

# *The Breath of Life*

by Lisa Hering

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There is a farm house near the edge of a small family farm with dark soil and rows of tilled earth. A narrow dirt road with grass growing down its middle passes by the house. Colorful butterflies of yellow, blue, orange, and green flutter quickly. They dance between the flowers in the garden in front of house on the farm. I am lifted by my butterfly wings as I dance to the music of the Earth within the protection of a bubble, my sphere of life, my world where I can watch the universe that surrounds me. Candy striped ballet shoes of red and white peppermint adorn my feet, the white satin laces flowing freely. The bubble floats with the butterflies and they pay no attention to me. It is an invisible world of my own and I seek only to enjoy and observe. And within that bubble I can be whatever I want to be. In my bubble I am me in all my many different forms. My innermost urges are answered. And I become them without judgment.

There are people in the farm house. Smoke rises from the chimney. An old car drives up, a model T. People talk in muffled voices as I cannot hear them clearly from within my bubble. A man and a woman come out of the house onto the porch. They welcome the newly-arrived and show them inside. A dog wanders the grounds, a white dog with black spots. He is tired and rests on the porch, wondering about the goings on inside to which he was not invited. But he makes no sound. He circles and circles until he finds his comfort zone, then settles down. A cat meanders around the edge of the porch, wrapping himself cleverly around the posts, somewhat protected in case the dog decides to give chase. But the dog only wants to nap. The cat's interest is absorbed by the butterflies. One lands on his nose and the cat abruptly pulls back. He watches the butterfly, then tries to catch it with his paw, but he is unsuccessful.

The sky is a beautiful cerulean blue and the clouds are bright white with a silver lining. I watch all day as the golden sun wanders to the horizon, and shines the bright

pinks and reds in the twilight of its daily life. It has caused all that I see to live, and in its passing, the darkness sets in, and life holds its breath till the morning.

Life is the breath of the living. The deeper the breath, the greater the quality. A breath mirrors life for us in one single moments what we cannot see for a lifetime. It is slowly inhaled and is sucked inside our lungs. We take in more and more oxygen. Our lungs grow and fill to capacity. We enjoy the oxygen for a time when we are at our greatest. Our lungs are full. The chest is bold. Blood is bright red. Skin is flush with life. The body and soul are vibrant. It is the time of life when we sparkle. And we experience this as long as we can. This is our moment. We are in our prime. We delight in all the living things around, the raindrops on the rose petals, the snowflakes on our noses, the sun in our eyes with a reflection that reaches the moon. Everything is ours in this moment. We laugh because we can't help it. The Earth is so incredible. And it's ours, right now, in this moment of life. And then, we relax a bit. And the smile goes from excitement to peacefulness. And in that peace, we begin to exhale. The warm air comes slowly streaming out of the body. The lungs deflate. Muscles use up the oxygen they have. The breath is almost gone. The life has almost gone. We are now like we were before the breath. Soon the breath is completely gone and there is nothing, and the cycle is complete. We hold it momentarily and we reverse. Then it begins a new, with new life, and repeated experiences, the same but some minute and unnoticeable change. Always change. Never ending change. And it is to this change that we owe both our life and death to. Protons and electrons forever changing dancing partners in the ultimate kaleidoscope. They alter our environment. We have to keep up. We have to change to fit it. Yes, be who you are. You be who you are in your environment. And teach your children to be who they are in theirs, both changed forever in the development of the most complex puzzle in the universe, life. Life is more complex than any single atom, more complex than any crystalline structure, more complex than the fuel burning in the sun, more complex than the star dust picked up in our universe and turned into Earth with its array of petrochemicals and its own breath of life. Yes, the Earth herself has breath, each time a tectonic plates heaves in or out. It's the inorganic life of the Earth, the solar system, the Milky Way, and the multiverse.

What is life if not welcoming friends on a Sunday afternoon? What is it if not in the eyes of the waiting dog and the curious cat? Life fills the farm with every leaf and flower that grows, and the butterflies multiply and flourish within them, both giving and

receiving life. Quality for me is in observing all this from inside my safe bubble, watching, enjoying, dancing with the music that the Earth produces. This I can do when I tell my mind to wander. It sees what it wants to see and shows me the magic and the beauty which I would otherwise miss in my busy day. The energy required to survive can take us away from our one and only true mission – to be the breath of God, and to live our days with the joy we were meant to have, to stop worrying about how long we will live, and live only as long as we have joy. For there is nothing else that motivates us. Only in that way can our breath be the breath of life.

Thank you and good night.

*Dedicated to Kathleen Janelle Alford Hering,  
my mother whose breath of life is waning.*

*Written while in the hospital with my mother, who was breathing deeply, struggling for life.*

*I stayed with her day and night, listening to her breath.*

*She was at peace, a peace she could not find while alert.*

*Once she stopped being cognizant, once I could no longer wake her up,*

*her cognizant struggle was over. Her mind was at peace. The pain was gone from her face. Only her physical struggle remained, her body's breath of life, her final breath of life, which I witnessed several days later.*