

HARE HALFWAY
AND THE
BOOK OF EVERYTHING

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After a long run, Hank arrives at Mirror Lake, at the far rear end of the Dusky Animal Forest. Here, beneath the old oak, lies the entrance of the bear's den.

Knock-knock-knock!

Screeching chair legs. Then dull, heavy footsteps.

The hatch swings open, and Bookie Bear, blinded, asks: "Who's there?"

The old writer hasn't had a visitor in years.

"Hank, sir," says Hank. "Hank the Hare."



As Bookie leads the way, Hank's eyes explore the den that's filled with trash, dirty dishes, and dusty books. Bookie Bear's a slob, the hare thinks.

Bear puts two glasses of juice on the table.

"So tell me. And no sir. Not a single sir ever lived here."



"Like I said: Hank. But everyone calls me Hare Halfway. See, I'm easily distracted. Then I go - what was the plan again? I never get any further than halfway. Very annoying. I'm glad I made it *here*."

"Ouch," says Bear. "But why come to me?"

"Well, you've written loads of books, haven't you? Of all animals, I guess you should be able to teach me. How to finish stuff."

"I see your point," Bookie agrees.

"Can I just ... live here for a while and learn? I'll cook for you. I'll clean and never get in your way."

It only takes the writer a glance to see the advantages. "Shall I give you a tip already?" he says. "What I do when I get distracted? Bookie Bear, I say, hocus focus! That usually helps."

Bear jumps from his seat. "Let's do it!" he cheers.

"Let's do it!" cheers Hare.

Together, they break into a silly little dance.



The next day. Hare's doing the dishes, but not quite - all he does is stare.

"Hocus!" Bear shouts.

"Focus!" shouts Hare, and he resumes his work.

Damn, the water's gone cold.



Bookie Bear's walking on air. There's more time to write, the food's delicious, and he no longer has to talk to himself.

And Hare? He's laughing his head off with the countless stories that Bookie tells.

You might call them best friends by now.



One night, the two best friends are stargazing. Hare indicates the Great Bear.

Being silent together - another thing they're good at.

Absorbing the quiet.

Peace.

You don't say anything unless it matters.

You don't disturb the peace lightly.



"Bear?"

"Umm."

"They say you used to be famous. The older animals. Why aren't you anymore?"

Bookie's smiling. He waits for Hare's words to disappear from the air.

" Ah, fame. Being recognized everywhere. Long tours. Months spent not writing, not having a single moment to yourself. Enough, I said. I quit."

An owl hoots.

"Started writing my Book of Everything. Now I get to sleep in my own bed."

Hoo.

"I'd like to be famous," Halfway yawns.

"When you've reached the end, you hope that more stories about the twosome will follow, because they are an unusual, delightful couple that you have taken to your heart."

Book blogger Anneke Van Dijken - ☆☆☆☆☆

"A gem!!! Beautiful writing, a moving story, and gorgeous drawings. I enjoyed it immensely."

"The grandchildren and I enjoyed this very much. A beautiful, touching story with an unexpected resolution. Hare Halfway and Bookie Bear are two characters you will never forget!"

Hare never gets to finish stuff: no matter what he undertakes, he just doesn't make it past halfway. Desperate for help, Hare runs to Bookie Bear. Old Bear has written tons of stories. If anyone can teach Hare how to follow through, Bear can.

Soon they become best friends. Hare Halfway may even read the Book of Everything, although Bear is far from finished with it! Then fate strikes. One moment of carelessness, and the friendship lies shattered. Or is there more than meets the eye? With Bookie, you never know.

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