



The Mad Scientist

Many rainforest animals were awake in the middle of the night. Ranger Tabatha, Toco the toucan, Snapper the crocodile, Blink the frog and Bronte the butterfly were still awake. They stood inside a tree house balcony, high among the trees. Bright lights glittered from nests, burrows and branches in every direction.

‘So many electric lights!’ said Toco. ‘Everyone’s awake tonight.’

‘We can’t even see the stars!’ said Snapper.

‘But it does look rather pretty,’ said Bronte. ‘Don’t you think?’

‘Yes,’ said Ranger Tabatha with hesitation. ‘But starlight is prettier, I think.’

Blink, ignoring the chatter about lights and stars, jumped up and down. ‘Time to go! We don’t want to be late.’

‘No, we don’t,’ said Ranger Tabatha.

The same thought must have passed through the minds of everybody in the rainforest. The sound of paws scurrying down bark and bodies rustling through leaves filled the air.

As they joined the hurrying throngs of creatures, Bronte glanced at a poster nailed to a tree. It read:

Dr Ratty McBrain

Scientist extraordinaire!

Spectacular experiments

You won’t believe your eyes!

Where: The Rainforest Generator

When: 10th Day of Autumn at Midnight

Today was the 10th day of Autumn and everyone wanted to watch Dr. Ratty McBrain’s experiments. Bronte grinned with excitement. What wonders would they see tonight?

A crowd gathered near a gigantic metal box, tall as a tree. It hummed like a bee.

‘Is that the generator?’ Bronte whispered into Ranger Tabatha’s ear. ‘What’s it do?’



She nodded and whispered back, 'It gives power to the rainforest so we have electric light.'

A stage stood beside the generator, and on the stage sat an enormous fan and a tiny exercise bike. Strings of electric light bulbs spider-webbed throughout surrounding trees.

A steady drumbeat began. **Boom boom boom!** A hush fell upon the crowd as the show began. The drumbeat continued. **Boom boom boom!**

'What's happening, Mummy?' Toco glanced into a nearby bush and saw Nut and Blossom Possum nestled against their mother, Honey.

'I'm not sure, Sweethearts,' said Honey Possum. 'We'll have to wait and see.'

Boom boom boom! The drumbeat grew louder and louder: **BOOM BOOM BOOM!**

Suddenly, the drumbeat stopped. Silence filled its place. Everyone stood still, not daring to make a noise. Then the lights went out. The generator stopped humming. Inky blackness wrapped around them, so black Blink couldn't see Ranger Tabatha or anyone else. Snapper stood still, wishing the lights would come back on. Toco didn't like the darkness.

Neither did the baby possums. 'I'm scared, Mummy!' said Blossum and Nut. Honey possum murmured, 'Shhh. Stay close to me, Darlings. I'll keep you safe.'

Other voices broke the dark silence. 'Is this part of the show?'

'What's going on?' 'What kind of show is this?' 'Dr. Ratty must be batty!' 'Dr. Ratty must be a mad scientist!'

The voices ceased as something flickered inside the blackness. An orange pin-prick of light grew until it turned into a beam of torchlight. 'There he is!' said Ranger Tabatha.

They all looked towards the stage. Inside the light beam sat a plump rodent wearing thick spectacles. He held a torch. Shaggy black fur gleamed with a ghostly reddish tinge.

'Welcome, welcome,' said Dr. Ratty. 'Welcome one and all to my electric light show extravaganza!' He bowed with a flourish towards the crowd.

A few animals began to clap, but the applause petered out. Nobody knew quite what to make of Dr. Ratty McBrain.

'You must be wondering why the generator has been switched off?' asked Dr. Ratty.

'Too right, Mate!' shouted a red kangaroo. 'You're scaring the kids!'

Dr. Ratty wore a serious expression as he pulled out a notepad from his pocket. 'My



calculations tell me that overuse of the rainforest generator is changing the weather. If we don't fix it now, the weather will become topsy-turvy.' Dr. Ratty paused and looked at the crowd. 'Droughts, floods...the rainforest will be a difficult place to live.'

Ranger Tabatha's face looked somber. Toco, Snapper, Blink and Bronte felt gloomy. Blossum and Nut started to cry.

'BUT...' declared Dr. Ratty, 'I have a solution!' The rodent placed the torch on the ground and jumped onto the exercise bike. Tiny paws pedalled around and around. 'I've found a way to harness the wind!'

The crowd gasped as the fan began to spin, and as it whirled, strings of electric bulbs came to life with a sparkle. Lights flashed and danced like a million happy fireflies.

Dr. Ratty bounced off the bike. The audience applauded with enthusiasm. Gloom had turned into excitement. 'I can also capture sunlight and turn it into power,' he announced.

Toco waited, heart pounding, wondering what would happen next.

Dr. Ratty thumped the stage with his paw: *thud thud thud*. 'This is not an ordinary stage,' he cried. 'This stage traps powerful sunbeams in daylight hours. Let me show you.'

Dr. Ratty crouched down and pressed a switch. Silvery light glowed and began to flow like a river through the light bulbs. It rose higher and higher until it splashed like lightening across the sky. 'So pretty!' squealed Nut and Blossum.

The whole crowd erupted into applause. They whistled and shouted and clapped with all their might. Dr. Ratty took another bow as the drumbeat began again to announce the end of the show. **Boom boom boom!**

Snapper smiled at Nut and Blossom. They smiled shyly back, then hid their faces against their mother's fur. The rainforest folk departed and went their separate ways. Ranger Tabatha, Toco, Snapper, Blink and Bronte walked back to the tree-house. They sat in the balcony sipping mugs of warm billy-tea.

One-by-one, lights went out in nests, burrows and branches across the rainforest. Night-time descended, but it was a friendly darkness this time. Blink felt safe in the tree-house surrounded by friends.

'Did you like the show, Toco?' asked Ranger Tabatha.

Toco grinned and nodded. Dr. Ratty had certainly given a spectacular show. The moon and stars appeared in the black sky. They sipped their tea and admired the twinkling lights.