

THE BUTTERFLY

FROM *THE TWELVE*

by
David S. Lampel



AUTHOR'S NOTE

5 On the island of Patmos, Naomi (wife of a local fisherman) brings news to the elderly apostle John that soldiers have arrived to escort him back to Ephesus. What follows is a scene laced with humor wherein the cantankerous apostle explains to Naomi how we all are transformed by the power of Jesus.

This sketch is great fun because John is played very (very!) old, a bit absent-minded and given to random streams of consciousness. His costume should be a collection of dusty rags and cobwebs, multi-layered and he should appear just slightly younger than Methuselah. He should also have a tired, weathered look to him from being outside so much on Patmos.

CHARACTERS

The apostle John
Naomi, a fisherman's wife

PROPS AND SET

15 "Rocks" for sitting and a walking stick for John. Naomi could be carrying a basket.

SCENE

20 *The Time: c. AD 95*
The Place: The island of Patmos

House lights down.
Stage lights up.

25 *John, the aged Apostle, enters with deliberation. He has the appearance of incredible age, but there is still color in his cheeks and a twinkle in his eye. He is a man of humor, a man possessed of a peace that comes from great age and from walking with the Savior.*

30 *Naomi, a woman of middle years, is the wife of a local fisherman. She and John are already friends, having met each other shortly after John's exile to the island because of his testimony for Christ.*

John carefully sits down and closes his eyes. Shortly thereafter, Naomi enters.

Naomi

(searching for him)

35 John. John!

(finding him; good-naturedly stern)

Are you sleeping again?

John

(without reacting in any way except to speak)

40 A man of God does many things with his eyes closed—

(opening his eyes and turning slightly)

—only one of which is sleeping.

Naomi

(excitedly)

45 I have great news for you!

John

(suddenly interested)

Your husband has come ashore with fresh fish?

Naomi

50 No, no, I—

John

(trying to guess)

The runner has come with new papyrus for me.

Naomi

(scolding)

55 Try my patience more and I'll forget you are a man of God!

John

(looking away; meekly)

I'll be good.

60 **Naomi**

I've just come from the docks and I heard soldiers—

John

(excited again)

Oh, there is fresh fish, at last—

65 **Naomi**

Would you just wait!

(pause)

I overheard the soldiers talking. They'll be here shortly to take you back to Ephesus! John! You're going home!

70 **John**
(quietly)
 Hhhmmmm— that is good news, Naomi.

Naomi
 Aren't you excited? At last, you'll be getting off this rock.

75 **John**
 Oh, Patmos hasn't been so bad. I've enjoyed the quiet and accomplished much.

(pause)
 But I do miss Ephesus.

80 **Naomi**
 There was something else. Tell me, John, has anyone ever called you, uh—"thunder"?

John
 Why do you ask?

85 **Naomi**
(with disgust)
 That husband of mine. As soon as the soldiers stepped off their boat, he asked them their business. When they said they were here to release the disciple of the Nazarene, he said,

90 *(mimicking)*
 "Oh, you mean old 'Son of Thunder' " What does it mean—Son of Thunder?

John
 It's been many years.

95 **Naomi**
 It seems a strange name for you.

John*(struggling to get up; Naomi helps him)*

100 Naomi, you're a person who spends much time outside—much time with the creatures of this island.

Naomi*(sarcastically)*

You mean like my husband?

105

John*(with very little reaction to her previous line)*

You know that before the moth, must come the worm; before the butterfly must come the caterpillar.

110

Naomi nods.

John*(continuing)*

Then, likewise, before the man you see now, there was—Son of Thunder.

115

Actually, it was “Sons”.

(wistfully)

I had a brother. Many, many years ago.

(to her)

James.

120

(smiling)

He was mother's favorite.

(soberly)

Now he's gone. He was the first of the twelve to die for our Lord.

(pause; ruefully)

125

I will be the last.

(long pause)

Ah, there we were. Young, vibrant, alive! Twelve ugly caterpillars who thought they were already butterflies. We were just old enough to know it all—and too young to know any better.

130 **Naomi**
(insistent)
 But the name—where did that come from?

John
(quickly)
 135 You see! Just like my brother and me. So impetuous. So impatient.
(louder; entranced)
 So ready to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans!

Naomi
(baffled)
 140 What Samaritans? What are you talking about?

John
(recovering; sheepishly)
 Pardon me, woman. I was carried away.

Naomi
 145 I think it's a good thing you are getting off this rock

John
(dismissively)
 There are many memories stored in my head. Occasionally one pops out.

Naomi
 150 Who called you "Sons of Thunder"?

John
 My brother and I had a habit of making much noise—with little being accomplished. So Jesus named us Sons of Thunder.

Naomi
(shaking her head)
 155 I can't picture it.

John
 My dear, you're forgetting: The caterpillar goes through the metamorphosis. There is a change. A cleansing from the ugliness of the
 160 old to the exquisite beauty of the new. We, too, went through a change.

You could not walk with Jesus for three years without there being a change—a tangible change. You could not see His resurrection, His return to the Father without there being a change in your life.

(turning; intensely)

165 You cannot receive the Holy Spirit without change.

Naomi

So often you've spoken of this Jesus.

John

170 I have. I never tire of it. And when there is no one around to listen, I talk to myself about Him.

(pause)

The rest of the time I talk to Him.

Naomi

And now they call you the "Apostle of Love".

175 **John**

(irritably)

Everybody has to have a title these days!

(quieter)

180 If I am, it is only the love of Jesus working through me. Without Him, I am still "Son of Thunder". With Him, my heart is tender. I know compassion. It doesn't come from me—it comes from Him.

Naomi

I wish I had known Jesus.

John

185 I keep telling you: You can!

Naomi

But He's no longer living!

John

190 He is! He lives on with the Father! How many times have I explained it to you?

(pause)

Well, there is still breath left in this body; I'll keep telling you more about Jesus until you do know Him.

(shuffling toward the exit)

195

Meanwhile, you can help me down to the dock.

(as they exit; to the audience)

I just know they have fresh fish!

Naomi takes John by the arm as they exit.

200

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Script Edition: 2004/5