



MY BLUE BUTTERFLY RING

By Anonymous

Lights! Cameras! Snapshots! Flashes! Action was happening everywhere. I pinched that little piece of skin under my elbow and ferociously blinked my eyes to make sure it was not a dream.

"Jeanne-Marie! You have won! You can come up to the stage now, come on!" said the announcer.

No, I was definitely not dreaming. Part of me wanted to crawl under the legs of my chair due to a sensational overload of emotions, sounds, and spasmodic actions. On the other hand, the other part of me wanted to perform back flips all the way up to the stage. I decided to find a happy medium and attempt to walk up those skinny, concrete stairs to receive my glorious plaque, money, and medallion. It was my award, no one else's. Almost in a trance, I floated out of my chair, and glided to the stairs. I was weightless. I could not even feel my feet carrying me to the steps. I felt carefree and accomplished for once in my life. The awards were showered upon me before I even realized that I had made it to the stage. My mind suddenly began to race. I thought, Mom! Dad! Are yaâ€™ll believing this? Oh My God, I can't wait to tell Olivia. She will freak. Thank God I put makeup on, but is my hair ok? My eyes and smile began to hurt from the pictures, yet my posture improved with each flash. This is what I had strived for and finally, it was my turn to win-my time to shine! Suddenly, for no reason at all, I was surprised to find my eyes diverting from the addictive flashes and lights down onto the little, blue butterfly ring delicately placed on my right ring finger. It was in that frozen moment in time that I remembered the woman who gave me that ring. The woman who would have given anything to be there at that moment, watching me receive my Grand Champion Vocal Award-my Maw Maw.

She once tried giving me the entire world, and almost succeeded because she was an extremely persistent woman.

Her madness could only be suppressed by my mother's pleading, "Maa, she doesn't need all of those things, just let it go!"

Even at that, Lula would go ahead and get the toy anyway, get the clothes anyway, take me out anyway, and brag about me anyway. Oh, how she could brag about me! In her eyes, I was the best singer in the choir. I was the best dancer in the review. I was the best volleyball player of the court. The truth is that I was horrible at sports, dancing, drawing, swimming, or any other physical activity due to my extra weight. All I could ever do is sing, yet she knew exactly how to make my talent soar!

She was constantly fussing at my mom, "Pattie! Why in God's name don't you get that child out there? Get her an agent!"

My mother never believed in getting me an agent because she complained that whenever she would ask me to do a show, I would whine that I would rather play with my Barbies. As a result of my mother's "lack of persistence" with my voice, Maw Maw took it upon herself to be my agent and support group. She came to every single show, sat in the front row, and made crude, negative comments to whoever was sitting next to her about every other child performing.

She would complain, "That girl can't even sing! Why does she get to do three numbers

when Jeanne-Marie only gets to do two?"

That is why I loved her. Her "I don't care what anyone thinks because my grandbaby is the best" attitude was exhilarating. One usual Saturday morning I was sitting on her lap in her plush, faded green rocking chair, eagerly listening to her attempted hum of "Hush Little Baby."

Yes, I was twelve years old being rocked as though I was an infant. I loved every minute of it! This was a moment of pure serenity, yet something felt extremely wrong.

At that moment I prayed silently, "Dear God, I have this strange feeling that something bad is going to happen. Whatever it is, don't let it be her. Take anyone but her."

That dreadful, anxious feeling gnawed at my insides until two weeks later when I found out that God had other plans.

I waited patiently until it was my turn to visit her in that lonely, white, hospital bed.

"She's in a comatose state," Mom choked, "After the heart attack she hasn't responded to anyone or moved even a finger, so don't be afraid. Do you want me to go in with you?"

"No," I responded curtly. I wanted her to myself.

I solemnly walked in, not quite knowing what to expect. My bangs instantly stuck to my forehead and my hands clammed up like they would on a hot, muggy, summer day. She was lying there. Still. She appeared peaceful, yet worn down and beaten. Silent, invisible tears stung my eyes. I clamped my eyes shut so that I could not cry. I didn't want her to have to witness me crying because it would have made her sad. A sudden, drastic sensation of resentment and anger rose from my toes to the tips of the hairs on my head. I could not determine who the culprit of these feelings was. Was it God? Was it the doctors? Was it my grandmother for not taking better care of herself? After moments of confused pondering, I discovered that I was mad at myself for taking all of the wonderful things she did for me for granted. I wanted to make it up to her, so I decided to give her one last gift--her favorite gift--my voice.

"Well I woke up this morning feeling fine." I shakily sang. "I woke up with heaven on my mind. I woke up with joy in my soul, where I knew my Lord. He had control."

As I was kneeling beside her electronic bed, singing, a nurse had silently crept into our room and began to cry. Instantly turning bright red, I stopped singing to look at where the nurse was pointing. Maw Maw had not only opened her eyes, but was continuing to mouth the words to my song. My eyes stung me, yet I was still determined to stay strong.

In compensation for my non-existent tears, I prayed, "Thank you God."

The second I stepped out of the room my mother nosily asked me, "Jeanne-Marie, you look flustered, what happened?"

"Mom, a miracle."

There was no need for further explanation because she had already known that my encounter with Maw Maw would be extraordinary. In the waiting room of the hospital, I noticed a small, white box in my mother's hand. My mother did not look at me as I opened the box. A numbing sensation came over my entire body as I clumsily opened the box. I knew it was from Maw Maw because it smelled like old, sweet perfume crossed with the aroma of a department store. I clumsily opened the box to find a white-gold, little, blue butterfly ring.

Before I could ask, my mother answered me, "She bought it for you the day of the heart attack. It was in her purse. Keep it close to your heart as a reminder of all she did and will continue to do for you. She will always be with you wherever you go. Remember that, ok?"

"Ok, thanks. I will."

I tightly pressed the ring against my palm, and held it right next to my heart.

At this thought, I wanted to slowly raise my eyes from my ring up to heaven to thank

God for Maw Maw, when I was harshly brought back into reality with another bright flash. A sharp pain came to my face from too much smiling, yet I happily squeezed my award once I became oriented back into competition mode. Then I suddenly remembered that this was actually happening to me. Silly, unaccomplished, non-goal oriented me. My thoughts continued racing. Wow, thank you God. Thank you Maw Maw. I stepped up to the microphone, "I would like to thank everyone who helped me get here and make this happen: my friends for being there for me, my parents for supporting me, my teachers for encouraging me, and most of all-my grandmother, who never gave up on me and believed in me with all her heart. I love you Maw Maw."

As I slightly stumbled down the stairs, a new feeling of comfort and peace consumed me as I pressed my blue butterfly ring into my palm. The confusion and exhaustion from the awards, applause, and flashes faded as I cried. This time however, my eyes didn't sting, but instead, felt relaxed in my tears. It was a happy cry, a thankful cry, and a cry of unconditional, eternal love for my grandmother.