

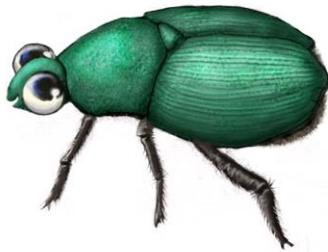
HOPE THE FIREFLY

Story by Cindy Taft

Sample Illustrations by Aaron Listen

There once was a little firefly named Hope. She lived in a deep, dark forest. Hope loved flying through the trees, blinking her golden light, and listening to the sounds of the night. One evening, a frightened little voice caught her attention.

“I hope I can find my way home,” cried Billy the Beetle, “I’m scared.”



and I’ll light the way.”

“I live two pine trees that way,” Billy said pointing down a misty, shadowy path. Hope flew slowly in front of him, her light scattering Billy’s fears and warming his heart.

Later that night, Hope was flying on a gentle breeze, her light winking in the darkness. As she flew lower, she heard a faint, little voice.

“I hope I can get this food to the hill,” said an old ant named Abby. “It gets harder every day to find my way.”

Hope hovered beside the ant, glowing softly. “Did someone call me?” she asked. “I’m Hope. Can I help?”



Hope flew down to the forest floor, where she saw a small, blue beetle sitting on a maple leaf. “Did someone call me?” she asked. “My name is Hope.”

The tiny beetle saw a beautiful beam shining before him.

“I’m Billy and I can’t see my way home,” he said. “Will you help me?”

“Of course I’ll help you,” said Hope. “Let’s work together. You give me directions





The tired ant looked up at the graceful little bug floating next to her.

“How kind of you to stop. My name is Abby. I must get this food to my sick grandson. The ant hill is about five yards around that bend.” Hope looked down a damp, mossy trail that curved around an old tree stump and disappeared into the woods.

“I would be happy to help,” replied Hope picking up a pine seed and flying slowly down the trail. The two worked their way along the newly lit path, and the love shown by Hope lifted Abby’s spirit and lightened her heavy load.

On her way home, Hope found herself in an unfamiliar part of the forest. It seemed so gloomy and lifeless, until a small voice drifted up from below.

“I hope we can see our music tonight,” chirped Katie the Cricket to the cricket orchestra. “We have practiced a long time, but we may have to cancel the concert.”

Hope fluttered down and landed on a dewy blade of grass. “Did someone call?” she asked. “My name is Hope. What’s wrong?”

Katie and the others looked at Hope. Would she be able to help?

“We have a concert tonight,” replied Katie, “but without the moonlight, we won’t be able to see our music. Could you help us?”

Hope thought for a minute. “I can’t do this by myself,” she replied. At that moment, Hope recognized a small ray of light dancing among the tall trees. “It’s Flora!” yelled Hope. Drifting down softly, Hope’s best friend landed gently in the cool grass.

“Hope, what are you doing so far from home?” Flora asked.

“Helping some friends,” replied Hope, “and I’m glad you’re here. I need your help. We need to work together and signal our families.”

Hope and Flora flew side by side, their lights flashing as one. The dazzling glow carried deep into the woods and soon a hundred glittering fireflies came gliding into the thicket. The brilliant illumination filled the woods with the most magnificent light the crickets had ever seen.

“Will this help?” asked Hope.



“It’s wonderful!” replied Katie, “and just in time. Here comes our audience.” Within minutes, all the night creatures were gathered around the breathtaking light.

As the crickets began to play, enchanting music filled the air, inspiring everyone in the forest.

That night, Hope became a beacon, a guiding light for all to see and everyone realized that if you can find Hope, anything is possible.