

THE BUTTERFLY

Written by

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EXT. COUNTRYSIDE BACKYARD - JANCZEWO, POLAND, 1942 -  
AFTERNOON

FADE IN:

A jet black Volkswagen Beetle resides in the long driveway of  
a rural ranch white house.

Farm land.

Their neighbor- the coastline of the Baltic Sea.

Explosions heard in the distance. The water's ripples are in  
sync with each explosion. The fall foliage is in full effect.

Red leaves, yellow leaves, orange. Beautiful, ostentatious  
autumn scene.

BARN.

The entrance sign reads "WYRZYKOWSKA FAMILY"

YELLOW BUTTERFLY on the grass, still.

The butterfly's wings flap.

A young 6-year-old, LILLY is wearing a yellow star pinned on  
her left chest. The star matches her golden blonde perfect  
little curls. Her yellow patch sticks out on her short brown  
dress. Lilly plays with the butterfly, carefully.

The butterfly flies, Lilly follows it. Smiling, Lilly runs  
around the yard with the butterfly.

The golden-yellow butterfly, TIVKA, is like the sunshine.

INT. HOUSE/ KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Lilly's GRANDFATHER, FRANK, 55-years-old walks in the back  
door frantically. Dressed in his black wool suit. He is  
returning from work as he places his briefcase on the table.

Timidly, he glares at Lilly's MOTHER, ADINA, 30-years-old.  
Her apron is dirty, she has been cleaning the house. Her  
short brown hair is tied back. She watches Lilly through the  
window.

She seems tired.

Now, concerned.

FRANK

My Adina, it would be too risky going into the city even one more day. The bombs- they're getting closer. Our best chance of surviving is going into hiding tonight. The shelter has been set up for weeks. It is time, Adina.

ADINA

Antonina is still on board? So, tonight is definitely a go.

FRANK

Antonina knew she was putting herself at risk two months ago when she invited us in her non-jewish home. There is still love and goodness in the world, we found it, and we will forever be grateful for her mitzvah.

Wiping a tear away, Adina hugs her father.

She walks out of the house with a Mason Jar.

LILLY

Mama, look!

Adina catches the butterfly with the Mason Jar and her hand, gingerly.

ADINA

Let's go inside now honey. We can bring your new friend, too.

LILLY

Her name is Tivka.

ADINA

Let's play Hide and Seek with Tivka. It's time to go inside.

LILLY

I love Tivka. She is mine. I will take care of her.

ADINA

And I will take care of you.

Adina hugs Lilly and swings her around.

On their way into the house, Lilly pulls bright green grass out from the ground. She places the carefully picked out pieces in the jar.

Adina takes a few bright orange and scarlet autumn leaves from the tree, and places them in there as well.

Tivka is fed.

INT. BARN - SUNSET

ANTONINA, 75-years-old, and Frank welcome them at the double doors. Antonina is old, brittle, kind, and looks strikingly German. Her light blondish-white hair, blue clear eyes, all match with her light skin.

Frank kisses Lilly on her forehead.

FRANK

Lilly, my angel, you remember the rules for Hide and Seek, right?

ANTONINA

Lilly, sweetheart, I can never find you. You know that.

Lilly nods. She becomes sad.

A tear falls from Adina's eye, slowly.

She wipes it before Lilly can see.

ADINA

Lilly, honey, we have been preparing for a long game of Hide and Seek.

LILLY

It is time to play isn't it?

ADINA

It's time.

Antonina, Frank, and Adina move some hay around. A small door appears.

Antonina opens the door and a small dirt box shaped room is underneath.

Blankets, bottled water, canned food, and books.

Frank jumps down into their new home.

Adina follows suit.

Lilly clenches onto her butterfly, afraid.

ADINA (CONT'D)

It is okay, Lilly. If we stay in here nothing will happen to us.

LILLY

Mama, I'm scared.

ADINA

Be brave, for Tivka.

LILLY

For Tivka.

Adina reaches her arms out for Lilly.

Lilly sits on the ledge and slides into her mother's arms.

ANTONINA

Frank, you know the knocks. You will see when it is dark through that crack. Each morning, at precisely 3:00am I will bring clean water. Everything else should last as long as possible. Stay in here, and you will be safe. You have my word. Stay silent. Lots of love my Jewish family.

Frank reaches for her hand.

He places three yellow Stars of David in Antonina's palm.

Antonina blows a kiss and closes the trap door.

Antonina brushes the hay over the door to conceal it again.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE BACKYARD - NIGHTTIME

Antonina takes the barn's silver tin garbage can outside with a match.

She places the three yellow patches in the can and lights a match.

The pail burns all night.

INT. HIDING PLACE - NIGHTTIME

The space is the size of a small coat closet. It fits the three of them, uncomfortably.

Lilly sits on her grandfathers lap. Tears fall from her eyes. Her cry is silent.

She looks around the room.

The dirt room is a makeshift basement. The blankets cover the floor. Canned food and buckets of water pile up in the corner. The necessities residing with them are minimal.

FRANK

Lilly, my angel. This is our little home within our home. We can make it our own. Draw pictures. Play with Tivka. But, our one and only rule in our new home is silence. We must at all times be the best hidiers of all time. The seekers cannot find us. Lilly, if we are the best hidiers we can be, they will not find us.

Lilly whispers to her butterfly.

LILLY

Did you hear that Tivka? Shhhh.

Lilly cradled Tivka's jar as her eyes slowly shut. While Frank stroked her hair, a smiled slipped from his face.

Adina whispered.

ADINA

Dad, what is it?

FRANK

We survived one day. Smile.

Adina looked around her, and then at Lilly with her butterfly. She forced a smile for her father.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE BACKYARD - 3 A.M.

Frank hears the signature triple tap by the peep hole to the backyard. He perks up in fear.

Antonina is there, smiling. She is clenching a loaf of chocolate chip banana bread.

ANTONINA

Your body will adjust. It is 3am. I have a present for Lilly, for doing as she is told. Enjoy. We made it through the day.

FRANK

The transition was smooth. Tears were minimal. If we stay focused we should be okay. You're a modern-day saint, my Antonina.

ANTONINA

Lots of love to my Jewish family.

Frank hears her blow a kiss. The exchange was short, but just what he needed for reassurance himself.

All was good.

It was just a matter of time.

Sun rises.

Lilly puts her boney hand in the jar and Tivka rests on her human mother's dainty finger.

Sun sets.

Lilly cradles Tivka to sleep.

Sun rises.

Lilly and Frank sit cozy and read silently. Frank smiles. Lilly grins to her grandfather back.

Sun sets.

Adina and Frank meet Antonina at the peep hole. The water is replenished. Antonina's demeanor is not as warm.

FRANK

What is happening?

ANTONINA

They're getting closer. Much closer. Families down the coast have already fled.

ADINA

I am coming up. I will make arrangements. You have sacrificed enough, Antonina.

FRANK

No, I will go. You're my little girl. And, you need to care for your little girl.

ADINA

Don't. That is not the plan. You know the plan. I will be okay.

FRANK

For Lilly.

ADINA

For Lilly.

Adina kisses her sleeping little girl on the forehead. A tear falls from her eye and lands on Lilly's face.

Lilly wakes up.

LILLY

Where are you going Mama? Why are you crying?

FRANK

We are following our plan, my angel. We are winning Hide and Seek.

LILLY

Mama, you have to win too.

Lilly begins to weep. Adina hugs her one more time. Frank grabs Lilly's hand.

Adina departs.

Lilly whispers.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Mama, I love you. Goodbye.

Even 6-year-old innocent, naive Lilly knew that would be the last time she would see her mother. Memorizing each detail, the tears are continuous.

Antonina blows a kiss.

ANTONINA

Lots of love, my Jewish family.

Antonina wipes the tears away from her eyes.

The next morning Frank hears screams, Adina's scream.

Did the Nazis find Antonina and Adina? Frank listens.

Shouting. In German.

The Nazis found Antonina and Adina.

Frank takes out a book from his left back pant's pocket.

A Bible. A Sidur.

Frank prays silently for his daughter and guardian, and cries, silently. Lilly sleeps naively, innocently. Frank prays damaged, torn.

Sun rises.

Lilly and Frank spend time with Tivka. Watching her eat the last of the autumn leaves. They let her out of the jar and flap around the bunker.

Frank watches Lilly.

Lilly smiles playing with her friend.

A smile slips from Frank's face as he watches his only family left, enjoy the little things life offers.

Sun sets.

Frank waits for the silence. The silence he knew weeks ago. The silence that meant everything was safe outside.

When the silence came back, he knew they could leave the barn and enter Antonina's home.

The plan.

FRANK

Lilly, my angel, the day has come.  
We are on our way to winning the  
ultimate game of Hide and Seek.  
Now, is the most important part. We  
are leaving here, and going into  
Antonina's home.

LILLY

Are we hiding there now?

FRANK

We are leaving Poland. We are the  
best hidiers. They will never find  
us.

LILLY  
Tivka can come too, right?

FRANK  
We wouldn't be complete if she  
didn't.

Frank opens the trap door. Hay falls on his boney head. He see the sunlight. He squints. Almost fainting.

To himself.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Stay strong. For Lilly.

Frank lifts Lilly out of the bunker. Her reaction exactly the same. She sees the sunlight. She squints. Almost fainting.

Safely they're out of the bunker.

Frank and Lilly journey to the house.

The silence is still so silent.

Frank picks Lilly up. So, only his footsteps can barely be heard.

Each step is taken with such precision, like he is stepping on hot lava.

The fifty foot walk feels like a marathon.

It is so dark, he cannot see in front of him.

Lilly feels for the door knob, she places her grandfather's fingertips on it.

INT. HOUSE/ KITCHEN - 3:50 A.M.

They're safe.

Well, safely in the house.

Frank puts Lilly down, and motions for her to hide in the cabinet. He tacitly gives her a thumbs-up.

He smiles.

She holds up her butterfly in a jar.

She smiles.

Frank turns on the washing machine. The sun is about to rise. It is almost time for the "morning chores." He knows this will not seem out of the ordinary.

Frank moves the washing machine one foot to the left. The floor boards squeak.

A nail is loose.

Frank lifts the nail, and then the floor board. Taped to the back of the board is a folder.

Frank opens the folder.

A smile lights up his face.

The sun begins to rise.

Frank unloads the laundry.

Clean clothes.

He opens the cabinet.

Lilly is sleeping, soundly.

He kisses her forehead.

FRANK

Lilly, my angel, we are going to win. I can feel it in my bones. Today, we shower, put on clean clothes and head to America.

LILLY

AMERICA?

FRANK

The boat leaves at 4 P.M.

Frank's face is sincerely happy.

LILLY

But, but, but how?

Frank opens the folder. Inside are papers. Papers with "new identities" for Frank and Lilly. Papers that can bring them to America safely.

Frank's face lights up.

FRANK

All made with love by Antonina.

He smiles.

She smiles.

Lilly shakes Tivka's jar.

LILLY

Did you hear that Tivka? AMERICA.

FRANK

Now, you are Frieda. And I am  
Heinrich.

LILLY

Opa Heinrich.

FRANK

My brilliant angel. We are so close  
to winning.

JUMP CUT:

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Lilly washes up with excitement. As she dresses in her "new identity" she brushes her blonde curls with her fingers, and twirls them. The dress she puts on feels so clean.

She smiles.

JUMP CUT:

Frank straightens his tie, and picks up his briefcase.

He places it on the table, and opens it checking to make sure all the correct documents are present.

FRANK

Frieda, my angel, we can't be late  
for the boat?

LILLY

Coming Opa!

Frank goes into the cookie jar in the kitchen and picks up the keys.

JUMP CUT:

A jet black Volkswagen Beetle pulling out of the long driveway of a rural ranch white house.

Lilly is holding Tivka, she waves good-bye to her home.

FRANK

This is very important. We have to be our new identities from now on until I say so. No Jewish words, no Jewish gestures, *nothing*.

LILLY

Nothing.

EXT. BALTIC SEA PORT - MORNING

Frieda and Heinrich enter the line to the boat from the port. After a while the stoic, uniformed GERMAN INSPECTOR waves up them up.

GERMAN INSPECTOR

Papers.

Heinrich smoothly takes the papers out of his briefcase, and hands them to the inspector.

Frieda shows zero emotion. Her face: blank.

The German Inspector stares each of them down, with an extra keen eye. After reading each line of each document to a T, he cannot find an error.

There is no reason to keep them from entering the boat.

They gain access through the gate.

GERMAN INSPECTOR (CONT'D)

Wait. No animals. Insects too.

FRIEDA

She is yours now. Stay hopeful.

Heinrich looks at his granddaughter with utmost respect.

He smiles.

She smiles.

They enter through the gate

BOAT.

FRIEDA (CONT'D)

IT'S HUGE.

HEINRICH

America, here we come.

The boat is crowded. "Huddled masses".

Heinrich finds a corner of the boat to themselves. There is a bench for Frieda to rest her head.

Heinrich sits, and Frieda sits on his lap. She watches as hundreds enter the boat.

She motions to them.

FRIEDA  
More hiders?

HEINRICH  
Some, I'm sure.

The boat starts to pull away. The Polish coast is in the distance. Frieda and Heinrich wave good-bye to their old life, as they venture on to their new one. The coast gets smaller and smaller, and a sea of blue becomes their surroundings.

The blue fades to black.

Sun sets.

The temperature plummets.

Sun rises.

Frieda wakes up to a cold brisk wind. She is fully surrounded by water.

Heinrich's eyes open.

LILLY  
Lilly is scared and cold.

HEINRICH  
Frieda is tough.

FRIEDA  
Right. Frieda is tough.

Frieda's eyes close.

Sun rises.

Heinrich buys a blanket off another shipmate.

Frieda and he stay warm with their new layer.

Sun sets.

People chatter that they are half way there.

Frieda meets some other little *German* girls.

They play around the deck.

Sun sets.

FRIEDA (CONT'D)

Opa, some of the girls said there is going to be a gold lady at the port to greet us into AMERICA! Is it true? Is it?!

HEINRICH

My angel, I heard that too. We will soon see. Let's get some sleep.

Sun rises.

They are close to America, less than a week.

Frieda gets colder. Bread is scarce. She is growing weaker.

Heinrich wraps her in the blanket, but it still is not enough.

The girls Frieda befriended give her their tea. It is not that hot, but helps a little.

Frank prays in silence.

Heinrich cares for his granddaughter.

Sun sets.

Life-threatening cold nights.

Sun rises.

The week goes by. Frieda has slept for a majority of it.

Sun rises.

Heinrich purposely wakes up Frieda for the first time in five days.

Excited.

HEINRICH (CONT'D)

We are approaching the harbor. I can see her in the distance!

Weak, whispering, white.

FRIEDA

It's true? She's really there?

Heinrich lifts his granddaughter and brings her to the ledge of the boat. They watch, and watch.

Through the clouds a crown is spotted.

A torch.

FRIEDA (CONT'D)

I see her, Opa!

As the clouds clear away, a clear site of Lady Liberty is in the distance.

The boat gets closer, and closer.

Her eyes, her book, her dress.

It is so clear.

LADY LIBERTY.

As the boat drifts passed the copper statue, a clutter of butterflies fly out of the triangular holes in her crown.

Frieda whispers.

FRIEDA (CONT'D)

Tivka...

FRANK

There's hope.

FRIEDA

Tivka. Hope. There's tivka.

FADE OUT.