

*“In Time,
Clementine”*

By Persis A. Moodley

Chapter 1: “The Crystal”

Something bright was shining on her face, but it wasn't the sun. Rather, it was something sparkly, something colourful, something... CRYSTAL!!! Clementine sprang up from her bed and dashed to the window, where a delicate chain with a tear-drop crystal pendant dangled from the window latch.

It was glowing in the morning sun, with all the colours of a perfect rainbow. In awe-filled wonder, she held up the pendant to let the sun rays reflect off it, and suddenly the pale walls of her bedroom was swathed with dancing diamonds of pink, orange and turquoise.

It was the best gift she had ever gotten for her birthday!!

Clementine washed her face and hands, put on her new birthday dress and tied the crystal

chain around her neck. She felt like a princess-ballerina, and she twirled on the tips of her toes to the kitchen where the sweet smell of honey pancakes enticed her tummy.

Mum was singing as usual, and she stopped when Clementine came into the room. “Happy birthday my little Angel! I see you found your birthday present.” Mum placed a delicate kiss on Clementine’s head.

“Oh Mum, it’s so pretty! Thank you, thank you, thank you!!” Clementine gave Mum a tight hug. “And you’re making my favourite! Wow! You’re the best mum.”

“It is my pleasure dear, I love to make your day special,” said Mum.

Clementine sat down at the table to eat her pancake and watched as Mum fluttered around the kitchen with her pretty blue wings.

How she wished she could get her butterfly wings!

Suddenly, Clementine felt unhappy and pushed her plate away.

Mum asked, “Is everything alright, dear? Don’t you want your pancake?”

“I do...” said Clementine slowly, “But I was wondering... Mum, when am I going to get my butterfly wings?”

“In time, Clementine,” Mum said. “There is a time for everything, and when it is time for your wings to grow, it will.”

“Oh,” Clementine sighed, “But I want to be pretty just like you!”

“And you are already my dear,” said Mum. “With or without wings, you are always pretty!” Mum kissed Clementine on her

forehead. “Now finish up your breakfast so you can go out to play.”

Chapter 2: On A Stroll

Clementine strolled out into the front yard, where her older sister Ellie was planting seeds for a flower garden. Ellie already had her pretty blue wings, and they were glittering in the morning sun.

She flew over to Clementine and gave her a big hug.

“Happy birthday, Clementine! You look beautiful, like a princess-ballerina! And the crystal matches just perfectly with your pretty eyes!”

“Thank you Ellie,” smiled Clementine. She watched Ellie fill seeds into a hole in the ground and then asked, “Ellie, when will I get my butterfly wings?”

“In time, Clementine,” Ellie said. “You will go to sleep one day, and when you wake up, it’ll be there, just like that!” Ellie snapped her fingers as she said that.

Clementine wondered when that wonderful day would come. She took a leisurely walk along the lush pathway and came to stop at Mr Wilkins’ house.

As usual, he was sitting on the porch reading the morning newspaper and sipping on a big mug of hot tea.

“Good morning Mr Wilkins. It’s my birthday today,” called Clementine.

“Well, good morning to you, Clementine. And a very happy birthday too!” said Mr Wilkins. “You look pretty in your new dress.”

“Thank you Mr Wilkins, but I don’t have butterfly wings yet,” said Clementine sadly.

“Oh, you will get them my dear... in time, Clementine,” said Mr Wilkins. “Just wait a little longer.”

Chapter 3: Almost Caught!

“*Wait a little longer...*” Clementine didn’t like waiting but Mum always said it was good manners to wait your turn. Everything seemed to always take so long though... Like Dad getting back from gathering food for the winter; like her wings growing.

At least she had finally gotten the crystal pendant she had been waiting for, for so long, which was now sparkling in the bright morning sun.

Suddenly, she heard a loud screech and saw a black shadow in front of her, sending chilling fear throughout her little body. Oh no!

It was that horrid black eagle again: the dreadful and greedy caterpillar-eater! No-one could ever escape him or out-run him...

Clementine was terrified when she realised he was determined to make her his next meal!

How had he seen her? She was so careful to stay under the shadow of the bigger leaves and along the lush greenway that camouflaged her pretty green birthday dress... from way up there, it would have been impossible for him to have seen her.

As she turned to look up at the black eagle, a sparkle from the crystal pendant caught the corner of her eye. And he had seen it too... that's how he had picked her out through the bushes and that's how he was going to catch her.

Clementine felt fearfully hopeless and so disappointed that the one thing she wanted so dearly had gotten her into such a dangerous situation. "Oh Daddy!! Where are you now???"

Clementine held on tightly to the crystal to hide it from the sun's bright rays and ran as fast as she could. She had to hide from the black eagle.

She could hear the rapid flapping of his strong wings and his loud shriek was more like an evil laugh. But then, everything just went quiet. Too quiet...

Oh no! Ellie said that when eagles keep quiet, it means they are flying low and sneakily to catch you. This was not good, not good at all!

Clementine stopped running and listened intently for the eagle, though the pounding of her frightened heart rang loud in her ears. And then she saw the shadow pass over her, big and dark!

She spun around and saw the black eagle flying straight at her with his sharp claws wide open to grab her.

With barely seconds to think, Clementine lunged into the nearest bush of undergrowth, the tip of his claw ripping the skirt of her new birthday dress.

As she literally rose in the air, she heard a loud thud and a scream of frustration and pain... the eagle had flown straight into the tree!

Clementine didn't dare lie in the undergrowth any longer, and she certainly wasn't going to be a brave hero to look around again for the black eagle. Instead, she sprung up and held up her torn dress so that she could run as fast and quietly as she could.

She stayed under the darkest and bushiest leaves so that the sun's rays wouldn't catch her crystal pendant again.

She ran and ran and ran; thorny stems and sharp stones scraping at her delicate legs and body all along. Her tummy ached and her heart

pounded so hard... eventually her little legs couldn't run any more.

Clementine collapsed into a spongy bed of mushrooms and after calming her frantic breathing, she started crying hysterically.

Chapter 4: LOST!

Poor Clementine! This was not how she wanted her birthday to be... it was the total opposite and ghastly horrible! Her butterfly wings hadn't grown, the hideous black eagle tried to catch her and now she was lost in this scary and dark forest.

There were new, strange noises all around her and Clementine was shivering and hungry. She held on tightly to her crystal and thought of her sweet and beautiful Mum.

Oh, how she wished to be back home in her warm bed, savouring the aroma of the delicious dinner Mum would have been preparing, especially for her birthday!

Clementine realised that this day had officially made her a year older, so it meant that she was somewhat "grown-up". This was now the

defining moment that would prove just how “grown-up” she could be, and she sat up on a mushroom to think of a plan to get home.

Firstly though, she had to quieten the grumbling of her empty tummy and find a warm and safe place to spend the night. Wiping away the tears, she crept out from under the mushrooms and sought the closest leaves.

Undergrowth foliage was generally sweeter than most leaves but these ones here in the forest were the best she ever tasted! Clementine just ate and ate – she was famished – and lazed back on the soft mushroom top, for a moment forgetting where she was.

A chilling breeze signifying the pending evening twitched her into awareness of her surroundings and she cautiously explored the

tree above for the most comfortable yet safest place to call her bed for the night.

Finally, she settled on a smooth branch that was wide enough for her to lie on and inconspicuous from any prey above. It was extremely cold even higher up here in the tree amongst the mature density of leaves, so Clementine spun a thick blanket of silk around her and very soon she was sound asleep, exhausted from the eventful day.

Chapter 5: Could it be...?

Something bright was shining on her face, but it wasn't the sun. Rather, it was something sparkly, something colourful, something... that was not a tear-drop crystal. Rather, it was a water droplet on the tip of the leaf above her.

As her mind registered that she was alone in this vast forest and not in her bed like the morning before, Clementine sadly pushed away the silk blanket. She had slept throughout the entire night but her body felt heavy and very different, and she struggled to stand up onto her four legs.

SIX LEGS! Oh no, no, no, no, NO! Whatever had happened to her? Clementine was frantic and the weight on her back didn't alleviate the panic attack she was about to have.

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