

Let's craft a myth that a seven-year-old can love, that a teenager can wrestle with, and that an adult can suddenly realize was the blueprint for the whole civilization.

A myth that is gentle, mischievous, solemn, and true.

This is not a story **about** the Charter.

It is a story that **teaches** the Charter without ever naming it.

Here we go.

****THE STORY OF THE LITTLE LANTERN****

Long ago, before people knew how to live together, the world was full of shadows.

The shadows weren't monsters.

They were just empty places where no one had bothered to care yet.

Where a person forgot to look at another person's face.

Where a child cried without being heard.

Where someone took more than they needed and hid it away.

The shadows grew slowly, like mold on bread.

Nobody meant to make them.

Nobody knew how to stop them.

One day, a wandering child found a lantern sitting by the side of the road.

It wasn't lit.

It wasn't magical.

It was just... waiting.

The lantern had seven tiny windows, each shaped like something familiar:

a hand,

a bowl,

a door,

a thread,

a book,

a shield,

and a leaf.

The child picked up the lantern, and the lantern whispered (as lanterns sometimes do):

****"If you light me, I will show you how the world is supposed to feel."****

The child blinked.

"Supposed to feel?"

"Yes," said the lantern. "Like home."

The child wasn't sure what that meant, but children try things, so they lit the lantern with a spark from two little stones.

The lantern glowed — soft, warm, steady.
And something odd happened.

Wherever the child walked, a tiny patch of shadow melted.

Only a little patch at first.
Like a thumbprint wiped on a foggy window.

But it was enough for someone nearby to see a little more clearly.

A tired woman suddenly saw the hungry boy she'd walked past.
A greedy man suddenly felt embarrassed by the pile he'd hidden.
A lonely elder suddenly felt brave enough to open their door.

The lantern didn't change who they were.
It just let them *see each other again.*

The child wandered from town to town,
and the lantern kept melting shadows —
around animals, around forests, around people who'd forgotten how to be kind.

Soon other children asked:

“Can we have lanterns too?”

The wandering child smiled.

“You already do. They're inside you.
Mine just reminded me how to use it.”

So the child taught them the seven little tricks the lantern whispered:

- * **the hand** (everyone is someone — touch gently)
- * **the bowl** (take only what fills you — share what spills over)
- * **the door** (no one left outside)
- * **the thread** (mend what breaks)
- * **the book** (learn and teach)
- * **the shield** (protect and ask for protection)
- * **the leaf** (leave places better than you found them)

Every child practiced one window at a time.

Sometimes they forgot.
Sometimes they got mad.
Sometimes they wanted everything for themselves.

But the more children who carried lanterns inside them,
the smaller the shadows became —
because shadows hate being seen.

Grown-ups noticed.
They didn't change as quickly, but they followed the light,
because grown-ups secretly want the world to feel like home too.

After many years — not all peaceful, not all easy — the shadows shrank so small
that no one could remember how they ever covered the earth.

And the wandering child, now much older,
set their lantern down on a hill
and whispered to it:

"Thank you.
The children will take it from here."

The lantern winked —
one warm pulse through all seven windows —
and went out.

Not because it died.

Because it wasn't needed anymore.

Why this myth works

A seven-year-old hears:

- * a magic lantern
- * a journey
- * seven glowing windows
- * a world made gentler because children helped

A teenager hears:

- * empathy is not naïve — it's structural
- * light spreads socially, not magically
- * shadows are just neglected spaces

An adult hears:

- * a whole civilization built on the behaviors of children
- * the Charter encoded in symbols
- * a soft revolution

This story doesn't command.
It invites.

It doesn't idealize people.
It trusts them.

And the myth carries one final, hidden truth:

****The lantern is not real magic.
The child is. ****

If you'd like, we can write alternate versions —
a picture-book edition,
a slightly darker "young adult" edition,
a ceremonial retelling used at community gatherings,
or even a version told by an elder to a crowd of children at dusk.