

The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas

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Scripture Union, Trinity House, Opal Court, Opal Drive, Fox Milne, Milton Keynes, MK15 0DF, UK
Email: info@scriptureunion.org.uk
Website: www.scriptureunion.org.uk


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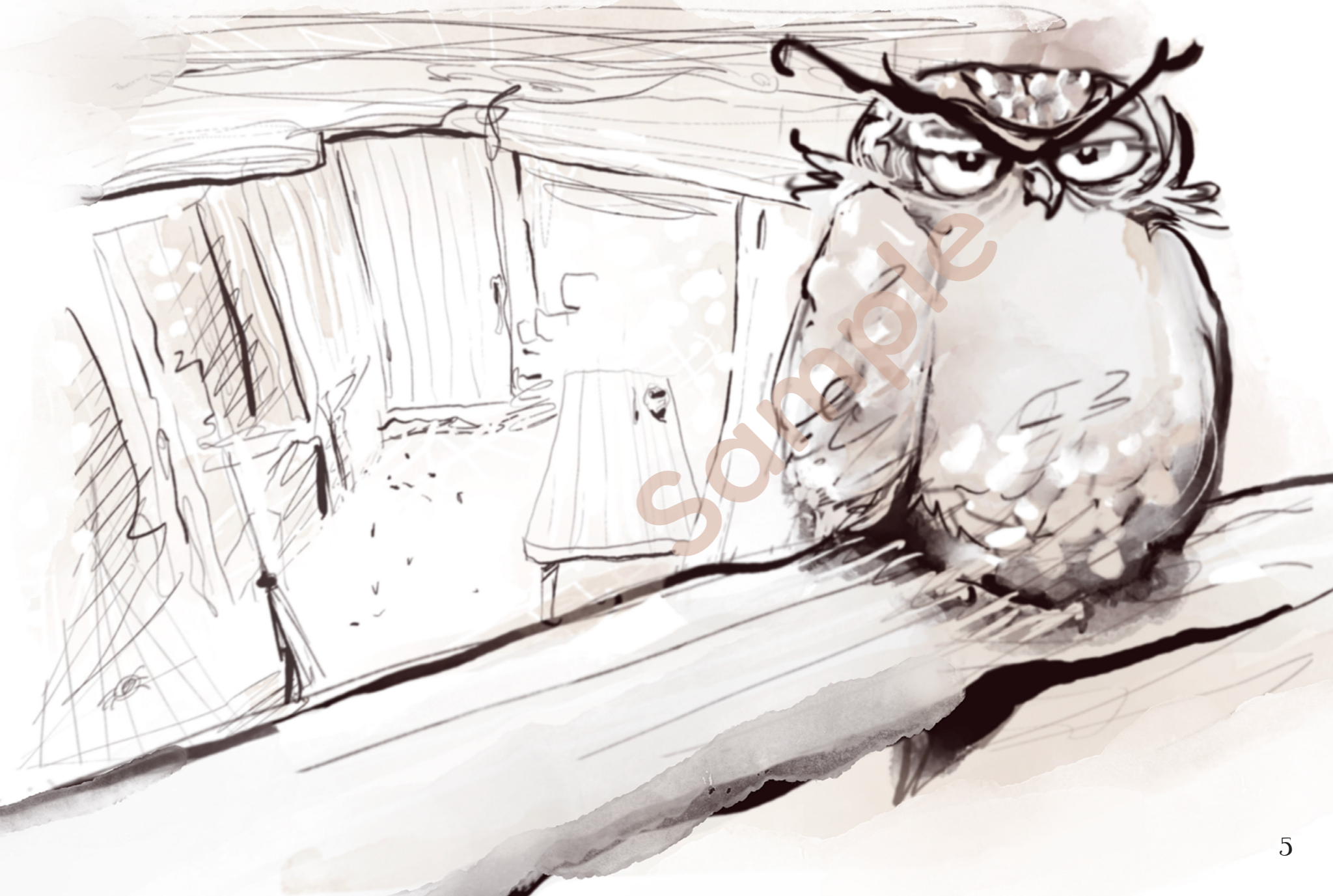
Jonathan Maltz
Christopher Poch
Jake Biggin



There once was an owl who lived
in an empty, old barn. It was cold,
damp and, most of all, lonely.

Just the way he liked it.

He was a grumpy owl.



One night, the owl was rudely interrupted by a man, a woman and their donkey bursting through the door.

“What are you doing in my barn?” hooted the owl to the donkey.

“The guest room was full, and she’s having a baby!”

“Well, she’s making way too much noise!” The owl was growing angrier by the second.

“But this is a special baby,” explained the donkey.

“I don’t give a hoot! This won’t do.”

With a flap of his wings, he was off to find somewhere to be alone.



The grumpy owl landed in the rolling hills on the edge of the village.

“That’s better.”

Suddenly, over the hill came dozens of excited sheep and their shepherds.

“Have you heard?” baaed a sheep. “The Saviour of the World has been born in a barn!”

“Who told you that?”

“Angels appeared in the sky and told our shepherds. Isn’t that amazing?”

“I don’t give a hoot!”

“We’re going to see him now – won’t you come and see?”

“I just want to be left alone,” the owl replied.

The sheep hopped on, joining the parade of laughing, singing and baaing.

“This won’t do,”

With a flap of his wings, he was off to find somewhere to be alone.

This time the owl flew a bit further to an empty desert.

“That’s better.”

Out from the dunes marched a camel.

“Have you heard? The King of kings has been born,” he murmured.

“Who told you that?”

“These humans saw his special star!”

“I don’t give a hoot!”

“We’re bringing him gifts! Won’t you come and see?”

“I just want to be left alone,” the owl huffed.

As the camel padded on, he was followed by a line of camels and wise men, following the light of a star.

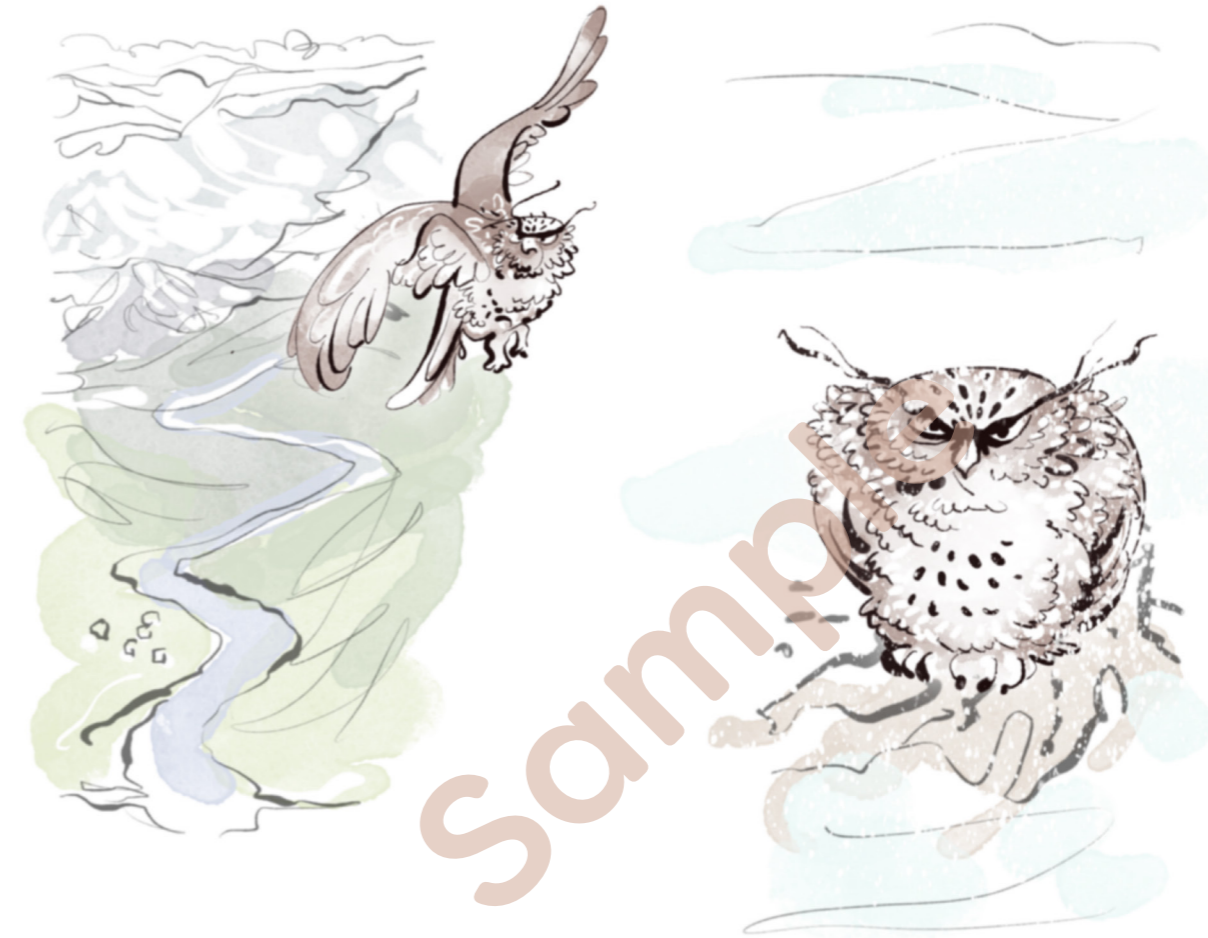
“This won’t do.”

And with a flap of his wings, the owl was off to find somewhere to be alone.



This time the owl flew further than he'd ever flown before. He flew over jungles, swamps, oceans and mountains...

...until he reached the frozen land at the very end of the earth.



All he could see was snow. All he could hear was the wind. Finally, a place where he could be left alone.

“Perfect.”



Out of the snow sneaked a fox.

“The Creator is doing something special. Can you feel it? The whole of creation is excited!”

“I don’t give a hoot,” the owl grumped.

“Neither do I,” replied the fox.

“I just want to be left alone.”

“I know a place where no one will bother you!” smiled the fox, with a cunning look in his eye.

“Won’t you come and see?”

The owl followed the fox into the snowstorm.



“We’re here! Quick, into my burrow.”

“But where will you go?” asked the owl.

The fox grinned, revealing his sharp teeth. “I’m not going anywhere.”

Suddenly, the fox leapt at the owl.

The owl backed away from the fox’s jaws. He flew out of the burrow and up into the air.

“My barn can’t be worse than this!”





The grumpy owl flew back over the jungles, swamps, oceans, mountains, deserts and hills.

But as he flew closer to his barn, he saw light spilling out of the doorway.

So many noises!

There were sheep baaing, shepherds worshipping,

chickens clucking and cows mooing, relatives rejoicing, singing and dancing.

“THIS WON’T DO!”



The grumpy owl was now the grumpiest he'd ever been. He decided to wait until everyone had gone.

All of a sudden, he heard the cry of a baby.

Through a crack in the roof, in the middle of all the people and animals, he saw a baby lying in a manger.

Could it be true? Was this the special child, the Saviour, the King of kings?

The grumpy owl saw everyone's extraordinary smiles. It must be true!

He began to feel a warm feeling he had never felt before.

Joy!

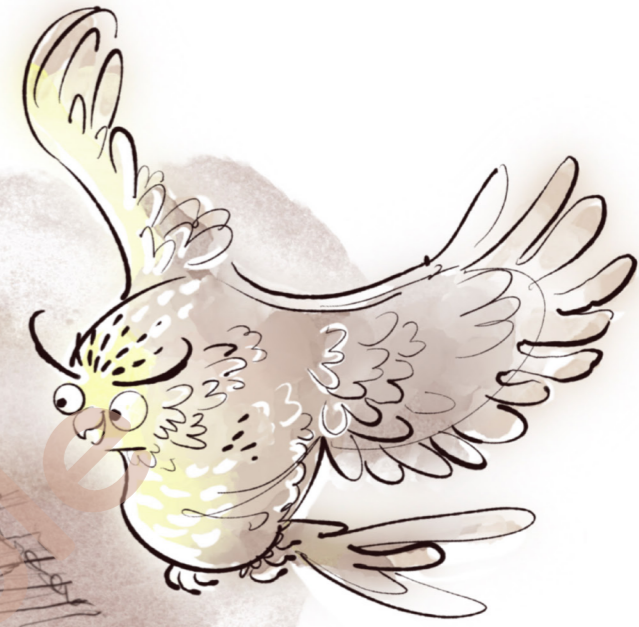
Not wanting to miss out, he flew inside the barn.

“The Saviour has been born... in my barn!” he hooted with joy.

He flew throughout the village, inviting all the other animals to come and see.

His urge to be left alone had disappeared.

“This will do,” he thought.



From that day forward, the grumpy owl wasn't grumpy any more.



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