

The Lantern That Forgot Its Flame

\$LANTN

Eleven-year-old Elara, whose lantern holds no dreams, journeys across floating islands with fox spirit Kael and wind magician Thorne to reignite her flame before permanent darkness swallows her future.

ONE SENTENCE

Logline

Eleven-year-old Elara, whose lantern holds no dreams, journeys across floating islands with fox spirit Kael and wind magician Thorne to reignite her flame before permanent darkness swallows her future.

Treatment

Act 1: On the drifting island of Vespera, Elara lives in a cramped lantern-lit cottage with her mother. At the annual Dreamkindling, her lantern remains black while every other child's glows with future visions. Ashamed, she flees into the melancholy Whisperwood where she meets Kael, a fox spirit who steals glowing threads from lanterns for fun, and Thorne, a wind magician who once guarded the winds but now forgets names and directions. They agree to help her reach the extinct Ashforge, the only place lost dreams can be reignited. Act 2: The trio crosses the chain of floating islands. Kael's pranks cause them to lose their sky-sail and crash onto the sorrowful island of Veiled Pines. Thorne's faulty memory summons the wrong winds, trapping them in a forest where trees whisper forgotten ambitions. At the midpoint, Elara briefly ignites a small spark using a stolen thread, but it reveals her mother's hidden grief at having raised a child without dreams. The shadow weaver Nyra closes in, drawn to the spark, and steals Thorne's last clear memory. Elara's lantern stays dark. In the darkest moment, Kael's own flame-thread is torn away, leaving him formless. Elara must decide whether to abandon the quest. Act 3: Elara enters the Ashforge alone. She confronts Nyra by offering her own emptiness as bait, forcing the weaver to reveal the flame's location inside the last living ember. Elara reignites her lantern with a single, honest memory of her mother's lullaby. The islands realign. Kael regains shape and Thorne remembers his true name. On the final island, Elara returns home at dusk, her lantern now emitting a steady, quiet light that draws the other children closer rather than away.

Beat Sheet

- p. 1 Opening Image**
Elara sits on a mossy dock, holding a cold black lantern while dozens of glowing lanterns drift past on evening wind currents.
- p. 5 Theme Stated**
Elara's mother tells her, 'A dark lantern doesn't mean no future, it means the light is waiting for you to choose it.'
- p. 10 Setup**
Vespera island life, lantern-kindling ceremony, Elara's isolation among luminous peers.
- p. 12 Catalyst**
At the Dreamkindling festival, Elara's lantern refuses to light.
- p. 15 Debate**
Elara hides in her room, convinced she must leave the island to spare her mother shame.
- p. 25 Break Into Two**
Elara steps onto the sky-bridge with Kael and Thorne, choosing the journey.
- p. 30 B Story**
Kael teaches Elara how to steal small lights; Thorne begins to remember fragments of his own lost past.
- p. 30 Fun and Games**
Island-hopping sequences: sailing on wind currents, dodging dream-eating moths, Kael's lantern pranks.
- p. 55 Midpoint**
Elara's first spark reveals her mother's private sorrow; false victory turns bitter.
- p. 60 Bad Guys Close In**
Nyra tracks the spark; Thorne forgets how to summon the right winds.
- p. 75 All Is Lost**
Nyra tears Kael's flame-thread; he collapses into mist, Thorne loses all memory of their quest.
- p. 80 Dark Night of Soul**
Elara sits alone in the Ashforge ruins, lantern still black, ready to give up.
- p. 85 Break Into Three**
Elara remembers her mother's lullaby and offers her own emptiness to Nyra.
- p. 95 Finale**
Elara reignites the lantern inside the last ember; Nyra dissolves, islands realign.
- p.110 Final Image**
Elara stands on the same dock at dusk, her lantern casting a steady glow that pulls other lanterns toward it.

Opening Scene

INT. ELARA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Rain taps the copper lantern frames hanging from the rafters. ELARA (11) sits on a wooden stool, knees drawn up, staring at the black lantern in her lap. Its glass is cold, no flame inside. Her mother, LIRA (late 30s), folds a sky-sail in the corner.

LIRA

The others are already at the dock. You don't have to go.

ELARA

I'm not scared.

LIRA

Then come sit with me until the wind changes.

Elara doesn't move. She turns the lantern over. A single drop of rainwater slides down the inside of the glass and pools at the bottom like ink.

EXT. VESPERA DOCK - NIGHT

Dozens of children hold glowing lanterns. Their lights bob and drift on the wind. Elara steps onto the dock last. Her black lantern draws stares. A boy named MIRON snickers. Kael, a small fox-shaped shadow, watches from the roof of a nearby shed, tail flicking.

Elara sets her lantern on the water. It sinks. The other lanterns rise and sail toward the horizon. Elara watches hers disappear beneath the black surface.

Characters

Elara PROTAGONIST

11

LOOK Small frame, pale skin with faint freckles, straight black hair cut unevenly at the chin. Wears a patched gray coat too large for her and always carries the cold lantern in both hands.

VOICE Soft, slightly hoarse from disuse. Speaks in short sentences, often trailing off. Uses pauses instead of filler words. When nervous, her voice drops to a whisper.

ARC Starts as a withdrawn child convinced her darkness makes her a burden. Learns to treat her emptiness as a choice rather than a flaw. Ends by offering that emptiness to save others, becoming the quiet center others gather around.

Kael DEUTERAGONIST

ageless

LOOK Sleek red-black fur that shifts like smoke, golden eyes, and a tail that splits into two when excited. Often appears as a fox the size of a large dog or a darting shadow.

VOICE Quick, playful, with a constant undercurrent of mischief. Rolls consonants, adds little laughs between words. Never uses titles or formal address.

ARC Begins as a selfish thief of light who cares only for his own amusement. Loses his own thread and must rely on Elara's choice to exist again. Ends by protecting her lantern instead of stealing from it.

Thorne SUPPORTING

late 70s

LOOK Tall and stooped, wind-bitten skin, white hair that moves even in still air. Wears layered robes stitched with faded maps. Carries a broken compass that spins randomly.

VOICE Slow, gravelly, frequently interrupts himself to ask where he is. Forgets names but remembers weather patterns and old songs.

ARC Begins forgetful and directionless after losing his own dream. Regains clarity by helping Elara and finally remembers his true purpose as guardian of the winds.

Nyra ANTAGONIST

ageless

LOOK Tall figure wrapped in shifting gray veils, face never fully visible. Lantern glass embedded in her palms that drink light from the air.

VOICE Low and measured, almost soothing. Speaks in statements that sound like offers. Never raises her voice.

ARC A weaver who feeds on abandoned dreams. Grows stronger the longer Elara hesitates, then dissolves when Elara willingly offers her darkness instead of fighting to keep it.

Locations

Vespera Dock EXT.

Wooden planks worn smooth by wind, copper mooring rings, hundreds of empty lantern hooks. Moss grows between boards. The water below is black and still.

Quiet anticipation under bruised purple twilight with faint gold reflections from distant lanterns.

Whisperwood EXT.

Dense trees whose leaves are translucent and carry faint voices. Fallen leaves form soft gray carpets. Thin white threads hang between branches like abandoned spider silk.

Melancholy hush broken only by distant wind chimes made of old lantern glass.

Ashforge Ruins INT.

Black stone arches half-buried in ash, a single glowing ember in the center pit. Cracked lantern molds line the walls. Cold drafts move the ash in slow spirals.

Still and heavy, lit only by the single ember casting long, sharp shadows.

Style

PALETTE

deep indigo nights, dull brass lantern casings, ashen gray foliage, faint ember orange, bone-white mist

REFERENCES

Lighting like Pan's Labyrinth (del Toro) - practical sources only, deep pockets of shadow. Pacing like The Lighthouse (Eggers) - slow, deliberate silences. Composition like Coraline (Selick) - tight frames, foreground clutter, distant glowing points.

TONE

Gentle melancholy undercut by sudden mischief. The film moves at the speed of a child walking through an unfamiliar forest: curious, careful, occasionally startled into wonder. Silence is used as punctuation rather than absence.

SOUND DESIGN

Score built from wind recorded through hollow reeds and distant glass chimes. No orchestral swell. Foley focuses on cloth movement, lantern metal, and leaf texture. Long stretches without music where only breath and wind remain.

Director's Vision

I want the audience to feel the weight of a child's silence. This is not a story about finding your dream; it is a story about what you do when you discover you have none. The floating islands will never feel magical in the usual way. They drift because something essential has already been lost. I want parents to leave the cinema holding their children's hands tighter and children to leave feeling strangely older, as if someone finally acknowledged that not every light is guaranteed. The fox spirit provides the necessary mischief so the sorrow never becomes oppressive. The final image of Elara's lantern drawing others toward it is meant to stay with the viewer long after they exit the theater: a quiet refusal to let emptiness remain empty.

Dialogue Samples

- > Elara: It doesn't have to glow for anyone else.
- > Kael: If you keep walking like that, the wind will think you're already gone.
- > Thorne: I used to know which way the good winds blow. The name escapes me now.
- > Nyra: Your emptiness is almost beautiful. Let me keep it safe.
- > Elara: I'm not giving it to you. I'm using it.
- > Kael: That ember's smaller than my left ear. Still brighter than anything we've seen in days.
- > Thorne: The compass says we're already there. I think it's lying again.
- > Elara: Mother's song still works when nothing else does.

Screenplay

Title: The Lantern That Forgot Its Flame
Credit: Written by
Author: Anonymous
Draft date: 12 April 2026

FADE IN.

INT. ELARA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Rain taps the copper lantern frames hanging from the rafters. ELARA (11) sits on a wooden stool, knees drawn up, staring at the black lantern in her lap. Its glass is cold, no flame inside. Her mother, LIRA (late 30s), folds a sky-sail in the corner.

ELARA
I'm not scared.

LIRA
Then come sit with me until the wind changes.

Elara doesn't move. She turns the lantern over. A single drop of rainwater slides down the inside of the glass and pools at the bottom like ink.

EXT. VESPERA DOCK - NIGHT

Dozens of children hold glowing lanterns. Their lights bob and drift on the wind. Elara steps onto the dock last. Her black lantern draws stares. KAEL, a small fox-shaped shadow, watches from the roof of a nearby shed, tail flicking.

Elara sets her lantern on the water. It sinks. The other lanterns rise and sail toward the horizon. Elara watches hers disappear beneath the black surface.

INT. ELARA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

Elara sits alone in her room, the black lantern beside her bed. She pulls the patched gray coat tighter.

ELARA
(whisper)
I have to leave.

EXT. WHISPERWOOD - NIGHT

Elara steps onto the sky-bridge. KAEL darts ahead, playful. THORNE stands at the far end, compass spinning.

KAEL
Come on, little dark one. The wind won't wait.

THORNE
Where was I going again?

Elara crosses.

EXT. FLOATING ISLANDS - SERIES OF SHOTS

The trio sails on wind currents between islands. Kael steals tiny threads of light from passing lanterns, laughing. Moths the size of hands swarm; Thorne's broken compass summons gusts that scatter them. Elara watches, silent.

INT. VEILED PINES FOREST - NIGHT

Trees whisper forgotten ambitions. The group is trapped by wrong winds.

THORNE

I knew the path once. Names slip. Winds stay.

KAEL

Names are boring. Light is better.

Elara tries to steal a thread the way Kael showed her. A small spark flickers inside her lantern.

The spark reveals a vision: Lira alone, crying over an empty cradle of light.

ELARA

(soft)

Mother...

NYRA glides from the mist, veils shifting. Lantern glass in her palms drinks the spark. Thorne clutches his head.

THORNE

I... I don't remember why we're here.

Kael's flame-thread is torn away. He collapses into mist.

KAEL

(distant)

Elara...

EXT. ASHFORGE RUINS - NIGHT

Elara enters alone. A single ember glows in the central pit. NYRA waits.

NYRA

Your darkness calls me. Offer it.

Elara remembers the lullaby. She steps forward and opens the lantern completely.

ELARA

Take the empty part. It's all I have.

The ember flares. Nyra dissolves into ash. Kael reforms from the mist, whole. Thorne's compass stops spinning on true north.

EXT. VESPERA DOCK - DUSK

Elara stands on the same dock. Her lantern casts a steady, quiet glow. Other lanterns drift toward it. Children gather close. Kael sits at her feet. Thorne

smiles, remembering.

ELARA

(soft)

It was waiting.

FADE OUT.

Shot List

INT. ELARA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

#1	WIDE	STATIC	Copper lanterns hang from rafters above Elara on a stool with the black lantern in her lap, mother folding sail in shadowed corner. <i>Establish the quiet, practical-lit interior and Elara's small, isolated figure amid deep pockets of shadow.</i>
#2	MEDIUM	STATIC	Elara seated with knees drawn up, staring at the cold black lantern on her lap. <i>Reveal her defiant yet melancholy expression in tight, Coraline-style framing.</i>
#3	OVER-SHOULDER	STATIC	Elara turning the lantern while her mother speaks from the background. <i>Capture the emotional distance between mother and child during their exchange.</i>
#4	INSERT	STATIC	Rainwater drop sliding inside the lantern glass and pooling like ink. <i>Highlight the lantern's emptiness and the quiet sorrow of the moment.</i>
#1	MEDIUM	STATIC	Elara alone in her room pulling the gray coat tighter beside the black lantern. <i>Return to her solitary resolve in the same shadowed space.</i>
#2	CLOSE	STATIC	Elara whispering her decision to leave. <i>Intensify the intimate moment of quiet determination.</i>

EXT. VESPERA DOCK - NIGHT

#1	WIDE	STATIC	Dozens of children holding glowing lanterns on the misty dock at night. <i>Establish the ritualistic gathering with distant glowing points against indigo darkness.</i>
#2	MEDIUM	TRACK	Elara stepping onto the dock last with her unlit black lantern drawing stares. <i>Show her isolation and the curious, careful mood of the scene.</i>
#3	CLOSE	STATIC	Kael the fox-shadow watching from the shed roof, tail flicking. <i>Introduce the mischievous companion with a hint of wonder and secrecy.</i>
#4	MEDIUM	TILT-DOWN	Elara's lantern sinking into black water while others rise and sail away. <i>Convey loss and quiet melancholy as her light disappears beneath the surface.</i>

EXT. WHISPERWOOD - NIGHT

#1	WIDE	STATIC	Elara stepping onto the sky-bridge with Kael darting ahead and Thorne at the far end. <i>Set the mysterious forest crossing with practical lantern light piercing mist.</i>
#2	TWO-SHOT	TRACK	Kael and Thorne exchanging lines as Elara crosses the bridge. <i>Advance the group's playful yet uncertain dynamic.</i>

EXT. FLOATING ISLANDS - SERIES OF SHOTS

#1	WIDE	CRANE	Trio sailing on wind currents between floating islands under ember-orange skies. <i>Open the journey with sweeping, deliberate motion and glowing distant points.</i>
#2	MEDIUM	HANDHELD	Kael stealing threads of light from lanterns while moths swarm. <i>Capture mischievous energy and tactile wonder in tight, cluttered frames.</i>
#3	CLOSE	STATIC	Thorne's spinning compass summoning gusts that scatter moths. <i>Highlight the compass's magical utility amid the slow, silent pacing.</i>
#4	MEDIUM	STATIC	Elara watching silently as the group travels. <i>Emphasize her observant, gentle melancholy within the adventure.</i>

INT. VEILED PINES FOREST - NIGHT

#1	WIDE	STATIC	Group trapped among whispering trees with wrong winds swirling. <i>Establish the trapped, disoriented atmosphere with deep forest shadows.</i>
#2	CLOSE	STATIC	Elara attempting to steal a light thread, sparking her lantern. <i>Build tension and sudden wonder as the spark appears.</i>
#3	INSERT	STATIC	Vision of Lira crying over an empty cradle revealed by the spark. <i>Deliver the emotional memory punch with intimate, shallow focus.</i>

#4 MEDIUM STATIC

Nyra gliding from mist and taking the spark while the group reacts.
Introduce the antagonist and heighten the sense of loss and confusion.

EXT. ASHFORGE RUINS - NIGHT

#1 WIDE STATIC

Elara entering the ruins alone toward the central ember pit where Nyra waits.
Frame the final confrontation with stark practical lighting and bone-white mist.

#2 CLOSE STATIC

Elara opening the lantern and offering its emptiness.
Capture her vulnerable, sacrificial moment in tight composition.

#3 MEDIUM STATIC

Ember flaring, Nyra dissolving, Kael reforming, and compass settling.
Resolve the conflict with a burst of light and restored order.

EXT. VESPERA DOCK - DUSK

#1 WIDE STATIC

Elara on the dock with her now-glowing lantern drawing other children close.
Close the story on a note of quiet belonging and gentle wonder.

#2 MEDIUM STATIC

Kael at Elara's feet and Thorne smiling as lanterns gather.
Show the restored family and peaceful resolution in soft dusk light.

Characters

4 PRINCIPALS

CHARACTERS

PROTAGONIST

11

Small frame, pale skin with faint freckles, straight black hair cut unevenly at the chin. Wears a patched gray coat too large for her and always carries the cold lantern in both hands.



DEUTERAGONIST

ageless

Sleek red-black fur that shifts like smoke, golden eyes, and a tail that splits into two when excited. Often appears as a fox the size of a large dog or a darting shadow.



CHARACTERS

SUPPORTING

late 70s

Tall and stooped, wind-bitten skin, white hair that moves even in still air. Wears layered robes stitched with faded maps. Carries a broken compass that spins randomly.



ANTAGONIST

ageless

Tall figure wrapped in shifting gray veils, face never fully visible. Lantern glass embedded in her palms that drink light from the air.



Locations

3 SETTINGS

LOCATIONS



EXT.

Wooden planks worn smooth by wind, copper mooring rings, hundreds of empty lantern hooks. Moss grows between boards. The water below is black and still.

Quiet anticipation under bruised purple twilight with faint gold reflections from distant lanterns.

LOCATIONS

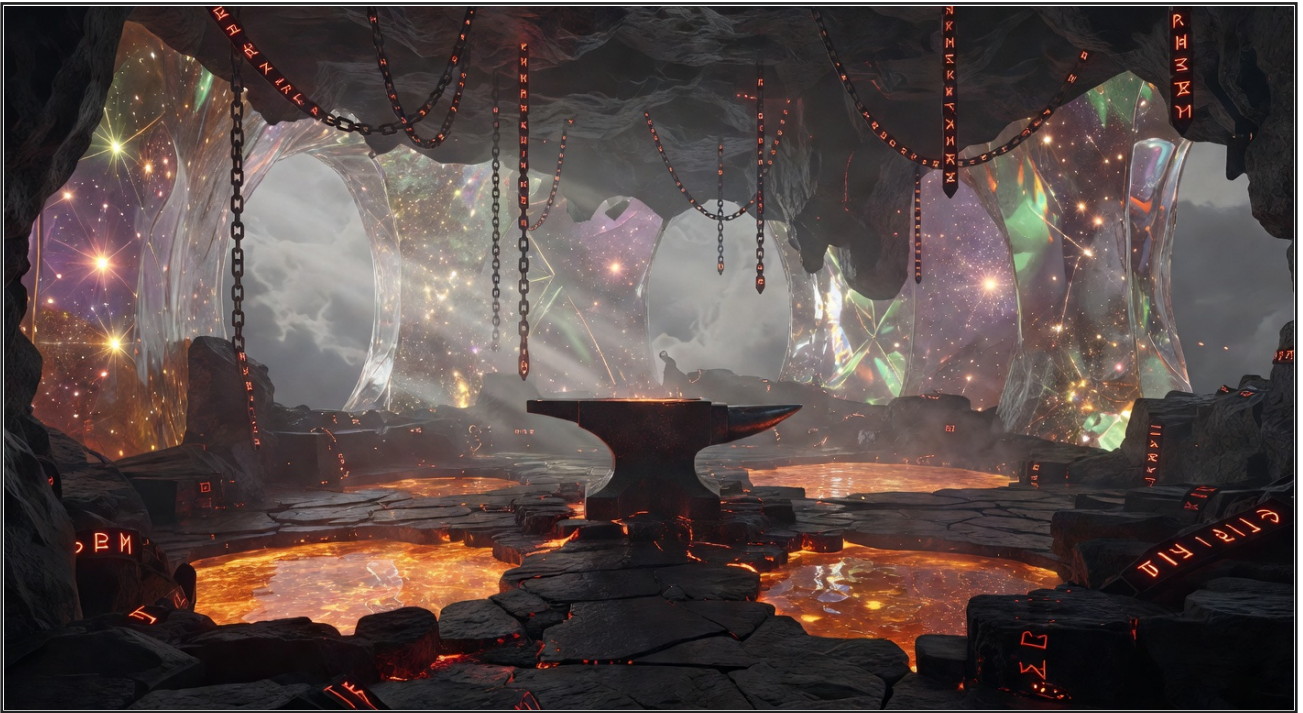


EXT.

Dense trees whose leaves are translucent and carry faint voices. Fallen leaves form soft gray carpets. Thin white threads hang between branches like abandoned spider silk.

Melancholy hush broken only by distant wind chimes made of old lantern glass.

LOCATIONS



INT.

Black stone arches half-buried in ash, a single glowing ember in the center pit. Cracked lantern molds line the walls. Cold drafts move the ash in slow spirals.

Still and heavy, lit only by the single ember casting long, sharp shadows.

Storyboard

6 FRAMES

STORYBOARD

FRAME 1



FRAME 2



STORYBOARD

FRAME 3



FRAME 4



STORYBOARD

FRAME 5



FRAME 6

