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The Butterfly Garden

Sophia Madouvalou

Illustrations: Katerina Hadoulou



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ΜΕΤΑΙΧΜΙΟ 

*Was I ever a man
who dreamed that was a butterfly
or rather I am now a butterfly
who dreams that is a man?
Chuang Tzou*





To Myrto the most beloved butterfly

*At first glance,
they started fluttering in my mind.
That very moment, I saw little Katia
wearing a lovely dress
full of butterflies.
You look like a fairy tale I told her.
So beautiful,
so fragile,
so strong,
so free
as the little souls of love
on your dress.*



To Katia and her dress



‘**T**hat’s not a frock, it’s a garden full of butterflies!’ sighed Myrto enviously the moment the box from the dress shop was opened to reveal the lovely little dress inside.

Her younger sister, Katia, had the kindest godmother in the world -so much so that their mother would scold her about the presents she was always bringing the two girls, saying, ‘I wish you’d come with empty hands for once!’

‘No, let’s pretend that every day’s a birthday!’ was always her laughing response.



Maybe Katia's godmother had only christened her little sister, but she never left Myrto out. She always had a gift for 'Myrtoula' as she liked to call her.

And today was no different: as soon as she had helped Katia into her beautiful new dress and received the expected kisses and the delighted hugs, she took from her bag a little flat yellow box no bigger than a child's palm and handed it to Myrto, saying, 'This is for you,' and giving her a kiss on the cheek.

'This can't be a frock,' thought Myrto, disappointed. 'A frock with butterflies would never fit into a little box like this.'

'What I'm giving you is the soul of love,' her godmother continued. 'With this you can make anything you like more beautiful.'

Myrto thanked her politely; and with some curiosity but not much eagerness she opened the little box.

In it was a very pretty butterfly brooch, its four wings decorated with symmetric splashes of yellow, red and mauve, so realistic that it looked ready to take flight.



Myrto's lips formed themselves into the polite 'thank you' her mother had taught her always to say, but her heart longed for a dress with butterflies just like her sister's.

'They didn't have any butterfly dresses for big girls like you,' said Katia's godmother, reading Myrto's thoughts. 'I brought you this butterfly brooch instead, so you can make all your dresses look more beautiful.'

And with that she drew a pretty little pink cotton frock out of a paper bag and helped Myrto put it on.

'Where shall we put the butterfly? Let's see... on the shoulder?... In the middle?... No, no, here's where it goes best.' She pinned the butterfly on the left, over Myrto's heart, and satisfied with the result gave her a light push from behind, saying, 'Now go and look at yourself in the mirror.'



Consoling herself with the thought that at least with this butterfly she could make all her dresses look nicer, Myrto went into the hall and reluctantly approached the looking glass.

The sight of the butterfly on her new pink dress had a magical effect on her. Her godmother was right: the 'soul of love' over her heart made the dress absolutely beautiful. Myrto suddenly felt as if she had butterflies with wildly beating wings inside her; her eyelashes began to flutter and her arms rose in the air as lightly as a pair of wings. She turned with all a ballerina's grace in front of the tall old mirror and her face was lit by a contented smile.



With a frock like this, all her friends were certain to be jealous of her. But deep inside, she still envied Katia her new dress – the dress with butterflies all over it.

‘I want a butterfly like hers!’ wailed little Katia, running up to Myrto and jealously tugging at her dress. ‘I want one just the same!’ she whined.

‘When Myrto grows out of it, it will be yours,’ said her mother reassuringly, thinking Katia was envious of the dress.

‘All I ever get to wear is Myrto’s cast-offs,’ continued Katia in the same aggrieved tone, and stamped back into the living room.

‘Come on, now, you don’t always get her old ones, that’s not fair. The garden full of butterflies you’re wearing is brand-new.’

‘Love... soul... garden... butterflies...’

‘What’s that you’re muttering, Myrto?’
But the question came too late, for the words had already sent Myrto soaring up on the wings of her imagination:



'It's lovely to have a dress all to myself, but I do feel very much alone with not another soul around,' the lovely butterfly murmured to herself, gently spreading out her wings.

'You're not alone. I'm here, too,' said another butterfly whose wings were laden with smiles, bowing to her in mid-air.

'Ooh, you gave me fright! How did you find your way here?' asked the first butterfly, looking very pleased.

'I was flying here and there to find a place to spend a nice relaxing holiday when I heard the voice of your lonely soul call out to me. Then I just followed the wind.'

'And why didn't you say anything all this time?'

'I was admiring you. You're so beautiful, you look as if you're made of jewels.'





‘Where have you come from?’

she asked, by now blushing scarlet.

‘From a faraway land up north.’

‘And how did you get as far as here?’

‘I have my antennae to thank for that. It was they that led me towards the light.’

The smiling butterfly swooped swiftly and gracefully down onto the dress, balanced on her broad, butter-coloured wings and asked, ‘May I sit down next to you? May I stay here with you on this lovely dress and keep you company?’

‘But of course you may! I’d be delighted.’

‘Yet I don’t know anything about you, not even what your name is or what you’d like me to call you.’

‘I am the soul of love. My name is Butterfly and I come from England.’

‘That’s strange,’ said the other butterfly, ‘for I, too, am the soul of love. And what does ‘butterfly’ mean?’

‘Why, it means what it says: “butter” and “fly”.

‘Are you a butterfly because you flutter by? Unless you get stuck in the butter, that is!’ asked the other. ‘What a funny name you’ve got!’

But before she had time to tell Miss Butterfly what her own name was, they were interrupted by a rapid beating of wings which made them both raise their heads. Their big round eyes made out a tiny but very handsome butterfly who introduced





himself by saying,
'Bonjour! Eez it all right if I stay 'ere wiz you? I am ze soul of love, and you may call me Papillon.'

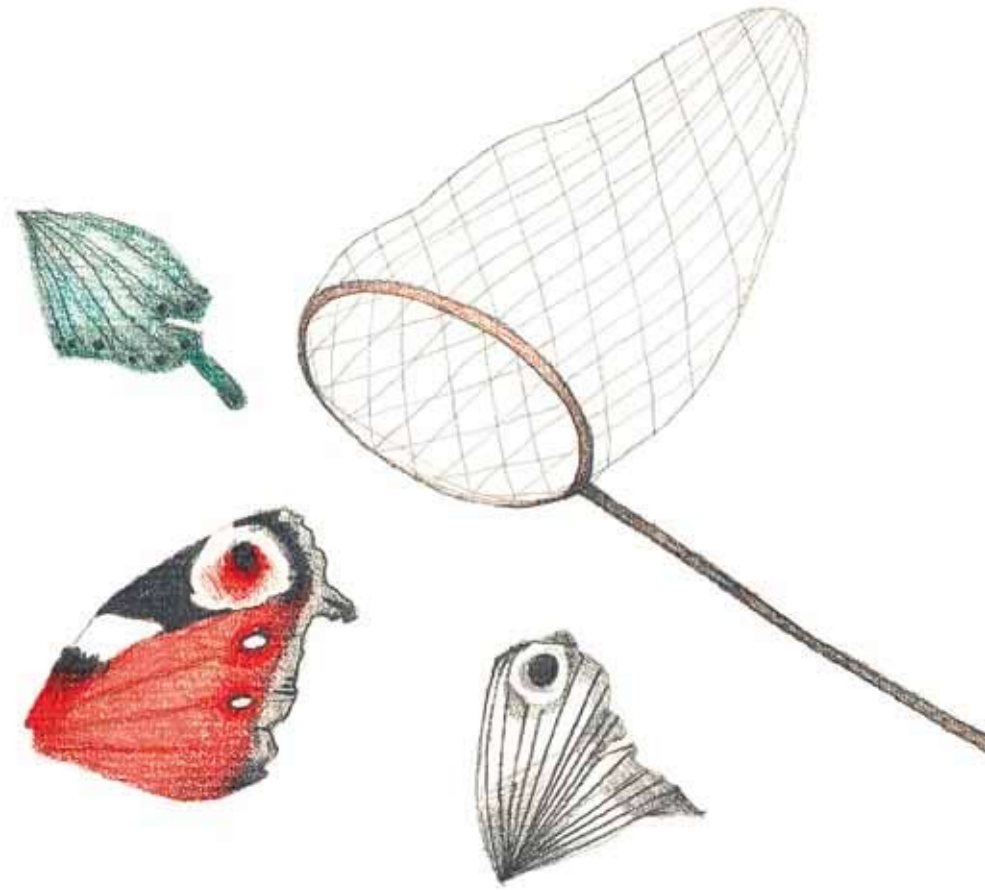
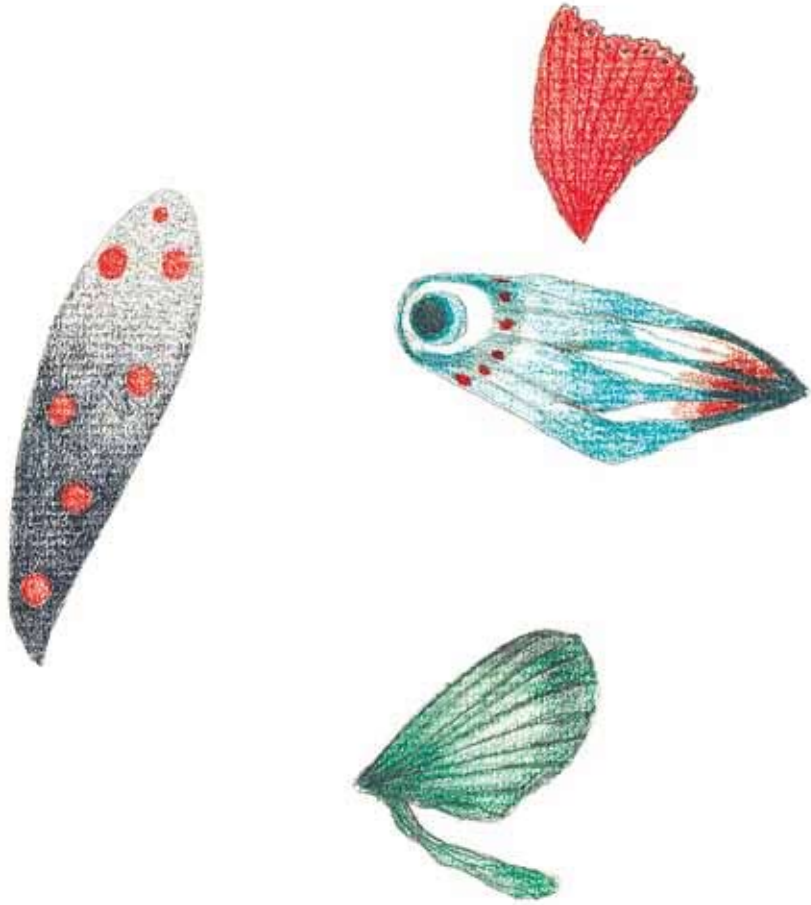
'Love seems to have a lot of souls,' said Miss Butterfly to herself.

' "Papillon", just listen to that: "Papillon"! laughed the other with the smiling yellow wings.

'Why are you making fun of me? Zat is what butterflies are called in France.'

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The Butterfly Garden **MIDDLE SECTION**

‘It seems quiet here. I’ll ask this beautiful butterfly with the velvet wings if we can stay a while.’

‘Hello,’ she said with a fluttering heart, ‘can we stay here with you and take a rest? My name’s Leptir.’

‘Yours, too? My name’s Leptir as well.’

‘Oh, how lovely, we’ve got the same name. It’s a pleasure to find someone else from my part of the world. Have you been here long?’

‘I’ve just arrived as well. I’ve only been here a few seconds.’

‘And you, what’s your name?’ she asked, turning to the other butterfly.

‘I’m called Flutura.’

‘And what does Flutura mean?’

‘Why, just what Leptir means: butterfly. A beautiful butterfly that comes from Albania.’

‘Two beautiful butterflies,’ Butterfly corrected her, overhearing their conversation.

‘One beautiful butterfly and one that used to be beautiful,’ said Flutura, looking at her tattered wings.

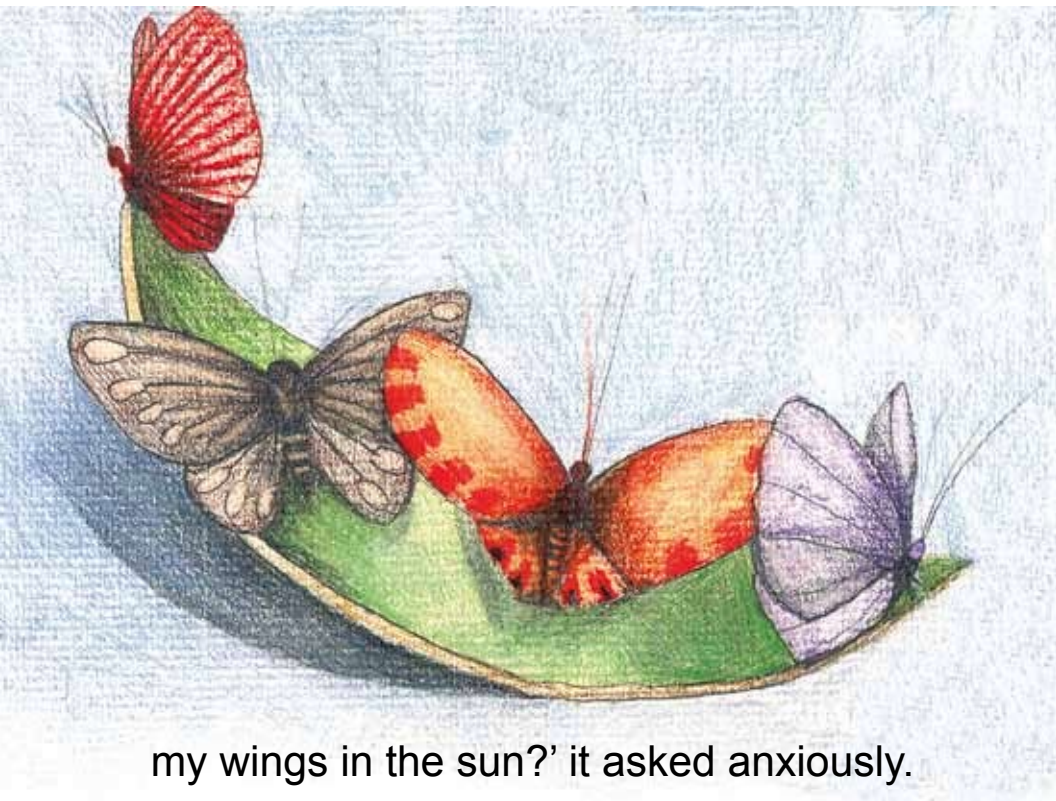
‘And you, why did you leave your country?’

‘A horrible war...’

But before she could finish what she was saying a brown butterfly whose wings were all wet circled twice above the dress.

‘Ah!’ it cried in relief. ‘A garden full of butterflies. Can I stay here with you and dry





my wings in the sun?’ it asked anxiously.

‘Look at you! You’re soaking! How did you get so wet?’

‘I crossed the sea with some other butterflies, all crowded together on a melon skin.’

‘And why did you make such a dangerous voyage?’

‘To find peace and justice.’

‘And what’s your name?’

‘In Turkey they call me Kelebek, but Petvame as well because I love to fly around

lights.’

‘and my name’s Pelatink,’ came the voice of another new arrival, ‘and my parents are Kurds. I travelled on the same melon skin.’

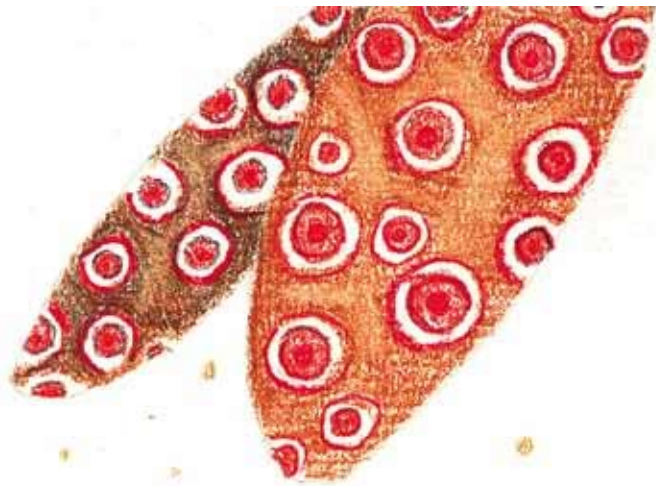
‘Your wings are soaking wet as well. Spread them out to dry,’ Petalouda said, welcoming her like a good hostess.

‘I’ve seen you somewhere before,’ said Papillon. ‘I’m sure it’s not the first time I’ve seen those lovely wings. What part of the world do you fly around in, and what work do you do?’

‘I defend dreams with my soul.’

Now another butterfly made her appearance, saying, ‘Dreams? I have dreams, too.’ She was chocolate-coloured with bright red circles on her wings. She shook them proudly and a golden dust filled the air.

‘Hey, look what you’re doing!’ protested the two newly-arrived souls, Kelebek and



Petalink, who were right below.

‘Why make such a fuss about a little dream dust? If we share our dreams, perhaps we’ll discover that some of them are the same. Can I stay an hour with you and tell you mine and then you tell me yours, before I continue on my way? My name is Titering and I’m from Armenia.’

‘We’re only guests here, so we’ll have to ask our hostess,’ said Kelebek.

‘Yes, you can stay,’ came the voice of Petalouda from a little way off. At the moment she was watching another butterfly with lovely silky yellow wings that had just made a perfect approach and landed neatly on the dress.

‘Good day, can we stay with you, too?’ asked what turned out to be not one but two tiny butterflies, with slanting eyes and almost transparent lemon-coloured wings.

‘Where do you come from, and what are your names?’





‘We are silk moths,’ they said, speaking with one voice. ‘We come from faraway China. My name’s Hu Die.’

‘And my name’s Hu Die, too.’ they introduced themselves.

‘And why have you made such a long journey?’

‘Some people in our country wanted to put me -us, that is- in a butterfly salad. Luckily I -we, I mean- managed to escape in time. We left our roots in the soil that we were born in and flew all the way here with our hearts in our mouth.’

‘It’s a long, long way you’ve come.’





'My grandma used to say that happiness is as free as a butterfly's soul. That's what gave me -us, that is- strength to fly as far as here,' said Hu Die.

Suddenly Papillon opened his wings and flew like a maniac towards the sun, crying,

'Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!'

'Now I remember where we've met,' said Pelatink, her face lighting up with a smile. And she sped up after him, hoping her wings would not be burned in the sun's flames.

Within a few hours the pink dress had filled with voices, colours and the fluttering of wings from every corner of the earth. It was as if one butterfly was bringing another, one soul calling to the next.

'Good day, I'm Peperooda from neighbouring Bulgaria. Can I stay with you for a while?'

'Good evening, I am Motyl from Poland. Can I rest in this paradise for a day?'

'Hi there! I'm Alibangbang and I've come all the way from the Philippines. Can I stay for a day? -but only till the evening.'

'Alibangbang! What a funny name you've got,' laughed a butterfly whose wings were loaded down with dreams.

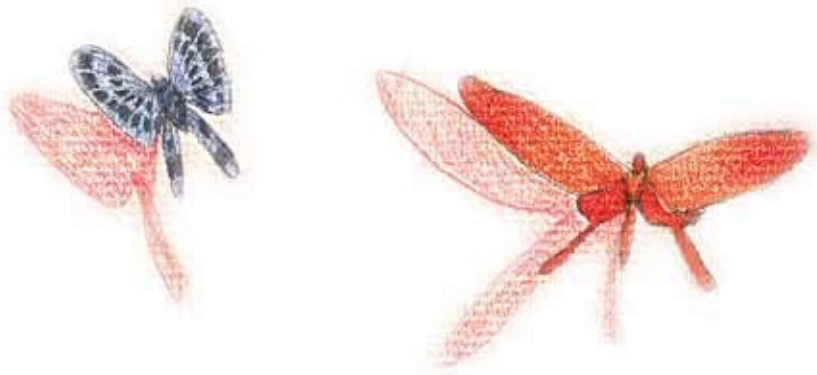
'Why, what's yours?'

'Pee-suah,' she murmured, in a voice that could hardly be heard.

'Pee-suah? Why, that makes me think of a baby who has wet his nappy!' broke in their hostess Petalouda.

'I don't see what's so funny. Everybody calls me that in Thailand.'





‘And what brings you here in the noon-day heat?’

‘I’ve come to find my place in the sun. I am carrying the soul of love and am looking for somewhere that will receive it.’

‘What a coincidence,’ said Pee-suah. ‘That’s why I flew here, as well. I carried all my dreams to spread them out in the sun.’

‘Do you think we’ll find our place in the sun here?’ asked two frightened new voices.

‘Where did you two dusky butterflies spring from? What are your names?’

‘My name is Palmaduk and I am the soul of love. I come from Pakistan.’

‘And you? What are you called?’

‘They call me Parvanth.’

‘Your wings are straight out of a fairy tale. They’re the loveliest I’ve ever seen.’

‘How could they not be lovely when I have come from Persia bringing the whole world’s fairy tales along with me? It is true that I take great pride in my wings.’





Can I stay here with you for a while and tell you the fairy tales of life with all the lies and all the truths in the world?’

Without waiting for an answer, she settled down as if the place belonged to her and began to tell her stories.

Before it even knew, the dress was covered in butterflies. Some looked as if they were embroidered, with bizarrely coloured wings, others had only one or two colours, others still were transparent and almost invisible. The butterflies came and went yet none, however beautiful they found the fairy tale of life, stayed longer than a day. As for the pink dress, by continually welcoming new winged souls of love, it grew lovelier and lovelier with every passing day.



As night was falling, a butterfly with black and white stripes made her appearance.

‘Good evening to you,’ Petalouda welcomed her.

‘May I stay on your lovely dress for a while?’ the newcomer asked, fluttering her wings like rapid drum beats. ‘I am Izoubazoubane. In my part of the world they call me Ouvembane, too.’

‘I am Petalouda. Those are strange names you have.’



‘And yours sounds very strange to my ears.’

‘Your wings are striped. You look like a flying zebra. Where have you come from?’

‘I come from another continent. Am a Zulu and I live in Africa.’

‘You have a difficult name: Izou...bazo...’ said Petalouda, struggling to pronounce it.

‘If those names seem strange and difficult to you, what are you going to say about mine?’ came a loud voice. ‘Good evening to you. Olookolobooka from Nigeria,’ said the new arrival with a bow.

‘Oloo... kolo... booka.’ Petalouda managed to say. ‘That wasn’t so difficult.’

‘And what may your name be?’ a butterfly with strong wings and a haughty air demanded of Petalouda. ‘I am Frau Schmetterling from Germany,’ she added, without smiling.

‘Your colour reminds me of the cream I used to eat when I was young,’ said Motyl, so can I call you “Creamy”? You see, your German name sounds more or less like the word for cream in my language.’

‘I wish they’d call me Creamy, too, but they’ve given me the name Babushka,’ complained a lovely butterfly from Russia. ‘I don’t like it one little bit. They gave me that name because they all think I’m an old witch who has transformed herself into a butterfly so she can steal honey.’

‘I’m Birabiro from Ethiopia,’ another butterfly introduced herself.’

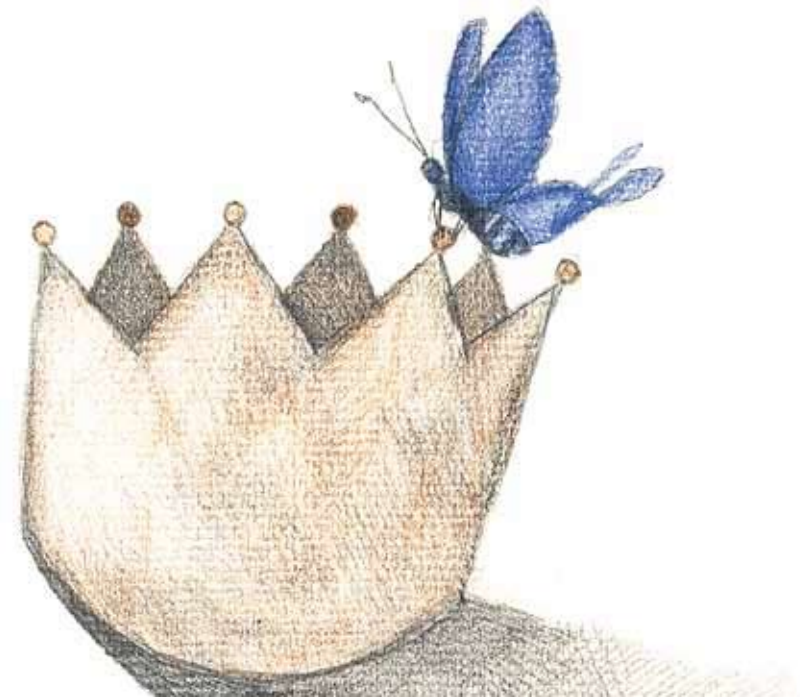
‘Bira... Biro...? That’s a very funny name you’ve got!’ said Babushka with a laugh.

‘I demand a little respect. If you wish to know, I am a butterfly princess,’ said Birabiro in a wounded voice.

‘I didn’t know that the souls of love have a king and queen. But I guessed you were

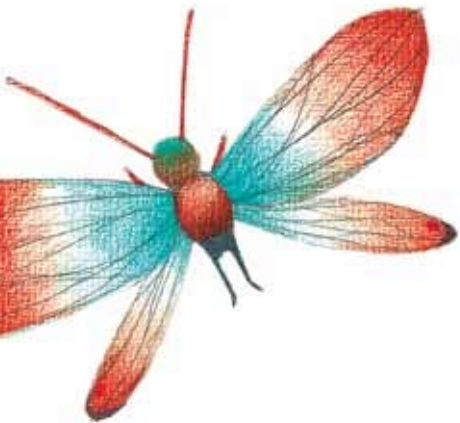
blue-blooded. I thought as much when I saw the colour of your wings,’ she said, admiring her sky-blue wings a little enviously.

‘I would have you know, Miss Birabiro, that in my land we have done away with emperors. We threw them out for the very simple reason that they showed no respect for butterflies.’

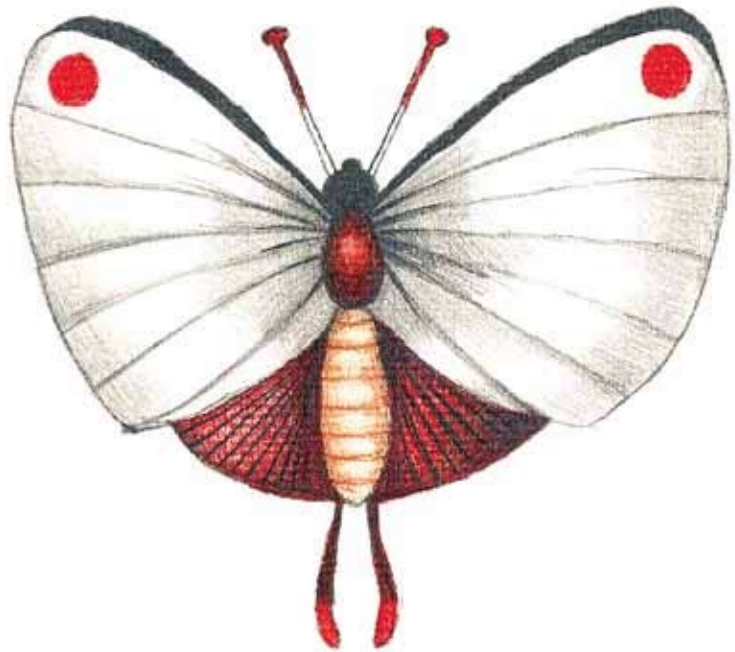


'You misunderstood me. I, too, want butterflies to be respected. That's why I've flown so far from my own country -to take part in the struggle. But don't make fun of my name. It hurts me.'

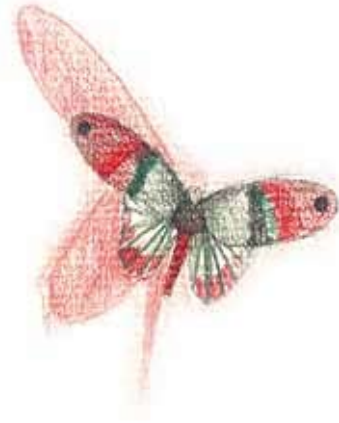
The lovely, winged guests came and went, came and went upon the dress, getting to know one another, male and female alike, and fearlessly touching wings to bond in friendship and in love. No skirt in the world had ever known such joy.







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‘There’s no room for selfishness on a dress like this. It spoils its beauty. Will you be quiet for a second so I can say good-bye?’ shouted a bright yellow butterfly whose wings were loaded with smiles.

‘You’re leaving?’

‘The time has come.’

'Isn't it a pity to go off taking such a load of smiles with you?' the other butterflies protested.

'And who said that I'm taking them with me? I'm going to hide them away in the cocoon of my new life, and so they'll always be here.'

And by the morning the soul of love was gone.

She was followed by a bright red butterfly with dreams upon her wings.

'Hey, where are you going? Isn't it a pity to leave and take so many dreams with you?' asked the other butterflies sadly.

'And who said I'll take them with me? I'm going to hide them in the cocoon of my new life and then there will be even more. And here they'll stay.'

On the pink dress, the soul of love continued being born and then reborn.



The yellow and red butterflies had hardly left when a bright green butterfly appeared, her broad wings laden with hope.



'Can I stay for a day -just a day- and then I'll leave.'

'And take so many hopes with you?'

'And who told you I would take them with me? I'll hide them in the cocoon of my new life and they'll stay here to flutter in your thoughts.'

A butterfly white as icing sugar, her wings spread with pure thoughts, settled beside the green butterfly.

'Can I stay for a day on this lovely dress?'

'I'm just staying for a day as well.'

'Will one day be enough for me to get to know you and to love you?'

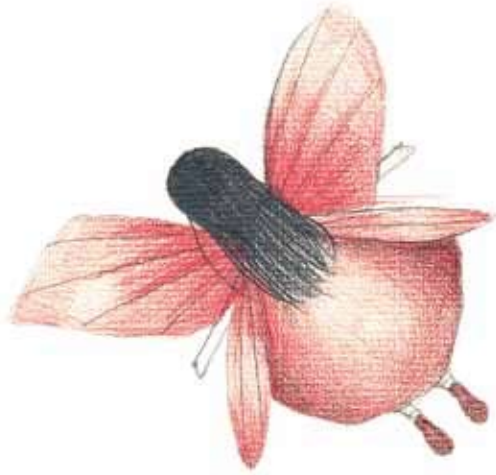
'A day is plenty of time: one thousand,

four hundred and forty minutes or eighty-six thousand, four hundred seconds.'

Every day is born and reborn, like the butterflies. There was always room on the pink dress for souls that had just arrived. Every day it became more beautiful. Embroidered butterflies with bizarrelly..



The Butterfly Garden **THE END**



‘Myrto, Myrto! What’s the matter with you? Don’t you know you’ve been talking to yourself?’ asked Myrto’s mother anxiously.

With a wild leap of happiness, Myrto sailed into the living room.

‘You were miles away. What were you dreaming of?’

‘I dreamt I was a butterfly with smiles painted on my wings.’

‘I thought you were looking at your new dress in the mirror.’

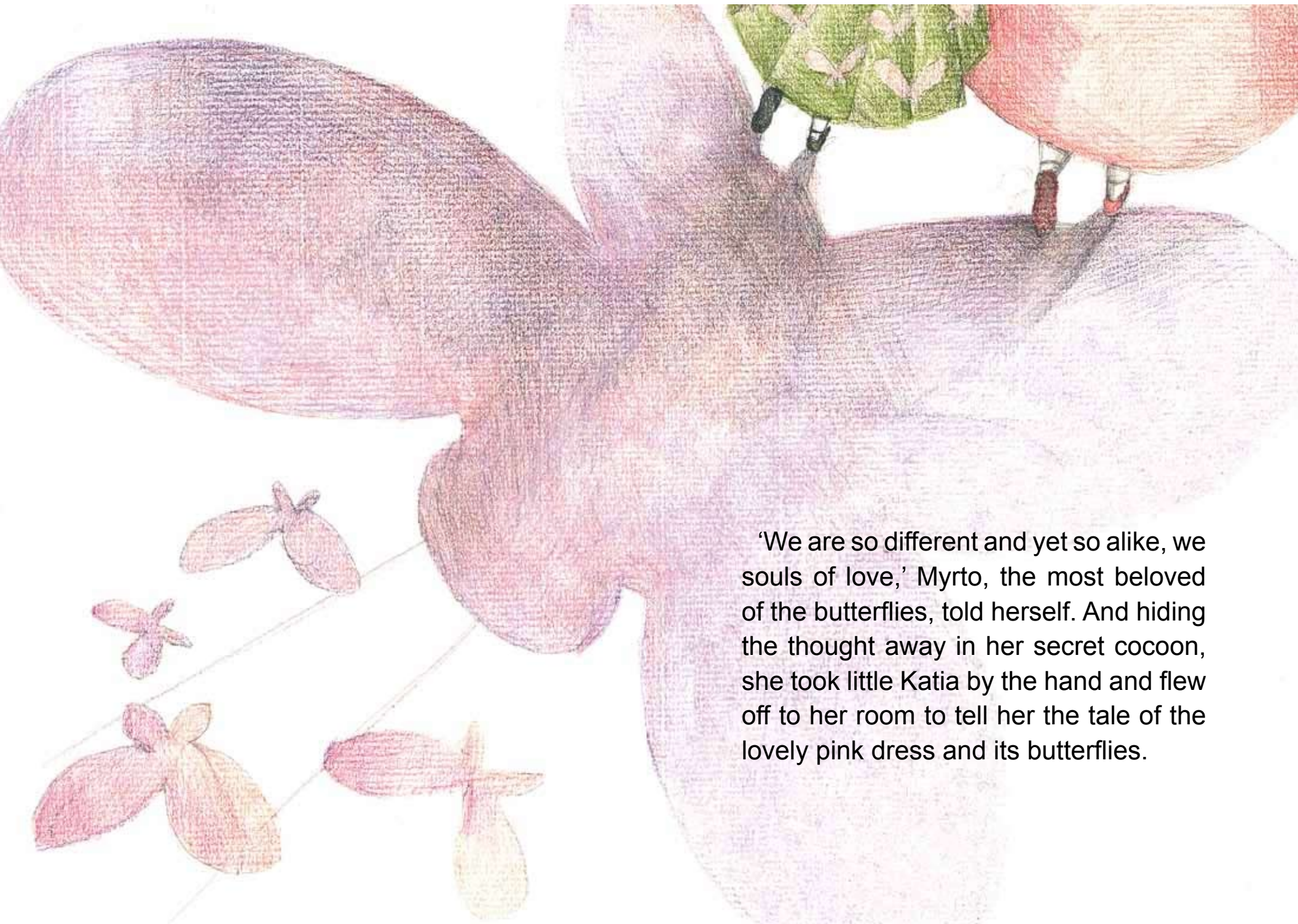
‘That’s why I went, but then there was a flittering and fluttering of wings and before I knew what was happening there were more little butterflies perched on the dress than I could ever have imagined,’ smiled Myrto. ‘And all thanks to Katia’s godmother and her lovely presents,’ said her mother, giving her friend a grateful look.

‘This is mine, mine!’ cried Katia, tugging at Myrto’s dress and looking as if she was about to burst into tears.

‘Mummy, does a butterfly only live one day?’ asked Myrto.

‘No,’ she replied. ‘Though some have wings that only live one day, the soul of love continually renews its wings, and so it lives on for ever.’

‘I envy butterflies,’ said Katia’s godmother. ‘They are so beautiful, so fragile and yet strong, and so free.’



'We are so different and yet so alike, we souls of love,' Myrto, the most beloved of the butterflies, told herself. And hiding the thought away in her secret cocoon, she took little Katia by the hand and flew off to her room to tell her the tale of the lovely pink dress and its butterflies.

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'But that's not a dress, it's a garden full of butterflies,'
sighed Myrto enviously the moment she set eyes
on the lovely dress her sister's godmother had given her.'

Little Katia's godmother always has a gift for Myrto, too.
This time it is a pink dress together with a butterfly brooch
that will set off all her clothes and make them prettier.

Myrto pins it on and admires herself in the mirror.

The little butterfly resting on her heart is like a soul of love and
makes her dress look perfect

(In Greek, 'soul' can also mean 'butterfly').

In her imagination it begins to flutter its wings
and as it does so the dress slowly fills with brightly-coloured
little souls from every corner of the world,
fearlessly touching wings to get become accustomed to one another
and become loving friends.

Every day the pink dress becomes lovelier as the earth's butterflies
come and go in all their wonderful colours and varieties.

They are as different in character
as the countries that they come from,
yet in their interaction we see metaphors for universal human values,
the struggle for human rights and peoples' longing
for a better world.

SUBJECT: Values - Diversity

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