Mini reading booklet

Three short texts that get harder, like the real paper

TEXT 1 · STORY

The Seed Tin

Every Saturday, Priya trudged behind Grandad to the allotment, kicking at stones. Plot 14 was the smallest on the site, squeezed between a shed with a sagging roof and a pond full of frogs.

“Pass me the seed tin,” Grandad said, the way he always did.

The tin was dented and blue, with a ship on the lid. Inside, dozens of paper packets rustled like dry leaves. Grandad had written on every one in his careful, curly handwriting: Runner beans, 2019. Sweet peas for Nana. Sunflowers – Priya’s?

Priya stopped. “Why is my name on this one?”

Grandad smiled and didn’t answer. Instead, he handed her a trowel.

By June, the sunflowers had climbed past the shed roof. They were taller than Grandad, taller than anything on the site, and their heavy yellow faces turned to follow the sun all day.

People stopped on the path to point. “Who grew those?” they asked.

Priya stood a little straighter. “We did,” she said. Then, after a moment: “Mostly me.”

That evening, she found a new packet in the tin. In curly handwriting it said: Priya’s seeds, for next year.

TEXT 2 · ACCOUNT

The Lighthouse Keeper’s Logbook

For forty years, the lighthouse on Gull Rock was kept by one family. Each evening the keeper climbed one hundred and twelve steps to light the lamp, and each morning they wrote in the logbook: the weather, the ships that passed and anything unusual.

Most entries are short. “Wind from the west. Two fishing boats. Calm.” But on 3 March 1911, the keeper, Ada Penrose, filled two whole pages. A storm had torn the lamp's shutter loose, and the light had gone dark just as a steamer approached the rocks.

Ada did not wait for help. She tied a rope around her waist, climbed onto the gallery outside the lamp room and held the shutter open with her own hands for three hours, until the steamer had passed. Her last line that night reads simply: “Ship safe. Hands cold.”

TEXT 3 · POEM

The Night Train

It does not knock. It does not call.
It slides through towns asleep,
a ribbon of small yellow rooms
drawn softly through the deep.

In one, a girl with folded hands
is practising goodbye.
In one, an old man reads a letter
twice, then wipes his eye.

And I, awake behind my glass,
will never learn their names.
They pass like pages flicked too fast,
like sparks, like little flames,

then dark again. Just humming rails,
still trembling, thin and bright,
as if someone had sung one note
and left it in the night.

