

The Two-Faced Butterfly

By: Jessica Chen

Chirp, chirp! Tweet! Birds were chirping happy songs of spring in treetops and flying off into the baby blue sky. Butterflies perched on trees watching curiously at the kids with their clipboards in one hand, a water bottle in the other, and mouths moving rapidly.

“Ahem.” Ms. Kane clapped her hands. The energetic chatter of the science class that sounded like bees buzzing died down. “Now class, I will be the one to partner you up for your science experiment.” Collective groans came from the students. “Ah, ah, ah. Just be grateful that we’re outside in the nice weather.”

Brittany leaned over and whispered to Molly, “There’s no reason to be grateful. It’s like eighty degrees out here. Sorta hot for spring. Why is curly red head with glasses over there wearing full snow gear?” Molly laughed awkwardly, but then went silent when Ms. Kane gave her a stern look.

Ms. Kane continued. “Once I do, pick a spot in the grass, an insect to observe, and take notes. Let’s see, Matty and Austin. Brittany and Avery. Molly and um-” Ms. Kane scanned the faces of the students, trying to find anyone who didn’t seem to have a preference for what group they were in.

Of course she would pick the one person who didn’t seem to mind the fact that she didn’t have any friends. “Oh! Franny! Get going!” Ms. Kane smiled excitedly.

Molly’s face fell. *“I’m Brittany’s right-hand man. I should be partnered with her. Franny is the girl that Brittany bullies and thinks is super weird. Why did Ms. Kane have to put me with her?”* She thought.

Molly grabbed her clipboard, reluctantly stood up, and walked over to Franny. “Um, hi Franny. Where do you, uh, want to sit?”

Franny didn't answer, only walked over to a sunny spot near a meadow with colorful flowers resembling a sunset at the beach.

Molly followed, slightly confused. "Why here? Don't you want to go to a shadier spot because well..." Molly trailed off and gestured to Franny's outfit fit for a snowstorm in the Arctic on the coldest day of winter. Franny sighed.

"Meadows are where butterflies like to live because they can feed on nectar and bask with the sun. They use camouflage defenses when faced with potential risk, so be aware that they'll blend in with the flowers."

Molly blinked, surprised. "Oh, wow. I didn't know you were that... smart." Molly rushed to correct herself. "I mean, you seem to know a lot about butterflies." Franny sighed yet again, as though people made this realization many times before.

"That's because no one is willing to truly dig deep past looks and get to know me." There was an awkward silence. You could hear a pin drop except for the joyful birds communicating through song.

Molly broke the silence. "Well, let's start taking notes. I'm going to choose-" Molly was interrupted by a loud voice booming across the field like thunder.

"That butterfly is so like me. With its blue and black wings, it's gotta be popular among its other butterfly friends. I'm picking this pretty butterfly."

Molly looked over wistfully at Brittany and her partner. How she wished she could be like Brittany, who didn't even try to be popular yet somehow she was. With Brittany's short blue tank top, and a black skirt, she did resemble a confident butterfly. In reality, she was a social butterfly too.

A flash of orange wings interrupted Molly's thoughts.

Franny nodded. "A monarch butterfly. Herbivores that feed on nectar. Their populations are going down, which makes them at risk to be

endangered." Molly stared, then returned to her notes. Franny seemed to be talking to herself.

Over the next few minutes, Molly observed her monarch butterfly and realized that Franny's facts were surprisingly accurate. Her butterfly did seem to love to feed nectar on the orange flowers. She had to squint to see the butterfly.

Looking at the butterfly reminded Molly of something. *"Oh! Brittany! If she saw me talking with Franny, or even looking at her, she would start making me the target for her badmouthing. I have to do something!"* Molly bit her lip. She glanced at Franny, who was writing furiously. Franny's pencil was a blur because it was moving at the speed of light.

On the other hand, Brittany was flipping her blonde bouncy ponytail over her shoulder while laughing with Avery.

So Molly decided it was time for her to take action. She plastered a smile on her face and walked over to Ms. Kane. "Ms. Kane?" Ms. Kane looked up from her phone.

"Yes, Molly?"

"Um, is there any way for me to switch into Brittany's group?" Molly asked.

Ms. Kane crossed her arms. Before she could decline Molly's offer, Molly continued.

"Avery could switch with me. I bet she and Franny would work well together. Besides, I don't think Avery and Brittany are having that much fun." Ms. Kane looked over at Brittany's group, only to see Avery and Brittany laughing and chatting while sharing their notes.

"Sorry Molly. But no. You'll have to stay with Franny for now." Molly frowned, and stomped back to her spot near the meadow. The words *for now* said by Ms. Kane gave Molly a tiny bit of hope, but she knew that it wouldn't happen.

Molly sighed, then jumped, startled by the loud noise.

"Fweet!" Ms. Kane whistled to get everyone's attention. "People, start to wrap up! We are going back inside in 10 minutes! Remember to

share your notes with your partner before the bell!" Molly sighed. It was getting too hot, and she had forgotten to bring a water bottle. An orange T-shirt, jean shorts, and her brown hair in a ponytail didn't help.

"I need to go to the water fountain. I'll be right back. But can you just share your notes really quickly before I go?" Molly asked. A second went by. "Um Franny? Did you hear me?"

Franny was lying on her stomach staring intensely at the grass. Molly followed her gaze and saw a tiny caterpillar struggling to crawl up a tree. Molly's eyebrows furrowed, about to say something, but then gave up on trying to get Franny's attention and stood up to walk to the water fountain.

As Molly was a quarter there, she heard a little voice saying, "The insect I chose was a caterpillar."

Molly swiveled around. "Oh. I assumed everyone would pick butterflies. Why'd you pick a-" Molly paused. Franny was back to watching her caterpillar attempt to climb the tree.

So Molly continued to the water fountain.

Not long after, Molly felt much cooler and refreshed. She strolled back across the field.

Meanwhile, Brittany and Avery are chatting. "You know Molly?" Brittany questioned Avery. Avery nodded. "She thinks she's my best friend. News flash! She's not. I only act all sweet and sticky as honey near her so that I have someone who never questions anything I say."

Avery spoke hesitantly. "I don't think we're supposed to be gossiping."

Brittany scoffed. "I don't care. Anyway, before you so rudely interrupted me, I was saying that as you can see, I am a majestic butterfly. I bet Molly is dying to be like a butterfly too, but she's more like a slug. Or a snail. Slimy and slow. What do you think?"

At that exact moment, Molly walked past their group and stopped in her tracks. Avery's eyes widened, and Brittany gasped in fake concern.

“Oh my god! I totally didn’t see you there. I didn’t mean what I said. Besties forever?”

The sun conveyed tears of anger glinting in Molly’s eyes.

She stormed away towards her spot near the meadow, wiping her eyes roughly with her arm. Brittany smirked and rolled her eyes.

“Sensitive, right?” Avery looked away and didn’t respond. For a millisecond, Brittany’s grin faltered.

“I can’t believe she would say that about me! I thought we were friends for real. Am I not a butterfly, like Brittany said? If not, then am I at least close?” Molly fretted in her head.

When Molly sat back down on the grass, she found that Franny was staring at her in concern.

“Are you okay?”

Molly managed a smile.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Thanks.”

“Good, because I heard Brittany’s sarcastic voice from across the field and well, I’m sorry.”

Molly’s smile turned upside down.

“Do you think I’m a butterfly?” she asked hopefully.

“Why would you want to be a butterfly like Brittany? Sure, she’s popular, but she’s also mean and a bully. You shouldn’t worry about what she thinks of you. Take it from someone who has experience. Every day, Brittany talks about me both behind my back and to my face. It doesn’t hurt me. My dad always said people who talk bad about you are insecure and jealous on the inside.”

Molly pondered about this.

“I guess I just wanted to be popular, so I tried to mimic the most popular person in the school: Brittany. But you’re right. Thanks Franny.” Molly paused and tapped her chin.

“Just out of curiosity, why did you choose a caterpillar as your insect?” Molly wondered aloud.

“Simple. Because a butterfly is already developed. Plus, they’re kinda boring. A caterpillar is way more interesting because you get to watch the ups and downs of their journey to becoming a butterfly. You get to see the process of metamorphosis from a caterpillar to a butterfly and the 10-14 days they are in a cocoon.” Molly, again impressed with Franny's in depth explanation, grinned in understanding.

Bring, bring! Franny sprang up and quickly gathered her notebooks.

“I have to go to math. See you at lunch maybe!” Molly gave a thumbs up in response. Franny’s face lit up like a freshly changed lightbulb when she saw Molly’s thumbs up.

As Molly gathered her book bag as well, she dug a little deeper to what Franny said. *“Brittany’s right. I am not a butterfly. In fact, I am a caterpillar on a journey to becoming a butterfly! Once I am, I’ll spread my wings and fly!”* Molly thought to herself. She smiled, satisfied, and skipped off to her next class.