



No Death -- Just Change

By Olive Jones

Today I walked slowly to a lovely little park near my home. No one was there to disturb the quietude. I was glad of this because I wanted so much to think deeply of the most serious illness of a great friend. The silver thread of life was not yet severed, though obviously that moment was imminent.

In the cold, frosty air of the winter morning I offered loving thoughts to the noble beloved soul of this dear friend of mine who was hovering on the brink of departure -- this gentle man whose greatest wish, I knew, was to fulfill the law of karma and to live this life with selflessness, patience, quiet dignity, and love.

I wanted to think of the wonderfully happy times we all had together -- as adolescents, as adults, as "ancients." I wanted to send to him my desire for his peace while he still lived.

The frozen ground was covered with crystals, frozen where the shadows were; but where the warmth of the morning sunshine had melted the ice there were thousands of dewdrops, glistening like jewels and changing their rainbow colors as I gazed at them in wonderment. It was truly a magic carpet.

There were tears in my eyes, being human, as I thought about my departing friend. Then, as I paused to take in all the loveliness around me I saw a beautiful birch tree -- its bark shining silvery with the sun's rays. It stood with other trees in a little copse. In a special way, though, it was different. All the other trees were silent, still and bare. This one was tall, with its topmost filigree branches delicately defined against a cobalt blue sky -- deep, deep blue. And I saw that it was covered with glittering white lacy caps of hoarfrost baubles. But the tree looked, and sounded, as if it was, like me, weeping. I could see --and hear -- the tears falling from its branches.

I walked very slowly nearer and discovered that the tree *was* weeping, not raindrop tears, but thousands of tiny pure white balls of frost. Suddenly an idea flashed into my mind -- this tree was *not* weeping; it was overflowing with joyous, dancing crystals, each pulling itself from this huge living home; each bouncing gleefully up and down on the frozen ground. They all seemed to be enjoying their brief life before sinking into the stiff grass blades, and here they were slowly adopting a different form of life - this time as rainbowed dewdrops, a birth from death. The cycle of the life and death of the frost particle was before me and I was *there* to witness it!

A robin with its red breast glowing, flew near my feet. I did not move, nor did he. It was all so breathtaking. I felt as if I was on holy ground. I somehow understood how the prophet Moses must have felt when, in the story, he witnessed the burning bush. I knew that there was no death, just change, a birth into somewhere or some thing else. Yes, I thought, just as these ice crystals have changed in form, so we humans change our material form also. We return to -- or with? -- our basic ingredients. And what are these, I wondered.

I felt all was well with my dear friend. Whatever force was responsible for such stunning beauty and such wonderful law and order, this would surround him and he would be protected on his journey through the stars. He would travel with trust and joy towards the light which is at the heart of all things.

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