



The Girl with Copper Curls

CRRRAAACK! Pearl dropped her picture book onto the quilt and vanished beneath her blanket. Only one small toe showed at the end of the bed. Outside, rain slid down the bedroom window in wiggly silver trails. Pearl wanted very much to stay in her own bed tonight, but every rumble made the dark space under the blanket seem like the only possible place.

Mum came in carrying Pearl's striped bear, Marmalade, who had been left upside down by the door. She switched on the little bedside lamp, making a round puddle of yellow light on the rug. "May I sit here?" Mum asked. Pearl made a tiny bump in the blanket that meant yes.

Another low growl rolled across the roof. Pearl pulled the blanket over her toe too. "It sounds angry," she said, her voice muffled by the quilt.



“It is loud,” Mum said. She did not say it was not. “Thunder is a sound from storm clouds far away. The clouds bump and crackle high above, and the sound comes rumbling along until it reaches our house.” She set Marmalade beside Pearl’s pillow. “We are indoors, in your snug room, and the storm is outside.”



Pearl lifted one corner of the blanket. Her copper curls sprang out first. “Can the sound get in?” she asked. “We can hear it get in,” Mum said, “but sound is only sound. Would you like to try a waiting game for the spaces between rumbles?”

Mum put a hand on her own tummy. “We sniff in gently, as if we are smelling warm toast. Then we blow out slowly, as if we are cooling it.” Pearl copied her. In through her nose. Out through pursed lips. Marmalade sat against her arm, listening with his stitched brown eyes.

Pearl had just begun her second toast-smell when BOOM! shook the windowpane. Down went the blanket. Pearl grabbed Marmalade, but she grabbed him backward. His legs stuck out near her chin, while his head poked from the bottom of the quilt. “Oh!” Pearl squeaked. “He’s become a bear-sausage.”



Mum's laugh was soft, and Pearl's was a little shaky, but it came out. She untangled Marmalade and hugged him properly. "I did one breath," Pearl said. "You did," said Mum. "And then a big sound surprised you." Pearl frowned at the blanket. "I don't want to hide all the way anymore. It makes everything sound bigger in there."

She thought for a moment, stroking Marmalade's velvety ear. Then Pearl folded the blanket down from her face and tucked its edge under her chin. "This can be my lap cave," she decided. "My face can listen, but my legs can be cozy." Mum moved no closer or farther. She simply stayed in the chair beside the bed.



For a while there was only rain ticking at the window. Pearl watched it from her pillow, not near the glass, while the lamp made the room easy to see. She smelled toast-breath in. She blew toast-breath out. A long rumble arrived, gentler than the clap before. Pearl's fingers squeezed Marmalade's paw, but her eyes stayed above the blanket.





Then the loudest thunder of all burst overhead. Pearl's shoulders jumped. She wanted to pull the blanket over every curl and eyelash. Instead, she pressed Marmalade to her chest, kept her lap cave in place, and took one small breath in. The thunder rolled away before she had finished breathing out.

Pearl blinked at the rainy window. The silver trails were slowing. After a few minutes, the rain became a soft patter, and then only drops plopped from the roof somewhere beyond the wall. "The storm is walking away," Pearl whispered.





“It is,” Mum said. Pearl gave Marmalade a careful place beside her pillow, pulled the blanket over her legs, and left her face in the lamplight. Her copper curls spread across the pillow like little springs. The room was still her room. The thunder had been loud, but Pearl had listened from her bed, and now the last faint grumble wandered away without her.





Good night.



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After the story



WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT

When thunder makes bedtime feel frightening, Pearl and Mum find a gentle way to listen from the safety of Pearl's own bed. With her blanket lap cave and Marmalade close by, Pearl discovers that brave can be soft and small.

TALK ABOUT IT AFTER READING

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

AND TOMORROW...

The next afternoon, Pearl wonders whether Marmalade might need help during a very windy day.





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6 minutes of reading



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