

Lydia Lemon was a very bright kid.



She read three books a week, always raised her hand in class, and ...well...she glowed! And not just in the dark. Lydia was as bright as a 100-watt light bulb in the morning, at noon, and at night.

Always!



Lydia didn't usually hang out with the other kids at school. They told her that she hurt their eyes, and Max thought she was an alien. So Lydia sat alone at lunch, by the shiny red slide and metal monkey bars. Her only friends were the moths that were attracted to her glow.

She liked to tell them stories. They were good listeners, but didn't have much to say.

One Friday, Lydia's teacher, Ms. Persimmon, announced that the second grade would be going on a camping trip in March. The class cheered. Ms. Persimmon's kids in particular were big fans of marshmallows and nature. Buster told everyone that he knew three especially scary ghost stories. Alice said that she saw a bear last time she went camping. That afternoon, Lydia told her parents that she was excited for the camping trip but nervous at the same time.

March came around pretty quickly, and Ms. Persimmon's class busily gathered hiking boots, trail mix, and tents. Most of the kids brought flashlights, but Lydia, of course, didn't need one.

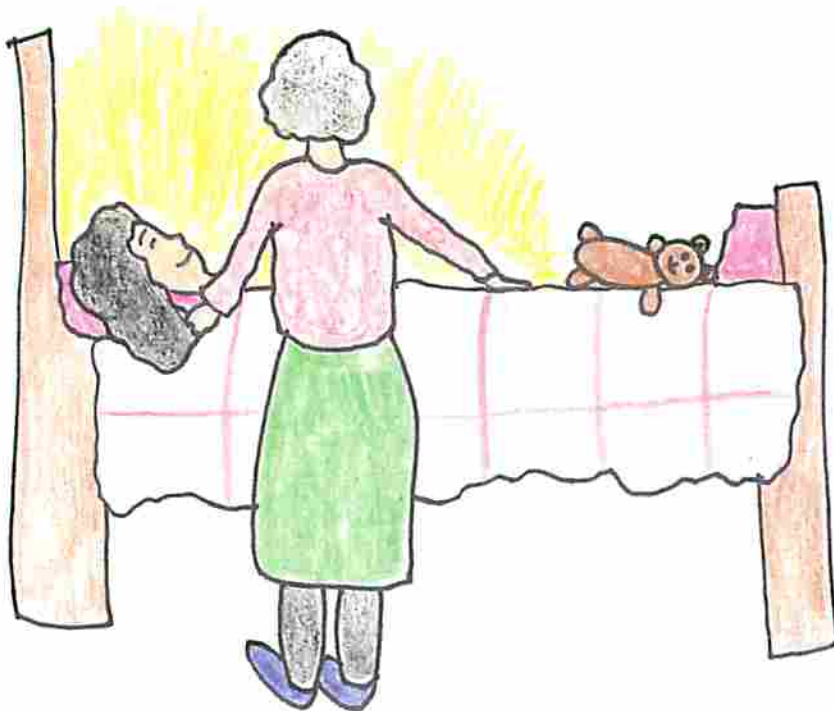
At night, Lydia read books about camping and told the moths about all the s'mores she planned on eating. At lunch, she tried to talk to the other kids, but Priscilla said, "Ouch! That light hurts my eyes!" The other kids agreed, and ran away to play baseball on the field. Lydia stayed by the climbing structure, and slid down the shiny red slide by herself until the bell rang.



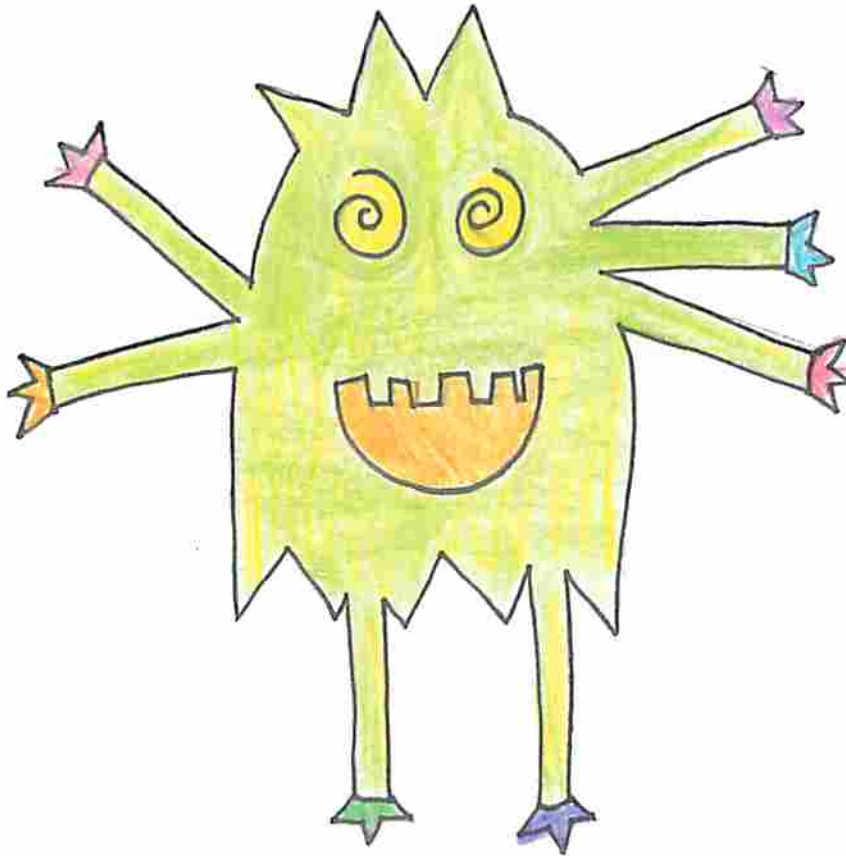
The night before the trip, Lydia's mom tucked her into bed and said, "You're going to have so much fun tomorrow!"

"I don't know," said Lydia. "I'm a little scared."

Lydia's mom kissed her cheek. "I know sweetie," she said. "You haven't been away from home before. But I bet you're going to have a good time, and you'll see me and Daddy the next day."



The big day arrived, and the second graders drove all the way to Redwood River in the morning. They set up their tents and unpacked the coolers. They *oohed* at the towering trees and *aahed* and the rushing river. They spent the afternoon swimming and hiking up the hills.



At night, they sat around the campfire and Buster told his ghost stories. One was about a monster who lived in the forest and never went to sleep. He had slimy lime green skin and five arms. Lydia looked around her at the tall redwoods, and shivered. The wind was making strange noises, and she was definitely ready to go to bed. After Buster finished his last spooky tale, Lydia brushed her teeth and crawled into her sleeping bag. She was cold, and kind of missed her parents. She closed her eyes and tried to sleep.

In a few minutes, she heard a voice outside the tent. "Can I come in?" it said. It sounded just like Alice. Lydia unzipped the tent and let her in. "It's dark and scary in my tent," said Alice. "But yours is all lit up!"

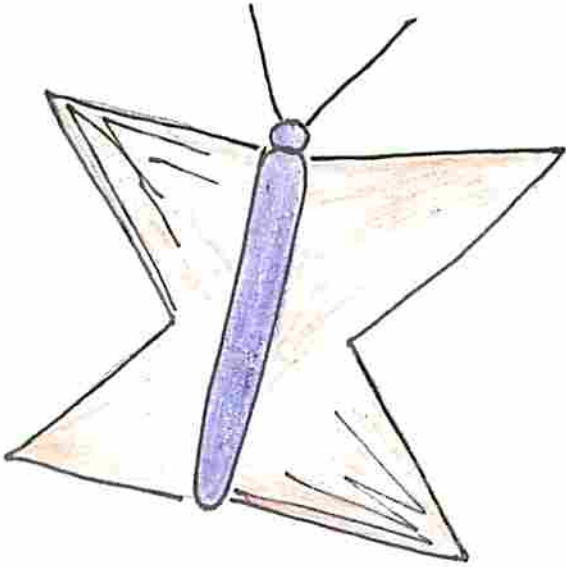
A few minutes later, Max came by. "I usually sleep with a nightlight," he said. "Can I come in?"

Soon, the whole class was in Lydia's tent. Priscilla had brought cards, so they played a game of Go Fish. They were all still thinking of that monster, so Lydia told a new story. It was about a cat that baked delicious desserts. Everyone loved it, and Max couldn't stop giggling when Lydia told him about the kitten's specialty: salmon sundaes!

Even though it was a little crowded, all the kids fell asleep in Lydia's well-lit tent. She forgot about being homesick and dreamt of catfish cupcakes and hiking.



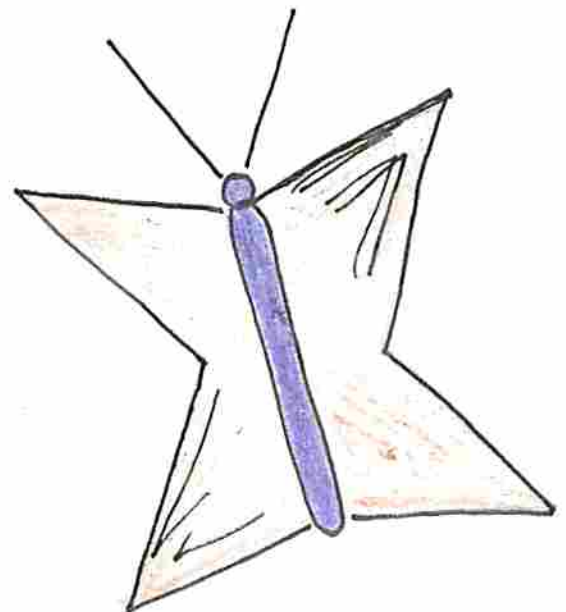




In the morning, Lydia ate breakfast with her new friends and rode back to school. When her mom picked her up, she said, "I love camping!"

At lunch the next week, Lydia played kickball with her classmates. Priscilla asked her to be on her team, and nobody told her that she hurt their eyes. From then on, Lydia was always on the go, always meeting new people. At school, she was usually telling stories to a Max or Buster or Alice.

But she didn't mind if the moths still hung around!





The
End