



The Boy and the Forest of Darkness

Daria Dementeva



One evening, a young boy named Leo discovered an old deck of Tarot cards in his room. He drew a card depicting a glowing Moon hovering over a dark, mysterious forest. Whispering his quiet fear of the dark, Leo was amazed when the Moon on the card suddenly shimmered with gentle light, encouraging him to face what he feared most. Holding his flashlight tight, Leo bravely stepped out into the night and toward the shadowy woods.



Deep inside the forest, complete darkness surrounded Leo on all sides. The towering tree branches looked like long, stretching arms, and the twisting shadows resembled giant monsters. Stopping in his tracks, Leo felt his heart race with fear. Remembering the glowing Moon card, he gathered his courage and took one small, brave step forward, and then another.



Suddenly, a sharp rustling noise burst from the bushes right beside the path. Leo gasped with fright and quickly aimed his flashlight beam into the dark leaves. Out popped a tiny, curious hedgehog blinking in the bright light. Laughing with relief, Leo realized that the dark often just hides harmless things we haven't taken the time to look at closely yet.



Further down the path, Leo spotted a second card resting on a mossy rock—the Strength card, showing a gentle woman beside a majestic lion. The card spoke to him softly, sharing that strength isn't the absence of fear, but the choice to keep moving forward despite it. Leo took a deep, calming breath, looked into the shadowed forest, and declared that he saw his fear, but was going to keep walking anyway.



Up ahead, a colossal silhouette towered over the path like an intimidating giant. At first, Leo felt an urge to turn around and run back home as fast as he could. But when he pointed his flashlight beam toward the sky, he saw it was simply a magnificent old tree with wide, welcoming branches. Leo gave the sturdy tree trunk a big hug, smiling at how easily his lively imagination had tricked him.



A gentle voice suddenly called out from the dark, causing Leo to freeze. Raising his flashlight, he discovered a tiny firefly perched on a leaf. The little firefly admitted that he was afraid of the dark too, but had learned to carry his own small light wherever he went. Leo smiled warmly, realizing he didn't need to wait for morning to find light when he could carry his own.



The winding trail led Leo into the deepest, darkest corner of the entire woods, where his flashlight began to flicker. Leo felt his heartbeat quicken, but he remembered the secret he had learned: fear shrinks the moment you face it directly. He paused, took three slow breaths, and reminded himself that he was safe as he continued forward step by step.



Entering a wide meadow, Leo found the third card—the Star—lying beneath a vast, open night sky. Countless stars sparkled brilliantly above, illuminating the forest until it no longer felt scary at all. Looking up at the cosmic display, Leo realized that darkness wasn't just an absence of light, but a magical background where stars could shine their brightest.



As Leo emerged from the edge of the forest at sunrise, he found the final card waiting for him—the radiant Sun. The card congratulated him on conquering the darkness, but Leo thoughtfully shook his head. He explained that he hadn't conquered the dark, but had simply stopped being afraid of it, which the smiling Sun declared to be the true meaning of bravery.



The next evening, Leo looked out his bedroom window at the quiet night stretching across the world. Instead of hiding under his blankets, he smiled and whispered a fond goodnight to the forest. Turning off his lamp, he curled up comfortably under the glowing stars, knowing that the dark was just a peaceful part of the night where a tiny firefly was lighting his path.