

Before the Festival Ends



Author: Lamis Al-Asaly

Illustrator: Ilina Martha Taeva



Mary stomped into her room.



Her mother had refused to buy her a new dress to wear to her friend's birthday party.



“I’m going to write a story about the most fabulous girl. I will make her wear a different dress every half hour,” she muttered. And so she wrote...



Sasha woke up early today. She wore her new dress and skipped to the festival that she had been waiting for all year - the Spring festival. Unfortunately she slipped and fell and mud covered her face and dress.



At this point Mary heard a voice calling her so she looked around and asked, "Who is it?" The voice replied, "It's me, Sasha!"



“How did you get out of the story?” Mary rubbed her eyes in disbelief.
“You got me in a lot of trouble when you decided to ruin my dress with all that mud,” replied Sasha.



“Don’t worry, I’ll make you a brand new one,” Mary laughed. “But this dress is the only dress I want! Change the story and fix this before the festival ends” protested Sasha.



“As you wish.” Mary grinned slyly and she continued writing...



Sasha changed her clothes and carried her muddy dress to the river. She soaked it in the water and then she hit it against the rocks over and over again. But it was still dirty, so...



Sasha angrily interrupted her and jumped out of the story. “Why did you come out? You soaked the page with the water!” Mary exclaimed. “Change the story! This will take all day and by that time, the festival will be over,” replied Sasha. “You change your dress,” Mary cleverly replied. “Never! I want this dress,” insisted Sasha. Mary pursed her lips, knit her eyebrows and kept on writing...



Sasha heated some water in the boiler, poured it into the wooden hand crank washing machine, and added some soap. She put in her dress and then she turned and turned and turned the crank while the dress sloshed around inside the machine.



After a couple of hours, she took it out, squeezed out the water and hung it on the clothesline to dry. Suddenly, it began to rain. And the dress got soaking wet...



Sasha jumped out of the story, totally frustrated, and said, “My hands are so tired from turning that crank, and when the dress was finally dry, you made it rain! I will miss the festival!” “Wear another dress, you have many. Just pick one,” Mary said, smiling as she raised an eyebrow.



“I will not get back into the story until you make sure I can wear this dress,” Sasha declared. Mary exhaled deeply, nearly blowing Sasha off the paper, and then continued writing...



Sasha put her muddy dress in the electric washing machine, added some detergent, pressed a button, and waited as the machine washed and then dried the dress.



While she waited, Sasha had her breakfast. When her dress was dry and ready, she put it on and went to the festival where she danced and had a wonderful time.



Towards the end of the festival, a clown threw a pie in the air.
Unfortunately, it fell right on Sasha's dress.



Sasha jumped out of the story, her face red. “How am I supposed to take a picture now, with my dress covered in pie? Figure this out quickly before the festival ends!” “I have one solution...” replied Mary.



“I won’t wear another dress,” Sasha interrupted. “And I won’t finish the story until you choose a new dress,” answered Mary.



Mary waited and waited for Sasha to go back into the story, but she didn't. So Mary left. She ate, played, slept, and woke up. And to her surprise, Sasha was still sitting there on top of the book!



Mary leaned in towards Sasha. “Why do you only want this dress? I’ll give you red and white ones, with roses and stars on them. Really, really nice ones,” she said.



Sasha looked at the ground sadly. “Do you remember Anna and Mika?” Mary replied, “You mean the characters from my previous stories?” “Exactly. Their dresses are old and torn. They deserve a new dress more than I do. I’m happy with one beautiful dress.”



Mary promised Sasha to keep her one dress clean and pretty and to draw beautiful new dresses for Anna and Mika.



But Sasha still refused to go back into the story since she didn't feel well from all the juice and sandwiches she ate. Mary thought of a solution and kept on writing...



Sasha went back home to find that her father had bought a new washing machine that she could power all by herself! “A bit of exercise and a lot of savings,” she thought.



And in just thirty minutes, her dress was clean again and she felt better, just in time to get back to the festival and take pictures with her friends. THE END.



Mary thought for a moment after she finished the story, “Before I give Anna and Mika new dresses, I have one important thing to do.” She looked at her own dresses that she had thrown on the floor, hung some up in her closet, and put the rest in pretty bags and went out.





THE END