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Old Mr. Owl Writes a Book

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Mr. Owl had decided to write a book, and he wanted everyone to know about it.

"It will be a marvelous book," he told the Fairy Queen. "As long as anyone can remember, I have been called the Wise Bird. The bird who stays up all night and whose eyes are extraordinarily bright. Think what a book I can write."

The Fairy Queen considered this. "Before you tell everyone what a fine book it will be," she said, "perhaps write it first, and give other people the chance to say so."

Mr. Owl found this an unreasonable suggestion, but he did go home and write. He wrote with a pen made from one of Mr. Turkey Gobbler's best feathers, on a large flat stone in the hollow of his tree.

Very late that night, he hooted for all the neighborhood owls to come and listen, woke the sleeping fairies, and prepared to read aloud. But before he could begin, he announced that the light was insufficient. He couldn't possibly read in such dim conditions. His eyes — his beautiful, wise, very large eyes — would suffer.

He had made arrangements, as it happened. At his word, fireflies came drifting in from all across the woods, hundreds of them, until the hollow blazed with soft, sparkling light. Mr. Owl settled his spectacles on his beak.

"Now I see to perfection," he said.

The book was wonderful. It was full of parties and picnics and wild happenings in the woodland, and the fairies were thrilled to find themselves in it. The very last chapter was all about the Fairy Queen.



"You made me rather ashamed of myself," Mr. Owl told her, "for boasting about my book before I'd written it. So I thought the only proper thing was to write my wisest chapter about you."

The Fairy Queen smiled with real pleasure, and perhaps a little amusement.

The fireflies had been patient long enough. "You must dance," they announced.

"It is not right to read books all evening. You must also dance."

And so they did — owls, fairies, and fireflies all together — and before the night was over, Mr. Owl had presented the Fairy Queen with a copy of his book. On the cover, in his best handwriting, it said: *A Book, by Wise Mr. Owl.*

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