

The Dragon Who Tickled the Hidden Paths



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Magic Story Code - Personalized Stories

SAMPLE EXAMPLE

DEDICATION

For the incredible

Waylon Zane

*May your imagination always be
bigger than any obstacle ahead,
and your heart more generous
than any treasure ever found.*



Deep inside the Forest of Hiding Paths, where the trees liked to shuffle their roots and move when nobody was looking, there lived a small dragon named **Zion**. He had soft mint-green scales that shimmered like moonlight on still water, a round little belly, and wings just a tiny bit too big for his body. His stubby tail curled up at the tip like a question mark, as if it were always wondering what came next.

Zion loved mornings in the forest best of all. The air smelled like warm bark and sweet clover, and today something very special was happening. Today was the Day of the Singing Mist — a magical day that came only once each season, when glowing silver fog drifted between the trees and hummed soft, wobbly tunes. **Zion** puffed a tiny cloud of sparkly smoke from his nose and giggled. "Singing! It is singing!" he said to a nearby mushroom.

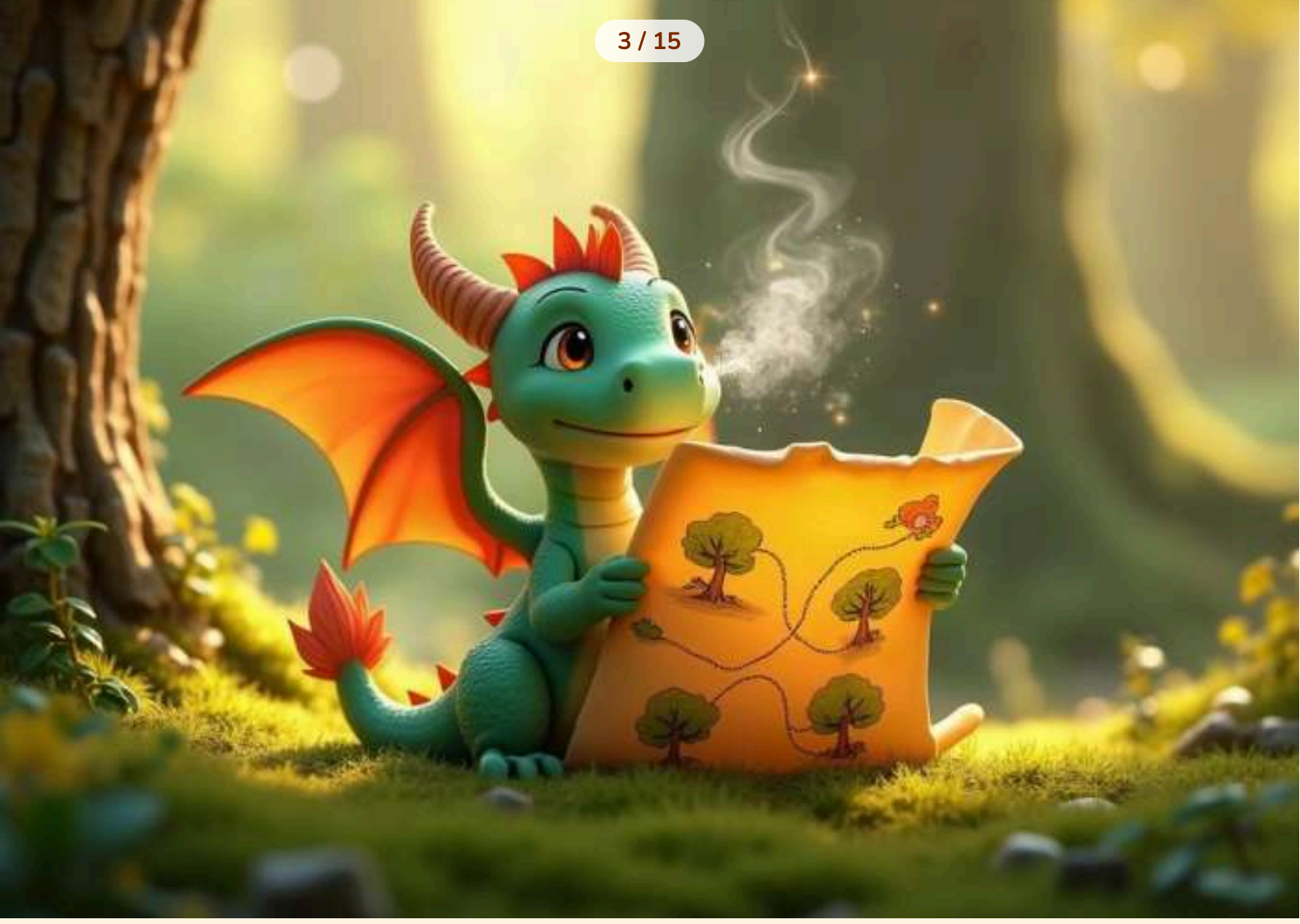
He reached into a hollow log near his cozy burrow and pulled out the most important thing he owned — the Magical Map. It was rolled up like a little scroll, warm honey-colored, with frilly edges that looked as if the map had grown its own little ruffles. **Zion** held it carefully with both clawed hands and smiled his widest smile.



The Forest of Hiding Paths was a wonderfully tricky place. Its trails did not stay in one spot for long. A path that led to the mossy pond on Monday might lead to a spinning boulder on Tuesday. The trees shuffled and giggled and rearranged themselves whenever they felt like it, which was most of the time. This was simply the way of things in this wild, beautiful, wonderfully strange world — in this forest, nothing stayed where you left it, so every dragon had to stay very clever and very curious.

Zion had a mission today — a big, important, wonderful mission. Deep at the center of the forest lived a family of tiny Glimmer Bugs. These bugs made the forest's night-lights glow. But they had lost their way home three days ago, and without them, the whole forest had been dark and a little bit sad at night. **Zion** had promised to find them and guide them back. "I will find them! Find them!" he declared cheerfully.

But to do that, **Zion** needed the Magical Map to show him the hidden path to the center of the forest. And the Magical Map was very, very stubborn about being opened. **Zion** tucked it under his wing and wobbled forward on his short legs, humming along with the Singing Mist as it drifted past.



Zion unrolled the Magical Map and held it up in the pale morning light. The map showed the Forest of Hiding Paths in wonderful detail — tiny illustrated trees with hand-drawn leaves, a little drawing of a mossy pond, and a wiggly star marking the center of the forest where the Glimmer Bugs lived. But all the trails between here and there were just blurry, fuzzy lines, like someone had drawn them in fog. They would not show clearly until **Zion** activated the map.

To activate the map, **Zion** had to tickle it. Not just any tickle — a genuine, joyful tickle, right in the exact right spot. The map was very particular about this. **Zion** pressed one claw gently near the left frilly edge, and the map let out a tiny, outraged squeak. It wriggled. It shivered. It curled one corner up like a grumpy lip. "Oops! Wrong spot!" **Zion** yelled.

He tried the right edge. The map shuddered so violently it nearly launched itself out of his claws. **Zion** grabbed it just in time. "Whoooooop!" He tumbled backward one full step, bonked into a tree, and slid down to sit on the mossy ground. He blinked his big amber eyes. The tiny trees on the map waved their branches at him, as if they were laughing. **Zion** qiqqled too. He would figure this out.



Zion sat on the soft moss and thought very hard. The Singing Mist drifted around him, humming a gentle, wobbly little tune. It made the air feel cozy and a little bit fizzy, like the world itself was happy. **Zion** closed his amber eyes and listened. The mist's hum was warm and tickly inside his ears. A tiny puff of sparkly smoke floated from his nose. And then — an idea!

If the forest mist was singing and tickly, maybe **Zion** needed to tickle the map the way the mist tickled him — softly, gently, right in the middle, with real joy in his heart. **Zion** spread the map on his round belly, pressed one claw tip right in the very center, and giggled his biggest, most honest giggle as he did it. The giggle made extra sparkly smoke ring his head like a tiny crown.

The map quivered. Then it shook. Then it let out the happiest, squeakiest little laugh — like a mouse discovering a mountain of cheese. Golden light bloomed across it, racing along all the fuzzy trails, turning every blurry line into a bright, glowing golden path. "It worked! Worked!" **Zion** shouted, leaping to his feet. He did a small spin — "Whooooop!" — and nearly fell over, but caught himself on a tree root. The paths were open. The adventure



The Magical Map glowed with three golden paths, each one leading toward the center of the forest. **Zion** studied them carefully. The forest's Crazy World Rule meant that the shortest path was almost never the easiest one — in this world, things worked wonderfully backwards sometimes. The wide, straight path always became the longest journey, while the wiggly, twisty, silly-looking path was often the quickest way through.

So **Zion** chose the wiggliest, most twisted-looking golden trail on the map. It looped around a boulder, dove under a low branch arch, and spiraled past something the map labeled "The Giggling Grove." **Zion** tapped the tiny drawing of the grove with one claw. The illustrated trees there were drawn laughing with their branches in the air. "I like it," **Zion** decided firmly.

He rolled the map back up and tucked it safely under his wing. Then he wobbled forward, wings bouncing with each step, tail curling and uncurling with excitement. The Singing Mist floated ahead of him, as if it approved of his choice and wanted to lead the way. **Zion** followed, making little sound effects with each step. "Thwomp, thwomp, thwomp!" His round belly swayed left and right. The forest was shifting again around him — he could hear



The Giggling Grove was everything the tiny map drawing had promised. The trees here had bark that rippled when you walked past, and the ripple made a sound exactly like someone trying very hard not to laugh. "Hee hee hee," said the bark. **Zion** pressed his round belly against one trunk just to feel it. The tree giggled loudly, and **Zion** giggled back, and a cloud of sparkly smoke puffed from his nose that floated up through the leaves in little glittering spirals.

But then **Zion** noticed something odd. The golden trail on his map had split into two glowing branches — one going left, one going right. He unrolled the map and checked. Both paths led to the center of the forest, but the map's tiny trees were waving differently. The ones on the left trail were waving calmly. The ones on the right trail were waving in a fast, frantic, "oh no, oh no" sort of way.

The Crazy World Rule, **Zion** remembered. In this forest, the panicked-looking path was usually the fun one. He chose right. "Here we go! Go!" He tucked the map away and bounded down the right-hand trail. Almost immediately, the path curved sharply, the trees leaned in close, and **Zion** found himself trotting into a small, sun-dappled clearing — where



The tortoise had a shell covered in tiny doodles that shifted and moved like living drawings. His front flippers were stained with deep blue-black ink. Behind one ear sat a drawing pen nearly as tall as he was, and on his nose perched a pair of enormous round spectacles. He looked up at **Zion** with bright little eyes and said, very confidently, "Hello. I am Pip. I draw things and then the things happen."

Zion blinked his big amber eyes. "You draw things and they happen? Happen?" Pip nodded once, slowly and seriously, in the manner of someone who has said this many times and still finds it deeply satisfying. He pulled the enormous pen from behind his ear and held it up.

Zion stared. The pen was slightly glowing at the tip.

Pip said, "I am lost. I was drawing a map of this forest, but the forest kept moving, and then I moved too, and now I do not know where I am." He seemed completely unbothered by this. **Zion** felt a warm, happy feeling bloom in his round belly. He pulled out the Magical Map and unrolled it on the mossy ground between them. The golden trails still glowed clearly. **Zion** pointed with one claw. "I know where we are! Look, look!" Pip leaned in, spectacles nearly touching the parchment. Then he smiled — a slow, wide, delighted smile.



Zion and Pip walked together along the glowing golden trail. Or rather, **Zion** wobbled and bounced, and Pip moved slowly but with great dignity. The Singing Mist had returned, floating around them both, humming its cozy tune. Pip seemed delighted by it. "The mist is musical today," he observed. "Good day for drawing." Before **Zion** could ask what that meant, Pip had already pulled out the enormous pen and was drawing in the air.

A shape appeared where Pip drew — a little floating boat. The boat drifted upward, bumped into a low branch, spun twice, and then flew off sideways into the treetops. Pip watched it go. "Hmm," he said. "A sky-boat. I intended a land-boat. But sky is also good." **Zion** let out such a loud laugh that three sparkly smoke rings blew from his nose at once. "Bloop, bloop, bloop!" he announced for each ring.

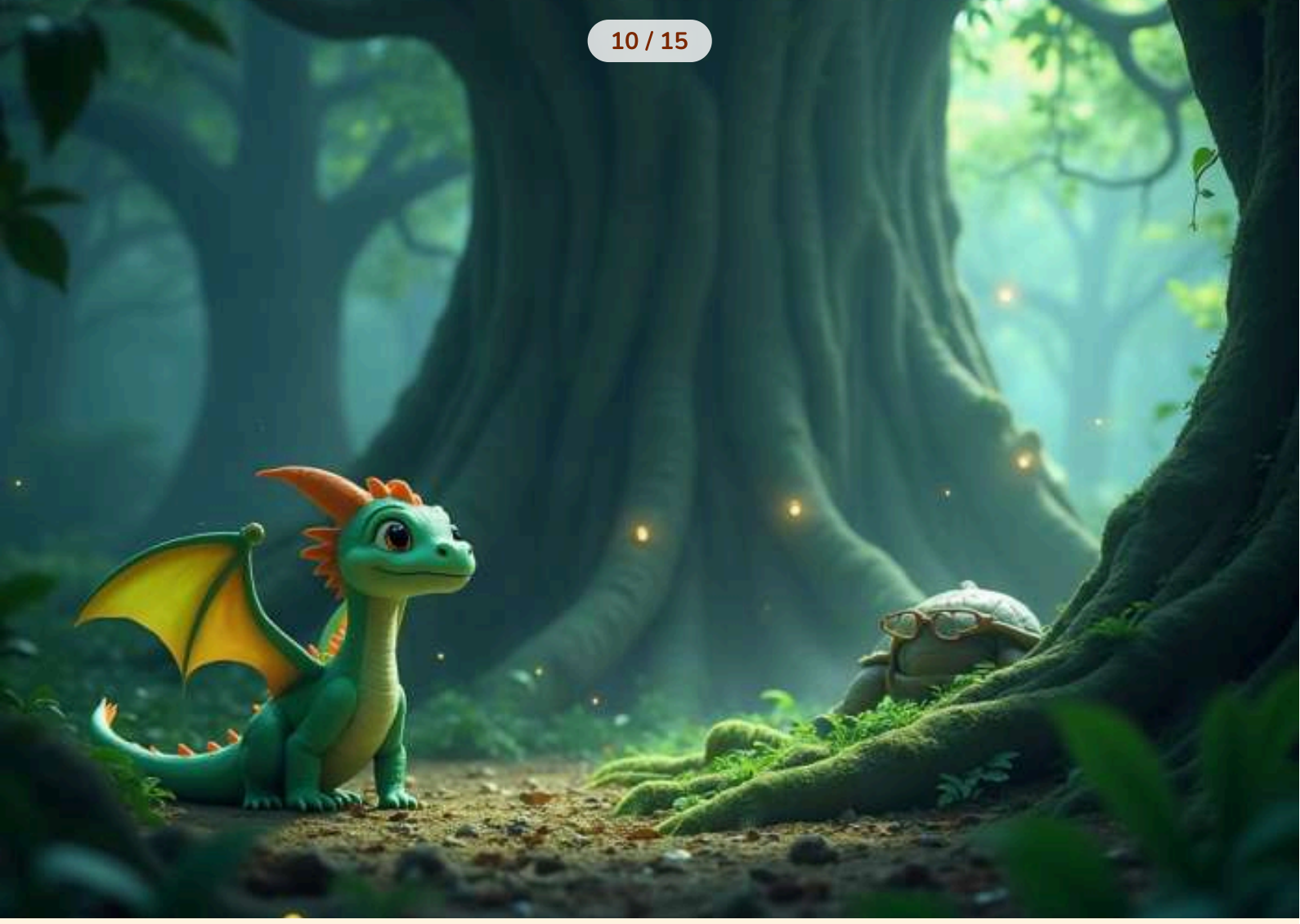
The forest ahead began to grow thicker and darker. The golden trail on the map dipped toward a place labeled with a small drawing of tangled vines and a question mark — not unlike the curl of **Zion's** tail. **Zion** checked the map. The path went directly through the tangle. He showed Pip. Pip studied it, then tapped the pen against his chin three times. "I will draw something," Pip said with complete confidence. **Zion** nodded, very curious about



The tangle of vines was enormous. They coiled and twisted across the entire golden trail, thick as tree trunks, looping over and under each other in every direction. **Zion** tried squeezing through a gap — "Hnnng!" — but the vines squeezed right back, friendly but firm. He tried going over — he flapped his too-big wings, wobbled magnificently, rose about three steps off the ground, then came back down with a "Bloop!" The vines were too tall.

Pip studied the vines for approximately four seconds. Then he drew. His pen moved at shocking speed — zigzag, swoosh, circle, dot. Where he drew, a door appeared in the side of the vine tangle. It was a perfectly round door, bright yellow, with a tiny brass handle. It was also completely upside down, handle at the top, hinges at the bottom. Pip looked at it. "A door," he said, with satisfaction.

Zion tilted his head sideways, then tilted it the other way. In this forest, the Crazy World Rule meant that upside-down things often worked perfectly right-side-up. **Zion** reached up, grabbed the handle — which was now at his chin level since the door was upside down — and pulled. The door swung open smoothly, and through it shone golden trail-light from the other side of the vine tangle. "It works! Works!" **Zion** cheered, and sparkly smoke burst from



Through the upside-down door, the forest changed completely. The trees here were enormous, their roots visible above the ground like arching bridges, their canopy so far above that clouds drifted between the branches. Everything was very still and very quiet. The Singing Mist was here too, but it had gone softer — just a low, sleepy hum, as if even the mist was being careful. **Zion** felt it in his chest like a warm, gentle hand.

Then they saw it — or rather, they did not quite see it. In the roots of the largest tree, in the deepest shadow, was a tiny, faint glow. Then another. Then a dozen more, blinking and winking like shy little stars. **Zion** caught his breath. "Glimmer Bugs," he whispered. "It is them! Them!" He took one very careful step, then another, making himself as small and unthreatening as a round dragon with too-big wings possibly could.

But just as he stepped forward, something unexpected happened — something that changed everything. A great rumbling groan echoed through the forest. The roots of the enormous tree began to shift and rise, lifting the ground in slow, huge waves. The forest was rearranging itself again, but far more dramatically than usual. The Glimmer Bugs flared bright in alarm — and then blinked out completely, plunging their corner of the forest into



The ground kept rumbling. Tree roots rolled like slow ocean waves. **Zion** stumbled, wings flapping for balance — "Whooooop!" — and grabbed a root to steady himself. Pip did not stumble at all. Pip had already pulled out his enormous pen and was drawing with great calm and terrifying speed. **Zion** tried to see what Pip was drawing, but the lines came too fast.

What appeared was a large, round, glowing lantern — floating in the air exactly where the Glimmer Bugs had gone dark. The lantern pulsed with warm golden light, very similar to the glow the Glimmer Bugs themselves made. For a long moment, nothing happened. Then, one tiny light appeared in the shadows. Then two. The Glimmer Bugs were peeking at the lantern, curious and cautious.

"Oh!" **Zion** breathed very quietly, barely moving. He understood. The Glimmer Bugs were afraid of the dark and the rumbling. They needed light to feel safe enough to come out. He looked at Pip. Pip gave one slow, satisfied nod, spectacles glinting. **Zion** began to hum — softly, gently, copying the Singing Mist's warm, cozy tune. His round belly vibrated with the sound. One by one, more Glimmer Bugs drifted toward the lantern and toward **Zion's** hum,



The Glimmer Bugs gathered around **Zion** in a slow, glowing cloud. There were so many of them — hundreds, maybe more — each one a tiny floating point of warm amber light. Together they made **Zion**'s mint-green scales glow like a living lantern himself. He stood very still and kept humming, and the sparkly smoke from his nose drifted upward in slow, gentle spirals that the bugs seemed to enjoy drifting through. "Hello, hello," **Zion** whispered.

The rumbling had stopped. The forest had finished rearranging itself. But now **Zion** pulled out the Magical Map and checked — the golden trail had shifted with the forest. The path home was different now, longer and looping. **Zion** studied it carefully. The Crazy World Rule meant that what looked longest on the map might feel shortest to walk, especially with the Glimmer Bugs lighting the way. He chose to trust the map and go forward.

Pip drew one more thing — a small arrow, floating in the air, pointing ahead along the new golden trail. The arrow rotated once, confirmed its own direction with what looked like a self-satisfied little spin, and then hovered steadily. **Zion** laughed, and sparkly smoke burst from his nose in a happy little cascade. "Ready? Ready!" He began to walk, and the Glimmer



The journey back through the rearranged forest was different from the journey in, as it always is when you carry something precious. **Zion** walked carefully and steadily, keeping his hum going so the Glimmer Bugs stayed close. The Singing Mist returned now in full strength, weaving between the bugs and **Zion** and Pip, its song mixing with **Zion**'s hum in a way that made the whole forest feel like one big, warm, cozy place.

Pip walked beside **Zion**, occasionally drawing things as they went. He drew a small bridge over a puddle — it appeared right-side-up this time, which surprised Pip enormously. "Remarkable," he said, and stepped over it instead, just to be safe. **Zion** waddled across the little bridge, Glimmer Bugs bobbing around him. The tiny trees on the Magical Map were all waving their branches in the same direction now — forward, forward, forward.

At last, the great Home Oak came into view — a wide, ancient tree at the heart of the forest with a hollow at its base the exact right size for a family of Glimmer Bugs. **Zion** knelt down slowly in front of it, wings folding gently, and the Glimmer Bug cloud poured softly into the hollow like warm golden water filling a cup. One by one they settled, and their lights bloomed — first the hollow, then the roots, then the bark of the entire great tree, all



Zion sat back on his round bottom and watched the Great Home Oak glow. The whole forest was different now — every shadow had a warm amber edge, every leaf had a golden underside, and the night, which had been so dark and sad, was now full of gentle, dancing light. **Zion** pressed both clawed hands to his round belly and let out the longest, happiest breath. Sparkly smoke drifted from his nose in soft, slow ribbons.

Pip sat beside him. He did not draw anything. He just looked at the glowing tree through his enormous spectacles, and for once, he was completely quiet. Then he said, simply, "Good mission." **Zion** grinned so wide his amber eyes nearly disappeared. "Good mission! Good mission!" he agreed, and bounced twice in place. The Singing Mist hummed its warmest tune yet, as if the forest itself was joining in the celebration.

Zion rolled up the Magical Map one last time and held it in both hands. It let out one tiny, happy squeak — not a grumpy one, but a pleased one, as if it too was glad the day had gone so well. **Zion** pressed his nose against the warm honey-colored parchment for just a moment. Then he tucked it gently under his wing. Pip drew one final thing in the air — a small, lopsided star. It floated up through the glowing forest canopy, past the Glimmer

MORAL OF THE STORY

This story teaches us that the best adventures happen when you follow joy instead of fear. Like **Zion**, when you stay curious, stay kind, and keep laughing even when things get wobbly — you will always find your way, and you might just light up the whole world while you do.



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Congratulations, Waylon Zane!

You lived an incredible adventure, full of
courage, imagination and special moments
that only you could experience!

You are incredible!

SPECIAL MESSAGE

This is the cutest little story!! Waylon is my favorite author!! Kisses from Mommy!!



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