

The Last Story Candle



Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

The Last Story Candle

Yavuz DEMİRKİRAN



In a small village nestled between snowy hills, winter had arrived with a fierce howl. The wind rattled windows and piled snow against doors. Inside her cozy house, nine-year-old Mira watched the lights flicker. She had warm brown skin, curly black hair in two short puffs, and a gap-toothed smile. Her red knitted sweater with snowflake patterns kept her snug as she pressed her nose to the cold glass.



Suddenly, the lights went out. The whole village turned dark and quiet. Mira's blue mittens dangled on their string as she felt her way to the kitchen. Her mother lit a single candle, but it was just an ordinary one. Mira remembered the special story candle in the attic—a family treasure that only glowed when stories were told. She climbed the creaky stairs, her wool scarf wrapped tight.



Back downstairs, Mira set the story candle on the table and struck a match. At first, nothing happened. Then she whispered, "Once upon a time..." and the candle burst into a warm, golden glow. A tiny sparkle danced in the air. Mira's dark brown eyes widened. "It works!" she cried. "But we have to keep telling stories, or the light will go out."



Word spread fast. Neighbors knocked on the door, drawn by the strange, bright light. Soon, the room was full of people—children, parents, and grandparents, all seeking warmth and company. Grandpa Tomas arrived, tall with a gentle stoop, his round glasses fogged from the cold. "Ah, the story candle!" he said, stroking his thick white moustache. "I haven't seen it glow since I was a boy."



Everyone gathered in a circle. Mira held the candle high, and the glow seemed to pulse like a heartbeat. "Who wants to tell the first story?" she asked. Little Pip, only six, jumped up. Pip had straight ginger hair with a cowlick, an oversized yellow jumper, and a homemade paper crown. "Me! Me!" Pip shouted, green eyes sparkling. "I have a funny one!"



Pip told a silly tale about a snowman who wanted to be a baker. The snowman tried to bake cookies but kept melting the oven. Everyone laughed, and the candle flared brighter. Mira noticed a tiny glowing sprite appear near the flame—a palm-sized creature with moth-like wings and violet eyes. It was Luna, a story sprite! She left faint sparkles as she zipped around the room, growing stronger with each giggle.



Next, Grandpa Tomas shared an old village tale. He spoke of a brave girl who once saved a lost lamb in a blizzard. His pale blue eyes twinkled behind his glasses. The children listened, wide-eyed, as he described the howling wind and the girl's courage. When he finished, the candle glowed steady and strong. "Stories connect us," he said, smiling at the shy children. "Who's next?"



A shy girl named Eliza raised her hand. She told a story about a magic paintbrush that could paint warm weather. Her voice started small but grew louder as the candle's light encouraged her. Luna danced around her head, sprinkling sparkles. The room felt warmer, and outside, the wind seemed to quiet down. Mira's freckled nose crinkled with joy.



Then Mira's friend Sam told a story about a dragon who was afraid of fire. The dragon learned to breathe bubbles instead. Everyone chuckled, and the candle flickered with delight. More children shared tales—funny ones, scary ones (but not too scary), and ones with happy endings. Each story made the candle burn brighter, and Luna grew more visible, her translucent pale gold skin shimmering.



As the night went on, the villagers took turns. Grandparents told old legends, parents shared stories from their childhood, and friends made up new adventures. The candle never dimmed. Outside, the winter wind still blew, but inside, laughter and warmth filled the room. Nobody felt scared or cold. They were together, and that was enough.



But then, a little boy named Leo fell silent. He was too shy to tell a story. "I don't know any," he whispered. The candle flickered, and Luna dimmed. Mira gently took Leo's hand. "Just tell us about your day," she said. "Or your favorite toy." Leo thought for a moment, then began to describe his toy boat. His voice was soft at first, but the candle glowed steadily.



Grandpa Tomas smiled and said, "You see, every story matters, big or small." He encouraged the other shy children to share. One told about a pet cat, another about a dream. Each story made the candle shine. Luna glowed brightly again, her wings fluttering happily. The villagers learned that even the smallest voice could keep the light alive.



Just before dawn, the candle began to sputter. Everyone had told a story, and now they were tired. "We need one more story," Mira said. "A story to last until morning." Grandpa Tomas nodded. "Let's all tell one together." So they wove a tale of their village—of friendship and sharing—each person adding a sentence. The candle blazed one final time, then gently went out.



Morning light crept through the windows. The power had returned, but the villagers didn't rush to turn on the lights. They sat together, smiling. "We made it through the dark," Mira said, holding the spent candle. "Because we shared our stories." Luna, now just a faint sparkle, waved goodbye and faded away. The room felt warm with friendship.



From that night on, the villagers often gathered to tell stories, even when the lights were on. The story candle sat on a shelf, waiting for the next dark night. Mira knew that stories could light up even the darkest winter, as long as friends were together. And somewhere, Luna watched over them, ready to sprinkle sparkles whenever a tale was told.



And so, in that small village between snowy hills, the people learned that sharing stories and friendship can light up even the darkest night. The candle might burn out, but the glow of their togetherness never would. Mira smiled her gap-toothed smile, her curly puffs bouncing, and knew that the last story candle was not really the last—it was just the beginning.