

# The Enchanted Bush

Josh Mishra



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Written & illustrated by

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## The Holiday Begins

Jack and Joe couldn't stop bouncing in their seats as the car turned up the grandparents' house lane. "We're here!" shouted Joe, spotting the stone gate of Grandma and Grandpa's house. The cottage looked just as cosy as they remembered, with vines climbing the walls and smoke curling from the chimney. Grandma waved from the kitchen window, the aroma of mouth-watering food wafting out. Grandpa waved from the garden.

Grandma came out first, arms open wide. "My, how much you've grown!" she said, hugging them tight. Grandpa winked from behind her. "Hope you two brought your best running shoes—I've got games planned all week!" he said.

Inside, the kitchen smelled of sausages, baked potatoes, and warm chocolate cake. The boys ran straight to the counter.

"Can we taste, Grandma?" Joe asked eagerly.

"Just a spoonful," she chuckled, "before you eat the whole cake!"

Jack grinned. "You make the best food in the world!"

After supper, they played board games with Grandpa until the stars shone bright above the garden. Everything felt perfect—like summer was never going to end.



## The Big Garden and Butterfly chase

The next morning, sunshine spilled across the garden. Grandpa handed them a ball and said, "Go to the garden to explore—just don't go too far near the wild corner!"

The boys ran off, chasing butterflies through bushes and racing under trees. Joe spotted something bright fluttering in the distance. "Look, Jack—a blue butterfly! I bet I can catch it!"

Joe shot between bushes; eyes stuck on the butterfly's shimmering wings. He reached out—and stumbled.

"Joe!" Jack shouted. But before Joe could answer, there was smoke around him and the bushes glowed golden—then he vanished!

Jack stared at the empty spot, heart pounding. "Where did he go?" he wondered. Then, gathering all his courage, he leapt into the glowing bush himself.



## The Strange New World and Mysterious Stranger

Jack and Joe landed with a thud on something soft but cold and damp. For a moment they just lay there, listening to their own pounding hearts. The ground felt like soggy moss, and when they pushed themselves up, their fingers came away wet and muddy. The air around them was thick and foggy, like breathing through a wet cloth. They heard an owl screech, wolf howl and a slithering snake somewhere far away. The forest seemed to be watching them, listening to every breath they took.

"Where are we?" Jack whispered. His voice sounded small, swallowed by the trees. Joe clutched Jack's sleeve and looked around with wide eyes. "This isn't Grandpa's garden anymore," he murmured.

Before they could guess, a smooth voice slipped out of the shadows like smoke.

"Lost travellers, are you?" said a tall man dressed in black who had a strange smile. They replied, "Yes, we are! Who are you?"

"I'm Lucas. I can help you find your way home."

Jack blinked. "Really? You know how?"

"Why, of course," Lucas said warmly. "All I ask is a little help first... a few chores in my house."

The brothers exchanged a worried glance at each other. Could they trust him?

*Were they making the right choice?*



## The Creepy Cottage

Lucas's house stood at the edge of the woods, built from dark wood and crooked stone. Inside, it smelled like smoke and something sweet—but not quite right. "Start with the floors," Lucas said, tossing them old brooms. "Then wash the pans."

When they finished, Lucas clapped his hands. "Splendid! Now, dinner first, and then I'll send you home."

The brothers sighed with relief and sat down at the table. Lucas disappeared into the kitchen. Pots clattered.

"This feels off," Joe said, frowning.

"Maybe he really can help," Jack replied, though he didn't sound sure.

A smoky smell filled the air. Curious, Jack peeked through the kitchen door. His eyes widened. Lucas was changing—his skin had turned crimson, red horns sprouted, and his smile stretched into sharp, glinting fangs. "Finally," Lucas hissed to himself, "a fine meal after so long!"

Jack froze, then whispered to Joe, "He's a demon! We must get out of here. We trick him—like he tricked us."



## The Escape Plan

When Lucas returned in his disguised self, the boys forced a smile. "Sir," said Jack, "we forgot the special sauce our grandma uses in every meal! It's the only thing that can make food perfect."

Lucas paused, intrigued. "Special sauce? Very well—hurry up, little chefs." The moment they stepped outside, Jack whispered, "Run!" They sprinted through the foggy forest, Lucas's angry roar echoing behind them.

Branches snapped, wolves howled, and the air shook as they ran. Just when their legs began to ache, Joe shouted, "Look!"

At the top of a small hill, a bright, glowing bush shimmered—the same kind of light that had swallowed them before.

"That's our way home!" Jack panted. They clambered up the hill as Lucas's shadow loomed behind them.

The ground rumbled. Lucas roared, "You can't escape me!" "Yes, we can!" Joe yelled, and together they leapt into the light.

## Home Again

In a flash, they tumbled onto soft green grass. Birds were chirping again, and Grandpa's roses swayed in the sunlight.

"Jack! Joe!" their grandparents cried, running toward them along the garden path. Grandma's apron fluttered as she hurried, and Grandpa nearly dropped his watering can. "Where were you? We've been so worried!"

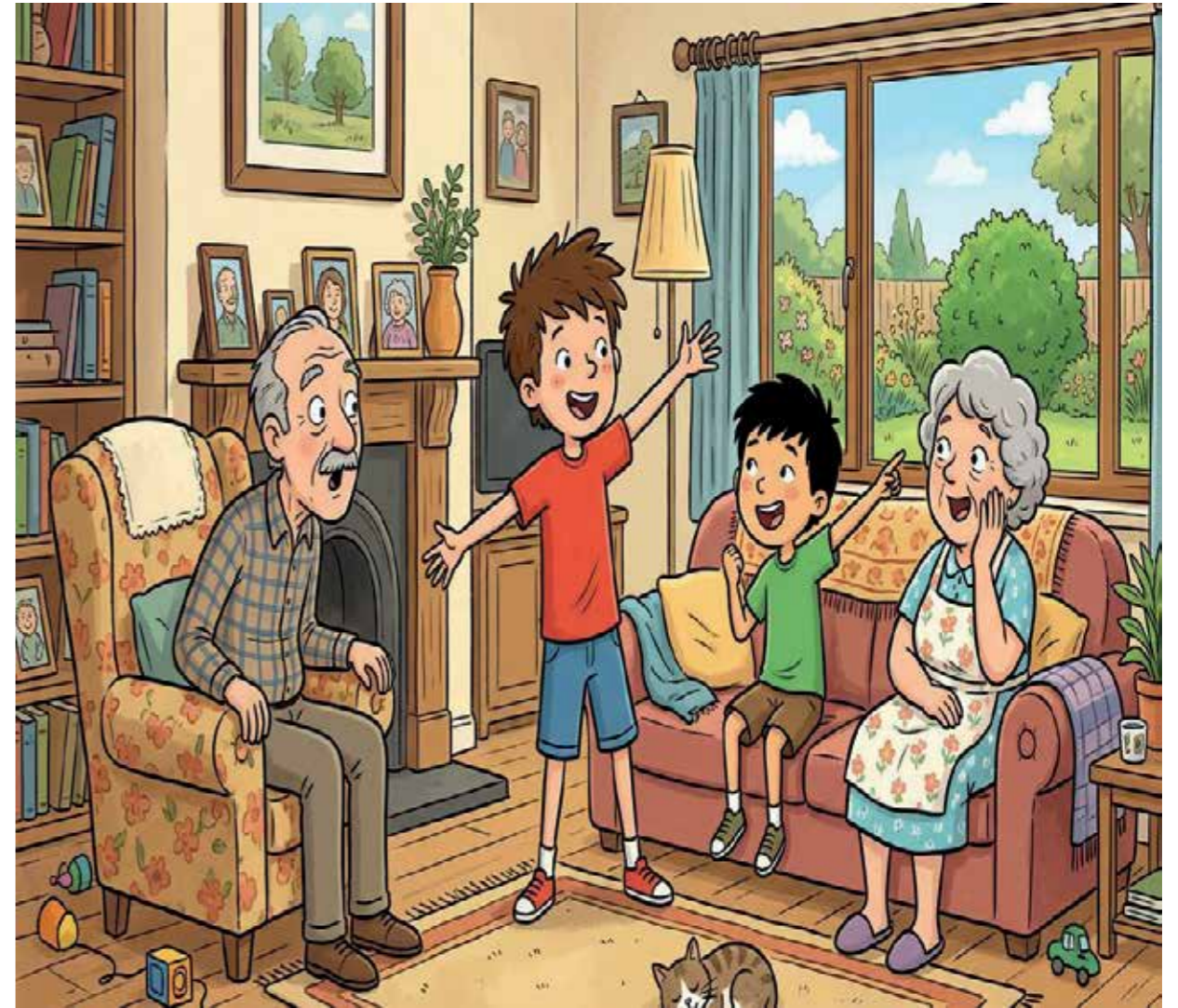
The boys hugged them tightly. "You won't believe it," said Jack breathlessly.

Jack could feel Grandma's heart beating fast as she hugged him tight. "You won't believe it," he said again, still catching his breath. "We didn't just go to the back of the garden... we went somewhere else."

They told them everything—about the forest, the chores, and Lucas's horns. Grandpa shook his head in disbelief.

"Well," Grandma said softly, "sounds like an adventure meant just for you two. But next time, keep your games away from mysterious bushes!"

As they laughed together, a blue butterfly fluttered across the garden and landed on a flower. Jack and Joe smiled—and decided to let it fly free.



### About The Author

Josh Mishra is a 9-year-old boy who loves magical and mystical adventures. When he isn't writing, he enjoys imagining secret portals, mysterious forests, and surprising creatures that might live just beyond our world. Josh likes to turn these ideas into stories that are exciting, a little spooky, and full of bravery. He hopes his books will make other children feel as if they've stepped into a new, enchanted place every time they read.



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Two brothers, Jack and Joe, are thrilled to spend their holidays at their grandparents' cosy cottage, where Grandma's cooking is amazing and Grandpa's garden is a playground of adventures. But when a shimmering blue butterfly leads them to a strange glowing bush, Joe suddenly disappears and Jack dives in after him. Inside, they find a dark, haunted forest and a mysterious man called Lucan, who seems friendly—at first. As Lucan's true, frightening form is revealed, the boys must use their wits to escape his trap and find the portal home.

Will Jack and Joe realise in time that not everyone who *seems* kind can be trusted, and can two brothers outsmart a dangerous demon before it's too late?