



Whose Mitten Waits Here?

Bramble stopped so suddenly that his tail bounced over his head. There, in the middle of the forest path, lay a green wool mitten with a blue ribbed cuff and one yellow star stitched near the thumb. It was far too big for him, far too soft to be a leaf, and far too lonely to leave in the mud. Bramble sniffed it carefully. Then he caught the cuff in his teeth and began tugging it along the path. He would find its owner before evening.

A rabbit was nibbling bark beside a hazel bush. Bramble dragged the mitten straight to her and placed one paw on it. The rabbit sniffed, lifted both long front paws, and gave a brisk little shake of her head. Her paws would have floated inside that mitten like peas in a pudding bowl. Bramble nodded, took up the blue cuff, and pulled onward.

The mitten snagged on a root, flopped over, and filled with three dry oak leaves. Bramble emptied the leaves with quick swipes of his paws. Under the root he spotted two glossy brown acorns. Usually he would have tucked them into his winter store at once. He even picked up one and rolled it between his teeth. But the mitten waited beside him. Bramble set the acorn down again and hauled the mitten toward the woodland clearing.





In the clearing, a deer stood eating twigs from a low branch. Bramble circled the deer's neat dark hooves, then pushed the mitten forward with his nose. The deer bent her elegant head, sniffed once, and stepped back. One hoof would not fit, and neither would the other three. Bramble's ears drooped. He had asked a rabbit and a deer, and neither had paws like the mitten's owner.

A gust skittered the mitten across the clearing. Bramble raced after it, but the green wool slid beneath a fallen branch. He wriggled under, braced his hind feet against the soil, and pulled until his whiskers trembled. Out came the mitten, dragging a thin blue thread behind it. The thread had caught on a thorny twig, where it fluttered like a tiny flag. Bramble did not notice it. He was busy shaking dirt from the yellow star.



At the far side of the clearing, the path split. One track curved deeper among fir trees. The other led toward the nearby park edge, where Bramble sometimes watched families crunch past on walks. He sniffed the mitten again. It smelled of wool, certainly, but also of orange peel, pencil shavings, and the sharp piney soap that people carried on their sleeves. Those were park-edge smells. Bramble chose the second path.





The path became busier there. Boot prints stamped over one another. A dog's paw marks ran in circles around a bench. Bramble paused beside a puddle, worried that the mitten's scent would disappear among all those feet. Then his nose twitched. Orange peel. Piney soap. And something else, warm and woolly, drifting in tiny puffs from the low bushes. He followed the smell, stopping whenever it faded and starting again whenever it returned.

The scent trail led him past a wooden park sign and beneath a hedge. There, caught on the lowest twig, was another curl of blue yarn. Above it, Bramble could hear voices. "We've looked by the gate and all along the path," said a grown-up. "I know," said a small, worried voice. "It was my green mitten. The one with the yellow star. My fingers are getting chilly." Bramble froze, his teeth still holding the blue cuff.





Beyond the hedge stood a girl
in a yellow coat and a blue wool scarf
dotted with white flecks. One of her hands
wore a matching green mitten. Her other
hand was bare. Bramble understood
at once: the blue thread had come from
her scarf, and the mitten smelled like her
orange snack and her pencil case.
But a low wire fence ran between Bramble
and the girl. He could not drag the mitten
through its narrow squares without
tearing the wool.





Bramble dropped the mitten, seized the blue cuff again, and raced along the fence until he found its open gate. The mitten bumped over roots, gathered one last oak leaf, and nearly slipped from his teeth when he crossed a patch of gravel. He did not let go. At the gate he gave a loud, urgent chitter and dragged the mitten into the open. The girl looked down. “My mitten!” she cried. She crouched slowly, and Bramble pushed the green wool toward her boot. “Thank you, little squirrel,” she said, lifting it in both hands.

Her grown-up smiled and helped her pull the mitten on. It fitted perfectly, star near the thumb and blue cuff snug around her wrist. “We should leave him a thank-you,” said the girl. From a small paper bag, she placed a pile of nuts at the foot of an oak: hazelnuts, walnuts, and several shining acorns. Bramble waited until the two people had stepped back before he scampered over to inspect the gift.





The girl waved her newly mittened hand from beside the park gate. Bramble sat upright beside the nuts, his tail curved neatly around his paws. Then he picked up one acorn, carried it to his hollow in the old oak, and returned for another. The forest path still stretched homeward, but the lost mitten was no longer waiting there. It had found the hand it belonged to.





Good night.



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After the story



WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT

A warm illustrated story about a small discovery, a meaningful choice, and finding a gentle way forward.

TALK ABOUT IT AFTER READING

After reading, ask which moment felt the warmest or bravest today.

AND TOMORROW...

The next morning, Bramble notices that a bright red button has appeared beside the same oak tree.





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A watercolor illustration of a squirrel in a tree. The squirrel is brown with a large, bushy tail, and is sitting on a branch. The tree has thick, textured bark and some green leaves. The background is a soft, warm orange and yellow wash, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The squirrel is looking towards the left.

Whose Mitten Waits Here?

A warm illustrated story about a small discovery,
a meaningful choice, and finding a gentle way forward.

8 minutes of reading



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