



The Star Map Listened

Elowen pulled the soft blanket right up to her round silver ears, then pushed it away again. Tomorrow was her first day at the little school among the dream clouds, and her yellow school satchel waited beside the bed. She wanted to choose a peaceful sleep before morning, but every choice felt somehow wrong.

She was a small dream-mouse with moon-pale fur and a tail that curled like a question mark. Her bedroom floated gently in the dream sky, though its floor stayed nicely beneath her paws. A small blue night-light shone on the shelf, and above the bed hung a star map stitched on deep-purple cloth.



First Elowen chose the thickest corner of the blanket. She tucked it under her chin, under one paw, then over her nose. But the blanket made a warm, squashy cave, and inside it her thoughts bumped together: Will I remember my name? What if the cloud steps are bouncy? What if my satchel feels lonely?

“Perhaps I should sleep with my satchel,” she decided.

She climbed from bed, lifted the yellow satchel by its strap, and set it beside her pillow. It was not very large, but its clasp pressed a cold little lump against her cheek. When she rolled over, a pencil inside made a scratchy tick-tick-tick.

Elowen sat up. Through the window, the gentle dream sky was full of slow, floating clouds shaped like slippers, spoons, and sleeping cats. They drifted past without needing to know where they were going. Elowen wished she could drift like that, but her paws kept smoothing the blanket and then wrinkling it.





Above her, one tiny star on the map gave a patient blink. Then another blinked beside it. Elowen looked closely. The stars had always formed paths: a spiral for sleepy stories, a curved line for deep breaths, and a little nest shape near the bottom. Tonight the nest stars were glowing.





“I don’t know what is wrong,” Elowen whispered. Saying it did not make the room worse. The blue night-light stayed blue. The dream clouds kept floating. She put one paw on her chest and listened to the small thump-thump beneath it.





At last she knew. “I am fluttery,” she said. “Not scared exactly. Just fluttery because tomorrow is new.” The word settled softly in her room, like a feather landing. On the star map, the nest shape shone brighter, while the stars of the curved breathing path winked, one after another.

Elowen looked at the satchel beside her pillow. It had been a kind idea, but not a sleepy one. “You can wait by the bed,” she told it. She carried it back to the chair, where it stood ready for morning, then returned to bed with empty paws.





She followed the map's curved stars.
One star meant breathe in slowly.
The next meant breathe out slowly.
Around the curve she went, not with her
feet, but with her breathing. Then she
followed the glowing nest: tuck
the blanket over her legs, rest her tail
in a curl, and let her ears lie flat
and comfortable.





The star map seemed to listen to every quiet breath. Its light spread across the bed in small silver dots, as if the gentle dream sky had come indoors just for Elowen. Her fluttery feeling did not disappear all at once. It folded its wings and sat peacefully beside her.





Elowen watched one cloud slip past the window, shaped almost like a yellow satchel. Tomorrow could come when it was ready. Tonight, her blanket was soft, her night-light was kind, and the stars above her bed knew the way to the nest. Before the last star blinked, Elowen was asleep.





Good night.



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After the story



THE MAIN IDEA

A small, thoughtful step can make a difficult moment feel safer.

TALK ABOUT IT AFTER READING

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

AND TOMORROW...

In the morning, Elowen may discover which star on her map points toward the cloud school.





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On the night before her first day at cloud school, Elowen cannot settle down. With a glowing star map and a gentle breathing path, she finds her own peaceful way to sleep.

5 minutes of reading



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