

A monarch butterfly with orange and black wings is perched on a tall, slender spike of small pink flowers. The background is a soft-focus garden scene with green leaves and other pink flowers.

# *God Saw a Butterfly*

*An inspirational parable for  
those who want to know why  
bad things happen.*

*Theresa Chaze*

*God Saw a Butterfly*  
*A Divinely inspired transformational parable*

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Just as a snake sheds its skin, we must shed our past over and over again.  
...Gautama Buddha

This book is dedicated to my mom, Anne Whitworth. Her belief in me gave me the strength to believe in myself. She kept me going when I was ready to give up.

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## *The Awakening*

She awoke and squirmed a little. But only a little for there was very little room. She looked around. She saw no one and nothing. She was alone. Frightened, she began to cry.

“What is it my child?” A soft voice whispered. “Why do you cry?”

Even more frightened, she tried to look around, yet she could not move. She still saw no one. “Who are you?”

“I’ve been known by many names.” The voice replied. “Most call me Mother.”

“Why?”

Mother chuckled. “Because Little One, from me all life comes. To me all life returns to rest until it is time to be born to learn and grow. Just as you are doing now.”

She pondered. “Who am I?”

Mother chuckled again. “Long ago when your soul was first born, you were named, Shylon. But now that you are awake enough to ask, you may choose another name. ”

“Shylon?” She liked the sound. “If I can choose any name, I choose Shylon.”

“I approve Little One.”

Shylon ate and slept and then ate some more. After a time she could move around. She shifted and turned. She wanted to know more about this place. But all around her seemed the same. “Mother,” she called.

“Yes, Little One.”

“What is this place?”

“It is your home. It is the safe world that I built for just you.”

“Why does it shrink when I sleep?”

Mother chuckled. “It’s not shrinking. You are growing. As you eat, you make room. When you sleep you grow. Soon you will outgrow it and have to leave.”

*Leave? Why would I want to do that?* Shylon started to panic. *I don’t want to leave my home. Mother made it just for me. I like it here.* Then the idea came to her and she spoke up. “You can make it bigger.”

“No my Little One. I can't do that.”

Shylon started to cry. She didn't want to leave her home. Mother made it just for her. She felt special and loved here. She was happy and safe. She had everything she needed in her world. *Why would I want to leave it? Mother must not love me any more.*

“Little One, why do you cry?”

“You don't love me anymore.” Shylon whimpered.

“Why do you think that?”

“You made this place just for me. Why you do want me to leave it?”

Mother chuckled. “When it is time, it will be your decision. Free will is our highest law. Not even I can break it. Nor would I want to. You see, that is how we learn and grow.”

Comforted, Shylon settled back and ate some more. “If I decide to stay here always, will you still love me?”

Mother continued to chuckle. “Yes, Little One. I will always love you. There is nothing you can do that would make me stop.”

There came a time when she had a great deal more room to move. Her food was no longer soft and sweet; instead, it had become bitter and more difficult to chew. The light sometimes made it to difficult sleep. With the light came the heat that made her world seem so much smaller.

The light did help her find the sweet tasting food, but it also showed how little there was left. Shylon reached for it. An eerie shape moved. Fearfully, she moved to the other side to get away. It moved along the wall, following her. Her fear was quickly replaced by anger. *It must have taken my food. That's why it was gone.* She cried out, “Mother! Mother! A monster! A monster! It stole my food!”

Mother laughed. “Little One, it's your shadow. See as you move so does it.”

*How did the shadow get inside my world? That's not possible. This world belongs to me and me alone. Mother made it just for me!* Her anger exploded and she lashed out at it. But it shrank away and disappeared only to reappear some place else. “Mother, make it go away! It's bad! It ate my food. All I have left tastes terrible!”

“Little One. Little One.” Mother's voice began fading away.

Shylon could no longer hear her. She was too busy chasing the shadow. But it always escaped. She squirmed and turned until she was too tired to move. More exhausted than she had ever been, she cried until she had no more tears left to shed.

“Mother, help me.”

But there was only silence. Shylon didn’t know what to say or do. Mother had never ignored her before. *Mother doesn’t love me anymore.* The thought made her sick. *How can I get her to love me again? I don’t understand. Why did she stop? I must be bad,* Shylon thought. *I didn’t mean to be. It just happened. The shadow scared me and made me angry.* “Mother, if I promise to always be good will you love me again? Please? I’ll be good. I promise. Please love me again!”

“Little One, I will always love you?” Mother’s voice sounded strange; it was like she was suddenly far, far away.

Hearing her voice calmed Shylon, but the fear still remained.

“Your shadow was always there. But it was too dark for you to see it until now.”

“It stole my food!” Shylon whined.

“Shylon!” Mother scolded. Her voice was clear and strong as before. “You know that is not true.”

Surprised by her tone, Shylon became silent.

“No one has taken anything from you!” Mother continued. “You still have food to eat.”

“All that is left tastes bad.”

“There is always bitter with the sweet. Otherwise you wouldn’t know the difference.”

“I’m sorry!” Shylon cried. “I’ll be happy with the food you give me. I promise.”

“Little One, I would never give you less than what is for your best and highest good. When you learn how to trust you will understand.”

*I wish I could believe that.* Shylon thought as she cried herself to sleep. She dreamt of a place that was too wonderful to describe. There were colors she had never seen before. There were new sounds that she had never heard before. It was all so bright and beautiful. There were others there that looked like her and many who were much different. She felt safe and happy.

She longed for the dream to continue. But she woke up and her world didn’t seem as wonderful. She had never noticed how dark and small it was before. The light made it easier for her to find the last spot where the food was soft and sweet. She ate it until it was gone then began eating the other until she made a hole and the light streamed brightly inside. It was warm and comforting. It reminded her of the dream.

Her shadow became bigger and darker as it danced on the wall. It startled her at first, but she no longer feared it. Something came through the hole and touched her, but she couldn’t see anything. It was cool, yet not. It smelled sweet. *Wind*, she thought; but she didn’t know how she knew that. The

sounds reminded her of the dream. Curious, she looked out of the hole. Things moved. Startled, she jerked back. A big piece of the wall fell outward and she could see beyond her little world. Her curiosity overwhelmed her fear and she briefly stuck her head out. But just as quickly ducked back inside. “Mother, what is that?”

Coming in from the outside, Mother’s voice was louder and clearer than before. “That is outside.”

“Outside? Is that were you are?”

Mother chuckled. “Come out and see.”

Shylon looked around. She loved her world. It had kept her safe. But she needed to know what was out there. She wiggled out of the hole. *Besides, she thought, I can always go back inside if I don't like it.*

## *Emergence*

Shylon stuck her head out. Everything was so big! Shylon felt small. She tried to go back inside, but the pieces fell away and she was left naked without shelter.

“Mother! I don’t understand!” Panicking, Shylon curled up into a tight ball. “What is this place?”

“It’s your new home.”

Confused, Shylon looked around. It was all new, yet it was strangely familiar. It looked very much like what she saw in her dream. It was terrifying, but it was also bright and exciting all at the same time. “Is it just for me?”

“This one you must share.”

“Oh.” Shylon sadly curled back into a ball. *I’m no longer special*, she thought. *Otherwise, Mother wouldn’t have taken my home and put me in this place with all the others.*

Mother answered as if she heard her thoughts. “I created this world for those I love the most. That’s why I brought you here. Your other home was your egg. It was there you grew until it was time to come here. You were alone. Now you will not be.”

“Everything is so big and I feel so small”

“That will change.” Mother teased. “But only if you eat. Look see how your sisters and brothers are eating?”

Shylon looked around. There were many, who looked like her, and some that were the same only different. She hadn’t seen them until that moment. Some were a little bigger than she, but others were a little smaller. Seeing them filled the cold spot inside that she didn’t even know existed until it was suddenly filled.

Watching them eat, she suddenly became fiercely hungry. She waddled to the edge of the leave and started eating. It was sweet and satisfying. The more she ate, the more she wanted.

She finished the first leaf and looked for another. There were plenty. She just had to choose which one she would eat first. She saw a big juicy one just above her. She stretched up as far as she could, but it was beyond her reach. Unwilling to give up on it, she raced to the stem and reached up, but she still couldn’t grab it, so she chose the one on the other side.

The second leaf was just as sweet as the first. But after it was gone, she felt strange. She no longer felt comfortable within her body. She could no longer move freely and the world seems to close in on her. Moving and shifting made her feel better. The more she moved the easier it was to move.



Looking back, she saw that she was leaving part of herself behind. Frightened, she froze and started to cry.

“Shylon, why are you crying?” Mother asked.

“I’m falling apart.” Shylon sputtered. “Look!”

Mother chuckled. “Little One, you’ve grown. That is the part you have out grown.”

Shylon wiggled to turn around to look and she slide out of the old skin. She felt free and comfortable again. She looked at herself more closely and found the changes exciting. “Oh. I’m different. I have colors!”

“Of course. You are growing up. So you won’t be afraid I will tell you that this will happen again and again. Sometimes you will change more than others.”

“I don’t understand.” But hunger quickly quashed her curiosity. She reached for a new leaf. On the underside was a bump that reminded her of the egg she came out of, but it was much smaller. “Mother, I’ll leave that leaf for my sister or brother.”

Mother hesitated. “That is very kind. But unnecessary. The soul who lived there will not be coming out. She came back to me.”

“Was she bad?”

Surprised, Mother quickly replied, “Why would you say such a thing?”

“Why else— “

“Child, that is the lesson you are learning this time.” Mother hesitated. “Not everything is good or bad. Sometime it just is. Not all souls, who start to incarnate, are actually born. Sometimes, they need to come back to me first.”

Shylon didn’t understand. “Why?”

“Sometimes they are young souls who don’t have the strength to incarnate but they want to try anyway. I always give them the chance. Sometimes circumstances change and they can no longer work on the lessons in that body. Sometimes they just change their minds, because they simply aren’t ready to come back. But when they are ready I will find them the place where they can learn and grow. Just like you are doing now.”

“Oh.” Satisfied, Shylon started chewing on the leaf. But she carefully avoided eating the egg. She didn’t understand why. It just seemed like the thing to do. Toward the end of the leaf, there were three empty eggs. She wondered where they went, but her curiosity was not enough for her to go looking for them. She was much too hungry for that. The vibration of her chewing knocked the fragments of her old skin off the leaf and they fell away.

She ate until her skin once again seemed to small. Instead of panicking, she started to shimmying back and forth until she squirmed out of the old skin. She watched it fall over the edge and drop to the ground. It was a long way down. Frightened, she backed away, but even in that brief moment she saw so many things she had never seen before. Curiosity beat out the fear and she crept back to the edge. Her old skin was gone. She didn't understand. It was there just a moment ago. She wondered where it went, but only for a moment. Seeing the different shapes and colors of the leaves, she speculated on how they would taste.

Someone, who was bigger and fuzzy, hungrily ate an oval shaped leaf. Still chewing, he looked up at her.

"Hi," she called across the distance. "Does it taste good?"

Without acknowledging her, he continued to eat. Suddenly he stopped and scooted backward. His head quickly rocking back and forth, he moved forward, while his tail remained behind.

Shylon thought he looked silly until she realized that he was shedding his old skin. For an instant, she was embarrassed, wondering if that is the way she looked. But it was only the briefest of moments as she became captivated by his dance. When it was over he looked different. He was bigger, but he also had more colors. Instead of finishing the leaf, he moved to the stem and climbed downward. His old skin rolled off the leaf and fell to the ground. Other creatures quickly found it.

Shylon watched with a mixture of confusion and amazement as together they lifted it. They were so much smaller, yet they easily carried it away. "Mother, who are they?"

"They are called ants."

"But what are they going to do with the it? It isn't good for anything."

"It has great value to them. It's food to them just like the leaf is to you." Mother paused for a moment before continuing. "The spirit of the plant gives of himself, so that you can live."

"Does it hurt him?"

"Only if you eat too much from just one plant." Again, Mother hesitate. "Life lives on life. It is how we both give and receive."

Shylon didn't understand. There was a naggy memory that was trying to come back, but she simply couldn't bring it into focus. It seemed like it was important. The harder she tried to remember, the faster it slipped away.

"Never mind Little One. Right now it's not important." Mother's voice was gentle, yet firm. "You will understand when it is time."

Shylon watched until the ants were out of sight. *There is nothing to be afraid of*, she reassured herself. *They are a long way away, They can't hurt me.*

She suddenly saw so much more than just ants. She wondered why she never noticed them until now. They were all sizes, shapes, and colors they bustled around on their own private missions. She found them intriguing and wonderful. Some crawled. Some flew. Yet their energy pulsed in time with the life force that connected them all.

Suddenly hungry again, she raised up and grabbed for a leaf that had been out of reach before. Only this time, she was able to pull the edge down. But before she could take a bite, it popped back up, knocking her backward. She saw the sky. Beautiful and blue, it seemed so far away, yet part of her longed to be there.

A shadow glided over her. Fear sent her scurrying to the safety near the stem. She didn't know what it was, but she didn't like it anyway. She made a promise to herself to never to eat the top leaf, no matter how hungry she was, that way she would be safe. Besides, there were so many others. There was enough to last forever.

The days blended together. Heeding Mother's warning she moved from one plant to the next, carefully making sure that she never ate too much of any one of them. She grew and shed her skin. Every day she grew bigger and stronger. More importantly every day she could see more of her big, beautiful world. The more she saw the more she wanted to see. Her curiosity led her further and further away from where she first came out of her egg. It wasn't until she looked back that she realized just how far she had come. At first it was scary, but the fear quickly turned to wonder.

She sometimes met others like herself. She made friends with some. Others, usually the younger ones, were just interested in eating. She like to think of them as her brothers and sisters. Taihara thought the same way. They met when both had spotted the fresh growth on an older plant. Shylon raced from one direction; Taihara came from the other. Shylon ate her way to the stem and found Taihara on the other side. The two of them bumped noses. Once the surprise wore off, they laughed and introduced themselves.

Taihara was nearly twice as big as herself. She had many more bands of color and something Shylon had never seen before-two antennae. Shylon ate while she listen to her companion tell her how they just appeared after her one of her changes. She thought they were wonderful. Delicate and long, they tickled Shylon's nose when Taihara reached out to touch her. She confessed that she was jealous of them. Taihara laughed and assured her that if she continued to eat she too would have a pair of her very own.

They spent most of the day together, sharing the lessons that Mother had taught them. Shylon was surprised Taihara's lessons were so much different than her own. But her older sister, for that is how Shylon came to see her, helped her see and understand more of the world. Not all flying shadows needed to be feared. She coaxed Shylon out of the protection of the leaves and pointed at all the flying things that were no danger. It was just the ones that flew very high and very fast that she really needed to hide from. Yet she quickly followed with another warning to not live in fear, because it attracts what you are afraid of the most.

"Mother is always listening," she said another time. "But she is also always whispering to each of us to teach and to give us warnings. She leads us to where we need to be to learn the most. That is how we met. She inspired both of us to go to that plant at that particular time. But our fear and anger

will keep us for hearing her. That is when we find ourselves lost and alone. Then another kind of shadow can find us.”

One afternoon, they were eating a new kind of plant and she pointed to the things she called bees. She said they were unpredictable. The big ones were nice. They danced from flower to flower without care. They were more than willing to share a flower. Taihara saw her friend Ralph. She called to him. He flew up long enough to say hello, but he was just as quick to fly off to deliver the pollen back to the hive. Later, she pointed out the smaller ones. She said if they were fatter and fuzzy were nice, but the Taihara warned her to avoid the yellows. They were very clannish and territorial. They would even hurt others of their own kind if they belonged to another clan.

Taihara helped her see her world one piece at a time. She freely answered her questions. If neither knew the answer, they would call Mother. Shylon felt happy and contented. She couldn't image the world being a better place.

On the morning she had shed her old skin and found her own set of antenna, Taihara arrived late. She didn't want to eat. Instead she looked around as if she was memorizing it for all time. She didn't even notice the change. She just kept looking up at the sky and smiling.

Following her gaze, Shylon looked up. “What do you see?”

“Everything.” Taihara whispered. “Aren't they beautiful!”

Shylon saw them for the first time. Light and delicate wings, they fluttered from flower to flower. They just seem to float in the air as if by magic. But it was the colors she found amazing. Unlike all the others, their wings were more colorful than their bodies. They made no sound, yet Shylon heard music. “Taihara, what are they?”

Taihara smiled and continued to look up at them. She was so focused on them that she had totally forgotten Shylon.

Shylon's attention wandered, especially after the pretty ones flew away. First she was bored, then resentment set in as Taihara stopped talking. *How can she teach me if she doesn't answer my questions?* Shylon pouted. *I'll just ignore her back.* Instead, Shylon focused on eating. Taihara gently rubbed against her once, but Shylon refused to acknowledge her. *Two can play at that game.* The food soothed her wounded pride and she looked back, but Taihara was gone. Surprised, Shylon looked around. But her friend was no where to be seen. She looked the rest of the day. She had been so looking forward to Taihara noticing her antenna. They made her look even more like her. *Tomorrow she'll notice,* Shylon comforted herself as she went to sleep.

The next day came and went, yet Taihara was nowhere to be seen. Shylon went further from her home base than she ever thought she would go. She asked everyone she saw. Some knew her, but most were too busy eating to even pay her any mind. She even risked talking to the yellow bees. They were angry and rude, but her persistence got them to answer her questions.

For a moment, Shylon thought she had found her. But when he reached up for the stem at the top of a tall plant, Shylon realized she was wrong. She yelled up, hoping that he had seen Taihara. He

hesitated and looked at her. The fast shadow flew past her so close she felt the air move. The plant above her wildly shook. Things fell. Too scared to look, she curled into a ball and hid in the shadows. Just as quickly as it started, it stopped. Shylon waited until she thought the shadow was gone before creeping out. Among the freshly broken leaves and stems lay pieces of him.

*What if that is what happened to Taihara?* Panicking, Shylon tried to find her way back home. Nothing looked familiar. Alone and afraid, she curled up into a small ball and started to cry. The fear and guilt of knowing that it was her fault overwhelmed her. She cried herself into an exhaustive sleep that seemed like a bottomless pit. She fell through the darkness. How far she had no way of knowing. She could not see the top, nor the bottom. The nothingness surrounded her with no points of reference for her to find her bearings.

Out of the void, she heard a voice. It was so far away at first, she wasn't even sure it was real.

"Little One, come back." The voice drew closer.

Shylon realized it was Mother. Ashamed, she moved further into the darkness. She couldn't let Mother find her. She had deliberately ignored Taihara at a time when she was needed the most. *Who knows what horrible thing happened to her, because I was selfish and childish? It is unforgivable.*

Mother continued to search, calling "Little One, Little One. Come back to me!"

Her voice became more insistent. No matter how she tried to hide, Mother always found her.

"Shylon! Stop running!" Mother scolded.

Shylon curled into a tighter ball, hoping in the darkness that she would be over looked. She wanted the darkness to swallow her up so that she would be no more. No pain. No guilt. Just the release of nothingness. For a moment, Mother's voice grew more distant and a deeper voice laughed. Coldness surrounded her.

"No! This will not be!" Mother's voiced overshadowed the laughter. Pinpoints of light appeared in the darkness and wrapped around her. The cold was replaced by the warmth of love. They lift her up. Suddenly, she was back beneath the plant and she curled into a tight ball.

The warm wind blew, nudging and pulling at her to open up. The ground was soft. The smell of the leaves awakened her hunger. Yet, the harder wind pulled at her, the more determined she became not to give into it. The tug-of-war continued. The wind spun her around and she hit the stem. Angrily, she curled around it and used it as a anchor. Suddenly, the wind simply stopped. Shylon steeled herself against another assault, yet none came. Instead, a freshly grown leaf gently fell over her, completely covering her. Uncertain if it was a trick, Shylon was slow to relax. The leaf looked so inviting. She reached for it, but stopped herself. It shielded her. *But I so hungry. If I ate it I would again be vulnerable. But I'm so hungry. Just a little,* she rationalized, grabbing the edge. She ate around the edge and felt better.

"Little One, are you ready to talk to me now?" Mother whispered.

Startled, Shylon peeked from beneath the leaf. “Mother, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt Taihara or my brother.”

“You didn't hurt anyone.” Mother firmly replied. “This is one of the lessons you are learning. Not even I could have controlled his destiny. What happened to your brother had nothing to do with you. He would have come back to me whether you were here or not.”

“Then why was I there?”

“Little One, you found your way there at that moment to test yourself.”

“Mother, I don't understand.”

“You are here to learn from and teach others. That's what Taihara was doing for you.”

“Mother, I ignored her and she got hurt.”

“Little One, you take on guilt that's not yours to bear.” Mother hesitated. “You did nothing wrong. Taihara is more than fine. You didn't hurt her. She loves you so much that she wanted to spend her last moments before her transition with you. She wanted to tell you, but you weren't ready to understand just yet, but soon you will be.”

“But Mother--”

Mother cut her off. “No. No more. You must eat and rest. This was a lesson day. The first of many.”

“Will you take me home?”

“This is your new home for a while. Finish eating the leaf I've given you. Then climb up and rest in the folds of the leaves.” Mother's voice left no room for discussion.

Reluctantly, Shylon did as she was told. Eating the leaf gave her strength enough to climb the stem. Half way up she found a cluster of leaves to nestle in. Sleep came quickly as did the dream.

She was in a space that was much like her egg. It fit snugly around her, leaving no room even to twitch her antenna. Rather than being frightening, she found it comforting. With a sigh of relief, she relaxed like she never had done before. In the dream, she watched herself fall into a deeper sleep that brought about wonderful changes. She was all aglow inside. The brightness spilled out of her and lit up the world.

When she woke the world looked the same, yet it was so very different. Part of her kept looking for a place, but she didn't understand why she would need it. For the next several days, she ate heartily. But this time when she shed, the changes were more on the inside than the out. She looked the same, but she felt so very different. The world seemed new to her in ways she didn't understand. She thought about calling Mother to ask, but she didn't know how to formulate the question. Her attention kept being drawn skyward and to the pretty ones, who suddenly seemed to be everywhere.

They were even more enchanting than before.

It was watching them that she suddenly found the place. *It's so high up*, she thought. *There has to be a better place. Someplace that the shadows couldn't see.* Although she continued to look, her attention kept being drawn back to that place. Scanning for the shadows, she quickly climbed until she found her spot. Deep inside the bush was the best place in all the world. It was protected, yet the sun found its way through the leaves. By the time she reached it, she was nearly too exhausted to move, yet she knew that she was not finished.

She was frightened, yet she knew that all was as it should be. She prepared the stem and attached her tail. For a moment, she felt silly hanging upside down. Like the first time she shed, she began to move back and forth, only this time it was her head instead of her tail that split. She shimmied upward pulling the outside in, until she was totally alone in the small space that she had seen in her dream. Exhausted, she fell into a dreamless sleep.

## *Transition*

Enclosed in her tiny world, Shylon became aware of herself again. She was not really awake, neither was she asleep. Rather she was a bit of both. She sensed the changes that were happening within her, yet she did not feel them. Suspended in an in-between place, she cared little what happened to her body. Out of sequence pieces of conversations and thoughts floated through her consciousness. She watched them float by like will-o'-the-wisps. She cared not where they went.

The memory of her first experience with the outside world floated by. Shylon smiled. She had been terrified of leaving her egg. It was all she knew. It was all she wanted until she learned what was outside it. Each step of the way was scary until she chose to take it. Her fears vanished like the morning dew when she chose to face them head on. Now she was back inside. Where or why she did not know. She was safe and that was all that was important at this moment.

The learning moments with Mother drifted through her awareness. None of them were special individually, but as a whole they were the building blocks of what she knew of life. All the who is that? What is that? The whys—the never ending whys made her both blush and smile at the same time. Mother always found time to answer her questions even when her understanding took a little time. Mother would chuckle and answer another way or by telling a story. There were times when Shylon pretended not to understand just so Mother would tell another tale. Her favorite was about how souls were born. Every time Mother told it she added more of the story on the end.

As the story goes Mother awoke only to find she was alone. It was alright for a while, but then she became lonely. So she took bits of her heart and made others. But she didn't want them to be just like her, so she made them all unique. Each of her children had their own soul. She named them Menota, Kalondia, and Methos. She taught them what she learned. In teaching them, she also learned. As they grew and learned they developed their own wills and destinies.

Only once did she try to force her will on her children. Menota was the first of her three children. Loving and strong willed, Mother saw much of herself in him. He was the one the other two went to settle quarrels and seek advice. Mother was caught off guard when he came to her and wanted children of his own. Mother believed that he was not ready and refused to teach him how to safely take the pieces from his heart. Even though he begged, she thought she knew what was the best for him. Menota became very sad. The sadness turned into anger. He loved Mother too much to blame her, so he turned his rage on himself. She tried to stop him, but the sadness burrowed its way into his soul. Menota drifted away, Mother realized her mistake and tried to hold him back, but he only slipped away faster until he was gone.

It was a hard lesson for Mother to learn. Honoring free will became the first and highest law of all places. She wrote it on the Wall of Souls and took her other children to read it. She explained why her mistake hurt Menota and why they now had the right to choose for themselves, but they also had to take responsibility for their choices. Kalondia and Methos listened and understood each in their own way. She searched for Menota. She found him in a home that he had made through trial and error. It was much different than the one she had created for them. Mother apologized and asked him to return.



It was only then did he show her his children. They sprang from his tears and filled his heart with joy again. She returned to the Wall of Souls and proudly wrote their names beneath Manota's.

Shylon had asked what happened next, but Mother told her that lesson was for another time. But she never brought the topic up again. She did tell her stories about Kalondia and Methos as well as all their wonderful children and their children's children.. Holding onto the thought she wondered why it never occurred to her to ask more about Manota and his children. Reminding herself to ask later, she let the memory go.

"It's all a lie." A male voice whispered.

Soft and seemingly far away, Shylon wasn't sure she hadn't imaged it.

"It's a lie." The voice repeated only louder and closer than before.

Shylon recognized it. It was the same one that Mother had banished.

Closing in on her, the voice continued. "It didn't happen that way. She banished him. He was bad, so she sent him away."

"That's a lie!" Shylon angrily counter. "Mother is all that is good. She is all loving and forgiving!"

"Just like she did you."

"That's a lie!" Her anger rose to the border of rage. "She loves me!"

"Then why did she send you away?"

"She didn't!"

"Then leave this place. Just run away." The voice purred.

Shylon tried to move, yet she was held tightly in place. The harder she tried the angrier she became. "You are doing this!" She screamed. "Let me go!" Enraged, Shylon heard nothing but his taunting laughter circling her. *He was doing this to her! How dare he keep me prisoner! He has no right!* "You'll pay! I'll kill you!" She fought until she so exhausted all she could do was weep. *I don't understand. I don't understand.* Her mind chanted.. *Why isn't Mother coming? Why isn't she making him go away again?*

"Call her." The voice taunted. "If she answers, I'll leave and never come back."

"Mother!" Shylon called. "Mother, I need you!" She paused, waiting for her to answer. "Mother! Where are you? I'm afraid!"

"She'll keep you here forever. You'll never escape."

“Mother! I need you!” The panic overwhelming her, Shylon screamed. “Where are you? You said you'd always be there!”

“You're bad. She only loves her good little children. The ones, who do what they are told. You abandoned her favorite, Taihara. Now she has abandoned you forever. She will never forgive you!” The voice continued to taunt her. “You're evil! She hates you. She will never love you again! That's why she gave you to me.”

*Mother always came quickly when Taihara called. Her questions were always answered in so much more detail. When the we were together, I learned so much more. Shylon now understood why. Mother loved Taihara more than me. How can she forgive me?*

“She can't.” The voice changed becoming seductive and consoling.

“No! I don't believe you!” Shylon countered “Mother loves me! You're the evil one! I hate you!”

The voice merely laughed. “You are just like me.”

“No!” Shylon screeched. “You're a liar!” But even as she spoke the words her mind raced to all the times when she wasn't as kind, generous, or patient as she could have been. The times she ate too much off one plant and it wilted.

“You are selfish and cruel like me.” He purred. “But I don't care. I love that about you.”

Shylon's mind raced on the circular track, going over and over the all the would've-could've-should've times that added up to her being evil. *It's true, she thought. I'm evil. That's why Mother doesn't love me any more. But I can do better. I can fix this.*

“How?”

“I don't know.” Shylon quickly answered then realized in horror that he could hear her thoughts.

“Of course I can. That's how I know you are evil. I know every hurtful and greedy thought you ever had. I know how you envied how others love her and she them. I know that you were jealous of Taihara and wished she would go away. I know how you hated her goodness, because you knew you weren't good enough or smart enough.”

His words cut though her heart and deep into her soul. *It was true. It was all true. I wish it wasn't. But it is. Mother, I need you to tell me it's not true. Tell me you still love me. I can be better if you love me again!* Shylon tried to hide her thoughts from him by focusing on remembering Mother's voice, but it was blocked by his laughter.

“She will keep you here forever. She will never love you again! She hates you.” His voice boomed from everywhere, filling everything. The echo seemed to go on forever repeating over and over “She hates you.”

Shylon's heart broke. Guilt and sadness overwhelmed her. *Mother, your love is all I had ever wanted. But that is gone. There was no more reason.* The thought trailed off as she tried to comfort herself. *Maybe this is a bad dream. If I go to sleep here, maybe I will wake up where Mother loves me and I can do better?*

"I can set you free." Warm and inviting, his voice soothed her. "You could go anywhere you like and do anything you like—even make up for all your evil thoughts. It very easy. Just break the seal."

"The seal?"

"Use your anger to curl into a ball and push out. She won't be able to stop you."

Shylon thought it sounded simple. *The easy way out. The easy way out*, she repeated to herself.

"Just do it. Just do it!" He chanted, becoming louder and more insistent. "No more guilt. No more pain. Just do it." His voice and words became hypnotic.

Shylon found herself trying to pull herself up as he ordered her to do, but she suddenly stopped herself. *This is wrong. Very wrong. If I'm so evil, why free me? It would be best for me to stay here. Stay where everyone would be safe from me. I need to think.*

"Don't think! Just do!" His anger broke the spell.

It all seemed so familiar as if she had done this before. *When was it?* She didn't remember, yet she knew that this had happened before. "No!" Shylon snapped back. "I'm staying here forever." The decision was made as she spoke the words.

"You'll be alone."

"I would rather be alone than hurt anyone again."

"Except for me. I'll be always be with you. Always reminding you how evil you are—how you hurt so many others. I'll never let you or anyone else forget. "

"I won't listen."

"I have forever to change you mind." He taunted.

*No, you won't.* Shylon thought. Refusing to listen to him, she focused on remembering. She could barely recall Mother's voice, but her stories were clear in her mind.

This place was very much like her egg, only back then she was always hungry, but now eating was the furthest thing from her thoughts. She was alone then. Her thoughts were her own. Her life was peaceful.

"You will never be alone again. I will always be with you reminding of all the horrible things

you've done.”

Shylon focused on the feeling of security and peace that she felt when she first woke up and claimed her name. Back then knowing that she was safe and well provided for left no room for fear or doubt. That time was simple and complete with itself.

“Don't be stupid!” He snapped. “You have to leave! Now! Run! Before she finds you! She'll punish you!”

Shylon forced herself to ignore him. Instead she grabbed every story and every memory in a death grip, using each in their turn to shield herself from his taunts. Only his voice became louder the harder she held onto them until his voice drowned out even her own thoughts.

“You are worthless. That's why she loved Taihara more than you. She hates you. She'll hate you forever!”

Shylon sobbed in despair, but she would not stop. She remembered every detail of every story that Mother and Taihara told her. She had relived every moment all the way back to her first memory of awakening and the moment she had claimed her name as Shylon. The moment she claimed it was one of her most cherished memories. Yet, in the grand scheme, it was the most simplistic and uneventful one. *I wonder why, she thought, of all the points in my life, why this one is the most comforting? Shouldn't it be Mother's stories or meeting Taihara? Why would that moment be the best of all of them?*

Shylon continued to question and compare that moment to all the others. Yet, each time her naming won the comparison. Slowly, she felt something inside her become stronger. It ignited an inner glow that blossomed and grew a little more every time she thought, “My name is Shylon.” Repeating it became the salve that healed her fears and banished her guilt. *I'm Shylon, she thought without judgment. And this is my perfect place. My perfect time of no yesterdays or tomorrows. Only this moment of now remains.*

Time lost all meaning. She never noticed when the voice stopped. It just wasn't there anymore. She was grateful to it for helping her find this place of peace. She didn't understand why it taunted her. But it didn't matter. Here is where she was and here is where she would stay. “Thank you.” she said, without knowing to whom she spoke. “Without you, I wouldn't be here.”

“Shylon.” Mother whispered. “I'm proud of you.”

“Mother?” Afraid of knowing, but needing to know the answer, Shylon hesitated before asking. “Do you forgive me? Do you love me again?”

“Little One, I never stopped.” Mother continued. “I never left you. You couldn't hear me because of your fear and anger.”

“But he said you hated me.”

“Why did you believe him?”

“I was afraid that it was true.”

“Little One, that is why he said it.” Mother scolded. “Loving yourself and accepting love from others is your greatest challenge. Everyone makes mistakes. It's part of the learning process. We all do the best we can with what we know at the time. As we learn and grow our perspective changes and so does the way we react to challenges. That is the lesson you are teaching yourself now. ”

“I've done so many horrible things to others. How could they love--”

“No!” Mother sharply cut her off. “ You are a kind and beautiful soul, yet you think the worse of yourself. He took advantage of that weakness.”

Shylon didn't understand. “Why would he do that?”

“He wanted to stop you from sharing your beauty with the world. If you had left then, he would have taken you to a dark place that was beyond my reach for as long as you let him stand between us. I love you dearly, but I could not have stopped it if you chose that path.”

“Mother, why would he deliberately want to hurt me?”

“You haven't learned the lessons you need to heal yourself. Until you do, you will be vulnerable to them and to him. Stopping you now when you are at your weakest will also make those you are destined help and teach easy targets for him.”

More confused than ever, Shylon didn't know what to ask next.

Mother continued. “He is the shadow to my light. We are the balance of life. Without each other, neither could exist.” Mother hesitated. “You don't understand now. But someday you will. Just know that you reclaiming your name broke his hold on you.”

“You never finished Menota's story. Did you forgive him?”

“He did nothing to be forgiven for. He forgave me and we both learned. We both grew.” Mother chuckled. “There is more to the story, because it is never ending. ”

“What happened to them?”

“Menota has many children. Some of them stayed with him. Some of them are here with me. But even more of them have set out as he did to create their own worlds. They have had children, who made the same choices as did Methos and her children. Kalondia, my sweet one, made another choice that surprised and delighted me. Although she loves her brother and sister's children, she choose not to have her own. Instead, she became the Keeper of Knowledge. She is the one, who writes everyone's name when they are born and keeps their history. As their numbers grew and the worlds expanded, it became impossible for one to do it all alone. But she still tried to do it. The work was too much for just her. But she refused to ask for help. Her exhaustion became frustration that turned into anger and then rage. She forgot that she chose the challenge. No one forced it upon her. Her anger frightened those who would have helped her and they stayed away. It was what she expected and in her own way

asked for. Free will kept me from interfering.”

“How did you fix it.”

“I couldn't. She blamed me the most.”

“How could she blame you?” The thought horrified and confused Shylon. “You are Mother.”

“Even mothers make mistakes. If I had interceded earlier...” Mother's voice trailed off. When she continued, her voice was filled with pride. “Menota's first child, Cassola was the one, who helped her heal. She was the only one, who had both the love and the courage to face her rage. Through patience and persistence, she was finally able to persuade Kalondia to rest. While she slept, we created a world around the Wall of Souls that touched all other worlds no matter how far away. Cassola organized each of them. No longer did Kalondia have to go looking, what she needed came to her. At first she fought it, but then she realized it was working and she stopped fighting.”

Confusion overwhelmed Shylon. None of it made sense. “How could she have loved them and scared them away?”

“Little One, it's not that Kalondia didn't love them. She loved everyone but herself. She was so busy taking care of others that she forgot to take care of herself. Now she is resting and learning that to love yourself is to love others the best.”

“I don't understand.”

“You don't have to. Not now. Just like Kalondia, this is your time of rest. This little world helps you review your lessons and find the patterns behind your challenges.”

“How long will I be here?”

“Only you know. When it is time, you will tell me and I will help you. Until that time, rest and restore your energy. You will need it for your grand adventures.”

“Grand adventures? When? Where?” There was a million questions Shylon still wanted to ask, yet the silence around her told that she was once again alone. But it didn't matter. She could wait. Her questions would be answered in their time. She also knew that she would find some of them in the patterns of her experiences, so she relaxed and focused on remembering.

## *Reemergence*

Shylon relived every moment—every lesson, looking at and reexamining each from different perspectives. She needed to find the pattern that had made her vulnerable to the darkness. Yet every time she thought she found the core issue, she found another layer—another depth to analyze. She began to think that she would never reach the bottom and she suddenly realized that was the answer. The journey was never ending because the learning and growing never ends. When you seek the ultimate end you are always disappointed, because endings are also the beginnings; there are just moments of rest along the way that enable us to stop and absorb what we have learned.

*I've never really stopped.* The truth of the thought amazed her. *Not even to savor my successes or analyze my failures. I just kept moving. No! Not moving. I have been running. For so long as I can't remember stopping. Why is that? Am I running from or to?* Instead of finding an answer, Shylon posed another question. *Do I really have to answer that question right now?*

Part of her screamed, “Yes!”

She quickly responded, “Why?”

The question startled her, yet in the asking Shylon found peace. *Why do I need to know now? This was a time of rest and review.* That part of her tried to keep the debate going. She simply ignored it. Eventually, it stopped and there was silence.

“I'm proud of you.” Mother began. “You finally conquered that challenge.”

“Was I running to or from?”

“Now that your soul is quiet and at peace, you can tell me.”

Shylon tried to focus, but the harder she tried the faster the knowledge melted away from her. Instead, she relaxed and suddenly she understood. “It wasn't to or from. It was just running in fear. If I was just fast enough, smart enough, wise enough, worked hard enough...so many enoughts—too many enoughts to be possible or real. I thought if I was perfect, I would be loved and forgiven.”

“By who Little One? Who do you need to be forgiven by?”

“I see so many faces.” Shylon stopped, confused by the growing number different faces as they overlapped on each other.

“You are looking too hard to see.”

Shylon relaxed, letting the individual faces go out of focus. They blended together to become one that she recognized from long ago. “It's me.”

“Little One, you now understand. All those other souls were helping you to learn forgiveness and love. Just like you were doing for them. We are all teachers, but at the same time we are all students.”

“Even you?”

“Especially me.” Mother chuckled. “My lessons are just a little bigger than yours are right now. You can only teach, what you have learned. What else do you remember?”

“I chose this form for a reason. But I don't remember it.”

“Right now, do you need to?”

Shylon thought for a moment. “No. Right now it's unimportant. Knowing that there is a reason is enough.”

“I'm proud of you. That is a second challenge that you have met.”

Shylon felt something changed inside her. It was very important. But it was not like anything she had ever felt before. It was a difference that she didn't know how to put it into words. “Mother,” she began slowly. “I feel different.” Shylon waited for her to explain. But there was only silence. She patiently waited for an answer and suddenly something radically changed within her. One moment she was safe and contented, yet in the next she yearned to be elsewhere, but she knew not where. The overwhelming feeling that she needed to be some place else became stronger and more insistent in every moment with each moment seemingly like a forever. She could not wait for an answer. It had to be now.

Not knowing what to expect, she pushed against the boundaries of her world. The seal broke. Fresh air rushed in. It felt wonderful. Energizing, clean, and filled with the sounds of life, it motivated her to quickly free herself. She was half way out before she released that her body moved differently. Hang on to her old world, she looked at herself in amazement. She expected changes. But she was not prepared to see wings. Delicate and colorful, she at first couldn't believe they were hers. Her amazement quickly changed to worry over their size. They were much smaller than the pretty ones' that she used to watch. She tried to move them. They were very heavy. By focusing, she got them to move. At first it was slow and awkward, yet the more they moved the less effort she needed to use to make it happen. In no time at all, they were twice their size and nearly fluttering on their own. Proudly, Shylon jumped from the shell and glided to the nearest leaf.

“That is third challenge that you mastered. I'm very proud of you. You chose to have faith in yourself.”

“Mother! Look how beautiful I am!”

“Little One, you always were beautiful!”

Happily, Shylon leaped into the air, flapping her new wings. The result weren't exactly as she imagined. More than a little uncoordinated, she bobbed and banked in the air until she found a leaf to



grab and steady herself.

A familiar laughter floated down and around her. A pretty one carelessly did complicated aerial tricks as she approached. “That has to be Shylon.” Taihara expertly landed on the leaf next to the one Shylon clutched. “About time!”

“Taihara!” Shylon squealed with delight. “Mother, it's Taihara! She's all right!”

Mother chuckled. “You two get reacquainted.”

“Mother, thank you for helping me find her.” Taihara reached with her antenna and touched Shylon's. “I did notice. Just didn't have time to tell you. I wanted to let you know what was happening, but I couldn't.”

“I wouldn't have been able to understand.” Shylon debated with herself. She didn't know how much she could tell her friend, without hurting their friendship.”

“It's okay.” Taihara started slowly, but with great compassion and love. “We all have lessons to face. Some of which we don't need to share even with our best friends. You don't have to tell me. But even if you do, I will still love you.”

Shylon began to cry. Taihara couldn't know how much those words meant to her, yet she just wasn't sure if she could trust them. “Would you still love me if I told you that I was jealous of you?”

“Would you still love me if I told you that I was jealous of you too?” Taihara counted.

“Me? Why?” Taihara's confession caught Shylon off guard. She simply couldn't imagine why anyone would be jealous of her.

Taihara bushed her wings against Shylon in a gentle caress. “You have such a kind heart. You have enough love to heal the world. You have the strength and courage to share it with others—even those who hurt you. When you can't help, you try to heal them by taking on their wounds even if it means taking on the pain yourself. I think that is amazing.” Taihara her tone quickly changed to the funny one she used when she needed to make a point, but wanted to lighten the mood. “Except for that last part. Taking on someone else's stuff hurts both of you. Work on that.”

“It's a lesson you both need to learn.” Mother interjected. “Which is why the two of you found each other. But time grows short. Little One, you must learn to fly. Taihara, will you help her?”

“Of course Mother.” Taihara quickly replied. “I know she will learn quickly. She always does.”

“It's easy to learn when you have a good teacher.”

“You are both good teachers and students.” Mother quickly interjected. “Now go fly Little One. The rest will take care of itself.”

With a quick flap of her wings, Taihara lifted off and effortlessly hovered in front of her. "It's a matter of balance and timing."

"Don't you get tired?"

"Sometimes." Taihara extended her wings and a breeze carried her way. Shifting the angle she caught another breeze, which brought her back. "But only if you fight the flow. I will teach you like I was taught. Ready?"

"Ready." Preparing to watch the demonstration, Shylon sat back.

Taihara caught a breeze, spun around and quickly zoomed back, knocking Shylon off the leaf. Caught off guard, Shylon panicked. Her wings flapped out of time with each other as she fell. The ground rapidly approached.

"Arch your wings! Like this!"

Without thinking, Shylon imitated Taihara. The breeze caught her. She leveled out and soared.

Taihara glided down to fly next to her. "That was close."

"That wasn't funny!" Shylon snipped. "You should have warned me."

"We'll talk about it later. We're coming to a tree. Tilt your wings like this." Taihara angled her wings and her path altered.

Shylon mimicked her and followed. "I can't glide all the time."

"You're right. Your wings are fully dry and extended now. They'll be easier to use. Just relax."

At first, Shylon was tentative when she flapped her wings. But each time she became stronger and more confident. By watching Taihara, she learned how to bank and turn. Her first landing was a little awkward. They both laughed. The second time Taihara gave her an A plus. Flying higher gave her a new perspective on how her life had expanded the more she grew. Taihara laughed as she flew passed and they danced on the wind over the tree tops. The world opened up to her.

"Let's go back." Without waiting for a response, Taihara floated downward.

Reluctantly Shylon followed. She began to recognize the places they had been together as well as those she visited alone. She thought it was funny that the plants she had found so delectable before had no appeal now. The sweet smell of flowers drew her close. Taihara landed on one. She reached in and drank deeply. Shylon followed her example on another. The first taste was unexpected. The second was amazing. Mimicking her friend, they moved from flower to flower before landing on a tree. Taihara led her to a recent break in the bark. The liquid had a much different texture. It was thicker, but it also was much sweeter.

The sunlight was fading and it was getting colder. Satiated, Taihara walked into a deep crevice

of the bark and folded her wings. Shylon followed suit. There were so many questions she wanted to ask, but in the coolness of the shade they faded from her mind and she fell asleep.

She dreamed of another place where entire trees were covered by those who looked just like them. They talked among themselves, telling stories of their travels and adventures. One talked about watching her children hatch and grow. *I wonder if the one who laid my egg is there. Did she watch over me too?* She felt herself drawn to them, but in the dream she was held back. *How do I find this place?*

"I will lead you and the others." Mother answered. "That is why you needed to learn to fly quickly. It is time to go. But before you wake we must talk."

"Did I eat too much in one place again?" Shylon asked fearfully.

"No, Little One. But that is part of what I want to speak with you about." Mother's voice was calm, yet firm. "You need to stop feeling guilty about asking for help. It's not a sign of weakness. Rather it is giving others the chance to share their energy with you just like you have done with others. Helping is a gift we share. Those who barter for their help only seek to control others. They always take more than they give. I wanted you to remember this."

"Is that the lesson that I wanted to learn this time?" The instant she asked the question, the memories of her lives returned one right after another. All the times, she helped and was hurt. The times she let the hurt turn to anger, which led to her harm others, which was followed by the regret that haunted her. "I began to hate myself for it and let others hurt me to make amends. It was a cycle I tried to break but couldn't, because I couldn't forgive myself. That is why I chose this form."

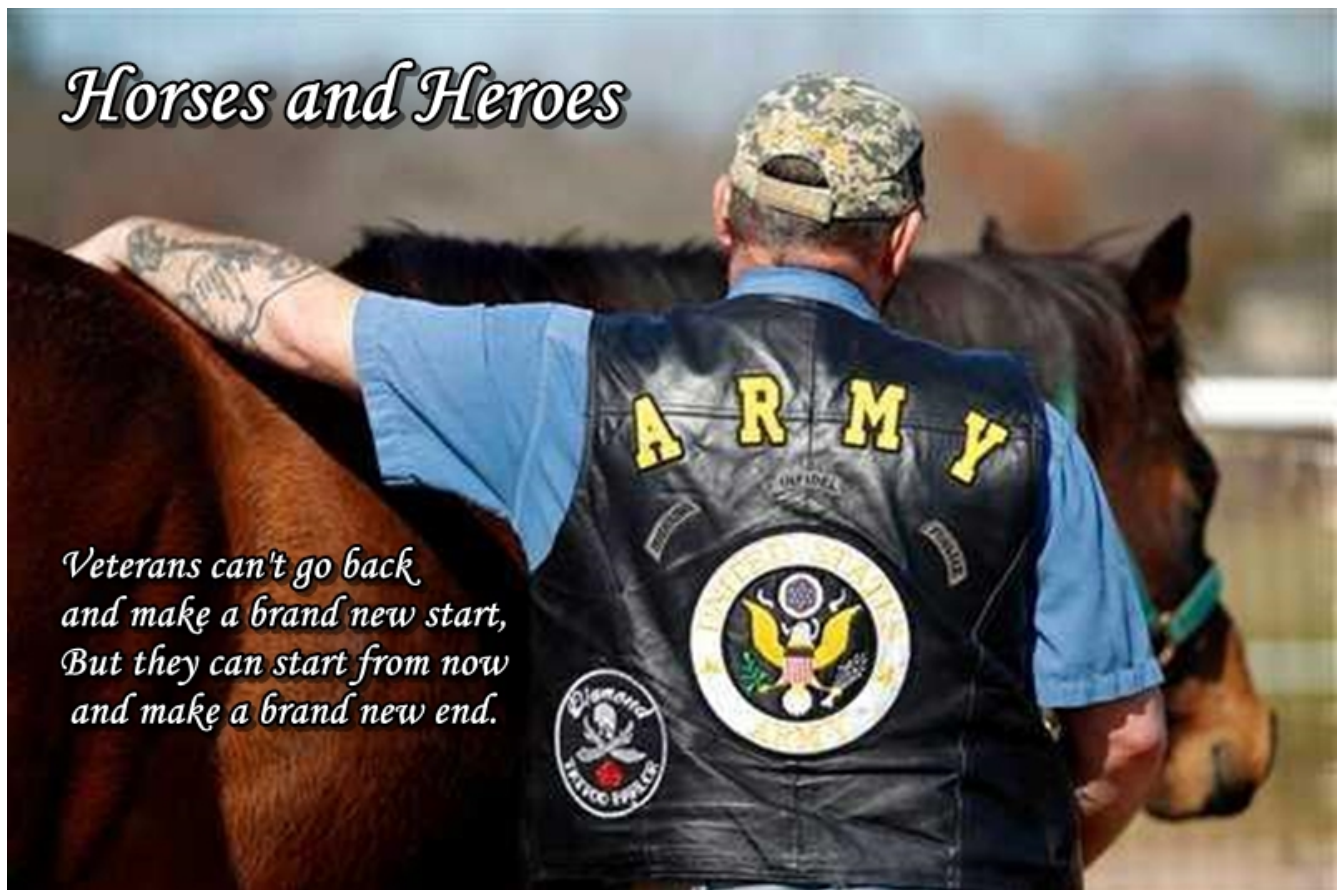
"You have forgiven yourself now." Mother's reply was a statement that didn't need to be answered. "I am very proud of you."

Forgiveness was something she easily gave to others, yet she had always withheld it from herself. It was that mistake that kept the cycle repeating itself. *Mother was right, I have finally forgiven me.*

Mother continued. "You are going to start a journey that will last this lifetime in which you will share your love and beauty without expectation or taking on others' lessons. You will help them heal just like you have. Sometimes it will be scary. Sometimes it will be sad, because those you try to reach won't always be able to hear you. Sometimes it will be glorious. They will understand the message you bring and find the courage to heal themselves. Hang onto those good times and release the rest. No one is ever lost. I always sent another to help. Are you ready?"

"Yes, Mother. I am." Shylon awoke to the sunlight of a new day finding her in the crevice. The specific memories faded, leaving only the lessons behind. "Mother, thank you," She whispered, "for not giving up on me."

Taihara was warming herself. They quickly drank from the tree and as if on cue they leaped into flight. Around them others joined them on their journey. The adventures laid beyond the horizon. Together they were going to share the love and the healing until it was time to return to Mother.



## *Horses and Heroes*

They raised their hand and swore an oath to defend the country against all enemies both domestic and abroad. They did their duty. They stood the line. They risked their lives. They took other lives in defense of the nation. They protected each other. They fulfilled their commitment. They received their honors as they took off their uniform and rejoined civilian life only to find that comradery that helped them through the challenges and stress of military service was also boxed away.

While in service no brother or sister in arms was left behind. However, many found themselves without a support system to help them through the transition from military personnel to veteran. It takes more than three hots and cot to move past the experiences that permanent altered lives from the inside out. The person, who raised their hand and took the oath, no longer exists. Whether combat or non-com, peace time or conflict, putting on the uniform meant setting aside their individuality for the good of the whole. Basic did more than train them for battle; it broke down the barriers between them and rebuilt them as a unit, which is was capable of working as single entity. Egos were set aside. Their competition in training strengthened and enhanced the whole. Their lives depended on their ability to trust and rely on each other.

Civilians can't or won't understand that kind of comradery. Serving is more than a job, it is who they became as a person. They no longer saw themselves as "I" or "me", but as "us" and "we". While

civilians compete for themselves, military personnel fight for the group. That mindset doesn't just end by taking off the uniform.

Horses and Heroes is a Reality TV series, which combines the highly effective Peer Support Therapy with Equine Therapy. Unlike most in the genre, it will focus on healing and positive growth rather than endorsing bad behavior. Each season will bring together the veterans from WWII to the current conflicts. They will be sharing their challenges and supporting each other as they find new solutions.

They know the talk, because they have walked the walk. They see the dodges and will be able to call each other on them. Sparks may fly. Tempers may flare, especially when they force each other to face the ghosts. When it airs, it will reach into the homes of the veterans, who need to hear that they are not alone and give them the information as well as the permission they need to also heal. They will help each other find their way back to the world. Veterans can't go back and make a brand new start; but they can start from now and make a brand new end.

In buying God Saw a Butterfly you have supported our efforts to help veterans heal and reclaim their lives. For this we are very grateful.