

Once upon a time, in a small, sunlit town nestled between a river and a ridge, lived an old bookbinder named Elias. Each morning, he would open the windows of his dusty little shop and let in the scent of dew-covered grass and roasted coffee drifting from the café down the street. His hands, worn with years of practice, moved gracefully over the delicate spines of leather-bound tomes. Customers came from far and wide to have their journals mended, their family heirlooms preserved, and their thoughts encased in bindings that whispered of time and care.

Though Elias rarely spoke more than necessary, the children of the village adored him, for he always had scraps of parchment and stubby pencils to share. They would sit on the floor, doodling and dreaming as he worked. Some claimed the books he crafted held more than just ink on pages. Legends spread — that if one opened a book from Elias' shelf at exactly midnight during the full moon, they'd be transported into its story. Whether it was true or not, no one could say. But strange things had happened in the town before.

There was the time when young Marnie, a curious girl with braids and dusty knees, wandered into the shop and found a slim red book with no title. She opened it without a second thought and later claimed to have danced through meadows of floating flowers and spoken with a bear in a waistcoat who offered her honeyed tea. When asked what the story was about, she'd shrug and say, "It's still being written." Elias never confirmed nor denied her tale. He merely smiled, tapped his chin, and offered her another pencil.

As the years passed, the town changed. New buildings rose beside old ones. The river grew narrower as the town grew wider. Children became parents, and Elias' beard turned silver. Yet his shop remained the same. A quiet nook of imagination, of stitched spines and silent magic. On rainy days, readers still crowded inside, seeking dry refuge and warm stories.

One winter morning, a letter arrived. It had no stamp, only a wax seal with the symbol of an owl perched on a crescent moon. Elias opened it with calm familiarity and read its contents aloud only once before tucking it into the pocket of his apron. The very next day, the shop was closed. Not boarded up or abandoned — just... quiet. As if waiting. No one saw Elias again. Some say he finally entered one of his own stories and decided to stay.

In the weeks that followed, townsfolk would still walk by the shop and press their hands to the foggy glass windows. Inside, the books still sat patiently on the shelves, and every so often, if you were very still and listened very closely, you might hear the turning of a page.

Perhaps the story had only just begun.