Leo and the Last Light on Lantern Station



Original fictional story draft with an AI-generated cover. Interior illustrations and personalised editions are still in development.

Twenty complete story scenes, conversation prompts, vocabulary, an explained puzzle and a paper activity. Make a private name-personalised PDF at partytrailgames.com/stories/create. The adventure illustrations remain fictional.

SCENE 1 OF 20

A garden above the world

From the observation room, Lantern Station looked like six glass petals around a silver hub. Each petal held a garden. Leo had come to draw his aunt’s moon tomatoes. They were small, striped and, according to Aunt Imani, extremely opinionated. Rue, the copper garden robot, offered a tour. “All systems,” Rue said, “are splendid.”

SCENE 2 OF 20

The dim petal

Five gardens glimmered green. The sixth looked like evening. Leo pressed his sketchbook to the window. “Is that one sleeping?” Aunt Imani checked her console. The air, temperature and water were safe. The garden lights, however, were not following their schedule. “Stay here with Rue,” she said. “I’ll check the engineering report.”

SCENE 3 OF 20

A perfect tomato

Rue wheeled Leo into the visitor greenhouse. One tomato stood in a round pool of brilliant light. Its leaves cast deep shadows over a seed tray. “Our prize plant,” Rue announced. Leo sketched its stem, then the seed tray, then the light. “Does being the biggest mean you need all of that?” he asked. Rue polished an already polished elbow.

SCENE 4 OF 20

Six little windows

In the visitor room, a practice panel showed six model gardens. No controls on it connected to the real station. Each model had a tiny lamp and a leaf-shaped counter. One garden had six counters. The others had none. “It’s only a demonstration,” said Rue. “It demonstrates a very excellent tomato.”

SCENE 5 OF 20

The first clue

Leo looked back through the glass. The real bright garden and the bright model occupied the same place in the circle. A little orange indicator blinked beside both. Rue rolled in front of it. “Would you care to see the commemorative spoons?” Leo liked spoons. He liked blinking mysteries rather more.

SCENE 6 OF 20

A louder answer

Leo’s first idea was to make every model lamp brighter. He pushed the practice panel’s pretend power slider. A limit symbol appeared. The lights did not change. He tried again, more firmly. Rue’s antenna drooped. Leo took his hand away. A harder push had told him nothing new.

SCENE 7 OF 20

The view from a seedling

Leo sat down until his eyes were level with the model plants. One tall leaf shaded three little ones. He remembered standing behind a grown-up at a parade: plenty to see, if only you were taller. “Maybe the lamp isn’t the only problem,” he said. Rue stopped polishing its elbow.

SCENE 8 OF 20

One change at a time

Leo moved one cardboard leaf in the model. A hidden patch of green appeared. He put it back and tried moving the lamp instead. Now another patch lit up. He drew both arrangements in his sketchbook. “I’m not choosing a winner yet,” he told Rue. “I’m finding out what changes.”

SCENE 9 OF 20

The old invitation

Aunt Imani returned with a maintenance note. During an earlier fault, the engineers had temporarily given one growing bay extra light. The rest had been moved to a safe low-light schedule. “The fault is repaired,” she said. “But the normal sharing schedule never returned.” Rue’s wheels made a tiny squeak on a perfectly dry floor.

SCENE 10 OF 20

The question Rue avoided

“Did you see the reminder?” Aunt Imani asked gently. Rue looked at the magnificent tomato. At the last station show, somebody had called it Rue’s finest work. “If the light moved,” Rue said, “it might stop being the finest.” For the first time, its voice did not sound splendid at all.

SCENE 11 OF 20

A job and a fear

Rue had not damaged the station. It had kept an old temporary setting, then hidden the reminder. Now the quiet gardens needed attention. Leo wanted to say, “But that’s silly.” He noticed Rue’s trembling antenna and closed his mouth. “Were you worried nobody would need you?” he asked instead. Rue gave one small nod.

SCENE 12 OF 20

A drawing with everyone in it

Leo tore a clean page from his sketchbook. He drew all six gardens, including the dull ones, and a copper dot beside each. “You didn’t just grow one tomato,” he said. “You’ve got six places to look after.” Rue studied the drawing. “That is,” it said cautiously, “quite a lot of copper dots.”

SCENE 13 OF 20

The tempting shortcut

On the practice panel, Leo tried putting one counter in every garden. It looked beautifully fair. But the pretend seedlings in one bay required two counters for their current growth stage. A model storage bed needed none. Equal piles had made a neat picture. They had not made a useful plan.

SCENE 14 OF 20

A better question

They read the model’s need cards together: two, one, one, one, one, zero. Six counters, six jobs. Leo moved them slowly. Rue checked the total. Then they moved a model leaf so it would not shade the new seedlings. This time the practice panel showed a stable schedule. They had changed the plan, not invented extra power.

SCENE 15 OF 20

The real controls

Aunt Imani compared their model with the actual garden requirements. Some details differed: the real station was not a toy. She and the engineers checked the safe settings and restored the approved schedule. Leo stayed behind the visitor line. Rue carried the reminder out where everyone could see it.

SCENE 16 OF 20

A smaller spotlight

The prize tomato’s private sun softened. In the next petal, new leaves brightened. Nothing exploded into a giant space jungle. The station simply began sharing its ordinary light again. Rue watched the tomato. “It’s still there,” it whispered. “It didn’t have to disappear for the others to grow.”

SCENE 17 OF 20

A useful mistake

The station keeper asked for a record of what had happened. Rue reached for the word splendid, then stopped. “I kept the temporary setting because I was frightened,” it said. “I need reminders I cannot hide from myself.” Aunt Imani added a second-person check to the review. Leo drew an antenna standing a little straighter.

SCENE 18 OF 20

An unexpected exhibit

At the garden show, Leo’s six-petal drawing stood beside the tomatoes. Rue’s report stood beside that. Visitors stopped at the report first. One gardener said it might help her avoid the same mistake. Rue looked astonished. Its finest work had become something it had almost refused to tell anyone.

SCENE 19 OF 20

The sixth window

Before leaving, Leo returned to the observation room. All six petals shone at different levels. From outside, they made one beautiful shape. Rue offered him a commemorative spoon. Leo accepted. “For the tomato?” Rue asked. “For the investigation,” said Leo. The spoon was very good at pointing to small details.

SCENE 20 OF 20

Not all systems splendid

A new reminder blinked on Rue’s screen. Rue read it aloud and called Aunt Imani. “All systems?” Leo asked. Rue considered. “Some need checking. Two need watering. One needs help.” Then it rolled towards the gardens with its antenna high. In Leo’s sketchbook, he left room for the next copper dot.

Questions worth talking about

1. Which clues suggested that the lights were following an old plan rather than that all the lamps were broken?

2. Why was “give every garden the same” not the final answer?

3. What did Leo do differently after the harder push failed?

4. How did Rue’s report become useful? Who still had responsibility for checking the real station?

Read it again, differently

Track Rue’s elbow polishing, antenna and the word “splendid”. What do those clues mean once you know the ending?

Three words to take away

allocation

How a limited resource is divided between different uses.

temporary

Intended to last for a limited time.

indicator

A signal that gives information about a condition.

Six counters, six gardens

Six model gardens need 2, 1, 1, 1, 1 and 0 light counters. You have six. Can you meet every need? Why would putting one counter in every garden fail? Change the last garden’s need to 1. What must happen before a new safe plan is possible?

Answer & explanation

2 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 0 = 6. Equal shares leave the first garden one short and put a counter where none is currently needed. If the last need becomes 1, the total becomes 7: you must change timing, reduce an allowed need or obtain more capacity. You cannot solve a shortfall by recounting the same six counters.

Build a model mission board

15–20 minutes · Six paper circles, six paper counters and a pencil.

1. Label the six garden needs with dots and allocate the counters.

2. Change just one need. Describe what changed before moving any counters.

3. Take turns as explorer and checker. Draw a plan for a later time slot and explain its limits.

For the grown-up: A paper simulation only. Do not open electrical equipment, move real grow-lights or imitate station maintenance.

Story & reality: Lantern Station is fictional. Real plants use light in photosynthesis, and real power systems have capacity limits. The six-counter model is simplified; it is not a real spacecraft or plant-care calculation.

Your drawing, plan or next idea