

AFTER THE SUN GOES DOWN

The Story of Animals at Night

GLENN O. BLOUGH
PICTURES BY JEANNE BENDICK

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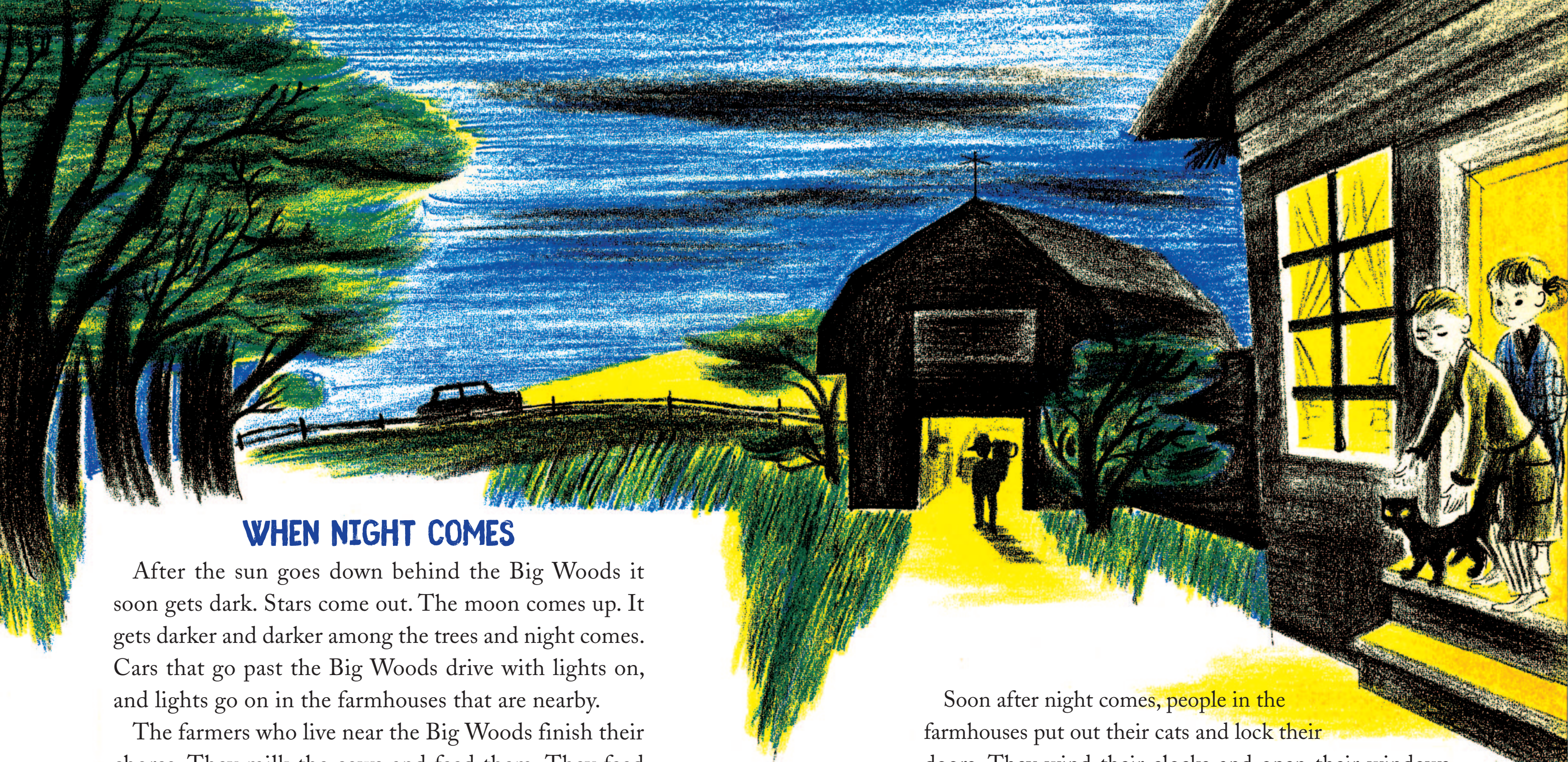
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WHEN NIGHT COMES

After the sun goes down behind the Big Woods it soon gets dark. Stars come out. The moon comes up. It gets darker and darker among the trees and night comes. Cars that go past the Big Woods drive with lights on, and lights go on in the farmhouses that are nearby.

The farmers who live near the Big Woods finish their chores. They milk the cows and feed them. They feed the chickens and feed the sheep and horses. The cows and sheep and horses go to sleep. The chickens climb up on something and shut their eyes.

Soon after night comes, people in the farmhouses put out their cats and lock their doors. They wind their clocks and open their windows. They turn out their lights and say good night to each other. At night hardly any cars travel along the road by the Big Woods. Night is the time for people to be at home asleep.





In the Big Woods many of the animals go to sleep too. Before night comes robins fly into places where the leaves are thick. They wrap their toes around branches so they won't fall off while they sleep. They sit on the branches all night long. Crows do too. So do some of the other birds. Some of the flowers nod their heads and some of the leaves close up like pocketbooks.

Red-winged blackbirds find places to sleep in the tall cattails that grow along the pond near the Big Woods. So do the marsh hens, and sometimes the bobolinks do too.

Fox squirrels and gray squirrels climb into holes in the trees or go inside bunches of leaves they have put together in the treetops. While the stars are shining, they sleep. Chipmunks usually sleep at night too.

But not all the animals in the Big Woods go to sleep when the sun sets. Some of them just begin to wake up after the sun goes down. All day long

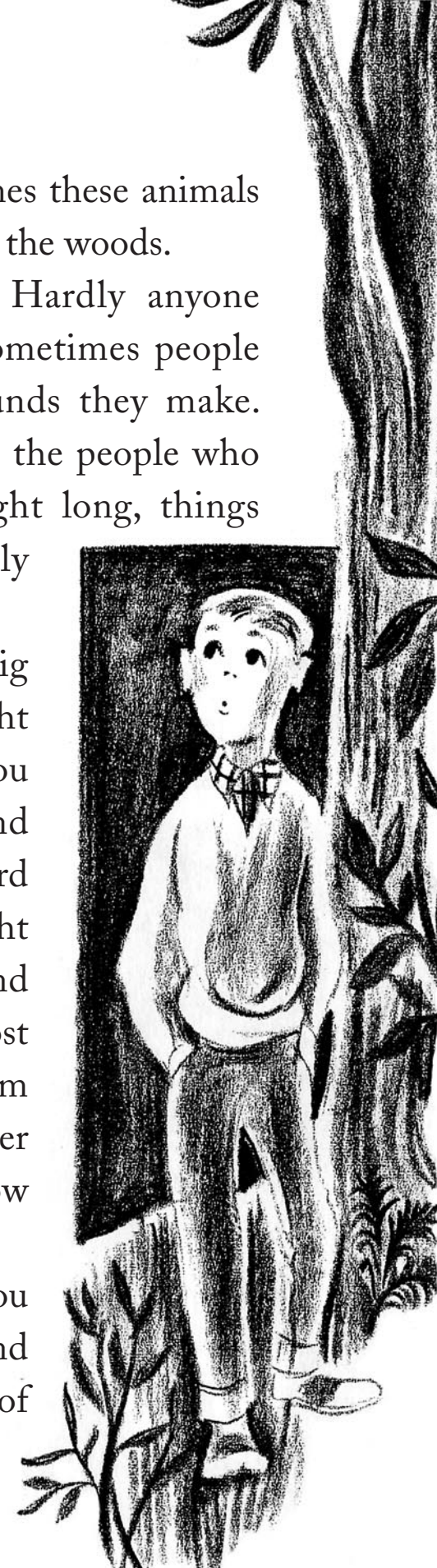


they have been asleep. When night comes these animals come out to hunt for food and to play in the woods.

Hardly anyone sees these animals. Hardly anyone knows they live in the Big Woods. Sometimes people who are awake at night hear the sounds they make. Sometimes the animal sounds wake up the people who live near the Big Woods. But all night long, things happen in the Big Woods that hardly anyone knows about.

If you stood at the edge of the Big Woods after dark and listened, you might hear strange sounds. A long way off you might hear a bird say its name over and over. Perhaps you would hear another bird that seems to be answering it. You might hear loud sounds coming from the pond near the edge of the woods. You are almost sure to hear a loud quivering voice from somewhere in the dark woods. The quiver will make you shiver if you don't know what it is.

If you listened very, very carefully, you might hear animals scampering around under the trees. If you walk under one of



the old oak trees and listen very carefully, you may hear a snapping sound. An animal is making it as it wakes up. And if you had better ears than most people, you might hear the flutter of some night-flying animals as they fly among the trees. While you are listening, you might see quick flashes of lights along the edge of the woods. There are too many to count but they are beautiful to see.

When the sun goes down and night creeps through the woods, the animals come out of all sorts of places where they have been all day long. Some come out of holes in the ground. Some come out of holes in the trees. Some

creep out from under the bark of trees. And some just seem to come from no one knows where. All of them are hungry and so they begin to hunt.

Some slip over the ground and through the woods as quietly as shadows. Some just sit and watch and wait for something to come along that they like to eat. Some fly through the air like fast planes to catch their dinners. Night is a hunting time for many animals—especially for animals that eat other animals that only come out at night.

Come into the Big Woods after the sun goes down and you will be surprised.

