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The blue butterfly

To those whose small bodies,
big wings they wear...

* * *

It was morning, and the sun, warm, was showering with light the green forest. Flowers in so many colours, were blooming amidst bushes and loaded foliage, while the wind was brushingly slow-passing sweetening tree shadows...

In the small clearing blue flowers — like lakes of coolness— were scattering around them transparent scents.

“Good morning...”,
said the small butterfly and let herself softly on its big petals.

...

“...Good morning” it replied. Unaccustomed to such politeness, it timidly half-opened its sleepy look.

“Could I drink some?”

It didn't answer but she bent thirstily to its precious center. She was born just a while ago, and yet this nectar seemed to give her life...

She sucked insatiably some of its drops and was about to leave.

“Thank you”, she said to the blue flower. But it didn't answer once again. It only saw her flying around it, playing for a while with the wind, and then disappearing beyond the clearing.

It closed its eyes.

* * *

“Could I drink some?”

the small butterfly quietly asked the white flower, there at the root of the aged tree.

“I am, you see, so thirsty...”

It spoke not. It stretched its stem high, and drew lower its white petals. The earth was letting out the night’s left-over dew, while the birds far away were heard, till the forest edges.

...Bending to drink she spread her small wings above it and the light then passed through her blue colours...

She was asking for earth’s nectar, the way the dried up earth thirsts for rain...

“So many butterflies have I seen” the white flower whispered alone words incomprehensible... “...It seems as if everything, forgets its colour...”

“...Even the sky darkens.”

The small butterfly was startled. She didn’t, she couldn’t say anything.

She stopped. She watched her blue shadow playing —like a cloud— on the all-white petals... Then she opened and closed once, twice, her wings and slid silently into the wind.

...

...She went up high, a little over the spring forest. And there she remained, spreading her laughter to the trees’ peaks. Till

this morning she was imprisoned in her tight cocoon. And before that, a voracious caterpillar by the bushes’ leaves...

Flying amidst the thin branches she was thinking how much indeed she owed to her two wings.

...Not remembering a lot, she surely remembered how tall the trunks around her once appeared to be. These peaks how unreachable. So high, that she almost never turned to look at them.

Even the stems seemed enormous...

But whatever she had been through seemed now long forgotten. Now she was tasting, as if for the first time, the beauty of life. The coolness of the grass.

And the warmth of the branches...

Only the white flower’s words were echoing from earlier on in her mind. Until, the time came that the night falls...

It is true she hadn’t yet met any other butterflies. But of old, as long as she recalled, they all seemed alike to her.

...

“Good evening”,

she said gently to the golden flower and lowered herself upon it.

“You are so strange”, she smiled at it...

“The sun is setting but you look like the sun which is forever shining.”

“...As if you fell from the middle of the sky...”

The sun-shaped flower played uneasily its ray-like petals.

...One among the many yellow flowers, it would have never expected to hear something like that. And the clearing in which it was, would surely be full of flowers like itself. Still it said nothing because the small butterfly seemed so happy to have found it...

It only saw her flying around it, like a small blue flame. The sun was fading away behind the mountains; in the forest was blooming once again the glow of darkness...

It let her gently touch its velvet disc.

To open onto it her transparent wings and peacefully close her eyes.

“And yours...” it whispered, even though she wasn’t listening any longer “...you, your wings that tremble but withstand the wind...”

“Warm, your colours are...”

Warmer, your colours are, than the sky’s everlasting colour.”

For a little longer it saw her spreading her dreams, on its soft petals. It felt her laying on its body, the small body of hers. And then, along with her, it closed its eyes.

A small blue sky would rest —so tired— that night on the beams of a sun.



* * *

The chirping of birds seemed to call the day near them.

Until it —unwilling you'd say and hesitant—, responded to their calling; it started rising more and more beautiful... Dressing in colours and spreading its shining beams in the little valley.

Along with it shone all that it might meet.

...

The blue butterfly woke up late on her golden flower.

Opening its eyes, it met her look... They'd both be deeply numb from the time that passed.

Yet, it first found the will to speak.

“...You should sleep in the clefts of the trees” it slowly told her. “The night, unfolds always harder in the forest's clearings.”

“And its moisture could harm your blue colours...”

The small butterfly was still sleepy. The light of dawn was getting stronger little by little, and the wind was drying her damp wings. But her small body at that moment, was more in need of the sun.

...She rose up into the sky, she played near it, returning back its warm caresses, before letting herself again on the big flower.

“My flower...”, in words she answered that she hadn't forgotten, “Thank you... Yet my colours have no importance to me...” “Then when I was still a caterpillar, two simple wings were all that I wished for; two simple wings to rise high for a moment only...”

The day had now really started, with all its colours and scents. The velvet flower let its sweetest aroma spread around.

She felt it. She bent inside it and tasted the coolness of its nectar.

“...My little butterfly” she heard it saying tenderly. “You are still too little to know...”

“For you perhaps, but the world around you, it's only the colours it can see.

So take care of them...”

...

She could not oppose it. The sun was shining on them. On her blue colours. Its yellow petals and its golden heart.

“I will remember you...”

she promised then. It smiled... “The forest is so big” it just told her.

“A flower, is so small...”

“Go.”

“...Go...”

She opened one last time her wings, touching it.
Then she left.

...

It saw her slowly drifting away, while it stayed behind.
“You will forget me...
...But it doesn’t matter to me...”

* * *

...The small valley ended in a steep ascent. She flew that way. Merely to see again the forest spreading. Wherever her look could reach, a green carpet covered everything.

In some places it opened out to smallish clearings, occasionally wrapped the peaceful hills and at other times it was ripped apart for a while by tall grayish rocks.

Indeed, the forest was so big...

A butterfly, was so small.

...

It was almost midday when she reached the crystal river.

Its sound while licking its stony edges was spreading unhindered. In the beginning palpable, then distant — until, in the end, it seemed like a faint remembrance... It was that sound that brought her gradually by its side.

Then she saw it continuously passing...

“Where are you going?” she asked, flying over it.

But the river seemed as if it wasn’t in the mood for much talking.

“I don’t know” it answered her.

And it continued to flow without interruption.

She insisted. She followed it, she smiled at it, and tried again.

“...It seems strange, my purling river...”

You are in such a hurry, without knowing where you’re going...”

This time the river paused for a while, something quite strange.

Perhaps it also got a little bit angry. With her persistent questions. The suspicious laugh.

“No one knows where he is going” it said to her afterwards, rather seriously.

“...Do you know?”

The small butterfly didn’t speak at all. She just continued to fly in silence. She was so embarrassed though that she hadn’t thought of it... This should teach her a lesson! Not to ask, without knowing the answer. But then again, why ask?

“I...”, she justified herself timidly, “I was born a little while ago. Wherever I go, it is for the first time. But you, being so big, you must have been going somewhere, years now.”

It was its turn to silence. It seemed as if it had decided — after some thought— to think harder...

It started spreading its banks till it got calmly flowing to a deep opening.

It turned this way. It turned that way.

It also changed colours.

But again ‘I know not’ it answered finally.

“The sole thing that I remember”, it went on, “is that I started from somewhere in the mountains. And that faintly.

As for where I am going, I only know that it is good...”

“Why?”

“...But... because I never turn back!” it suddenly answered laughing, and started running again, foaming on a big downhill.

...

The small butterfly laughed as well, and her laugh sounded like its own purl.

“How special you are!” she said to it then, and she seemed to have forgotten everything else.

“You adorn the forest with your beautiful colour.”

“I have no colour” it replied to her. “I don’t need it...”

— But...

— I take the colour of those bending over me. And I often

have the colour of the sky.

“What truly adorns me, though, is my motion.” “...This is why I am forever leaving”, it went on...

“Watch...”

She didn’t even find the time to speak... Its banks were getting narrower and it felt its body slipping between them faster and faster. It wrapped, like a wind, the rocks that rose inside it, gathered tiny branches and fallen petals, until finally it reached, loaded with gifts, the small waterfall.

“Indeed”

mumbled the small butterfly as she saw it falling fine and transparent, surrendering to a silent sound, before calmly restarting its babbling.

...

She was so happy that she followed the big river... And the river also seemed happy that its company became the small butterfly. On the calm slope, in the big opening, in its narrow part and the small waterfall.

Everyone till then was looking at only a turn of its route.

“My blue butterfly...” at last it smiled back at her, “tell me... Do you truly want to get to know the forest?”

“Yes”, she whispered.

“Then come...”

“You must first get to know something else... And that... That, I alone can show you.”

It was a day, like all the days in the life of the forest... Its sound would harmonically enwrap the silence of the branches, and their stillness was always accompanying, even magnifying its liquid beauty.

It pulled to its center a green leaf left on one of the banks. Calm its waters became; as if they were pausing...

“Come...” it said again.

She fluttered low above it, and then she let herself carefully on the half-sunken leaf.

“Don’t be frightened” the river said to her... “Those who come near me are frightened, but you, don’t get afraid while being close to me.”

“I am not afraid...” she replied.

“Look then deeply inside me... tell me what you see...”

The small butterfly leaned in front of her. “I see...”

But she couldn’t see anything.

She leaned even more and tried again.

“I see...” she said hesitatingly...

The river was getting wider, shallow, but huge trees were covering its stony way. They were spreading over it their bent body, and numerous branches and innumerable leaves seemed to become always thicker. Until, you’d say, the sun that finally hid for a while, and the river, colourless, disappeared into a world of shadows.

Unforeseen, weird everything seemed...

Nothing had changed, yet nothing had stayed the same. It was as if a breath of coolness spread around them, Deep green that dressed the light-coloured leaves, Bright flowers swiftly that clouded on banks of soil...

Its bed lost its brightness, and her small wings suddenly darkened to warmer colours.

...She hesitated to speak; even though the waters were flowing calmly once again, within them they were taking shapes, as never before... Leaves and branches would slip in their depth. Sky pieces would fall burning on them. And the half-sunken leaf seemed as if it had also sunk all at once.

There —by the side of everything— surrendered you’d think to the river’s currents, slowly... slowly she travelled a blue butterfly.

“...I see me”, she finally said.

...

All this time she really thought she knew but now for the first time, she felt she was only seeing pieces of herself.

In her small river, a little further from the silent waterfall, she would see the whole shape of her wings; soft, tranquil like the forest’s hanging leaves. Smooth, like the transparent waters of the river.

...Her small body. How changed was it from before... Neither heavy. Nor difficult to move... Very light, breathing now

and passing through the wind.

Limbs thin and long; so as to barely touch open petals.

And two antennae swaying at her world's limits; without stopping and without knowing weariness. To converse, to disagree and to laugh every now and then with one another; to separate and yet at their very beginning to unite.

Finally, her blue colours. Those that adorned bloomed flowers now were slipping quietly on the wide river... They were sucking silently its endless coolness, and within it they were dripping warm their ethereal beauty.

They hid deeply inside them the history of the forest. And scattered around them everywhere, the glow of the sky...

...

“Thank you” said whisperingly the small butterfly.

...Around them the sudden thick forest, was wrapping them up without pause into its shadowy penumbra...

Only broken branches, thrown helpless, were cracking the surface of the waters. And a multitude of butterflies further away, surrendered to their own silence, almost unreal, were chasing one another and hiding in open flowers.

...The leaf seemed to be pulling towards them.

It drifted away from the middle of the river and softly touched their nearest bank.

“I thank you...” replied the dark river. “Butterflies are so beautiful, when they fly.”

“So fly... Without ever stopping...”

“Now go near them”, it asked of her...

She rose to the sky. She fluttered over it for one last time.

“I do know now where you're going...”, she just told it, before leaving for ever.

“Where?”, it asked then sadly.

“...Where I go...”

The leaf slipped back, again into the river's flow... and she became one among the many butterflies.



* * *

She was watching them flying by her side.

Beautiful.

More than anyone imagined. They shone untouched by the shadows around them. Fragile. More than anyone would notice. Wings delicate; and yet, she felt the wind they were scattering.

Some flew alone in concentric circles. Some others, many at the same time, corners they formed in strange shapes. Others were separated based on colours... Red clouds that trembled in their every move.

White nebulae spreading and then coiling up in big spheres.

None noticed her small wings; they were all concerned with their own wings.

And none distinguished her blue colours. So many were there, blue butterflies.

One called her near; to take part in a new game. But the blue butterfly was so dazed that she didn't reply. And when she let herself on an aerial flower, some blue butterfly let herself by her side.

"Welcome" she said to her.

She didn't answer immediately... Two butterflies, further away, were flying one around the other and kept rising, forming a column that was ascending towards the sky... They afterwards separated, to reunite and start again.

"You're all so beautiful..." she finally replied.

"You adorn the world with your motion."

"Stay near us" she invited her. "To only fly, doesn't mean anything..."

We will teach you how to fly."

The small butterfly felt somehow uncomfortable by those words, without knowing why. It was as if the semidarkness around her suddenly tired her... And these butterflies with the uniformity in flying, seemed to benumb her and make her forget.

"I am very sorry", she answered gently, "but I'm afraid I must go... I must get to know the forest."

"There is nothing to know in the forest" she said to her. "Traps only. Stay near us, blue butterfly... Stay near us, and you will live forever..."

But the small butterfly stayed to hear nothing else... She thanked her once more and flew high, away from the

thick foliage.

Back to the aerial flower a butterfly was surrendering into the deep curve of a wavy flutter. “We are the entire forest” she was only whispering.

“Those who meet our world, to us some day they return.”

* * *

She was leaving behind her that part of the forest. She was leaving behind her multi-coloured clearings. Bushes’ tufts and towering trees.

She flew around their thin trunks departing afterwards... For a moment only she was touching them, before opening her wings again into the air.

She observed the caves she found on her way.

She lowered to rest on the verdant ground.

...The sun was changing, setting in the horizon, and so the clouds were changing along with it...

She was seeking foliage that she hadn’t seen. She kept on stopping, on fragrant flowers.

...Deep blue was spreading in the sky, and on her small wings. The day was fading away, but as everything around her was now losing its colour, everything seemed to reveal its hidden form.

In front of her, in the small clearing, almost in its middle, a single tree was thrusting proudly its dark outline.

But there was something different about that tree...

Something, that she had not felt till now on any other tree.

...

...Its roots unfolded around it, and then softly submerged into the ground. Its thin branches, on the contrary, were rising slowly towards the sky.

But no leaves, nor blossoms were adorning it.

Dry, silent and unshakable — unfitting in the vernal forest— this tree seemed to have no life.

And even stranger, it seemed never to have lived...

The blue butterfly flew near it.

Where the scanty light was still lightening it, the wood revealed so many seasons to have passed over it; perhaps all. How many more, who knows, would still pass...

“My tree”, she asked it tenderly then, “what has happened to you?”

But the dried up tree didn’t answer.

...The day was passing by, giving its place to the darkness of the night...

“My tree”, she said again.

“Talk to me...”

She flew around its decayed trunk.

There, she saw the scars of time. The winters that had passed had marked it without reason... And the spring it was searching for, perhaps never appeared.

She didn't ask it again. She understood that this tree would speak to no one anymore.

Only she didn't understand how it was still standing. How winds and winds hadn't uprooted it yet.

And how the wood, was still hiding such warmness inside it.

"My tree" she said to it then for one last time.

"My tree, the day shall come, that my colours all will shine for you."

She flew around it once more.

She would pass the night by its side.

And she would leave by the coming of dawn...

* * *

The moon, half, appeared to keep them company. It peeped through the clouds and then wanly shed its light upon the dry branches.

The small butterfly was soon carried away with it. She saw her wings sparkling in her every move. The big tree being wrapped in a silver body.

And the world around her twinkling timidly, weaving thus the veil of the weary earth.

The stars remembered their hidden dreams and started shining again at the edges of the universe. Silence returned there, from where it never parted, and sleep at last embraced the forest's thoughts.

...

...The time had finally come.

Having prolonged a lot that flutter, she had to rest somewhere her small body. She approached one of the many branches. She lowered to let herself upon it... And she was about to touch it when, all of a sudden, she felt a power hindering her.

She didn't immediately realize what had happened. She only felt distant from it.

Was it her idea or did something indeed keep her in the air?

She shook her small wings! Darkness around her everywhere. She stopped. She tried again. But what else did she

really expect to happen? Invisible threads entangled her soft body... Tightened around her in her every move. And fast trapped, her two wings.

She stayed entirely motionless.
Nobody was near. And there was nothing she could do.
Under the half-lit moon, she lay alone...

‘There is nothing to know in the forest’ she then remembered, the words she hadn’t listened to of some butterfly...
‘Traps only.’

It was at that same moment that she felt a shake.

It was moving her body up and down, like a wind that was suddenly growing stronger. Something was walking on these threads. And whatever it was, it was coming towards her hastily.

For her first time, the small butterfly was so afraid.

* * *

A strange creature stood opposite her.
Its feet easily stepped there where she herself could not even stand. Its figure, rather round, was almost disappearing in that night.

Only its eyes were glowing from afar. And its open mouth was now all clearly discernible despite the darkness.

Fortunately, someone was around.
The small butterfly, smiled with relief!

...

“Help me, please...” she said to it, seeing it approaching even more.

“...I got entangled in this web.”

The creature stopped.
Then it made a step backwards. It slightly leaned its head to the side, and remained still again.

“Help me, please”,
the small butterfly repeated quietly.
“I was not careful and got bound in these threads...”

Silence spread. For a while no one had anything to say. The

creature of the night, seemed rather confused... Its eyes, you'd say, were looking towards her, yet its thoughts were diverted elsewhere.

Finally, it found the words and the moment to speak.
As if it was some big decision.

"Where are you coming from, small butterfly?" it asked her in a low voice.

"From the forest..."

The strange creature remained silent. Only the wind around them sounded babbling incessantly with the dim shadows of the moon.

"...And yet, you don't belong to it" it commented...
But the blue butterfly didn't understand what it meant.

"Do you know what I am?" it subsequently asked her.

The small butterfly recalled the words of the river; 'No one knows...' she was about to say. But immediately she thought of it a little more. Something like that would not sound nice, and especially at such a time...

"No" she timidly answered.

"...Whatever gets entangled in my webs, never escapes..."
"The end would otherwise come for me..."

She didn't seem to understand.
"Was it you that made these webs?" she wondered.

The creature remained in its silence.

"...Why?"

Once more it did not reply. The clouds hid the glances of the moon and the winds suddenly stood at the forest's ends.

The lithe branches remained motionless. The blue butterfly looked silently at the distant soil and the creature obscured into the colours of the night.

Only the frost remained always the same.

"Do I...
Do I feed you?" she asked it.

"The creatures' bodies" it replied.

— My wings?
It distinguished the turmoil in her calm voice.
— Do not worry. I let those get drifted away by the wind.

The blue butterfly felt slightly better.
"Thank you" she said to it.
"Once they adorned the forest's flowers... And maybe one day they will return to them."

...

She saw the creature approaching her. And the stars trembling in the corners of the sky.

But the hour passed and they both remained still.

“What are you waiting for?” she asked it quietly.

“I don’t know” it said to her; “Nothing...”

“...I’ve never had anything to wait for...”

“Then?”

The moon was travelling in the dark sky. It slowly passed by the cloudiness, in the forest spreading its misty light... The creature of the night got absorbed in itself once again...

“Or, even if I am waiting for something,” it then whispered, “I know that it will never show up any more.”

...The small butterfly was puzzled. Again the creature remained silent for a while. Its look got dark for a moment and then, it was as if maybe it found its lost sparkle. It didn’t turn, however, towards her.

“Once” it started to speak alone “A long time ago...”

“Once I used to go around the whole forest.”

The small butterfly softly paused.

“...I know”, it calmly went on, “its every side.”

“...Its edges, and what is hidden in the desolation of its centre.

I know the flowers and its big trees. The purling river and the small clearings.”

Its words went on slowly as if they wanted to be heard once, and then be lost forever in the wind.

To become one, with the passing night.

“They say that my webs spread in everything. And that I know the answer to all things...”

“So what?”

No one wanted to see me. To hear about me.

The creatures pushed me away from their thought and from their life, till it was too late for them.”

“Until one day I decided to really go.

I found this tree, in a forest’s lost clearing.

...No one wanted to face it. To live with it.

And I chose to stay with it forever.

Only I never found out who or what had dried it...”

“But to this tree which took pity on me, which accepted to keep me in its bosom... To this tree which was covered

only by the frost and my webs, I always wanted to offer something.

But, apart from myself, I didn't know what else..."

"...Until today..."

...

It came even closer to her. The wind was blowing and the thin webs were being strained, as if they would be destroyed upon a single sweeping. This wind, however, was not capable of breaking them.

The creature came right above her.

The small butterfly was looking at it silently... She didn't know what to think. Neither did she understand what was going to happen. But as she saw it slowly rising, lifting its front feet threateningly, a novel emotion at once ran through her fragile body.

As for the last thing she could see, —before she only closed her eyes— it was this creature descending with incredible force. And flinging towards her, the rush of its nails.

...

She felt the wind slashing her everywhere again.

...The webs pulling and falling by her side. Her wings and her body suddenly being liberated.

"Go away", it then said to her slowly the creature of the night. "Your freedom small butterfly, is —I feel it— my gift to this tree."

"Even if I wanted to, unknown butterfly, perhaps I could not harm you."

She was taken aback...

"But I don't understand..."

"You don't have to" it whispered "maybe I don't understand it that well myself..."

"Just leave! It will be dawn in a while, small butterfly..."

Leave before you see the way I look!"

The moon was lowering and the night was reaching its end for tonight.

"You scare me no longer..." she said to it.

"...And I would like you to see my blue colours."

"I can't see anything" it spoke sadly.

"I am blind. My webs, however, are so delicate, that they can feel everything. That's how I recognized your small body. And the big wings of yours small butterfly."

Perhaps so much would be necessary, but she found nothing

to say... She only flew around it, with wind's melodies in the last moonlight.

“Go” the strange creature said to her. “I will be here if you ever want my webs’ embrace. But beware blue butterfly...”

“Real death waits there, where you are now going.
And he...”

He doesn’t ask for your body only.”

The small butterfly left in a hurry.
Ahead of her, the light of the dawn was breaking a ruddy glow.





* * *

She saw it, when she was still far away from it.

Perched on a little hill...

...With its few towers. The pointed spires and its tiny windows.

Around it, the forest, following the hill, slowly was declining and disappearing into the end; initially in the colours only of the trees and the flowers; then entangled with the warm reflections of the morning clouds; until finally it became one with the grey of the mountains.

Silent. Lonely.

The sun seemed to rise inside it... To rule and give itself once more from the beginning.

...It dimly became visible at the sides of one of its towers, gradually covered the voids and its successive corners, affectionately suffused the big castle.

And then —almost regretfully— it gathered its broken pieces, left behind it the forest and the high walls, and with one move returned to the vastness of the sky.

...

...She passed, along the way, clearings and clearings. Even if it seemed near...

She left behind her trees similar to which she might not find again.

Flowers that seemed to beckon her.

But the closer she got, the farther it always went...

The day was going by. The sun rose higher. Everything in her silent passing asked her to come and rest for a while. But she had no more time to stay.

And when she reached it, she didn't hesitate at the sight of their vast figure... She rose to their top following the wind.

The trees in front of her, raised their thin branches, as if they wanted thus to hinder her...

"Don't go further, blue butterfly" one of them told her.

"...Whoever chooses this land some day to cross, back to the forest not ever he returns..." others further added. But the wind that pushed her was stronger than their words.

She stood hovering for a moment, right above them, laying her look at the images of the castle. And then, with just one move of her small wings, at last she passed the stone walls...

She was there.

* * *

His hands he was softly laying on fragile flowers. They had just opened, and it was he who vested them with surplus care.

His eyes fell on her right away.
As she was wandering around amidst the many scents...
As colours she was changing, to the rays of the sun...

...His lips stood still.

He wished to talk, but there was nothing he could say. She was dancing in his full-bloomed gardens. Amidst so many flower species... So many butterflies.

He walked towards her.
With slow steps... Carefully. Afraid that he might frighten her.

He saw her sitting on some flower.
...He came closer.

...The gardens spread from the sleeping walls, to the castle itself... A building of beautiful brown and red stone. Enormous. With vaulted windows and a big, iron gate.

The small figure that was walking towards her, was almost disappearing before it. But moving closer, it kept getting

bigger...

His appearance didn't remind her of the animals in the forest. But then again, he couldn't be any different from them.

He smiled at her with his broadest smile.
She opened and closed her blue wings, but she didn't leave.

Quietly, the young king came even closer...

* * *

He stood still; straight ahead of her. Her entire look, was warming his eyes.

"...Welcome to my castle small butterfly" he said to her.

Familiar his voice sounded, tender... As if carved it was, in the passage of time.

She answered not. Butterflies of splendid colours were fluttering by their side...

"You are most welcomed" he continued gently. "You can stay with us, for as long as you like."

...Some of them were pausing for a while on his shoulder. Were pausing on his wavy hair before going on, on their trembling way.

"Stay at least to rest for today."

"I don't know where you're coming from, nor do I think I

know where you're going to, small butterfly, but I do know for sure you must be tired...

You may consider the flowers of my castle, from now on, as yours."

Then he turned towards his tower.

She saw him leaving, getting always smaller, till he faded away inside it. Silently, like the way he appeared.

He was thus forgotten...

...

The sky was as warm as it once was...

She started flying again amidst the blooming flowers. Some butterflies showed no interest at all.

Others seemed to have noticed her... They understood she had just come. They welcomed her and invited her to rest on their beautiful blooms.

On their garden's trees...

Each one seemed to favor a flower, a special branch.

...

The scents that floated in the air, were not of those that you could easily forget. The flowers' shapes were such, that she might have never met in the forest... And their wings... Their bright, their big wings, in colours and combinations similar to which she couldn't have seen...

...All day long they flew without stopping. From flower to

flower. And from garden to garden till the castle's edges.

...

Until she also came close to some flower's petals. They were soft... And it was now time for her to rest.

She smelled its juice... It was inviting, and it was time for her to drink.

She bent inside it.

And leaned on it.

Like all others, she passed her first night.

* * *

Time, tonight again went by without her feeling it. She woke up quietly with the sun's caress.

Simply opening her eyes to the light.

This time, the young king was by her side... Perhaps for long. Waiting for her. Watching her every move...

"Come", he urged her, as soon as she faced him. "Today, the day has come to show you my castle..."

He was kind, like the leaves when talking to the blowing wind.

Still the small butterfly was puzzled...

"Why?" she dared to ask timidly.

"But... I thought you'd like to get to know the world..."

...He moved ahead. He seemed willing. And she, how could she refuse? He was smiling... And she, how and why should she turn away?

The colourful butterflies one by one were waking up on their small flowers. The king greeted them all. He let them touch his golden hair. Rest their bodies, onto his own body.

They were flying around him. And the king, serene like the transparent waters of the river, seemed to reflect the dreams of them all...

The small butterfly found the courage to let herself onto

his shoulder.

A face that vaguely stirred. A breath that perhaps deepened for a moment.

...Yet indifferently he went on his way.

* * *

He was walking amidst his precious gardens. Having by his side the small butterfly.

"My castle", he said to her then, "The castle that you feel spreading around you... is the adornment of the forest."

"The flowers that you see, are brought from its farthest edges. No matter how much you search, wherever you may be, it is uncertain if similar to them you can ever encounter..."

My butterflies, are dressed in the most beautiful colours. Colours unprecedented..."

He was talking slowly, slightly bending his head towards her side. And she, she would allow herself to follow his crystal voice; words, asking to be heard once and forever remain in her memory...

"...In my gardens each butterfly can find for itself a flower on which to lean", he proudly went on. "A flower that doesn't look like any other. And taste the nectar that it offers..."

Enviably flowers were everywhere.
 The small butterfly flew by their side.
 Her colours played under the sun, and the king glowed,
 simply by watching her.
 She let herself on these wind-islands for a moment only,
 and soon she returned back onto his shoulder. His look, you'd
 think, clouded again.

...

...His garden's paths, were crossing in strange shapes.
 Following them for long, meaninglessly he'd stroll. Until he
 took the path that led to the castle. To the tall and impregnable,
 iron gate.
 "...I've gathered them carefully, one by one", he remarked.
 "The most precious, is to be found here only..."

In front of the gate, leading there, a small row of stairs... And
 right before it, one more garden spread out.
 A garden next to the other gardens. Similar to them — per-
 haps bigger— yet strangely different...

...The emerging scent was impossible to describe. It
 wrapped them both up. But the king was accustomed to it by
 now...

"...It is the garden of the unfading flowers..." he only whis-
 pered.

...

The small butterfly flew over it. Bright and fragile flow-
 ers were filling it, with delicate, unequalled, transparent-like
 petals... It wasn't that much beauty itself, as was the awaking
 of a hope that rose there by their side.

...She tasted their nectar, but soon she returned to his shoul-
 der.

"Each winter", he said, "when snow covers the forest, my
 servants cover this garden of mine, with unadorned crystals..."

He continued calmly his way to the castle...
 "...The light can, but the cold doesn't touch its flowers.

It is the garden that knows no fading. And all my butterflies,
 in this they gather, and pass their winters..."

They ascended the wide stairs.
 And alone they passed the large gate.

* * *

All day long, he showed her around his splendid castle...
 Well-looked-after in its every detail. And he — willing—,
 without ever getting tired. Without a moment of complaint.

Its interior, worthy of its gardens, only with them could it
 be compared...

...Floors with precious mosaics.
 Carved pieces of furniture... Colourful paintings. Fine tex-

tiles. Cast hand-finished metals. Quenched fireplaces and burning torches...

He patiently walked her through all of it. From chamber to chamber. From floor to floor. And from tower to tower. Leaving one only for another day...

...

So, when the night came, the small butterfly loaded with images returned to the sleepy gardens.

A tiny little phrase in her thoughts would turn again, before she fell asleep...

“...My castle”, he had said to her,
“...is the adornment of the forest...”

* * *

The next day, the small butterfly, woke alone on some flower. She looked around her, but he was not by her side... So, she flew to the castle...

She found him standing in one of the many chambers. Changing places of small objects... He seemed carefree. And perhaps even a little bit uninterested, though he saw her fluttering towards him. Then he smiled as if he was expecting her... Knowing already, you'd say, she would be coming... Still the words he heard mustn't have been the ones he thought he'd hear...

The small butterfly silently touched one of the furniture pieces.

“I came to say goodbye” she said to him.
“Today, I leave...”

...

The freshness of the morning filled his castle; one more day in the middle of spring...

She spoke softly. He did feel her every word though.

He left aside, whatever he was doing, and stopped his look on her. The smile didn't fade away from his lips... Yet it had now somehow changed.

“Why?” he asked.

She didn't answer hastily. She probably wouldn't like at all to offend him...

"I simply wish to get to know the forest..."

The king laughed lightly. But even so, his laughter unexpectedly filled the space...

"The forest?" he wondered.

"...Then you should stay here!"

"My castle is the entire forest... Whichever butterfly once tasted my gardens' nectar, for that it is forever searching.

Ask them; they thirst for it, without ever having enough..."

"I doubt it not", she admitted,

"but, I'm sorry, the time has come for me to go..."

He started walking towards her.

"Some flower you're looking for that my garden lacks, isn't it so, small butterfly? If you imagine it, describe it to me, and if you've found it tell me and I'll bring it to you..."

"No..."

No, it is not that" she assured him, perhaps upset.

He was dimly discerning his precious castle... He came closer. And yet, the distance between them was always getting bigger... His eyes were only wrapping up her blue wings. And they, they were enwrapped by the diffused light...

He came in front of her one more time. He smiled again.

"In the forest you're talking about, one day the winter will fall and the end will come. But in my garden of unfading flowers, the spring even then shall live..."

He stayed completely still, as if made of marble. Observing her. Watching her every move...

"...Stay near us small butterfly..."

In your forest, you'll be alone again..."

He saw her watching the floor, as if she was contemplating.

She started opening her blue wings... She slightly lowered her thin body. The smile was lost from his lips.

"I'm sorry...", she was about to say...

But she didn't manage to complete her sentence.

His hand moved in a flash, perhaps without reason...

It fell on her, unhesitatingly, stealing away the wind and the sun's light.

...

She didn't immediately understand what had happened... She tried for a moment to escape, but it was tightening around her more and more.

...Trapping the body and her small wings.

She looked through the openings of his fingers.

A strange creature stood opposite her... Its face didn't re-

mind her of the young king. But then again, how could it be different...

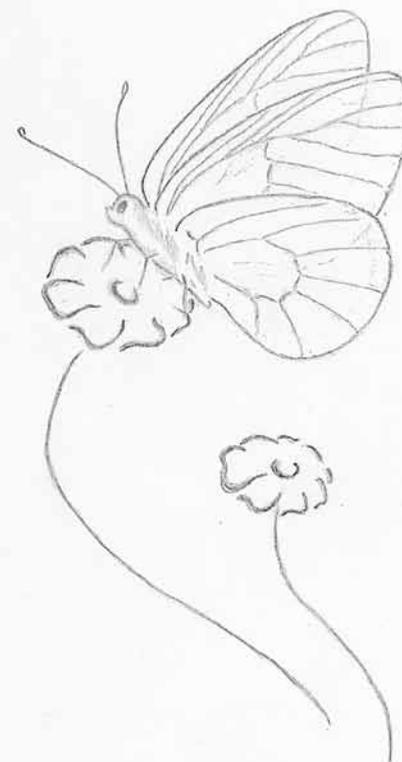
She then heard a voice, "I am sorry, small butterfly."

"I tried so much..."

But you, you didn't want to understand..."

She felt her powers fade, and the world around her disappear.

"...You're hurting me..."
she only managed to say.





* * *

She didn't know how much time had passed by.
Nor did she recognize the space around her when she came around.

She was shut in a small vase with glass walls. Without doubt somewhere in the castle... In a round chamber. Like the towers' chambers, but bigger than the ones she had seen.
And surely different.

It was a big, almost empty chamber; in contrast to the rest of the castle, its belongings were rather few. And they seemed lost inside it...

A small chest in one of its edges. Next to the quenched, forgotten fireplace... The tall and round, little table on which her transparent vase was laying — in the middle of the big chamber.

Two torches fixed on the wall...
A heavy armchair, indifferently turned.

All concentrated towards the part of the wall where the window was. The only window of that chamber; opened to the light.

...

It was a big bare chamber, in contrast to the rest of the castle.

And if something was filling perhaps its empty space... It

was the curtain that was spreading, wavy, on its other half part; the part that was facing the open window, without sharing it.

The small butterfly was standing in the middle.

* * *

When the king came, she almost didn't notice him. He appeared slowly from the top of the staircase that led to the chamber. A round staircase, assuming from the other towers.

...Reaching the level of the stone floor, he there walked, coming near her.

He was calm.

He slightly leaned towards her glass vase. Bringing his face by her side. "You woke up..." he spoke alone.

She answered not. Instead she turned her back on him. But the king suddenly turned around her small vase, thus forcing her to face him.

For her first time, the blue butterfly was mirrored so clearly in the seas of his eyes. The king stood watching her.

"...I'll give you one more chance" he said to her.

For a while he stood in silence, and then he walked away, approaching the wide fabric curtain. He held its one end tightly in one of his hands.

"Stay near me small butterfly" he proposed to her again.

"Stay near me, and my entire castle, one day might become yours."

Her voice reached him, through the openings passing of her closed cover.

"Your entire castle, is to me alien" it was saying.

"...Very well", he briefly noted.

"Then, you should learn where you are..."

He was walking parallel to the wall, slow steps, pulling along with him the high curtain.

...Her body froze... Her voice, which so unafraid sounded earlier, now within her hid deeply. And her eyes, those that were following him, were nimbly forgotten open, further behind.

He had rather reached the other side of the chamber, almost revealing his hidden wall.

"You are...", he continued calmly.

...

Her breath came out as if ending. As if around her, thought-

lessly, life was scattered... Wrapped up, in the duration of a moment.

...On the wall before her, on this huge spreading wall, frames everywhere hung, small and large ones. And inside them, inside the frames with the similar shapes... dressed in dozens of colours and the sun's light, butterfly wings were shining motionless.

Bodies, surrendered to their last flutter.

“...You are in the most beautiful chamber of my castle...”

* * *

The entire world, had been emptied for her.

Only wings in symmetrical frames were now before her. Nothing else... Frames starting from low, slightly above the floor. Reaching high, almost to the wall's top. Nothing else.

The young king returned to her side.

“You denied my offers, small butterfly” he said to her.

“But now you have no alternative...”

...You will live close to me.

Without ever crossing the walls of my castle.

And forever you will fly for me.

Otherwise, a part you will become, of my wall butterflies...”

Perhaps enough time had passed so as to find the strength of her lost speech.

“Never...” she just told him quietly.

“Never will I fly for you!”

...

He simply smiled.

“Don't be in such a hurry, small butterfly.”

“...Time,

is all ours...”

* * *

Days went by, before he came again... How many though she could no longer tell.

Days she passed in silence, just watching the wall. Those frames — in various sizes, that closed inside them sometimes a few, sometimes more butterflies.

Those wings... Wings she had never seen alike...

Colours that sparkled in the games of the light. A light that was coming in from the open window, to flood the big chamber and to be trapped in it...

Beyond that, only the clouds glided, and the wind... The clouds, which far away would always leave.

And the wind that would come close to her from time to time, to accompany her solitary thoughts. That it passed through the holes of her small cover, and caressed her sad face.

How strange it seemed indeed...

Once she could so easily slide out of these openings... Back then, when she was just a little caterpillar. And even now, if she wasn't wearing her big wings... Those, her ever-adored wings, those that had made her what she is, now got her all the way here and never again would they let her go.

...

The king returned some sweet spring afternoon. Looking as he first did. He ascended slowly the round staircase and quickly came near her. He softly held in his hands her small vase... She didn't react at all.

It had been a long time since he had seen her; and yet it was as if he was going on, from there where they had paused.

"Once you despised my garden, small butterfly" he said to her.

"Perhaps till now, you may have changed your mind..."

He took her with him, up to the open window. One of the larger windows of the castle. He softly let her vase on the sill's edge. Then he leaned on his two hands and slightly bent outwards.

Far below him the iron gate was lying.

Exactly in front of it, the garden of the unfading flowers, spreading a scent that reached, slightly, up till there.

Further away the bloomed gardens. The beautiful trees. Then the walls of the castle. And after the forest... Brownish and green... Immense...

The small butterfly looked out through the glass.

The king's look wandered far.

"Isn't my castle beautiful?", he asked her then...

“It lies built in the center of the forest... And you, you will be able to fly within its walls...”

She didn't answer.

“How strange indeed” he said afterwards. He was speaking slowly. Without looking at her... And his thoughts got lost who knows where. “How strange small butterfly...”

“Once, these very walls were holding back my enemies. Wars and victories, pellets and flames they have faced... My castle basements still full of powder, for battles never given...

Until today, I fear, these walls were useless to me; he slightly smiled... I wait for no one else.

...And don't be so mistaken to think they now restrain my butterflies...

No, none of them asks to get away.

They just stand to adorn my castle... Reminding me of hours long gone...”

“But now it is you they will hold back, small butterfly. From now on, they will be useful once again...”

He laughed lightly. He laughed beautifully.

“Look again at my gardens small butterfly...” he went on. “Do you see now, why so wonderful they seem?”

Look at my butterflies now that nothing confines them... Each winter alone they hide in my unfading garden. And each spring, around it they spread their precious wings. They choose another garden to live in... Or even the same one again, it doesn't matter...

Aren't they beautiful, small butterfly;
Aren't they beautiful, when you watch them from above?”

He returned to the interior of his big tower.

“So?”, he asked her, strolling with her in front of his colourful wall... “So, my little blue one?”

“My chamber always seats more butterflies. So do my blossomed gardens... Choose, where you want to be...”

She wanted not and yet she turned to look at him.

“Why?”, she asked him.

...

The king was puzzled... No one would have expected her, to have any questions... “What do you mean?” he asked her back.

“On your wall and in your garden you have”, she clarified, “so many blue butterflies...”

I, what can I offer you more?”

He looked at her in a fond way. And then he slowly turned his look away...

“It makes no difference” he answered to her. “It makes no difference at all...”

“As I myself used to do — so long ago— it takes you also long to understand. Haven't you been told, haven't you felt it

yet? Whoever passes my walls, never escapes... Never does he return...

Understand it, small butterfly.

...The quicker you understand it, the sooner you will enjoy the sun.”

* * *

Leaving he took out a flower and threw it in her vase... “For the days that come” he said to her...

She asked him not to cut flowers for her sake, and that closed in there, she was not so much in need to be fed... But he left, probably without hearing her.

The days that came seemed unending. As her flower also did, she found not the will to talk... She was only watching the big chamber...

...Time, why should it pass so slowly?

Its neglected fireplace. The two torches, put side by side. The heavy armchair. The small chest, that hid inside it, who knows what...

Time may have stood there.

...She was observing the sad wings on the silent wall. Wings open, and yet they'd never fly... Wings the sun was wrapping.

Yet, they would never feel the light.

...

The king returned some day like all days.

She was weary. He found her lying on the dried up flower with her eyes closed. She didn't touch its nectar at all.

He went near her, and nudged her small vase.

She rose...

“So?” he asked her without delay, for one more time.

“Have you decided, small butterfly?”

“I can forever wait...

But you, you will be dead sooner.”

Maybe she had no more the will for anything. She searched, nevertheless, for the courage to answer...

“I'll never fly for you”,

she said to him again. “And I don't find the reason to choose; between two identical prisons...”

If the small butterfly had looked at him while she was talking, she would have seen that his dim smile was petrified. Though she probably wouldn't understand.

“They are not identical!” he said upset. But immediately he lowered the tone of his voice.

“You reached all the way to here...” he confessed. “I think

you deserve me offering you a gift... Me, sharing with you, a secret.”

...

He started walking around her small vase. The sole movement perhaps in his bare chamber.

“I have to make your choice easier...” he admitted.

“And a small, innocent mistake, blocks your judgment, my blue butterfly.”

“Once I spoke to you, about the butterflies of my garden. I think the time has come to tell you also, about the butterflies of my wall.”

He seemed thoughtful. He seemed calm.

He kept moving around her...

“...You surely believe they are identical, because they are equally beautiful, isn't it so?”

The small butterfly was about to say something. But then she thought it would be better to stay in silence.

“Perhaps indeed — you must have noticed it— this wall of mine, in comparison with my garden, has an advantage.”

“...Truthfully, the butterflies that adorn it”, he stressed, “are the most beautiful of those that once flew in my full-bloomed gardens.

Watch their colours, how they're still shining in the light... Colours chosen, out of the most beautiful colours.”

The blue butterfly sometimes looked at the young king. And

some other times she let her eyes wander on the colourful wall.

“You know” he said, and he stopped for a moment to look at her, “even the butterflies of my garden... do not live for ever.”

“After seasons and seasons, a winter comes from which no one can hide...

Then, there comes the time for them, that only my wall can protect.”

“I hope you understand me now, small butterfly...

...Their wings away from me, would have been lost.

Perhaps they might have never even been created. If the nectar of my gardens gave them life... And if it had once adorned them with the most capable bodies.

If my garden of the unfading flowers and the distinct light of the seasons, granted their wings the perfect beauty, the most beautiful colours... Then they really can, and have reached here.

This wall of mine, is for them, eternity.”

“Away from me they would have been lost for ever...”, he slowly repeated.

“I, offered them the unreachable!”

The blue butterfly felt cold.

And yet it was that same morning she had felt the sun burning hot...

“But you are also wrong” he said to her. “As you must have understood, here exactly is where it lies the source of their difference. No, the wall that you see and my gardens are not the same.”

“This wall of mine is the end. My gardens, are only the beginning!”

...

“...You have the right to choose.
You may wish to be added to it as of now. Or you might prefer, first to get drunk by my blossoms’ nectar.”

“You have the right to choose, small butterfly.
But you can never escape!”

* * *

He changed the flower in her vase. And then he was about to leave. He had reached the staircase, when he stopped and turned to look at her.

“Did you think”, he said to her, “that the butterflies on my wall, resisted me?”

“Or that I fooled them perhaps?”

“...Few wouldn’t appreciate my wall small butterfly.
Almost all, if they knew of it, would want to get near it right away.

This is why I keep it hidden, small butterfly. Its places, are only for some lucky ones.”

“So?
Isn’t my wall beautiful now?”

“Now that it can only, grant life?”

* * *

...The days that came, seemed to her unending again. They must have been many... Her flower had dried out.

It had offered her its last nectar... She drank it, strangely, to keep on living.

In her mind also roamed another flower. A flower that had once told her to mind the colours... So she noticed the colours around her. But in this chamber, these colours, still she would say meant death.

A river she remembered, that had once shown her the movement. So she noticed the movements she was looking at. But the fluttering of the butterflies in his blossomed gardens, couldn't mean life...

The creature of the night could only feel her big wings...

But the wings of the butterflies before her, were so big. How indeed did they reach that wall?

How indeed did they stand in those gardens?

How?

...

Days and days she spent alone. Silent. The king was coming and going, only leaving behind him a flower. He always asked her the same. Sometimes she answered. Sometimes, she was too tired to talk.

Her small vase didn't tighten her any more as it did at first. She had almost got used to its close sides and the distant cover. To the space around her... To the fireplace, the quenched torches and the shut chest.

Perhaps she had even got used to the wall she saw. Even to that. To that bloodstained wall.

* * *

When the king went up the stair, he saw her body lying heavy at the bottom of the glass vase. He moved hastily by her side...

He opened the cover, took out the dried up flower and then softly blew inside it. His breath seemed to be giving life to the small butterfly.

She slightly rose. She looked at the young king and then she closed her eyes again.

“So?” he asked her.

She didn’t answer.

Quietly, he kneeled on the floor beside her. Leaving the cover open...

He went on for some time looking at her. There, fallen as she was.

“...The butterflies of my garden say about me that I know everything”, he spoke pointlessly. “And that I have the answer to all things...”

“Why do you deny me, small butterfly?”

His voice spread warmly around her.

“When you were flying” he said to her...

“When your small wings were opening to the wind, and the sun was passing its rays through them, they were then taking the glow of the sky.

And the moment they were shutting, — as if shade was cov-

ering the edges of the forest— they would take the deep colour of the oceans... That colour that isn’t alike anything in the forest...”

“Stay near me small butterfly...”

“No one else, can see your beauty...

Perhaps not even you.

Only I...”

“Fly for me a single moment, and then leave...”

The small butterfly turned her look on him. She saw him sitting on the floor. Touching her vase with his one hand. Inside her she had promised she wouldn’t speak to him ever again...

“...Come go with me...” weak, her voice sounded. “Let go of your castle and come with me...”

The king suddenly hushed for a while. Then he pulled himself away. He rose slowly and covered again the glass vase.

He turned elsewhere. He walked further away with slow steps, as if he was managing to escape from her wings’ nets...

“Go?” he laughed then.

“Go where?”

“Away...

There where you never walked.”

“Why?”

“...Without reason...”

He laughed again, calmly as if he were amused. Perhaps by her...

The small butterfly looked in front of her, the dead wings on the stone wall.

“You, that gave everything a reason,” she whispered, “tell me why are you doing all this?”

But the king probably didn't hear her words, for he didn't laugh at all.

...

After only some time, he moved silently towards the window. He leaned to the front; far below, his multi-coloured gardens were discernible. Suffused with butterflies' wings...

He started to speak; more to the wind than to his small prisoner. “...Most of them...” he said, recalling what he had shared with them... Years now...

“...Most of them will never reach that chamber. At least, as long as they can still fly.”

“Some among them, are totally indifferent to me...

The shape and the colour of their wings, never filled my eyes...

They will fade away and perish in the corridors of my garden. And it will be as if they've lived not for a moment.”

“Others again, made no difficulty for me.

They sank into the nectar that I offered them and found enough getting their whole life drunk on it.”

“Finally, among them, there are also some other butterflies...”

“Some — maybe a few, maybe a lot, I don't remember any longer— that once reached this chamber. That irrationally thought they could resist me.

But they also had to choose some day... Death in a single moment.

Or the extension of an everlasting life.”

“You know what they chose.

What you will also choose some day... It couldn't be any different.”

“Look at them now!

They fly in my garden. They fly near me and they are happy...

Their colours shine under the sun, as if they never knew my chamber... As if, you'd think, they won't ever enrich it...”

“I am now their happiness, small butterfly! I, and I alone.”

He turned towards her side. His look met her look.

“Accept” he said to her.

“I promise, day by day you will forget our little agreement...

And then, sorrowless, you will continue to live in my full-bloomed gardens.”

He came up to the top of the round staircase.

He stopped at his castle's first, and perhaps last step and turned again to look at her.

“Day by day you will also forget, small butterfly...”

“...Everyone forgets...”

* * *

The king, was only coming from time to time and leaving flowers in her vase.

But the evenings that were continuously passing, were chilly now. And she had long since been feeling cold each night. The colour of the sky had got darker and at times the clouds were bringing along drops of rain.

The wind would carry the smell of the damp forest.

The small butterfly had got used to this by now.

To the cold and to loneliness. To clouds and moisture. Maybe she had even got used to him. Even to the young king.

So, it didn't seem strange to her when he came some day like all days.

Nor when he brought near her his big eyes. Only when this time he asked her again, she thought his words seemed somehow changed...

“So?” he had asked...

“Have you decided small butterfly?

Today, is your last day here.”

...

She raised her body with difficulty. His words flowed in her mind and immediately disappeared, her not caring.

“Tell me” he went on, and started pacing around her for another time... He firstly approached the frames on his wall.

And then the open window. Behind him was coming the scent of the bloomed gardens.

She had got tired by now. And everything seemed without sense any more. But if she didn't answer, perhaps he would ask her again.

“Whatever I may choose,” she said then, “...has no meaning close to you...”

You, are the only death!”

The face of the king slightly darkened.

But her words flowed into his thought perhaps and faded, him not caring.

The sorrow was painted in his calm, blue eyes. As an indefinable interest.

“My innocent butterfly...” he tenderly said to her.

“...So much time spent here,

And still you've understood nothing...”

...

He touched her little vase, as he came near her.
“For whom?” he asked her... “For whom am I death?”

“...For everything...”

He smiled. The small butterfly was puzzled. His eyes were getting lost in her eyes. She saw him uncovering her small vase and then walking away from it.

“...The days of warmth have now gone by...” he said to her.
“Today, the day has come for you to go.

And I, this only had I come to tell you.”

“But in a while, you should know”, he added, “in the forest that you preferred, the cold will spread... That cold from which even you won’t be able to escape.”

“And then you’ll be forced to return. And ask for what you once denied...”

“I will be here.”

“...And perhaps I might be able to forgive you.”

The small butterfly had flown with difficulty, to the top of her glass vase.

“But before you leave I have something last to tell you...”
he gently spoke to her... “I’d like to ask you a tiny favor.”

“If you want to you can do it...”

It won’t be anything to you...”

He smiled again.

“Lower yourself... Please, lower yourself in my full-bloomed gardens. Fly amidst my many butterflies. And speak to them... Tell them about me. Tell them whatever you may think of... Whatever you’ve gone through...

Then you’ll understand, small butterfly.”

“They won’t be able to hear you!

I gave birth to them and nurtured them! Always I... I accepted them and protected them. I offered them, what you never would!

Deliverance!”

He came closer to her.

“I offered them the supreme gift... Life!

Deliverance, from their own self!”

He came by her side... Perhaps because of that, his voice so differently sounded...

“Go!” he just told her. “Go away, small butterfly.”

“Nobody wants you...”

“...You, are death to them!

You, are to everything death!”

“Go!”

“Go.”

...

She slipped, trembling, through the window.

...She lowered herself over his bloomed gardens.

The butterflies were flying around her as they first did. She would like to shout to them. And tell them to leave...

Elsewhere to gather and shine, scattering the glamour of his fake world!

But she could say nothing... And the king would surely laugh, watching her through the tower's window.

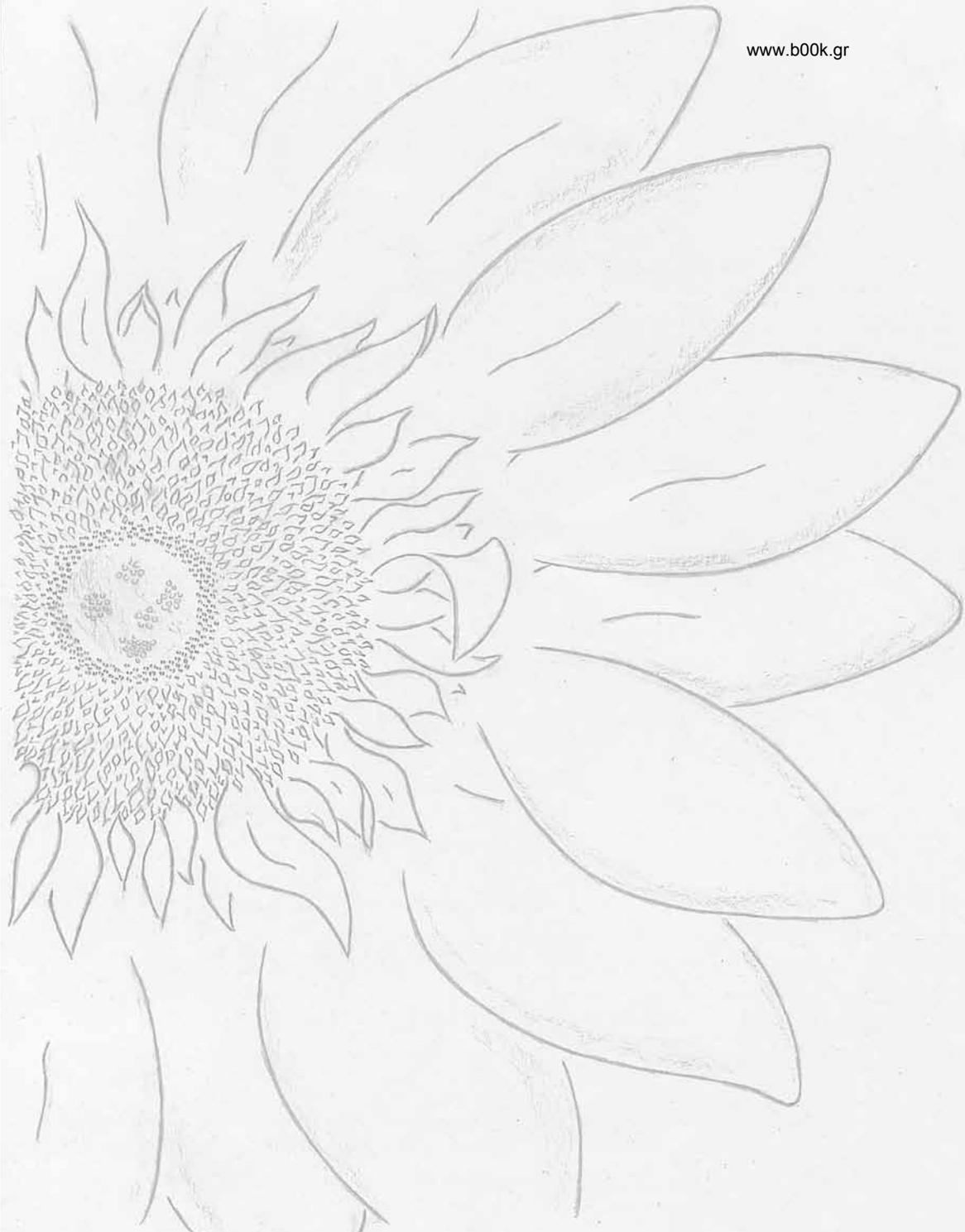
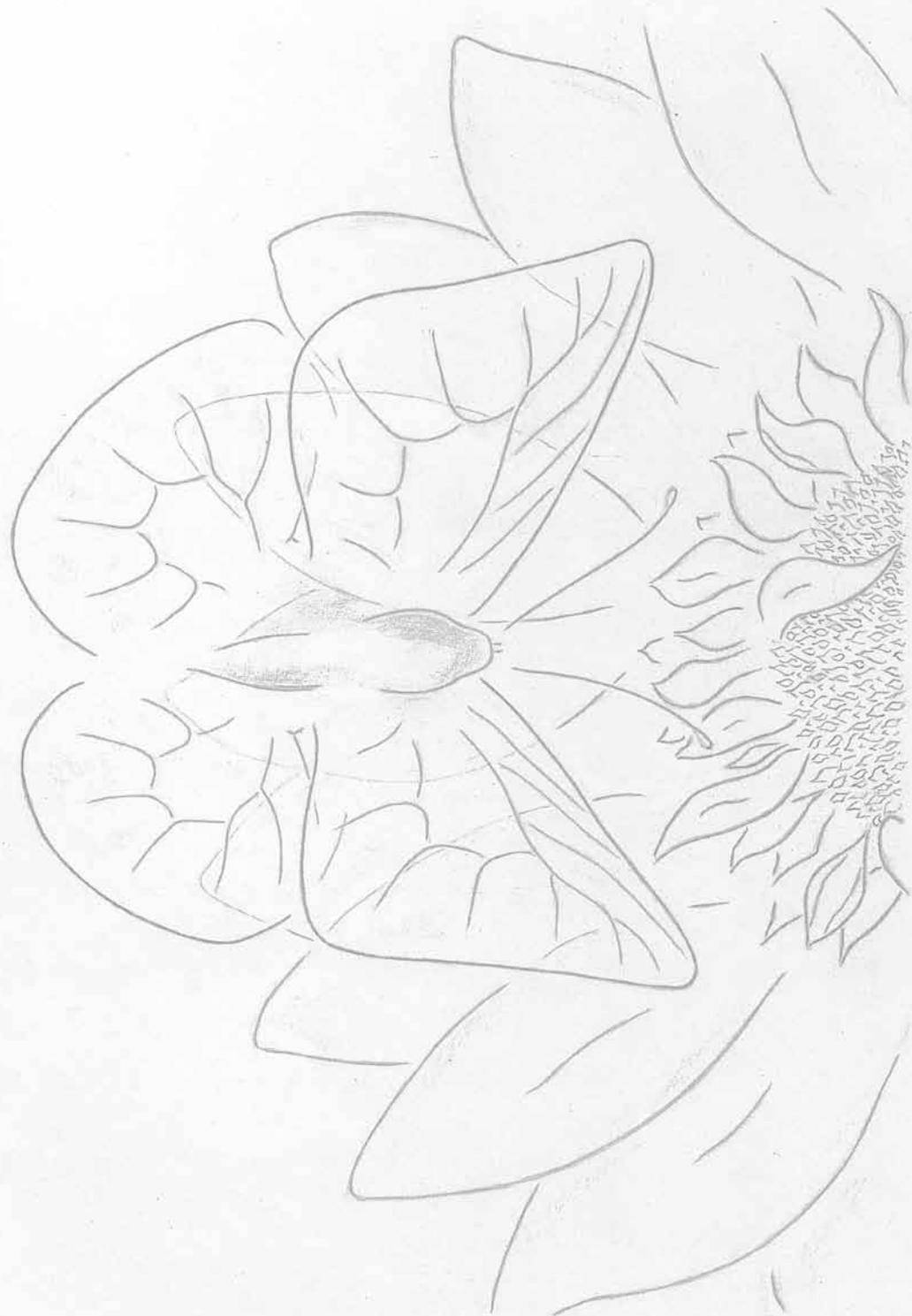
...

She gathered her few remaining powers.

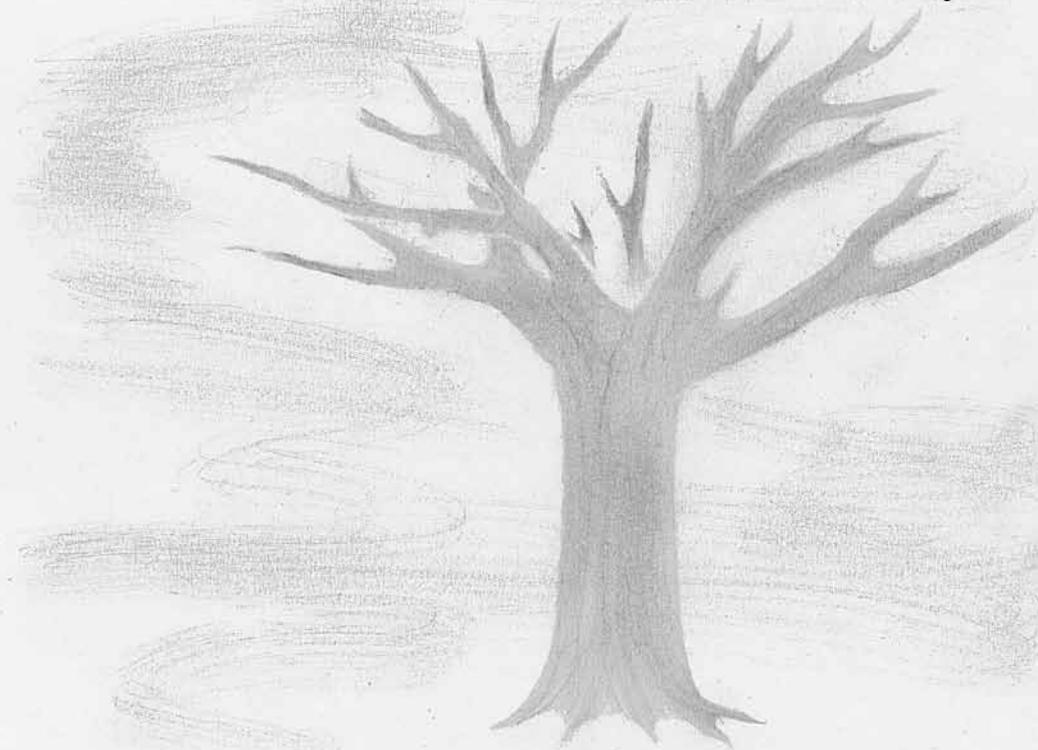
She rose high, above those gardens and those butterflies. To the edges of his unending castle she reached. Hovering she stood for a tiny moment. And then, with just one move of her small wings, behind her she left the stone walls.

Leaving, towards the last spring of the golden forest...











* * *

Trees' weightless leaves had now fallen on the earth — raindrops of a different rain...

...Leaving behind them dry shadows wrapped up with the hazy sky's cloudiness. And that, quickly gave way to the winter's frost.

The river ran dry. Little narrow pools left inside it, hardened in strange shapes.

Scarce food came even less, but those of the animals who had foreseen seemed to last. Accustomed to the moods of nature, they fell again into their hibernation or hid in their warm nests.

And the snow that came, when it came, found nothing but desert land to cover; crystals that dressed the nude branches.

...Wind's breath, blew everywhere, as a sign unshakeable of a newborn life...

And there, —into the forest's wounded depths— white storms wove the cloak of a castle.

...

The blue butterfly never did return.

Neither from the touch of rains, nor from the flapping of the cold's wings.

And sorrow scattered, the hopes of the young king.

In the walls, the hidden moisture was transformed to ice, and the cracks got bigger once again. But he didn't care... He would probably fix them in the spring.

His gardens withered. Unfading flowers' petals came to dust sliding in the wind... But he didn't try to protect them.

That winter he sent all the servants away. He wanted no one to see him.

And to see no one.

...Alone he wandered in his castle's rooms. Alone, he carried wood to his snow-covered tower.

His garden's butterflies slowly faded. And those, at whose wonderful colours he had once marveled, alone he killed, alone he shut them in large frames. Frames old, or other new ones. Some of his butterflies cramming... Or throwing others away.

And then he hung them in the highest chamber...

But for a long time he didn't go up there.

It didn't mean anything to him to see them. To admire them, as he first did.

The transparent wings on the indifferent walls seemed now

to stand without sense.

Out of habit he lit from time to time the big fireplace. Out of habit he would push aside the long curtain watching his dead butterflies. He would then recall, moments of no use, the way he had trapped each one of them. As a strange game of his mind.

How he had fooled them, how he had tempted them to his gardens of blooms. And they, how easily they had let themselves in his nets...

Out of habit he was pulling back the fabric curtain, before returning to the rest of his castle. Out of habit he was watching through the shut window panes.

...Away from the sleeping gardens, and the sleepless walls of his castle. Awaiting what?

Out of habit he ate and slept. Out of habit he was living and breathing in his immovable world.

...

Other days again, whole days, that wall was the only thing that seemed to matter.

He caught himself remembering again... Thinking continuously of his seduced wings.

He was going then up again to his beautiful, beloved chamber... He was sitting in his heavy armchair and was watching them in silence, folds indefinable of time. He was getting lost inside them. Each time more and more...

He was simply leaving and returning, without having deserted it a single moment.

In time he stopped drawing the fabric curtain. And he wouldn't even remember to light the fireplace.

Only winters' everlasting shadow he allowed to enter through the big window.

To cover with its dim glow the still colourful wall.

The dark torches, and his grey heart.

In time he ceased to eat... And he seemed to have forgotten the rest of his castle's floors.

He continued only to look deeply at his wooden frames.

He approached them, thus better wanting to face his butterflies. But they reminded him of nothing any more...

He pulled himself further away to look at them all. But there was now, nothing on them to see.

Until, little by little, he ceased thinking of anything. He ceased counting the hours. Those days, that without coming, were going...

Little by little he ceased, simply, to exist...

And then, some peaceful winter's night, a night like every night, there where he had leaned helplessly on the stone floor, a tear rolled down, burning hot, from his blue eyes.

Behind it, it cleared up, eternally unchanged, the image of his uncovered wall. His breath paused, and time seemed to

be reaching its end.

He slowly passed his fingertips over his dried-up cheeks.

A form that frayed into an alien face.

He clenched his fists with the remaining strength he had in him.

And the cry he let go, as if he had always wanted to, passed through — more and more powerful— his dead tower.

...

Right from the very next day's morning, he lit again the quenched fireplace.

Kneeling, he unlocked the small, sealed chest.

And, taking down carefully one by one the frames of his wall, he shut himself again in the big chamber...

* * *

...When at last spring came, the forest showed, how long it had been waiting for her...

The foaming river gave her now to drink.

So she dressed herself in the forms of animals.

The clouds, opening around her, granted her the sky. So she dressed herself in the forms of birds.

One by one it healed her many wounds, giving her space to rest...

One by one she adorned its many parts, forgetting wherever she touched the scent and the blossoms of her body.

And when the sun cast on her his warmest look, she silently surrendered to him... She felt, weightless, her small body, dissolving in the wind.

And her heart scattered, swarms of butterflies.

...

The young king was walking calmly once again the paths of his garden. His castle still deserted; alone he remained behind the walls.

The servants hadn't yet been ordered to return... And to those who sent their request, he said he didn't want visitors this year.

...But his small butterflies came again on time. They wore their delicate wings in a flirtatious way and spread their

shades, on sun-lit blossoms.

The king, by their side, faithful, was there to welcome them once more. As he had first done.

Heartily to laugh... To get lost with them in the colours.

And in this scent that was keeping them... That was sweetly flooding the narrow paths, softly was wandering to the tree peaks, and then was leaving far towards the forest.

He was always there to welcome the butterflies that were coming, following it.

To show them the rare, the wonderful plants they had been searching for... The impressive trees.

To politely show them around his castle.

Its small rooms, its big chambers. The spaces with the artful decoration...

And to leave them afterwards, unhindered, forever to enjoy their fluttering. Their carefree games, and their gardens' sweet-drunk nectar.

* * *

It was a beautiful spring's day when she came.

She found him reading, sitting in some of his castle's chambers. He was bent. Absorbed...

Around him things and objects beloved. Each one, with carefulness, with patience, and labour surely chosen.

On the wall behind him, pictures were hanging with his figure in past glories.

Then — a long time ago — when he vested his heavy king's garment and, sitting on his throne, he saw in front of him servants and lords being dragged.

Then when they all trembled at his sceptre's movements...

Its lowering, meant then the end. The opposite offered, another beginning.

In his hands, always left lying tears and death. Human fate, and what they called life.

...On the big wooden table, next to him, full of freshness flowers of his garden, rested in a precious crystal basket.

...

The sun entered from the open window.

The way she did.

Gold rays hitting the floor, and then timidly diffusing in the

whole room.

He saw her through the big mirror fluttering in the light. Touching softly, imperceptibly, the wide sill.

Through the mirror she saw him as well. They both seemed, as they did once.

He left the book he held, on the table.

And he let his gaze immerse itself in the mirror that hid her inside it... Then, with slow movements, he rose and walked towards her.

He stopped a little farther. She remained still. They looked at each other calmly. Maybe for a moment. Maybe longer.

Until, once again, he talked first. As if time hadn't gone by since the day she left...

"...Nobody wants you..." he said quietly. So as to be barely heard.

"Why did you come?"

...

The small butterfly was vesting the sun's breath. The king, further away, was standing in penumbra.

"...I don't know..." she replied. "I don't know..."

It may have been the silence, it may have been the moment

and the hour, but he didn't laugh at her words at all. Her funny words...

"Why didn't you go far?", he asked her only.

"I did..." "I left for the forest edges..."

"Then?"

She slightly turned away her look. Until it stood empty somewhere before she answered...

"...No matter where I went, in the forest's center there always lay a castle... And a tower stood in its own center."

"Your castle, was to me the entire forest..."

"Wasn't it you", some other day she remembered, "who told me that once?"

He stayed without any expression.

"Seasons came since then and hid again..." he whispered; so quietly, indifferent if anyone could hear him.

"...How did you bear?"

"How did you bear, small butterfly?" he asked louder.

"Winter in its passing, covered everything..."

She didn't notice him moving forward. And yet slowly he had come again by her side.

She raised her sad look to his eyes.

"The same way you did..." she simply replied.

"Like that..."

Just like that."

He had stretched his hand over her. Silently, his fingers' shadow spread on her small wings. "You should have come earlier..." he spoke alone. "Why didn't you come earlier..."

...But they were words that didn't care for an answer...

He started to slowly lower his hand's darkness towards her. "Why did you come?"

At least tell me that..."

But the small butterfly found no reason to say.

And the king had no more patience to wait...

She saw his hand coming nearer and wrapping her up. She felt it tightening around her body and her wings... His long fingers pressed her even more, hurt her perhaps, as he turned his palm to face her. And the laughter that came out inside of him, when he found her there, in his hand again, might have bothered her a little.

But she didn't say anything even now. She didn't have anything to say.

"I can break your wings with a single move..." into his laughter, said the king. "Why, why aren't I able to bend them?"

He raised his hand higher. A transparent flame was shining inside it.

He took it along to the corridors of his castle. Everything untouched around them, seemed like the first time. Materials unique in shapes sublime... Pieces of furniture, carved by capable hands... Chambers and chambers that had been

made for him.

However, they opened a door they hadn't formerly.

A door to a round staircase. One that led to a large chamber...

A chamber, with a curtain spreading on one side.

...Her small vase was lying in its old place.

He threw her body inside it and was about to shut the weightless cover.

"You know there is no need for that..." she said to him.

"And yet...", he kindly commented, "I'd like so much, —and so would you, I think— for all that has passed to be remembered..."

He softly shut the round opening, and took along with him her glass prison, moving unconcerned towards the only window.

It was a big, almost bare chamber.

* * *

...A blue piece of the sky, and the forest's view, was waiting at its end. But lower, a little bit before, a row of paths and a sea of colours.

"Do you remember?" he asked sweetly...

"Do you remember my gardens, small butterfly?"

He stood in front of that window.

His castle spread shining under the sun. Spring was blooming everywhere.

"...My huge walls...", he continued. "Those that bother no one any longer? Those that no one notices?"

On his face he felt the caress of the surrounding scents. They were emerging by his side calling thoughts to turn to them.

"Look at my butterflies, how beautiful they are. They fly for me alone, remember?"

In my gardens they're born and there they give birth, to those they consider their children."

"...And in the exact moment of their death", he added, "their wings become mine for ever..."

The same cold ran through her body, as it did back then. But

now, she might have got used to it.

"You ask for", she said to him, "what you never can have..."

A smile blossomed and softly dried on his lips. A smile full of comprehension. With it you'd probably say her words faded away.

But afterwards he turned peacefully to the interior of his large chamber. He lay down her vase onto its tall and round table, and her words returned to his mind.

"...My small butterfly" he commented, and smiled again. "So many seasons passed over you. And not even they were able to teach you anything..."

"You still make the same mistakes, as you first did..."

His look was severe and yet seemed affectionate at the same time. His voice was sinking deep inside her. A voice sliding slowly, peacefully dripping warmth in its very passing.

"Those butterflies... Those butterflies you have just seen, could never have whatever you imagined... Whatever you alone imagined.

You, my small butterfly...

You, could never have anything! Ever.

I can.

I can!"

"Watch, if perhaps you wish" he said to her, grasping tight-

ly the big curtain.

“Watch closely my small butterfly the truth you once asked for...”

“...Bodies,
...Bodies and wings...”

...ALL mine!”

* * *

He had drawn with strength the wavy fabric towards his side.

Revealing thus, uncovered, his beloved wall. This wall that was always guarding, his words’ incontestable proof.

He simply stood there helpless, watching it for a moment.

And then he turned again to look at her. In some movement of hers, searching to find, what was now perhaps hiding in her eyes.

...Because —how strange— that wall that appeared before her didn’t seem the same...

In a castle identical, it would have been perhaps that wall only that had changed.

And whoever saw it, would say that it had changed a lot...

It had changed, he’d say, for ever.
That it had now revealed itself, he would agree.

...Those frames —full of wings— that once adorned it, wouldn’t be lying on it in a random harmony. Not any more.

As if a tireless hand had chosen their places, again and again positioning them.

Put contiguously, almost side by side, concentric, distinct arcs until they formed on its wide curve. Arcs trapped imaginatively, in between the floor, and the forbidding line of the roof.

...Arcs like a wave that were opening, that were always spreading, calmly fading the further they went away.

Arcs that were closing, that were always shrinking —as petals that united—, complete circles finally forming towards the newly-created center.

Similar frames, matching one another, faultlessly hung on the wall. The mind that they were wrapping up, and the barricade of your eyes...

...And there, in the middle of all these circles, in that center of the large chamber —right across the open window—, one more frame was hanging.

A simple, empty, square frame.
From the most beautiful and prized, brown wood.

...

The blue butterfly stood in silence. She sensed, hazily perhaps, vaguely what she felt she would hear.

Only the king, as if he had forgotten all that took place and the words they started, walked untroubled towards the center of his wall.

He came near it, and softly touched this small frame. Feeling its strange warmth.

...Enough time must have passed by, looking at it. Almost ignoring his small prisoner. When, without turning towards her, he was about to start talking again.

* * *

...The wind was entering, meagrely, from the open window. Hiding along with it, before granting a moment to the chamber, the scent of the forest. A scent, weaved inseparably from flowers' flirtatious breaths, and trees' incessant respirations.

"Once...",
he said, starting. But his voice hesitated and his phrase stayed for a while unfinished.
"...A long time ago" he whispered.

The blue butterfly remained silent. An empty frame she was looking at. And an image, in front of it that was forgetting, and was remembering what it had erased...

"It was at that time that I was building my castle...
Then, when my walls hadn't yet been built, and the wars that would come I couldn't have known..."

His words on his lips stood again. It was as if he now wanted to overcome this wall, to which he was giving life for years. Until his look flickered. Slid and got lost in the unknown depths of his small frame.

"Then, when I sought the adornment of the one that was meant to become the most special of all my chambers."
"That in the transparent wings", he went on, "I saw the beauty supreme, and one by one I was already beginning to gather my wondrous butterflies..." "...Unexpectedly, carried away more and more..."

...

"...My servants I sent to find and bring to me the forest's most beautiful wood."
"The wood that could hold, that could highlight... my castle's most precious possession."

He rested his head softly on the stone wall. In his hand he

felt, unceasing, the warmth of his frame... The tranquility of its wood.

And he, who changed expressions, some moments indefinable would stay inexpressive.

“...For long they had been searching everywhere, I remember. Gathering branches out to the forest edges.”

“Until one day, a spring’s day it was, they came back holding in their hands a branch, from a tree they said, no... no, they had never seen an equal!” ...As if life he was getting, bent by the side of his frame, he also seemed to shine.

“There were so many... but similar it wouldn’t be to all the others.”

“At last!”, at his own thoughts he probably laughed, “I had the tree, I said, whose pieces would form the frames to adorn my wall.”

“...The morrow, I went with them, there where they led me...”

...

His steps were moving back to bygone days. To directions unknown on the forest’s erased paths.

He started laughing, alone again. Till he stopped; perhaps suddenly.

“Fools!”, he said with rage and immediately fell silent. But he didn’t manage completely to curb his anger. Nor was he able to send away what stood in front of him.

“In the small clearing, in the light of a dawn still ruddy, lay only a dry tree! Rotten.

So cold and dark... Even if it was in the very middle of spring...”

“They were mistaken!” pointlessly he added. “It wasn’t that. What if it were slowly submerging perhaps its roots into the ground... What if it were thrusting proudly its body in the sky, it wasn’t... it couldn’t be that.

It couldn’t be there!

I searched... I searched everywhere around to find it...

...But it was nowhere to be found!”

...

Despair had already started looming in his damp eyes. Little by little lining his dry lips.

“The only thing left from that tree for me, a branch. Only a branch!

Barely enough to form a frame. But now, it wouldn’t be that, that’d bother me so; into my hands I had the one, the frame that I asked for... But no butterfly was worthy of being inside it! As if to the same beginning I was turning.”

“...I made other frames. Frames most beautiful. Bigger frames. Inside them I closed other butterflies... None should escape me any more.” “...Not even one.” “The same mistake shouldn’t happen again. I was searching for more. Always for more...”

Looking for the one, for the only one I haven’t found...

The one, that never appeared...”

He turned towards her...

“I kept it always hidden”, he mumbled, “In my castle’s highest tower.”

His eyes had blurred...

He couldn’t discern her, no matter where he was looking. But he knew she was there.

“I’ve been waiting for you”, he then told her. “...I’ve always been waiting for you...”

“Before everything, I felt deep inside me that you’d come someday...”

His voice was now coming out with difficulty.

A voice that was fading away, but was still spreading to reach her.

“This frame I made,
I made it for you...”

“...Once you asked me why, and I didn’t answer! I didn’t know.

But now I know! Now, I remember...”

“This castle I built...” he said to her...

A body that shivered.

Two eyes that searched uneasily for the roof.

“...This castle I built,

I built it for you!”

...And a breath that hoped,

it would touch its end.

“For you...

...who was never coming...”

* * *

She had leaned her head down, looking low into the glass vase.

The king walked weary to her side. “I must be fair to you”, apologetic were his withered words. “Once, I —I myself— also made a mistake. With you...”

He took her vase in his hand. The blue butterfly didn’t speak once again.

“...The mistake”, he inexpressively continued, “of letting you get away. The mistake of letting you believe, that no place is there for you on my wall.

...That no place is there for you in my castle.”

“But now you know!” he slowly told her, having almost regained some of his voice’s powers...

“...Your place is, my entire castle! This frame of mine — one in so many that you easily rejected— is your inevitable destination!

And I, I who made whatever I made for you... I who was born from you... away from you I can not exist.

The time has come for you to choose. And I, I can not let you go any more.”

He raised her vase high. In some tower they were standing, in that centre, of a large chamber.

“So choose, my small butterfly.”

“But choose well”, he warned her.

“This, is your last chance!”

“My entire castle...

Or the tight hug of my most beautiful frame!”

* * *

...He was talking, but even if his phrases were getting stronger, they would be vainly lost into the passing wind.

For the small butterfly had for some time turned towards that frame... As if she had now forgotten the young king.

“My small”, she was only whispering, “frame,” betraying her wounds, “no one... no one thought of you the moment he was making you...”

Its firm, its stable figure, was turning secretly and changing in her mind... A branch, a tree it was becoming for a while... A tree that she once had encountered. Dry or blossomed — the most beautiful of all— in some forest’s always lost clearing.

“...Choose...” behind her she could hear, supplicant and commanding, his voice rising...

...It had nothing to say. It stood in silence.

A part of it remained speechless, hung on this wall. A part of it. So small and tired.

She herself could adorn it, if it alone would want it for a moment. A blue sea to become, for it, surrounded by the most beautiful, infinite shore...

But something like that, could never happen.

She was looking at it before her. It was in his tower, years now, patiently, as if it had also been waiting. Who knows for what...

“Choose...”, how much more powerful, his words would sound... But, alas, which way to find, to stand, to get to her.

Always together with that frame — foolishly together—, some small, small butterfly, bore to fly trapped in its center... Yet that butterfly, similarly silent, no, wasn't so much in need of her.

...Its transparent wings, the king could never discern... Perhaps there, but it was always missing from his collection. He was covering it perhaps, even if, unwillingly, not any more... But it would be the only butterfly worth seeing.

“Stay calm...” she noiselessly promised them... “You and I will hide for always our secret.

And all the worlds, too late might feel what they have lost for ever...”

“Choose...” he shouted now...

Who was talking? Who?

The one who didn't respect her small frame!

...Who never did try to understand it! A branch that he took from the forest's most beautiful tree and transformed it... asking to trap in that the very life!

...A wind started springing from inside her...

The one, who asked for the imprisonment... and for the solitary flutter of its dreams.

...Her wings, this wind, was opening, but her antennae were uniting, as if for a moment only they agreed...

“I came for you, my little frame!” into her thoughts she spoke. “For you that no one respected. That you alone deserved me, but never asked for me!”

...

...It was a wind, that was passing through the wind... Through the glass sides, his chamber's walls, and his castle's walls.

That was uniting the creatures, reaching up to a tree, into some hidden forest clearing, and was changing the flow of the river, drawing it — it also...— close to her.

Wide open it was sustaining her small, weightless wings.

The sun was iridescent in them in all of her colours. The colours of an empty sky... Her world didn't have anything to

say. But the time had come for her, to do this king a final favor...

So, she turned towards him.

He stood facing her. Sky and sea, were meeting and disappearing, upon a single flutter of her wings... Forests there were hiding, in her silence only...

And he, who for years was searching for an answer only coming out of her, one moment only remained before acquiring it.

“I am very sorry...” she said to him and tilted away from him the cloudiness of her eyes.

Why?

“I’m sorry...”

...It was only a moment!

Away from him everything laid, for only a moment.

“But this frame that you made for me,
Will never tie down its wings —

And this —

This castle that you built some day,

Its only You that it had ever shut in.”

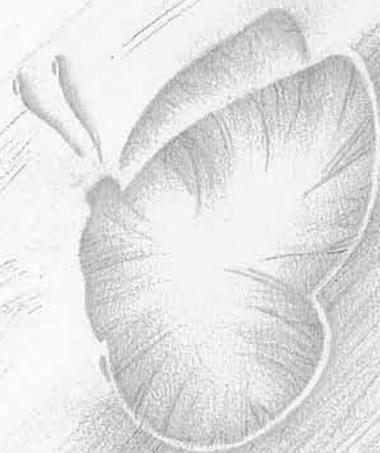
...

Laughter temporarily, into that chamber was heard. And, as it became a scream, everywhere around it spread, whirling into the corridors of his castle.

A scream, that didn’t recall a forest’s creature...

...Almost at the same time, a glass vase would shatter, on the shining silence of an unfitting frame...

Without an explanation and without sorrow, along with a butterfly’s small body, broken pieces, helplessly falling on the ground...



* * *

He had united the palms of his hands and was holding her. Like rain's precious water.

...That still he didn't ask of it, a single drop... He wanted there, far, everywhere, from everyone and everything, to protect her.

No one, never... never to touch her.

The small butterfly was looking at her torn wings...

So many fragments had hit them. But it wouldn't be sorrow, whatever she was feeling. Only a fathomless and undivided silence... However, her small frame, her glass vase, had now been broken. And the king was there, by her side, saying nothing.

He had simply kneeled and was holding her. He was holding her in his hands and had his eyes shut. Thoughts erased, to ask not what he had done.

To ask not how he could have...

"...Ask me for whatever you wish..." he only said to her.

"For whatever you wish..." and the sounds ceased in the big chamber.

...

She stayed silent.

...Sounds, like a fading, like a diminishing noise...

She didn't want anything, in truth. And these wings, she

asked herself, why indeed had she once wished for them?
...But the king still couldn't... And he was still waiting, on
some answer of hers.

She remembered the loneliness. Her days —her endless
days— in a glass vase. She remembered her past wings...
Those that used to hold the sun.

The king, she remembered, when he first started out.

“...If I asked you to kill me...”, she meaninglessly won-
dered, “...would you do so?”

He got upset! His body shivered again, as it had once done.
“No...”, he answered frightened. “Never...”

The small butterfly closed her eyes for a while.
“How strange...” foolishly she whispered. “...Because you
did it, years ago...”

“Leave”, she then told him.

“Let go of your castle and come with me...”

It was a shining... A carefree day it was...

The king looked at her deeply. Into her eyes, who knows
what he was searching for... “Don't”, he pleaded with her.
“Don't ask me that, understand me...”

“This castle is my entire life...”

She bent her head. No, no, she wanted to say nothing.

“...This castle hides death”, bent she said.

“You can forever refuse to see it... But inside it you know
that you can never know life.”

...He stayed there; silent, so silent and long forgotten... A
motionless, a minimal figure in an empty chamber.

And then he slowly rose... Carefully holding his hands unit-
ed. He walked to the open window. That unchanged edge of
his tower. Until he stopped at the broad sill.

Over the beautiful, the seductive colours of his castle.

“Wait for me”, he said to her.

“Wait for me at the walls, and I will come...” “Can you...”

“Can you still fly?”

...She turned again to look at him.

“Let us leave together”, she entreated him. “I am tired...”

“Before I come...”

“I have something last, to take with me.”

He beckoned to her hearteningly...

He stretched his hands outside the window.

“...My small butterfly...”

“Go.”

“...Go...”

Her every move, was hurting so...

As she was slowly stirring to his fingers' edges. And when with difficulty she rose inside of them. Wings offered, to a wind's breath... Leaving behind closing fingers...

Closing, while she was leaving, on only sky.

...He didn't stay long to look at her. Calmly he returned to the interior of his large chamber...

His look wandered around him for a moment. A moment more.

Before a random torch he took from his wall. Afore he walked towards the floor's opening.

And before, following the traces of his stairs, quickly he disappeared towards adjoining storeys.

...Yet neither on these floors would he delay. Even though for days on them, he used to spend his days. His pace he would now open and simply he would pass.

Lighting only a torch on his entire way.

Heavy iron doors he'd open by the light of its flame.

Narrow steps he would discern that one by one were waking.

Until he'd touch his castle's neglected depths... Depths that only darkness reached and covered.

...In its unstable, dim glow facing...

So much power, kept so well, for battles never given...

...

...The time was short, yet lengthily it seemed to have passed. As if another time was passing by. Quick movements, that seemed slow.

A last time that he looked back...

A last moment that he paused...

And the time would come, that he'd have to go.

* * *

...Time was passing...

Time was passing, and he wasn't coming...

She had let herself softly on the top of the wall. Even though she earlier thought, she wouldn't make it up to there.

She stayed motionless, so as to barely breathe.

And then she turned to face the castle.

Before her, its large tower was rising... Unreachable, it was surrendering to the light.

Near its base, the gate and its precious gardens.

...At that gate she was expecting him to appear. That somewhere she would see him, she was waiting, in these gardens... To walk. She looked more carefully. To cross them. She was always looking.

But the hour was passing...

...The road, she thought, he'd find, that would lead to her...

But time went by.
Went simply by.
And he wouldn't come.

...

...And it was a faint motion she saw then in his castle. When she was not waiting any more for him to reappear... He was peacefully standing again in his familiar place. A figure inexpressive, unconcerned... having all.

An unharmed... unshakable figure; forgetting all...

High, up in the largest, most beloved tower.
Untroubled — right before the open window.

...Towards her as if looking, and she, looking at him...

* * *

...She only turned her eyes and her body, towards the forest's side. She didn't want anything else to see.

She didn't want anything else to think of, but the forest...

The forest that spread in front of her... Like back then when it graced her with colours. And that it was telling her to fly away... She still had, even so, her small wings. Weren't they indeed, all she had once wished for?

...Behind her...

...The clouds she looked at smiling, over her that were sliding and leaving...

...Behind her, her little frame had broken into pieces...

It would have crossed his world, but he wouldn't possess it. Without ever trapping wings, forever it would have shone and disappeared...

That castle was behind her. A castle, meant to become an exitless prison.

And he...

Who had wished together with her to share it. Who first asked to wrap her up, tightly, in his binds... No!

Who didn't offer her... He, who never did know; and offered her nothing else, but pain alone and death. No.

A last time she would look back.

A last moment only she would pause...

The forest's breeze was reaching near her. But how could she find — which sense to bear... She'd open again her small wings...

And simply she would return to the sky's body.

* * *

...She was above his full-bloomed gardens,

And in the seas of his eyes she was emerging
When the explosion took place...

Then when his castle; the entire forest perhaps; from its
depth was shaken.

As if, how little, what had changed indeed?
...That who could understand?

As if no more powers were upholding... walls unsound; as
she saw his tallest tower lowering...

Be slowly torn apart by an unknown cause.

...And the open window falling, with him left in its center...

When —almost at the same instant— the wind she felt,
burning hot, hitting her body. Enwrapping tightly her wound-
ed wings...

And sweeping her, in a moment of rejection untold in
time, Far...

...Away from the gardens.

...And from the walls of his castle.

Away...

Away from the ending.

...And from the beginning of his world...



* * *

It is morning, and the sun, warm, is dressing in light the green forest. Flowers in so many colours, are blooming amidst bushes and loaded foliage, while the wind brushingly is passing sweetening tree shadows.

In the small clearing blue flowers — like lakes of coolness— are scattering around them transparent scents.

...Soon, the soil gives way to caves, and to rocks that continuously rise, before they face the view of another valley. Flowers again, similar foliage, moved by an inexplicable attraction, anew they head for the temporary horizon.

Some river flows in an identical rhythm travelling some way that it will never know.

But away... Away from the river and from the clearings, in the forest's distant center..

Away from trees' seas having died down in the tranquility of a hill, something seems to have changed the previous day.

...

The dust that suddenly rose there, returned softly to the earth where it was born. Slowly revealing the walls again, standing without reason to remind...

Before they perish in the passing of time.

Amidst them the castle that once was, is no more discernible. By the reverse game, of which logic was it sunk?

Unfolding images of dilution at the same time; fog's threads, from fainting flames... After first having held in their lithe body, floors' ruins, worn-out frames and wings remaining further away.

Leaning on the most distinct flowers' beauty, tower's remembrances that once stood united.

...And the stones thus rolled to unfading gardens... Gardens, alas, that may not blossom any more.

Those butterflies that surrounded them, now aren't there. Far they were all thrown at the moment of the explosion. Some among them, winds' drift they'll follow; Even though their wings adorned this castle, they will forget themselves in the forest... As they had easily the forest forgotten, so as to stand there.

And some, before it gets dark they will return. As they first did seeking again what, strangely, never has been found.

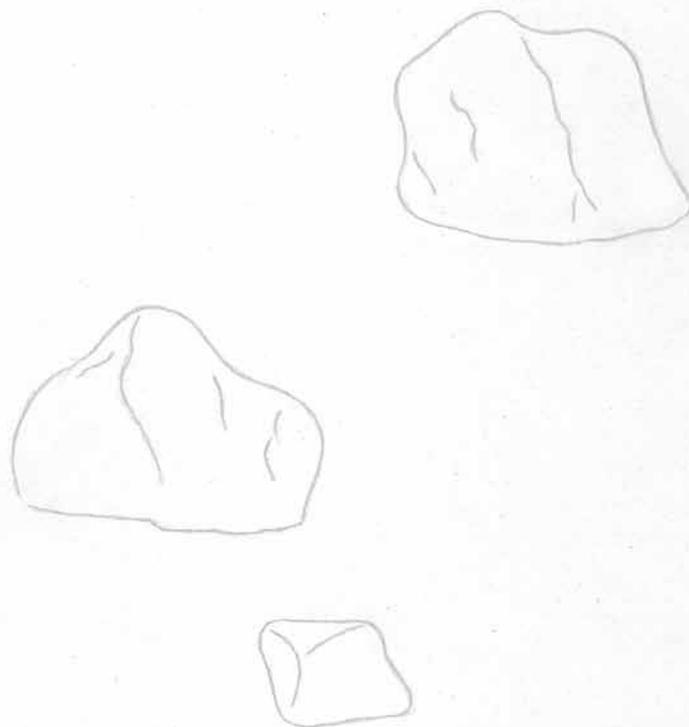
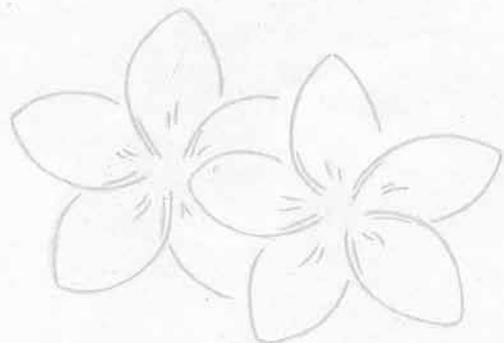
Until a spring some day will come... That on earth will spread intact its reunited carpet... And other images will surface. Before fading away.

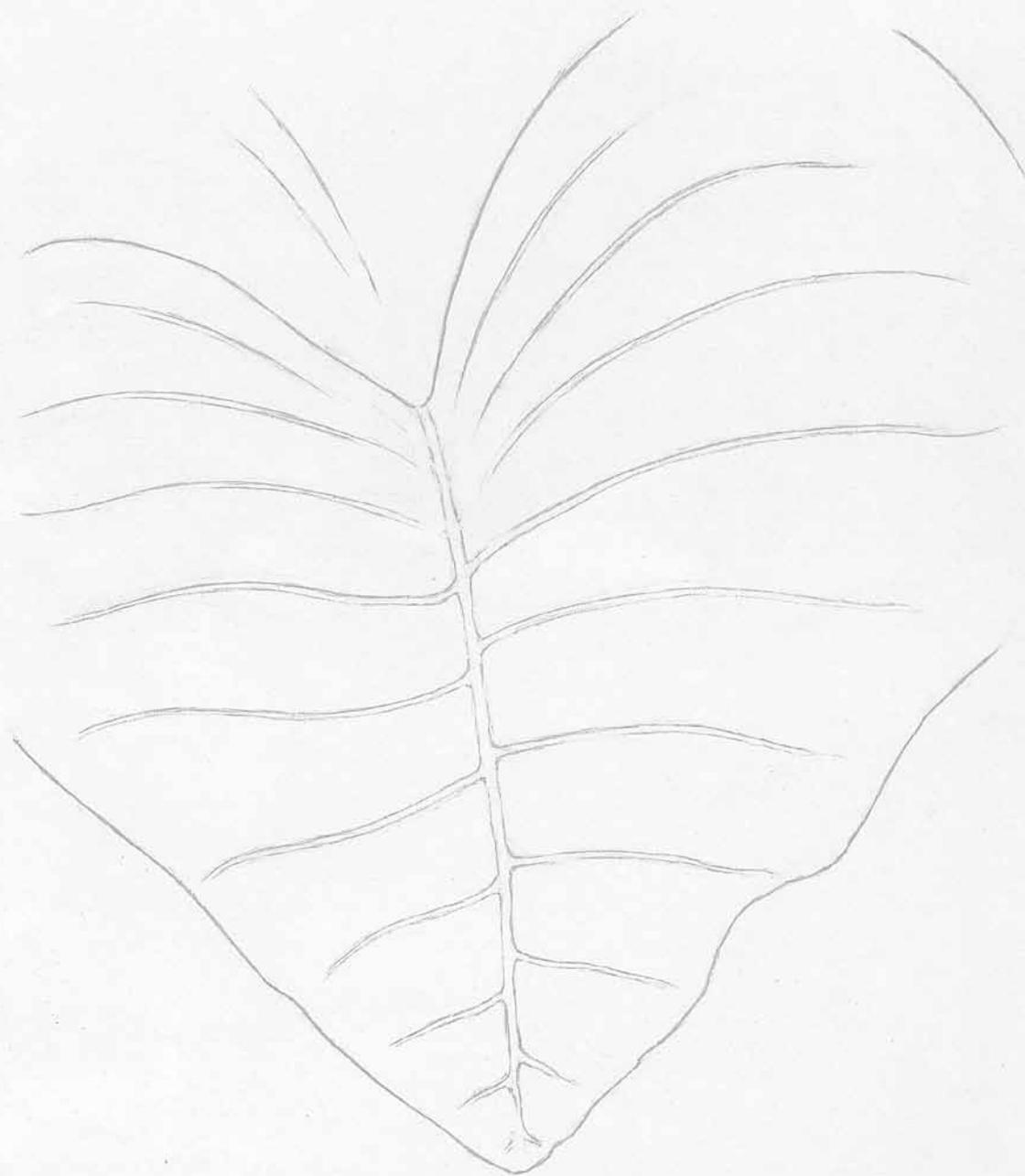
...Only one... one small butterfly, has yet remained.
Somewhere over there; in his walls' center. So small... she has nothing to do. Desolation everywhere. Smoke only...
Nor has she anything to say... Silence everywhere.

...She only flies.
She flies for the dead king...

Transparent strips hang in her abraded dreams.
But even so, they were
and always will be warmer
...than the warm sky's blue.

...Each of their colour deeper...
than the deep
oceans' colour.





It's late...

And now have passed thousands of years.

...No one knows what became of the small blue butterfly...
Simply, some said, she died by the next winter.

Others said that she lives forever in the clearings with the blue flowers, or that she still faintly flies over sun-shaped blossoms... Others again, claimed that some killed her a long time ago. That they saw her wings gracing, the strangest of their homes' frames...

But these last ones, I can not believe.

Some that contemplated deeply, and, thus, assert the truth for themselves, say she faded away, yet her wings travel in the wind; searching for the body they might find some day that will make them its own.

Finally, it is said for the blue butterfly that she didn't set, she only let herself softly on the edges of an ancient tree... Or that she weaved in some way her cocoon again, if on some other day she may be born to start once more from the beginning.

...

...I know not any more. They may all be right. They may

be simply, all mistaken.

Yet, I think, I still remember for a little longer that this small butterfly once fluttered... Even if I learned nothing to say about her very birth. Even if the details I did not retain of the forest in which she wandered. Nor the exact name of the castle she demolished.

...But if some should say that it was all a matter of chance, I do recall something myself that should have taken place.

And in spite of the fact that I know that none of you care — apart perhaps from some kings— it is, let's say, a matter of time before she reappears.

Wherever you wish...

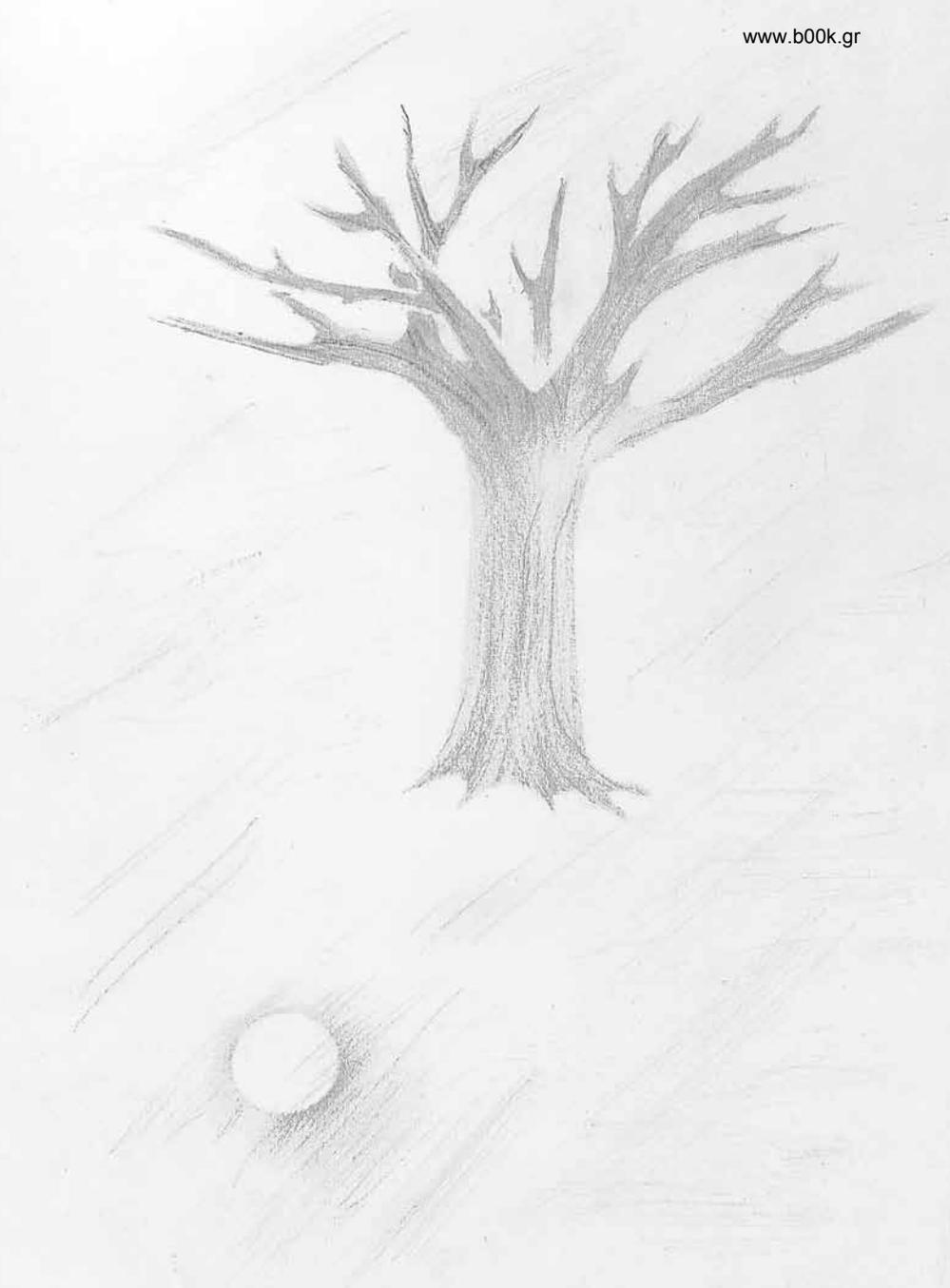
Whether at some forest's ancient tree. Whether, —I do hope— in some nymphs that will say they will become butterflies...

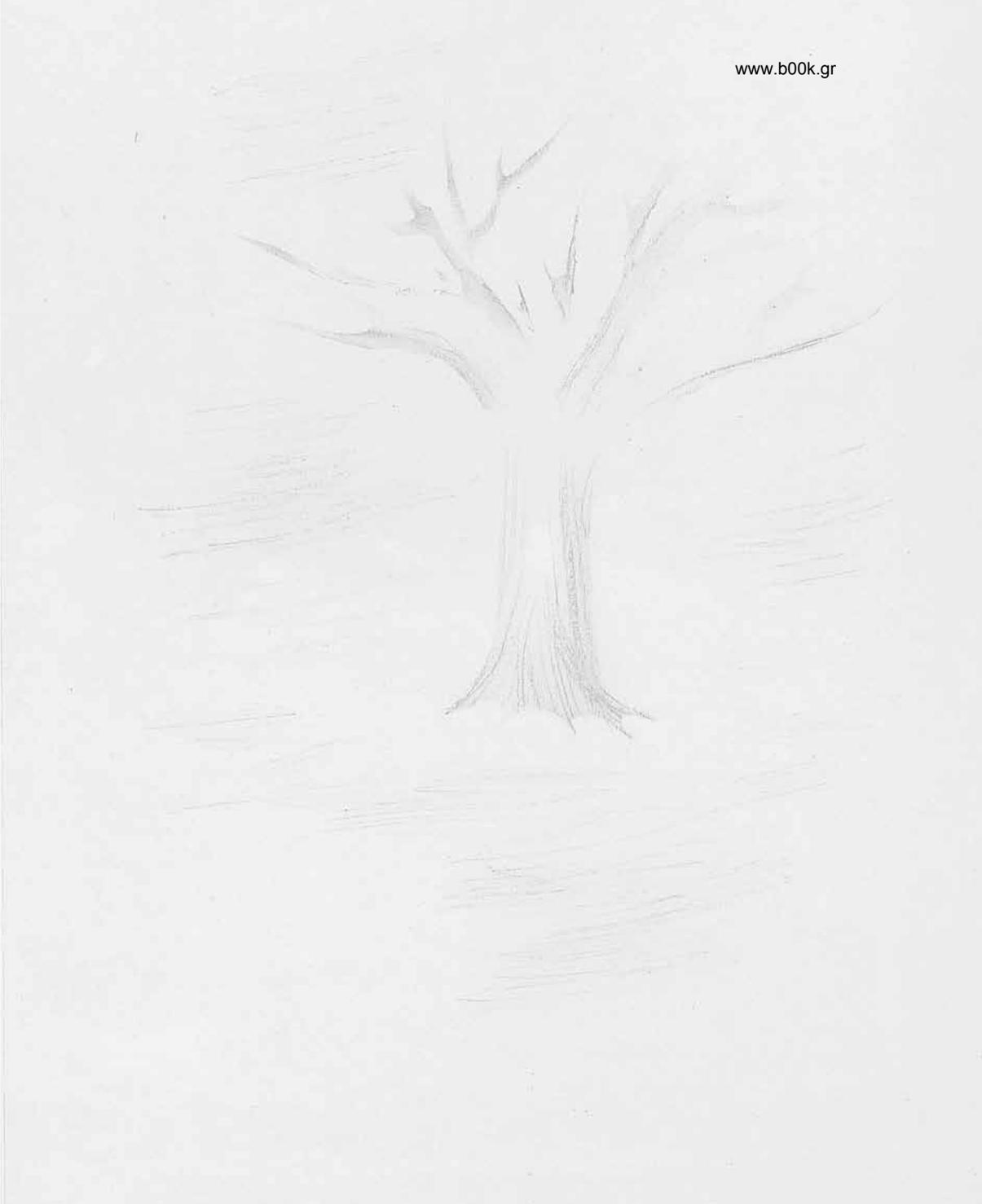
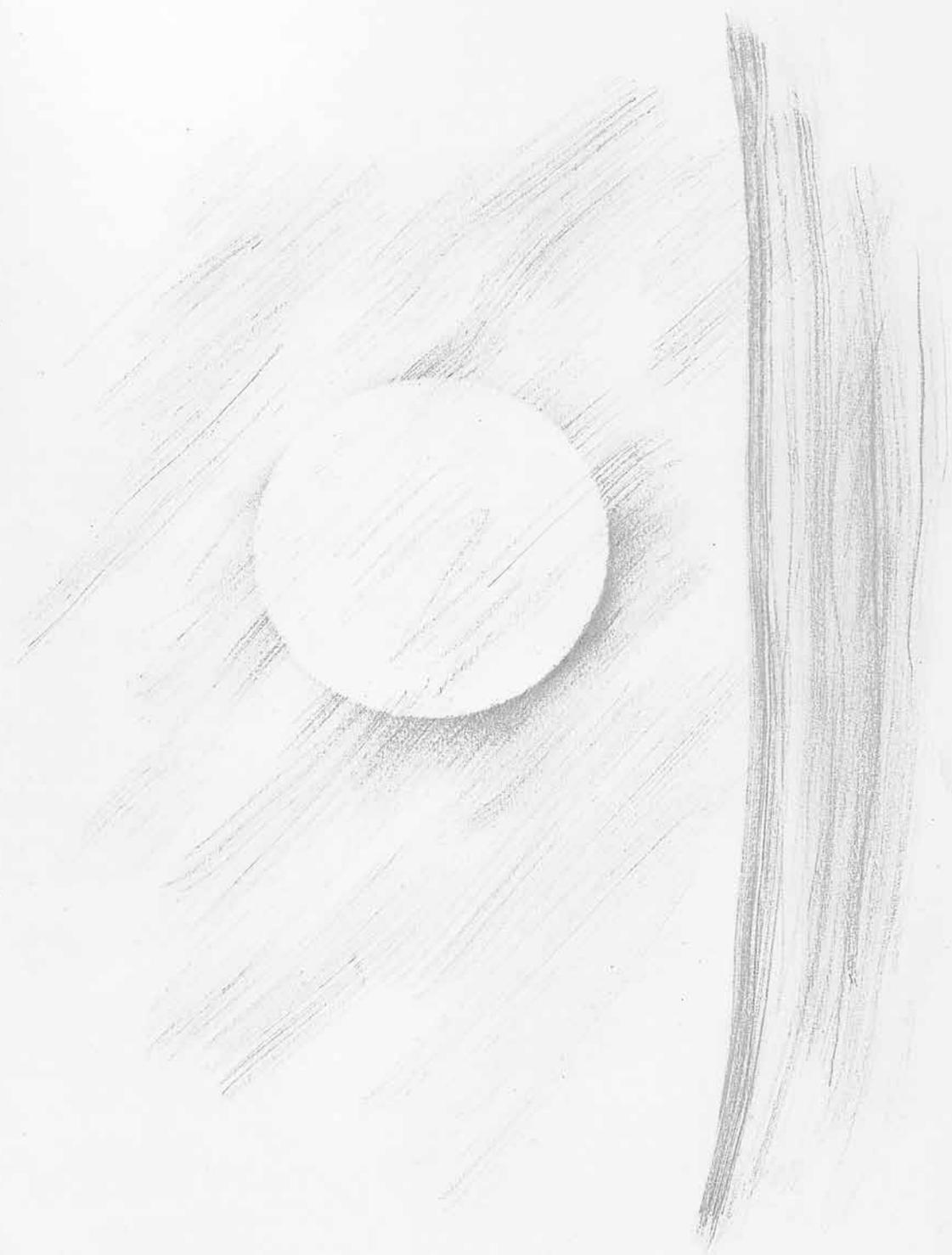
Whenever you wish.

Till then...

Till the moment to tear apart, our paper cocoon...

Good night.







...from the pages
of some non-existent book...