

THE SPARROW AND THE HORNED NIGHTBIRD



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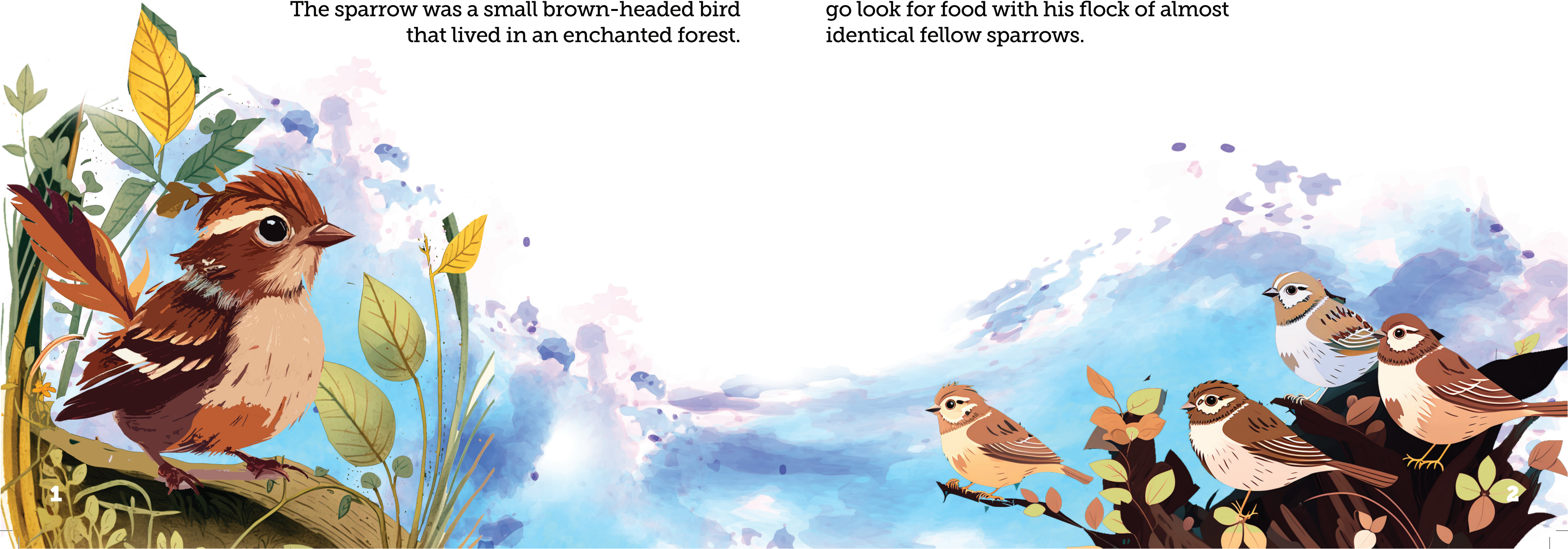
THE SPARROW AND THE HORNED NIGHTBIRD

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There once lived a little bird called a sparrow.
The sparrow was a small brown-headed bird
that lived in an enchanted forest.

Every morning, the sparrow would wake up and
go look for food with his flock of almost
identical fellow sparrows.



The flock went to find seeds, plants, and small insects to eat. Nothing special. Not like the pelican that swoops down with its long bill and grabs fish in its large throat pouch to fill its larger tummy. The sparrow's beak was tiny, and its food even tinier.

No one would bother to admire his size.

His little song was soft and sweet. Nothing special. Not like the hadeda that even startled big animals. The sparrow's call was an itty-bitty little chirp.

No one would bother to pay attention to his song.





The flock was flying merrily when the sparrows saw a hawk!
The hawk took chase, and the sparrows rushed to take cover.
The sparrow hid inside a tree, and the hawk tried to reach him.

Luckily, the hawk was too big to get inside the tree and soon gave up. The sparrow sat there shaking. *What a fast bird, he thought. I wish I could be that strong. Instead, I'm a weak little bird, and the hawk can make me his lunch!*

Later, when all the little sparrows were safe,
they flew home together.



The sparrow was still upset, so he went outside for some fresh air. He was grumpy and thought about how unfair it was to be a little sparrow. He was distracted and did not look where he was going. Just then, he bumped into something soft and furry. "Oh, what is it now?!" he shouted.

As he looked up, he could hardly believe his eyes. It was the most majestic creature he had ever seen!

It was the great Horned Nightbird, a magical bird whose feathers could grant wishes.

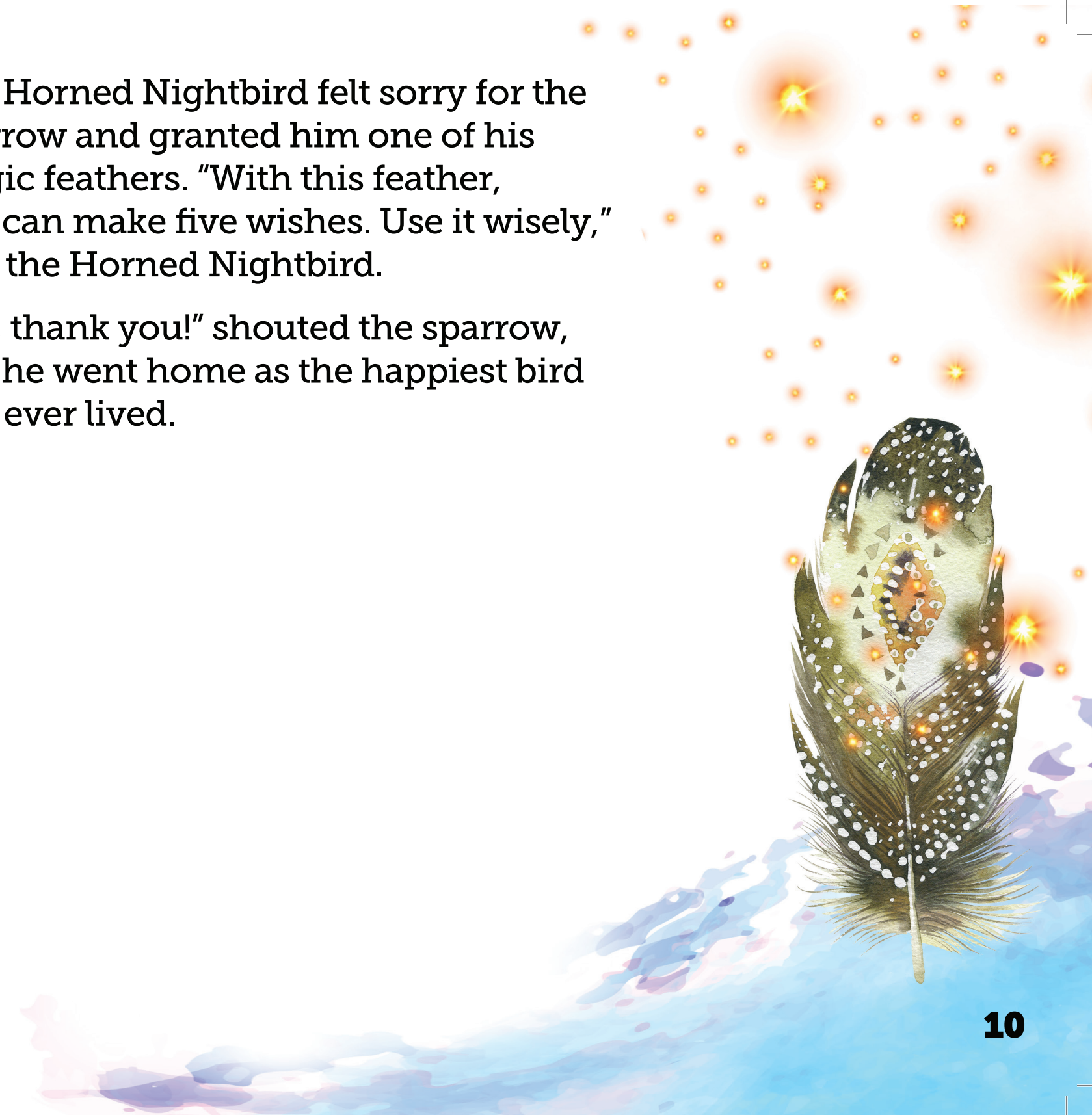
"Please, Horned Nightbird, please may I have one of your feathers?" begged the sparrow.

"Why do you need my feather?" asked the great Horned Nightbird. The sparrow told the Horned Nightbird how he was almost eaten by a hawk. He told him how unfair it was that he was just a sparrow.



The Horned Nightbird felt sorry for the sparrow and granted him one of his magic feathers. "With this feather, you can make five wishes. Use it wisely," said the Horned Nightbird.

"Oh, thank you!" shouted the sparrow, and he went home as the happiest bird that ever lived.



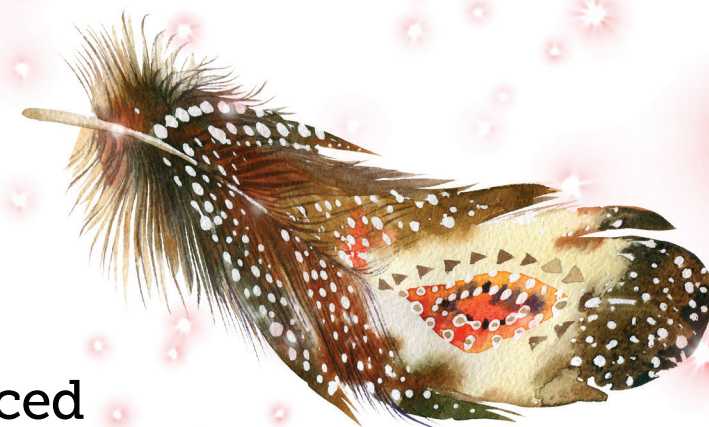


At home, he wondered what he should wish for first.

A pretty, pink plumage just like the flamingo, decided the sparrow.

"With all of my heart, I wish to be pink like a flamingo," he said.

Magically, the sparrow turned bright pink! Proud of his pretty colour, he could not wait to show it off to his flock.



In the morning, the sparrow pranced around to show off his feathers. His fellow sparrows were all shocked.

Even though they did not want to, the flock went off with the sparrow to look for food.

The sparrow felt proud as everyone stared at him.





As the birds were finding food, the hawk came again.
The sparrows scattered and found places nearby to hide.



The sparrow's pink colour stood out, and the hawk could see where they were hiding. With a thud, he came crashing down and just missed catching one of the birds.

The flock was mad at the sparrow and told him he could not fly with them anymore.

Deep in the forest, the sparrow found a muster of beautiful peacocks. He looked admiringly at the peacocks and decided the colourful tail and pretty crest was really what he wanted!

That was what he wished for next.



For the first time in his life, everyone seemed to notice the sparrow. Everyone looked at him and admired his feathers. He felt so proud of his beautiful new feathers and walked with his head held high.

It was not very long when the sparrow's little legs got tired from dragging the heavy tail.



Not a problem, he thought as he passed a herd of ostriches. "With all my heart, I wish to have strong legs and wings like an ostrich," he said.

So, the sparrow got long, strong legs and wings like an ostrich.



Everyone noticed, and even the flamingos seemed to envy his long legs.

The sparrow grew hungry. It took a lot of energy to carry his large wings and to have such long legs.

The seeds, plants and small insects were not enough for him anymore, but his little beak could not eat anything bigger.



As he walked, he passed a pod of pelicans and remembered. "Ooh, that's just what I wanted!" he said. With all his heart, he wished for a long bill, a large throat pouch, and a tummy that could hold more food, just like a pelican.



So, he got a long beak, a throat pouch, and a bigger tummy.

Off he went into the lake to get some fish.





"Haa-haa-haa-de-dah," sang a hadeda passing by.
Oh yes! I always wanted to sing like that, thought the sparrow.
More than anything, he wished for a hadeda's call.
Magically, the sparrow could now sing like a hadeda.

He got to the lake and saw a reflection of himself in the water.
"Haa-haa-haa-de-dah," he screamed, scaring himself.



He was so loud that
all the fish swam away from him,
and he could not catch anything.





He walked home, hungry, tired, and lonely.
As his old flock of sparrows flew past him,
he saw how happy they were flying
together. "Look how happy the
flock are! What a sweet song
they sing."



How lucky are they that
they have friends to fly
with and lots of food to
eat," said the sparrow.



Right then, he realised that he had made a big mistake. "With all
my heart, I wish to be a sparrow again," he said.

To his surprise, nothing happened. Oh no! he thought. He had
used up his five wishes!

He needed to find the Horned Nightbird.



After a long search, he finally found her.
"Please, great Horned Nightbird, make me a
sparrow again," begged the sparrow.
"Why do you want to turn back?"
asked the Horned Nightbird.
"With all my heart, I just
want to be me!" said
the sparrow.

"Ah, you've found the magic words," said the Horned Nightbird.
"You've finally learnt just how special you are." With those magic
words, the sparrow changed back to himself.

He returned to his flock and lived happily ever after, flapping his
little wings and looking for food with his flock of almost identical
fellow sparrows.

THE END

