

ALABASTER AND THE GRUMPY RAIN



BY **CHILDBOOK.AI**

Alabaster made his last mark on the wall. Thirty-seven! Today was the Mushroom Festival! He wiggled with excitement. His red and white spotted overalls hung ready. He'd ironed every single spot until it was perfect. Old Mossy had hung beautiful lanterns outside. Mama Fern's spore-swirl pies smelled wonderful. The fireflies promised to come at dusk. Everything was ready. Everything was perfect.



Alabaster looked out his window. Something felt different. The sky looked gray instead of blue. He heard a low rumble. His cap-head drooped. "No," he whispered. "Please no." Another rumble came, louder this time. "No no no—" BOOM! Thunder crashed. Then the rain came pouring down all at once. Alabaster pressed his face against the window and watched the drops fall.



Mama Fern rushed outside with her leafy arms full. She carried her pies back inside one by one. Old Mossy slowly took down the wet lanterns. His mossy shell got soaked. The fireflies darted under leaves to hide. Alabaster watched from his window. A raindrop fell from the festival banner into a big puddle. Splash. His perfect day was washing away. Nobody would dance now.



Alabaster stomped inside his mushroom house. He crossed his arms tight. His cap-head felt heavy. A grumpy feeling filled him up from his polka-dot overalls to the very top. It was the grumpiest he'd ever felt. "It isn't fair," he said to his empty room. "I waited thirty-seven whole days!" He plopped down on his leaf-cushion. Outside, the rain kept falling.



Knock knock knock. Alabaster sighed the biggest sigh. He dragged himself to the door and opened it. There stood Sage, his neighbor. The old snail's shell dripped with water. His kind eyes smiled from their stalks. "Hello, Alabaster," Sage said warmly. "Come walk with me." Alabaster put on his little leaf-hat. "Fine," he grumbled. "But I'm not going to enjoy it."



Sage moved slowly through the rain. Alabaster followed, arms still crossed. They walked past the empty festival grounds. They walked past the banner dripping in puddles. Finally they reached the village pond. Sage stopped at the edge. "Watch," he said softly. Alabaster looked at the water. Rain pattered on the surface making circles everywhere. He'd never really noticed that before.



Suddenly, tiny frogs began jumping into the pond. Splash! Splash! Splash! They leaped with such joy! One little frog landed right in the middle of a ripple. The circles spread out and out. Alabaster's eyes grew wide. The frogs seemed so happy. They loved the rain! "Oh," Alabaster said quietly. His arms uncrossed just a little bit. The frogs kept splashing and playing.



"Look up," Sage said gently. Alabaster tilted his cap-head back. Between two gray clouds hung the most tremendous rainbow. Violet melted into blue. Blue flowed into green. Green became gold. It stretched across the whole sky! Alabaster had never seen anything so beautiful. His arms fell completely open. His grumpy feeling got smaller and smaller. "Wow," he breathed. Sage smiled his warm smile.



"The rain didn't ruin the day," Sage said softly. "It just changed it." Alabaster looked at his wise friend. Sage's shell glistened with raindrops. They looked like tiny jewels. Alabaster reached out and gave Sage's mossy shell the smallest, quietest pat. "Thank you," he whispered. Sage's eye-stalks wiggled happily. Together they watched the rainbow until the colors began to fade away.



That evening, something wonderful happened. Mama Fern moved all her pies inside the community hall. Old Mossy slowly strung his lanterns from the ceiling beams instead. The fireflies came in little glass jars on every table. They glowed softly. The hall smelled of warm pie and home. Everyone gathered together, dry and cozy. It wasn't the outdoor festival Alabaster planned. But it felt special anyway.



Music started playing. Alabaster danced with Mama Fern. Her leafy arms twirled him around. He danced with Old Mossy, who moved very slowly but smiled the whole time. He danced with Sage. He danced with tiny frogs who'd come inside. He danced and danced and danced. Maybe seventeen times. Maybe more! He laughed until his cap-head wiggled. This was wonderful after all.



Much later, Alabaster lay in his leaf-bed. Through his window he could still hear the rain. Tap. Tap. Tap. It sounded gentle now, like a lullaby. He thought about the rainbow. The joyful frogs. The cozy hall. His friends' happy faces. He closed his eyes and smiled. Maybe he'd been looking for a perfect day in the wrong place. Perfect was right here all along.



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