

“Gosh, Sid, have I really done something wrong?” whispered Chopper.

“Nahhh, don’t worry about it, pal,” said Sid. “They’re just afraid of heights.”

But Chopper was concerned. He had thought that all the beavers would be thrilled that he had made perhaps the most important discovery in beaver history. He had no idea that it would turn out to be something that would cause accidents, and bring important beaver work to a total standstill.

“If I could only show them how flying could be good for all of us,” he said to himself...

“I don’t think we can stop it,” said Murgatroyd Beaver, to the elders. “I don’t think the young ones will listen to us. They’ll just call us old fogies, and fly even harder and faster if we try to stop them.”

“Murgatroyd’s right,” said O’Leary, after a short silence. “There’s only one person who can order the end of flying.”

Cora’s eyes widened. “You mean...”

“Yes,” said O’Leary. “Castor, The Great Beaver. Only he has the power and authority to make all beavers behave the way beavers should.”

Everyone hushed and bowed down at the mention of the Great Beaver’s name.

“Mr. Mayor,” said Chopper’s father, “it’s your duty to send a message to the Great Beaver. Perhaps he’ll only send a message back, but even that would be serious enough for everyone to listen to, and obey his command.”

“Oh... oh my goodness,” said the Mayor, quivering with fear. “The Great Beaver. The Magnificent One. Oh dear me, I must send a m-m-m-message to him...”

Behind the fern bush, Chopper heard the news about the Great Beaver, and became very frightened.

He had only heard of the Great Beaver, for many, many winters had come and gone since the last time the Great One had visited Tadpole Lake – since well before Chopper had been born.

It was said that the Great Beaver was over sixty years old – older than any other beaver. He had been a great warrior and explorer, they said, and in his earliest days, the fastest swimmer and strongest wood carrier of all. As the beaver that all others looked up to the most, the Great One had been unanimously appointed the number one beaver of all, for as long as he should live.

It was said that the Great Beaver was very fair in his judgements, but angry when beavers didn't act like they should. And Chopper had a good idea that flying was probably not high on his list of "Things Beavers Should Do".

And so, as Chopper got more and more nervous, he and Sid decided to "lay low" for a couple of days, and wait to hear what message the Great Beaver might send back.

But just as the elders were getting up to leave their meeting, Bennett Beaver came running over to the Council Meeting in a terrible state!

"It's Bicuspid!" he shouted. "My baby boy! He's gone, disappeared! No one knows where he is!"

"How long has he been missing?" asked Chopper's father, quickly.

"Since this morning," Bennett answered. "He was practicing his flying outside our lodge, and when I came back from chewing down a maple branch, he was gone!"

"Milton," Bennett continued, "I don't blame you, but I *curse* the day your son learned how to fly!"

Chapter Five



The news about flying beavers spread quickly. One beaver passed it on to his neighbour, who passed it on to his neighbour, and so on.

Even though it was more than a hundred kilometers away from the beaver pond at Tadpole Lake, it took less than two days for the news to reach the Great Beaver – even before Mayor Claude Beaver’s message was received.

And when he heard the news, the Great Beaver was greatly alarmed. Chopper’s friend Sid had been right – no beaver in history had ever been able to fly.

Castor immediately understood that once the word got around to all the beaver ponds around the country, and once all the other beavers learned Chopper’s secret, it would change life completely for the entire species of beavers. And unless they were very careful, they might not survive as flying animals. With birds and bugs and airplanes already filling the sky, a million beavers would surely make things far too crowded up there.

The Great Beaver decided that, somehow, he would have to put a stop to all this flying. As soon as possible.

So he set out at once to visit Tadpole Lake, and see for himself how serious the problem was.

Meanwhile, back at the pond, everyone was looking everywhere for little Bicuspid. Two days had passed since his mother had noticed him missing, and there was much concern among the beaver community.

Before all the beavers had started to fly, it had been pretty easy to find a lost youngster. After all, beavers can't travel too far, too fast, on four paws.

But now, no one had a clue where or how far away Bicuspid might have gone. And they were all worried. Especially Chopper, who felt guilty that he had been the one who'd taught Bicuspid how to fly.

It was decided, by the Mayor and the elder beavers, that the search would be carried out only by foot. No flying allowed. So for the third day in a row, all the beavers gathered together, and each started out in a different direction, to find the missing youngster.

After they'd gone a few yards from the others, Sid spoke to Chopper.

"Don't you think we'd cover more ground up in the air?" he asked.

"I – I don't think we should be flying, under the circumstances," said Chopper.

"But he could be anywhere," Sid replied, "and if you could find him by covering more distance, other beavers might forget that it was flying that started this whole mess."

"Gosh," said Chopper, "you think so? Maybe you're right. I suppose it couldn't get me into any more trouble than I'm in right now..."

With that, Chopper quietly tiptoed around the trunk of a giant pine tree. Sid looked out to make sure no one was watching, and within seconds, Chopper had his tail spinning full speed again. Two seconds more, and the beaver and the magpie were soaring above the tree line, looking down on the pond, the lake, and the forest below.

As the other beavers were searching along the ground on the south shore, Chopper and Sid decided to try the north shore first. They flew slowly over

the trees, back and forth, along and down, Chopper looking left, Sid looking right.

They flew over to the west shore, then across the lake to the east. They were afraid that they might not be able to see Bicuspid if he was stuck under a log or trapped in a hole or a cave. But they knew they were covering a much wider area than if they'd stayed on foot.

Slowly, afternoon turned into evening, and evening turned into dusk. There was no sign of Bicuspid. It was getting almost dark as the beavers on the ground decided to call off their search for the night. Chopper and Sid knew they'd have to get back to the pack, or someone would notice they were gone, too.

"Let's just check over that ridge, Sid, and then we'll head home," Chopper said, pointing to a small hill covered with tall, green pine trees.

"Okay, pal," said Sid.

No sooner had the words left Sid's beak than Chopper shrieked with excitement.

"Bicuspid!" he shouted. "Sid, look!!"

There, just below, lying on a broken branch of a tall pine lay the little lost beaver!

Chopper and Sid swooped down for the rescue.

"Bicuspid!" Chopper yelled, "are you alright? It's me, Chopper."

Little Bicuspid turned his head slowly. He was clearly in some pain, and very weak.

"Ohhhhh, Chopper," he moaned. "I'm so glad you came. I – I spun out of control and sprained my tail when I hit this branch. I couldn't fly, and I can't get down from here."

"Don't you worry," said Chopper, landing on the branch beside him. "I'm here, and I can carry you home."

With that, Chopper lifted the little beaver into his arms, and with Sid giving his tail a good spin to get it started, the three of them lifted into the sky, toward home.

Back at the beaver pond, the Great Beaver had already arrived, and everyone was gathered round a large campfire that the elders made in his honour.

Castor's concern about flying beavers was only made worse when he heard the story about Bicuspid's disappearance.

In fact, the Great Beaver had called the entire community together to tell them about the great danger that flying would mean to all beavers, everywhere. Bicuspid's disappearance was already a good example of that, he said.

"I don't know this young lad Chopper," said Castor, "and I'm sorry that he's not here to listen to what I'm saying. But I say this to all of you: Chopper has made a fantastic discovery. But flying is not something that beavers should ever do, again."

At that very moment, Chopper, Sid and Bicuspid came flying into the gathering.

"Look!" one beaver shouted, "It's Chopper, with... Bicuspid!"

Suddenly, all the beavers were up on their hind feet, straining to look, cheering, waving their arms. Even though he was hurt, Bicuspid smiled to the crowd, and shrieked with joy when he saw his Mum and Dad, who were crying with happiness that their son was home and safe.

The other beavers began to congratulate Chopper for finding and rescuing the little beaver.

Although Chopper wouldn't say it himself, most of the others began to realize that Bicuspid would never have been found if Chopper hadn't been able to fly.

And even though, yes, Bicuspid wouldn't have been *lost* if *he* hadn't learned to fly, it was generally understood that Chopper's flying had been a good thing, and a life saver.

Seeing this, the Great Beaver realized quickly that this was not the time to tell the beavers that flying was to be forbidden from now on. But, he also knew he had to stop it, somehow.

Suddenly, he had an idea.

"My friends!" he called out to the crowd, "this is truly a wonderful and happy moment.

"It is clear that little Bicuspid would not have been found if this young beaver had not seen him from the air. And so, in that sense, flying has saved the day."

"On the other hand," he continued, "there is no question that we must put an end to this flying phenomenon.

"So here is what I propose to all of you. From this moment on, flying – in this, and all other beaver colonies, everywhere – is forbidden, forever."

The crowd of beavers let out a loud sigh. The Great Beaver was, after all, right.

"However," said the Great Beaver, "there will be *one* beaver who *will* be allowed to fly.

"And that one beaver is.... Chopper!"

Well, the crowd let out a mighty cheer as Castor called Chopper to his side.

"My boy," he said, "*you* will be the world's only flying beaver. That does not mean that you will not work, like other beavers. And you must never tease or taunt other beavers, or use your flying to do any harm or injustice to beavers or any other living creatures. Do you understand and agree?"

“Yes sir, Great Beaver!” said Chopper, smartly. “No matter what I do, or where I go, I’ll be a *good* beaver. I won’t get anyone into trouble ever again. I’ll try to make everyone proud of me.”

With that, all the beavers let out another loud cheer. Chopper’s parents looked on, proudly. Bicuspid hugged his Mum, and smiled. All the elder beavers nodded at each other and clapped their hands. The Great Beaver held up Chopper’s right paw, and the crowd roared its approval.

And Sid flew over to Chopper, smiled at his friend, and said, “Y’know, kid, I think this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship...”

And that’s how Chopper became the world’s first, official, flying beaver....

THE END

Brought to you by the Lake Kasshagog Residents Association in celebration of their 75th Anniversary.



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