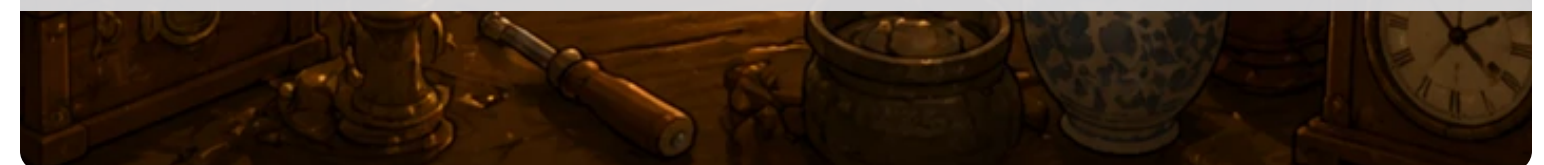




The Polished Star

Gabrielle Blakey





High on the dusty top shelf of Grandfather's cozy antique shop, Oliver discovered a heavy, dull piece of metal. It was shaped like a star, but years of neglect had covered it in dark tarnish. Oliver gently blew away the cobwebs and decided it was time to bring its shine back.



Oliver set the tarnished star on his wooden workbench next to a soft cloth and a small tin of silver polish. He dabbed a tiny bit of cream onto the cloth and began to rub the metal in slow, careful circles. Beneath his thumb, a tiny speck of warm golden light gleamed for the first time.



With every rub of his cloth, dark smudges melted away to reveal intricate patterns carved deep into the star's surface. Tiny swirls resembling winding rivers and soaring birds appeared beneath Oliver's fingertips. The more attention he gave it, the warmer the star felt against his hands.



As twilight settled outside the shop window, Oliver kept working tirelessly on the star's five curved points. A gentle hum filled the quiet room, sounding almost like a soft lullaby vibrating through the metal. Oliver smiled as he buffed away the very last shadow from the star's surface.



Suddenly, the polished star released a dazzling flash of golden light that illuminated every dark corner of the workshop. Clocks tick-tocked in rhythmic harmony, and wooden toy soldiers on the shelves seemed to stand a little taller. The magic hidden inside the metal had finally been set free.



The golden star gently floated into the air, rising above Oliver's head like a tiny indoor sun. Swirls of soft, shimmering stardust spun around the room, leaving sparkles on old books and vintage velvet chairs. Oliver watched in complete awe as his hard work lit up the entire shop.



Oliver carefully guided the glowing star toward the large front window so everyone in the village could see its radiant warmth. Outside, neighbors paused on the cobblestone street, looking up in wonder at the bright light beaming into the twilight sky. The once-forgotten object was now the brightest thing in town.



Grandfather stepped into the room and wrapped a warm arm around Oliver's shoulders, smiling down at the gleaming creation. He praised Oliver's patience and care, reminding him that the most beautiful treasures often just need a little love and dedication to shine.



Together, Oliver and his grandfather hung the polished star high up in the window frame, securing it with a sturdy ribbon. It cast a cozy, welcoming glow over the cobblestone pathway, promising warmth and comfort to all who passed by.



That night, Oliver tucked himself into bed, gazing out his bedroom window at the glowing star shining brightly downstairs. Feeling proud and peaceful, he knew that with patience and effort, even the dimmest things can be made whole again. He closed his eyes and drifted off into sweet, starlit dreams.