



# Barnaby and the Big Dark Night

By Priyanka R.



Barnaby was a little bat with big ears and a tiny secret. Unlike all the other bats in the bell tower, who loved the night, Barnaby was afraid of the dark. While his family swooped and soared through the starry sky, Barnaby would cling to the rafters, his heart thumping like a trapped moth. "It's just so... quiet and empty out there," he'd whisper to himself.







But tonight, the silence was broken by a cheerful sound. Chirp-chirrrr-chirp! It was a happy, bouncy sound, not scary at all. Curious, Barnaby crept to the edge of the bell tower window. Down below, sitting on a blade of grass, was a tiny cricket, rubbing his legs together to make music.







"Hello up there!" chirped the cricket. "I'm Pip! Isn't the night music wonderful?" Barnaby fluttered down, landing softly beside him. "Music?" Barnaby asked. "But... it's so quiet." Pip laughed, a sound like tiny bells. "Quiet? Oh, no! The night is full of music. You just have to learn how to listen."







Pip told Barnaby to close his eyes and open his big ears. At first, Barnaby heard nothing. But then, slowly, he heard the gentle whoosh of the wind in the trees, the soft rustle-rustle of leaves skittering on the ground, and the chirp-chirrr-chirp of all of Pip's cousins singing along. It wasn't silence. It was a symphony!





"Wow," Barnaby breathed.

"You're right, it is like music!"

He felt much better about the sounds of the night, but the darkness still felt big and scary.

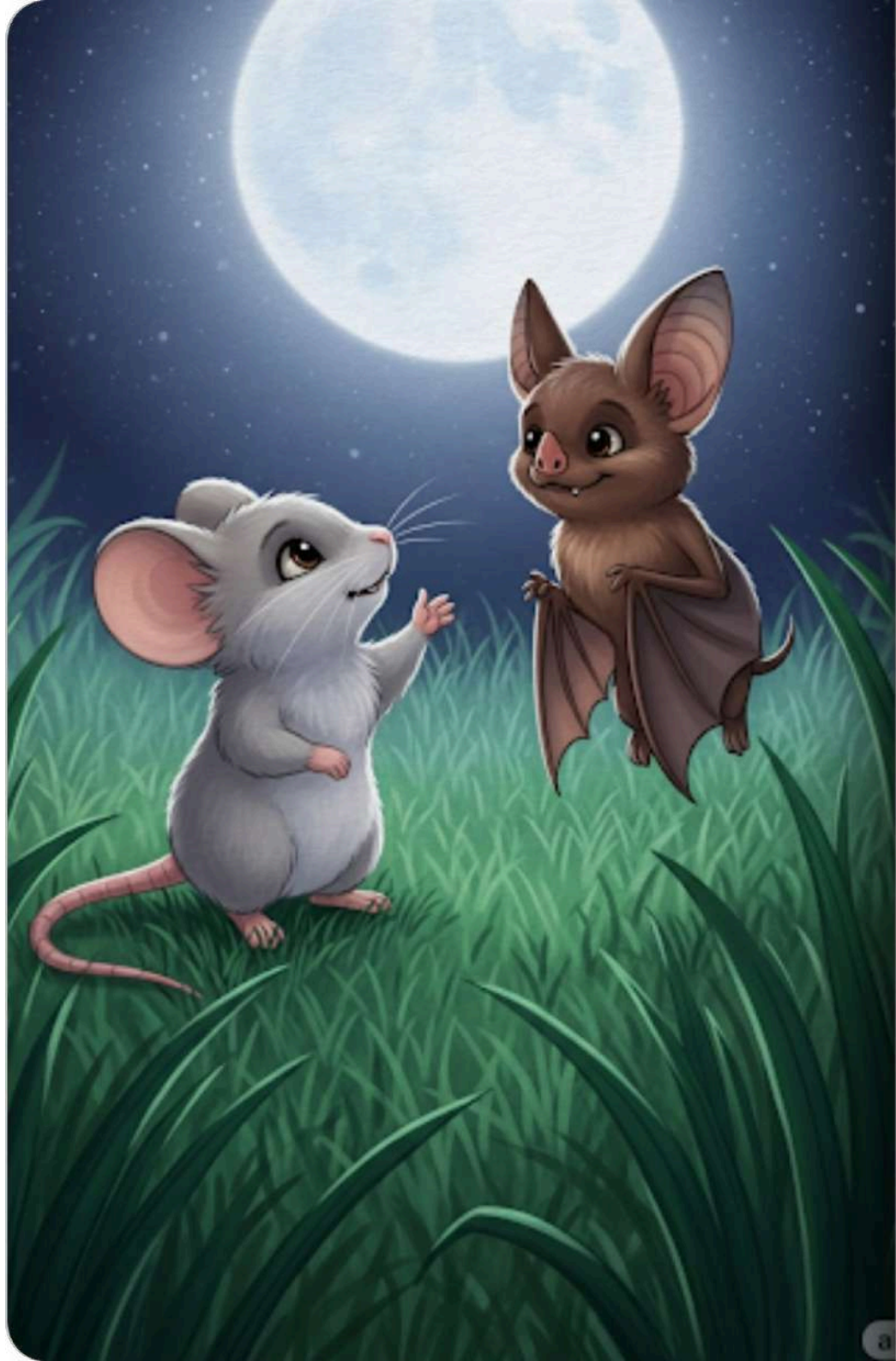
Just then, a tiny field mouse with kind, dark eyes scurried out from behind a toadstool.

"Hello," she squeaked softly.

"My name is Pipkin. Are you lost?"







"I'm not lost," Barnaby said sadly. "I'm just... a little scared of the dark." Pipkin tilted her head. "Scared of the dark?" she said. "But the dark is when the moonlight comes out to play! It's magical. It makes the world silvery and new."





Pipkin led Barnaby through the tall grass. She showed him how the dewdrops on a spider's web sparkled like a diamond necklace in the moonlight. She showed him how the river shimmered like a ribbon of silver. The world didn't look empty at all; it looked enchanted.





"It is beautiful," Barnaby admitted. "But I still wish I had a little light of my own to keep, just in case." Pipkin's whiskers twitched thoughtfully. "I know just the thing!" she squeaked. "Follow me! We'll find you a moon-petal!"





She scurried to a hidden patch of flowers near the base of an old willow tree. The flowers didn't open to the sun, but to the moon. Their petals glowed with a soft, gentle light, captured from the moonbeams themselves. "These are moon-petals," Pipkin whispered. "They hold the moonlight's magic." She helped Barnaby carefully pick one small, glowing petal.





Barnaby held the moon-petal carefully. It glowed with a warm, comforting light. He thanked his new friends and flew back to the bell tower, his wings feeling strong and sure. The night was still dark, but now he could hear its music, and he held his very own piece of moonlight. Barnaby the bat wasn't afraid of the dark anymore.

