

Not far away was Jasmine's tree. Now all of the owls had become thin and bony during the drought and more than one of Jasmine's brothers and sisters had cast an eye on their mother, but had held off suggesting they make a meal of her out of respect for Jasmine's and Peony's talons and beaks. But as their stomachs began to shrivel and their talons found less and less game, the more attractive their weak mother seemed. Until finally all the brothers and sisters banded together before their mother grew any thinner. Jasmine and Peony fought as best they could and though they were outnumbered, they managed to hold off the others until their mother escaped into the jungle. Then they followed her, as her several hours later.

In the meantime, the young walker sat restlessly in his tree, the noise of the owls' fighting having drawn his wandering dream-soul back to his body, so that he had awakened. He looked across the clearing and in the moonlight saw on the limb of the tree across from him three owls, round of body and of head with solemn eyes and small tufted ears. The one in the middle was larger and looked older than the other two, but the feathers of all three were torn and bedraggled and there were cuts on all of them, as if they had just been in some fierce battle and were now too worn out to be on their guard.