

HOW FIREFLY GOT HIS LIGHT

by Daniel Errico

Sun and Moon need someone to tell them when to rise and set, and Elephant, Turtle, and Owl have an idea of who it should be. This story for kids is an origin tale for the best and brightest of bugs: the firefly!

Long ago, there was no such thing as nighttime.

Sun and Moon were the best of friends and they never left the sky.

Moon looked after the quiet oceans, and Sun shone brightly over all the land.

Elephant lived on the plains.

The sunlight made his skin very hot.

He tried to cool off in a mud bath, but Sun dried it up.

He tried fanning himself, but his ears got tired.

One day he called out to Sun, "You dry the ground and burn my feet! I cannot stand this awful heat!"

But Sun did not listen, and Moon did not say a word.

Owl lived in a tall tree in the forest.

She could not hunt in the sunlight.

She tried to catch Mouse for dinner, but Mouse saw her coming and ran away.

She tried eating berries instead, but they did not fill her up.

One day she called out to Sun, "Mouse can see me in the light, I cannot hunt with you so bright!"

But Sun did not listen, and Moon did not say a word.

Baby Turtle hatched on the beach by the ocean.

To reach the sea, he needed the tides to pull him in.

He tried to swim out, but the waves pushed him back on shore.

He waited for the tides to come, but they never did.

One day he called out to Moon, "I need the tides to reach the seas, I beg of you to bring them please!"

Moon heard the animals and she asked Sun if there was a way they could help them.

Sun cared deeply for Moon and he agreed. Together they came up with a plan.

Sun called down to all the animals.

“For the sake of Elephant, Owl and Baby Turtle, Moon and I have decided to share the sky. When I rise, Moon will set and leave the sky bright. When Moon rises, I will set and leave the sky dark.”

“Moon will bring the tides each day as she travels through the sky and it will be cool and dark.” Sun continued. “And when I rise, I will once again make the sky bright... But we need one of you tell us when it is time for us to switch.”

“It cannot be me,” said Elephant, “for I am forgetful.”

And this was a lie.

“It cannot be me,” said Owl, “for I cannot be trusted.”

And this was the truth.

“It cannot be me,” said Baby Turtle, “for I am just a baby.”

And this could not be argued.

One by one, the animals declined except for Dullfly, who was resting in the shade of a banana leaf.

Sun shone his great heat on Dullfly and spoke to him a booming voice. “Dullfly, this is Sun! Do you hear me?”

“From now on, you will tell me when it is time for me to set, and we will call it dusk. And you will tell Moon when it is time for her to set, and we will call it dawn.”

“I cannot!” Dullfly said, frightened by Sun’s loud command. “I am too small for you to see!”

Sun exhaled and shot a burst of light straight into Dullfly’s body, making it glow brightly.

“There. From now on you will be known as Firefly, and you will flash your light to send us a signal,” said Sun. And from that day forth, Firefly did just that.

So, if you happen to catch Firefly at dawn or dusk, you must be sure to let him go, because it is he who decides when Moon brings the tides, and when Sun rises and sets.