

AUTUMN REFLECTIONS

by Barbara Hattemer

Through tall picture windows, I watched leaves fall from brightly painted Maples interspersed among the spruces. Like falling stars cascading downward, the leaves garnished the green world of the forest in radiant red, yellow and orange. My mind photographed the scene, so vibrant with life and energy in the crisp October sun, imprinting it on my brain; a treasure stored to delight me long after the leaves had faded.

Nearby, half eaten and curled by inchworms, drab brown leaves hung listlessly on birch trees. Gusts of wind tore at the tiny threads that held them to their branches until these leaves, too, fell to the ground.

In the autumn of my own life, I wondered which leaves represented the legacy I would leave behind. Would my children, my friends, the acquaintances I had touched, remember me like those brilliant leaves that lighted up the forest? Had I brightened their world, depositing memories they could revisit when they needed comfort and love? Or had I impacted them so little, I would be as quickly forgotten as those withered leaves that drifted beneath the birches?

Falling leaves signaled the end of summer, time to leave the island. I scanned the room I loved so well. Soon white sheets would cover couches, chairs and teakwood tables to protect them from the winter sun. The decorative treasures joyously collected at local craft shows would be stored away, out of sight of intruders peering through windows.

The harsh Maine winter would soon arrive replacing falling leaves with falling snowflakes. Four years ago, an unexpected October storm had sent huge flakes swirling from the sky. I watched fascinated as they fell the length of the tall spruce trees; soft white circles floating silently down, down, descending gracefully like a troupe of ballerinas clad in white tulle. They landed in a gentle pli   on the wooden deck and disappeared. The memory of their softness and grace impresses me still.

Lord, when I enter the winter of my life, grant me the grace to do it as softly and elegantly as those snowflakes. Help me to bear the pains of old age silently, without complaint. May I ever be thankful for a lifetime of beautiful memories and never stop trying to bring a smile or a word of wisdom to those I love.