

Santa's Workshop

ADVENTURES FROM THE NORTH POLE

BOOK 02

Bring a Lantern



As told by

Imogen Quillworth

KEEPER OF THE STORY LIBRARY

Bring a Lantern

Told by Imogen Quillworth
Keeper of the Story Library

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A Picture of Tomorrow



Nellie painted a little yellow light inside the lantern on her paper.

She left a white dot in the middle. Now it looked as though the lantern was shining.

Around it she had drawn stars. Below it sat a bun, with a curl of icing that had taken considerably longer to paint than to eat.

“There,” she said. “Would you like to come?”

Jasper leaned over the drawing.

“Very much. Where are we going?”

“For another discovery walk. With neighbours this time.”

Yesterday, she and Jasper had wandered about the village, drawing the things they enjoyed. Jasper had found a view. Nellie had found a little piece of sky between two roofs. Both discoveries fitted on their paper, once they had worked out where to put them.

Now she wanted to see what somebody else would notice.

She had brought her paints and a few sheets of paper to the Design Loft after their toymaking was finished. Jasper had come to help with the invitations.

He pointed to the first star.

“Is that where we begin?”

“No. It's a star.”

“And this one?”

“Another star.”

Jasper counted them.

“Six discoveries. We shall need a route.”

He took a scrap of paper and began drawing dots.

Nellie watched a line grow between them.

“We haven't found the discoveries yet.”

“Then I'll leave the dots empty.”

“What if there are seven?”

Jasper stopped at his sixth dot.

“I can add one.”

“What if Penny finds something you didn't put a dot for?”

His pencil stayed in the air.

Nellie looked at her invitation. She had meant the stars to make it feel like an evening worth going out for. They had already become six places to visit.

She dipped her brush again.

“It needs people walking.”

There wasn't much room beneath the lantern. She drew two small boots beside the bun.

One boot pointed left. The other pointed right.

Jasper tipped his head.

“Are we going in both directions?”

“We are wearing boots.”

“That's a sensible beginning.”

Nellie put down her brush. The boots were clear enough, she thought. Somebody who hadn't helped make the picture would know.

“Let's show Mr. Puddlesworth.”

How Much for a Lantern?



Outside, Nellie held the dry invitation by its edges. The paper bent a little in the breeze, and she brought it close to her coat.

In Lantern Square, they stopped beside the Christmas tree's noticeboard.

Jasper unfolded his dotted scrap. Nellie held up her picture next to it.

From a distance, her painted lantern shone far more brightly than his pencil marks. She was glad she'd left the white dot.

“We could put a copy here,” she said.

“Once we know where my dots go.”

“They might not need to go anywhere.”

Jasper looked at his small, very orderly line.

“I’ll keep them in case.”

They crossed to Mr. Puddlesworth’s Shop. The visitor bell rang as they went in.

Mr. Puddlesworth looked up.

“Good afternoon. What have you brought me?”

“An invitation,” Nellie said.

She laid it flat on the counter, facing him.

He admired the painted lantern. Then he looked from the boots to the bun.

“An evening sale?”

“A walk.”

“Ah. I thought those were boots for sale.”

“They are our feet.”

“I’m relieved. I couldn’t sell those as a pair.”

He examined the bun.

“And are you selling these?”

Nellie shook her head.

“Then am I?”

“Nobody is selling anything.”

Mr. Puddlesworth rested one finger beside the lantern.

“I thought I might have to swap a bun for a lantern.”

Jasper folded his scrap a little smaller.

“I thought it was a map.”

“I thought it was an invitation,” said Nellie.

The other two looked at her.

It was her invitation. That was the trouble. She knew what every picture meant before she looked at it.

Mr. Puddlesworth turned the sheet gently towards her.

“What time is your walk?”

“Tomorrow, when it begins to get dark.”

“And where shall I meet you?”

“At the Christmas tree.”

“That would be useful to know.”

Nellie took back the paper.

She could draw the tree. She could draw a clock. Perhaps a clock beside a tree, with the sun going down behind it.

But the stars were already at the top. The lantern filled the middle. At the bottom, the bun was being approached by two boots that nobody was wearing.

She couldn't see where tomorrow would fit.

“We'll bring you another one,” she said.

“I shall look forward to discovering what I'm invited to.”

Penny Reads the Picture



At North Pole Post, Penny finished dealing with the parcel in front of her before turning to them.

“Hello. Have you something to send?”

“Something to show you first,” said Nellie.

She put the invitation where Penny could see it. This time, she kept quiet.

Penny looked carefully.

“A lantern. Six stars. A very nice bun.”

Nellie almost said what they were for. She pressed her lips together.

“Anything else?”

“Two boots.”

Penny glanced at Jasper's folded paper.

“Is that the rest?”

“That is six empty dots,” Jasper said. “They may not be needed.”

Nellie rubbed a tiny spot of dried yellow paint from her thumb.

“Can you tell what we'd like you to do?”

Penny studied the picture again.

“Bring a lantern, perhaps?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“You can't tell?”

Penny shook her head.

Nellie sat back. Even the shining lantern couldn't tell somebody where to bring it.

“I could put all the words on a new sheet,” she said. “Just the words.”

She moved her picture aside and reached for a clean sheet.

Jasper watched her leave the painting behind.

“I liked the light you painted.”

“I do too.”

Nellie pulled the picture back towards her.

The white dot was still there. So were the stars and the carefully curled icing. She hadn't made those for people to misunderstand. She'd made them because she wanted the walk to look inviting.

"I'll write the invitation first," she said. "Then paint around it."

Across the clean sheet she wrote:

"Come for a discovery walk tomorrow.

"Meet at the Christmas tree in Lantern Square at dusk.

"Bring a lantern. We'll look for things we like, then you can draw or tell us about yours."

She read it aloud to check it.

Then she drew the lantern small, at one side. The stars curved above the words. Underneath, she drew the bun and a pair of boots pointing the same way.

Penny smiled.

"I can come after my work is finished."

"You'd like to?"

"Yes. I've never looked at the square while trying to choose something to draw."

Nellie made a small empty circle beneath the words.

"This can be for your discovery."

"I don't know what it will be."

"Neither do I."

For the first time that afternoon, that seemed exactly right.

Jasper looked at his folded scrap.

“I’ll bring a pencil,” he said. “And wait to find out where the dots belong.”

Something of His Own



Back in the Design Loft, Nellie made four invitations from the new drawing.

Jasper copied the words while she painted. Once the paint had dried, they checked the copies against the first invitation.

He held one farther away.

“The boots are going together now.”

“They have agreed on a direction.”

On the last invitation, Nellie gave the lantern its little white dot.

Four small lights shone on the paper.

They delivered one to Penny. She put it safely with her own things, away from the post she was handling.

Jasper took another for himself. The third was for the square's noticeboard. Nellie kept the fourth to hand to Mr. Puddlesworth.

This time, in his shop, she waited while he read.

“Tomorrow at dusk,” he said. “At the Christmas tree. Bring a lantern.”

His finger reached the bun.

“And this?”

“We finished our first walk with a bun. I liked that part.”

“So might I.”

He read the invitation once more.

“I can close up in time. Yes, I'll come.”

Nellie's shoulders dropped. She hadn't noticed how high she'd been holding them.

“You don't need to bring anything to sell.”

“Excellent. My counter is terribly awkward on a walk.”

He pointed to the empty circle.

“What goes here?”

“Something you find. You can draw it afterwards, if you want to.”

“May I borrow your pencil?”

Nellie passed it over.

Mr. Puddlesworth drew a question mark in the circle. He made its dot particularly firm.

“That is what I'm bringing,” he said. “I haven't the faintest idea what I'll find.”

Nellie laughed. His question mark had a wonderfully determined dot.

Outside, Jasper held the last invitation while she pinned it to the noticeboard. The words could be read without covering the little lantern. She checked the bottom corner, then stepped back beside him.

The stars still curved over the paper. The bun still had its curl of icing.

Behind them, the shop bell rang.

Mr. Puddlesworth came to his doorway, the invitation in his hand.

“One more question.”

Nellie turned.

“How large a discovery will fit in this circle?”

“You can tell us about it if it won't fit.”

“Good. I'd hate to leave a magnificent discovery behind.”

Jasper smiled.

“I'm bringing spare paper.”

Mr. Puddlesworth looked down at his question mark.

“Then I shall bring a larger question.”

Nellie smiled at the invitation on the noticeboard, picturing their lanterns gathered round the tree.