



**The Butterfly** by Patricia Polacco (Part 2)

Many nights passed and Monique didn't see the little ghost again. But late one night Monique awoke with a start to see the ghost sitting on the window seat. This time it was holding Pinouff. Monique thought, "This is no dream, I can hear Pinouff purring."

"I see you there," Monique whispered.

The little ghost sprang to her feet, but Monique stopped her from running away this time.

"Don't be afraid, it's all right for you to be here!"

The little ghost with sad eyes sat down and said nothing.

"What is your name? Where do you come from?" Monique asked.

The girl just sat for the longest time, holding on tightly to Pinouff.

"I once had a cat just like this one," she finally said.

"Her name is Pinouff. What is yours?" Monique sat down by her.

"My name is Sevrine...Sevrine."

"Where do you live?" Monique whispered.

"I have lived in many places since the war," the ghostly Sevrine answered.

"Where do you live now? Your parents must miss you, especially in the middle of the night like this."

The girl didn't answer.

"Where do you live?" Monique insisted.

"Here!" Sevrine finally said.

"Here?" Monique said with such surprise and so loudly that it might have awakened the whole neighborhood! "But I live here!"

Sevrine motioned Monique to follow her. They both tiptoed down the stairs and crept into the day room. There Monique saw the rug pulled back and what looked like a door in the floor.

Sevrine pulled up the door, and they both climbed down a very narrow set of stairs into a part of the cellar that Monique didn't even know existed. The walls were scraped clean, and there was a small table with a tiny tray and supper dishes on it. Monique could see another small room with cots. It looked like people were sleeping on them.

"My mother and father and I have been here for a very long time," Sevrine whispered. "We are being hunted by the Nazis, you know. We are Jews. There are many of us hiding all over France."

"But how have you stayed here without my *maman* knowing?"

"Oh... you mean Madame Solliliage? She knows! We aren't the only ones that she has helped."

How could this have been happening in her own home, and her mother never said a word to her about it?

"Your mother made me promise that I would never come to your room again while you were there!"

"Why? I don't understand!"

"It puts you in great danger to know about me. She is protecting you!"

Monique started to say more, but it sounded like footsteps echoing upstairs. Could Marcelle have heard them?

"*Vite, vite*, Monique!" Sevrine pushed her up out of the hidden room.

"But when will I see you again?" Monique whispered as the door closed over the top of her new friend.

The next morning at breakfast Monique didn't know what to say to her mother. Somehow her mother seemed mysterious, but she chatted to Monique cheerfully, as always. "Go to your garden, my sweet child, and cut some of your beautiful flowers for our table, won't you?"

Monique skipped out of the kitchen doors into her garden with Pinouff trotting after her.

Pinouff was playing with the petals of the flowers as Monique cut them and put them into the basket. Then, all at once, the cat crouched and made herself flat against the ground; her eyes were ablaze. Then Monique saw

why. A *papillon*, a butterfly, fluttered from flower to flower. As it landed on a bright blue iris near the wall, Monique gathered Pinouff into her lap.

"No, *ma petite*, just look. See how beautiful?" They both sat quietly as they watched the butterfly together.

Suddenly the air grew still and heavy. The birds in the garden stopped singing. Pinouff hid herself in the folds of Monique's apron. Monique looked over the wall and saw tall shiny boots. Her heart leapt in her chest. Three Nazi soldiers glared at her. One reached over the wall and took the butterfly in his leather-covered fist. "*Joli, n'est-ce pas?*" He grinned at Monique, then squeezed his fist. The other tall boots laughed. They mumbled something and walked away.

"*Maman, Maman* Tall boots!" Monique shrieked as she ran into the house and blurted out what had happened in the garden.

"Those monsters!" her mother grumbled as she held her child as close as she could.

"Mama," Monique finally sobbed, "did they do to Monsieur Marks what they did to the butterfly?" Her mother did not answer. She rocked Monique gently and stared out of the window.

But Monique had her answer. Now she understood the sadness in Sevrine's eyes. The fear that was in the eyes of her neighbors and friends whenever the Nazi soldiers came close. She knew now she had to protect her friend. At all costs she had to keep the secret that lived in her basement.

*To be continued. . .*