The Boy and the Swallows
Çınar BİBER

The Boy and the Swallows

Çınar BİBER

In a small house at the edge of a village, a boy named Leo lived with his family. Every morning, Leo put on his mustard yellow rain jacket and red rubber boots. He always carried a small green notebook and a pencil in his pocket. Leo loved to look up at the sky and watch for birds. His round face, with a few freckles and a little gap in his front teeth, often wore a big smile when he saw something interesting.

One sunny spring day, Leo heard a cheerful twittering above him. He looked up and saw a small flock of swallows flying against the bright blue sky. They had glossy blue black backs, white bellies, and rust red throats. Their long forked tails swooped and dipped as they chased insects. Leo quickly pulled out his green notebook and wrote down the date: March 21. 'The swallows are back!' he shouted.

Leo ran to his grandparents' house next door. Grandma was in the kitchen, wearing her soft lavender cardigan and round glasses on a chain. Grandpa sat by the window in his dark green wool vest, holding his pocket watch. 'The swallows have returned!' Leo announced. Grandma smiled, her crinkly brown eyes twinkling. 'Then it's time to mark the calendar,' she said, pointing to a big calendar on the wall.

Grandpa nodded and said, 'Swallows are amazing travelers. They fly thousands of miles to follow the seasons.' He opened a drawer and took out a small notebook. 'I've been keeping a record of when they arrive each year,' he said. 'Would you like to help me add today's date?' Leo nodded eagerly. He wrote 'March 21' in his green notebook and then helped Grandpa write it in the family record.

Grandma bustled around the kitchen. 'Every year, when the swallows return, I bake a little cake,' she said. 'It's our way of celebrating spring.' She mixed flour, eggs, and sugar, and soon the kitchen smelled warm and sweet. Leo set the table with three plates. Grandma put the cake in the oven, and they all sat down to wait. 'Patience,' Grandpa said. 'The swallows teach us patience.'

The next day, Leo went outside to watch the swallows again. They were building a nest under the eaves of the grandparents' house. He saw them carry little bits of mud and straw in their beaks. 'They're making a home,' Grandma said, coming out to stand beside him. 'They'll raise their babies here.' Leo made a note in his green notebook: 'Swallows building nest. March 22.'

As spring turned to summer, Leo watched the swallows every day. He saw them swoop low over the garden and high into the sky. He learned that they eat insects, catching them in midair. Sometimes, he sat with Grandpa on the porch. Grandpa would take out his pocket watch and say, 'Swallows are like clockwork. They arrive at about the same time each year.' Leo wrote that down too.

One day, Leo asked, 'Where do the swallows go in winter?' Grandpa leaned back in his chair. 'They fly far, far south, where it's warm all year,' he explained. 'They follow the sun and the seasons.' Leo imagined the tiny birds flying over mountains and oceans. 'How do they know the way?' he wondered. 'That's one of nature's mysteries,' Grandpa said. 'But they always come back.'

Leo decided to make his own calendar to track the swallows. He drew a grid on a big sheet of paper and wrote the months at the top. Each day, he checked the sky and wrote down what he saw. Grandma hung his calendar next to hers in the kitchen. 'Now we have two calendars,' she said. 'One for the family and one for you.' Leo felt proud.

Summer passed, and the days grew shorter. Leo noticed the swallows gathering in larger flocks on the telephone wires. 'They're getting ready to leave,' Grandma said softly. Leo felt a little sad. He wrote in his notebook: 'Swallows gathering. September 15.' Grandpa said, 'Don't worry. They'll be back next spring. That's the promise of the seasons.'

One morning, Leo looked up and saw no swallows. The sky seemed empty. He ran to Grandpa. 'They've gone,' he said. Grandpa nodded. 'Yes, they've started their long journey south. But remember, they'll return.' Leo marked the day on his calendar: 'Swallows left. September 28.' He looked at the calendar and felt a warm feeling inside. The swallows were on their way, and he would wait for them.

Through autumn and winter, Leo kept watching the sky. He saw other birds, but not the swallows. Grandma baked bread, and Grandpa told stories by the fire. Leo added notes to his calendar: 'First snow,' 'Frost on the window.' He learned that nature has many signs. 'The calendar helps us remember,' Grandpa said. 'It connects us to the earth and to each other.'

One cold February day, Leo thought he saw a swallow, but it was just a starling. 'Patience,' Grandma said. 'Spring will come.' Leo kept watching. He drew pictures of swallows in his notebook. He imagined their journey. And he waited, knowing that waiting is part of the adventure. The calendar on the wall showed the days passing, one by one.

Then, on a bright morning in March, Leo heard a familiar twitter. He rushed outside. There, against the blue sky, were three swallows! 'They're back!' he shouted. Grandma and Grandpa came out, smiling. Grandma's eyes crinkled with joy. 'Just in time for cake,' she said. Leo wrote the date on his calendar: 'March 20.' The swallows had returned, and spring had begun.

That afternoon, the family celebrated with a small cake. Grandpa raised his teacup. 'To the swallows,' he said. 'And to Leo, who keeps our tradition alive.' Leo beamed. He looked at the calendar, filled with dates and notes. 'I'm going to keep watching forever,' he said. Grandma hugged him. 'And we'll be right here with you,' she said. The swallows chirped under the eaves.

As the sun set, Leo stood by the window. The swallows were settling into their nest. He felt happy and peaceful. He knew that the seasons would keep turning, and the swallows would keep returning. And he would keep watching, with his green notebook and pencil, marking the days. For Leo, the calendar was more than just dates. It was a story of nature, family, and the joy of waiting.