

Astro and the Disasters in the Lab

One morning, their parents took their children to their grandfather’s house. Natàlia, the youngest, was thrilled. She loved going to Grandpa Albert’s house because they always learned new things and did amazing experiments in the lab. Adrià, on the other hand, wasn’t so sure: there was a lab at his grandfather’s house, and that made him very curious but also a little scared, in case an experiment went wrong.

When they arrived, Grandpa Albert was already waiting for them at the door with his calm smile. He was wearing his glasses and a white lab coat full of pockets. In one pocket, he had neatly folded latex gloves, and in the other, a bunch of pens and a pair of safety goggles.

“Good morning, little scientists!” said Grandpa enthusiastically. “Today I’m going to show you my lab.”

Natàlia ran into the house. Adrià followed slowly, both with slightly tangled hair and a bit of wrinkled summer clothes. They looked around, alert, in case they saw anything unusual. He was shy but responsible, and always tried to keep his sister out of trouble. She, on the other hand, could never sit still.

Grandpa Albert led them to the basement and, with a wide grin, opened the laboratory door. As they entered, a white light brought tears to their eyes. Then they began to take in the large, heavy cabinets, the shelves with neatly arranged glass jars of different sizes, the tables with their stools, and so on. Natàlia and Adrià couldn’t tear their gaze away from that laboratory filled with things they had never seen before.

Grandpa coughed, trying to get his grandchildren’s attention. “Before starting any experiment,” he explained, “we must familiarize ourselves with the instruments and machines. To avoid disasters.”

Natàlia suddenly felt a tickling sensation coming from her pocket. Inside, she saw whiskers and a pink nose emerging. It was Astro, the mouse Natàlia always took everywhere. He had very white fur, a long, thin tail, dark eyes that shone with curiosity, and small, round ears. He was very curious and mischievous, always darting around like a restless little thing.

Adrià, with a small smile, greeted Astro without his grandfather noticing. He always looked after the mouse, but he was a little afraid because he didn’t want his grandfather to catch him, since animals weren’t allowed in the laboratory.

Taking advantage of Natàlia’s momentary lapse in attention, Astro escaped from her pocket and slipped through a hole he found near the cabinets. When Natàlia and Adrià realized Astro was gone, they began to look worried.

“This shower is for protection in case of an accident,” Grandpa said, turning to his grandchildren to see if they could hear him.

“Adrià, try to distract Grandpa while I catch Astro,” Natàlia whispered so Grandpa wouldn’t hear her. Adrià nodded.

“Grandpa, what’s that thing that looks like a transparent cage for?” Adrià asked.

“Very good question, little scientist,” Grandpa turned and pointed to the object Adrià had described.

“This is called a fume hood, and it’s used to expel the air from inside to the outside.” While Grandpa proudly explained, Natàlia took the opportunity to slip away and approached the hole where Astro had entered.

Astro, restless as ever, had clambered up the shelf next to the wardrobe and, with agile movements, ended up on a mechanical arm that was holding a glass jar.

Suddenly, a noise echoed throughout the laboratory, like someone jumping into a pool. “What happened?” Grandpa asked, surprised.

“Beep-beep!” Natàlia, who had heard that sound many times before, shouted, “Astro!” Adrià, with a swift movement, approached the table where he had heard the noise and saw a clear glass jar filled with a lilac liquid.

Luckily, Grandpa, who was very skilled, rescued Astro and pulled him out of the jar. “Hahaha!” Natàlia laughed when she saw Astro was lilac. Adrià, surprised, asked,

“Grandpa, how come Astro is lilac?” Grandpa smiled and said,

“This lilac liquid is the juice of a red cabbage, and it has the ability to dye things lilac.”

“Will Astro stay lilac forever?” Natàlia exclaimed, her face showing surprise. “Don’t worry, he’ll be white again in a few days.”

Adrià and Natàlia sighed contentedly, knowing that Astro would be back to his old self. Grandfather caught Astro with a towel and left him warming up on the table.

“Adrià and Natàlia,” he said in a more serious tone.

“You must keep an eye on Astro and let me know right away; we don’t want him to change color when he returns to the lab.” They both nodded, and the proud grandfather said:

“You are great lab assistants. Today Astro has taught us an important lesson: curiosity is fantastic, but in the lab, we must always be responsible.”

And so, amidst glowing test tubes and laughter, Adrià, Natàlia, and Astro the mouse continued learning to use the laboratory instruments, without any major disasters… or at least, none too major.

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