

Gardening

[By Sophia Dimdam]

Words hold immense power. Those who can speak freely have the choice to give life, or destroy.

In my palm, appeared a seed. With it, came the responsibility of nurturing it and allowing it to flourish properly. there were no instructions indicated, like most flowering seed packets do.

I was, however, assigned a partner. a teammate.

“Hey,” he poked me in the side with his elbow.

“You do know that if we fight, you won’t escape me! We’ll sort it out, right?”

”Yeah dude, whatever.” I said, giving him a playful push.

We made a promise to take extra care of this little seed.

For the first few weeks, it was great! We were working together in peaceful harmony, spending hours together in the greenhouse. I found him a delight to work with.

My job was to hydrate the plant with a few gentle spritzes of water. His task was to situate the pot in such a place where the sun could joyfully shine on it.

We both loved our jobs. He always whistled a little tune while he adjusted the potted plant.

One day, he didn’t come in to the greenhouse. I completed my job alone, with the hope that he’d come running inside any minute. Slamming the doors open, maybe babbling about accidentally sleeping in? That was so like him (he told me so himself).

But, he didn’t show up. Afraid that the tiny green sprout would be upset about missing its daily dose of Vitamin D, I turned the pot towards the window. Facing the smiling, early-morning sun. (I remembered how his upside-down grin would spread across his face.)

The next day, he had come dashing inside the sparkling glass building, his brown hair all in a flop. He said he was sorry that he failed to be responsible.

I said it was alright. I covered for him. Like, come on! What are partners for, right?

“Right!” he laughed.

He whizzed around the room like a fire bolt, making up for everything he did not finish the day before.

This bizarre occurrence, thankfully, did not repeat itself.

The next week, there was a letter in our hand-painted leafy green mailbox (we had also stuck our thumbprints on the side of it as a signature; mine was in purple, his was blue). I tore the white envelope open, almost ripping the letter itself along with it. He just rolled his eyes at me jokingly.

There was to be an assessment commencing in a few days. The head wanted to check our progress with the plant.

“Hold on, we aren’t done yet!” I said, panicked.

“Relax. It’s alright, we’ve just got to keep at it and work hard,” came the reassuring reply.

So, we resolved to diligently toil harder in order to put out the satisfactory result we wanted.

The poor sprout, however, did not take kindly to this sudden hit of adrenaline. The little fellow half-drowned in the constant splashes of water, and was nauseous at the hasty repositioning of its home.

I wanted to take a break. Truthfully, anyone could see that the pitiful sliver of green in the clay pot desperately needed one too.

Unfortunately, I did not succeed in realizing that my partner would continue to drench and agitate the poor thing in my absence.

“Stop! Stop it right now!”

“Listen to me, I know what I’m doing,” he firmly said, while engulfing the pot in water.

“You clearly don’t. You’re killing it!” I said, seizing the spritzing bottle.

His smile vanished.

“Don’t you have any sense? Are you crazy? I’m trying to take care of you!”

“Me?”

“I mean, the plant,” he gestured towards it half-heartedly. “I’m trying to keep the plant alive, like you wanted me to.”

“Not like this!”

“Well, I don’t know what you want from me!”

“I want you to take care of this plant, in the right way. You can do it if you just listen to me!” I said, throwing my hands up in the air. “God! This doesn’t have to be that difficult.”

His face hardened. “**Fine! I messed up, I made a mistake! I’m sorry.**”

I sighed.

“Come on, don’t be like that. Don’t leave!”

“Get a grip! This is ridiculous. I’m a horticulturist. I know how plants work,” he turned on his heel and began to walk away, muttering to himself. “...Stupid...making me look like an **idiot**—“

Stepping one foot outside the door, he called back. “Aren’t you going to apologize?”

I didn’t answer. What error was I going to humbly admit before him?

The young bud, witnessing everything from its swamped home, shivered and curled up slightly.

The next day, he grimly opened the door and briskly walked inside. Upon hearing the sound of his footsteps on the ground, I looked up.

“Hey, I’m sorry—” I began.

”I asked the head if I could be transferred.” he interrupted in a monotone. “I’ll be assigned to a new partner next week.”

“What?”

Pause.

“Hold on, it’s the presentation tomorrow. September 9th, don’t you remember?”

He acted as if I didn’t speak a word at all. “I can’t work with someone who belittles my efforts. Nor with one who thinks I don’t know what I’m doing.”

I stared at him. What was he saying?

“I don’t want your next partner, and your next assigned plant, to suffer the same way I did.”

The door violently slammed shut. The whole greenhouse promptly shook, as if a small-scale earthquake had occurred.

The potted plant, in its warm place on the windowsill, crashed down onto the floor.

His words, red-hot, burned into my skin. Shoved the tears out of my eyes. lodged themselves into the crevices of my brain, filling it with a deafening echo. The broken promise.

*I didn’t escape. **You did.***

As I looked back to check on the fallen rose, I found that it had withered up into an unrecognizable brown stump.

Maybe it heard his words too.

“Oh, no. No...I’m sorry, darling.” I whispered, picking up the broken shards of the pot. “I’m really sorry.”

I clutched my head, trying to regain control of my breathing. “God, I’m so stupid! Why do I keep doing this?”

This was my fourth assignment. Maybe I just didn’t have a green thumb.