

## The Otter With Good Intentions

by Paisley Dutcher (3/11/13)

"This is terrible!" <sup>c</sup>cried the otter, "This is the worst I've ever seen them! I don't think it's ever been this bad before!" The otter pushed his big black nose against the cool glass of the window, his brow furrowed.

"Calm down, Otter," said the otter's best friend. He was a tortoise and spoke with as much fervor as a bowl of brown pudding. "I'm sure it's fine . . . I wouldn't worry about it . . . You worry too much . . ." The otter had grown accustomed to the long pauses.

The otter made sure the tortoise was finished speaking. "I know you're probably right," the otter sighed, "and I know they fight all the time, but this feels different. Do you know what I mean?" The otter turned and looked into the tortoise's small, dull eyes.

"No," said the tortoise after a long pause.

"Oh," said the otter.

An awkward silence hung in the air. The otter looked disappointed and the tortoise just looked uncomfortable.

"I'm late for something," said the tortoise, finally.

"Of course you are," said the otter.

The tortoise left and the otter turned back to the window.

The otter had been born in the village on the left side of the lake. For as long as he could remember his village had been at odds with the village on the right side of the lake. He didn't know why they hated each other so much. In fact, he didn't think anyone knew, but he kept that to himself. Every so often the leaders of The Left and The Right villages would bump into each other (sometimes accidentally, sometimes not) and verbally abuse

each other. They insulted each other's village, <sup>families?</sup> family, leadership, and physical appearance. The arguments lasted for hours but never ended in violence.

Even so, the otter worried about the possibility of war. He didn't like fighting and believed there was always a better solution. Fortunately for him no war had ever broken out between the two otter clans. He prayed that none ever would.

Perhaps he should have prayed harder.

After the especially bad argument between the two lead otters that morning each decided that they had had enough. They both declared war on the same day.

Within the week every able bodied inhabitant of the lake was enlisted in either The Left or The Right army -- all except the otter. The otter sat in his cottage tapping his tail and twiddling his fingers anxiously. He was so very conflicted. On the one hand it was his duty as a citizen of The Left to fight for his home, but on the other hand . . . well on the other hand there was war and the otter couldn't just stand by and watch. A plan formed in the otter's mind

I got a little bit lost on this sentence.

On the day of the battle, everyone was ready. The armies of The Left and The Right stood their ground on either side of the lake. A sandbank glimmered in the sun between them. The lead otters marched up and down, checking soldiers and gear <sup>and</sup> giving last minute advice and encouragement. A warm breeze rolled across the lake. The lead otters looked each other dead in the eyes, raised their small, brown fists, and . . .

"NO!"

Everyone froze. No one had noticed the otter swimming out to the sandbank.

"Stop!" cried the otter as he climbed up the sandy ledge and stood panting at its

crest. "We don't have to do this! Don't you see? We've been living in peace for ages," the otter yelled to be heard across the lake, "the only reason we're fighting now is because you two," he pointed at the two lead otters, "think you have to insult each other in order to keep the other in line, but you don't! You don't and you never have."

↳ had to? its never been necessary?

The otter stood on the sandbank, his chest heaving and his fur still dripping from the swim. The otter looked back and forth between the two armies. The two lead otters wavered, confused by the unexpected challenge. No one had ever questioned their disputes before, not even themselves. Behind them, their armies began to falter. Whiskers twitched and feet that were once steady began to shift and shuffle. No one knew what to do.

Good job building energy / momentum here.

The otter was rooted to his spot on the sandbank. He didn't know what to do either. Without warning a mighty cry erupted from one of the armies. In the next moment an intense pain spread from the back of the otter's skull and the world went black as the ground came rushing up to meet him.

and ← ok

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The otter awoke in a room that smelled like daisies and antiseptic. He looked around groggily and spotted a nurse sitting in a chair to his right. He groaned to get her attention.

"Good morning," the nurse said sweetly, "I'm glad you're up."

"What happened?"

The nurse smiled, "See for yourself."

The nurse stood and handed the otter a heavily creased newspaper with the

— ? Was it a peaceful protest?

headline: Peaceful Protest Turns Violent. The article gave a detailed account of the otter's outburst. The otter cringed when he got to the part that explained his head injury. A frustrated member of The Right army had thrown a rock at him. It went on to say that almost half of the soldiers from the two armies defected before the battle even started. The otter stopped reading and smiled to himself, so his words had done some good after all. He read on. The other half fought wildly, using strategies meant to provoke more than harm. Many animals died. The battle ended when neither army had the strength to continue.

The otter put the paper in his lap and smoothed out its wrinkles with his furry, webbed fingers.

"Are you alright, sir?"

The otter looked up to find the nurse looking in his direction. A soft look of understanding graced her ottery features.

"Yes, I'm alright. Can I keep this?" He held up the paper.

"Of course."

"Thank you."

The nurse left. Sun filtered through the hospital room window, the otter sat on his bed, content and slightly sleepy. There was a knock at the door.

"It's open!" called the otter.

The tortoise shambled in on his short, wrinkled legs.

"How are you?" asked the otter pleasantly. He had missed his friend.

"... Good ... You?" The tortoise sat down in the nurse's abandoned chair.

"Good." The otter turned and looked out the window. The two sat in silence for a long time.

"We're proud of you, you know."

That brought the otter's head spinning back around to face the tortoise.

"What?"

"We're . . . proud . . . of . . . you," <sup>t</sup>The tortoise said it, like he was speaking a new language. The otter's lips pulled up at the corners. He knew how much the tortoise hated sappy moments like these.

The tortoise's mouth clacked open and shut but no more words came out.

"Uh . . ." The tortoise finally said and then paused for an exceptionally long time.

"I'm late for something. . ." the tortoise finished.

"Of course you are," said the otter.

Very nicely written story!  
I enjoy how the momentum builds,  
the story isn't predictable and that  
it clearly has a message but there  
are still things that keep me thinking.

## War Theory Behind *The Otter With Good Intentions*

by Paisley Dutcher (3/11/13)

This parable represents a mix of Pacifism and Realism. The otter thinks war is unnecessary and that there's always a better solution. When war breaks out between The Left and The Right villages of the lake he decides to do something about it. Moments before the battle was set to begin the otter jumps in the middle of it and stops it in its tracks. He gives a heartfelt speech and pleads with the two head otters to stop this pointless war but before a decision can be made the otter is struck down. He wakes up later in the hospital. This series of events represents the battle between pacifists and realists. The otter is a pacifist because he wants to avoid war at all costs. The creature that strikes him down is a realist because he believes war is a necessary part of civilization. The creature also represents the pressure (from society, government, family, etc.) that pushes people to fight for their homes, even when their homes aren't actually in danger. When the otter wakes up he is greeted with praise to show that, even though he wasn't altogether successful, it was important for him to follow his morals.

### Goals from Reflection

by Paisley Dutcher (3/11/13)

Goal 1: **Make my characters/plot more absurd.** I didn't go crazy with this one but I did give my characters odd quirks. Specifically, the tortoise and his aversion to emotional situation. He loves his best friend the otter but whenever either of them get even remotely emotional the tortoise mutters "I'm late for something," and retreats. I don't know why I love him so much but I really, really do. I also had my otters living in cottages with glass windows and going to the hospital with medicine and doctors... that's pretty absurd if you ask me. 😊

Goal 2: **Emotionally attach the reader.** In the beginning of the story I made sure that I focused on the characters first and the plot second. I wanted the reader to know the characters so that they could understand how the plot affects the characters on an emotional level. I also made sure to *end* with the characters as well, I didn't want the characters to be washed out by the action. The reader should have been left thinking of the characters more than anything. Nice.

Goal 3: **Add more hidden meanings.** Because I wrote the story it's difficult for me to say whether or not my messages are hidden or not. I am satisfied with my messages nonetheless. Hidden or unhidden I tried to layer my meanings and relate them to each other so that the plot reflects reality. In reality there's never just one lesson to be learned from any one experience.

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I think you did this well.