

THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE ROSE

Juvenile chatter among his three hundred forty-two cousins convinced the tiny grasshopper that one day he could become a beautiful butterfly. None of them knew where that supposed fact came from, but it was fully distributed. With grasshopper family life somewhat lacking in parental oversight, the young grasshopper had to sift through certain information on his own. In his particular case, naivete and the desire to wear a coat more colorful than the dull, dingy green of his own led him to believe that he actually could do it if he could only figure out how.

After totally wiping out the lettuce crop of their first stop in the morning, the grasshopper clan moved on. Taking a side path in the garden away from the rest of his kin, the young grasshopper came upon a beautiful rose bush. After successfully navigating his way around thorny stems and spiky stipules, he found some fresh new leaves to try for brunch. It is common knowledge that grasshoppers have both breakfast and brunch. As he chewed away, he soon came upon an ugly caterpillar who

was also partaking of the same vittles. They eventually took up a conversation between bites.

“Well, young grasshopper,” said the caterpillar. “Where are your friends? Usually, your kind are among a large crowd.”

“I guess I was daydreaming and made a wrong turn,” replied the grasshopper. “The new leaves on this rose bush are quite tasty, though, aren’t they?”

“Indeed, they are, my friend,” said the caterpillar. “Indeed, they are.”

“Tell me, Mr. Caterpillar. How does one become a beautiful butterfly?”

“Ah, I see, young one,” replied the caterpillar. “You are more inquisitive than most of your sort. Well, I shall give you the wisdom I have gained. To become a beautiful butterfly, you must eat the last flower bud of a ‘Magic’ rose.”

“Is this a ‘Magic’ rose?”

“No, no, no, my little friend. If this were a ‘Magic’ rose, I surely wouldn’t need to spend my time eating from it. That bush way across the garden is a ‘Magic’ rose.”

“Then I must surely go to it,” said the young grasshopper.

“You must be very careful, though, to not eat so many of the leaves that you don’t have room for that last flower bud.”

“Thank you so much for your wise counsel, Mr. Caterpillar.”

So, the grasshopper flew over to the far side of the garden and landed near the top of the ‘Magic’ rose bush, where he could keep an eye on the nearest cluster of rose buds. Worried about what the caterpillar said about not eating too many leaves, he decided to remain near the flower cluster and just wait for the last flower bud. He looked up every once in a while to see the ugly caterpillar smugly eating away on the other rose bush. He continued to wait and wait, while the ‘Magic’ rose opened all of her flowers, except for one last bud. Though he was getting hungry, he felt like he was in a good position to get that last flower bud. While he waited, other young caterpillars moved onto his rose bush and began eating the leaves. He must resist, though, and wait.

The grasshopper looked across the garden and saw that the ugly and plump caterpillar who

was his benefactor of wisdom had stopped eating and wrapped himself in an ugly brown coat. As time wore on, the grasshopper got hungrier and hungrier, but he remained vigilant in waiting. Then he noticed the ugly brown coat of the old caterpillar crack open and a beautiful butterfly emerge.

“Surely, the caterpillar was right,” said the grasshopper to himself. “For he is now a beautiful butterfly, but ... he told me that wasn’t a ‘Magic’ rose ... Maybe it’s different for caterpillars.”

Finally, there remained the one last flower bud on his ‘Magic’ rose. The grasshopper devoured that tasty last bud. And then, he waited ... and waited ... and waited some more. But the grasshopper had no ugly brown coat to wrap himself in. He asked some of the other caterpillars that were on his ‘Magic’ rose if they had an extra coat he could borrow, but they didn’t answer him as they wrapped themselves up.

“Well, maybe you don’t need a coat,” said the grasshopper, hopefully.

The grasshopper felt very weak. Perhaps he should have eaten some of the leaves of the ‘Magic’ rose as he waited. All the caterpillars had stripped clean the leaves of his rose, so he had to

move somewhere else. He saw that the rose across the garden still had some leaves on it, so he decided to go back there. Weak from hunger, he didn't have the strength to fly. When he tried to walk down the rose, he stumbled on a thorn and fell to the ground.

“Why haven't I turned into a beautiful butterfly?” lamented the grasshopper. “I waited and ate the last flower bud, just like the caterpillar said ... Maybe I won't ever be a beautiful butterfly.” In his dying breath, the grasshopper said, “Maybe I should have just been the best grasshopper I could have been.”

The beautiful butterflies that flew overhead did not hear the final thoughts of the grasshopper. Or, if they did, they didn't care. They were majestic, colorful butterflies and not ugly grasshoppers.