



Lantern Through Ferns

TuckBook

Mitya tipped the last three round berries into his small basket and counted them twice. “Grandma will have tea before the school bell starts again,” he said. Tomorrow he would begin his new school days, but tonight he wanted to bring her a taste of the berry patch.

Then rain pattered on the leaves above his head. It was a soft rain, not a scary one, but it turned the forest path into brown, shiny squish. The painted acorn markers Mitya usually followed had blurred beneath drops of water.





For one bouncy moment, Mitya thought he could hurry anyway. He hopped after a pale shape on a tree trunk. Squish! His foot sank in mud, and the basket tipped. Berries rolled under a fern like little red marbles.

Mitya sat back on his heels. His ears drooped. Then he remembered how he had packed his school satchel that morning: crayons in the side pocket, book flat at the back, snack tucked where it would not get squashed. Slowly was better than hurried.

He found every berry and placed them carefully back in the basket. From his satchel he took his tiny yellow rain cape, which Mama had folded there for damp days, and fastened it under his chin. The basket went beneath the satchel flap, safe and snug.

Mitya listened before he hopped. Drip-drip from the birches. Plink from the pond. Farther away, he heard a warm, familiar sound: Grandma's wooden gate clicking gently in the breeze. He turned toward the click and followed the firm, rooty ground.



At the fork by the giant mushroom, the gate sound disappeared under a chorus of frogs. Mitya did not guess. He asked a mole pushing a neat pile of rain-dark soil, “Which way does Grandma’s cottage lie?” The mole pointed with his nose. “Past the sleeping log, where the ferns make a green doorway.”

Mitya thanked him and went on. At the sleeping log, a wren shook raindrops from her wings. “The fern doorway is close,” she chirped, “but take the pebble strip. Mud loves to steal little boots.” Mitya chose the line of smooth gray pebbles instead of the slippery brown shortcut.







The pebbles led him safely to two tall ferns leaning together. Beyond them, the forest had grown dim and blue. Mitya's tummy gave a small wobble. Then, between the fern fronds, a golden glow blinked once, twice, three times.

“Grandma’s lantern!” Mitya
whispered. He held his basket steady with
one paw and followed the glow, not too
fast, not too slow. Each time the path
bent, the lantern appeared again through
the leaves, bright as a little moon that
knew his name.





At last he stepped through the ferns and saw Grandma waiting by her cottage gate. Her brass lantern hung from a curved hook, making a puddle of honey-colored light on the stones. “There you are, my careful traveler,” Grandma said, opening her arms.

Inside, Mitya hung his yellow rain cape by the door and set the basket on Grandma’s round table. The berries had not squashed at all. Grandma poured warm mint tea into a little cup, and they shared the berries with buttery oat cakes.

Later, Mitya’s school satchel rested beside Grandma’s armchair, ready for tomorrow. Grandma gave his damp ears a gentle rub and tucked a soft quilt around his shoulders. Outside, the rain had become only a quiet tick on the cottage roof.







Mitya watched the lantern glow at the window until his breathing slowed. New school days could wait for morning. Tonight there were berries, Grandma's hug, and a safe path home waiting whenever he needed it.

Good night.



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After the story



WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT

On the evening before school begins, Mitya brings berries to Grandma through a rainy enchanted forest. By going slowly and carefully, he finds her warm cottage and a peaceful bedtime welcome.

TALK ABOUT IT AFTER READING

After reading, ask which moment felt the warmest or bravest today.

AND TOMORROW...

On Mitya's first school morning, something small and golden glints inside his satchel pocket.





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Copy TB-3F1-46AB70161B

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5 minutes of reading



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