

The Something in the Woods

A Thistledown Lane story · Series 1 · Episode 4



It was an ordinary morning on Thistledown Lane. The leaves were coming down, and Bramble and Moss were counting them.

“Forty-one. Forty-two. Forty-th—”



And then Lilly came down the wall so fast she nearly went straight past them.

“I’ve SEEN it. In the woods. I’ve seen it!” said Lilly.

“Seen what?” said Bramble.

“Something enormous. With great big teeth. And eyes like lamps.”

“Eyes like LAMPS?” said Moss.

“Well. One eye. I only saw one eye. But it was very lampy.”

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“Lilly. What did you actually see?”

“Something red. Moving. Behind a tree,” said Lilly.

“That’s a fox. That’s a FOX,” said Moss.

And that was the moment the whole lane began to worry.



They went straight to Old Wren, who sees everything from his branch.

“Old Wren. Is there a fox in the woods?” said Bramble.

“Hmm. I’ve heard a snuffling, these last two nights. Down among the trees, when the light goes,” said Old Wren.

“A snuffling,” said Moss.

“A snuffling. That’s all I know, and I’ll not say more than I know.”

But by the time they got back down the lane, it was rather more than a snuffling.

“It’s got teeth like garden forks,” said Moss.

“And it’s the size of a horse,” said Lilly.

“A horse! You said eyes like lamps!”

“It’s got both!”

By dinner time it was the size of a cow, and it could open gates.

“It cannot open gates,” said Bramble.

“You don’t KNOW that.”



So they did what everybody on Thistledown Lane does
when they don't know what to do. They went to see Mam.

"A cow that opens gates. Well. That's a big story for a small wood," said Mam.

"You don't believe us," said Moss.

"I believe you heard something. That's not the same as knowing what it is."

"Then how do we find out?" said Bramble.

"You'll not know what a thing is by talking about it, my love."



And she wrapped three honey buns in a cloth and put them in Bramble’s paws.

“Are the buns for us, or for it?” said Moss.

“We’ll see,” said Mam.

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So off they went, across the big green field, with the buns and no plan at all.

“We could go tomorrow. Tomorrow’s good for me,” said Moss.

“Moss,” said Bramble.

“Or never. Never’s also good.”



Lilly, who had started all of it, had gone very quiet indeed.

“Lilly? You’ve not said a word since the gate,” said Bramble.

“I might have made it a bit bigger than it was,” said Lilly.

“A bit.”

“Quite a lot bigger.”

And ahead of them, the trees went quiet.

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Under the trees it was cooler, and the light came down in thin stripes, and every leaf they stepped on sounded enormous.

Then Moss stopped, and pointed at the ground.

“Bramble. Look at that,” said Moss.

A pawprint, pressed into the soft earth. Bigger than Moss’s whole paw.

“That’s it. That’s the thing,” said Lilly.

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Somewhere off between the trees, a twig broke.

“I want to go home. I want to go home NOW,” said Moss.

“Wait,” said Bramble.

And then, for half a second, something red moved behind a tree.

“Bramble, please.”

“Moss. You can’t be frightened of somebody you’ve never met.”



And she walked towards the tree, and looked behind it.

And there, wedged under a root with a loop of old wire round his back leg, was the something in the woods.

He was not the size of a cow. He was smaller than Bramble. And he was shaking.

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“Please don’t. Please don’t, I didn’t mean to be here.”

“Oh. Oh, you’re only little,” said Lilly.

“I’ve been here two nights. I couldn’t get my leg out,” said Sorrel.

“Two nights?” said Bramble.

“I kept crying and nobody came.”

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And Moss, who had been the most frightened of all of them, went first.

“Here. It’s a honey bun. It’s still warm,” said Moss.

Bramble worked the wire loose, and Lilly held the root back, and Moss held out the bun. And that was that.

“Thank you. Thank you, thank you,” said Sorrel.

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They walked him home up the lane,
slowly, because his leg was sore.
“Well. There’s my snuffling,” said Old Wren.
“I did say it was a small thing making a big noise.”



“I’m sorry. I made you into a monster and you were only stuck.”

“That’s all right. I thought YOU were the monsters,” said Sorrel.

“Us?” said Moss.

“Three of you. Crashing about. Shouting about garden forks.”

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“And who’s this, then?”

And the fox cub sat up, on the warm kitchen floor, with a bun in both paws.

“You’ve a home here whenever you want it,” said Mam.



“If you’re ever frightened of something, go and look at it. It’s nearly always smaller than the story.”

“And it’s nearly always more frightened than you are,” said Moss.

“Now. You’ve not told us your name, my love,” said Mam.

“Sorrel. My name’s Sorrel.”

And that’s how Sorrel came to Thistledown Lane.

Thistledown Lane

The lesson: **If you're ever frightened of something, go and look at it. It's nearly always smaller than the story. And it's nearly always more frightened than you are.**

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