

The Spring Keeper

By Sophia Lacocque

My name is Cheat. I am a Cheat Mountain salamander living in a spring in the West Virginia highlands. Animals want water from my spring, but I do not want to run out because I need water to survive. So, I guard it with my long tail, which is about the same length as my body.

One day, I was guarding my spring when an orange newt politely asked, "Can I have some water, please?" I shoved my tail toward her and said, "Get lost." She tried to beg me, but I would not listen. That same day, a beetle snuck in but I chased him away before he could put one antennae in my precious spring. Later, I heard something. Eight, tiny, brown speckled spiders scurried across the mossy ground. I stopped them and said, "What do you think you're doing? This is my spring." The smallest spider said, "We need water too." I ignored how cute they were and brushed them away.

That afternoon, a box turtle visited me. She said, "I saw what happened today. There is plenty of water for everyone, and I think sharing will make you happier."

The next day, I made a decision. I decorated my spring with small tables, cloth napkins, and a sign that said, "The Spring Keeper's Restaurant! All welcome!" First, the shy orange newt came to drink from the spring. She was worried that I would shove her away, but I told her she was welcome. She handed me flowers. Next, the beetle scampered in, placed a bowl of tasty ants on a table, and took a big lap of water from the fresh spring. Finally, the family of spiders cautiously crept in. I reassured them that I would share. The smallest spider replied, "We have a gift for you. We made it ourselves." The spider handed me a silky, handspun tablecloth.

As I looked around, everyone was cheerful. Their kindness made me smile for the first time in years. The wise turtle was right. Sharing does make you happy.

The end.

3-10

Cheat Mountain



4 inches

Salamander

3-10









