

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 *matters*  
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**