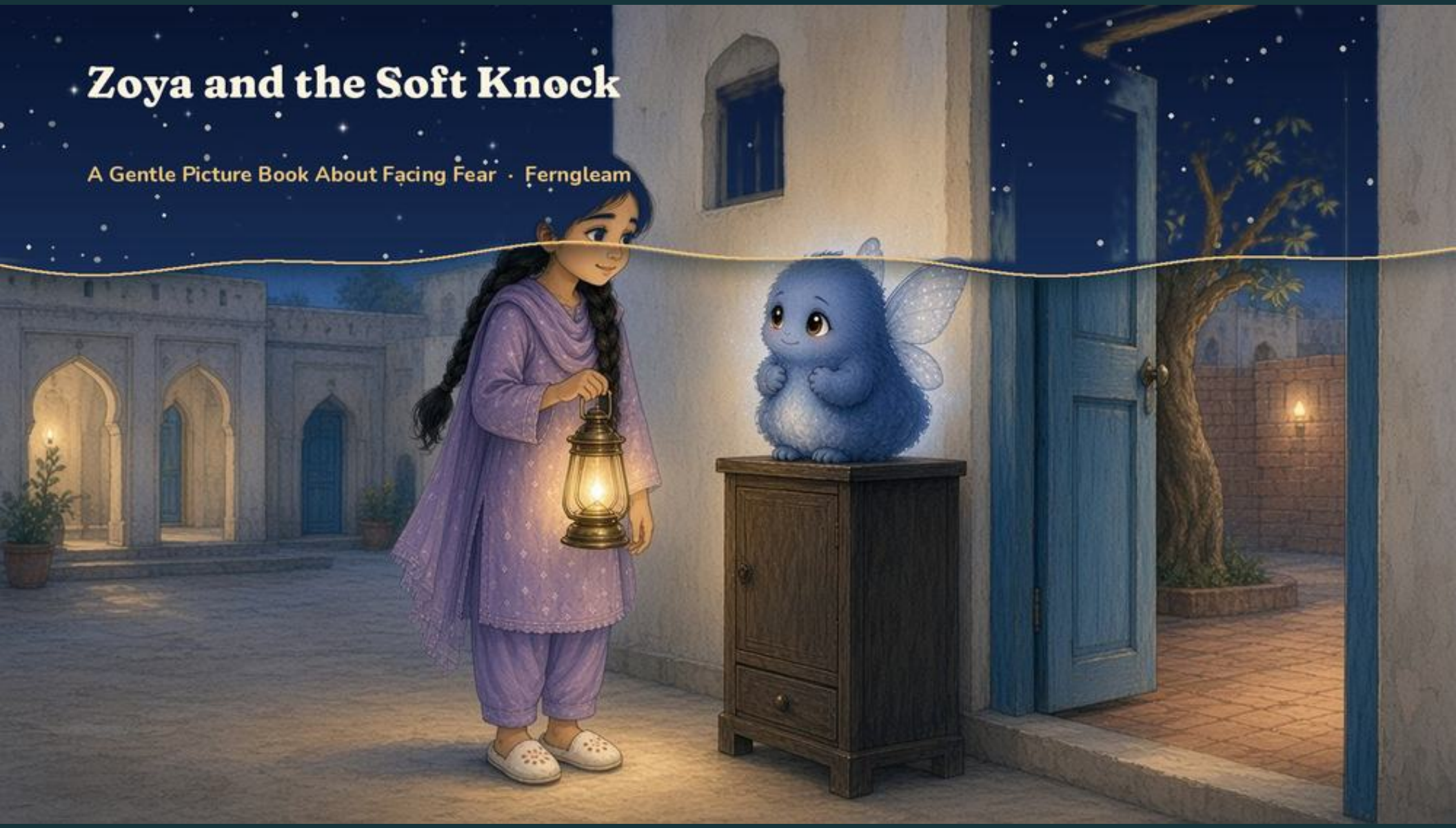
Zoya and the Soft Knock

A Gentle Picture Book About Facing Fear · Ferngleam



Zoya and the Soft Knock

A Gentle Picture Book About Facing Fear

Ferngleam · First free edition, October 2026

This book is free. You are welcome to download, read, print and share it, unchanged and free of charge. Please don't sell it.

The story text, the illustrations and the audio narration were made with AI tools, then edited and checked for this edition.

Read by a computer voice: Piper text-to-speech, "Cori" voice (en_GB-cori-high) by Bryce Beattie, public domain.

Before You Read

This is a gentle spooky story about a girl, a soft knock in the night, and what she finds when she looks closely.

As you read, notice how the dark corridor changes once the lantern light arrives.

In Nano’s old haveli, the night was quiet except for one soft sound: knock… knock.

Zoya sat up in bed. The knock came from the long dark corridor.

In her mind the knock grew huge. She pictured a tall thin shadow with long fingers waiting at the end of the hall.

Her heart beat like a drum.

Zoya pulled the quilt over her head until only her eyes peeped out.

The soft knock came again, patient and small, but somehow that made it scarier.

Nano appeared with a small brass lantern. Warm light pooled on the floor.

“Scary sounds grow bigger in the dark,” she whispered. “Shall we look together?”

They walked the corridor slowly. Shadows stretched on the cream walls like long blue ribbons.

Zoya held Nano’s sleeve with one hand and the lantern with the other.

Knock… knock. This time it came from behind the tall wooden cupboard near the courtyard door.

Zoya’s feet wanted to run back to bed.

She almost turned away. Then she lifted the lantern a little closer, just enough to see.

Dust motes floated in the beam. Something soft stirred in the dark gap.

It was not a tall shadow at all. A tiny night-spirit sat there, indigo as a raincloud, with gentle amber eyes and moth-soft silver wings.

It tapped the wood with tiny fists because it was lost and cold.

Zoya’s fear loosened, like a knot coming undone.

“Oh,” she breathed. “You were only knocking because you needed help.”

She set a warm saucer of milk by the window and folded a soft cloth into a little nest.

The night-spirit, whom she named Raat, crept closer, wings trembling with thanks.

Raat’s amber eyes glowed happily. The soft knock became a gentle thank-you tap on the sill.

Outside, the courtyard neem whispered, and the night felt less sharp.

Later, when something creaked or tapped in the dark, Zoya remembered the lantern and the kind look.

“Hello?” she would say softly. “I’m listening.” Often it was only the wind — and sometimes it was Raat, saying good night.

The Lesson

Fear often paints pictures that are bigger and sharper than the truth. A soft knock can sound like a monster until you bring a little light and a little courage.

You do not have to be fearless. You only have to look kindly, carefully, and take one small step closer. Many scary things turn ordinary — or even friendly — when you meet them that way.

Look closely at what frightens you; the dark often softens when you meet it with a kind light.

Conclusion

Zoya still keeps the brass lantern by her bed in Nano's haveli.

What soft knock will you look at kindly today?

The End