



The Owlet Who Feared Air

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“My feet have decided to stay here forever,” said Bramble, squeezing the low tree branch with both clawed feet. Just beyond the branch, tucked into the thick fork of the oak, waited his nest. It was only a little way away, close enough for him to see the pale feathers at its rim. But between branch and nest lay the dark, open sky.

Bramble was a young tawny owlet, round as a pinecone and still wearing downy patches among his brown feathers. Tonight was to be his first gentle night flight. Mother Owl stood beside him, broad-winged and steady, her amber eyes catching the soft moonlight. “You do not have to fly far,” she said. “Only from here to there.”





“There is too much air,” Bramble whispered. He peered down, then quickly looked at the nest instead. The forest floor was far below the low branch, blurred by ferns and silver roots. His stomach felt like it had folded its wings inside him.

“What if the air does not hold me?”

Mother Owl lifted one wing and gave it a slow, quiet flap. “Air is not a branch,” she said. “You cannot grip it. But your wings can press against it.” She stepped along the branch until she was beside a small knot in the bark. “First, we will not go to the nest. First, hop to this knot.”





Bramble stared at the knot. It was scarcely farther than his own beak. That seemed almost silly. Still, he loosened one claw. The branch wobbled beneath him, or perhaps it was only his knees. He tightened his claws again. A tiny feather floated from his chest and drifted away.

“I cannot do the whole flight,” Bramble said.

“Then do not do the whole flight,” said Mother Owl. “Do one thing your body knows.” She showed him: bend legs, open wings, push gently. Her feathers made a soft hush. “Choose one spot. Look at it. Then let your wings help your feet.”

Bramble chose the bark knot. He did not look at the wide dark around it. He bent his legs, opened his small wings, and gave one careful push. For a fluttery blink, his feet were nowhere at all. Then they landed on the knot. His claws closed around it with a click.





“I moved!” Bramble said, surprised enough to laugh. The knot was still part of the same branch, but he had crossed a little space. He ruffled his feathers. The air had touched beneath his wings. It had felt cool, not empty.

Mother Owl nodded toward a small bend at the end of the branch. From there, the nest was nearest. “Another hop?” Bramble’s claws wanted to argue. He listened to them for a moment, then looked at the bend instead. Bend legs. Open wings. Push gently. He hopped there, landing with a scrabble and a proud little wobble.





Now the nest filled his view. Its woven twigs made a round, welcoming cup. One loose feather at its edge lifted and settled in the moonlight. Bramble knew the next move was bigger than a hop. His heart thumped hard, but he remembered the bark knot, then the bend. He did not have to fly across all the sky. He only had to fly to the nest.





“Ready when you choose,” Mother Owl said. She spread her wings beside him, not pushing, not pulling. Bramble leaned forward. His claws unclenched. He flapped once, twice, and the soft air pressed under his feathers. Instead of dropping, he glided. The nest rose toward him, close and certain.

His feet touched the rim. Twigs rustled. Bramble tumbled gently into the nest, wings spread wide, then sat up with one feather stuck over his eye. Mother Owl glided in after him and tucked the feather back into place with her beak.





Bramble looked across the little gap to the low branch. It no longer seemed like the edge of everything. It was simply where he had begun. He nestled against Mother Owl's warm side and flexed his claws once, thinking of the knot in the bark.





Above the quiet forest, the moon shone
on two owls in their nearby nest.
Bramble's wings rested neatly at his sides,
tired in a good way. Tomorrow, perhaps,
there would be another small space
to cross. Tonight, one short flight
was enough.





Good night.



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After the story



WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT

A warm illustrated story about a small discovery, a meaningful choice, and finding a gentle way forward.

TALK ABOUT IT AFTER READING

After reading, ask which moment felt the warmest or bravest today.

AND TOMORROW...

The next night, Bramble notices a moonlit branch that looks just right for practicing a careful turn.





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The Owlet Who Feared Air

A warm illustrated story about a small discovery,
a meaningful choice, and finding a gentle way forward.

6 minutes of reading



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