

# Butterfly Kisses

BY CORRINE BOYCE



I arrived to work only to find out that it was my turn to float to the long term care unit. I'll admit I wasn't exactly pleased about this. After all that part of the nursing home reeked with stagnate air filled with odors from the residents. The staff nurse informed me that I would be the nurse taking assessments on the residents; something the float nurse typically does not do. I agreed and reviewed my assignment.

I looked at the clock, it wasn't moving any faster, just like the last shift. I went to a patients roomed named Sophia. According to my assignment she was listed as a hospice patient. I arrived to her room to find family visiting. My stomach dropped with just the thought of the type of questions Sophia's family might ask. I knew nothing about this woman and now I was her advocate for all aspects of her life, at least for the remainder of my shift.

Sophia's hair was white as snow. Her body was frail and thin, with little evidence of life. She couldn't move nor talk. She responded to my commands with blinking her eyes. Her daughter was among the family members visiting. She explained that her and her brothers all came from out of town to say their goodbyes. "She just won't let go... I don't understand." said her daughter. "When it's time for her to go home, she'll go" I replied. Sophia's family left and I assured them I would call with any updates.

Sophia's room was decorated with trinkets from her passed. Next to her crystal crucifix stood her wedding picture. The only thing that was still the same about the woman in the picture and the woman in the bed was the sparkle in her bright blue eyes. Next to her bed laid a devotional booklet. I sat beside Sophia and turned to a random page. I began reading to her about the shining lights that God places in our life at the precise moment we need it. It spoke about God letting us know that Heaven is beautiful and he tells us through our fellow brothers and sisters. I closed the book and spoke softly to Sophia, "You get to go to Heaven and see just how beautiful it is, you are very lucky, you get to meet Jesus soon." I sat in a moment of silence with Sophia and continued, "When you get to Heaven I want you to come back and visit me as a butterfly to tell me just how beautiful Heaven is." I leaned over and gave her a kiss on her forehead. Sophia blinked her eyes twice for a yes.

Two weeks later I was at a birthday party. It was afternoon in early August and the air was filled with laughter from children and the sweet aroma of barbeque. A commotion began and the children swarmed a man holding an empty cake container. As I got closer I noticed inside the container was a butterfly. It was an enormous black and white, wild butterfly. The excitement lasted only for a moment and then the children continued on with running and laughing together. I noticed the butterfly still in the container, stuck with no way out. I walked over and lifted the top of the container to free this magnificent wild creature. What happened next surprised me, instead of flying free from its captivity; the butterfly remained in the container. I got closer for a better look thinking perhaps it was injured. I reached my forefinger out and lifted the butterfly onto it. It sat on my finger, with its wings gracefully moving back and forth. It just stared at me, right into my eyes, and in that moment I knew it was Sophia. That moment I felt beyond this world and holiness surrounded me like a million butterflies. Then, as fast as she came to me, she flew away, back to her eternal home.

I worked the following day. I was on my floor and a staff member from Sophia's unit came to me asking to review something in the patient's chart, the one I just happened to have. Recalling the events from the day previous, I asked "How is Sophia doing?" The woman stopped what she was doing, looked me into the eyes and said, "Sophia passed away yesterday afternoon."