

[Author's Note] *A fable inspired by the little light in my lamppost.*

## THE LITTLE LIGHT IN THE LAMPPOST

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ON A DARK AND NARROW STREET SAT A TINY HOUSE. In its front yard, which neighbors say is always trimmed and well kept, stood an old lamppost rooted among the grass, black iron and beginning to reveal its sign of age. Inside this old lamppost lived a small, dim light, guarding the winding path to the front door. The light was only a little light, yet it burned faithfully every night. The light possessed a very vibrant radiance, especially considering its size, and it lit up cobblestone path and yard, lighting the way home for the man who lived within the tiny house, just beyond the lamppost.

The little light loved the man, but he hated his old lamppost and even more, his dim light. After the man in the house returned from a long absence, the little light had heard the man speak of the bright lights on New York with awe and wonder. The little light dreamed of becoming a big, bright light, shining among the brightest and most famous lights in the world, the lights lining Broadway in New York City. Each and every night the little light would pretend to be a brilliant, flashing light on one of the famous mar-quees on Broadway. Overlooking the glittering street, he pretended to be outside a grand theater. People would stop and stare up at him as his blinding light dazzled them and beckoned them within to the crimson curtains, glossy stages, and soft velvet seats. He could see them snapping photographs, posing in front of him, either on their way into the theatre or as they passed by. He dreamed and dreamed every night, hoping and wishing. The little light thought here he could be famous, shining brighter than the ever could in his aging, musky old lamppost, and so he longed to leave his dark street and narrow lamppost, and live among the millions of glaring beacons in New York City.

One day when the man came outside to visit the little light as he often did. He tightened his bulb, wiped the dirt off him and dusted away the cobwebs

on his lamppost. When he was finished the little light decided to tell the man about his wish to become a famous and bright light on a grand marquee overlooking Broadway. The little light pleaded with the man to grant his wish. The man looked at his little light sadly and said, "Bright light, you have always been here to light my way home, helping me to see on many dark and dreary nights. I owe you something in return and cannot refuse your wish." The little light was overjoyed, but filled with sadness at the prospect of leaving the man and the home he had always known. Determine to be bright and see the lights of the city, the little light buried his feelings and fears and thanked the man.

Just as he promised, the man took the light to New York City. He searched up and down Broadway until he found the largest and brightest marquee, outside one of the oldest and most famous theatres of the city. Beneath the marquee were lines of flashing, glowing lights, beckoning theatregoers. Lighted playbills, ticket booths, and door runners, seemed to moved and danced with light. The man found a ladder in a nearby alley and climbed all the way to the top of the sign, hanging above the grand entrance. He placed the little light in a spot where another light was missing and made sure to tighten him in firmly. Suddenly the little light popped on. Instantly, he grew ten times in size! His light burst out of him in every direction. He flashed wildly and burned

brilliantly. The little light was no longer little. Finally he was a shining light, as famous and bright as the rest of the lights around him. The little light was a star.

The man knew his little light's wish had been fulfilled, and he climbed back down the ladder with a smile that hid his sorrow. As the little light watched him descend the ladder, his heart overflowed with a spectrum of conflicting emotions that would have given the lights a run for their money, had this spectrum been a visible, tangible thing. The little light thanked the man once more, and he heard him say goodbye as he disappeared around the corner. Although the little light was sad to see him go, he was so happy now that all his dreams had come true. All his longing and imagining had finally come to fruition. He was a bright light of New York City.

A short time after he arrived, the little light's happiness started to fade. He found that he had no one to talk to. The little light was surrounded in a sea of lighted billboards, TV screens and flashing advertisements, but the other lights were always too busy to speak to him. Crowds of tourists stopped to look up at his glow, but he found they could never hear his voice over the buzz from his sign or the loud noises coming up from the street. This made it impossible for him to make any friends, and so the little light grew more and more lonely.

New York City never slept, and glowing so brightly was very hard

work. He found it very tiring after a while. The little light burned with all his might through the day and night, never stopping for any rest. In his old lamppost he always had plenty of time to sleep during the day and now he never slept at all, and so the little light grew more and more tired.

The giant marquee was part of a busy theatre. Employees of the theater were too busy attending to the inside of theatre and the stage lights inside, which light the glamour stage performers, that the theatre attendants never took much time to take care of him. Only once in a blue moon did they ever climb the ladder to wipe the dirt from him, dust away cobwebs, or see if he needed to be tightened. So, the little light grew more and more dirty.

Exhausted and tired, dirty and alone, the little light dreamed of going back to his old lamppost on the dark and narrow street, under the care of the kind man. He knew that he would probably never see the man or his old lamppost ever again, and suddenly the little light was filled with tremendous regret and sadness.

Days and nights went by and the little light had almost given up any hope of returning to his home, until one day a familiar voice shouted up from the noisy street. "Bright light, bright light, is that that you?" yelled the man. The little light was overjoyed; he couldn't believe the man had come back, but he was not alone. The man had a family with him. Beneath him stood the man, his wife, and a young

child. They had come to see a play inside the theatre and visit the city, but the man had stopped to visit his old friend. The man climbed up to see him, just like he did back home in his old lamppost, and he dusted away the cobwebs, tightened him in, and cleaned him with a handkerchief. The little light begged the man to take him home and apologized over and over again, begging and pleading with the man. The man smiled and said in his kind, soft voice, "Bright light, you were always there to light my way home, helping me to see on many dark and dreary nights. I cannot refuse your wish. I will need you to watch over my child as he plays in the yard on summer evenings and I will need you to light the path and safeguard my family from dangers." He then took the little light down the ladder and back home, placing him once again into the old lamppost.

Finally the little light was home. As the morning sun rose upon the tiny house, the little light let out a yawn and slowly flickered out. He thought about his journey and found that his life in the old lamppost was much more rewarding than being a bright, famous light on Broadway. It was then, quite suddenly that the little light realized that he wasn't a dim, little light at all, but a bright light, just as the man had always seen. In the old lamppost he shined brighter and more brilliant than he ever did on the giant marquee. He shined brightly because he was loved and needed. The little,

bright light knew there was no place  
like home, no place would he rather be,  
than in front of the tiny house, on the  
dark and narrow street, inside the old  
lamppost, lighting the way home for all  
who need to find it. ✱