Jay is Calm, Anywhere, Anytime

By Michelle Wanasundera
Illustrated by Begum Manav
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Original illustrations by Begum Manav

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Jay had a little routine.
But, for him, it was a big deal.
His little routine set him up for a great day.
It was simple, too.

Every morning, Jay would open his eyes, roll out his antennae, and stretch out his wings.

Then, he had an important job to do.
Jay’s job was to blow out lanterns from the garden parties the night before—the garden insects loved to party at night.

Jay liked his job, but he did get rather puffed out.

But he knew a trick: each time he saw a flower, he would take a nice long breath in. Then, each time he saw a lantern... Puff! He would blow it out.
Round and round the garden he’d go.

When he saw a rose, he took a deep breath in. It smelt lovely.

Then, he saw a lantern. Puff! Out he blew.

By the end of his rounds, Jay was calm, refreshed, and ready for a great day ahead.

Even better, the calm feeling stayed with him all day long.
But one day, Jay woke up to a startling scene.

The flowers had wrapped up their petals and the lanterns had been put out by a shower of rain.

Jay couldn’t do his morning routine. He had not expected everything to be different that day.

Jay’s heart began to beat faster.

He forgot to breathe in deeply from his belly.

His legs began to wobble.

He started to feel dizzy.
“Are you okay?” asked a flying friend, the dragonfly. “Come, sit down.”

“When I started my routine, I didn’t know there would be wet days like this,” replied Jay.

“Oh, of course there are. The weather is always changing. One time it rained for a whole week.”

That sounded terrible to Jay. “What did you do?”
“Well, wet days are just perfect for getting cosy inside. You can play a game with a friend or make a lovely warm drink,” Dragonfly smiled.

“But I can’t feel calm without sniffing the flowers and blowing out the lanterns,” said Jay.

“Sure, you can.”
“Simply imagine the flowers and the lanterns. That’s what I do and it works a treat. Did you know that imagining is almost as powerful as doing the actual thing?” said Dragonfly, confidently.

But Jay wasn’t convinced.
“Close your eyes right now,” the dragonfly began. “Now, imagine you can see a lovely yellow tulip. Take a long, deep breath in. Can you imagine the smell? Count to five. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.”

Jay could smell the tulip. And the more he imagined, the brighter the yellow petals glowed in his mind.

“Now, breathe out, just like blowing out a lantern,” said the dragonfly.

Jay breathed out.

Then, they tried again. This time Jay imagined smelling lavender. Then, puff, out he blew.
“How do you feel?” asked the dragonfly.

“I feel like I’ve been sniffing flowers and blowing out lanterns,” said Jay. “And I haven’t even left my seat.”

“That’s right,” said Dragonfly. “You can calm yourself anywhere, anytime, no matter what else is happening—even on a rainy day.”
The next day, the sun rose early and Jay knew exactly what to do.

*I’m happy to see the lanterns, thought Jay. But, even if it was raining, I could use deep breathing and my imagination to feel just as good.*
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