

Strawberry Girl

Strawberry Girl sat on a tree stump in front of her house, crying and feeling despondent. Today seemed like one of those days when everything—absolutely everything—went wrong. She had just stumbled over a root with her small bucket full of delicious, ripe berries, scattering them all over the forest floor. Her friend Mole had passed by and told her he was having trouble walking and would therefore not be able to make the long-planned walk to the lake at the edge of the forest. And if worst came to worst, she might not be able to have the picnic around noon with her friend Elmira, as it had just started to rain. She had been looking forward to spending time with her dear friend so much, and even more so, to surprising her with her bucket full of strawberries. Elmira really loved strawberries.

Strawberry Girl retreated under the canopy of her house. She was still crying and feeling moody, but at least she was sheltered from the rain. She watched as the rain fell like a veil and wafts of mist rose from the damp forest floor.

The sight of the peacefully falling rain somehow calmed her, her sobbing subsided and then stopped altogether. She asked herself why things always had to be so difficult here on earth. She had come to this strange planet a long time ago together with her parents, and she could still vividly remember that where she came from everything had been lighter and easier, somehow less troublesome. Why was that so? Was it possible to achieve this carefree state here, too? Strawberry Girl watched the rain falling, deeply immersed in her thoughts.

Was it really such a tragedy that she had spilt her bucket of strawberries? Elmira might not be able to enjoy them, but she would still be delighted to see her dearest friend. And after all, it was still early morning, and who knew, maybe they would still be able to have their picnic. And even if it did not stop raining, she and Elmira could sit under the canopy and have a good time chatting with each other, while the rain fell outside. Moreover, she could now see how the ants, who lived close to her house, were over the moon with the rich gift of the berries scattered all over the forest floor. Despite the rain, they were busily transporting them back to their anthill. Strawberry Girl actually felt quite pleased that she had, albeit unintentionally, made the ants happy by spilling her berries. And the outing with her good friend Mole that she had so much longed for? Well, they could easily catch up on this trip some other time! Instead, why not invite her friend Mole for a cozy afternoon under the canopy, and with him maybe aunt Hornet and her dear friend Passerine Bird? Suddenly several others came to her mind that might enjoy a sociable afternoon at her place.

Strawberry Girl quickly summoned her friend Fox, who always gladly ran her errands, and gave him a list of all the friends she wanted to invite. No sooner had he received the list, than he was off and running. Fox did not mind the rain at all. On the contrary, he felt it was quite pleasant and refreshing in this early summertime which was already turning swelteringly hot. He was back in no time telling Strawberry Girl that everybody had gladly accepted the invitation. When all of her friends had arrived at her house at the appointed time, they thoroughly enjoyed their time together, talking and laughing loudly until the whole house was filled with joy.

As the afternoon drew to an end, all those who had come agreed: They had not spent such a lovely rainy afternoon in such joyous company for a long time. They thanked Strawberry Girl from the bottom of their hearts for having had the great idea of this get-

together, and they decided that they would meet again soon. Just as the sun began to emerge from behind the clouds, they embarked on their journey home.

Elmira stayed at Strawberry Girl's house for the night. When they were both lying in their beds, Strawberry Girl said to her friend, "Well, wasn't it lucky that I stumbled over that root today and spilt my berries?"

"Yes," answered Elmira, "and how lucky we were that it started to rain so you could not go hiking, and we simply had to move our picnic under the canopy!"

Finally, Strawberry Girl replied, "How fortunate we are to have spent such a lovely afternoon with friends," before she fell blissfully asleep.