

GRACE OF THE
MONARCHS
& HER MIRACULOUS JOURNEY



Wake up, butterfly! Wake up!

G.H. BABAGILO

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by

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This book is dedicated to
my family and friends
and all the caterpillars out there
who want to fly



Acknowledgments

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Prologue

Dear Traveler,

You are about to embark on a miraculous journey. You need no baggage, no heavy backpack, not even a walking stick. On this journey you will travel light.

Right now, in the depths of your soul, lies a caterpillar. Be still. Quiet your mind. Can you feel it stirring within you? This lowly creature will help you smash the

shackles of doubts and fears that limit you. You will crawl like a bug no more! Rather, fly into the light!

But before you do, the caterpillar within you must die.

Do not fear, do not weep. The death of your caterpillar is not the end, but the joyous awakening of the real you.

Wake up, butterfly! Wake up! Burst free of your limited shell and emerge with your butterfly wings. The world around you is filled with color and light. Flap your golden wings. Fly — and you shall see for yourself!

Chapter 1

The clock at Grace's office showed 1:00 p.m. She packed her notebook, files, and calendar into her black leather bag and rushed out through the corridor.

"Happy birthday, Grace," her peers called as she passed their gray cubicles. She forced some fake smiles and nodded, unable to utter a word through her constricted throat.

The long hallway finally ended. When Grace stepped out of the glass door, her wet hazel eyes threatened to overflow with tears. "Hold on..." she mumbled as she entered the elevator. Luckily, no one was inside. She pressed the P button. Now she had more than thirty floors to collect herself.

As the elevator began to descend, Grace stared at the mirror. Under her exhausted eyes were puffy bags and black circles no makeup could hide, signs of long sleepless nights full of tears. The bright smile that could once light a dim room remained hidden behind tight lips. The smooth amber hair that fell on her slender back appeared as dull as her face.

Being a lawyer in a top-notch firm, she found herself often in black and gray business suits. Her least favorite colors, they seemed fitting now.

"Gong!" The elevator doors opened and she hurried on her high heels to her silver Mercedes.

Toronto downtown streets were hectic and busy as a beehive on a spring day. Her sweaty palms gripped the wheel as though she was driving for the first time. Leaving for her office before sunrise and returning home late at night, Grace had forgotten what heavy traffic felt like. She couldn't remember the last time she had left her workplace midday.

"Too early to go to my empty home," she muttered.

She stopped by a park. Golden and red maple leaves covered the grass as she strolled along a crusty path. The afternoon sun penetrated the vibrant foliage and painted the ground in ruby and gold. It felt as though she was marching on the sunset.

At last she sat on a wooden bench facing a lake. The wind caressed her cheeks and the leaves rustled. She closed her tired eyes and sniffed the crisp air of autumn deep into her chest.

Yet the quietness lasted less than a minute. Too soon, her blank mind turned into a projector, showing a horror film: it was none other than her own movie, taking place last year, the worst time of her life. First, losing her beloved father and best friend to cancer. Then, her bitter divorce. Both bundled with endless stress at work. Last year's plagues flattened Grace to the ground, threatening to dig her grave.

"How long will this nightmare continue? Not a moment of rest," she grumbled to herself as tears gathered. Her blurry eyes stared at a young couple hugging and kissing.

There was a time when watching young lovers swirled butterflies of excitement in her stomach. Now, her abdomen turned into a dry log, idle to any hopeful sensation. Romance and love seemed impossible to her. Nothing more than a slippery dream offering an instant of hope, only to vanish forever. Better not to fancy than be disappointed, her guarded inner voice urged, pinching her heart time and again.

She rose to her feet and marched back to the car, blind to all the wonder around her. Her mind was so trapped in the sticky web of the past that she could see nothing of the magical present. Grace had no reason or will to celebrate her thirty-fifth birthday.

"Wake up, Luxrider...wake up..." A voice echoed under the milkweed plant.

Moments later, a twig vibrated. A crumpled butterfly broke through its chrysalis, emerging from its womb. Orange and black he was, with tiny white dots that fringed his wings like diamonds on a royal necklace.

Like a newborn baby who had just left the warmth and safety of his mother, the stunned monarch blinked in the new light. Yet, rather than crying, he breathed for the first time and smiled at the morning sun.

His eyes idly scanned the juicy milkweed leaves. Only three weeks ago, fuzzy worm that he was then, he salivated and feasted on them nonstop, blind to everything else. But now that seemed nothing more than a far-off memory. Now his eyes wandered to the vibrant flowers and a new desire arose in his stomach. His virgin sucking tube unfurled for the first time, and his keen eyes grew wide.

"Juices of heaven..." he said, mesmerized.

Thrilled as he was, Luxrider still clung upside down to his old home, afraid to let go. His new wings felt like useless wrinkled paper as he tried to flap them in vain. Frustrated and confused, he held onto the last familiar thing he knew, the chrysalis.

"Is that all?" he wondered. "Long days of transformation so I would turn into a cripple?"

He scanned the new world with uncertain eyes. Now, it appeared frightening rather than exciting. *Perhaps, he thought, I can turn back into a caterpillar. At least then I would be able to survive.*

The crumpled monarch pushed his body up and attempted to squeeze back into his old shell. But he was too big.

"Ha-ha-ha-ha..." A roaring laughter sounded. "Already doubting yourself, Luxrider?"

The young butterfly lowered his eyes in shame. He recognized the voice at once. It was the same voice that had encouraged him in his dark hours of desperation and guided him into the light. The voice of the wizard of light.

"I just looked inside my old home..." Luxrider answered with innocent tone.

"Why? Did you forget anything?" The wizard teased him. "There is no going back, my boy; only forward. Today is your butterfly birthday. The old caterpillar in you must die before you can fly. Cast your fears and doubts aside and become who you were born to be. Flap your wings, my child..." his voice echoed.

"I am trying, but nothing happens," complained the monarch.

"Just keep flapping your wings..." the voice faded away.

Luxrider trusted the wizard's infinite wisdom more than he trusted himself. He flapped his crumpled wings for long minutes, yet still nothing happened. He glanced around, hoping none were looking at him. He felt more ridiculous and stupid than an earthworm.

Suddenly, his little heart boomed. A fluid pumped from his body and flowed into his wings. They tingled now, and he slapped them together faster. Wonder of wonders, the four crumpled papers smoothed out into gorgeous, sturdy wings.

Luxrider studied his new flying tools with admiration. Not one wrinkle, not one crease. They were perfect.

"You are an idiot, Luxrider!!" he scolded himself, promising to never again doubt the wizard of light.

His empty stomach rumbled now and he craved some heavenly nectar. A morning breeze kissed him softly and he found himself rising a few inches, then landing back. He roared with a joyous laughter.

"Good morning to you, my dear butterfly," the wind whispered.

"Good morning," Luxrider replied in a hesitant tone. Up until now, the only voice he had heard was the wizard's voice.

"You shall ride on me whenever you wish. I am at your service," the wind said.

"Thank you," Luxrider answered.

A sudden beam of light caressed his wings, and the warmth spread throughout his body. The wind snorted.

"Move aside, young sister," said another voice, and the sunlight grew bright.

"Butterfly," said the wind, annoyed, "meet the sun, my older sister."

"Well, well, what do we have here?" said the sun. "This is no regular butterfly, sister, but a monarch of autumn, king of the butterflies. One who will embark on a miraculous journey."

Luxrider said nothing.

The wind remained still. Her older sister knew much about the world.

"The wizard mentioned something about a journey," mumbled Luxrider.

"Of course he did!" the sun snapped. "He is the wizard of light and wiser than all. Anyhow, I will warm your wings every morning and help guide you on your adventure. My light shall be your light. Three days from now, on my rise, look to the east and open your mind. Your journey will start then. Farewell for now."

"Happy birthday, Luxrider," called the wind and vanished with a blow.

The two sisters left, yet the monarch felt neither sad nor alone. He recalled the wizard's words: "You are surrounded by love, and the universe is your best friend."

With that cheerful memory and thought, Luxrider dropped his caterpillar life behind and flapped his wings. His body soared, and joy rushed through every cell.

"I am flying!" he screamed and laughed. "I am flying!"

And so he did. From tree to bush, he shifted the angles of his black-tipped orange sails. His empty stomach mooed like a cow, but he didn't care. All he wanted was to fly some more.

At last his wings gave up and he glided down like a dandelion seed, landing on a bunch of milkweed flowers.

Gazing at the pink petals bowing before a white crown at the flower heart, Luxrider wondered how he'd managed to miss this magic before. As he rubbed his feet on the flower top, he sensed sweetness in his mouth. "Incredible," he whispered. At once, Luxrider uncoiled his sucking tube and sipped the nectar for the first time. A rainbow of sweet flavors gushed so fully through his body and mind, the young butterfly almost choked with excitement. Soon enough, he mastered his lively straw and penetrated more flowers like a professional driller.

At last he stood on the pink milkweed and tears of bliss trickled down his face.

"Thank you, my wizard, for not giving up on me. Thank you for showing me the light beyond the darkness," said Luxrider.

Moments later, he flapped his wings and fluttered in the garden—until he got caught in a spider's web.

When Grace arrived home, her hand trembled on the front door handle. Some days she found anger or bitterness inside; on other days, grief and loneliness. She pushed open the door, praying for the least painful emotion, whichever that was. Asking for peace seemed inconceivable.

She entered with hesitant steps and turned on the lights, yet no emotional thief lurked. A surprised smile curled her lips. She dropped her bag, took off her business suit and high heels, and donned colorful pajamas, thinking she might enjoy an afternoon nap. Then she had a brave thought. She rushed across the TV room, opened the sliding door and stepped out onto the patio.

A sudden wave of sadness smashed against her heart, and she almost fell to her knees. The intense sorrow didn't seem to come from within her but from the outside. As though the whole universe was grieving for something; as though a mother had helplessly witnessed the death of her baby.

From the corner of her eye something moved. She glanced to her right and noticed a spider's web.

The silk threads tied the monarch like iron chains. He tried to flap his wings, but they remained glued to the sticky trap. A swift shadow slid down on a string. It was a

creepy brown spider with black marks on his back and legs. His jaws rattled with excitement, and his eight dark eyes grew wide.

"My wizard!!" Luxrider screamed in panic, but no voice answered.

"Wind... Sun... Please..." He tried to cry, yet a butterfly rarely shed tears.

The spider drooled as he got closer. His saliva stank like death.

"Why, wizard of light? Why?" the butterfly whimpered. "All the long days of transformation and suffering, just so I might sip nectar, fly a bit and die?"

"It is the way of the world, my child..." the wind breathed.

Her sister sun hid behind a cloud as death approached. She didn't take sides. As much as she was for the monarch she had to also be for the spider.

"But I have so much to live for, to love and explore..." Luxrider sighed and turned his head from the advancing fangs, waiting for his inevitable death.

A sudden body of light approached, and the monarch's heart froze.

Through the dense silk, he caught a glimpse of a human hand. The fingers snapped the stunned spider away and cut his web. A moment later, they released Luxrider from the deadly trap.

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escape the rat race! awaken the butterfly within!

You are about to embark on a miraculous journey. You need no baggage, no heavy backpack, not even a walking stick. On this journey you will travel light.

Like many of us, Grace lives in the midst of a hectic rat race. On the surface, she seems to do well: she lives in a beautiful home, drives a luxurious car, and has a promising career in the most prestigious law firm in Toronto. But inside, Grace is dying.

Recent tragic events bundled with years of pressure to achieve, to impress, and to be recognized, have taken their toll. Her once genuine smile is now forced. Even the fastest rat eventually gets tired. Just when she's at the end of her rope, Grace meets something she didn't expect...a light rider! A master of change! A monarch butterfly of fall, ready to embark on the most miraculous of all journeys. Grace's life is about to change forever.



G.H. Babagilo is a traveler and lover of life. He has traveled widely and lived in many countries throughout Europe, Asia, Latin America and the United States. His interests and activities are broad and diverse ranging from backpacking and rock climbing to surfing and dancing the tango. Above all, his writing comes from the depths of his soul and the heights of his imagination.

