



A Caterpillar Grows Up

Ellen was sitting up on a branch of the apple tree, swinging her legs. Her mother was looking over the vegetable garden.

"Want to see a nice fat green worm?" her mother called.

Ellen jumped down from the tree and ran over.

"I guess that's a cabbage worm," said her mom. "He's sitting on a cabbage leaf. See the big holes he's eaten in the leaf?"

"He's just the same color as the leaf," said Ellen. "He's hard to see."

"I suppose there are a lot more of these worms around," said her mother. "They don't help us a bit, because they eat the cabbages."

"Would that worm grow up to be a butterfly, like a caterpillar does?" asked Ellen.

"I guess so," said her mother. "I suppose that really is a cabbage caterpillar, not a worm, and there *are* cabbage butterflies. You know those yellow ones with big black spots?"

"Do you think we could keep him, Mommy, and watch him grow up?" asked Ellen. "Maybe we could see him turn into a butterfly!"

"We could try it, Ellen. We know what he eats. You could feed him cabbage leaves every day."

"Let's show him to Daddy," said Ellen. "Maybe we can find something to keep him in." She ran off into the house holding the green cabbage caterpillar close in her hand.

Her father was working in the kitchen. "See my caterpillar, Daddy," said Ellen. "I'm going to watch him grow up into a butterfly. Would you help me find a house for him?"

"Let's build him a house right now," he said. "I have four small panes of window glass. We can use those for the sides of the house, and a piece of screen for the top of the house, and some wood for the floor of the house."

In just a few minutes they had made a fine large glass house and Ellen put the caterpillar right in. They put the screen over the top.

"You can pull up one little cabbage plant each day to feed your caterpillar," said her father. "There are more plants growing in the garden than we will ever be able to use. Probably if you wet the leaves before you put them in, he'll get enough water. We'll keep his glass house on the living-room table, so we can all see what happens to him."

Ellen ran right out into the yard and her mom helped her pull up one baby cabbage plant. Ellen brought it in and wet the leaves. Then she put it into the glass house.

"There you are, Mr. Caterpillar! I hope you'll grow up to be a butterfly soon," said Ellen.

For three days the caterpillar crawled around inside his glass house. Ellen put in fresh cabbage leaves each day. He seemed to be fine. On the third day he crawled up the glass on one side of his house. About half way up, he stopped.

When her parents came home from work that night Ellen said, "My caterpillar is just sitting on the side of his house. He hasn't moved all day. Do you think he's dead?"

They looked at the caterpillar. He seemed rather dried up. He wasn't moving at all. "But if he were dead," said her father, "I should think he would fall down. We'll just have to wait and see. I never raised a butterfly before."

"You know," said her mother, "when a caterpillar is nearly ready to become a butterfly he stays very still for a while. Sometimes he spins a cocoon, or he buries himself in the ground, or he just sits quietly in his old skin. They call him a chrysalis when he's doing that. Then, when he's ready, he comes out a butterfly."

They decided that either their caterpillar was a chrysalis now or he was dead. For about a week he didn't seem to change much, except he got a little smaller looking. He didn't look like a caterpillar any more even, just a dried up little skin.

A few days later, Ellen was standing in front of the glass house, wondering if anything was ever going to happen to that old caterpillar. Suddenly she noticed something! "Mom, Dad" she called. "I think I can see yellow wings inside. I'm sure I can."

Her parents came into the living room quickly.

"See," said Ellen, "there are two tiny yellow wings all folded up in there. I see some black spots too. Do you think he is going to come out and be a butterfly now?"

"I guess that is exactly what is going to happen," said her mother. "Why, this is the most wonderful thing I have ever seen! Let's take the glass house out on the porch. We'll watch the butterfly come out."

They put the caterpillar's house on the porch railing and sat down beside it. They waited and waited and waited. Nothing seemed to be happening.

"Maybe it will take a long time still," said her father. "I guess we better not just sit here the rest of the day. Let's go weed the beets and then come back and take a look."

After they had worked for a little while, Ellen said, "I'm going to go see the chrysalis for a minute," and she ran up onto the porch.

"Oh, look!" she called to her parents. "He's a butterfly, already! He's come out. He's beautiful!"

They came running. Instead of a dried-up old worm, there was a beautiful creamy yellow butterfly! His wings looked soft as silk. They were much, much bigger than the little wings that Ellen had seen all folded up. Now the butterfly was flapping them back and forth, back and forth.

"Oh, I'm so sorry we missed seeing him come out of the chrysalis," said her dad. "I shouldn't have been in such a hurry. But isn't he a beauty? See his long tongue! He can reach way down in the flowers with that." The butterfly kept unrolling his tongue, and then rolling it up again.

"I'm going to take off the roof of his house now," said Ellen, "so he can fly away if he's ready." The butterfly did not fly away right away.

Then after a minute her mother slipped her finger down next to him. Carefully he put out one of his long legs, his long new butterfly legs, and stepped onto her finger.

Then Ellen put her finger next to her mother's. Once again the butterfly reached out a long leg, and stepped out onto Ellen's finger. Ellen lifted up her hand carefully. She held the butterfly out over the porch, in the bright afternoon sun.

For a moment he clung to her finger. And then, opening out his silken wings, he flapped them gently and rose up in the air.



"Fly away, fly away, butterfly dear," Ellen and her parents sang as the lovely yellow butterfly flew off. They watched him fly across the street to the meadow.

"He's landing!" said Ellen. "He's landed on a meadow flower!"

It made them glad to see their very own brand-new butterfly having his first drink of the sweetness of a flower.

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