



## CHAPTER 23

### WHITEFOOT SPENDS A DREAFUL NIGHT



*Pity those who suffer fright  
In the dark and stilly night.*

—Whitefoot.

One night of his life Whitefoot will never forget so long as he lives. Even now it makes him shiver just to think of it. Yes, sir, he shivers even now whenever he thinks of that night. The Black Shadows had come early that evening, so that it was quite dusk when Whitefoot crept out of his snug little bed and climbed up to the round hole which was the doorway of his home. He had just poked his nose out that little round doorway when there was the most terrible sound. It seemed to him as if it was in his very ears, so loud and terrible was it. It frightened him so that he simply let go and tumbled backward down inside his house. Of course it didn't hurt him any, for he landed on his soft bed.

"Whooo-hoo-hoo, whooo-hoo!" came that terrible sound again, and Whitefoot shook until his little teeth rattled. At least, that is the way it seemed to him. It was the voice of Hooty the Owl, and Whitefoot knew that Hooty was sitting on the top of that very stub. He was, so to speak, on the roof of Whitefoot's house.

Now in all the Green Forest there is no sound that strikes terror to the hearts of the little people of feathers and fur equal to the hunting call of Hooty the Owl. Hooty knows this. No one knows it better than he does. That is why he uses it. He knows that many of the little people are asleep, safely hidden away. He knows that it would be quite useless for him to simply look for them. He would starve before he could

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find a dinner in that way. But he knows that any one wakened from sleep in great fright is sure to move, and if they do this they are almost equally sure to make some little sound. His ears are so wonderful that they can catch the faintest sound and tell exactly where it comes from. So he uses that terrible hunting cry to frighten the little people and make them move.

Now Whitefoot knew that he was safe. Hooty couldn't possibly get at him, even should he find out that he was in there. There was nothing to fear, but just the same, Whitefoot shivered and shook and jumped almost out of his skin every time that Hooty hooted. He just couldn't help it.

"He can't get me. I know he can't get me. I'm perfectly safe. I'm just as safe as if he were miles away. There's nothing to be afraid of. It is silly to be afraid. Probably Hooty doesn't even know I am inside here. Even if he does, it doesn't really matter." Whitefoot said these things to himself over and over again. Then Hooty would send out that fierce, terrible hunting call and Whitefoot would jump and shake just as before.

After awhile all was still. Gradually Whitefoot stopped trembling. He guessed that Hooty had flown away. Still he remained right where he was for a very long time. He didn't intend to foolishly take any chances. So he waited and waited and waited.

At last he was sure that Hooty had left. Once more he climbed up to his little round doorway and there he waited some time before poking even his nose outside. Then, just as he had made up his mind to go out, that terrible sound rang out again, and just as before he tumbled heels over head down on his bed.

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Whitefoot didn't go out that night at all. It was a moonlight night and just the kind of a night to be out. Instead Whitefoot lay in his little bed and shivered and shook, for all through that long night every once in a while Hooty the Owl would hoot from the top of that stub.