Life Is What You Make It

Donna Denker*
MY COCOON was cramped and hot. Just living in the little hollow ball didn’t give me much room. But I have to admit most of my problem extended from the fact that I was afraid to become a butterfly. I wanted to stay a caterpillar. All spring I had enjoyed myself. They said I was one of the best looking caterpillars around. My coat was fuzzy, and all my legs were in fine shape. My whole existence had been carefree.

When I first hatched, the world looked awesome. I awakened to find myself on a soft green thing. It was very comfortable, and I found it was delicious to eat, too. Intermingled throughout the green petals were big red balls. They were yummy too but harder to chew. I decided to crawl down to the ground and explore a bit. On my journey down I met many other creatures. They all commented on what a nice fur coat I had, and I noticed I was unique in that my legs outnumbered theirs ten to one. The ground was soft, and my feet kept tripping over clumps of dirt. A feathery giant flew down my way, and I barely got into a hole in time to avoid being picked up in its mouth. My second encounter
was with a huge furry creature. It had four legs with retractable prongs and didn’t look a bit friendly. For a minute I didn’t think he noticed me, but he had. He walked over and sniffed me from my first segment to my last segment, only to walk away indifferently. The farther I traveled from my home the more obstacles I met, so I thought it best to return.

As I got older I learned what was expected of me. At the right time I would shed my skin, which would wrap around me. This would be my home until the appointed time when I would emerge as a beautiful butterfly. I dreamed of the day that I would be one of these lovely creatures. Everyone loved butterflies.

My life was one of leisure. I crawled in and out of apples, ate leaves, and spent hours basking in the sun. Then one horrible day I saw two human children outside playing around my apple tree. They were in wild pursuit of a butterfly. Within a few minutes they had him and he was doomed. They slipped him into a jar for a few minutes and then mounted his body in a glass case. To my horror, he was just one of many they had collected. I was so shook that I just about fell out of my tree. From then on I knew the life of a beautiful butterfly was not for me.

That night sleep did not come easy. I lay awake trying to think of a way to avoid my fate. The way I looked now, people left me alone, and I wanted to stay that way. Bright and early the next day I went to see the only person who could do anything about my problem.

The sign on her door read “Mrs. Nature,” but she let everyone call her Mom.

“Be seated, Herbie.”

“Thank you. I know you’re a busy person, so I’ll get right to the point. I’d like to be excused from being a butterfly.”

“You what? Herbie, are you crazy? It’s a law. You can’t defy the law. And why? Butterflies are one of my most beautiful and beloved creatures.”

So I explained how horrible it was to be collected. Certainly she wouldn’t want me to end up mounted in some kid’s bedroom.
“Herbie, each of my creations has a purpose, and if that is yours, you must accept it. How can you not want to be such a lovely thing?”

As much as I pleaded to remain a caterpillar, it was useless. Mom refused. She repeated it was a law, and I would become a butterfly just as all my kind had done before me. She said each creature’s existence had its good times and its bad times. Her ending statement was “life is what you make it.”

So that’s how I got into this predicament. I have been fighting metamorphosis but somehow feel I’m not succeeding. It’s so dark in here that I really can’t tell what I look like. Hey look, the side is splitting. I’m going to be free in a minute. The suspense is just killing me. It’s broken open. My wings are flapping; I’m no longer a caterpillar. But I remember what Mom told me.

“I’m a caterpillar. I’m a caterpillar.”

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**Long After the Death of a Brother**

*by Andrea Carlisle*

*English, Jr.*

If you hadn’t gone away, I never would have needed you, perhaps. Perhaps you would have seemed a brother, not a mind. But you did go—too far—and the sky fell long ago, long ago when I touched the shiny stone and read the nothing words and it was final.