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The Old Man in the Woods

Mary Graham Bonner

Bobbie and Agnes had lived their whole lives near the edge of those woods, and they had always been told there was a queer old man living somewhere in the middle of them. No one visited him. He was thought strange.

One day, Bobbie and Agnes decided to go and see for themselves.

The forest road was long and quiet. After a while they came to a small clearing where a hut stood with smoke curling from its chimney. As they approached, the door opened and an old man looked out.

When he saw them, his face broke into such pure delight that they stopped in their tracks.

"Visitors!" he cried. "I'm having visitors! Come in, come in!"

Inside, the hut was small and warm and full of books. Wonderful picture books, stacked on every shelf. The old man laid them out on the table one by one, showing the children picture after picture — animals and distant mountains and ships at sea and cities they had never imagined.



He told them how glad he was to have company. He knew people thought him odd, he said. Perhaps he was, a little. He simply preferred to live in the woods, that was all. He had always liked the quiet, and the trees, and having his books nearby. That was the whole of his strangeness.

"You must come back," he said, when at last it was time for them to go. "I'll have more to show you."

"We will," said Bobbie and Agnes. They meant it.

He pressed a large piece of apple pie into each of their hands as they stepped out the door.

Walking home through the long shadow of the trees, Bobbie noticed that the forest felt entirely different now — the same woods, the same light between the branches, but all the strangeness gone out of them.

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