



Caspar and the Pocket Moon-Lantern

Caspar snapped shut his explorer satchel just as Nix, his little glow-bunny, sprang onto the map beside it. Her fur shone pale blue from nose to tail. “Oh, Nix,” said Caspar, peering at the bright circle she made on the floor. “You need a sleeping place before every creature in the forest wakes up.”

Tomorrow was Caspar’s first morning at Explorer School, and he had packed his map, his berry-pencil, and a small pocket moon-lantern. But first he had an explorer’s job of his own: help Nix settle down. He tucked the lantern safely into his satchel, lifted his soft blanket, and led Nix into the enchanted forest.





Their first stop was a fern alcove, where curled fronds made a green, leafy roof. Caspar hummed his best slow humming tune and patted the moss beside him. Nix sat down politely. Then her glow brightened with every hum. Three field mice blinked awake beneath a root, rubbed their whiskers, and hurried to find a darker nook.

“Humming is not the answer,” Caspar whispered. He took Nix to the pond, where the water held the stars in a wobbly puddle. He tried a quiet shushing song, soft as the reeds. Nix’s glow bobbed across the water. The sleeping frogs opened one eye, then the other, and gave three puzzled little croaks.

Caspar chose a third place: the cozy hollow under a wide-rooted hushwood tree. “A blanket tent!” he said. He draped the soft blanket between two roots and tucked Nix inside. For one hopeful moment, all was still. Then Nix glowed so brightly that the blanket became a blue lampshade. Two owlets in a nearby branch blinked at it and hooted, “Is it morning already?”



Caspar hurriedly lifted the blanket. Nix did not hop out. She crouched close to his claws, trembling. When the hollow behind her turned dark again, her glow flared even more. Caspar stopped thinking about sleepy mice and frogs. He watched Nix look at the darkness, then at him.





“You are not trying to wake everyone,” Caspar said softly. “You are worried the dark will be too dark.” From his satchel he took the pocket moon-lantern. It was only as big as an apple, with a brass handle and a round cloudy window. Caspar had planned to save its gentle light for his school map, but Nix needed it now.

He set the moon-lantern beside her and turned its little leaf-shaped key. A pearly glow opened inside, much smaller and steadier than Nix’s. Nix sniffed the lantern. She placed one paw against its warm glass. At once, the blue shine in her fur softened from a blaze to a sleepy shimmer.

Caspar spread the blanket beneath the quiet tree and made a round nest beside the roots. He put the moon-lantern where Nix could see it, then lay down nearby with his satchel under one arm. The hollow was no longer dark. It was softly, safely dim.



Nix circled once on the blanket. She circled twice. Then she folded her glowing ears over her eyes and leaned against Caspar's warm green side. Her light became a tiny blue freckle in the hollow. Above them, the owlets tucked their heads back under their wings.

The moon-lantern dimmed too, as if it understood. Its cloudy window held just enough light to show the curl of Nix's tail and the edge of Caspar's map. From the pond came one last low frog-croak, and then the forest settled into its proper nighttime hush.







Caspar listened to Nix's small, even breaths. He smiled, closed his eyes, and let tomorrow's first Explorer School day wait until morning. Under the quiet tree, with the little lantern glowing kindly beside them, both friends fell 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...

At dawn, Caspar may discover that his first Explorer School map has a tiny blue pawprint leading toward a hidden woodland path.





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When worried Nix cannot sleep in the dark, Caspar tries gentle forest bedtime places before discovering what she truly needs. A tiny moon-lantern helps the two friends make a safe, softly glowing night together.

5 minutes of reading



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