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THE BALL OF RED YARN

Albatros



By day, the children find Grandma's village a pretty, cheerful place, a blaze of flowers of all colours. Cats bask in the sun. Neighbours call hello and say how much Mia and Max have grown.



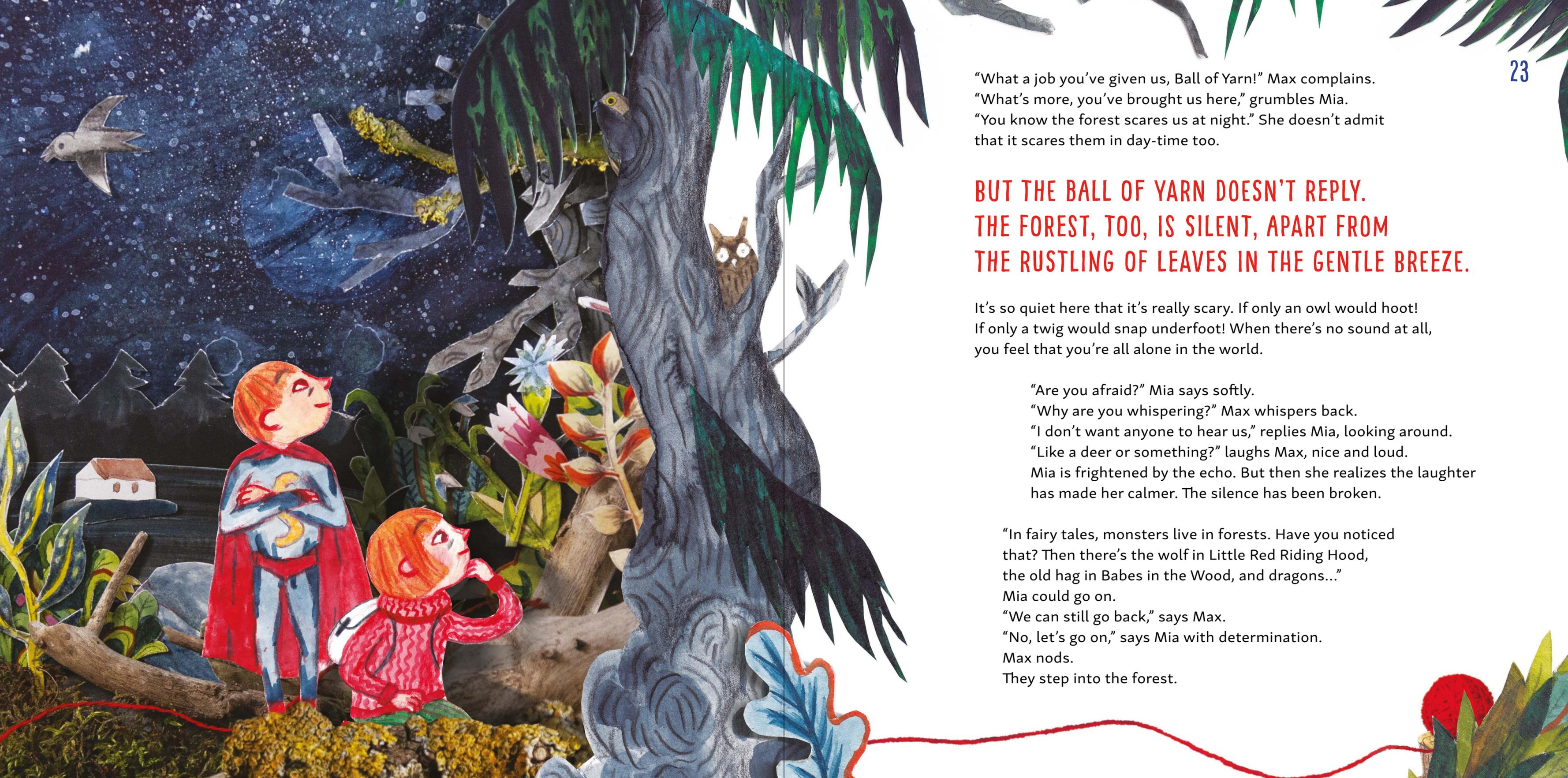
At night, though, the village is in heavy darkness. The only light comes from behind drawn curtains. Dogs bark behind high fences. Moths flock to the streetlamps. All this gives Mia the creeps.

"Which way?" she says, looking to Max.
"The way Grandma went – so we follow the ball," commands Max. But as soon as they turn the corner, they realize it won't be that easy. Red threads lead off in all directions. Which lane should they follow?

Who can help the children follow a red thread to the ball?

YOU, PERHAPS?



An illustration of a forest at night. A large, gnarled tree trunk is the central focus, with a brown owl perched on a branch. The leaves are dark green and black. In the foreground, two children are looking up at the tree. One child is wearing a blue superhero suit with a red cape and a yellow crescent moon on the chest. The other child is wearing a red and white patterned sweater and a red hood. The background is a dark blue night sky with a small white house and a bird flying. A red thread is visible at the bottom of the page.

“What a job you’ve given us, Ball of Yarn!” Max complains.
“What’s more, you’ve brought us here,” grumbles Mia.
“You know the forest scares us at night.” She doesn’t admit that it scares them in day-time too.

**BUT THE BALL OF YARN DOESN'T REPLY.
THE FOREST, TOO, IS SILENT, APART FROM
THE RUSTLING OF LEAVES IN THE GENTLE BREEZE.**

It’s so quiet here that it’s really scary. If only an owl would hoot! If only a twig would snap underfoot! When there’s no sound at all, you feel that you’re all alone in the world.

“Are you afraid?” Mia says softly.
“Why are you whispering?” Max whispers back.
“I don’t want anyone to hear us,” replies Mia, looking around.
“Like a deer or something?” laughs Max, nice and loud.
Mia is frightened by the echo. But then she realizes the laughter has made her calmer. The silence has been broken.

“In fairy tales, monsters live in forests. Have you noticed that? Then there’s the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood, the old hag in Babes in the Wood, and dragons...”

Mia could go on.

“We can still go back,” says Max.

“No, let’s go on,” says Mia with determination.

Max nods.

They step into the forest.

"What an enormous tree!" says Max in awe.

"It's huge," says Mia. "Do we really have to climb it?"

"Maybe the ball of yarn wants us to look down."

Luckily, the branches reach all the way to the ground, so it's a bit like climbing a ladder. Up and up they climb. They have almost caught up with the ball, are reaching out for it when... the ball jumps up and then goes all the way down again.

"That ball's driving me crazy," says Max.

"But isn't it lovely here!" says Mia. "How close the moon is!"

"Look over there!" cries ~~Hansel~~ Max. "A light!"

"You're not Hansel, you know," says ~~Gretel~~ Mia.

"I know. But it could be a gingerbread cottage, couldn't it?"

**YOU'RE NOT IN A FAIRY TALE, THOUGH,
ARE YOU?** says Mia.

"Maybe I am," says Max. He's thinking of you, reading this book.

"Well, let's turn the page and find out," says Mia, as she reaches the ground and breaks into a run. She goes...

THIS WAY 





OH DEAR! THE YARN DISAPPEARS UNDERGROUND HERE. LOOK!

Mia leans down to look into a deep burrow.
“Do you think Grandma crawled down there?”
“Hardly! But the ball of wool went that way.”
“It’s like a treasure hunt, isn’t it?”
They take it in turns to dig deeper and deeper.
But there’s no sign of the ball of yarn.

“I’m worn out, and I feel like a worm,” says Mia in a tone of disgust. “Or a mole.”

“Moles are blind. You’ve got great eyesight. What on earth are you writing in that pad?”

“I’m drawing a map of the way we’ve come. In case we get lost.”

“I see. That’s where I switched on the torch, and that’s where we turned left. That’s where we passed the sound-asleep mole. How loud he was snoring! After that, we took a tunnel to the right and crawled straight on, past the hedgehog’s den. Should we turn left here?”

Reaching a fork in the path, they take the tunnel to the left.

“Hey, we’re going upwards!” cries Mia with delight.

“Maybe we’ll get out of here at last.”

Indeed they do! Moments later, the ball of wool brings them to the surface. Their destination is within reach. They rest and eat a few fruit-gum snakes to refresh themselves.



CAN YOU DRAW THE WAY MIA AND MAX WENT ON THE MAP?

"Well, we dug and dug and still we didn't find any treasure."

"Or Grandma."

"You think she buried herself in the ground?"

"Maybe we haven't looked hard enough."

"Yes, we have. We've found her knitting needle, glasses, earrings and the polka-dot scarf. I wonder if the children reading this book with us have found all those things too. There's nothing left to find but Grandma's slippers."

"And Grandma."

"So where do you think we should still look?"

"Maybe nowhere. Do you see anything?"

"No. Do you?"

**NO! THE TORCH
HAS STOPPED WORKING.**

"But haven't we got spare batteries?" asks Mia.

"Do you think I haven't been looking for them?"

"Oh. But anyway, I'm not scared of the dark anymore. I've got used to it."

"It seems to me that in the forest we're most scared of what we can't see."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, we know there's nothing to be frightened of. But still we have this strange feeling that there's something out there. Lurking behind every tree. It's as if there's always something watching us."

"And is there?"

"Maybe. A bird, a deer, some nocturnal animal.

But let them look. After all, aren't we looking too?"

"Then look hard. You don't want to trip," says Mia.

OW!

"What was I just telling you?"

"Hey, I've found the batteries!" says Max. "Wait a sec, until

I SWITCH...



A FANTASY STORY FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE (NOT) AFRAID IN THE WOODS!

A great adventure takes twins Mia and Max into a spooky forest, which in normal circumstances they wouldn't dare enter. But who could resist the allure of a living ball of red yarn? The ball's thread guides the children through the book, from one amazing monster of the forest to the next. Guess who is hiding under the hay in the animal feeder – go on!

This marvellously illustrated book encourages adventurers aged five and over to read, puzzle things out and maybe even make things out of moss and sticks!