

The Remarkable Rocket

by Oscar Wilde

The King's son was married, so there were general rejoicings. It was a magnificent ceremony, and the bride and bridegroom walked hand in hand under a canopy of purple velvet. Then there was a State Banquet, and a Ball. The last item on the program was a grand display of fireworks, to be let off at midnight. At the end of the King's garden a stand had been set up and the fireworks began to talk to each other.

"The world is certainly very beautiful," cried a little Squib. "Just look at those yellow tulips."

"The King's garden is not the world," said a big Roman Candle; "the world is an enormous place."

"Any place you love is the world to you," exclaimed the thoughtful Catherine Wheel.

Suddenly, a sharp, dry cough was heard, and they all looked round.

It came from a tall Rocket, who was tied to the end of a long stick. He always coughed before he made any observation, so as to attract attention. He spoke with a very slow, distinct voice.

"How fortunate it is for the King's son," he said, "that he is to be married on the day on which I am to be set off! It could not have turned out better for him."

"Dear me!" said the little Squib, "I thought it was quite the other way, and that we were to be set off in the Prince's honor."

"I hate rudeness and bad manners of every kind, for I am extremely sensitive," said the Rocket. "No one in the whole world is so sensitive as I am. Suppose, for instance, anything happened to me tonight, what a misfortune that would be for every one! The Prince and Princess married life would be spoiled. Really, when I begin to reflect on the importance of my position, I am almost moved to tears."

"If you want to give pleasure to others," cried the Roman Candle, "you had better keep yourself dry. That is only common sense."

"You cannot understand my friendship with the Prince."

"Why, you don't even know him," growled the Roman Candle.

"I never said I knew him," answered the Rocket.

"You had really better keep yourself dry," said the Fire-balloon. "That is the important thing."

"Very important for you, I have no doubt," answered the Rocket, "but I shall weep if I choose;" and he actually burst into real tears, which flowed down his stick like raindrops.

"Let the fireworks begin," said the King. And the fireworks began a magnificent display.

Whizz! went the Catherine Wheel, as she spun round and round. Boom! went the Roman Candle. Then the Squibs danced all over the place. Every one was a great success except the Remarkable Rocket. He was so damp with crying that he could not go off at all. The best thing in him was the gunpowder, and that was so wet with tears that it was of no use.

The next day the workmen came to put everything tidy. Then one of them caught sight of the Rocket. "Look!" the workman cried, "what a bad rocket!" and he threw the Rocket over the wall into the ditch.

"Bad Rocket? Bad Rocket?" he said, as he whirled through the air; "impossible! Grand Rocket, that is what the man said. Bad and Grand sound very much the same, indeed they often are the same;" and he fell into the mud.

What Do You Think?

Why did the Rocket not go off?

Did the Rocket ruin the fireworks display?

Why did the other fireworks not like the Rocket?

