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The Rain Elves

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The Rain Elf children had been locked up in their homes for a long time, as it had been hot and the Rain Elves don't like very warm weather. Their mothers, the Rain Clouds, woke up one morning and discovered that the sun was not shining, so they told their children that they could come down and play on the earth for a while.

"But be careful, don't all go at once. Some of you can go, because there are so many of you, many millions. The poor earth would be quite crowded if all the Rain Elves descended at once." So a few children from each Rain Cloud family went out when their mothers opened the cloud door. They descended and arrived on the dry earth.



Oh, the gardens were so happy to see the Rain Elves! The flowers lifted their drooping heads and smiled a joyful welcome. "Where have you been?" they asked. "It's been so long since you were here that we thought you had forgotten about us."

"Oh no, we haven't forgotten about you!" replied the Rain Elves. "But it's been so hot that our mothers wouldn't let us go outside. We can only stay for a short time, because we have many, many millions of brothers who also want to come to the garden. So now we must go back, and the next shower will bring other Rain Elves."



The little flowers were saddened when they heard this, because they were so dusty and thirsty that they could never get enough of the shiny Rain Elves. "What can we do to keep them here?" they whispered to each other. "If they go back to the clouds, the others may not come. Oh, if only the old Wind Witch would come, she might be able to help us."

"She could also get us all into trouble," said a slender lily. "I think we had better trust the Rain Cloud mothers, they know what is best to do."

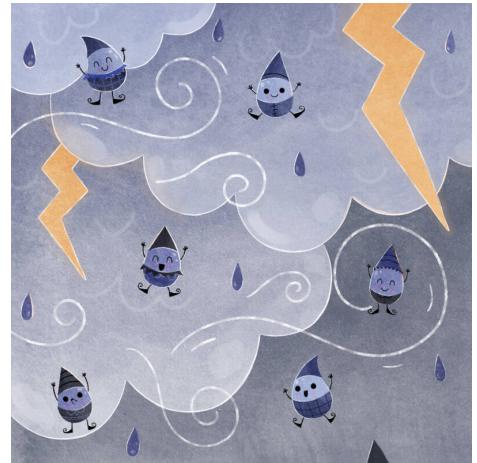
But the words of the poor little lily went unnoticed, and a tall hollyhock was

asked to find the old Wind Witch and ask her to help keep the Rain Elves down all day. The old Wind Witch laughed with joy when she heard the request, for she saw a chance to do evil and make it seem as if she were trying to do good.

"Tell those lovely flowers that they will have the Rain Elves all day, and their brothers too," she said to the hollyhock, and away she flew to the houses of the Rain Clouds. She walked very softly and carefully through the clouds, for she knew that if the mothers of the Rain Cloud heard her, they would immediately call their children home. But slowly she saw her opportunity, and while the Rain Cloud mothers were busy, she quietly opened the door of each cloud one by one and beckoned to the Rain Elves.



"Quickly walk through the door," she said. "Your brothers are having so much fun that they have completely forgotten about you. They really won't be back today, so come along and have fun with them." The little Rain Elves didn't think they needed to wait for their mothers to tell them when to go, they wanted to go outside so badly. They first went down very softly, plop, plop, but then they forgot all the warnings, thinking of the fun they would have, and down they went, splash, splash, splash.



At first, the flowers laughed and danced with joy, as their leaves and blossoms were being washed again and their thirsty petals were getting plenty of water. But after a while, the Rain Elves came so quickly and with so many, and the drops became so thick that the flower petals fell off one by one. Then the stems also bent under the quick arrival of the fairies. Soon the garden was so full of water that the grass was no longer visible, while the old Wind Witch danced over their heads and cackled with delight at the mischief she had caused.

"Oh dear! I didn't know there were so many of you Rain Elves!" cried the tall hollyhock when her stem broke and she fell into the water.

"I was afraid of this," sighed the lily as she fell to the ground. "A few Rain Elves at a time is really the best. The mother Rain Clouds know it."

What a commotion there was in the Rain Cloud homes when the mothers found their doors open! They ran around calling for the Rain Elves to come home. But they were so caught up in the fun they were having, splashing and spattering around, that they didn't hear. Gradually, the old Sun Man also saw them, and it didn't take long before he cast his hot rays on the old Wind Witch and drove her away, and then the Rain Elves also felt the breath of the Sun Man and thought of home.



One by one, they disappeared. Some hid among the roses and other flowers left in the garden, and others were lucky enough to return to their cloud homes and their mothers. But they left the garden as a very sad place. "Whoever thought there were so many of those Rain Elves," said a bedraggled-looking flower. "I will never wish for them to stay all day again."

"The lily was wiser than we thought," said another. "The mother Rain Clouds know what is best for us, and the next time they send some of their children, I think we had better be content and not ask them all to come here at once."

"I think you're right," sighed the tall hollyhock from the ground where she had fallen. "Will I ever look over the wall again, I wonder. No one can ever imagine the kind of fall I've just experienced."

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