

The Wasp and the Ladybug

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A wasp went about his usual business of collecting food for the nest when he noticed a ladybug. It was the duty of wasps to kill such things, but there was food to be found elsewhere the wasp decided.

She flew off one way, he flew off the other, but the wasp never once let the ladybug out of his sight. Ladybugs were the guardians and protectors of plants, and the wasp admired the way this ladybug crawled so diligently from stem to stem of the flowers assigned to her. He appreciated a girl who took her career seriously. This ladybug was damn good at what she did, and she looked damn good doing it. But wasps poached the sugary nectar. Ladybugs protected it. They were mortal enemies, and could never be anything else. And so the wasp flew off to another flower and forgot about the ladybug.

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Try as he might, the wasp found no luck that afternoon. One flower remained before he'd have to head home to a hungry nest, empty handed. He slumped his shoulders, hung his head and flew over to it. He peeked inside. The sun reflected gold and yellow beams as it bounced off of thick, succulent veins of sweet nectar. The wasp buzzed around the flower in frantic circles and dove in.

Halfway into his third scoop, something knocked the wasp hard into the opposite wall of the flower. The wasp shook his head and regained his focus just in time to see the ladybug slam into his chest. She backed off and swung around for another pass. The wasp put up his hands and dodged at the last second. He burst out of the flower and took off as fast as he could, but the ladybug chased after him. He dived through petals, weaved through stems, dipped through branches, but he never gained an inch. The wasp smiled. He never met a ladybug as vicious as she was diligent. To hell with the rules, he decided.

The wasp stopped and turned toward the ladybug. He opened his arms for embrace. He didn't notice his stinger raised with them. The ladybug's eyes widened. Ladybugs aren't as precise and agile of flyers as wasps. She tried with all her might to slow down, change direction, anything. The wasp spread his arms further, eager to finally hug the most beautiful ladybug he'd ever seen, when a yellow-brown pointed object caught his eye. He looked down and saw his stinger, and looked at the ladybug flying towards it. The wasp's mouth dropped. He leapt to fly away, but his stinger sunk clean into her stomach.

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The ladybug gasped as she lay on the peat moss and perlite soil floor of the flower bed she'd worked so diligently to protect. The wasp stroked the ladybug's face gently. He scooped

a handful of nectar and tried to feed it to her. Her breath grew slow as she lifted her arm to the back of wasp's head and pulled him close to her. They smiled and stared into each other's eyes. The ladybug leaned in, gently kissed the wasp, and then she died.

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The wasp worked until nighttime. He dug the ladybug's grave beneath the flower where they first met. He lined the walls of it with the flower's golden nectar. He dragged a petal over the grave to mark it.

The wasp sighed and dusted the dirt from his hands. He fulfilled his duty as a wasp to kill such things. He would return to the nest and the other wasps would be proud. They would laugh and drink nectar and revel in the day's work. Wasps and ladybugs were mortal enemies, and could never be anything else.