

**LITTLE
BELONGS LIGHT**
THE COUNT'S DARK THREAT

Lyck Liss

First published in the United Kingdom in 2025 by Lyck Liss Stories Limited

Available in multiple markets

www.LyckLiss.co.uk

First Edition

Printed in the United Kingdom and other locations worldwide.

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Book and cover illustration services: Dazzling Media

Editorial services: Kerry Plume

ISBN Hardcover 978-1-0683195-0-1

ISBN Paperback 978-1-0683195-1-8

ISBN eBook 978-1-0683195-2-5

FOREWORD

These writings are for all children, from you and me.

They are inspired by the finest memories imaginable.

I will always miss you when you are not around.

You are my true friend.

FREILAND

N O R T H L A N D

In a distant galaxy filled with wonder, there exists a beautiful world known as The Globe. On its surface, many lands are waiting to be explored, including the charming realm of... Freiland

Village of Yellow Balls

Ice Cream City

Land of the Animals

Mulberry Island

East Coast

Pia Harbour

South Coast

Cuddley Kennel

Coast of Plums



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PROLOGUE

“*They’re coming,*” echoes the familiar voice.

Ms Chealsa listens to the faint whispers inside her head. Rocking her armchair, she stares out with darting eyes at the endless sea. Preoccupied with her own worrying thoughts, she’s distracted from noticing the noisy colony of nearby seagulls flapping by with their broad wings—and unable to see the colourful butterfly pressing against her living room window.

Her attention is drawn instead to the shimmering light flowing from a piece of metal resting in her open palm. Pulsing out, a few seconds at a time, the light sends out a subtle golden glitter that fills the air.

Calmed by the glow enveloping her, Ms Chealsa gently puts away the precious belonging in a small wooden box.

Still shaken by the echoes of the mysterious voice, she closes her eyes, and an image floods her mind. It starts as a dark flicker, growing into an ever-expanding mass of terrible storms shaping in the clear blue sky. The mass destroys everything in its path. The shining Sun disappears, as does the sea, the coast, and the tiny island with Ms Chealsa’s cottage. Darkness and total silence are all that remain.

“*They’re coming,*” echoes the insistent voice from within, louder and more determined than before, then dies away as Ms Chealsa’s eyelids flutter open again.

CHAPTER 1

WHISPERS OF LONGING

One year later

A radiant rainbow-coloured butterfly flutters its delicate wings as it soars through clear blue skies.

Vast flocks of parakeets, swirling clouds of feathers and cheerful whistles, appear from nowhere, encircling the butterfly and guiding it as they all descend towards the flower-filled meadows of Freiland.

Drawing nearer to their destination, the birds veer off, leaving the butterfly to continue its journey alone to the pretty village of Yellow Balls. Eventually, it lands gracefully on a loose orange leaf that rests upon the windowsill of a school building, and as the sun climbs higher, casting its warm glow over the peaceful village, the butterfly bathes in the glorious heat, and watches the last of the morning mist disappear.

Peering through the window, the butterfly spots a young boy slumped in his seat amid the crowded assembly hall, his eye lids closed, yet tears trace silent paths down his cheeks before dripping to the carpeted floor, unnoticed by those around him.

As the boy sleeps, troubling events unfold within his subconscious. In his dream-like state of mind, he stands outside his home's porch, bidding farewell to his father with a wave. He lowers his arm as tears flood his face. In his distress, he cries out, 'Dad, where did you go? Please come back! We need you! Who took you away?'

Sinking down awkwardly on the porch steps, he buries his face in his hands and remains that way, tearful, upset, and blanketed by a heavy feeling of despair, for a long time.

He's determined to wait... until Dad comes back.

'Ooh!' The skin around his ankle suddenly starts to tickle. At his feet stands a curious looking pup of a hound, with tricoloured fur: black, white, and brown, and ears so long they reach the ground.

The pup's large, almond-coloured eyes sparkle with playfulness as it's picked up in the boy's welcoming embrace. 'Hey Puppy! I'm Blue, who are you?'

Wriggling from Blue's arms, the pup leaps into the nearby garden and races around the towering trees, its nose sniffing out every scent in the lush greenery. Blue can't help but join in the fun, and before long, the air is filled with laughter.

The newly acquainted friends playfully weave in and out of the trees. Vibrant yellow ball shapes adorn the tree branches, adding a splash of colour to the exciting escapade.

Blue picks a yellow ball from one of the sweet-smelling trees. He throws it a good length into the open field close by. The pup runs as fast as it can after the ball, unintentionally tumbling over a couple of times.

As it approaches the yellow sphere, it eagerly sniffs and licks at it, trying to figure out what it is. But despite its efforts, it can't seem to break through the solid surface of the ball. Oddly, its bland tastelessness only adds to the pup's confusion.

Suddenly, a strong wind picks up, and heavy rain showers pour down from the grey sky. The pup, standing a good distance away from Blue, drops the yellow ball from its tiny jaws—the ball



tumbles onto the grass. The pup turns its head towards the dark, thundering sky and begins howling.

Flashes of pitch-black lightning strike all around. Blue rushes to rescue the pup from danger, but the field is filled with smoke and he can only hear its cries echoing against the furious sky. Dodging the striking flashes, Blue finally reaches the spot where he last saw the pup. But now there's no sign of him—only the yellow ball lying on the grass.

The storm ceases, bringing an end to the lightning, rain, and strong winds. The dark sky clears, allowing the sun to shine once more. Blue picks up the yellow ball from the ground. He scans the field. The pup is nowhere to be seen, and silence reigns—no barking or howling is heard.

A spooky stillness blankets the air, settling over the field like a thick fog. In the quiet, a faint whisper tickles at the edge of Blue's consciousness, barely detectable at first. 'Save me... they will kill me...' The words send a shiver down his spine, and he swears he hears them coming from the very ball in his hands. His heart races as he spins around, searching for the source of the haunting plea.

The stillness is suddenly shattered by a deafening, bone-chilling sound that pierces the calm. It erupts into sinister, malevolent laughter—dark and mocking, echoing across the empty field as if taunting Blue's worst fears. The laughter wraps around him like a cold embrace, sending icy tendrils slithering up his arms.

The voice, twisted and cruel, seems to echo from every direction, causing Blue's pulse to quicken. He grips the yellow ball tighter, a wave of worry crashing over him as the terrible laughter echoes, igniting his fear for the pup's safety. 'Puppy! Puppy!' Blue calls out dejectedly, turning in different directions.

‘Puppy!’ Blue gasps as he suddenly sits up in class, his thoughts in a jumble. The movement sends his chair skidding back, and the sound draws a wave of startled gasps and giggles from his schoolmates. Blinking in confusion, he looks around, realising he just crashed back into reality and interrupted the seminar. A few students glare silently at him, while others chuckle at his clumsy awakening.

‘*Oh no—oh!*’ Blue suddenly realises that his adorable four-legged companion was just a figment of his imagination, a character from his troubling dream. The pup’s warm, friendly face and floppy ears fill his mind, leaving a sad feeling in his chest and an ache in his stomach. The scary words of the death threat still echo in his thoughts, making him feel anxious. ‘*They will kill me...*’ His heart thumps as he tries to push away the troubling feelings.

Just then, as he settles back into his cushioned seat, Blue catches sight of a butterfly fluttering gracefully outside the window. Its sparkling bright colours subtly elevate his spirits, drawing his attention away from the fear. ‘*That’s striking cool... really amazing looking,*’ he thinks, a small smile spreading across his face as he watches the butterfly dance in the sunlight.

The weight of his nightmare begins to lift, and a sense of hope stirs within him once more.

Blue notices a heart-like pattern on one of the butterfly’s delicate wings. ‘*That heart shaped mark,*’ he thinks, ‘*I’m sure I saw the pup in my dream with the same mark. Or was it just something similar?*’ The thought sticks in his mind, mixing his dreams with reality.

Before he has a chance to gather his thoughts, the bell rings, signalling the end of class. Blue takes a moment to shake off the embarrassment still warming his cheeks.

As students scramble to pack up, Sri Dee strides over to him. She's his cousin, two years younger and a total genius—so much so that they share the same classes.

Her big, captivating brown eyes twinkle with mischief, and she wears a bright yellow outfit: a fitted hoodie with a super cool zipper and matching tights.

'Hey, sleepyhead!' she teases, grinning and offering him a hand. Blue looks at the birthmark that spans the area around her cheekbone, which just adds to her charm.

'You okay?' she asks, trying to stifle a laugh.

Blue can't help but chuckle too, feeling a little bit lighter. 'I can't believe I fell asleep in class. That's never happened to me before,' he replies, grateful for her presence.

'Wow, Blue! Didn't you sleep well last night?' Sri Dee's gaze nearly pierces through him, her eyes brimming with curiosity, hands resting on her hips.

Blue furrows his brow, tilting his head slightly to one side, his deep ocean blue eyes reflecting a momentary confusion. 'Well... actually I did. I slept well. I'm not sure what happened.'

He glances away for a moment, scratching the back of his neck, his fingers brushing against his light brown skin, then meets her gaze again. 'But how come you're here? Don't you usually start your day with dance and theatre classes?'

‘Ooh, but I had to be here. It’s mandatory, remember?’ Sri Dee steps closer, her eyes narrowing as she studies him. ‘Are you sure you’re okay? You look like you’ve just seen a ghost.’

Blue’s gaze drifts to the floor, lost in thought. Strands of his deep blue, almost black bob-cut hair, styled back and falling behind his ears, catch the light. ‘I had this weird dream just now,’ he murmurs, the memory lingering in his mind like a thick fog.

Sri Dee’s eyes widen. While she’s eager to find out more about Blue’s dream, she knows it’s likely tied to his recent nightmares about his missing dad, dreams that have weighed heavily on him. A knot forms in her throat, leaving her momentarily speechless.

Blue looks back at her, a flicker of a smile playing on his lips, though it doesn’t reach his eyes. Dressed in white jeans, a grey three-quarter sleeve graphic tee that accentuates his athletic frame, and sneakers, he manages to maintain a casual appearance despite the worries that cloud his mind. ‘It was just... strange. I’ll tell you about it later, okay?’

Sri Dee examines him for a moment, her expression a blend of concern and intrigue, but ultimately she nods. ‘Alright, later it is. Just remember, I’m always here if you want to talk about it.’

A quiet moment follows, during which Blue contemplates the idea of sharing his thoughts. He hesitates, knowing that talking about his missing dad would also lead to memories of Sri Dee’s own absent parents. He worries

that bringing it up would only stir her grief, causing her to worry about him more than she already does.

Breaking the silence, Sri Dee spins around effortlessly in her dance shoes, her energy radiating throughout the room. 'Come on! Let's shake off the sleepiness. I'm really hungry for a snack at the cafeteria!' She points toward the door, her enthusiasm making it hard for Blue to resist her invitation.

As the sunlight floods the empty assembly hall, Sri Dee's vibrant energy brightens the vast silence, while Blue's thoughts linger in the shadows of his troubling dream.

The high ceilings and glossy floor amplify the stillness, leaving them feeling small in the expansive space. With a glance of quiet understanding, they push open the double doors, stepping into the busy corridor, where the buzz of voices makes them feel connected to the world again after their short time alone.

Their school, which welcomes all children in the village, is a lively place full of imagination and creativity. Inside, students explore a wide range of subjects designed to captivate their interests, from science and technology to art and music. Innovation is woven into everything they learn, inspiring the youngsters to think outside the box and pursue their passions, often through collaboration that benefits society or the environment.

As they wander the corridors Blue and Sri Dee admire colourful wall paintings that celebrate their talented classmates' exciting projects, each one showing off the unique talents of the school's diverse community.

Around a corner a group of boys stand against one of the walls, and eyeing Blue, begin cheering loudly, 'You were awesome yesterday, Blue!'

Blue looks up, waves his arm in acknowledgment, and shouts back, 'Thanks, guys.'

Sri Dee asks intently, 'Did you play fantasyball yesterday?'

'Yeah. We played a league match,' Blue replies, but his voice lacks the usual excitement.

'Nice! What a cool game, right? I should watch you play more often. You're so good at kicking and throwing that ball,' she says, trying to spark his enthusiasm.

Blue nods absently. 'It's fun, but...' He trails off, glancing away, lost in thought.

'And that smart tech is so fun to watch. You know, the ball just takes control if someone breaks the rules or does something shady.'

'Yeah,' Blue agrees, but his voice is flat. He used to thrive on that part—the thrill of competing and outsmarting opponents while the balls tech ensured everyone played fair. But lately, he has felt distant from it all.

Sri Dee enquires about Blue's victory the day before, but all she receives in return is a subtle nod. Disappointed, she reflects on how Blue, usually so full of energy and enthusiasm for the sport, hasn't been acting like himself lately. Deep down, she understands why. His father's absence has hit him harder than he lets on, and the weight of responsibility for his mum and sister sits heavily on his shoulders. *'I believe his dad and my parents will return to us,*

I truly do. Maybe that's what sets us apart. Blue just can't seem to lift his spirits,' she thinks as they greet many friends and teachers while navigating the bustling school building.

As they progress, their eyes catch a handful of colourful flyers spread out on the floor, promoting the annual Treehouse Exhibition—a cross-curricular project that has consumed the creativity and excitement of the local eighth graders.

Today, Blue, Sri Dee, and their classmates will showcase the fruits of their labour: the treehouses they've spent weeks building. With a sigh, Blue picks up one of the flyers and glances briefly at the vibrant images of the various treehouses.

'Dee. Are you excited for tonight?' he asks.

'Sure! It'll be fun showing everyone our project,' Sri Dee replies, to which Blue nods in agreement before tossing the leaflet into a nearby bin.

The two of them settle into a quiet corner of the cafeteria, enjoying their energising superfood smoothies. As they converse, the loudspeaker crackles to life, cutting through the chatter.

'Attention, Blue Litleone, could you please report to the school office immediately!'

Blue frowns, glancing at Sri Dee. 'Hmm... doesn't sound good. And how long have I been at this school? Surely everyone knows by now it's pronounced Lit-lay-own.'

Sri Dee shrugs, trying to stay upbeat. 'I was just hoping for a smooth break. Let's see what this is about.'

Reluctantly, they get up and head to the headteacher's office. When they arrive, she hands Blue a slip of paper with a serious expression. 'You need to complete a task after school for falling asleep during lessons.'