

The Snail in the Snapdragon

Trinity Rollins

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On a particularly sunny morning in mid-March, when the winter had just turned to spring, a single snapdragon stood tall and mighty in the middle of an otherwise barren flower bed. Barren, that is, if one did not consider the weeds and the miniature life forms that roamed the soil between them.

Among the ladybugs and butterflies lived a much different garden dweller. Mostly different due to his lack of legs, the lowly garden snail slowly but surely made his way to the base of the snapdragon and prepared himself for a tiresome climb. This practice had become a routine for the snail, at least when it had rained the night before as it had on this specific morning. He wished to make his way to the raindrops still resting on the flower's leaves before the sun took them all away. Where else was he to get such a refreshing sip of water?

On this day, the snail was running rather late on his climb. Perhaps he had slept in too late, but whatever it was that caused his delay must have been fate. This day was the first day on which the garden snail witnessed the dazzling petals of the snapdragon spread wide for all to see. He had always been too early to be able to enjoy the flower's glorious wake-up call. On his hefty trek up the trunk of the snapdragon, the snail was so mesmerized by the beauty before him that his usual leafy pit-stop completely slipped his memory. He kept ascending until he was able to crawl inside one of the beautiful blooms of purple, leaving a faint trail of slime on the petal behind him.

The snail settled down, lying his face between the soft petals of pastel. When he gazed out from the flowery hideout, the snail saw a view of the garden he found almost as marvelous as the snapdragon herself. This flower had struck a feeling within the snail that he'd never felt before. He was inspired by her strength and might, and in such admiration of her boldness and delicacy. If it were not for his thirst,

the snail decided he would have stayed in the clutch of her petals for an eternity. Feeling a bit melancholy, the snail made his way back down to his usual leaf, leaving the blooms behind him.

From that day on, the snail ran late on his upward journey so often that it became his norm. It was no accident, now. Day after day, the snail visited his lovely flower. He no longer minded the length of the trip, for he could never grow tired of the sight of her lavender elegance. He would curl up in her middle, occasionally drifting off to sleep in the gentle cradle her petals provided. Some days he would stay for such a long time that the two would watch the sun set into the horizon together. The once lowly snail felt larger than life when in his floral penthouse. It was not of difficulty for the other garden dwellers to see that the snail had fallen in love. His eyes were held higher, and his shell seemed to gleam brighter than ever before. Yes, he was as in love as a snail could ever imagine to be.

The snail continued to meet with the snapdragon for several more weeks. Together, they watched the spring turn into summer. Her petals transformed into a gentle shield from the fiery sun.

However, the summer did not last forever. On his daily returns, the snail began to take notice of some unsettling changes in the appearance of his lover. With each passing day, her color seemed to diminish into nothingness. As the temperature stooped, her petals followed suit. The lavenders changed to browns. Her gentle plumage became rough and brittle. The snail became fearful of climbing her stalk, for he did not wish to injure her. She had only fallen ill, he believed. This would soon pass, and she'd again be able to guard him from even the harshest blizzard. If only the snail's fantasies held true.

The snapdragon's condition continued to worsen. Her browning blooms sank heavily to the soil floor. Never had the snail seen her look so forlorn. Her emotion was contagious, and caused the snail to mope about, his own head practically dragging the ground. The day he could see there was nothing left that he could do, the snail curled up at her fragile base and did not exit his shell for the rest of the evening despite how frigid the air grew in the night.

He grew exhausted of waiting for what he realized would not come, and the frost caused his body to ache. Though some part of him was still hesitant, the snail burrowed far beneath the topsoil and fell into a deep slumber until spring dared to show its deceitful face again.

And show its face, it did. When the snail awoke from his final dream of his violet enchantress, he slowly ascended to the surface. He couldn't help but be reminded of his past journeys up the snapdragon's stem. The thoughts of her did not so much excite him anymore, but rather brought him a rather gloomy feeling. Little did he know what awaited him above ground.

As his eyes adjusted to the sunlight, the snail was happily greeted by several insect friends, new and old. He then made his way out from dim shade of the weeds to feel the true sunlight warm his shell. Taking in his mostly familiar surroundings, the snail noticed only one thing out of place.

Where his darling once stood tall and proud, there was a stout green sprout in her place. At first, the snail was unsure of this supposed replacement. He avoided the sprout for many days, much like the rain avoided the flower bed. From afar, the snail could see the sprout growing thirsty, just as he'd been all those months ago. Struck with a pang of sympathy, he nudged a particularly dewy leaf over to the sprout, pouring the water onto its roots.

It was then when the snail noticed the wee buds of purple hiding throughout the sprout's foliage. His love was coming back to him, for she was reborn! The snail continued to collect dew-filled leaves, doing whatever he could to assist the babe's growth.

A week went by and the snail could rest under her leaves again. Two weeks, and he could practically lounge in her flower. Six weeks, and it was as if the two had never spent a day apart. What was lost had been found, and many a summer sunset awaited them.