

THE MOONLIT PAGE

The Heron's Evening Shift



June had looked after the little rowing club for eighteen years. She checked the locks at sunset, put the oars away, and always made certain the last boat was tied correctly.

One evening a grey heron stood beside the landing, so motionless that June first mistook it for a weathered post. The bird lifted one foot and set it down. Something orange flashed beneath the dock.

June crouched to look. A small safety float, which usually hung from the club's shallow-water marker, had slipped beneath the boards. Its cord was tangled around an old nail.

She fetched the long boat hook, drew the float out carefully, and tied it where the youngest rowers could see it the next morning. The heron did not take an interest in this work. It had its own supper to consider.

Across the canal, her neighbour Ali came to close his boathouse. He watched June put away the hook.

"Late inspection?" he asked.

"Two inspectors," she said, glancing at the bird. "Only one of us carries a checklist."

The heron stepped slowly into the reeds. June turned the key in the clubhouse door and followed the long blue reflection of evening home.

To remember

1. June notices a still heron by the canal landing
2. Orange marker float lies snagged under the boards
3. She rehangs the shallow-water marker
4. June and Ali close their boathouses as the heron walks into reeds.