

Caroline Cottonsoft learns to rain

Early in the morning when the first birds' voices woke up the world, Cynthia Cottonsoft gathered all of her children and led them to their breakfast place - a wide and silent valley crossed by a murmuring brook. Caroline still was all sleepy. She felt chilly and her eyelids were so heavy that they always fell down.

Little Cyrus instead was quite awake, frolicked along the winding brooklet and sipped on all these tender hazes of mist that arose from the bushes by its banks. Morning mist is the most delicious breakfast for little clouds, and very soon they all had eaten their decent fill. They had to leave the rest on the meadows and bushes as glittering dew.

Still being sleepy and drowsy, Caroline was not really hungry. She just nibbled a little bit here and there and finally sat down on the top of a big oak tree that stood in the middle of the meadow. When the sun rose higher in the sky, the warm air pulled her up all by itself, without her having to make any effort.

Caroline was lazy and sluggish, and she was happy that she did not have to attend to the raining exercises scheduled for today in cloud school. That was a really strenuous thing: After the abundant and filling breakfast, the wind pushed the cloud students up the southern mountain ridge, and above the mountain top there stood the cloud governess in her large skirt waiting to keep the youngsters from escaping south. Thus, the young Cumulus schoolchildren had to climb higher and higher until they started sweating out all the humidity they had had for breakfast. In the cold air, the sweat became rain and fell down to earth in short, heavy showers.

Caroline felt pity for Clifford, Clarence and Clyde, as they had to drudge so hard. One day she would have to go through the same raining lessons but for now she was happy to be spared of this terrible exercise. She felt much too lazy for such things even if she had not had that much of a breakfast -

Maybe her laziness was caused by that Stratus family who was just about to come over the valley from its northern end and locked in all the warm air underneath them. Obviously, these boring fellows intended to stay here for a while and have a picnic - after all, there was enough food for everybody in the meadows and forests.

From minute to minute the air became heavier and stickier, and Caroline rushed to slip out of the valley before it was totally covered.

But on her way out she had to swallow such a lot of mist and humidity that she felt really overeaten and surfeit when she reached the open land. "Pooh - " she groaned, "If I only could rain already; that would make me feel a lot better." She tried to draw together and to press but all that came out was a little bit of drizzle, nothing serious, and it did not bring her any relief.

"It's just not my day, today," she thought, "maybe a little workout will make me feel better." She started climbing into the sky until she reached a layer of colder air where she could breathe easier at least. But strange enough, the higher she climbed the more she felt like raining off and getting rid of the overflow humidity inside her. It was almost painful, Caroline felt like bursting -

"Hey, what's up with you, little Cumulus?" a hissy tiny voice asked from behind her.

Caroline turned around. A Cirrus had come up to her, with tousled hair and glittering eyes. Had she climbed so high? Cirri fly where a Cumulus hardly ever goes.

"You look so sad. Can I help you somehow?" the Cirrus asked, watching her curiously.

"My stomach hurts so badly!" Caroline sobbed, "And I have not learned to rain yet. I'm still in cloud kindergarten!" Again she sobbed. If only the wind would be there to help her, or Mom, or aunt Charlotte!

"To rain?" The Cirrus looked helpless. "Hum, I don't know what that is. We don't have to learn those things. But - " she passed her hand over her white feather gown. Suddenly, with a sly laughter, she took Caroline's hand: " - but we know how to have fun. And I guess that's what you need most. Come on!" She plucked on Caroline's skirt, tickled her belly and pinched her arm, "Be not so lame, you fat old bear, come on, dance with me!" She giggled.

Caroline was stunned. She always thought that Cirrus's were arrogant and cheeky, but this one seemed to be really nice. She already felt a lot better, even if her stomach was still hurting.

"What's up? Don't you want to dance? Come on!" The Cirrus pulled Caroline by her hair. "I'm going to show you what needs to be done with a bad stomach. Dance with me!" She pushed her to and fro, and back and forth, jumbled her up, cuffed her in her side and swung the little Cumulus around until Caroline started laughing and -

Yes, and all of a sudden Caroline noticed that the pressure in her stomach loosened and all of the overflow water ran off of her and fell to earth as a gentle rain. Oh that was good!

"I can rain, I can rain!" Caroline screamed out of breath, seized her skirt and lifted it up to see better what was going on below her - her first rain gliding down to earth in a fine gray haze -

"Thank you, oh thank you so much, dear Cirrus" she shouted with joy hugging the other child cloud in gushing happiness.

They spent a long time together dancing and playing in the sky, and all the meteorologists on the earth were wondering why a Cirrus and a Cumulus could play so close together. In the evening they hugged each other goodbye, Caroline flew back to her family, and the Cirrus frolicked giggling into the pale blue of the icy skies.