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Opening extract from

The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark

Written by

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For Philip and, of course, D. H.

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Dark is exciting

Plop was a baby barn owl, and he lived with his mummy and daddy at the top of a very tall tree in a field.

Plop was fat and fluffy.

He had a beautiful heart-shaped ruff.

He had enormous, round eyes.

He had very knackety knees.

In fact he was exactly the same as every baby barn owl that has ever been – except for one thing.

Plop was afraid of the dark.

'You *can't* be afraid of the dark,' said his mummy. 'Owls are *never* afraid of the dark.'

'This one is,' Plop said.

'But owls are *night* birds,' she said.

Plop looked down at his toes. 'I don't want to be a night bird,' he mumbled. 'I want to be a day bird.'

'You *are* what you *are*,' said Mrs Barn Owl firmly.

'Yes, I know,' agreed Plop, 'and what I are is afraid of the dark.'

'Oh dear,' said Mrs Barn Owl. It was clear that she was going to need a lot of patience. She shut her eyes and tried to think

how best she could help Plop not to be afraid. Plop waited.

His mother opened her eyes again. 'Plop, you are only afraid of the dark because you don't know about it. What *do* you know about the dark?'

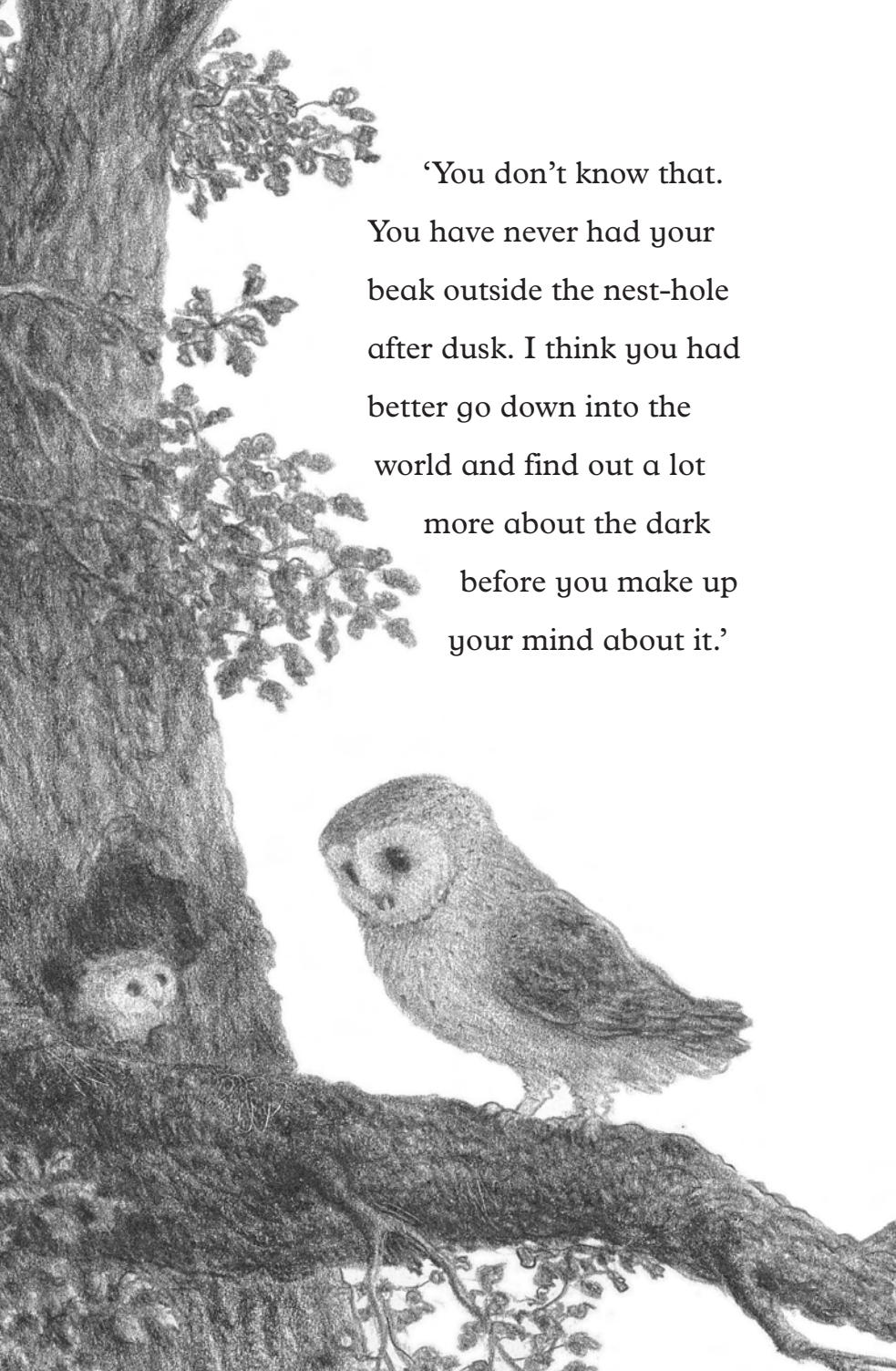
'It's black,' said Plop.

'Well, that's wrong for a start. It can be silver or blue or grey or lots of other colours, but almost never black. What else do you know about it?'

'I don't like it,' said Plop. 'I do not like it AT ALL.'

'That's not *knowing* something,' said his mother. 'That's *feeling* something. I don't think you know anything about the dark at all.'

'Dark is nasty,' Plop said loudly.



‘You don’t know that. You have never had your beak outside the nest-hole after dusk. I think you had better go down into the world and find out a lot more about the dark before you make up your mind about it.’

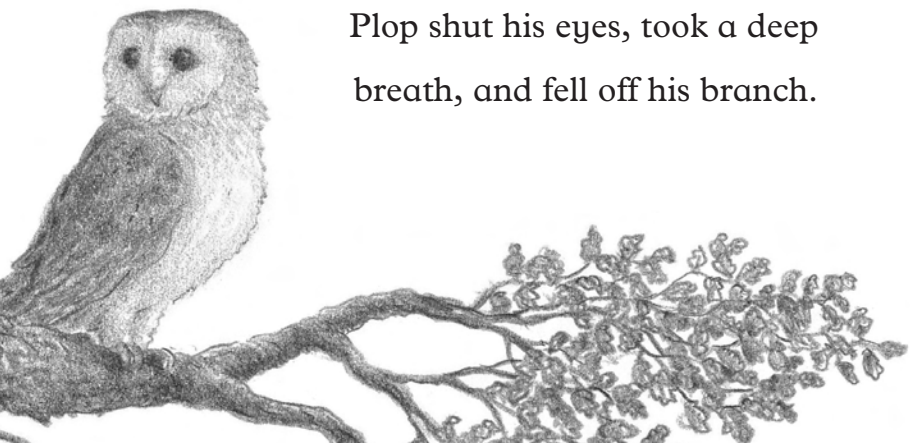
‘Now?’ said Plop.

‘Now,’ said his mother.

Plop climbed out of the nest-hole and wobbled along the branch outside. He peeped over the edge. The world seemed to be a very long way down.

‘I’m not a very good lander,’ he said. ‘I might spill myself.’

‘Your landing will improve with practice,’ said his mother. ‘Look! There’s a little boy down there on the edge of the wood collecting sticks. Go and talk to him about it.’

‘Now?’ said Plop.

‘Now,’ said his mother. So Plop shut his eyes, took a deep breath, and fell off his branch.