

In Kyoto, beneath the glow of temple lanterns, Aiko wandered the streets of Kiyomizu-dera, seeking a connection to the past her grandmother had spoken of. At the temple entrance, an old man tended a stand of delicate lanterns.

“Choose one,” he said. “Make a wish, and it will find its way.”

Aiko picked a lantern painted with a rising sun and whispered, “Let me understand the heart of this place.”

That night, she dreamed of ancient Kyoto: samurai under moonlight, tea ceremonies in quiet shrines, cherry blossoms falling like pink snow. When she awoke, she felt a thread connecting her to the city’s history and spirit.

From then on, every stone path and temple bell whispered stories to her, and Aiko carried the lantern’s glow in her heart.