

~プロローグ~

Prologue

Reading isn't a thing too many seven-year-old girls do. But to Gwen, reading was an essential part of life. She even kept a journal of things she found interesting. So to a lot of the girls at school, Gwen was a bit odd, but she didn't let that bother her. Most girls didn't get her anyway. Then again, most girls don't magically disappear in a flash of light either. But that doesn't matter right now.

Gwen's parents worked in the science field. Her father, Hank, worked in a lab and experimented with animals, part of the USDA. He always told Gwen about the cool animals he had seen, which always made Gwen's face light up with joy. Her mother worked as a hematologist, which was a word Gwen had never been able to pronounce correctly. Whenever she tried, her

mother would laugh, thus causing little Gwen to laugh too.

The year was 2015 little Gwen was lying in the grass, gazing out at a butterfly resting on a bush in the sun. The butterfly was the most peculiar thing that Gwen had ever seen, its wings a dark purple. She watched the butterfly as it slowly flapped its wings, revealing yellow stripes that brightened the overall feel of the creature. Gwen flipped around and turned her attention to her parents.

“Woah! Mommy, look!” she exclaimed, as quietly as possible, trying not to scare the beautiful creature. Nina, Gwen’s mother, turned her head, averting her attention to Gwen from where it had been moments before as she watered her small garden.

“Oh, what did you find here?” Nina inquired as she approached Gwen. Gwen spun around and pointed at the butterfly, which was still perched on its rock, the small wings still

slowly flapping. Nina's eyes widened slightly at the little insect, clearly intrigued.

"Hank, come look at what your daughter found!" she said, her voice nearly a whisper to not scare the butterfly.

Gwen's father, Hank, was sitting in a beach chair with his feet propped up on a makeshift footrest. He had a book in his hands and was squinting at it through a pair of thick glasses. At the sound of his wife's voice, Hank closed his book and rose from his chair, walking over to crouch down next to Gwen. His eyes landed on the colorful bug, and like his wife's, they widened slightly.

"Nice job pumpkin!" he said, patting Gwen's head. "That is a very pretty butterfly you found there! But whatever you do, don't touch it."

Gwen was confused. Why couldn't she touch the butterfly? She wasn't going to hurt it.

"But why?" she pouted, sticking out her bottom lip.

Nina sighed. “The reason you can’t touch the butterfly is because we want it to live.” Nina patiently explained, ruffling Gwen’s hair before walking back to her garden. “We have to be careful with it. They’re very delicate, you know.”

Gwen still confused questioned again “But why?”

Hank took the lead this time adding to Nina’s point, “Think of it this way Gwen, we have gross germs and bacteria on our fingers.” He wiggled his fingers, to emphasize how gross it was, Gwen looked at her hand with disgust.

“We can make them sick?” Gwen asked. Nina responded, “You can’t make them sick, but it can shorten their lives, that’s why it is extra important.”

Gwen asked, “If we can hurt them, can they hurt us?”

Hank hesitated, his eyes still on the butterfly. “I haven’t seen anything like this one before... This could be a valuable asset for my research... Stay right here,” Hank said, suddenly

rising from beside Gwen. “I’m going to go grab something so I can trap it and bring it to the lab.”

“Okay, Daddy!” Gwen responded, her voice full of excitement. Hank smiled, and lightly booped Gwen’s nose before walking swiftly into the house. Gwen continued to quietly stare at the butterfly, the bug getting more enticing every second she looked at it. It was like an interesting television show, and Gwen didn’t want this one to end.

Nina muttered something, and Gwen turned her head to see her mother looking down into her small green watering can.

“Hey, Gwen?” she said, lowering the can. “Stay right there honey! I’ve got to grab some more water.” She lightly shook the can as if to prove there was no water in it. “Keep your eyes on that butterfly for your Dad, okay?”

Gwen gave her mom the thumbs up and a smile, and Nina walked around to the front of the house where the hose was. Gwen watched her mother disappear around the corner of their

home. Then she immediately moved her eyes back to the butterfly. Her small legs twitched a little from excitement as she looked at the butterfly.

Although her eyes burned, she refused to blink, refused to lose sight of the butterfly for even a split second. Her dad was depending on her to keep track of the bug. She wouldn't let him down.

But then the butterfly's wings began to flap harder. Gwen realized what was happening too late, and the butterfly had taken off and begun to fly away. Not wanting to lose the creature, Gwen quickly and clumsily placed her feet in grooves in the fence and pushed herself over. Her landing was less than Gwenful, and she very nearly fell flat on her face, but she was able to keep her balance and began her chase after the butterfly.

"Hey! Get back here!" Gwen yelled after the butterfly. Before anyone could stop her, she

had run too deep into the woods to hear anyone who may have yelled after her.

Gwen's little legs ran as fast as she could to catch up to the butterfly.

"Where are you going?!" she inquired as if the butterfly could understand her and respond. She was getting deeper and deeper into the woods now, and the trees practically made her blind. She had to squint her eyes just to keep track of the butterfly.

She rushed into a bush, hiding as if she were a predator stalking her prey.

"I will get you," she whispered. Suddenly, she lunged out of the bush and continued her chase. She had nearly reached the butterfly, a small grin on her face when-

She tripped and fell flat on her face.

Gwen toppled head over heels, tumbling down the small slope she had been running down. She bruised her elbows and knees before she finally came to a stop. She pushed herself up, but it didn't matter, the butterfly was gone.

“I failed,” she murmured, staring at her scraped hands. The thought of disappointing her parents gripped her with fear. “I can’t let them down!” Her pain and frustration left her in a temper tantrum; she threw her foot into the tree next to her, kicking it with everything she had. She took a deep breath and turned back around. It was alright. She may not have been able to find the butterfly, but she could still-

Her heart jumped. A few feet in front of her, a swarm of the butterflies she was hunting down flew in a beautiful pattern, the little bits of sunlight that peeked through the trees making the bugs appear to glow. The feeling was magical, mystical even. Gwen slowly approached the swarm of butterflies, her heart drumming against her ribs. The butterflies all seemed intrigued by the girl who stood alone in the middle of the woods.

Laying in the middle of the swarm of butterflies was a small, black stone that shone faintly. Gwen could tell that this stone, though

small, brought a magical feel to this place. Gwen, not knowing what the stone was, began to walk closer.

“What is this place?” she asked, her curiosity peaking. As she got closer, the butterflies began to fly away, one by one, and the stone began to shine brighter.

Gwen continues to walk closer, slowly putting her hand out, and reaching for the stone. She giggled. “Just wait until I bring this back to Dad-” Her hand had touched the stone, and she attempted to pull it back towards her, but the stone was stuck in place. She gave the rock a hard tug, but it refused to move as if it was glued into place.

As she pulled, Gwen realized something much more shocking than the rock itself being stuck. When she tried to pull her hand off of the stone, it wouldn't move. Her hand was stuck on the stone. Panicking now, Gwen pulled as hard as she could, trying to free her hand to no avail.

Grabbing her stuck hand with her free one, Gwen struggled, but her hand wouldn't budge.

Starting to lose hope, Gwen stopped pulling, her breath coming fast and hard. She wished she hadn't run so far away. She wished she had listened to her mom. She wished she'd never found that stupid butterfly.

As if they had heard her very thought, the swarm of butterflies came back. They flew hard and fast, surrounding Gwen and the stone. Gwen's long brown hair began to fly around her. What was happening? She just wanted to go home, she didn't want this anymore. The butterflies flew faster, and Gwen could no longer see the forest around her. Only those stupid purple and yellow bugs.

In a sudden panic, Gwen pulled at her hand again, in a final, desperate attempt to escape, but it didn't matter. Her hand was stuck, and a bright light was starting to emit from the stone.

Gwen didn't even have time to scream as the stone exploded in dazzling white light, taking everything with it, including Gwen.