



Mia Maps Lantern Cove

A story for Mia

TuckBook

The main character of this story: **Mia**

“The lanternfish are dark!” Mia said, pressing her nose close to the round window of her small explorer submarine. Beyond the glass lay Lantern Cove, where hundreds of tiny fish usually blinked blue-gold among the sea flowers. Tonight, before the gentle August gathering that welcomed a new sea cycle, the cove was as dim as an empty cupboard.

Mia was five, and she was mapping the underwater garden in her coral-red dive coveralls. Her soft diving lamp glowed beside her helmet. Behind her sat a shell collection basket and a silver sample case for safe, empty things such as fallen shells. Her mother sat at the grown-up controls, close enough to reach any big switch.

“The old route goes through the ribbon arches,” Mia said, unfolding her garden map. A dotted line curled from the submarine dock to Lantern Cove. “If we find the route, we can find out what happened.”



The whole little submarine unfolded its broad side fins and drifted over the garden like a red beetle with a glowing belly. Mia was small at its front window, but the submarine filled the water around her. Tall kelp swayed below, and a shining swarm of silver minnows streamed around its hull.



At the ribbon arches, the dotted route vanished beneath a rolling cloud of bubbles. Mia guided the lamp toward it. There stood a plump sea anemone, puffing bubbles through an old brass pipe. A lost ribbon had tied itself around the pipe's mouth. Each puff made the ribbon flap over the map sign: left, right, left, right.

"That is not an arch," Mia said. "It is a bubble sneezer!" Just then the pipe gave a grand POOF. The ribbon sprang up and wrapped itself around the submarine's periscope like a floppy hat. Mia and her mother laughed while Mia used the outside gripper to lift the ribbon free and place it gently in the shell basket.





She drew a new line on her map around the bubbles. But the new route stopped at a hedge of sea grass. In its middle, Mia saw faint flickers: one lanternfish, then another, peeping from a narrow crack. They did not swim out. They only blinked once, waited, and blinked again.

Mia opened the sample case a little. “Perhaps they have lost their glow,” she whispered. “Could I gather some?” But when her lamp shone through the crack, she saw the fish blinking toward each other. One flashed. A second answered. A third turned and tucked a loose bit of seaweed beneath a small shell roof.





Mia closed the case at once. “Their light is not a treasure to collect,” she said. “It is their way of saying, ‘Here I am. This is home. Come this way.’” She looked past the sea grass and discovered the real trouble: a great drifting tangle of old seaweed and lost gathering ribbons had blocked the sheltered cove’s entrance.

Mia could have asked her mother to steer away from the muddle. Instead, she studied the garden map. “The seaweed belongs on the nursery rocks,” she decided, “and the ribbons belong on the gathering poles.” Her mother nodded and kept the submarine steady beside the safe, open entrance.





Mia worked the gentle grippers, one slow pinch at a time. She lifted seaweed from the tangle and laid it over the nursery rocks, where it settled like green hair over sleeping stones. She put each ribbon into the shell basket, then carried it to the short marker poles by the garden path. One ribbon tried to escape and plastered itself across the submarine window. Mia could see nothing but purple stripes until it slid down with a plop.





At last the entrance opened. The lanternfish slipped out, first in twos, then in twinkling rows. Their blue-gold lights joined into a soft path through the cove, over the nursery rocks, and back toward their shell roofs. Mia added the shining path to her map, not with ink, but with tiny star marks.

For the August gathering, the old ribbons now fluttered neatly from the marker poles, and the garden looked ready for its new cycle. The fish blinked to one another as they tidied the cove, their little signals calm and clear.







Mia switched her diving lamp to its sleepy setting. The submarine folded its fins close and hummed toward the dock while the lanternfish's path glowed behind it. In her shell basket, there was only one empty shell for her collection. Everything else had gone home.

Good night, Mia.



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After the story



WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT

A warm illustrated story about a small discovery, a meaningful choice, and finding a gentle way forward.

TALK ABOUT IT AFTER READING

After reading, ask: “Mia, which moment felt the warmest or bravest today?”

AND TOMORROW...

On Mia’s next garden map, a row of star marks appears where no stars were drawn before.





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A warm illustrated story about a small discovery,
a meaningful choice, and finding a gentle way forward.

7 minutes of reading



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