

Lulu-Light was the brightest firefly in the Glimmer Clan. Everybody called him Lulu. And everybody said he was the brightest. Mostly Lulu.

"Trust me," he liked to say. "I've got this."



Tonight the whole clan was getting ready for the long flight south. Winter was coming, and the cold would blow out every light. So the Glimmer Clan would fly to warm, sleepy Florida.

Papa Flare led the clan. One day, Lulu would lead it too. He was the oldest son. And Lulu planned to start right now.



Papa Flare unrolled the Great Map. It was an old, old leaf covered in silver lines and tiny stars.

"This is how we find our way," he said. "Each star is a glow station. That is where the Source of Light fills us up again. Our light comes from the Source. We cannot make it all by ourselves."



"Never pass a station," said Papa. "Follow the map. Stop where it says."

Lulu counted the stars. There were so many!

"That's a lot of stopping," he whispered.



On the first night, the map showed a long, lazy curve around a marsh.

Lulu squinted. A straight line is shorter than a curve, he thought. Everybody knows that.



"Trust me," he said to everybody.
"I've got this!"

And off he zipped, straight into
the marsh.

The fog was as thick as oatmeal. Lulu flew past a cattail. Then he flew past it again. Then, BONK! He flew into it.

"Ribbit," said a frog. "Lost?"

"No," said Lulu. "I'm exploring."

"Ribbit. You have explored past me three times."



Lulu's light was getting dim. Dimmer. Dimmer still.

Then a warm glow came through the fog. It was Papa Flare.

"Come on, son," he said. He wasn't angry. He just smiled through his soft silver beard. "The clan is this way."



At the first glow station, the whole clan swooped down into a quiet meadow. The Source's light pooled there like a silver pond. One by one, the fireflies dipped their wings and came up shining.



Lulu dipped his wing for one second.

"I'm fine," he said. "I'm not even tired."

But his light was only half as bright as it had been.



On the third night, Lulu saw something amazing.

Lights! Hundreds of lights, red and blue and gold, shining bright on the edge of a big, busy city.

"A station!" cried Lulu. "The biggest one yet! And it's not even on the map!"



He zoomed toward the lights. He circled a sign that said PIZZA.

He circled one that said OPEN. He bumped into a window that said nothing at all.



Buzz. Buzz. Buzz. The lights hummed loudly, but nothing filled him up. Lulu's light grew thin.

"Lulu!" Elio flew up beside him. "Those lights are loud. But they don't fill you."



Lulu's cheeks felt hot. "Oh," he said quietly. "Right."

The clan led him to the real station, just past the hill. Lulu dipped his wing for a second, and they flew on.



The next days were cold and long. Rain slowed the clan down. They were behind.

Lulu flew to the front. "Follow me!" he called. "I know a way to catch up!"

Papa flew at the back with the slow wings. The map showed a star ahead, a glow station by the shore.



"We'll skip it," said Lulu. "We're in a hurry."

"Lulu," said Elio. "The map says stop."

"Trust me," said Lulu. "I've got this."

And the whole clan trusted him. They followed him past the star and out over the wide, black bay.



Halfway across the bay, Lulu's light
began to flicker.

Flicker. Flicker.

Then it went out.



It was the darkest dark he had ever seen.
No stars. No moon. Lulu's wings felt heavy
as wet blankets, and he began to sink.

"Papa?" he whispered. "Anyone?"



And then Lulu saw a tiny glow.

It was Elio.

**Then another light. Then
another. And another!**



One by one, the whole Glimmer Clan flew close, so close their lights touched. They made a path of light across the dark. Warm wings caught Lulu and held him steady. Together, they carried him across the bay.



"I thought I was leading you," said Lulu.

"Trust me," said Papa Flare. "We got this."

On the far shore was another glow station.

This time, Lulu dipped his wings all the way in. Silver light poured over him, from his head to his toes. His light came back, brighter than before.



Then he picked up the Great Map and, for the first time, read every word.

"I thought the map slowed me down," he said slowly. "But it was showing me the way home all along."



After that, Lulu still flew at the front. But he stopped at every single station. He checked the map at every turn.



At last the Glimmer Clan landed in Florida. The night was warm. The air smelled like oranges and rain.



Papa Flare put a wing around Lulu.

"A light on its own goes out," he said.
"But a light that is connected to its
source can lead the way."

