**Crystal**

By Maritza Rico

As I was flying through a wheat field and I passed through the outskirts of it, I could see a little cocoon that was hanging from one of the trees there. I remembered my younger years when I was in that small protected shelter. Nothing could break it except time. The hope and anticipation of caterpillars over any species is outstanding. Knowing that someday you will emerge into a beautiful moth or butterfly, with flamboyant wings, like the ones I have. Although, if they ought to know, life is not easy as an adult moth; in fact, those years are the ones you will want to go back to forever. I wish I could have stood on that tree next to the cocoon for a while, and talk to him about how life is when he’s out. When he gets to see the light once again and develop into this thing that is so unbelievable but at the same time expected.

I thought of it for awhile. I wanted to ask him questions. There were many things I remembered about the time I was in a cocoon, though not once do I remember company. Maybe he would appreciate it, me being there to welcome him into the world. Possibly going and having a little chat with it. It would be silly of me, he could never listen but still I thought I should do it. After I found my day’s meal I would try to carry some of it with me and share it with the little cocoon. Of course in my right mind I knew he wouldn’t eat it, I mean, he was filled with all the nutrients he needed for the rest of his metamorphosis. But you know what they say, 'It's the thought that counts.’ I flew away with my silly thoughts. Still in the back of my head remained the idea that I would see him/her again someday.

The next day after I woke up, I flew to the wheat field I was roaming around in yesterday. I tried to remember which one out of the thousands of surrounding trees it was that the cocoon was hanging from. Of course it took me more than 4 hours to find it. The sun was at its fourth position already. ‘I must find it’ I kept repeating in my head every time I felt like giving up. It’s a precious life and every second that passes is a second more that he is exposed to danger. I looked and I looked going over every branch of every tree, and every texture I traced with my antennae trying to identify the baby pupa hiding.

        When I thought I could look no more and was about to give up, I found him/her. The cocoon was hanging from a tiny branch on a decently tall tree. As soon as I saw it, I started twirling by body all around. I was so happy. The little pile of nectar I had laying on my back, otherwise known as my lunch, was almost dry now. I was starving, but first I decided I should introduce myself. “Hey little cocoon” I said, “I don’t know if I should call you that, but then again, I don’t know what you like to be called. I’m sorry for coming uninvited, and if I realize you don’t appreciate my company I will leave right away. But I thought you would,” I walked in circles as I talked “so I came here looking for you. You see, I remember I felt really lonely when I was inside that cocoon. Yes I know it’s hard to believe but I was a pupa too, like you.” I chuckled to myself. “So I imagined you would like a friend, it’s important to feel appreciated, right?” I said and stared at the cocoon dangling from that branch; It was as if the little cocoon had nodded to me. But reality stroke, it hadn’t; it was just the wind. I felt some disappointment.  “This is absurd.” I stopped talking realizing I was embarrassing myself.

With my thorax arched down in disappointment I prepared myself to fly away back to my resting nest. I flew away little by little hoping that at any moment the cocoon would call before me saying, ‘Come back’ or ‘I do need a friend.’ As my mind went over all these thoughts I barely had the instinct to see the predator flying straight towards me: a gigantic blue bird with its wings flapping as fast as it could. Until he passed right next to me I realized that he wasn’t going for me, the cocoon was its prey. ‘The cocoon!’ I did a half turn and went after the creature hundred times my size dangling my tiny body as fast as I was able. The bird had already landed on the tree branch and stared at my cocoon friend precisely. He was not going to harm it, not while my wing membrane remained untorn and I was still alive. He approached it slowly and carefully. I flew gaining momentum and stood right in front of the cocoon. The bird didn’t expect this, but I knew it wouldn’t be of much help. He would just eat us both. So as I could see a faint smile on the birds  beak, I reached for the cocoon’s fabric where it was tied to the tree; and untied it as fast as I could, carrying it with my mouth parts away from danger.

I flew and flew until we were long away from the bird. I guided myself from the light of the moon. I looked for another tree where I could safely place the little chrysalis. I found a beautiful cherry tree similar to the one I grew up in. I fabricated a sort of hook in which I could hang it and I was done. “Are you okay? Everything’s all right now don’t you be scared.” I talked to the chrysalis inside the cocoon. “That’s it, I refuse to let you live out here on your own. It’s too dangerous. I promise I will take care of you every day until you are out, and until you can survive in this world by yourself.” That night I stayed watching the cocoon until the moon went up and I fell asleep.

I visited it every day, and stayed with it until nighttime, when every predator had gone to sleep. Since I was talking to it every day I decided to name it something. I came up with Crystal, it sounded like chrysalis and I liked to think she was a girl. I talked to her a lot, about everything. She never gave me an answer but I loved to believe she was listening. I couldn’t wait for her to come out of her cocoon; it made it even more exciting that I was going to be there to experience it. I knew that I could crack the shell and get her out. But my lack of patience would only tarnish her development. I mean, I would end up with a friend but I would destroy her chances of ever evolving into her wings and learning to fly. And now that I know how incredible it is to have the freedom of flying, I could never take that away from any one. So day in and day out I watched over her, waiting for that amazing encounter where I would meet my friend for the first time.

It had been a week and a half already. I felt like today would be the day. It was a beautiful day and the sun was shining bright. I woke up extra early to go out and find some lunch that I would save for Crystal. It would be like a welcoming present from me to her. I flew to the nearest flower garden I could find. I found some beautiful purple coneflowers and got some nectar out of it. I flew away back to the cherry tree. On my way there I saw my cousin the butterfly. We were all part of the Lepidoptera family. I got to the tree and made my way up. I set the pile of nectar down and I tried to make it look nice. “Oh Crystal you’re going to love this nectar,” I said walking towards her “It’s like the best tasting juice you will ever...” I froze upon the image that was in front of me. The image that will stay with me forever. A cocoon, flat on the surface of the tree, cracked open. That was the only thing on the tree. No moth, no butterfly, no Crystal. My disappointment was overwhelming. Everything I had lived up to was all gone. I was probably never going to see her again. She had come out, spread her wings, and flown out of my life as quick as she came into it.

That day I could say was the saddest day of my short, one month life. However, what time taught me about that experience was that my encounter with Crystal wasn’t meant to be as moths. Our encounter was the whole time we had spent together. Her miracle wasn’t coming out, but surviving her metamorphosis. That she couldn’t have done without my help. So instead of being sad, I smiled. Because I knew that I had helped her in every way that I could. And she had helped me too. She had been my friend. Although she never knew me physically I believe she knows I exist. I believe there is a place in her tiny little heart for me. And every time I see a moth fly by, I smile at it thinking that one of them is my friend Crystal. That she has made it, and she lives happily in the world.