

## A Season of Happiness Presents



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### Story Seven – SIX SICK DRUMLINS

By Dave Hawkins

Pronto was up early as usual so that he could deliver the morning newspapers to The Valley folk. Coming out of his bedroom, he was expecting to find his three Drumlins preparing breakfast, but for some reason they were still asleep. Maybe they were just tired, he thought, but he couldn't imagine why because yesterday hadn't been particularly busy for them. This was very strange.

He went next door to talk to his friend about it and was greeted by a very grumpy Wombat who said: "Something's wrong with my Drumlins. They won't wake up. I suppose I'll have to make my own breakfast."

"That's pretty selfish of you," Pronto scolded, "All you care about is your stomach. Aren't you the least bit worried about the Drumlins? Mine are still asleep too. Maybe they're sick."

"I bet if you said that to Red he'd say: 'Drumlins are never sick'," Wombat suggested.

"I don't imagine he'll be saying anything at the moment, Wombat. In fact, he's not the same Red as he was."

Wombat frowned. "How do you mean, not the same?"

"Well," Pronto explained, "I know this will sound weird, but his colour has faded. He's not bright red anymore. He's more of a pink. The others have lost some of their colour too. Yellow is a sort-of cream, and Purple is lilac. Have you looked closely at your Drumlins?"

Apparently Wombat hadn't. They both went over to check the colours of Wombat's Drumlins to discover that they had faded too, and were much lighter shades than before. "This is serious," declared Pronto. "They must have an illness of some kind."

"Well," said Wombat, "Get your doctor's hat on and cure them."

"To start with, I don't have a doctor's hat," Pronto told his friend, "But I doubt there is a doctor in The Valley who would know about sick Drumlins. We'll have to call Rainbow."

"I thought you said we shouldn't expect Rainbow to help us with every little problem," Wombat reminded him.

"I'd hardly call this a *little* problem," stated Pronto. "Get your umbrella Wombat." Half way to the door, he turned to see that Wombat hadn't moved. "NOW, Wombat!" he ordered, "There isn't a moment to lose."

Wombat shuffled over to the stand by the door to get his umbrella, moaning and groaning. "You don't have to yell at me. I think Red's been living with you for too long. You're starting to sound just like him, bossy-boots."

Once in the garden, Wombat twirled his umbrella, sending a bright spiral of many-coloured light up into the sky. In moments, Rainbow was there right above them in all her splendour. Pronto told her about the Drumlins. "Yes," Rainbow said, "They are sick and you were wise to call me. They have something a bit like the colds that you get, but this is much more serious." When Pronto asked what they could do about it, Rainbow replied: "The best thing, Pronto, is for you to bring the Drumlins into the garden and let me take them home with me. I can make them well again; and when they are, I can return them to you, if that's what you wish."

"That would be very kind of you," said Pronto.

Wombat added: "And yes please, Rainbow, we would like your Drumlins back to live with us. It wouldn't be the same without them."

Rainbow waited as the two friends brought the Drumlins out into the garden; then she picked them up in her hand to carry them back into the sky with her. "I will let you know as soon as they are better," she said. In moments she had faded away.

"See, Pronto," said Wombat, folding his umbrella and shuffling back to his hole, "Sometimes problems are too big, even for you, and it takes the Umbrella Master to fix them. Remember that for next time. Now, seeing as you've just given my Drumlins back to Rainbow, perhaps you'd care to make my breakfast. I think I might fancy a cooked one: I am really hungry after all that umbrella-twirling."

Over the next few days, the two friends came to realise how the Drumlins living with them had made their lives so much better; and now that they were no longer there it was very lonely. Wombat, especially, was finding it hard without his Drumlins. "I have to do everything for myself," he complained, "And the place is getting very messy."

"It's your mess," Pronto reminded him, "Maybe you should clear it up."

"Oh, no, I couldn't do that," said Wombat, "I'm leaving it just as it is, so that my Drumlins have something to do when they come home again. Isn't that kind of me?"

Pronto was about to argue, but thought better of it. "Yes, very kind as always, Wombat."

Later that day, something odd happened. The sun was shining in a clear sky and it was warm, but for some reason a light mist had started to fall into The Valley. Pronto puzzled it as he continued pedalling his cart around with deliveries for his customers. This was taking him longer than usual because the mist made it hard to see. Half way round The Valley, the mist had thickened to become fog, so thick that it was like heavy smoke. Pronto was having to guess

where he was riding because he couldn't see a thing in front of him. Eventually, he managed to make it home, and he knew for certain he had when he ran into something. Actually, it wasn't *his* home, it was Wombat's hole, and his friend came rushing out. "What are you doing, you maniac, Pronto?" Wombat growled, "Part of my wall just fell into the kitchen, all thanks to you..." Wombat ceased his complaining as he noticed the fog. "Oooh! Where did this come from?"

"I have no idea," said Pronto, "But it's making travelling very dangerous. I almost ran over Goanna in town. He was waiting for the sun to warm him up and thought he was laying on a rock. Actually he was in the middle of the road. If this fog doesn't clear soon, someone is going to get hurt."

"Hmm," murmured Wombat, "Am I thinking this might be a job for the Umbrella Master?"

"Well," said Pronto, "Rainbow is a part of the weather, so she might know how to fix it. I don't really feel right about disturbing her though, not with six sick Drumlines to take care of; but we can't put up with this fog for much longer. Come on, Umbrella Master. Time to do your twirly-thing."

Out in the garden, Wombat tried spinning his umbrella. It glowed as before and sent up a brightly coloured spiral, but this simply disappeared into the fog. They had no idea if the message had passed through into the sky above where Rainbow could see it. So they waited. Nothing happened. Wombat tried again. Still rainbow didn't come. "It's no good," said Wombat dismally, "We'll just have to put up with the fog until it clears on its own."

"Maybe not," said Pronto hopefully. "I think there might be a way to get your umbrella above the fog."

"I can't jump that high," said Wombat, "And I doubt Purple could, even if she was here."

"We do know someone who can do better than jump. Magpie could fly the umbrella into the clear sky. Her tree is not far away. We need to call for her, very loudly, and she may hear."

The two friends started calling: "Magpie, Magpie," and did it for so long that they were making their throats sore, but finally she came. Pronto told her what they wanted her to do, and Magpie took the umbrella and flew up into the fog. While they were waiting, Pronto remembered something: "I forgot to tell Magpie to spin the umbrella."

"I think she saw me doing it before," said Wombat, "She'll probably remember – she's very smart."

Apparently, Magpie did remember that the umbrella had to be spun. After what seemed an age, a brightness started to appear through the fog, then the grey was showing signs of colour. Slowly but surely, Rainbow arrived. Instead of her usual happy greeting, she said: "Oh dear, I didn't realise this would happen. It must be a problem for you all. I am so sorry."

Pronto didn't understand. "It's just fog, Rainbow," he explained, "The weather brought it, not you."

“I’m afraid this time I did, Pronto,” apologised Rainbow. “Because the sick Drumlins had to be kept warm, I turned up my heat. As you know, I am made from drops of water, and the heat caused them to turn to steam the same way as water boiling in a kettle does. I’ll go now and turn the heat down a little, then the fog won’t be as thick.”

“What about the Drumlins?” questioned Wombat, “That might make them even sicker.”

“No, I don’t believe so,” Rainbow assured him, “They are already a little better. In a day or two they should be over the worst. If you could put up with some mist until then, I can return them to you. As long as you keep them warm, their illness will pass very soon.”

Everything that Rainbow said would happen did. Almost as soon as she turned down her heat, the fog began to thin until it was just mist. Although it made seeing difficult, it was not as bad as before, so Pronto and The Valley folk could travel around without bumping into things. Two days later, Rainbow brought the Drumlins down so that Pronto and Wombat could tuck them up safe and warm in their homes. In less than a week, all of the Drumlins were back to their old selves again, which was a great relief for the two friends.

“I am so pleased we have returned to normal, Wombat,” said Pronto. “Red’s bellowing as usual, Yellow’s complaining about most things, and Purple broke a cereal bowl this morning – it was all quite wonderful.”

“I know what you mean,” said Wombat. “I was thinking on what you said about cleaning up my own mess; but I decided that wouldn’t be very fair because my Drumlins would have nothing to do. So, being kind as I am, I left the mess for them. They seemed very pleased about that.”

“Admit it, Wombat,” said Pronto with a chuckle, “You didn’t clean up your mess because you are just plain lazy.”

“Of course I am,” said Wombat, “You wouldn’t want me any other way, would you?”

Pronto thought for a second or two, then replied: “No, probably not.”