



The Town That Forgot the Stars

A science mystery about light pollution and the night sky



A Sky Full of Questions

Nia and Ben loved climbing to Nia's rooftop with a telescope, a flashlight, and their old star notebook. But one night, when they opened the notebook and looked up, something felt wrong. The pages were filled with sketches of constellations and glittering stars, yet the sky above their town held only a few faint points of light. "It looks like the town forgot the stars," Nia whispered.



The Bright Main Street

The next evening, the two friends became sky detectives. They walked down Main Street and noticed bright signs, lamps without covers, and beams of light shooting up into the night. Every shop seemed to glow louder than the one beside it. Ben shaded his eyes and pointed upward. “Maybe the stars are still there,” he said, “but all this light is getting in the way.”



Mr. Vega's Clue

At the library observatory, Mr. Vega listened to their mystery and smiled kindly. He spread a star map across the table and explained that the stars had not disappeared at all. "Your town is making too much skyglow," he told them. "When lights shine upward or sideways instead of downward, they brighten the sky and hide the stars. It's called light pollution."



A Simple Experiment

Nia and Ben wanted proof they could show everyone. In the schoolyard, they set up two lamps. One lamp was bright and bare, sending glare into every direction. The other had a hood that aimed the light down at the ground. Near the shielded lamp, the sky looked darker and more stars peeked through. “There it is!” Nia said. “Good lighting helps us see more.”



The Town Listens

The friends made posters and presented their idea to the town council. They explained that streetlights could still keep people safe without flooding the sky with wasted light. They asked for warm bulbs, shielded lamps, and timers for signs that stayed on all night. The adults leaned closer, looked at the drawings, and nodded. Their mystery was turning into a plan.



Changing the Lights

Soon, workers arrived with ladders and tool belts. They replaced old glaring lamps with warm, down-facing lights and turned off some of the brightest unnecessary signs. Nia and Ben watched from the sidewalk as the street slowly changed. The town still glowed, but now the light stayed where people actually needed it—on the roads, porches, and sidewalks.



Star Night in the Park

A week later, the town held its very first Star Night in the park. Families spread blankets across the grass, telescopes pointed upward, and soft lanterns glowed near their feet. Above them, the sky was deeper and darker than it had been in a long time. One by one, stars appeared. Then another. Then dozens more, until the whole park buzzed with happy gasps.



The Town Remembers

Later, Nia and Ben lay back on a blanket and watched the stars sparkle over the quiet town. Nia pointed to a bright constellation while Ben searched for more with his glasses tilted toward the sky. The stars had been there all along—they had only been hidden behind too much light. Now the town had remembered how to share the night.

Science Element



What Nia and Ben Learned

Light pollution happens when too much artificial light brightens the night sky. Unshielded lights send light upward and sideways, creating skyglow that hides the stars. Using shielded, warm-colored lights that point downward helps keep streets bright and safe while letting more stars stay visible.

THE END

Look up. The stars may be waiting for you, too. Sometimes science helps solve a mystery. In this story, Nia and Ben discovered that the stars did not leave their town at all—too much light was simply hiding them. Small choices, like using better outdoor lighting, can make a big difference for the night sky.