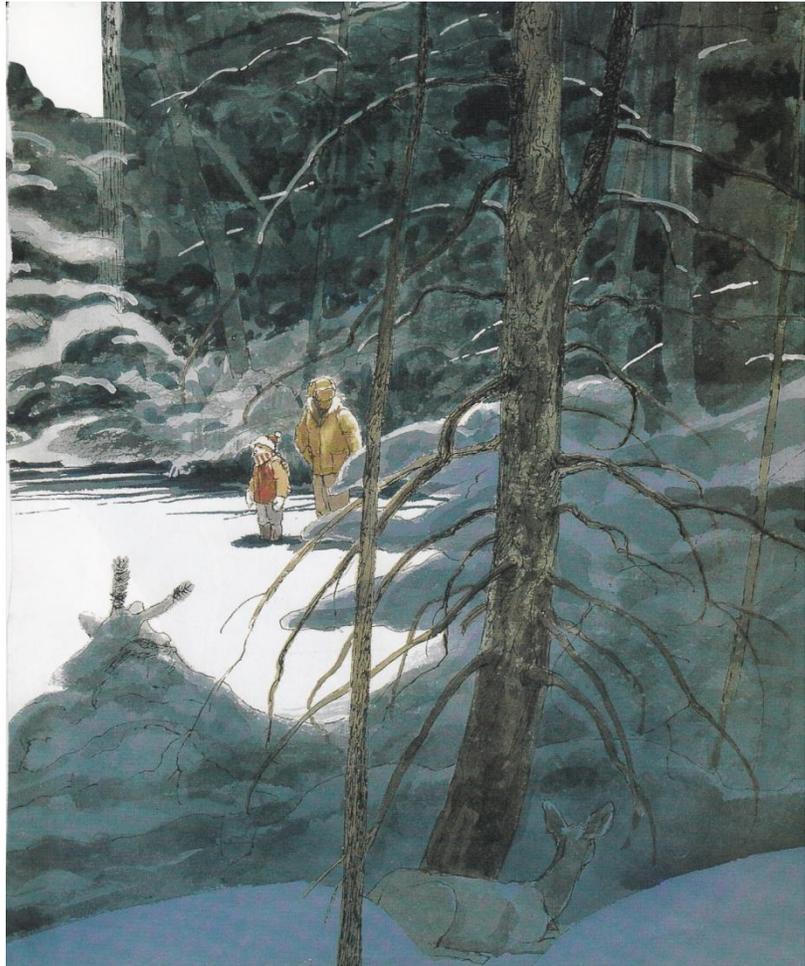


## Owl Moon

(excerpt)

By Jane Yolen

We went into the woods.  
The shadows  
were the blackest things  
I had ever seen.  
They stained the white snow.  
My mouth felt furry,  
for the scarf over it  
was wet and warm.  
I didn't ask  
what kind of things  
hide behind black trees  
in the middle of the night.  
When you go owling you have to  
be brave.



Then we came to a clearing  
in the dark woods.  
The moon was high above us.  
It seemed to fit exactly over the  
center of the clearing  
and the snow below it  
was whiter than the milk  
in a cereal bowl.



I sighed  
and Pa help up his hand  
at the sound.

I put my mittens  
over the scarf  
over my mouth  
and listened hard.

And then Pa called:

*“Whoo-whoo-who-who-who- whooooooo.  
Whoo-whoo-who-who-who-whooooooo.”*

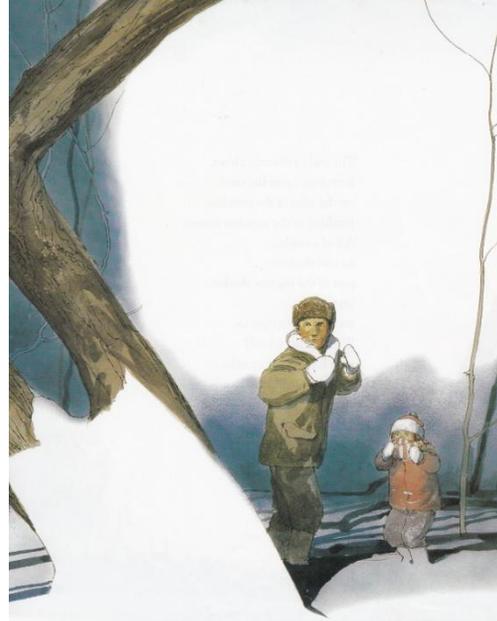
I listened  
and looked so hard  
my ears hurt  
and my eyes got cloudy  
with the cold.

Pa raised his face  
to call out again,  
but before he could open his mouth  
an echo

came threading its way  
through the trees.

*“Whoo-whoo-who-who-who- whooooooo.”*

Pa almost smiled.  
Then he called back:  
*“Whoo-whoo-who-who-who- whooooooo.”*  
just as if he  
and the owl  
were talking about supper  
or about the woods  
or the moon  
or the cold.  
I took my mitten  
off the scarf  
off my mouth,  
and almost smiled too.



The owl's call came closer,  
from high up in the trees  
on the edge of the meadow.  
Nothing in the meadow moved.  
All of a sudden  
an owl shadow,  
part of the big tree shadow,  
lifted off  
and flew right over us.  
We watched silently  
with heat in our mouths,  
the heat of all those words  
We had not spoken.  
The Shadow hooted again.

Pa turned on  
his big flashlight  
and caught the owl  
just as it was landing  
on a branch.

For one minute  
three minutes,  
maybe even a hundred minutes,  
we stared at one another.

Then the owl  
pumped its great wings  
and lifted off the branch  
like a shadow  
without a sound.  
It flew back into the forest.  
“Time to go home,”  
Pa said to me.  
I knew then I could talk,  
I could even laugh out loud.  
But I was a shadow  
as we walked home.

