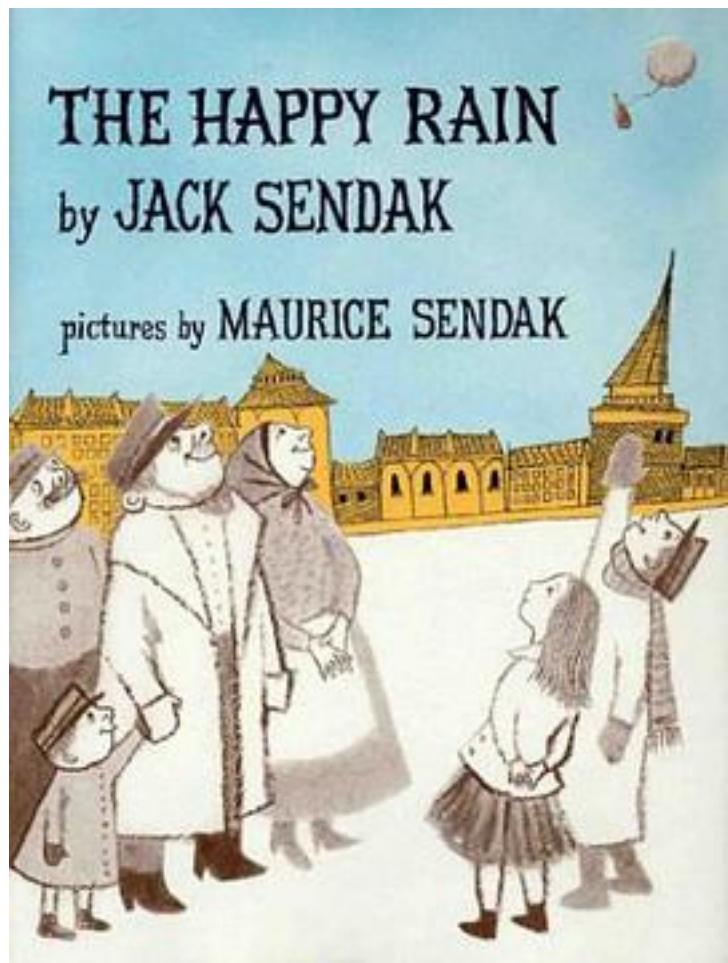


The Happy Rain



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Chapter One The people of Troekan were very fortunate. No other village could boast of such fine, glorious rain. Rain that flooded their gardens with a profusion of dazzling flowers. Rain that made music as it pattered on the tile roofs. Rain that perfumed the

very air, drenched their clothes, and muddied their streets. It was a joy to live in Troekan. Now, as this story begins, it was a typical day in the village of Troekan-a real soaker. Many of the villagers were picnicking in the country. Others were stretched out on the wet grass in the parks: airing their babies, listening to the band concert, or just napping. School, which for reasons of health was held outdoors in the rain, had just been dismissed. And the children ran, shouting happily, past the shiny wet houses-toward the lake. It was just the right kind of a day for a swim. In one of the houses, a mother's voice said, "What -- Raymond and Yolande -- still in the house on such a fine rainy day? Quick -- out into the streets -- or do I have to toss you both out of the window?" Raymond and Yolande ran into the street, giggling. Mother was always joking. "And, mind," she cried after them. "And, mind you come back soaked to the skin -- else I'll lock you both out." Oh, of course Raymond and Yolande would get soaked to the skin, and muddy, and dirty. Didn't they every day? Playing their regular games of mud-rolling, puddle-jumping, and hide-and-splash? Situated in the center of Troekan was the village square. As always, it was a hubbub of activity. Vendors were selling their soaking wares everywhere. The villagers were shopping, and discussing the affairs of the day. And they were forever arguing, and shouting, and laughing. While the children played games, or had mud-ball fights. And cried, and chased dogs, and ate. Everyone was having a grand time. And above all the clatter and bustle could be heard the beautiful sound of the rain pattering on the tile roofs. And, just as they did every night, everyone, including the children, stayed up as late as they wanted to. For there were so many things to do, and to see, and to hear. And, just as every day in Troekan, this one had been full of happiness, excitement, and fun. As Raymond and Yolande prepared for bed, they were already making plans for the next day. "We can dig a tremendous tunnel," said Yolande. "Right under the street-and we can make believe we are rabbits." "Yes," added her brother, "and we can scare everybody that comes by." Throughout the village everyone flung their windows wide open, the better to feel the rain as they slept. This, they believed, would assure them of fine dreams. And soon the pattering rain soothed the villagers to sleep ...

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