

A Season of Happiness Presents



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Story Four – A VERY IMPORTANT VISITOR

By Dave Hawkins

The summer had been long, hot and dry; and the state of The Valley was proof. “The fields and the hills are all brown and burnt,” moaned Pronto. “It really is a sad-looking place. What I can’t understand, though, is why we haven’t had any rain. We’ve seen rainclouds the other side of the hills, but they never come into The Valley. If they had, the lake wouldn’t be almost dry.”

“I told you how we could fix that,” said Wombat. “I could have spun my umbrella and called Rainbow. She would have come and sent the clouds into The Valley. Oh, no, you said. We can’t call Rainbow every time we have a little problem. Well, this is a big problem now, and it’s your fault, Pronto.”

“You may be right,” Pronto admitted, “But we’ll just have to make the best of it until the winter rains come.”

“Even tomorrow won’t be soon enough,” said Wombat, pointing to something he had seen in his morning newspaper. “If you took the trouble to read the papers you deliver, you’d know why. Guess who’s coming to The Valley today.”

Pronto peered dismally over the top of his teacup at Wombat who was sitting across the table from him. “I can’t imagine,” he replied, “But maybe if you told me I’d know.”

“The Lady Mayoress!” declared Wombat. “She’s a very important person.”

“I know that,” said Pronto a little irritated, “Everyone knows. What I wonder, though, is why?”

Not realising what his friend meant, Wombat stated grumpily: “Because a Lady Mayoress *is* important.”

“That’s the point,” Pronto tried to explain, “Why would someone so important bother to visit at all? What’s so special about The Valley?”

“It says in the paper that people have told her how lovely it is,” Wombat read aloud, “And she wants to see it for herself.”

“Oh dear,” moaned Pronto, “It might have looked lovely once, but not anymore. The Lady Mayoress will think it a very dry, brown and dull place.”

“Actually, I don’t mind brown and dull,” muttered Wombat.

“Well, I don’t like it,” stated Pronto, “And neither will our important visitor. We have to think of a way to brighten up The Valley for the Lady Mayoress. Do you have any ideas?”

“I’m not good with ideas,” admitted Wombat, “But I know who is.”

The two friends went outside to find the Drumlins who were all busy watering the plants in the gardens. As Pronto’s and Wombat’s rainwater tanks were nearly empty, the water for the plants was being taken from the kitchen sink, the bath and the laundry tub. “Stop that jumping around, Purple!” ordered Red, “You are spilling the water, you careless Drumlin.”

“Don’t be too hard on her, Red,” pleaded Orange in her usual whisper, “She is trying.”

“Purple is always trying,” said Yellow, “Very trying when it comes to my patience.”

Blue was coming out of the kitchen with a bucket and said: “That’s the, er, last of the water.”

Green had just noticed Pronto and Wombat were in the garden, and he could see they weren’t too happy. “What’s the matter? Why are you looking so glum?”

“Glum is not good,” said Red, “Drumlins are never glum.”

“But we aren’t Drumlins,” explained Pronto, “And we have a problem.” He went on to tell the Drumlins about the important visitor, and how she would be disappointed to see The Valley the way it was. “I just want the Lady Mayoress to remember The Valley as being bright and colourful instead of brown and boring,” he added finally, then looked gloomily out towards the sunburnt hills.

“Rainbow could paint The Valley all sorts of bright colours,” suggested Purple, “And we could do the Drumlin dance to call her,” she added hopefully and turned to the others to ask: “How about it? Is that a good idea, or what?”

“No, I don’t think so,” said Pronto, “Sorry, Purple; but making out that The Valley is bright and colourful when it isn’t is really the same as not telling the truth.”

“Quite right, Pronto,” declared Red, “And Drumlins are always very truthful.”

“Also,” Pronto went on to say, “We shouldn’t keep calling Rainbow every time we have a problem. We need to sort some things out ourselves.”

“Anyway,” explained Blue, “The, er, Valley is supposed to be mainly, er, green; not all kinds of, er, different colours.” Taking off his hat to look at it, he said: “Imagine a grassy, er, field the same colour as my hat. It would seem very, er, strange.”

“True,” said Green who had been quiet for a while as he had been thinking about the problem. “But,” he said to Blue, “Do you remember how you stayed with Bower Bird, and your bright blue colour attracted a Lady bower bird? Well,” he carried on to explain, “We are all different colours and quite bright, really...”

“Drumlins are very colourful, and very bright,” said Red.

“Purple may be colourful,” said Yellow. “As for bright, I have serious doubts.”

Purple was a bit upset about Yellow's comment. "Okay, miss smarty-yellow dress. What about this for an idea? I could go and meet the Lady Mayoress; and I could show her round The Valley, leaping and jumping and twirling along the way. She will be so dazzled that she won't notice anything else."

"And she'll think all The Valley people are as silly as you," stated Yellow.

Green had carried on thinking and no-one realised he had been listening until he said: "Purple might have an idea."

"See," Purple sneered at Yellow.

"Oh, do be quiet you silly Drumlin," said Yellow. "Let's hear what Green has to say."

Green's idea was fairly simple. The Drumlins would line the road into town and greet the Lady Mayoress along the way. Hopefully, she would pay more attention to the bright, different colours of the Drumlins than she would the sad state of the dry, brown countryside.

Red had the Drumlins stand in line before him and moved them around until he was satisfied their different colours were in the right order. "So," he said, "Purple will be the first Drumlin the Lady Mayoress sees. And she will NOT bounce up and down. Is that clear, Purple? You will, however, be polite," he commanded, "Drumlins are always polite."

Wombat, for once, had also been thinking. "The journey from the hills to town is a very long way," he said, "What if the Lady Mayoress meets one Drumlin, then has too much time before she meets the next one that she looks around The Valley? She's bound to see how dry it is."

Everyone went quiet as they thought about this new problem, especially Red who had been sure his planning was Drumlin-perfect. "Change of orders," he declared suddenly, "Once a Drumlin has greeted the Lady Mayoress and she has passed on, that Drumlin is to run ahead – out of sight, of course – and stand in one of the gaps between the other Drumlins along the road."

"Er, won't she remember that she is, er, seeing the same Drumlins over and over?" pondered Blue.

There was silence again, because it seemed Blue was right. Then Orange whispered: "I believe the Lady Mayoress will be so pleased to be met by lots of different coloured Drumlins that she won't bother to count them."

"I hope you are right, Orange," said Pronto, "All we can do is follow Red's plan."

And that was what they did. When the Lady Mayoress' procession came over the hill and down into The Valley, there was Purple, trying hard not to bounce while being very happy and polite. As soon as the procession passed on, Purple ducked off the road and raced along behind the bushes to get ahead of Green who was next in line. Then Green did the same. By the time the Lady Mayoress arrived in town, she had met each of the six Drumlins three times.

The Drumlins were finally together in the town square with a crowd of Valley people, and all were cheering and waving. Pronto and Wombat were standing in front of the others, and Pronto said: "Welcome to The Valley, Your Ladyship. We hope you had a pleasant journey."

“Oh, most certainly,” the Lady Mayoress replied, “And everyone I have met was so kind and polite.”

“Did you like all of their bright, different colours?” asked Wombat.

“Actually, I wasn’t aware they were different colours,” she said. “I have to wear these coloured glasses because the sun hurts my eyes,” and she showed them her sun glasses. “As the glass in them is red, everything I see looks red, even your green hills.”

This was one piece of information none of them knew about. Even Wombat hadn’t read about it in his newspaper. He groaned, and it seemed he was going to say something. Pronto nudged his friend to stay quiet and said quickly: “So, do you think The Valley is as lovely as you were told?”

“More lovely than I expected,” said the Lady Mayoress, “But I should say that seeing it for myself wasn’t the only reason I came.” She went on to explain that the next valley on the other side of the hills was really wet because of all the rain, and the lake had overflowed into the fields. “I have a big favour to ask,” she continued, “I did notice that your lake is almost dry, so would you agree for a pipe to be run from the next valley into your lake? Then, if water is pumped from the overflowing lake into your dry lake, I am hoping everyone will be happy.”

“Begging your pardon, Madam,” said Red, trying not to shout, “But I would like to offer the services of my Drumlins to help bring the pipe into The Valley.”

“That’s very kind of you, young man,” she replied, “Thank you. I accept your offer.” Then she looked around the people gathered in the town square. “I am puzzled, though. What, may I ask are Drumlins?”

Purple couldn’t stop herself and began bouncing around. “We are, Your Ladyship,” she declared excitedly, “And Drumlins are not only colourful, bright, happy and polite; Drumlins are also always very helpful. Isn’t that so, Red?”

Red had to agree, as did everyone else, in particular Pronto who said quietly to Wombat: “Isn’t it funny how things can look bad, but they always seem to turn out right in the end? It has been a really good day, don’t you think?”

“I suppose so,” grumbled Wombat, “Now, can I go home? I’ve done enough and I’m tired.”

Pronto frowned. “I imagine the Drumlins would be tired after all that running, but what exactly have you done except stand around?”

“That’s what I call enough,” said Wombat; then he turned and walked away.