



The Butterfly by Patricia Polacco (Part 1)

It was unusually bright that night outside of Monique's small bedroom window in *Choisy-le Roi*, just outside of Paris. The moon was so radiant, it seemed almost festive. As Monique gazed up at it, she thought that the moon must not know that her village was occupied by Nazi troops. All of France was, for that matter. There was a terrible war raging in what, to Monique, seemed like most of the world.

But this night the moon seemed not to care. She pulled Pinouff, her cat, up next to her and hugged and kissed her goodnight, then drifted off to sleep.

Monique didn't quite know why she woke up, but suddenly she saw a ghostly little figure sitting just next to the window on the end of her bed. A girl about her own age. She was petting Pinouff.

"Who are you?" Monique whispered.

The ghost child wheeled and looked with sad eyes that seemed frightened, then spun and ran from the bedroom.

The next morning at breakfast, Monique could hardly wait to talk to her mother about the ghost, but her mother seemed almost angry. It wasn't like Marcelle Solliliage to be angry at anyone. "It was only a dream, child; do you hear! Only a dream. Now go to school. God knows how much longer you will have the privilege of going to school with the war..." Her mother's voice trailed off.

Monique couldn't wait to get to school so that she could tell her best friend, Denise, about the ghost. Since Monique was an only child, Denise was like a sister to her.

On their way home from school that afternoon, Denise asked Monique, "What did this ghost look like?"

"She was dark, and had very sad eyes...", Monique answered. "Weren't you very, very frightened?" Denise asked her.

"At first, yes, but the longer I looked at her, a feeling came over me. A feeling of fear for her," Monique answered.

They stopped and peered into the front window of Monsieur Marks' candy shop. He waved them in as he always did. He loved children in the

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neighborhood and always had small bits of brightly wrapped candies for them in his apron pocket.

As the girls entered the store, they saw that most of the jars that used to be filled with every kind of candy and confection were empty. The war.

But Monsieur Marks had saved something for them! "For you, little Monique," Monsieur Marks cooed as he dropped a bright dot of sweetness into her hand. "And one for you, ma petite," he said as the beautifully wrapped confection rolled into Denise's waiting hands.

Monique and Denise unwrapped their candies and popped them into their mouths. But as they were walking away from the store, they suddenly saw tall boots coming toward them up the hill.

The tall shining boots of marching Nazi soldiers. Their heels clicked like gunshots along the cobblestone path. People froze and tried not to look at the soldiers. The girls wanted to run, but knew better. They had learned to chat and laugh as if they had no cares in the world.

"Are they looking at us?" Monique asked breathlessly when they had gotten a distance away.

Denise looked back. "No, they're still marching."

Then they heard loud yelling and glass breaking. They both wheeled and looked. To their horror they saw Monsieur Marks being dragged from his shop by the Nazi soldiers.

"Schwein...Judenschwein," they heard the Nazis shout as they pushed Monsieur Marks to the ground. They watched the Nazis kick him hard in the ribs with those tall black boots. Monique covered her mouth to hold back a scream. Then a car drove up, and the Nazis threw Monsieur Marks into the back of it.

Don't look for too long, Monique!" Denise warned. "If we do, they'll come for us next."

The girls were both sobbing by the time they ran up *Rue du Bennard* to Monique's mother's house. They knew it had happened before during these years of the occupation, but never had they seen it. And to Monsieur Marks!

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"Why...why, *Maman*, did they do that to Monsieur Marks?" Monique choked through sobs.

"The Nazis hate people like Monsieur Marks, *ma cherie*. It is so pointless and cruel..." Her voice faded to a whisper.

"What do you mean, people like Monsieur Marks, Maman?" Monique asked again.

"You know, Monique," her mother answered. "Jews."

"But Monsieur Marks is a Frenchman!" Denise said.

Marcelle hugged them both. "The Nazis can't be here forever, my sweet children. Mother France has been here for centuries; they, for a short, terrible time." Marcelle had tears in her eyes.

"Now I'll fix you some soothing tea. Monsieur Marks would not want either of you to worry or be so sad."

"Madame," a voice called from the front door. It was Pere Voulliard, their priest from *St. Germain des Pres*. He rushed in. "Have you heard what happened to Monsieur Marks?"

Marcelle motioned to him to come into the other room, and they closed the door. Monique was used to her mother having hushed conversations in the living room, especially since the war.

To be continued. . .