

The Little Mapmaker



Yavuz DEMİRKIRAN

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Oliver loved maps. He drew them everywhere—on napkins, on school papers, even on the back of his hand. His curly dark brown hair always had a pencil tucked behind one ear, and his red sneakers tapped while he dreamed of faraway places. In his small satchel, he kept rolled-up maps of islands he had invented. Each one had sandy beaches, secret coves, and winding paths. Oliver was a mapmaker, and he was proud of it.



One rainy afternoon, Oliver sat at the kitchen table with Grandpa Walter. Grandpa Walter had warm tan skin, bushy white eyebrows, and round glasses that crinkled when he smiled. He gave Oliver a worn leather map case. 'Every good mapmaker needs one,' Grandpa said. 'And remember, planning makes exploring more fun and safe.' Oliver nodded and carefully placed his newest map inside. It showed a teal island with green hills and a tiny cove.



That night, Oliver spread his map on the floor. He traced the sandy beaches with one finger and whispered, 'I wish I could explore you.' The map shimmered. The lines wiggled. Suddenly, a warm breeze blew from the paper, and the floor turned to soft sand. Oliver gasped. His map was real! He grabbed his satchel, checked his pencil, and stepped onto the island. 'Adventure!' he cheered, ready to explore.



Oliver stood on a sandy beach. The air smelled like salt and flowers. Waves rolled gently, and seagulls called overhead. He pulled out his map and checked the landmarks. 'First, I'll explore the beach,' he said. He walked along the shore, collecting shells and drawing new details on his map. The sun felt warm on his light brown skin, and his hazel eyes sparkled with excitement. This was better than any imaginary adventure.



As Oliver rounded a rocky point, he heard a tiny squeak. 'Hello!' said a small, fluffy creature. It was knee-high, with soft teal fur, big amber eyes, and tiny wings. It wore a woven leaf vest and an acorn-cap hat with a twig. 'I'm Pip,' it said cheerfully. 'I'm the guide here. Are you lost?' Oliver laughed. 'Not yet! I'm exploring.' Pip's eyes widened. 'Exploring is fun, but planning is better. Let me help!'



Oliver showed Pip his map. 'I want to see the green hills,' he said. Pip pointed toward the hills in the distance. 'Then we should follow the shell path,' Pip said. 'It leads to the hills and loops back to the beach.' Oliver nodded and marked the path on his map. 'Good plan!' he said. They set off together, with Pip's tiny wings fluttering and Oliver's red sneakers leaving footprints in the sand.



The shell path wound through tall grass and colorful flowers. Oliver stopped often to add details to his map: a twisted tree, a bubbling stream, a cluster of purple flowers. Pip chattered about the island's secrets. 'The hills have the best view,' Pip said. 'But we must be careful not to wander off the path.' Oliver agreed. He drew a big star on the map to mark the hills. 'We'll go there and then head back,' he said.



They climbed the green hills. The path was steep, but Oliver's careful planning helped. He checked his map at every turn. At the top, the view took his breath away. They could see the whole island: sandy beaches, a sparkling cove, and the blue sea all around. 'It's beautiful,' Oliver whispered. Pip nodded. 'But now we need to plan our return,' Pip said. 'The sun will set soon.' Oliver felt a little flutter of worry in his chest.



Oliver looked at his map. The way back should be easy—just follow the shell path down. But when they started down, the path forked. Which way was home? Oliver's heart beat faster. 'Oh no,' he said. 'I forgot to mark this fork.' Pip patted his arm. 'Don't worry,' Pip said. 'You're a mapmaker. Let's figure it out together.' Oliver took a deep breath and studied the map carefully.



Oliver remembered Grandpa Walter's words: 'Planning makes exploring more fun and safe.' He looked around. He saw the twisted tree from his map. 'We came past that tree,' he said. 'So the left fork should lead back to the beach.' Pip clapped his tiny hands. 'You did it!' Oliver marked the fork on his map and drew an arrow pointing home. 'Let's go,' he said, feeling proud and much calmer.



They followed the left fork. The path curved past the bubbling stream and the purple flowers. Oliver checked each landmark against his map. 'We're on the right track,' he said. Pip flew ahead to scout. 'I see the beach!' Pip called. Oliver hurried forward, and there it was—the sandy shore and the gentle waves. He had used his mapmaking skills to find the way. 'Planning really does help,' he said, smiling.



On the beach, Oliver felt a warm breeze. He knew it was time to go home. He opened his map and found the spot where he had first arrived—a small cove marked with a tiny star. 'This is where I came in,' he said. 'So this must be where I go back.' Pip looked sad. 'Will you come back?' Pip asked. Oliver hugged the little creature. 'I'll draw new maps and visit again,' he promised.



Oliver stood in the cove. He waved goodbye to Pip, who waved back with a flutter of wings. Oliver closed his eyes and thought of home. The map shimmered again, and the sand turned to his bedroom floor. Oliver opened his eyes. He was back in his room, still holding his map. 'I did it!' he whispered. He ran to find Grandpa Walter, who was reading in his green cardigan.



Grandpa Walter listened to Oliver's whole story. His crinkly grey eyes twinkled. 'You used your planning skills,' Grandpa said. 'That's what mapmakers do.' Oliver nodded. 'And I made a new friend,' he said. 'I can't wait to draw another map and explore again.' Grandpa Walter smiled. 'Remember,' he said, 'every adventure starts with a good plan.' Oliver hugged him tightly.



That night, Oliver sat at his desk. He unrolled a fresh sheet of paper and picked up his pencil. He drew a new island with a wobbly volcano and a secret cave. He added a path with clear landmarks and a big star for the treasure. 'This time, I'll plan even better,' he said. He tucked the map into his leather case, ready for the next adventure. His red sneakers tapped with excitement.



Oliver learned that planning makes exploring more fun and safe. He fell asleep dreaming of islands and paths and a fluffy friend named Pip. In the morning, he would draw another map and dream of new places to explore. But for now, he was happy to be home, with his pencil behind his ear and his satchel full of maps. The end.