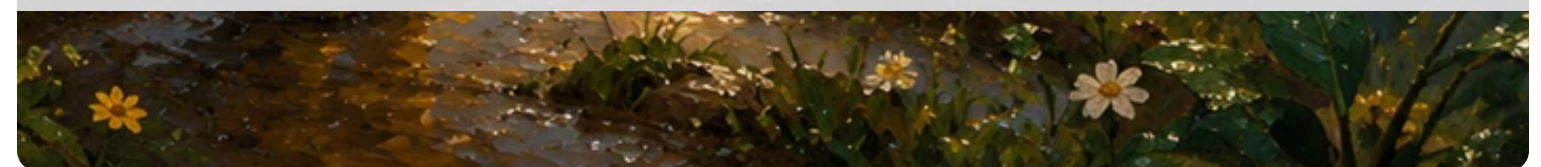




The Little Cloud Who Saved the Day

Jerome





Cirrus is a small, fluffy white cloud with a friendly face, drifting lazily through a brilliant blue sky. While the bigger clouds gather to work, Cirrus prefers to stay light and airy, reshaping himself into funny animals to make the sun smile.



One afternoon, Cirrus watches a dark storm cloud drench a birthday party, sending children running indoors with disappointed faces. He shivers at the sight and promises himself that he will never turn gray or make anyone feel damp and cold.



As the weeks pass, Cirrus travels across vast plains, always holding his breath to keep from growing heavy. He passes over a dusty village where the wells are dry, but he is too afraid of being the bad guy to let a single drop fall.



The world below begins to change, losing its vibrant greens and turning a parched, brittle brown. Cirrus looks down at a forest where the leaves are curling up and the animals are huddling in the shade, looking exhausted by the heat.



Cirrus hovers over a small garden where a young girl is kneeling by a patch of drooping sunflowers. She sighs and looks up at him with hopeful eyes, but Cirrus just puffs himself out, trying to look like a harmless white sheep.



He reaches a riverbed that has turned into a path of dry stones and cracked mud, where the frogs have gone silent. The heat is shimmering off the ground, and Cirrus feels a strange, heavy ache in his chest as he realizes his belly has turned a deep, dark gray.



A wise old owl perched on a withered branch looks up and tells Cirrus that the earth is thirsty for his kindness. Cirrus realizes that his fear of being hated is actually hurting the things he loves, and he finally understands that rain is a gift.



Taking a deep breath, Cirrus stops fighting his weight and allows himself to expand across the sky. He lets out a soft rumble of courage and begins to release a gentle, cooling mist that turns into a steady, rhythmic rainfall.



The transformation is magical as the parched earth drinks deeply and the scent of fresh rain fills the air. Below, the little girl splashes joyfully in the new puddles, and the sunflowers slowly lift their golden heads toward the gray sky.



As the sun peeks through the thinning clouds, a magnificent rainbow arches over the revitalized landscape. Cirrus, now small and white again, feels lighter than ever, knowing that he has brought life and laughter back to the world.