

# The Girl and the Owl



Çınar BİBER

# **The Girl and the Owl**

Çınar BİBER



Maya pulled on her green rubber boots and zipped up her red raincoat. Tonight was special: a night walk to look for owls! Her small silver torch swung on its string as she skipped down the path to the meeting point. The sky was turning deep blue, and the first stars were peeking out. Maya could hardly wait to begin.



At the car park, a tall ranger named Ruth waited with a clipboard. She wore an olive-green jacket covered in badges and a wide-brimmed hat. "Welcome, owl detectives!" she said with a warm smile. "Tonight we'll learn how to listen in the dark." Maya stood close, her big dark brown eyes wide with excitement. She was ready for an adventure.



Ruth handed out a list of owl calls. "Owls talk to each other," she explained. "But we must be very quiet and keep our distance. If we're too close, they feel scared and fly away." Maya nodded seriously. She wanted the owls to feel safe. The group set off along the woodland path, their torches glowing softly like little fireflies.



The path wound between tall trees. Ruth stopped and held up her hand. "Shh! Listen," she whispered. Everyone stood still. At first Maya heard nothing but the wind. Then, from high in the trees, came a soft, quivering sound: "Twit-twoo! Twit-twoo!" Maya's heart thumped. She had never heard an owl before!



Ruth shone her red torch up into the branches. "There!" she breathed. Maya followed the beam and saw a round-headed owl with mottled brown feathers and large dark eyes. It perched perfectly still, watching them. "That's a tawny owl," Ruth said. "The twit is the female, the twoo is the male. They're calling to each other."



Maya listened carefully. The twit-twoo came again, soft and rhythmic. She practiced the sound under her breath: "Twit-twoo." Ruth smiled. "You've got it! Now let's walk on and see who else is awake." The group moved quietly along the path, their boots crunching softly on the fallen leaves. Maya kept her ears open wide.



Further along, Ruth stopped by a fence post. "Listen for a whistle," she said. "It sounds like 'kew, kew.'" Maya tilted her head. Sure enough, a small, round owl with bright yellow eyes sat on the post. It called with a clear, whistling kew. "That's a little owl," Ruth whispered. "They're bold and curious, but we still keep our distance."



Maya watched the little owl swivel its flat head. It seemed to look right at her! She stayed perfectly still, just as Ruth had taught. The owl called again, then fluttered off into the darkness. "It didn't feel scared," Maya whispered. "We were quiet and far away." Ruth nodded. "Exactly. Respectful observation keeps wildlife safe."



The night grew darker, and more sounds filled the air. Maya heard a soft hooting far away, then another closer. "Are there more owls?" she asked. Ruth nodded. "Different owls have different voices. The tawny says twit-twoo, the little owl says kew. Listen carefully and you can tell who's who." Maya closed her eyes and let the sounds wash over her.



Maya heard a low, wavering hoot from the left. "That's another tawny," she guessed. Ruth smiled. "Spot on! You're becoming a real owl detective." Maya felt proud. She loved how each call was like a secret message. She started to make up a rhythm in her head: twit-twoo, kew, twit-twoo. The night was full of owl music.



Then Maya noticed something. A tawny owl sat on a branch quite low, and some people in the group stepped closer to see. The owl ruffled its feathers and looked uneasy. "Let's give it space," Maya whispered to her friend. "We can watch from here." The group stepped back, and the owl settled down again. Ruth gave Maya a thumbs-up.



"You remembered," Ruth said softly. "Owls are shy. When we keep our distance, they stay calm and we get to see more." Maya beamed. She felt like she had helped the owls. The group watched the tawny owl for a while longer, listening to its gentle twit-twoo. Then it glided away silently, like a ghost in the night.



On the walk back, Ruth asked, "Who can make up a poem about the sounds we heard?" Maya raised her hand. "I can!" She thought for a moment, then recited: "Twit-twoo, the tawny calls, / Kew, kew, the little owl. / In the dark we stand so still, / Listening to the night's sweet sound." Everyone clapped. Ruth said, "That's wonderful, Maya!"



Maya's heart glowed. She had learned so much: how to listen, how to tell the calls apart, and how to be respectful. "I'll never forget tonight," she told Ruth. "Owls are amazing." Ruth smiled. "And so are you, owl detective. Remember, the best way to watch wildlife is quietly and from a distance."



Back at home, Maya drew a picture of the tawny owl and the little owl. She wrote her poem carefully underneath. Then she whispered it to herself before bed: "Twit-twoo, the tawny calls, / Kew, kew, the little owl." She fell asleep with the sounds of the night still singing in her head.



The next morning, Maya told her family all about the night walk. "I heard two kinds of owls!" she said. "And I made a poem." She recited it proudly. Her little brother clapped. Maya smiled her gap-toothed smile. She knew she would always listen carefully and keep her distance, so the owls would always feel safe.