

High on a wintry hill
Snow blows, swirling like a *dancer's dress*
 made of crystals
 sewn with threads of frost.
My skis leave glistening trails,
My breath *Sparkles* like the snow—
I am all *ALONE*
 on this frozen slope.

Then I see, just ahead,
 tiny *footprints*.
Something small and furry
With a beating heart and quivering whiskers
Scampered here not long ago.
The creature *left nothing* but these faint marks,
 traces that would soon vanish
 in the blowing snow.

BUT NO! The footprints end abruptly
With a sudden crash, leaving
A crater in the snow the size of a salad bowl
Marking where that beating heart
Stopped.
Skiing closer, I gaze intently,
 hoping to find a clue to what happened here,
Frozen in time and crystals.

With a *GASP*
I notice, outside the crater,
The lightest brush of parallel lines in the snow:
feathers.
The outermost edge of some great wing—
An eagle, perhaps, or an owl
Who plunged down *without warning* and plucked
 a winter's meal.

The talons *closed tight*
Squeezing out every bit of life and tomorrow,
 leaving only
A hole in the snow
And the softest touch of *feathers*
As they flapped
 with grace and power
 high into the Sky.

Almost I could hear
 (underneath the wind)
That creature's shriek of **TERROR**
Leaving its mate and burrow behind—
And that bird's simultaneous shriek of **JOY**
Knowing that, at last,
There would be *food*
 and life
 and another
 tomorrow.

BUDDHA once said,
 in words that ring forever,
**"Make of your Life
 a Light."**

A worthy *goal*, I agree.
Yet even the brightest
 mortal *light*
Will fade and finally
 die—
With no shine or shadow
 that long remains,
Its life as *fleeting* as the touch of *feathers*
 on windblown snow.

All that *matter's*
All we can know
Is that a *light* did once shine.
Sturdy and bright at times,
Weak and flickering at times—
For a brief, *beautiful* moment
 it gave
 a *unique* and lustrous *glow*
 to the **WORLD.**

a poem by T. A. Barron

DEATH, SOFT ON THE SNOW