

KILLER BUTTERFLY



James R. Vance

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This is work of fiction. Any similarity to persons alive or dead is purely coincidental.

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Dedication

To the memory of my parents, Mona and James.

Preface

Butterflies develop through a process called **metamorphosis**: the process of transformation from an immature form to an adult form by natural or supernatural means.

The adult female butterfly chooses carefully the type of plant where the eggs are laid. The eggs hatch into larvae or caterpillars. When the caterpillar is fully-grown and stops eating, it attaches itself to a place to "rest." It forms a **chrysalis** or pupa and goes into a sort of hibernation. On the outside it looks like nothing is going on, but changes are occurring inside the pupa that we cannot see. The final stage is the exotic adult butterfly or **imago**.

Some butterfly species migrate great distances during the adult stage. They pollinate plants and reproduce. Many butterfly species seek floral nectar as a source of energy during their adult life and in the process of feeding, they help to pollinate many plant species.

Part One Chrysalis

Chapter 1

She smoked roll-ups in line with her limited budget. Occasionally she would manage a spliff whenever she had some spare cash. She enjoyed an alcoholic drink, preferably vodka, but more often had to settle for cheap cider especially when she *hung out with the crowd*. Despite her constant plunges into bouts of irresponsible behaviour as she rebelled against authority, she managed to control one aspect of her life. Petra was still a virgin.

She watched all the reality shows on television and became besotted by celebrity culture within the media. She rejected honest, down-to-earth family values for the dream of fame and fortune with its vapid materialistic trappings. Bent on destroying her life in pursuit of unrealistic goals, she had delusions of stardom. Life had to change dramatically for her to survive in the real world. Petra was fifteen years old.

“You’re grounded.”

“I can’t help it if the teachers are crap,” she screamed.

Petra’s father threw the paper listing his daughter’s below-average exam results across the table and stormed towards the living room door. “I want to see your homework every night for the next week. Those so-called friends of yours are dragging you down. If your mother was alive she would be ashamed of you.” David Rebovka slammed the door shut as he left the room.

Look at him, so involved with his upper middle class aspirations, I’m just a distraction. Even Mum seemed destined to die. Anything to escape from his ‘four-bedroom detached’ lifestyle. He can remonstrate and threaten me ‘til hell freezes over. What’s the worst that can happen to me...death? Even that would be a blessing! Get ready to move over, Mum. I may yet take the ‘soft option’. Mind you, I wouldn’t want to miss ‘Bad Girls’ and I suppose smoking a spliff wouldn’t give the same satisfaction. Ah well, thank God for the sanctuary of my own room.

In March, 1939, when German troops marched into Prague heralding the dissolution and subjugation of Czechoslovakia, the Rebovka family had already fled the country and taken up residence with friends in England. David was born in the mid-sixties, had married an English girl and settled eventually in Cheshire. Petra was the middle child of three. She had spent almost six years in the warmth and security of a close-knit family when her mother died from a rare form of tuberculosis. Her elder brother, Sacha, was now at university; Klara, her younger sister by one year was still the 'baby' of the family.

Despite her father's attentive parenting, she still carried the scars of losing her mother. Much was made of her brother's academic successes and her sister's 'cute' character. She felt isolated, unloved, overlooked and found solace in the companionship of her peers outside of the family unit. Her father introduced a new female 'companion,' who gradually adopted and performed the role of unofficial stepmother. This single action further exacerbated Petra's traumatic state.

In a strange way, this new development within the family unit had the desired effect for all parties. It drove Petra back to school where she could bully fellow pupils and subject teachers to her brand of vitriolic abuse and subversive behaviour. Whilst the teenager was able to act out her rebellious fantasies in this way, simultaneously she satisfied her father in the erroneous belief that his daughter was finally focussing on her education.

To avoid the family even further, she took on a weekend job as a waitress in a nearby restaurant to fund her increasing dependence on drink and drugs. Her father naively applauded this new commitment towards a more responsible attitude and her first taste of work experience. Petra sold it to him on that basis. This single course of action became the trigger for the transformation of the rebel within.

Jonathon Scott was in the process of building a new business. Divorced and in his late forties, he had fashioned an independent lifestyle where he could make choices without the need to consult with others. His restaurant venture was now his baby and, based on a quality product and first class customer

service, it was growing into a thriving concern. He had also become a popular figure amongst the local community.

Following his interview of Petra, he swayed from his usual disciplined judgement and decided to take a chance. Normally when doubts lingered, he would automatically reject a candidate, but there was something about this young girl that intrigued him, something deeper than her good looks and vibrant persona, something mysteriously special.

Maybe the customers would sense it also, he thought. Would she become the unique selling proposition, which would be the catalyst for further success? It was worth a gamble. He offered her the part-time job on a month's trial.

Petra was also unsure. *I'm really not up to this. Me? A working girl? I don't think so. Mind you, the boss is a bit tasty. Pity he's so old. Forget it, Petra, he's probably a boring old fart, anyway. Either that or a leech...whatever! At least I can use the experience to escape family suburbia and earn enough to buy better quality weed.*

It soon became apparent to her new employer that his new recruit was carrying some deep-seated baggage. Whilst this was her own personal affair, he felt the need to step in when it affected her work and the consequent potential damage to his business. He was soon beginning to doubt the wisdom of taking her on. Before the commencement of one of the evening sessions, he took her to one side and sat her down in his office.

"How are you finding the work?" he asked in a gentle manner.

"You're not happy with me, are you?" said Petra defensively.

"Do you always think the worst?"

"It usually is that way."

"Always?"

"You want to live at my house. My dad's always moaning at me and his girlfriend criticises everything I do...and now you're about to have a go."

"Did I say that?"

"No, but why have you dragged me in the office?"

"For a start, I have not dragged you in 'to have a go', as you describe our informal tête-à-tête, I merely wanted to see how you are coping and whether you need any support or further

training to help you in your role. I realise that it's difficult to come to terms with a certain amount of regimen in your very first job, even though it's only part-time. There may be pressures, which you may have never experienced before. I am here to help."

Petra seemed to relax a little. She was unused to the empathetic approach, which Jonathon had adopted. There was kindness in this man's eyes, which radiated a genuine concern for her as an individual. This *was* a new experience, but certainly not pressurised as he had suggested. Her defences down, she found it easy to chat and offload some of her personal concerns and the discussion drifted completely away from issues regarding the workplace.

Jonathon learned more about Petra during those fifteen minutes than he could have imagined. He was close to discovering that mysterious quality which had intrigued him during the initial interview. She took the first and only opportunity of her life to zip open her baggage and empty the contents onto his desk. It was a load off her mind and a window for his. He learned about her rebellious nature, her family history, the dominant father, problems with schoolwork, her lack of trust in everyone, her zest for life, and above all, her need to be loved and wanted.

Without any mention of her role as a waitress, she returned to her duties and Jonathon was amazed to witness a complete change in her attitude, her work-rate, and her level of skills. His chance taking had apparently paid off.

On the first Saturday in May of each year, Knutsford in Cheshire holds its annual Royal May Day Festival. A cavalcade of marching bands, dancing troupes, floats containing nursery rhyme characters and other well-known fictional figures, jugglers, street performers, and depictions of various national institutions parade through the throngs of spectators during the middle of the day. The procession terminates on the Heath for the afternoon ceremonies, the highlight of which is the crowning of the May Queen by the appointed Crown Bearer. The decorous sand-strewn streets, bedecked with streamers, flags, and bunting throughout the weekend add to the occasion.

Each day the town is awash with festive images and thronged with locals and hordes of visitors. A vast fairground on the Heath, a patch of protected grassland in the centre of the town, supports the festival for the whole weekend and the entire community is alive with music and spectacle, especially at night.

Petra and several school friends made the short journey from Altincham to spend the Saturday enjoying the May Day celebrations. With expertly applied make-up and wearing trendy designer clothes, their images were transformed into a more mature adolescence beyond their years. They started at the White Bear public house in Canute Square, moved on to the Cross Keys and the Rose and Crown in King Street and, as darkness descended, the group of teenagers stumbled their way to the fairground via a final round of drinks at the Lord Eldon.

The noisy, fun-filled fairground was extremely busy with jostling crowds of revellers, as the rather dated mix of music throbbed from the myriad of amusements. The bright lights appeared to be dancing to the rhythm, sparkling even brighter as the night sky approached. The young girls fought for seats on the swirling, undulating Waltzers. After several revolutions of dizzy abandon, they headed for the Dodgems to indulge in a series of bone-crunching circuits before electing for a more sobering walk through the rest of the attractions eating candy-floss and toffee apples between shared puffs on a couple of spliffs.

Heady with excitement, alcohol, and cannabis they emerged into a less crowded area away from the more popular rides to discover rows of exotic-sounding sideshows announcing their incredulous claims on enormous, gaudy placards. They boldly advertised the **World's Hairiest Midget** or one could choose to be terrified by the **Two-Headed Beast from Hell**. There was a boxing booth where all-comers could pit their prowess against the **Manchurian Mauler** or the **Boston Basher**.

However, one particular booth took their eye: **The Original Rosa Lee - Fortune-Teller**. After a prolonged debate amongst the girls, Petra was elected to be the "guinea pig" that would enter the inner sanctum of the mysterious tent to discover what the future had in store for her.

Compared to the bright lights of the fairground, it was quite gloomy inside Rosa Lee's arcane domain. The main light source was a dimly lit gas lantern suspended above the head of

the fortune-teller. In a macabre fashion, it highlighted her wrinkled features, which protruded beneath a black and gold headscarf.

She was draped in a multi-coloured cloak, which cascaded in rumpled folds to the temporary wooden floor. This bizarre figure hunched over a small table covered by a black cloth studded with silver stars and golden moon crescents.

Oh, my God, thought Petra. She looks like some over-the-hill prozzie. How can I trust my future to such an old hag? I must be mad to volunteer for this. Look at the fucking state of her...she looks in need of a good wash or even a damn good scrubbing. Bloody hell, I hope she doesn't stink.

She motioned Petra to a chair opposite. "Sit, my dear," she whispered invitingly.

On the table were a stack of cards and a crystal ball, which glistened from the narrow beam of a spotlight, which now shone down from above. Petra took her seat as instructed.

"Would you prefer the cards or the crystal ball?" asked the old woman.

"What's the difference?" enquired Petra innocently.

"Price," stated the fortune-teller.

"Oh, the crystal ball," replied the young girl and promptly handed over the correct amount.

"What's your name, dearie?"

"Petra."

"Ah, a good strong name for a pretty girl. Give me your hands, palms upwards."

The woman took Petra's slender white hands and smoothed the delicate skin with her own brown, weather-beaten fingers. They were cold and clammy despite the warm night air. Petra shuddered as though she had touched a corpse. The fortune-teller closed her eyes, rocking gently backwards and forwards, almost trance-like. She emitted a low, barely audible, moaning noise.

"One day, my dear, one day you will be famous. Everyone will know your name. I feel it. I feel it now...a very strong sensation."

She suddenly relaxed her grip, casting Petra's hands away from her. The old woman grasped the arms of her chair and moaned once again, swaying back and forth. Abruptly she

stopped and leaned towards the crystal ball. Her hands stroked the spherical contours of the glass without touching it. Bending her shoulders forwards, she peered intently at the ball. Petra tingled with anticipation.

“Your life is like a book. It has a beginning, middle, and an end. There will be many, many men in your life, but only three of any importance. Each will influence one of the stages of your life. One of these men will be good for you, one you should be extremely wary of, the other one—”

She broke off and peered more closely at the crystal ball. “The other one is a mystery.”

“Which is which?” asked Petra impatiently. “Is it the good one or the bad one first?”

“You will know in good time, my dear. You have the power to shape your own destiny.”

The fortune-teller sank back in her chair, exhausted.

“But when will all this happen?” protested Petra.

The old woman leaned forward and grasped the young girl’s hands. “You are developing into an exotic butterfly. Your fate awaits you, but be warned...your journey has many twists and turns. Go now.”

Petra left the doom-laden atmosphere of the tent to emerge into the bright lights of the fairground. A distant thunderclap rumbled ominously above the pervading mix of music. A storm was approaching.

End of Sample

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Book 2 – Killer Butterfly

Book 3 – Animal Instincts (available 2009)

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