

Stephanie The Butterfly

By Tom Leduc, Sudbury, Ontario

Stephanie Monarch was a caterpillar who lived in a milkweed patch behind an old forgotten garden. She had eight pairs of tiny legs and two antennae. She was covered with yellow, black and white stripes all over. Stephanie was always polite and pleasant to all the bugs in the garden. She considered them all her friends and they all agreed she was the belle of the backyard.

One morning, when Stephanie woke up after a long sleep, called moulting, she no longer had yellow, black and white stripes. She no longer had eight pairs of tiny legs to move around on. Instead, Stephanie had some big beautiful orange and black wings and her antennae grew much longer. Stephanie was now a Monarch butterfly.

At first, she was a bit frightened of the changes, but she remembered her mother's words, that one day she would moult into a butterfly and travel the world. Her mother explained to her that butterflies go on the longest migration of any species. Butterflies fly from Canada to Mexico following their food source, milkweed.

Stephanie felt a little better after she remembered this and decided to try out her new wings. She crept to the edge of the milkweed plant she was on and jumped off. Stephanie was flying. She laughed, and giggled, and played in the air, until she got lonely. She looked around but saw no one from her family.

Stephanie couldn't even go home and look for her family. The milkweed plant she jumped from had been cut down, replaced with a new shed. Her home was gone.

She was sad and frightened because the milkweed plants were gone. This was her home, her only food source. She would die without the milkweed plants. She knew she had to do something, so she decided to

ask her friends from the backyard if they knew where her family was. Her family would know what to do.

Stephanie spotted the Hopper sisters, two grasshoppers named Olivia and Chloe. They had grass backpacks strapped to them and were jumping their way to school. Grasshoppers love to jump. Sometimes they jump to get out of danger, and sometimes they jump as a start to flying. Grasshoppers' bodies are covered in a hard shell. Their skeletons are on the outside of their bodies to protect their insides.

Stephanie was happy to see the Hopper sisters because she really wanted to show them her new wings and how she could fly.

“Hi girls, it’s me, Stephanie. I’m a butterfly now. What do you think of my new wings?” she asked. The grasshopper girls complimented Stephanie on the beauty of her new wings.

“Have you girls seen anyone from my family?” Stephanie asked. The two girls shook their heads.

“No,” they said. They suggested she ask Leo, the worker ant, because he is always up early, sees everything, and he might know where her family was.

Stephanie fluttered off to the ant hill in the center of the yard. Leo, the worker ant, was standing on the top of the hill in his safety vest and hard hat. He was calling out orders to all the other ants in his colony.

A colony is like a really big family of hundreds of brothers and sisters all working together to help the family. “Imagine,” Stephanie thought, “having all those brothers, and sisters and only one mom, the queen. Leo could never lose his whole family; maybe he does know something about my family.”

Stephanie, politely asked Leo if he had seen anyone from her family. He lifted his head and replied, “no, sorry. I’ve had my head buried in the

sand all morning. New home owners are putting in a shed. They've messed up all of our homes. Hey, is something different about you? Did you get a new hair cut?"

Stephanie laughed. "It's my new wings, what do you think?" Stephanie fluttered over Leo's head.

"Yes, I like what you've done with them, very nice. Why don't you check with the worms in the garden? They've been up all night, sliding in the mud. They might have seen your family."

Stephanie thought this was a great idea and fluttered back over to the garden where she spotted Evan, a surfer worm, and his two friends Ben and Anthony. They were catching wind waves and sliding through the mud on their slimy squishy bodies. Earthworms don't have a skeleton. They don't have any bones at all. The coolest thing about earthworms, in Stephanie's opinion, was that they could be a boy or a girl whenever they wanted. Stephanie liked to hang out with them. She yelled out to Evan, "Hi Evan, have you, or any of your earthworm friends, seen my family?"

"Sorry, Stephanie dude, we've been sliding in the mud all night. We haven't seen anyone. I sure do dig your new wings though, they're totally rad. Later dude." And off he slid through the mud.

Stephanie decided to flutter over to the big rock on the edge of the garden to sit and think. When she landed she heard the singing of Uncle Cricket. She remembered Uncle Cricket was nocturnal, which means he stays up all night too. He likes to sing and dance all about the garden. He might know something about her family.

"Uncle Cricket, Uncle Cricket, I need to speak with you." Stephanie shouted, but it was no use Uncle Cricket would not come out in the daylight and stayed hidden under the big rock.

Just then, Sara the beetle appeared. Sara has an exoskeleton, which means her bones are on the outside of her body. She's all black and covered in a hard shell that shone bright in the sunlight and made her look like a knight in shining armor.

Sara had heard all the yelling and dug her way to surface of the garden. "What the sand flies is going on around here?" she said, shaking the sand out of her four wings.

"Hi Sara, it's me Stephanie. I'm a butterfly now, and I can't find my family. Do you know where they are?"

"No, can't say I do. But if anybody knows anything, it's Grandma Lady Bug. She knows everything."

"Yes of course," Stephanie said and off she went yelling "thank, you" back to Sara. Sara shrugged and dug herself back into the sand.

Grandma Lady Bug was doing what Grandma Lady Bugs do. She was rocking on a leaf, sipping on a dew-drop and knitting leaf sweaters for her grandchildren. She was hard to see at first because Lady Bugs are really small, only about the size of the tip of your baby finger. Luckily, Grandma Lady Bug had a bright red shell with black polka-dots and this helped Stephanie find her.

"Hi Grandma Lady Bug, it's me Stephanie, I'm a Butterfly now."

"Wow, that's lovely dear. What can I do for you?"

"I can't find my family, and the milkweed patch I lived in and ate from has been cut down. I miss my family very much and need their help. Do you know where they might be?"

"No dear, I'm very sorry, but I haven't seen any of them."

With this news Stephanie was very sad and didn't know what to do. She wanted to cry but knew crying wouldn't help her. She had to be brave.

She had to remember everything her parents had taught her. So she thought very hard and then her mother's words came back to her.

"Butterflies go on a long migration from Canada all the way to Mexico following milkweed patches." That's it, she thought. They started on the long migration.

"I'll fly as high as I can and then maybe I'll see them."

Up Stephanie went, higher, and higher, until she could see the whole neighborhood. From this height, Stephanie could see a large milkweed patch on the edge of the playground and there she saw her family.

Stephanie fluttered over as fast as she could, and when she arrived everyone was happy to see her. So happy, they had a great big party in the milkweed patch.

The next day, Stephanie went back to the backyard where she'd grown up as a caterpillar to say goodbye to all her friends. They were all very happy she had found her family and they all waved goodbye as she fluttered off with her family on the great migration.

Tom Leduc, a working-man's poet, was Greater Sudbury's Poet Laureate from 2014-2016. Tom was officially announced to the community on Friday, February 21st, 2014, at the Canada Reads Storytelling Festival at the South End Library. Tom works for Wajax Industrial Components by day and has been developing his writing and poetry in his spare time over the past seven years. He started submitting his work to local publishers in recent years and in 2012 won the Vale Living with Lakes Centre poetry contest with his poem "My Northern Lake". Tom is a member of the Sudbury Writers' Guild and, as a representative of the Guild, performed a collection of poems at Sudbury's very first Wordstock Festival. He also regularly contributes to the Library's monthly poetry nights hosted at the Main Library. He is planning, as part of his legacy project for this position, to work with young people in the community and encourage and support children and youth with writing and poetry.