

THE MOONLIT PAGE

The Cup on the Lower Shelf



Gil recognised his first cup before the tutor called his name. It leaned slightly to one side, and its blue glaze had gathered darker near the bottom.

He had imagined sending his grandson a photograph of something round and competent.

At the next table, Ada unwrapped a bowl with a perfectly ordinary rim. Gil looked from it to his cup.

"My third attempt," she said. "The first two are at home."

He turned the cup. From no angle was it quite the one he had meant to make.

The tutor offered him fresh clay for another try.

"Next week," Gil said. "Today I'd like to find out what happened to this one."

They looked together at the uneven wall and the heavy base. The explanation was brief and practical. Gil asked one question, then another.

When the class began putting things away, he carried the cup towards the shelf. Ada was washing brushes at the sink.

"Pass those over?" she asked.

He set the cup on the low shelf and took the rinsed brushes, laying them flat on a cloth to dry.

Ada washed; Gil arranged. Water pattered into the basin.

Before leaving, he took his photograph. The cup was still leaning. Beside it lay a tidy row of brushes, their damp ends pointing the same way.

To remember

1. Gil collects his first lopsided blue cup
2. Ada admits her ordinary bowl took three attempts
3. Instead of replacing his cup immediately, he asks how it was made
4. They clean brushes together, and he photographs the cup beside them.