

Oliver and Dad's Treasure





One summer morning Oliver and Grandma Gale pushed open the creaky gate of the old house.

“This is where your daddy grew up,” said Grandma Gale, turning the key in the lock. “Once he was just as small as you are now.”

The door gave a sigh and opened. Oliver breathed in apples, old wood and something mysterious. Inside, everything lay asleep under a soft blanket of dust: the clock on the wall, the chairs, the shelves of books.

Oliver tiptoed over the threshold and whispered:

“Did Daddy leave anything here?”

“Hmm,” said Grandma, narrowing her eyes slyly. “Let’s find out, shall we?”



Daddy's room smelled of old books. Fat volumes stood in a row on the shelf, and one of them — the most battered of all, in a faded blue cover — was about computers.

“That was his favorite,” Grandma Gale nodded.

Oliver pulled the book off the shelf... and suddenly — swish! — a yellowed sheet of squared paper slid out of it and sailed down onto the rug.

Oliver picked it up and froze. Drawn on it in colored pencil were a little house, a tree, a well — and a big red cross.

“Grandma...” he whispered.

“It's a real treasure map!”



They spread the map out on the table. Along the bottom, someone had printed a riddle in careful capital letters:

“A hundred years I’ve creaked and swayed,
and shared my apples in the shade.

Come close and find the words I hide —
my rough old bark has kept them inside.”

Oliver wrinkled up his forehead. A hundred years... apples... bark...

“The apple tree!” he shouted, jumping into the air.

“The old apple tree in the yard!”

Grandma Gale laughed.

“Lead the way, treasure hunter!”

And Oliver raced down the stairs, shouting loud enough for the whole house to hear:

“Treasure ahoy — here comes the boy!”



The old apple tree stood in the middle of the yard, all wrinkled, like a proper hundred-year-old grandmother. Oliver walked round it once, then again, running his fingers over the rough bark. And suddenly — there they were! Letters, carved long, long ago:

“Under the house there’s a house below,
with no windows, no doors — but a secret to show.
Climb down, and you’ll read what you need to know.”

“A house under a house?” Oliver wondered.

“Is there even such a thing?”

But there was no time to stand and think.

“Treasure ahoy — here comes the boy!” he called to the apple tree, and the apple tree creaked back.



A house under a house... no windows, no doors... Oliver walked round and round on the grass, thinking so hard that even his ears wiggled.

And then all at once he stopped.

“The cellar! A house under the house — it’s the cellar!”

“Of course it is!” Grandma Gale threw up her hands.

“There’s an old hatch in the hallway. Your daddy used to climb down there for jam when he was little.”

They rolled back the rug. Underneath hid a square wooden lid with an iron ring. Oliver and Grandma pulled together — one, two, three! The hatch groaned and opened.

Steep steps led down into the dark.



Oliver climbed down the little ladder, following the beam of the flashlight. Down below it was dark and cool and terribly interesting. Dusty jars glinted on the shelves.

“Who’s there?” Oliver asked, just in case.

“...there... there...” answered the echo.

Oliver giggled.

“Don’t be scared, Grandma. This is a friendly cellar.”

The beam of the flashlight slid across the ceiling — and stopped. On a wide dark beam, someone had scratched some words:

“I wear a collar of cold gray stone,
and deep in my pocket I keep the rain.
Look inside — but don’t dive in!”



A collar of stone... rain in its pocket... Oliver screwed his eyes shut, thought hard — and jumped up.

“The well! It’s got a stone collar, and water inside!”

“Treasure ahoy — here comes the boy!” — and off he tore across the yard so fast that Grandma Gale could hardly keep up.

At the well, Oliver stood on tiptoe and peered hopefully into the bucket. What if the chest was sitting right there?

But there was nothing in the bucket except rainwater.

“Only buckets go diving down there,” laughed Grandma Gale. “And the riddle said look inside, not dive inside. Search the outside!”



Oliver walked slowly round the well, studying every single stone. Here was a crack... here was a snail... and here — under a soft little cushion of moss — something was scratched!

He rubbed the stone with his palm. The moss came away, and the letters peeped out into the sunshine:

“The white stone under the raspberries.

DIG HERE.”

Oliver looked up at Grandma. Grandma looked across at the raspberry canes by the fence.

This riddle didn’t need any solving. It needed running!



The raspberry canes prickled and tickled and bopped Oliver on the nose with their berries.

“The raspberries are guarding the treasure,” said Grandma Gale.

“Then I’ll eat the guards,” Oliver answered importantly, and ate one berry. Then a second. Then a third — for courage.

He crawled deeper and deeper under the bushes on his hands and knees... and suddenly his palm came down on something smooth and cool. The white stone! And scratched into it: “DIG HERE”.

“Treasure ahoy — here comes the boy!” Oliver shouted from under the raspberries, and berries came showering off the branches.



Grandma Gale fetched a little spade, and Oliver dug with all his might. Earth flew in every direction, and the hole grew deeper and deeper.

And suddenly — clunk!

The spade knocked against something hard. Not a stone.
Not a root. Wood!

Oliver threw down the spade and started scooping the earth away with his hands. First a corner appeared... then a lid... then a whole old wooden chest!

Oliver pulled — and the chest came grudgingly out of the ground and sat down heavily on the grass.

The lid was shut.

“Shall we open it?” Oliver asked in a whisper.

“Let’s open it,” Grandma whispered back.



The lid creaked and lifted.

Inside, nestled together like eggs in a nest, lay little green turtle figures, a magazine about computers and a real hockey puck. And on top — a note, written in round, careful handwriting:

“I grew up. They didn’t.

Whoever finds them — play for me.”

“Your daddy wrote that,” said Grandma Gale softly. “When he was a boy.”

Oliver said nothing. Daddy had drawn the map. Daddy had hidden the riddles. Little Daddy — just the same as him.

Oliver pressed the note to his chest and held it there for a long, long time.



That evening, out on the porch, Grandma dialed Daddy's number.

"Dad, look!"

Oliver held a little green turtle up to the screen.

"That's my bravest one!" gasped Daddy on the phone.

"You found my chest! And I'd forgotten where I buried it!"

"I solved all the riddles! Every single one!"

"Try the puck," said Daddy. "It makes a wonderful noise on the porch boards."

Oliver sent the puck sliding — knock-knock-knock! — and Daddy laughed as though he were sitting right there beside them.

"Play for me," said Daddy.

"I already am!" Oliver answered.

And Grandma Gale wiped away one happy little tear.



Night fell. The first stars lit up above the roof of the old house.

Oliver sat under the apple tree. On his lap lay the turtles, the magazine and the puck — Daddy's treasure, which had waited for him all those years.

"Grandma," he said thoughtfully, "when I grow up, I'm going to hide a treasure too. With my toys and my riddles. For whoever comes after me."

"That's exactly how it lives on," Grandma Gale smiled.

"From one heart to the next."

The apple tree creaked softly, as if it agreed.

And Oliver looked up at the stars and whispered:

"Treasure ahoy... and one day, another boy."