

Morning dew clung to the bottoms of grass blades, hiding from the cool Autumn sun. The wind would pick up every now and then, catapulting the drops onto unsuspecting festival goers. Lucky found himself enjoying the moisture, pacing the lawn as he put the finishing touches on his home. Poppy was nearby, resting on the porch. A student would stop by every now and then. She waved at her students as they went by. They were adorned in all manner of costume, giggling, screaming, racing from event to event. In-between visitors she watched him stringing up orange and yellow lights on a big oak tree. Among the gigglers, Wess detached from their group to say hello.

“Happy Halloween Poppy!” she shouted, “Happy Halloween Lucky!”

“Happy Halloween to you too Wess” Poppy smiled.

Lucky stopped his work and flashed a big smile, “Happy Halloween!”

He paused for a moment to look at Wess’s costume. They were wearing a paper mache mask resembling an amcorn and a make-shift cape. The cape fluttered about in the wind, bouncing with Wess’s excited jumps. Poppy had told him about the costume’s progress, but he hadn’t gotten a chance to see it yet.

“Oooo, what are you this year Wess?” Lucky asked.

“Super Amcorn!” sung Wess.

“How scary!”

“Super Amcorn isn’t scary!” A muffled Wess refuted, “Super Amcorn is a hero that defends all of Willanova!”

“Oh, then how heroic!”

“Heroic enough to join the searchers..?” Wess nervously questioned.

Lucky’s expression fell as he gave a concerned glance toward Poppy. Poppy frowned a bit, this was becoming repetitive behavior from Wess recently.

“Wess..” Lucky began to say. But then he pivoted, “You know what, actually I have an idea.”

Lucky wrapped the last of the light wire around the tree and plugged it into an extension cord. His face was illuminated by a warm orange glow. Poppy gave a confused look, but Lucky shook his head with a confident expression.

“You, lil Wessie, are too young to do full Searcher work” Lucky said.

Wess's tail dropped.

He continued, "However,"

Wess's tail rose.

"I have a task for you, some Searcher training," Lucky began speaking with a grandiose voice, "If you complete it, I will give you... *three* candies."

"Candy!" Wess beamed, "What's the training?"

"I'm glad you asked Super Amcorn, we will be performing a foraging mission. Specifically," he pulled out a candy roll, unwrapped it, and placed the contents in his mouth in a few short moments. He continued with his mouth full, "we willh beh looking foor theese speschimens." He gestured to the wrapper in his hand.

"Candy?" Wess cocked her head to the side.

Lucky finished eating and clarified, "Candy wrappers, general trash-erm, discarded.. Trinkets, that sort of thing."

"Oooh, and what do we do with them?"

"We will drop them off in the..." Lucky's improvisation was losing steam, "trinket.. buckets..."

Poppy stifled a snort.

"Where are the trinket buckets?" Wess asked, bobbing in excitement.

"Glad you asked," Lucky strikes an exaggerated pose, pointing at a nearby trash can, "THAT is a trinket bucket."

"Oh no! I've been putting trash in there."

"That's perfectly fine, it also doubles as a trash can."

"Oh" Wess processed the information, "cool!!!!" they exclaimed.

Lucky made sure Poppy was alright to hold down the fort while they went out on Searcher business. She gleefully assured him she'd be good to give out candy while he was gone. With that Lucky and Wess departed. They went around the fairgrounds, picking up discarded wrappers and miscellaneous trash. As they went Wess got to ask questions about the Searchers and Lucky would retell all sorts of tales from his work. After a few hours of cleaning, they decided to take a well deserved break.

"Good job Wess, you did great," Lucky said while plopping down on the now-dry grass.

"You did great too! We learned a bit about your dad in history class, but it was really cool hearing your stories!" Wess plopped down on the dirt road, sprawled out.

Out of the two Wess was more visibly tired. They had overdone it a bit. Both let the cold wind cool them down. Lucky's mind began to wander.

"Say Wess, why do you want to be a Searcher so bad?"

Wess played with their tail for a bit, their expression covered by their paper mache mask.

"I wanna help."

Lucky looked over to their hunched figure, "You're a kid, you don't have to be helping all the time. Poppy's been telling me that you keep trying to stay after school to help out anyways."

"I..." Wess pauses, trying to formulate their feelings into words, "I keep causing everyone trouble. I break things, I take longer than everyone else at school, I've taken up your day off. Everyone is so nice to me, so I want to help back but. I just can't do it right."

"Wess" Lucky's expression became a tinge surprised, I didn't know you felt that way. I chose to hang out with you because I wanted to. Second, you're just a *kid*."

Wess flinched at the word.

He checked himself, "You don't have to worry about that. You can ask anyone and they'll recount how kind and caring you've been. If anything *I'm* grateful for all your hard work. Not just for today but helping Soda-Pop afterschool, Marbles when he got sick..." he trails off.

Wess pop's off their mask and shakes their ears. They avoid direct eye contact, but Lucky can see the tears welling up in their eyes. "I just- I just don't wanna be annoying, or a bother, or-or-"

Lucky embraces them and Wess gives out a little cry.

"I just feel like.. like everyone else has a thing they're good at, or a place to belong. And, and I don't."

"Oh Wessie." He squeezes them tight. He doesn't know what to say in this situation. He thinks about what Poppy would do at this moment. "I've got an idea, give me a sec okay?"

Lucky waited until Wess gave a sign. After a weak nod from them he stands up and scans the area. His eyes lock onto a fallen branch with

three prongs. He jogged over to it and with a swift cut from his spear he fashioned a makeshift wooden spear. He then trots back over to Wess. "I have a deal for you, Super Amcorn."

He crouched down to their level.

"I will give you 3 candy and this *spear of heroism*, in exchange you must promise to uphold an important oath." Lucky said with a stoic expression.

"What oath?" Wess asked.

"You must promise to come over whenever you feel like you don't belong." His voice grew softer, "I won't always be home, but if Poppy lets me know you visited asking for me, I'll come find ya and give you a biiiiig hug and tell you about how Scavenging went that day. Is that okay with you?"

Wess nodded and embraced Lucky one more time.

"You aren't alone okay? Don't be so hard on yourself" Lucky said, handing the spear to Wess.

A bell tolls in the distance, interrupting their moment.

"The contest! I'll be late!" Wess exclaimed. There was a costume contest going on that night and Wess had been preparing for it for months now.

"Have fun! Don't poke an eye out with that thing okay?"

Wess nods, puts their mask back on, and rushes to the square with their new spear gripped in their tail. Lucky watched them turn into a spec on the road, joining the other children and festival goers. After a while, he began the long trek back to Poppy. He found her napping on the porch. A bright quilt with all sorts of Fall colors was draped across her legs and back. She stirred once Lucky got a bit closer.

"Mhhmm," she stretched, "Hello darling."

"Hi Soda-Pop," he laid down beside her, "I think I'm going to get Wess a real spear, just like Gano-"

"What on earth? You can't give children spears." she snapped awake, all grogginess gone.

"Oh yeah, hahaha" Lucky nervously laughed, one hand behind his head.

The two chatted for a bit before heading in for the night. In the end, Lucky found that all Wess wanted was to spend more time with him.