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The Butterfly Didn't Know

You are at work, installing an awning on a restaurant on 56th Street. It's the middle of June, and you begin to sweat. A waiter collecting his tip wears a surprised face, then looks up and sees you. He walks away in a hurry, not that you've noticed yet. Before you know what's happening, there is a glass of ice water in your hands. "You looked tired," he explains.

"I was," you thank him. What this man didn't know is *why* you were tired; he didn't know you got four hours of sleep, that you spent five calculating hospital bills for your daughter's leukemia. Yet he still felt the need to help you out.

In Central Park, a butterfly flaps about. It is a monarch with a relatively rare red pattern on its wings. A little girl approaches, no older than seven. Not that the butterfly has noticed. "Look, mommy! A butterfly!" the girl exclaims. Her mother is shocked, frozen in her tracks. The butterfly, seeing the flower-shaped pin on the girl's ponytail, lands on her head to collect nectar. "Mommy! Take a picture!" the girl cries out. Tears begin rolling down the woman's face as she tries to take out her camera. The butterfly didn't know that little girl's parents had passed away in a car crash two years ago, that she was still waiting for her mother to return, that she refused to call her aunt, her new caretaker, anything close to "mommy." The butterfly didn't know that the girl's mother always used to wear red. But the butterfly flew on anyway, unaware of whose day it made.

School just let out for the summer. You're free at last. You begin to bike home, with no idea of what you'll do there. Suddenly, a little girl with a flower in her hair darts out in front of you, and you swerve out of the way. Your bike tips; you crash down onto the sidewalk. The mother,

seemingly absorbed in thought, doesn't notice. You look around for help and see a gruff-looking man climbing down a ladder. He doesn't hesitate to help you up, then starts checking your bike.

"You okay?" the man asks in a concerned tone.

"Uhh, yeah. I think I scratched my knee a bit, but I'm fine."

"That's good. Can you get where you're going okay?"

"Yeah."

"Alright, be safe!"

That man had no idea where you were going, or why. He didn't know you were visiting the site of your old house, the one that had burned down, the one that had everything. He didn't know that your bike was the most valuable thing you owned, that your dad abandoned you and your mother, that you live in a tent near Penn Station. Yet he still felt the need to help you up anyway.

A relatively wealthy man carries a briefcase through the Financial District, ready to gather investors for his company. He has nearly reached Wall Street when a woman and her daughter get out of a taxi and walk over to him. "Excuse me," the woman asks, "Do you know the way to Trinity Church from here?"

"Sure, it's two blocks down from here, then a left," the man responds.

"Thank you so much!" the woman happily replies. She runs off in the direction of the church.

The man is annoyed now. Even those few seconds he took to give that woman directions could make him late to his meeting. He begins walking again, until a scooter cuts in front of a smart car, causing it to swerve onto the sidewalk and into a building, directly in front of the man. The woman couldn't have known that by asking this man directions, she saved his life, nor could she have known that this man's brother died in a similar incident. But she walked on, unaware of the life she changed.

You are in bed, struggling to get up. You're trying to move, but you just can't. That's when you remember. You were admitted to Hassenfeld's Children's Hospital just three months ago for leukemia. Every night you go to sleep wondering if tomorrow your dad will earn enough money to pay for the experimental surgery procedure, or if you'll even wake up tomorrow at all.

Someone rushes in through the door. You wonder which nurse it is. But instead of Nurse Clarke or Nurse Sam leaning over you, it's a doctor. "Congratulations, Jasmine," the doctor says, "A man has just donated thousands of dollars to this hospital. We can do the procedure."

"Call my dad," you say without thinking. This rich guy had no idea that this girl's dad worked four jobs: a handyman, a store clerk, a custodian, and a busser. He didn't know that her mother had passed away from leukemia, and her grandmother too. But he still felt the need to donate to the hospital. Just as the doctor leaves the room to prepare the surgery room, a butterfly, a beautiful monarch with red wings, flies in through the open window and lands on the flower pin in your hair.