

The Butterflies

Once upon a time there were two beautiful butterflies. They lived in a very small greenhouse and danced amongst the green plants there. They smiled at the delicate little ferns, and sang to the big leafed trees, with all the little climbing plants, twisting and turning themselves around and around. They loved the little star flowers that peeped from within the leaves. The little butterflies were happy.

For a long time, the little butterflies were so busy, growing and dancing and singing, that they did not notice what was on the other side of the glass. Then one day, they happened to be sitting quietly on a leaf, when they suddenly saw out of the window a beautiful garden, full of flowers of every colour. Above it shone the sun in a brilliant blue sky, where birds swooped and sang with joyful cries.

The little butterflies nudged each other and gazed with delight at the garden.

Their eyes fell at last on a tall rose bush, with deep red roses standing tall on long stems and all about them were planted graceful white lilies, which swayed gently in the breeze. “How lovely that big red flower is,” sighed one little butterfly. “I know she would be my friend if only we were able to go out into the garden.”

“Yes,” murmured the second little butterfly very dreamily. “If only we were free to dance amongst the blossoms. I would dance all

day and when the dear sun went to sleep I would curl up inside one of those beautiful white flowers. I would feel very safe with her to care for me.”

“We have loved it in our little greenhouse. It kept us safe while we were growing up, but now we are bigger and we are ready for adventures in a bigger world,” they thought.

But then they sighed a little, even trembled, as they thought of the old man who cared for the garden. They were very shy little butterflies and they thought him very fierce. They had heard him shout at the birds, shake his fists and stamp his feet. “Leave my strawberries alone”, he would cry. They didn’t know what strawberries were, but they were frightened by his anger. So whenever he opened the door and came into the glass house, they stayed very quietly under a leaf and watched until he was gone. But it meant they could never go into the garden; they were too frightened of what might happen.

The two little butterflies thought about the beautiful garden they wanted to visit so much and then about the fierce old man and they cried and cried and cried. Their friend, the little striped bee, who visited them from the garden, tried to reassure them and told them the old man was not really so fierce and that they really should be brave, but the little butterflies only cried all the more.

They were so busy crying that they did not notice the old man come up to the glasshouse and open the door. They did not see the old man come up to the place where they were sitting.

Suddenly they heard him ask, ever so gently “What is the matter, my little butterflies?”

They felt very small and frightened. In fact they were so busy being frightened, that they did not see his loving look or hear the gentleness in his voice. However, they looked at each other and thought alike to themselves, as they often did because they were such very good friends, that perhaps they should take the bee’s advice and be brave, if they ever wanted to go into the beautiful garden.

So one little butterfly took a deep breath, stood up very tall and answered the old man: “We were born in your glass house and we have been very happy here, but now that we are bigger, we want to go out into the garden. Please.” The second little butterfly nodded her head very vigorously. They both still felt rather scared but they looked the old man in the eye, very politely of course, and even managed to feel just a little pleased with themselves for saying what they wanted to say.

Then, to their surprise, the old man smiled and said: “Of course you want to go out into the garden. Every butterfly should be free to have a garden to dance and sing in, with birds and bees and flowers for company. I’ll leave the door open for you to go out and in.”

And so he did. Then he walked slowly back out into the garden and went on hoeing the weeds.

The little butterflies were so surprised at what had happened that for a while they just sat on their leaf. Then, still just a little unsure, they moved closer to the door and finally fluttered nervously into the garden. There they smelt the sweet scents of the flowers. The young plants and the little bees, busy in the flowers, called out to them: “Good day, good day, welcome to our garden.”

Very soon they were dancing around the garden (and just between you and me, they were so full of joy that they even did some somersaults around the sweet peas!).

At first the little butterflies used to go back into the glasshouse at night. Eventually, just as the one had foreseen, she made a special friend of the rose, and one night she even snuggled in amongst the velvety petals until she was completely surrounded by redness and softness and went to sleep.

The other little butterfly had made a special friend of the lily and she too was cradled in a soft scented bed to go to sleep.

And there amongst the plants in the greenhouse and the flowers in the garden, the two little butterflies lived with much happiness, and are still living now, for all I know.