

The Panda's Paper Lantern



Çınar BİBER

The Panda's Paper Lantern

Çınar BİBER



Deep in the green forest, where bamboo swayed and birds sang, lived a round panda named Bao. He wore a little red scarf and carried a woven bamboo basket. Bao loved festivals more than anything. One morning, he woke up with a big idea: he would plan a lantern festival for all his forest friends. He smiled and said, "Everyone will love the lights!"



Bao hurried to a clearing and began to plan. He gathered paper, string, and tiny candles. He made lanterns of red, yellow, and gold. Each one glowed like a little sun. Bao hung them on low branches and bushes. He wanted everyone to see the beautiful lights. "This will be the best festival ever," he said, tying a bright red lantern to a stump.



Bao's friend Mei, a red panda, lived high in the treetops. She had rust-red fur, a bushy striped tail, and a little green leaf hat. From her home in the tallest tree, Mei could see the whole forest. But when she looked down at Bao's lanterns, she sighed. "They are lovely, but I can only see the tops," she called. "The glow is hidden by the leaves."



Bao looked up and waved. "Come down and see them!" he called. Mei scampered down the trunk, her tail swishing. She stood beside Bao and looked at the lanterns. "They are beautiful from here," she said. "But when I am up high, I cannot see them at all. The leaves block the light. I wish I could enjoy the festival too." Bao frowned. He wanted everyone to be happy.



Bao sat on a soft mossy log and thought. "I want everyone to see the lanterns," he said. "But how can we make lights that shine both up high and down low?" Mei's eyes sparkled. "We can invent new lanterns!" she said. "Lanterns that glow in two directions." Bao clapped his paws. "Yes! Let's work together." They hurried to Bao's basket of supplies.



Mei opened her tiny satchel and pulled out string and paper. "We can make lanterns with two open ends," she said. "One end faces up, one faces down. The candle inside will shine both ways." Bao nodded. "And we can hang some high in the trees and some low on the ground." They set to work, folding paper and tying string. Their paws moved quickly and carefully.



Bao cut strips of red and gold paper. Mei tied them with strong string. They made lanterns with a top opening and a bottom opening. "Look!" said Mei, holding one up. "The light shines up like a star and down like a firefly." Bao smiled. "Perfect! Now everyone can see them, whether they are in the treetops or on the ground." They made many lanterns, chatting and laughing as they worked.



All afternoon, Bao and Mei worked side by side. Bao's basket was soon full of special lanterns. Mei climbed high into the trees and hung lanterns on branches. Bao placed lanterns on bushes and rocks below. "This is fun!" said Mei, swinging from a branch. "I can see the ones below, and you can see the ones above." Bao looked up and waved. "We make a good team!"



As evening came, other forest friends arrived. A rabbit hopped by. "What are you doing?" she asked. "We are making lanterns that shine both up and down," said Bao. "So everyone can see them." The rabbit's eyes grew wide. "That's wonderful! I can help." Soon a squirrel and a hedgehog joined in. They carried lanterns and hung them everywhere.



Mei climbed to the very top of the tallest tree. She hung a lantern there. "Now I can see the whole festival!" she called down. Bao looked up and saw her waving. "And I can see you!" he called back. The forest was filling with soft, glowing lights. Everyone was excited for the festival to begin.



That night, the forest sparkled like a sky full of stars. Bao and Mei stood together and looked at their work. Lanterns glowed on the ground and in the treetops. "It's beautiful," whispered Mei. "I can see every single light." Bao smiled. "And so can everyone else." The festival had begun, and the whole forest was filled with joy.



All the forest friends gathered in the clearing. They danced and sang under the lanterns. The rabbit played a little drum. The squirrel tossed acorns like tiny balls. Mei twirled from branch to branch, her striped tail flashing. Bao danced with his red scarf flying. "This is the best festival ever!" everyone cheered. The lights twinkled above and below.



Bao looked around at his friends. The rabbit and the hedgehog were laughing. The squirrel was sharing nuts. Mei was showing a little mouse how to hang a lantern. Bao's heart felt warm. He realized that a good celebration should include everyone. "I'm glad we made lanterns for both high and low," he said to Mei. "Now no one is left out."



Mei nodded and gave Bao a hug. "You are a kind friend," she said. "You noticed I couldn't see the lights, and you fixed it." Bao blushed under his fur. "We fixed it together," he said. "That's what friends do." They sat on a branch and watched the festival below. The lanterns glowed softly, making the forest look magical.



As the night grew late, the friends gathered under the biggest lantern. "Let's make this a tradition," said Bao. "Every year, we will hang lanterns high and low, so everyone can enjoy them." Everyone cheered. Mei climbed up and hung one last lantern at the very top of the tree. It shone like a beacon of friendship. The forest was full of light and happiness.



Bao learned that day that celebrations are best when everyone is included. He smiled at Mei, and she smiled back. The lanterns glowed all around them, from the treetops to the ground. And the happy panda knew that this festival would be remembered for a long, long time. The end.