



Shadow the Squirrel and the Missing Morning Light

Tonya Saif



Every morning, just as the golden sun peeked over the treetops, Shadow the gray squirrel would race through the vibrant forest. He leaped cheerfully from branch to branch, calling out warm greetings to the bluebirds, friendly rabbits, and even the sleepy old owl getting ready for bed. The forest was always full of life, laughter, and bright morning sunshine.



One morning, Shadow noticed something felt strangely wrong. The forest was completely quiet, the flowers remained tightly closed, and the birds were silent while a dim gloom hung in the air. A tiny robin fluttered down to tell Shadow she feared the sun had forgotten their woodland home. Shadow twitched his fluffy tail with determination and promised to find out where the morning light had gone.



Shadow scampered off to investigate and soon ran into Benny Beaver near the stream. When Shadow asked if he had seen the sun, Benny scratched his head and mentioned seeing a very grumpy little cloud floating by before sunrise. Thanking his friend, Shadow hurried deeper into the dim woods to track down this mysterious visitor.



Further down the trail, Shadow met Daisy Deer, who was looking around nervously in the shadowy woods. She whispered that it was too dark for the butterflies to flutter out and play. Shadow reassured Daisy that they would fix everything, and together they searched until they reached the base of the tallest hill in the forest.



At the peak of the hill, floating all by itself, was a small gray cloud looking exceedingly sad and forlorn. Shadow climbed onto a high rock and called out a friendly hello to the little cloud. The cloud sniffled softly and admitted that it didn't mean to make the forest dark, but felt too unhappy to move.



The little cloud explained through tears that yesterday the bigger clouds had laughed because it was so tiny, claiming it was useless at making rain or shade. Feeling lonely and hurt, the tiny cloud had drifted right in front of the sun and forgot to move away. A single teardrop fell from its fluffy cheek as it shared its story.



Shadow, Daisy, and the robin offered gentle words of comfort, assuring the cloud that being small did not make it any less important. They explained that even small clouds perform special jobs, like giving plants a cool break from the hot sun or creating beautiful shapes in the sky. Hearing this, the little cloud blinked in wonder and smiled for the very first time.



Feeling loved and valued, the little cloud slowly floated away from the sun, allowing brilliant golden sunlight to pour across the canopy. Instantly, the woodland burst into life as flowers opened, birds burst into joyful song, and butterflies danced in the warm breeze. All the forest animals cheered with delight as warmth returned to their home.



Shadow invited the little cloud to visit the forest whenever it wanted, which filled the cloud with immense joy. From that day on, the cloud floated over every few days, bringing gentle rain and making silly shapes like dragons, turtles, and giant acorns. Shadow reminded his friends that everyone has something special to share, even if it takes a friend to help them see it.



As evening fell, Shadow curled up comfortably in his cozy nest high inside the great oak tree. He gazed out at his new friend glowing with a soft pink hue in the twilight sky and whispered a gentle goodnight. The entire forest drifted off to sleep in peace, knowing that every friend, no matter how small, makes the world a brighter place.