

This story is brought to you by Ririro.com for free. Our mission is to give all children in the world free access to a variety of stories. The stories can be read, downloaded and printed online and cover a wide range of topics, including animals, fantasy, science, history, diverse cultures and much more.

Support our mission by sharing our website. We wish you a lot of fun reading!



Ririro

IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Ririro

Bambi (18/25)

Bambi went to look for the old stag. He roamed around all night long. He wandered till the sun rose and dawn found him on unbeaten trails without Faline.

He was still drawn to Faline at times. At times he loved her just as much as ever. Then he liked to roam about with her, to listen to her chatter, to browse with her on the meadow or at the edge of the thicket. But she no longer satisfied him completely.

Before, when he was with Faline, he hardly ever remembered his meetings with the old stag, and when he did it was only casually. Now he was looking for him and felt an inexplicable desire driving him to find him. He only thought of Faline between whiles. He could always be with her if he wanted to. He did not much care to stay with the others. Gobo or Aunt Ena he avoided when he could.

The words the old stag had let fall about Gobo kept ringing in Bambi's ears. They made a peculiarly deep impression on him. Gobo had affected him strangely from the very first day of his return. Bambi didn't know why, but there was something painful to him in Gobo's bearing. Bambi was ashamed of Gobo without knowing why. And he was afraid for him, again without knowing why. Whenever he was together with this harmless, vain, self-conscious and self-satisfied Gobo, the words

kept running through his head, "Poor thing!" He couldn't get rid of them.

But one dark night when Bambi had again delighted the screech-owl by assuring him how badly he was frightened, it suddenly occurred to him to ask, "Do you happen to know where the old stag is now?"

The screech-owl answered in his cooing voice that he didn't have the least idea in the world. But Bambi perceived that he simply didn't want to tell.

"No," he said, "I don't believe you, you're too clever. You know everything that's happening in the forest. You certainly must know where the old stag is hiding."

The screech-owl, who was all fluffed up, smoothed his feathers against his body and made himself small. "Of course I know," he cooed still more softly, "but I oughtn't to tell you, I really oughtn't."

Bambi began to plead. "I won't give you away," he said. "How could I, when I respect you so much?"

The owl became a lovely, soft gray-brown ball again and rolled his big cunning eyes a little as he always did when he felt in a good humor. "So you really do respect me," he asked, "and why?"

Bambi did not hesitate. "Because you're so wise," he said sincerely, "and so good-natured and friendly, besides.

And because you're so clever at frightening people. It's so very clever to frighten people, so very, very clever. I wish I could do it, it would be a great help to me."

The screech-owl had sunk his bill into his downy breast and was happy.

"Well," he said, "I know that the old stag would be glad to see you."

"Do you really think so?" cried Bambi while his heart began to beat faster for joy.

"Yes, I'm sure of it," the owl answered. "He'd be glad to see you, and I think I can venture to tell you where he is now."

He laid his feathers close to his body and suddenly grew thin again.

"Do you know the deep ditch where the willows stand?" Bambi nodded yes.

"Do you know the young oak thicket on the farther side?"

"No," Bambi confessed, "I've never been on the farther side."

"Well, listen carefully then," the owl whispered. "There's an oak thicket on the far side. Go through that. Then there are bushes, hazel and silver poplar, thorn and shadbush. In the midst of them is an old uprooted beech. You'll have to hunt for it. It's not so easy to see it from your height as it is from the air. You'll find him under the trunk. But don't tell him I told you."

"Under the trunk?" said Bambi.

"Yes," the screech-owl laughed, "there's a hollow in the ground there. The trunk lies right across it. And he sleeps under the trunk."

"Thank you," said Bambi sincerely. "I don't know if I can find it, but I'm very grateful anyhow." He ran quickly away.

The screech-owl flew noiselessly after him and began to hoot right beside him. "Oi, oi!" Bambi shrank together. "Did I frighten you?" asked the owl.



"Yes," he stammered, and that time he told the truth.

The owl cooed with satisfaction and said, "I only wanted to remind you again. Don't tell him I told you."

"Of course not," Bambi assured him and ran on.

When Bambi reached the ditch the old stag rose before him out of the pitch black night so noiselessly and suddenly that Bambi drew back in terror.

"I'm no longer where you were going to look for me," said the stag.

Bambi was silent.

"What is it you want?" asked the stag.

"Nothing," Bambi stammered, "nothing, excuse me, nothing at all."

After a while the old stag spoke, and his voice sounded gentle. "This isn't the first time you've been looking for me," he said.

He waited. Bambi did not answer. The old stag went on, "Yesterday you passed close by me twice, and again this morning, very close."

"Why," said Bambi gathering courage, "why did you say that about Gobo?"

"Do you think that I was wrong?"

"No," cried Bambi sorrowfully, "no, I feel that you were right."

The old stag gave a barely perceptible nod and his eyes rested on Bambi more kindly than ever before.

"But why?" Bambi said, "I don't understand it."

"It's enough that you feel it. You will understand it later," the old stag said. "Good-by."