



CHAPTER 30

THE WHITEFOOTS ENJOY THEIR NEW HOME



*No home is ever mean or poor
Where love awaits you at the door.*

—Whitefoot.

“There,” said Mrs. Whitefoot, as she worked a strip of white birch bark into the roof of the new home she and Whitefoot had been building out of the old home of Melody the Wood Thrush, “this finishes the roof. I don’t think any water will get through it even in the hardest rain.”

“It is wonderful,” declared Whitefoot admiringly. “Wherever did you learn to build such a house as this?”

“From my mother” replied Mrs. Whitefoot. “I was born in just such a home. It makes the finest kind of a home for Woodmouse babies.”

“You don’t think there is danger that the wind will blow it down, do you?” ventured Whitefoot.

“Of course I don’t,” retorted little Mrs. Whitefoot scornfully. “Hasn’t this old nest remained right where it is for over a year? Do you suppose that if I had thought there was the least bit of danger that it would blow down, I would have used it? Do credit me with a little sense, my dear.”

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“Yes’m, I do,” replied Whitefoot meekly. “You are the most sensible person in all the Great World. I wasn’t finding fault. You see, I have always lived in a hole in the ground or a hollow stump, or a hole in a tree, and I have not yet become used to a home that moves about and rocks as this one does when the wind blows. But if you say it is all right, why of course it is all right. Probably I will get used to it after awhile.”

Whitefoot did get used to it. After living in it for a few days, it no longer seemed strange, and he no longer minded its swaying when the wind blew. The fact is, he rather enjoyed it. So Whitefoot and Mrs. Whitefoot settled down to enjoy their new home. Now and then they added a bit to it here and there.

Somehow Whitefoot felt unusually safe, safer than he had ever felt in any of his other homes. You see, he had seen several feathered folk alight close to it and not give it a second look. He knew that they had seen that home, but had mistaken it for what it had once been, the deserted home of one of their own number.

Whitefoot had chuckled. He had chuckled long and heartily. “If they make that mistake,” said he to himself, “everybody else is likely to make it. That home of ours is right in plain sight, yet I do believe it is safer than the best hidden home I ever had before. Shadow the Weasel never will think of climbing up this little tree to look at an old nest, and Shadow is the one I am most afraid of.”

It was only a day or two later that Buster Bear happened along that way. Now Buster is very fond of tender Woodmouse. More than once Whitefoot had had a narrow escape from Buster’s big claws as they tore open an old stump or dug into the ground after him. He saw Buster glance up at the new home without the slightest interest in those shrewd little eyes of his. Then Buster shuffled on to roll over an old log and lick

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up the ants he found under it. Again Whitefoot chuckled. "Yes, sir," said he. "It is the safest home I've ever had."

So Whitefoot and little Mrs. Whitefoot were very happy in the home which they had built, and for once in his life Whitefoot did very little worrying. Life seemed more beautiful than it had ever been before. And he almost forgot that there was such a thing as a hungry enemy.