

# Benjamin

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**Author:** Jo-Shin Lee **Illustrator:** Jo-Shin Lee **Publisher:** Viking International

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40 pages | 19 x 20 cm **Volume:** 1

**BFT2.0 Translator:** Kelvin Yang and Michelle Kuo

Benjamin is a “cool” owl who loves daydreaming and prefers staying home. But when his good friend Jim falls ill, Benjamin decides to step out and visit him. What adventures await him?

This heartwarming story inspires children to grow and embrace life, encouraging them to step out of their comfort zones and discover the beauty around them. Benjamin’s journey encourages readers to make friends, learn about nocturnal animals, and value self-acceptance. Through Benjamin’s eyes, children are encouraged to cherish the world in which they live.



Author **Jo-Shin Lee**

Jo-Shin Lee is an illustrator and author based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She primarily illustrates picture books, book covers, and other projects. Her authored works include *The Something*, *Sombrita*, and *Benjamin*, while her illustrated titles include *Still a Family* and *Little One*. Passionate about printmaking, Jo-Shin enjoys techniques like screen printing and collagraph intaglio printing. She also previously taught picture book and illustration courses at National Changhua University of Education.

# Stepping Out of Your Comfort Zone with Calm and Confidence: A Review of *Benjamin*

by Kuo Fu

*Benjamin* is a work by Taiwanese illustrator Jo Shin Lee, first published in 2017 and later released in a new edition in 2023. The book's cover retains its signature fresh and charming style, with soft blue and green tones that create a peaceful atmosphere. Additionally, the clever hole-punch design adds a delightful surprise to the visual effect, making it all the more engaging.

The title refers to the main character of the story—a little owl named "Benjamin." He is a typical "homebody," always immersed in his own world, playing video games, reading, and drawing. Benjamin enjoys his time alone, often daydreaming and finding solace in solitude. When friends invite him to parties or social events, he seems to always find a reason to politely decline. However, one day, he accidentally steps outside his home and discovers that interacting

with others, attending social gatherings, or even simply stepping outdoors is a beautiful, new experience.

Everyone has different preferences and personalities. Some people recharge by socializing, while others need time alone, preferring to avoid large social gatherings. This book reminds us to understand and embrace our own needs and characteristics. It encourages us to occasionally step out of our comfort zone, which may help us discover new possibilities in life and allow us to see familiar things from different perspectives.

In an interview, Lee shared her own creative process. As she put it, "My picture book stories focus on the atmosphere of the environment and include many descriptions of emotions and feelings. I usually complete the illustrations and concept first, then gradually develop the

entire story." Indeed, the book exudes a sense of peaceful ease that invites the reader to unwind and reflect.

The story of *Benjamin* touches on a universal theme: the balance between solitude and social interaction. While the little owl initially prefers being alone, his journey of stepping outside his comfort zone teaches both him and the reader that new experiences can bring unexpected joy and fulfillment. Life isn't just about staying within one's habits and confines but about embracing new opportunities for personal growth. The charming illustrations, paired with a subtle yet profound story, create a holistic experience that gently guides readers through the journey of discovering new aspects of life.

Benjamin's transformation invites readers to embrace life's unknowns and see the world with fresh eyes. This simple

yet moving tale encourages both young and old to take risks, venture beyond the familiar, and explore new horizons.

In essence, *Benjamin* offers more than just a whimsical tale of an owl—it serves as a gentle reminder that growth often happens when we step beyond our comfort zones; doing so does not mean losing our experience of peace. Instead, it might just lead us to richer, more meaningful experiences.

*Kuo Fu is a graduate of the Department of Japanese Literature at National Taiwan University. Deeply fascinated by the endless charm of children's literature, she has worked as a bookstore clerk and children's book editor. Her translations include The King of Bread Bundle series.*

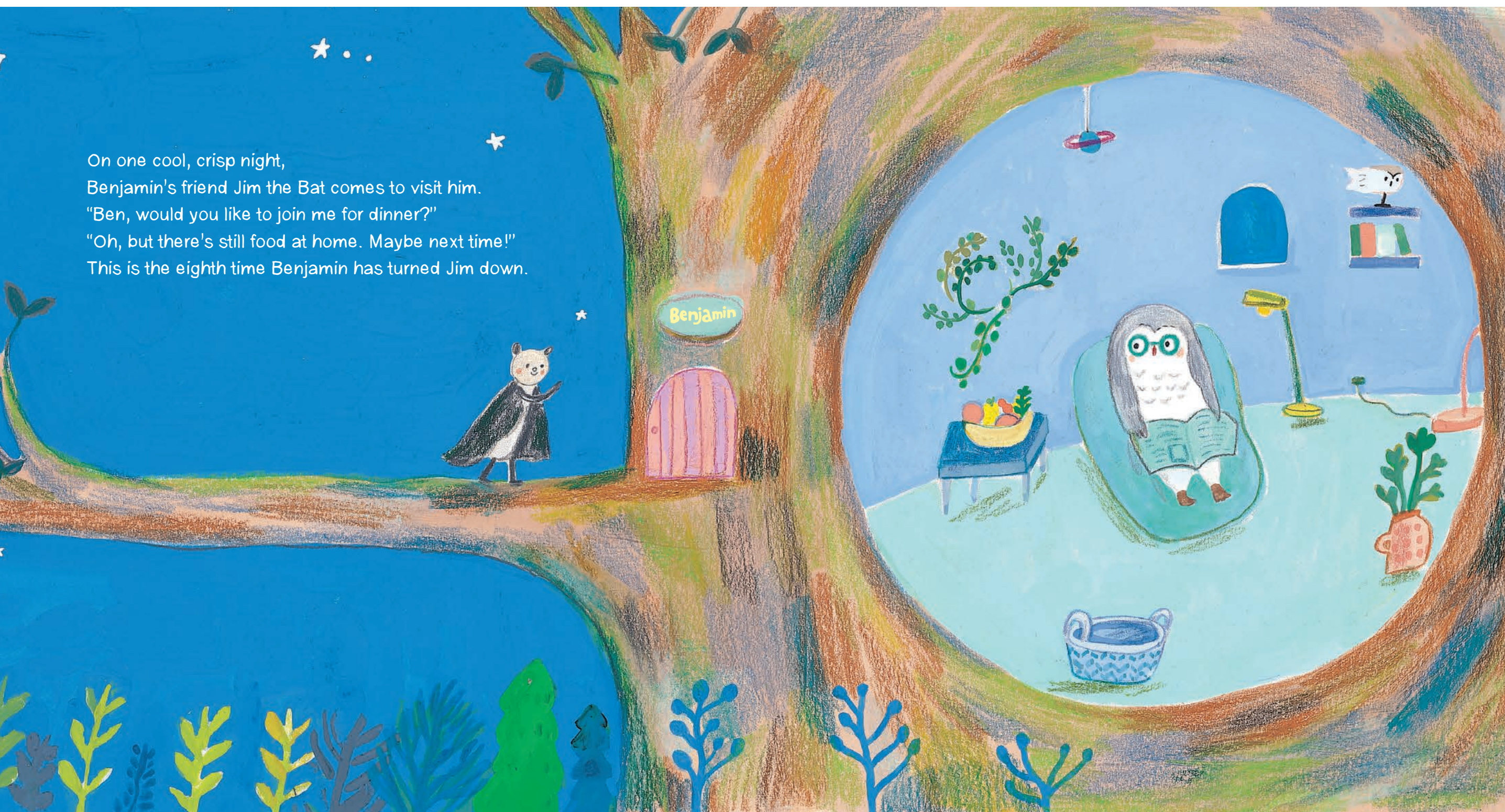


When everyone is throwing a party,  
he also daydreams.





On one cool, crisp night,  
Benjamin's friend Jim the Bat comes to visit him.  
"Ben, would you like to join me for dinner?"  
"Oh, but there's still food at home. Maybe next time!"  
This is the eighth time Benjamin has turned Jim down.





On another starry night, Ben's neighbor,  
Molly the Night Heron, comes by.  
"Ben, shall we go to the mountaintop to  
look at the stars?"  
"Oh, I will pass. I like them just as much  
on my computer screen."

