



CHAPTER 12

WHITEY THE OWL SAVES JUMPER



*It often happens in the end
An enemy may prove a friend.*
—Whitefoot.

Was ever any one in a worse position than Jumper the Hare? To move would be to give himself away to Whitey the Snowy Owl. If he remained where he was very likely Shadow the Weasel would find him, and the result would be the same as if he were caught by Whitey the Owl. Neither Whitey nor Shadow knew he was there, but it would be only a few minutes before one of them knew it. At least, that is the way it looked to Jumper.

Whitey wouldn't know it unless he moved, but Shadow the Weasel would find his tracks, and his nose would lead him straight there. Back and forth, back and forth, this way, that way and the other way, just a little distance off, Shadow was running with his nose to the snow. He was hunting—hunting for the scent of some one whom he could kill. In a few minutes he would be sure to find where Jumper had been, and then his nose would lead him straight to that tree at the foot of which Jumper was crouching.

Nearer and nearer came Shadow. He was slim and trim and didn't look at all terrible. Yet there was no one in all the Green Forest more feared by the little people in fur, by Jumper, by Peter Rabbit, by Whitefoot, even by Chatterer the Red Squirrel.

Chapter 12 -- Whitey the Owl Saves Jumper

“Perhaps,” thought Jumper, “he won’t find my scent after all. Perhaps he’ll go in another direction.” But all the time Jumper felt in his bones that Shadow would find that scent. “When he does, I’ll run,” said Jumper to himself. “I’ll have at least a chance to dodge Whitey. I am afraid he will catch me, but I’ll have a chance. I won’t have any chance at all if Shadow finds me.”

Suddenly Shadow stopped running and sat up to look about with fierce little eyes, all the time testing the air with his nose. Jumper’s heart sank. He knew that Shadow had caught a faint scent of some one. Then Shadow began to run back and forth once more, but more carefully than before. And then he started straight for where Jumper was crouching! Jumper knew then that Shadow had found his trail.

Jumper drew a long breath and settled his long hind feet for a great jump, hoping to so take Whitey the Owl by surprise that he might be able to get away. And as Jumper did this, he looked over to that stump where Whitey had been sitting so long. Whitey was just leaving it on his great silent wings, and his fierce yellow eyes were fixed in the direction of Shadow the Weasel. He had seen that moving black spot which was the tip of Shadow’s tail.

Jumper didn’t have time to jump before Whitey was swooping down at Shadow. So Juniper just kept still and watched with eyes almost popping from his head with fear and excitement.

Shadow hadn’t seen Whitey until just as Whitey was reaching for him with his great cruel claws. Now if there is any one who can move more quickly than Shadow the Weasel I don’t know who it is. Whitey’s claws closed on nothing but snow; Shadow had dodged. Then began a game, Whitey swooping and Shadow dodging, and all the time they were getting farther and farther from where Jumper was.

Chapter 12 -- Whitey the Owl Saves Jumper

The instant it was safe to do so, Jumper took to his long heels and the way he disappeared, lipperty-lipperty-lip, was worth seeing. Whitey the Snowy Owl had saved him from Shadow the Weasel and didn't know it. An enemy had proved to be a friend.