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# The Parable of the Matchsticks

Story by Jean Llorin and Pia Noche

Illustrations by Pia Noche

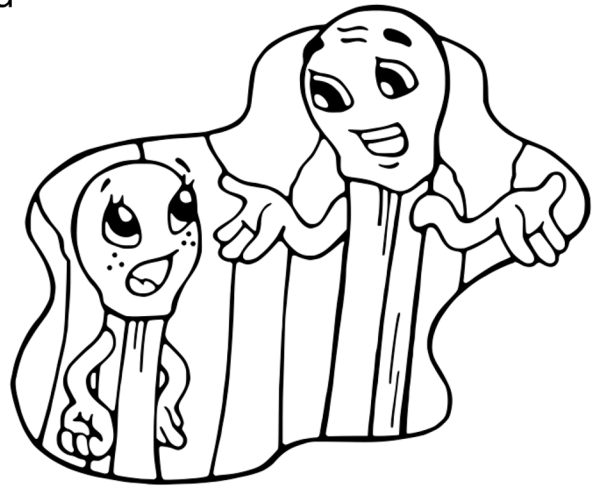
Once upon a time, at the edge of a quiet forest was a small and simple bamboo house. Inside the kitchen of this house was a cupboard near the stove. Inside the cupboard a small matchbox stood handy. Living inside this matchbox were around fifty matchsticks.

One day, a matchstick named Sticky said to the rest of the matchsticks, "Haven't you noticed that we have lost five matchsticks during the past week? Every time the match house is opened, one of us is taken away."

"Taken away? Where are they taken, Sticky?" asked Teeny, the youngest of the matchsticks.

"I don't know. I just know that they're taken away. I don't know what happens because as soon as one of us is taken, our house closes and it gets dark again. I only know that we are again one matchstick less."

The matchsticks became worried as they began to count how many of them were left inside the match house. Because none of the matchsticks wished to leave, they promised to hold onto one another the next time the match house was opened.



The next day, when the matchbox was slowly opened, the fearful matchsticks drew closer together and held tightly to one another. They all prayed that no member of their family would be taken away.

"Hold on to me tightly," Sticky whispered to the matchstick beside him.

Sticky bravely looked up. He saw that large fingers picked up a tiny matchstick who was trembling in fear. Since they were holding onto one another, several other matchsticks were dragged out of the match house. The matchsticks fell onto the kitchen floor.

Sticky was one of the matchsticks that fell out. As he fell, he hit his head on the foot of the kitchen table. Sticky felt the cold kitchen floor.

Sticky raised his head to call the other matchsticks who fell with him. He saw that it was almost nighttime but there was just enough light for him to see what was happening. In the fading light, Sticky saw Teeny being held at one end by the mighty hand. Teeny, who was the youngest of the family!

Sticky was surprised at what happened next. The mighty hand rubbed Teeny's tiny head on the wall of the matchbox. Sticky shut his eyes in shock. He cringed at the thought of the pain Teeny must have felt. Poor Teeny!

When Sticky opened his eyes again, he saw Teeny's tiny head suddenly turning into a beautiful spark of light. His vision was filled with the amazing colors of this light. Red, orange, yellow, white, and blue flashed from Teeny's tiny head which soon became a tiny flame that seemed to dance.

"How beautiful! I have never seen such a wonderful sight!" exclaimed Sticky.

Sticky looked on and saw that the tiny flame from Teeny's head lit the wick of a candle. The person who held Teeny blew on the tiny flame on her head until it was out. Sticky was saddened by the sight of the black end of the tiny matchstick.



But Sticky quickly noticed the candle flame and how it displayed a delightful dance. The flame reminded him of how Teeny was so cheerful and bright. It seemed that the candle flame that brightened that dark kitchen bore the will and spirit of tiny Teeny.

Sticky watched in astonishment as the candle flame was passed from one candle to another in other parts of the bamboo house until the whole house brightened up. It was as if the house was slowly being filled with Teeny's loving spirit.

The light which came from Teeny was used to cook supper and brighten up the conversation over supper. It shone over the books the children read and lit up the family altar during prayer time.

That night, Sticky understood how important the light from the flame was for the family who lived inside the bamboo house.

"So this is it!" thought Sticky. "We are taken away so we can turn into a big and beautiful bright spark that lights up the darkness that surrounds people. Even for one brief moment, this is what each of us can be and become—one bright light!"

Sticky was filled with joy because of what he discovered. The joy pushed aside the fear inside him. Hope slowly filled his tiny wooden heart.

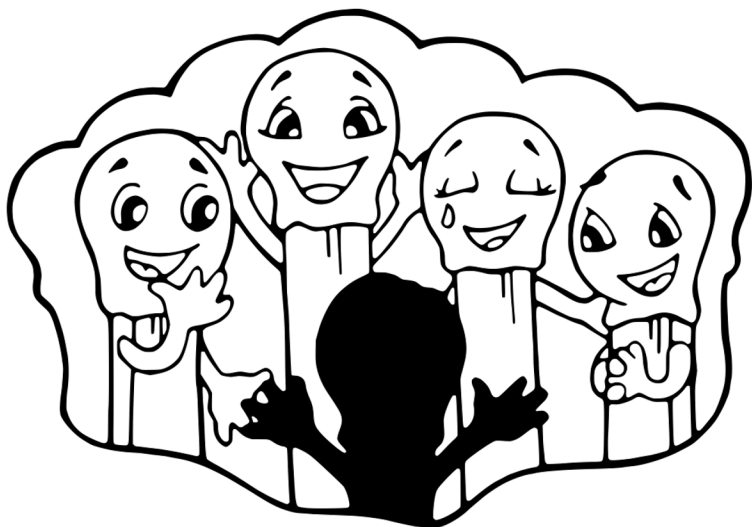
"I must get back to the match house," said Sticky. "I must tell the others of what I've seen. They must know the truth about us so that they will never be afraid to leave the match house. Oh, I must get back!"

Sticky fell asleep on the kitchen floor that night, dreaming of getting back home.

The next morning, Sticky was awakened by the tiny voices of his matchstick friends calling to him. "Sticky! Sticky!"

Sticky looked up. He saw the mighty hand carefully picking up the matchsticks that fell on the kitchen floor. One by one, the matchsticks were placed back into the match house.

As soon as Sticky was back inside the match house, he told everyone what happened to Teeny. The other matchsticks who fell saw it too. Like Sticky, they too stopped being afraid of leaving the match house.



From then on, the matchsticks understood their purpose. They accepted that one day, they would have to leave their tiny home.

This time, they knew what they would become when they leave. The tiny match house was now filled with hope and anticipation.

Since then, the matchsticks anxiously wait for their chance to become a much needed bright light.

Even for one brief moment.