

The Storm – by Peter Collins

Paul was an average man in his late thirties and had known Beth for many years. He fell in love with her after her marriage broke-up. After seeing each other for over two years they got married and on Saturday Beth's daughter called in to their end-terrace house. Linda also brought along her two daughters, Eva aged 4 and Dawn aged 2. Eva and Dawn were very close and did everything together.

It was a warm autumn day, so Paul and Beth said the two girls could play in their long back garden, while Linda talked with her mum and stepdad. Being on the edge of a long disused stone quarry, the house was a standard two stories at the front but three at the back. Just inside the back garden was a small sandpit which the girls loved playing in, making sand castles and getting themselves very dirty, but they were having great fun.

At about six o'clock, Beth decided it was time for the girls to play indoors, so Paul could look after them while she cooked dinner, but before indoor playtime it was bath time. This took nearly half an hour as they were both covered in a mix of sand and mud. After Beth dried them and put clean clothes on them, Paul then took them to the living room to watch television while dinner was cooking.

While eating, Beth could see Dawn's head starting to nod and both girls were very quiet. As they had both been very good they were told they could stay up until eight o'clock. But as they were both very tired, after dinner, Beth asked the girls "are you both getting sleepy?" This was answered with two quiet nodding heads. Eva said, "Nan we both want to go to bed". Beth said, "I'll tuck you in and gramp will lock the doors". About five minutes later Beth said to Paul in the hall, "that didn't take long, they are both fast asleep".

Beth and Paul staying up until around eleven o'clock and then decided it was bedtime for them as well. While they were both reading, Paul said "we must get that gutter fixed as it sounds as it's starting to rain". "Yes, we will have to get someone in on Monday" replied Beth. They read their books until about eleven thirty, the rain was getting worse but that didn't bother them at that time, so they gave each other a goodnight kiss, put their bedside lights out and fell sound asleep fairly quickly. But things were about to change.

Paul was woken up by his shoulder being gently pushed. He opened his eyes and saw Eva trying to wake him. He said, "Eva, what's the matter". She replied "Gramp, we are both scared, please help us". With this, he gently rolled over looked at the clock which told him it was one o'clock in the morning. So, he put his bedside light on and this woke up Beth who saw a very scared looking Dawn by the side of her. She said, "Dawn, whatever is the matter darling". Dawn was so frightened

that she had tears rolling down her face. She then flinched and hugged Beth as another flash of lightening and loud clap of thunder nearly rafted the windows. Beth said, “it’s ok darling, it’s only a storm”. Eva said, “but Nan, it scares us! Gramp doesn’t it frighten you?” Paul said “no, not in the least. Let me tell both you girls what’s happening”. They both looked at their gramp, still very scared and this is what he told them.

“Eva, you had a birthday party a couple of weeks ago, can you remember what happened?” Eva nodded and said “yes, we all had a great time”. Being a real chatterbox, Paul then asked her “was there music, lights and plenty to drink?” “Oh yes” she replied, starting to brighten-up a bit, “we had a lot of friends to the party and there was a lot to eat and drink, then we had a disco with music and party lights”.

There was another flash of lightening and loud roll of thunder. Eva hid her head under the edge of the duvet and Dawn clung even tighter to her nan.

“Well” said Paul. “Can you remember this morning seeing a few little white clouds while Dawn and you were playing in the back garden?” “Yes” said Eva, still scared. “But what does that have to do with this evening?” Paul then said, “well just before you went to the party you had to get your party cloths on, and that is what they cloud have done, they have got all their party clothes on and a lot of clouds have got together and are

having a party”. Eva then said, “but what about all the noise and flashes?”

Paul replied “when you and your sister had your party, you had lights and loud music. That’s all the clouds are doing. To us humans, as you say, it’s just flashes and bangs, but to the cloud party the lights, which we call lightning, are disco lights to the clouds. The very loud rumbling and banging is to the clouds party music”.

The girls were starting to settle down a bit. Eva then said “Nan, what is all the rain, it’s very wet outside?” This had Beth puzzled. She looked at Paul and said, “I’m sure your gramp has the answer for you”.

Paul had to come up with an answer pretty quick. “Well it’s like this”, he said, “Eva, the party you went to, one of your friends spilt her glass of orange juice, that’s all that’s happened in the sky. One of the clouds has spilt its’ drink. We call it heavy rain but it’s only a glass of water. But remember how big those are, and can you imagine how big a glass of water is for something as big as a cloud?” The girls looked at each other and started to giggle.

“Well” said Paul. “Trust your nan and gramp. Soon the cloud party will be over, the cloud music will stop, the disco lights will be turned off and all the clouds will go out of there dark party clothes and put on day time white fluffy clothes. So, this is nothing to worry about, it’s only the clouds having a party. It’s getting very late and I think the party is starting to come to an end”.

There had not been any flashes or rumbles for some time, which the girls had not noticed. So, they gave their nan and gramp a big hug and said, “goodnight”. They took themselves to bed, and all four slept soundly until nine o’clock in the morning.

The girls woke up first and after waking up their nan and gramp, both girls said they could not wait until the clouds have another party.

Epilog

Should you have young children or grandchildren, or even know someone who has, and the children are scared of a thunderstorm, just tell them this: -

It's only the clouds having a party.