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Mosquitoes and Snails

Mary Graham Bonner

"Oh, you again," said the Snails to the Mosquitoes. Not very warmly.

"We are indeed," buzzed the Mosquitoes. "And frankly, your manner is quite rude. Perhaps a small nip would teach you better."

"Try," said the Snails, "and we'll simply go inside our shells. We're slow creatures, it's true, but we can retreat very quickly when we need to. It isn't cowardly to avoid a bite that does no one any good."

"Cowards," said the Mosquitoes.

"Not at all," said the Snails. "We just refuse to let you say, 'We bit the Snails today — what fun!' It would only encourage you."

The Mosquitoes buzzed indignantly. "Then why are you talking to us at all?"

The Snails looked very pleased with themselves.



"Because," they said, "a picnic party of children went past here not long ago. A lovely picnic party, with lots of children. We're not going to tell you where they went. And by the time we've finished this conversation, they'll be much too far away for you to bother."

The Snails talked slowly, as they always did, while the Mosquitoes grew more and more furious — furious at being tricked, furious at having wasted all that time, furious that the children were now entirely beyond their reach.

Eventually the Mosquitoes flew off, muttering: "Never again will we waste time talking to those slow snails."

And the Snails smiled.

"Our slowness has never been so useful," they said.

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