

# The Tale of a Snail

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*“Your life is what your thoughts make it.”  
Marcus Aurelius*

# The Tale of a Snail

## Friends

Once upon a time there was a snail on a trail. She was a poor little snail. The little snail was very cold. She was lost and could not find all the other snails.

She tried and she tried but she could not find them. Snails don't just rush off. Snails are slow, but they are still very clever. They are slow because they take time to think about where they are going. Little Sarah the snail had not taken time to think. She had rushed to follow a tiny beetle.

Why did Sarah follow the little beetle? It was a very pretty green beetle. It was a very nice shiny green, and she wanted to have a nice shiny green shell just like the beetle. Oh but he was in such a hurry, scurrying around. She tried to follow him, silly Sarah. Her mummy and daddy had told her to keep with their snail family. "Stay with

us,” said daddy, snail earlier in the morning.

She tried to ask the beetle, “Where did you get that nice shiny green?”

He was too busy, running around trying to remember where he was going. “What am I doing,” said the beetle to himself, “Where am I going?” He was very busy, but he was not getting anything done. He was running around in circles. He did not have time to stop and think, so he kept going round and round.

Sarah was very upset, she started to cry. There were lots of tears, and a big creature came to look. When she saw the big creature she stopped crying. “Oh dear,” she said “You poor snail. You have lost your shell.” She felt very sorry for the big snail with no shell. He seemed to be much worse off than her.

“Oh dear, little snail. I have not lost my shell,” he said, “I’m a slug we look like snails but we don’t have shells.”

“Why?” said Sarah.

“It's just the way we are,” said the slug.

“If something tries to hurt me I can get inside my shell, what do you do?” She was very worried for the big old slug.

“I pull myself up very tight, and I have slimy mucus on my body so it is difficult to pick me up,” he said wondering about her, “Why were you crying?”

“I was on my way home with my family and I chased a beetle. Now I'm lost.” She was still very upset.

“Oh dear,” said the slug, “It will be light soon.” This worried the poor old slug. There are big beetles and birds that eat slugs and snails during the day.

“You can come and hide with me,” he said.

“Oh, I can't my mummy and daddy said I must not go with snails I don't know.” She was a good girl and remembered what her parents told her.

“I'm not a snail,” said the slug.

What should she do? Sarah was so frightened, she was very small and all alone.

She was lucky, Mr Slug's wife was worried about him. She came to find him.

“It will be light soon,” she said. “Who is this?” Mrs Slug looked at Sarah.

Mr Slug told Mrs Slug about Sarah and how she had got lost.

Mrs Slug was very nice, she gave Sarah a hug, “You come home with us.”

So Sarah went to stay with Mr and Mrs Slug. They had a nice home, it was very damp. Their little house was hidden under a big lump of stone. Above the stone were lots of little bushes with pretty purple flowers. The slugs and Sarah said “Good day.” to each other. When we go to bed it is at night so we say goodnight, slugs and snails sleep during the day so they say good day.

Sarah tried to get to sleep but she could hear a buzzing sound. Someone was up early and off to work. Who could it be? Is it a bee? It is lots of bees. They work very

hard collecting nectar from the flowers. The bees fly back to their home, this is a hive. In the hive bees make honey from the nectar.

The next evening Sarah woke. Mr & Mrs Slug were very kind.

“We will go and look for your snail family,” said Mr Slug.

“Thank you, for helping me,” said Sarah.

“You must think of us as friends,” said Mrs Slug. They liked Sarah because she was very polite. Sarah helped Mrs Slug to tidy up after breakfast.

## **Search**

Mr Slug looked outside of the house. It was nice and dark outside. He smelled the air, but he could not smell any snails. The two slugs and one little snail went outside.

Mr Slug went first, Sarah went second, and Mrs Slug went third. Mr Slug left a big trail for Sarah and Mrs Slug to follow. They went

very slow, Mr Slug was thinking. He was a clever slug, he took them to the cabbage patch. The snails might come to eat the cabbages.

They all stayed together. Mr Slug told Sarah not to wander off. This time she listened. She followed Mr Slug's tail, Mrs Slug followed Sarah's tail. They looked all over the cabbages, but they could not find the snails. Mrs Slug suggested a picnic.

“Yummee!” said Mr Slug he liked his food. He was big and strong because he ate his food.

Sarah liked her food to and ate it all up so she would be strong to. It would make her shell grow. She was not greedy. She had to fit in her shell. Her shell would get bigger as she got older. She knew that not all the food that tasted nice was good for her shell. She needed a good strong shell.

When they had finished Mr Slug again set off and with Sarah and his wife following. They had not gone far when Mr Slug

stopped. He did not look very happy. He was shaking his head, "Go back follow my trail. Do not wander off where I have been." They all edged back along the path he had taken. When they reached a cabbage he stopped.

"Are you alright?" Mrs Slug looked at her husband, "You don't look very well."

"Some creature has left a trail. It was a nasty trail all along the edge of the cabbage patch."

Mrs Snail turned to Sarah, "If you see something, and you don't know if it is safe to touch you stay away from it."

"Yes," said Sarah, "Is Mr Slug going to be alright?"

"I think he will be alright," said Mrs Slug,

"We must get him back home before it gets light."

Mr Slug was not very well. "I feel very ill," he said, as he moved slowly.

Suddenly there was a big bang, the ground shook. Thud, another big bang, the ground trembled. Thump, thump, thump, rumbled



the ground.

Sarah was frightened, "What is it?"

Mr Slug was too tired to answer her question.

Mrs Slug stopped, she looked around for a place to hide. There was a broken flower pot.

"Look we can hide under that," she said.

Mr Slug shook his head. "The cabbage leaf," he said. The three of them crawled slowly under the leaf that lay nearby. Mrs Slug and Sarah had to help pull Mr Slug under. It was very scary.

Thud, thump, thud, thump, thump, the ground trembled, it shook more and more. Sarah peeked out from a crack in the old leaf. There was a light, it shone from above.

"Is that the moon?" she whispered to Mrs Slug.

"The moon is a big light in the sky. It does move, but very slowly. It does go dull and disappear, but very slowly. This light is moving very fast. I don't know what it is," said Mrs Slug.

Again there was a thud, thump, thud, thump, then it stopped. Sarah drew back almost into her shell. A giant long thing with five pink slugs on the end was waving a black thing with light coming from its end.

“What is it?” said Sarah, so quietly even Mrs Slug did not hear her. “Is it a monster?” she said nudging Mrs Slug.

Then another long thing with five pink slugs on the end came down. It looked eerie in the light. The five pink slugs on the end, one shorter than the other, clasped the broken flower pot.

Sarah pulled back into her shell. A loud noise boomed through the night air. They did not understand, but you will. It sounded like, “Good gotcha.”

“It is a horrible monster,” thought Sarah. She peeked out of her shell. She saw the light rise in the sky. It was pointing into the broken flower pot. Inside she could see some slugs and snails, all hiding. The monster had got them.

The monster turned the light shining away

from them. Thump, thud, thump, thud, thud, thump, the ground shook. All grew quite as the thumps and thud got less and less. The monster had gone.

Mr & Mrs Slug were very upset, the monster had gotten some of their friends. Mr Slug was still feeling very ill. "It will take us a long time to get home with Mr Slug so unwell," thought Mrs Slug. "We must go," she said.

It took them a long long time to get back home. The sun was beginning to rise. Mrs Slug sent Mr Slug straight to bed. Then she sat with Sarah.

Sarah looked at Mrs Slug, she could see how unhappy the kind lady was. She knew that it was all that nasty monsters fault.

"What will happen to your friends?" asked Sarah.

"They won't come back," cried Mrs Slug, "We never knew before, now we know not to hide in broken things, they are dangerous places."

She gave Sarah a hug, "Promise, you won't go into broken places."

"I promise," said Sarah.

"We don't want the monster to get you," said Mrs Slug, with a tearful smile.

"Thank you," said Sarah, "Thank you for helping me look for my mummy and daddy."

"That's alright dear," said Mrs Slug.

"Will Mr Slug be alright?" said Sarah, "It's all my fault he's ill. If I had been a good girl and stayed with my parents Mr Slug would not have gotten unwell."

"It's not your fault. We might have hidden in the broken flower pot if we had not been looking for your parents. We often dine with our friends," said Mrs Slug.

## **Doctor**

The next evening Mrs Slug checked to see if Mr Slug was feeling better. He was not, he was still very ill. Poor Mrs Slug what was she to do? How can she make Mr Slug

better.

“You stay with Mr Slug Sarah. I must go for help.” Sarah was very good, she tended Mr Slug, he was all hot and cold. Poor Mr Slug he did feel very bad. Mrs Slug was gone for a very long time. Mr Slug began to worry. “I hope she is alright, she has been gone such a long time,” he said to his little friend. Sarah reassured him, “Mrs Slug is very wise, she will be back, don't worry.”

Mrs Slug had gone along a very dangerous trail. It lead up the side of a bank at the end of the garden. In the bank there was a big hole, much bigger than a slug. In the hole there lived a hungry toad. The toad liked to eat slugs.

She slid along quiet as she could, keeping low under the plants below his hole. There was a frightening noise. “Croak, croak, croak,” said the toad. “Croak, do I smell slugs?” said the toad. Mrs Slug moved as fast as she could.

Mr toad was feeling lazy, and he sat back in his hole. Mrs Slug travelled further and further up the bank. Finally she came to a big old piece of wood. It had once been a big tree. So what had happened to the tree? Well in this place there was a legend, a tale of a monster that came to the tree. The monster roared, the tree groaned and creaked. The monster roared again and again biting at the tree, until the tree fell down. The giant monster took the tree from this place and it was never seen again. The tree stump was home to some very strange creatures. In the bottom of the tree things grew and some strange crawly creatures knew secrets.

Mrs Slug found one of the crawly creatures and explained Mr Slug's symptoms. She described how he was feeling. She told of how he was hot and cold. That he could not talk much. How his head felt very strange.

Doctor Bug went down into a tiny hole in the

old tree stump. Moments later he returned with some very strange looking stuff.

“Give this to him,” said the wriggly bug, “Make sure he eats it all. It tastes horrible.” Mrs Slug understood, and she thanked Doctor Bug.

Mrs Slug retraced her path back down the trail. Luckily Mr Toad had gone to sleep. He was such a lazy toad.

When she got back home she went straight to Mr Slug and made him take his medicine. He did not like it.

“This tastes horrible,” he said, but he knew that Mrs Slug had travelled past the dangerous toad. She had done a lot for him, so he was very grateful and did as he was told.

## **A Flower Bed**

The next evening Mr Slug was feeling much better. He got out of bed and after a nice

meal they all set off. Today Mr Slug suggested they look in the flower bed. So they wandered along from their home at the bottom of the garden. Mr Slug stopped. Smelling a toad she peered through the plants. Mr Slug and Sarah also looked. In the moonlight they could see lazy toad's body.

“Is he asleep?” asked Sarah.

“I'm not sure,” said Mrs Slug.

They sat for a while, not daring to move.

They waited a long time, but Mr Toad did

not make a sound. Mrs Slug knew that lazy

toads liked to sleep but she was sure he

would croak. He did not, he was very very

still. He did not move, not even a little. Mr

Slug edged forward, he was very brave. He

caught another scent. It was a smell he

remembered very well.

Mr Slug turned and rushed back to the

others. “We must go around.”

“Why?” asked his wife.

“He has been eating slugs, the slugs have

been eating what made me ill,” said Mr



Slug.

The slugs did not like the lazy toad, but they were now more afraid of the food that made Mr Slug ill.

The thee of them wandered around the toad, still looking for signs of Sarah's family. They looked and looked, eventually Mrs Slug decided it was time to eat. Stopping for lunch under a nice bush.

While they ate they thought of lazy toad. He had not checked to make sure what he ate was good to eat. It was lucky that Mr Slug was wise and had only taken a little bite from the food that looked so good.

“Sarah, you must check with a grown up before you put things in your mouth,” said Mr Slug, concerned for the little snail.

Sarah was a clever girl and she understood. She did not want to be ill like Mr Slug, or sleep forever like lazy toad.

They had nearly finished eating when along comes another slug. He was smaller than

Mr Slug. The young slug came over to see them. "Hello," he said, "That looks good."

Mr Slug invited him to join them. While he ate they told him what had happened. When he had finished Mrs Slug spoke, "Well young Slug, we must be getting back it is a long way to our home."

"Thank you for the nice meal," said the young slug.

"That's quite alright," said Mr Slug, "It was nice to meet you."

As the young slug wandered off he stopped, then he turned and came back to them.

"If you are looking for Sarah's parents would you like to stay at my place tonight."

Mr and Mrs Slug thought this was a good idea. They could search further from home.

"What a splendid idea," said Mr Slug, "Thank you very much."

"Follow me," said the young slug.

The three slugs and one little snail set off. They had not gone far when suddenly all the slugs pulled themselves in hard, all squashed up, Sarah went into her shell.

A funny looking creature was looking at them. He was all prickly with lots of spikes all over him. He had a long pointed face, with a little black nose. His small black nose was wet, he sniffed at them.

“Oh, no, not slugs,” he thought as his tummy rumbled. He did not feel very well. Mr Hedgehog liked to eat slugs but in this garden they had made him ill. He left them alone and walked off down his trail to the next garden.

“Why did he not eat us?” said the young slug.

“Perhaps he had eaten ill slugs?” said Sarah.

Mrs Slug looked at Sarah, “You are a clever girl, I'm sure you are right.”

Sarah was very pleased and the young slug was very impressed.

It took them a little while longer to reach the young slug's home. It was not as big as Mr and Mrs Slug's home, but in a very good

location. It was in a small hole in the brick wall that surrounded the garden. They all went inside.

Mr Slug looked at Mrs Slug. He knew what she was thinking.

“Haven't you got a wife?” she asked the young slug.

“No,” he said, “There are so few slugs in the garden.”

“That's because of the monster,” said Sarah.

He understood, they had told him about the monster.

While he talked with Sarah, Mrs Slug looked around his home. She was very polite, he was providing them with beds to sleep. She looked at all the bits of flowers all over their beds. “We will be sleeping in flower beds like the plants,” she whispered to her husband.

“A flower bed for the night,” he whispered back, with a grin.

The young slug realised they were talking very quietly to each other. He guessed why.

“Oh, sorry it's a bit of a mess,” he said.

It was very untidy, but Mr and Mrs Slug smiled at him, and they all laughed.

“Don't worry,” said Mrs Slug, “You are very kind and thoughtful, that is most important.”

“As we always say; We did not come to see the house,” said Mr Slug, “We came to see the Slugs.”

The young slug grinned. He had a good sense of humour. He was a nice slug and that meant more to Mr and Mrs Slug and Sarah. Not all slugs were warm and kind hearted.

## **Signs of snails**

The next evening, they said goodbye to the young slug. They said thank you and wished him well for the future. He told them that if they came back his way, they were welcome to stay again.

So off they went, travelling slowly as slugs and snails do. Mr Slug sniffed the air, he could smell snails.

“Follow me,” he said, and they did.

Suddenly he stopped.

“Don't look Sarah,” he said.

Mrs Slug had seen the terrible sight and gave Sarah a hug. There was a lump of stone surrounded by flowers. On the stone were lots of shells, broken snail shells. All the shells were empty, pieces of shell were scattered everywhere.

Hastily Mr Slug took Sarah and his wife away from this horrible place.

“What was it?” asked Sarah.

“Sarah, just because you have a nice hard shell it will not protect you from everything,” said Mrs Slug, “Against some things your best protection is your mind.”

“I don't understand?” said Sarah. “How can my mind save me?”

“Remember how Mr Slug thought only to take a small bite, when all the other slugs took big bites from the food that made him ill,” said Mrs Slug.

“You must think, mustn't you,” said Sarah.

The two slugs nodded, she was a very

smart little snail.

The three of them set off again, Mr Slug was very alert. Listening, looking, smelling, he kept his mind on where they were going. This was very important. They had to get back home, he had to remember the way. If he forgot then they would all be lost and might never get back home.

They travelled under all sorts of flowers. The flowers' pretty colours were not visible in the moonlight, so they could not see such beauty. They could smell them, what lovely smells.

All sorts of things got in their way, big stones, sticks, bits of tree bark, string, even an old coin, half stuck out of the ground. It stood like a grave stone in a cemetery, they could see a strange image on it, it was a face, but not like a slug, it was a human face.

“What is it?” said Sarah.

“I don't know,” said Mr Slug, shaking his head.

“Perhaps it is a squashed animal,” said Mrs Slug. They had never seen money before. Mr Slug looked up at the sky, Mrs Slug saw him.

“We are a long way from home, we must get back to the young slug's home tonight,” she said.

“It is much to far back,” he said, and he was right. So they went in search of somewhere to stay. They made a camp under some damp leaves. It was like a little brown tent. It was very cosy.

Mr Slug turned to his wife and shook his head, “Oh, we are silly.”

“Why?” asked Mrs Slug.

“We have travelled to lots of places, but we did not think,” he said, looking rather glum.

“We should have asked Sarah to tell us about where she last saw her mummy and daddy,” said Mrs Slug.

“We've been going around like that busy green beetle haven't we?” said Sarah.

“Yes Sarah, we have done a lot and achieved nothing!” said Mr Slug.



They had gone a long way and were all very tired. They did sleep well. The next evening the two slugs and the little snail set off. It took them all the night to get back to the young slug's home. He was pleased to see them.

The young slug invited them in and was very keen to talk to Mr and Mrs Slug. He knew that he could learn a lot by listening to what they said. Young Sarah, also took an interest. She was a snail and these were slugs but they lived very similar lives and she learnt a lot.

They all slept well. The young slug was sad to see them go. Mr Slug went first, Sarah went second, then Mrs Slug went third. One behind the other, back to Mr and Mrs Slug's home.

It was nice to be back in their own home. It was not time for bed, so Mr Slug asked Sarah to describe where she had been with

her mum and dad.

“I remember going across some very hard ground, it was rough,” she said, “We went up and over it. Then down the other side.” She thought for a bit, “I went over hard ground when I chased the beetle but it was not the same. It was flat and wide.”

“Was it like the young slug's home?” asked Mr Slug.

“Yes, except he only had one way in,” said Sarah, excited, “Do you know where it is?”

“Yes, I think so,” said Mr Slug. “We will go there in the evening.”

## **Hole in the wall**

In the evening Mr Slug took them through the rockery. They travelled under all the heather that grew between the rocks. Eventually the slugs and the little snail reached the garden wall that went along the bottom of the garden. Mr Slug lead them through the long grass that grew next to the wall. He always made sure they followed

the wall. It was on the left of their trail. He thought it would be too rough and dangerous to walk on the wall.

“I remember this,” said Sarah. She could see a pale patch of very hard ground. Mr Slug lead them over the garden path. It was made of concrete. Mrs Slug was worried, she did not like it. It was very open, they had nowhere to hide.

Mrs Slug suddenly felt much happier, she could smell lettuces.

Suddenly two big eyes and a wiggling nose popped up in front of them. On the edge of the concrete path a little mouse stood in their way. He was a very hungry little mouse. Mr and Mrs Slug closed in around Sarah trying to protect her. They pulled themselves hard.

The little mouse edged forward. Sniffing them with his nose. Then Mr Slug heard a strange sound, the mouse squealed. The paw of a cat pushed Mr Slug, Mrs Slug and

Sarah, they all flew into the air.

Mr Slug fell to the ground with a thud. He was lucky he landed on soft ground. Mrs Slug was flung into the side of a plant and rolled down its stem. She was very dizzy. Sarah came down with a crash. Sarah was lucky her shell was strong. She poked her head out and looked around.

What a nice place for a snail to land. She was sitting in the centre of a lettuce. Sarah was in the heart of a big juicy lettuce. She could not resist a nibble, but she only took a small bite to make sure it was ok to eat. It was very tasty. She wandered down to see where Mr and Mrs Slug were.

Mr Slug had wandered over to his wife.

“I have a headache,” she said, “How are you?”

“I’m very bruised,” said Mr Slug, “Where is Sarah?”

“Over here,” said Sarah as she climbed down the lettuce.

The two slugs went over to meet her.

“Are you both alright?” she asked.

“Yes,” said Mr Slug.

“You are a lucky girl,” said Mrs Slug, with a big grin, “Falling into a lettuce.”

“Is it OK to eat? I took a tiny nibble, it tasted nice,” she said.

“It should be, let me have a taste as well,” said Mr Slug.

The little snail lead the two big slugs up to the top of the lettuce. Mr Slug and Mrs Slug tasted the lettuce. When they were sure it was alright to eat they told Sarah and the three of them munched away.

After what had happened, it was nice to eat and get their strength back. Mr Slug took some moving, he was enjoying the lettuce. Mrs Slug and Sarah persuaded him to stop eating and continue to look for Sarah's family.

Some way from the lettuce Mr Slug picked up a scent. He could smell snails again. Following the smell he lead them to the base of the garden wall. From the bottom of

the wall there was a trail going up. They went up the trail, climbing higher and higher.

“This is it,” shouted Sarah. She was quite excited, this was the way her parents had taken her into the garden.

Some way up the wall the trail went into a hole. The hole went through the wall.

“Quickly,” said Mrs Slug, who was behind Sarah.

“Quickly,” said Sarah, who was behind Mr Slug.

They hurried along through the hole.

“Why are we rushing,” said Mr Slug, he was feeling tired. His belly was rather too full.

“That light again, the monster is about,” shouted Mrs Slug.

They clambered down the other side of the wall. Suddenly a sound echoed through the hole. It was the monster, “Oh, no!” said the monster, “They've eaten my lettuces.” The monster sounded very cross. He made more funny noises.

“Where are they getting in,” shouted the monster.

Mr Slug was moving quite fast. Mrs Slug and Sarah had trouble keeping up with him. He lead them down the other side to the bottom of the wall. He was not so quick taking them from the wall into the undergrowth.

“You went down the wall very quickly,” said Mrs Slug, she smiled at him, looking at his bulging belly.

He smiled back.

Sarah looked at them both.

## **Into the unknown**

The two slugs and the little snail found a nice place to hide. The monster was about and Mr Slug decided that it was best to stay on this side of the wall. Mrs Slug prepared a lovely meal, it was very good food. She always looked for the best things to eat.

“You have not eaten much,” said Mrs Slug, looking at Sarah, “Are you alright?”

“Yes,” said Sarah remembering how Mr Slug had struggled up the wall then almost

fallen down the other side. She could see his big belly in her mind.

None of them got much sleep, the camp was nice but very noisy. Birds whistled songs in the trees above. Beetles and other insects scurried around, some would even take a look inside the leafy tent. The next evening they were all very sleepy. Mrs Slug made a nice breakfast. A slug eats breakfast when we eat our evening meal.

Mrs Slug was worried about Sarah. “Are you worried about your parents?” She knew that slugs and snails would sometimes not eat if they were frightened.

“A little,” said Sarah.

“Is that why you are not eating very much?” said Mrs Slug.

“No,” said Sarah, she did not want to offend Mrs Slug or Mr Slug, but she did think they were rather large.

Mrs Slug was very clever, she understood.

“Mr Slug, did eat too much, he does need to eat a bit less. You are growing, if you don't



eat enough your shell will not grow and you will be weak. Suppose your shell had not been strong when you had fallen into the lettuce. It might not have been a lettuce, poor Mr Slug fell onto the ground,” said Mrs Slug.

“You are very wise Mrs Slug,” said Sarah. “I will have some more, I do want a strong shell.”

“You are becoming a very pretty young lady,” said Mrs Slug.

After breakfast it was time to move on, Mr Slug did not want to be too long on this side of the wall. He turned to speak to Sarah.

“You will have to help us Sarah. We have never been here before,” said Mr Slug. Sarah showed them the way, she knew where her home was.

As they went further along the trail, a strange sound caught Mr and Mrs Slug's attention.

“Wait a moment Sarah,” said Mrs Slug, “What is that sound?”

“What sound?” asked Sarah, as there were

lots of sounds. The hoot of an owl, the scurrying of mice trying to hide from the owl. It was none of those sounds.

Mr Slug described the sound. It was a gurgling sound, water over pebbles.

“Oh, that sound, it is a very very very damp place. Too damp even for slugs,” said Sarah, as she remembered the small stream. “We are nearly home.” She smiled.

There was a crooked old tree. It had lots of curly roots. It was right beside the stream. The water had washed some of the dirt from between its roots. Around its base was a carpet of moss, it was very soft and green. Just below a piece of moss, was a hole in the tree. It was very well hidden. Sarah took her slug friends into the hole. Inside was a big open space.

“This is our home,” she announced, “Where are mummy and daddy?”

“Perhaps they are out looking for you?” said Mrs Slug. Mr Slug nodded.

“We should wait here, they are bound to come back,” he said.

Sarah waited by the entrance, looking out into the night. The sun was beginning to brighten up the early morning sky. The birds had begun to sing.

Sarah was very sad, she had imagined coming home and finding her mum and dad. This empty house made her very unhappy.

Mr and Mrs Slug said they would stay with her for a while to see if her parents returned home. When it was evening again and the sun had set, Mr and Mrs Slug and Sarah went to look for food. They were back in the snail home well before the sun rose in the sky. They had not gone far.

“What if they don't come back,” said Sarah, “What if the monster has got them?”

“Thinking about all the things that might or could happen won't help,” said Mrs Slug.

“You could spend your whole life doing that,” said Mr Slug.

“Does it matter?” asked Sarah, she was crying.

“One day you might be worrying about

something that might happen, when you should be thinking about where you are going,” said Mr Slug.

“So I could get lost,” said Sarah.

“Or eaten,” said Mr Slug.

“What should I think about then?” asked Sarah.

Mrs Slug gave her a big hug, “Perhaps, those you are with. Your friends.”

Sarah thought for a moment. She realised these kind slugs had done so much for her. They had risked their lives to try and help her. They were away from their home. Mr and Mrs Slug had looked after her in their home now she must look after them in her home.

Sarah helped the slugs feel comfortable, and they all went to bed.

“That was close,” said a snail.

“I’m glad to be home,” said the other.

The two snails stopped in the doorway. The first things they noticed were two big slugs sleeping in their beds. Mr Snail felt very cross. Mrs Snail was about to go and poke

these slugs and tell them off. Then she noticed her daughter sleeping quietly.

Mr and Mrs Snail rushed to her bed. Mrs Snail gave her a cuddle, Mr Snail patted her on the shell. She woke up, she was very sleepy. Her parents were so pleased to see her. She was filled with joy at seeing them.

With all the commotion, Mr and Mrs Slug had woken up. Mr Slug laughed, he had a loud hearty laugh. Mr Snail had an idea that these were very nice slugs.

“Thank you, thank you,” he said.

Mrs Slug was filled with tears, she was so happy to see mother and daughter reunited. Mrs Snail was also crying. Crying because she was so happy to see her daughter.

“Oh, Mrs Slug, how can we ever thank you?” asked Sarah's mummy.

Sarah told her parents how Mr and Mrs Slug had helped her. She told them of all the things she had seen and learned. She warned them about the monster and the food that made slugs ill.

Everyone was very happy, they did sleep well. When it was dark again, they all got up.

“We will come back with you, see you safely back to your home,” said Mr Snail.

“The hole in the wall will be far enough, we can manage from there,” said Mrs Slug,

“Can't we dear?”

“Yes,” said Mr Slug.

“We must all stay together,” said Mrs Snail, looking at Sarah.

“Yes mummy, Sorry,” said Sarah.

Along the trail mummy snail told her daughter, how daddy snail had got lost when he was little. “Sometimes when you are young you make mistakes. There is so much new you don't always think.”

“You don't always think when you are older,” said Mr Slug.

“We all do silly things,” said Mr Snail, “The important thing is to learn from our experiences. Good or bad.”

“Yes,” said Mrs Snail, “Learn from the things that happen to us, that is important.”

It was not long before the snails and slugs were climbing the wall. It was a very high wall.

“Oh no!” said Mr Snail. He was quickly joined by Mr Slug.

“Oh dear!” said Mr Slug.

“What is it?” asked the ladies.

“The hole,” Mr Snail paused, “It isn't a hole.” Mrs Snail, came up by her husband, Sarah and Mrs Slug followed.

“The monster,” said Mrs Slug, “I think the monster has blocked the hole.”

“What shall we do?” said Mr Slug.

“Can we get over the top of the wall?” asked Mrs Slug looking up.

“Climb all the way up, then all the way down the other side, before the light in the sky appears again,” he said shaking his head, “No, no.”

Mr and Mrs Slug looked very unhappy. The snails suggested going back to their house for the night.

“It is better to think about things when you are somewhere safe,” said Mr Snail, “Let us

concentrate on getting back home safely.” He was very wise, there were lots of hazards for snails and slugs, they had to be very careful. Always being alert, that is why they always tried to get a good sleep.

Back home they chatted for a long time. They talked about ideas to get past the wall. “Come on to bed everyone,” said Mr Snail, “Tired snails get eaten.” All of them did as he said and had a very good long sleep.

When it was dark the ventured out again. Along the trail came a young snail. He looked at Sarah, “Wow,” he thought to himself, “She is very pretty. Not to big, not to small.” He liked the way her tail wiggled when she moved.

“I’m Sam,” he said, “Where are you going?”

“These slugs helped me find my parents, now we are trying to help them get back home,” said Sarah.

He asked. “Where do they live?”

“On the other side of the wall,” said Sarah.



“Can't you go through the hole?” said Sam.  
“The monster blocked it.” Sarah looked sad, he could see she was upset.  
Sam decided he would try and help, he did not like to see a nice young lady so unhappy. “I'll help you,” he said.  
“Thank you,” said Sarah, but she did not see how a young snail could help when the grown up snails and slugs could not.

The four snails and two slugs made their way towards the wall. Sam talked to Sarah the whole time. He asked her questions, she answered them. Then she asked him questions and he answered hers.

## **Obstacles**

When the six of them arrived at the wall Mr Slug shook his head. Mr Snail scratched his shell. Mrs Slug looked at Mrs Snail. Sarah looked up at the wall that was hundreds maybe thousands of times higher than a little snail. It seemed hopeless.

“It's no good we will never get over that,” said Mr Slug, thinking back to when they came through the hole. Just a short climb had made him tired.

“Maybe we should find a new home on this side of the wall,” said Mrs Slug, “Oh I do miss my nice home.”

“Under the wall,” said Sam.

“We can not dig like worms,” said Mr Snail.

“Daddy, the hedgehog did not use the hole, it would be too small,” said Sarah.

“Yes, but he did get in and out of the garden,” said Mr Slug.

“I don't fancy using the hedgehog's entrance,” said Mrs Slug.

“Perhaps there is another hole,” said Sam.

“Maybe there is another,” said Mrs Slug,

“When I went to see Doctor Bug the wall was close to the old tree stump.”

“So should we go along the wall and see?” asked Sarah.

Her father looked for a moment, snails do a lot of thinking. Mr Snail always liked to think

about something first. He always told Sarah, “Before doing anything, give it some thought.”

Mr Snail spoke, “We might not make it back home before sun up.”

“By sunrise you can stay at our house,” said Mr Slug, but he had not thought. There might not be another way through the wall. He realised this and added, “If there is another.”

“I think there will be room at my parents house,” said Sam, “It is near the wall.”

“Thank you very much,” said Sarah.

“His parents might not thank him,” said Mrs Slug, “Suppose they already have guests coming.”

“I'm sure they won't and when I tell them how kind you have been to Sarah,” he looked at her, “Well I'm sure they will be glad to help.”

With that the four snails and two slugs set off, six of them on a trail along the wall. They had nearly reached the end of the wall.

Sam spotted a hole. It was much smaller than the other hole. When the old tree in the bank had grown, its roots had pushed through the wall. Some of the wood had gone rotten. The rotten wood had been eaten by the wriggly bugs. So now there was a hole.

All six of them climbed up, suddenly a big nasty looking creature put two big hooks through the hole. It had jaws like nut crackers. Mr and Mrs Snail put their shells against the hole.

“Go quickly,” said Mr Snail. The big beetle tried and tried to bite their shells. Mr and Mrs Snail had big strong shells. The beetle could not bite them. He pushed and pushed, but the snails were strong.

Sam was leading Sarah and the slugs to safety. The beetle was after the slugs, but Mr and Mrs Snail were still blocking the hole. The two slugs and two snails soon got to Sam's home. His parents were surprised to see three visitors and one son.

“Who is this?” asked his mother, “You did not tell us you were bringing friends home.” She was a little upset. She liked to prepare the home when friends came to stay.

“Better come inside,” said his father, “It will be light soon.”

“Sarah will explain dad. I have to go back for Mr and Mrs Snail,” said Sam rushing off.

Sarah told Sam's parents all that had happened. She told them how her mum and dad had used their shells to stop the beetle getting Mr and Mrs Slug. When Sam arrived back later with Mr and Mrs Snail it was getting light. Sam's dad was very proud of his son.

“You have done well helping these snails and their friends the slugs,” said Sam's dad, patting him on the shell.

The Wrinkleshells made their friends very welcome. They were called Mr and Mrs Wrinkleshell. Their shells went up and down like the waves in the sea, or the folds in

your cloths. Mrs Snail looked at Mr Snails shell, it had lots of scratches where the beetle had tried to bite.

## **The smell of heather**

The next evening everyone set off again for the hole, it was the only way back through the wall. Two slugs, two young snails and four adult snails. Eight little animals, six snails and two slugs all marched to the hole.

Mr Snail wanted to go first, his friends the slugs had saved his daughter. Mrs Snail was very worried, if the beetle got hold of Mr Snails soft body. You can imagine, he would be eaten. So Mr Snail was very brave, but he was also cautious and thought about what he was doing.

He remember the smell of the beetle, he remembered the noises it made. So he sniffed the air, he listened, then he move

forward a little at a time, keeping his head ready to pull back into the shell.

He was surprised when he got through safely. He could smell the beetle, but it was not the same as the night before. As he went forward he saw the beetle in the moonlight. It was not moving, it was not all the beetle. The outside of the beetle was hard and tough like the snails shell. Some creature had broken this tough outside. The beetle had thought it was so big and strong. It did not think that there might be something bigger and stronger. It was not cautious like Mr Snail, and so it was eaten.

Mr Snail called back to the others. They all came through the hole. Mr and Mrs Slug invited them all back home. Mrs Slug knew this part of the bank, so she guided them down the trail. They slowed down, Mr Toad's hole was above them. The lazy toad was not there, he was still laying in the flower bed. The food that made Mr Slug ill and killed the other slugs had also killed him

when he ate those poisoned slugs.

They went further down the trail. At the rockery Mr Slug took the lead. He went in front, guiding them all under the heather. It was a very lovely smell. Mr and Mrs Slug were very pleased to be back home. Inside it was very cosy. There was not much space. They had never had six snails to stay before.

While they were sleeping there was a sudden loud bang, followed by a rumbling sound. It was not the monster, he went thud, thump, thud, thump. All of a sudden there was water dripping everywhere. Snails and slugs love the damp, they all went outside to look at the rain.

Sarah remembered the place where she had not been allowed to look. Mr and Mrs Slug had explained that it had broken snail shells.

“We should go back inside now, we should not be out in the light,” said Sarah.



The six snails and two slugs turned to go back to the slugs home. Suddenly a big black thing with a yellow pointed mouth came down from the sky. The blackbird was very hungry. There weren't so many slugs and snails in the garden anymore.

It went to peck Mrs Slug. Sarah pulled herself inside her shell. Flipped herself with that lovely tail, then pulled it inside the shell. She rolled forward, the blackbird was distracted. A flash of lightning and clap of thunder frightened the bird. It flew back into the trees on the other side of the wall.

Sarah came back out of her shell. All of them saw how brave she was, but there was no time they had to get back into the Slug's house under the rock. Inside, Mrs Slug gave Sarah a big hug.

“You saved my life, little Sarah,” said Mrs Slug.

“You saved mine and Mr Slug's,” said Sarah.

Mr Slug was very wise, “We have all helped

each other.”

Mr and Mrs Snail were very proud of their daughter.

Later Sarah sat talking to Sam. They looked at the things that had happened to all of them. Sarah and Sam gave each other a big hug. Sarah looked at Sam, she was a clever girl. “Sam, when we work together and help each other we stand a much better chance of surviving don't we.”

“Yes,” said Sam, “Animals that fight each other are very silly.”

“All it takes a little bit of thought,” said Mr Wrinkleshell.

The End

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