

"And nobody dies!"

Posted on Apr 17, Posted by [Lois Lowry](#) Category [Uncategorized](#)

From:

Date: Fri, 14 Apr 2006 21:21:47 -0700

To: Lois Lowry

Subject: love Gossamer

**I love love love Gossamer. Your prose is so tight it's poetic.
And nobody dies! Yay! Very happy with the whole book.**

Here (I've deleted the name of the sender out of respect for privacy) is an e-mail I received last Friday, in response to my new just-published book.

"And nobody dies!" is what I want to talk about.

I chuckled when I read that, and then thought about previous books, and it is true: fairly frequently, people die in my books.

And they are born, as well.

My brother is a doctor. I remember being in the room once, some years ago, when someone asked him what aspect of medicine most interested him. I watched him think about the question for a moment, and then listened to his reply that he was most affected by being present...and he hoped of help...at moments of transition: birth and death.

This morning I received an e-mail from a student who was writing a paper and asked me to list the seven most meaningful things that had ever happened to me. It was a no-brainer, but I apologized to him for listing eight: the births of each of my four children, and the births of each of my four grandchildren. I wasn't present, of course, for the last four, except in spirit. But that didn't matter. The arrival into life is a profound and wonderful thing.

And the departing it, as well. (*She calls death wonderful?* I can hear you saying. In terms of its original meaning: yes, I do. Wonder-full.) I understood what my brother meant when I was present, recently (though not, of course, of any help, at least medically; but the time had passed, for that) at the death of a close friend. Even with the accompanying sorrow, it was a moment of awe and wonder – and of change.

I think most serious fiction is about transition. About change. And probably that is why people sometimes (okay, often) die in my books.

Not in this new one, though. Not in GOSSAMER.

But by the conclusion of the book, each character has changed in profound ways.

Unlike my brother, I am not there with stethoscope in hand. But as an author I love being present at those transitions in the lives of my own created characters.

Here is a passage from the final chapter of GOSSAMER:

He chuckled, watching her, but reminded her again, "We must hurry. We mustn't be out and about when the sun rises."

"All right." She fluttered back near him, then stopped, suddenly, examining her own self. "My goodness!" she exclaimed. "I'm not transparent any more!" She peered at her own arm, then lifted a leg and looked carefully at that as well. "I can't see through me!"

"Can you?" she asked him, and thrust her arm into his face. "Can you see through me?"

"No. You're becoming somewhat solid. You're filling in," he explained.

"What fills me?" she asked, staring still at her arm.

"Everything that you're a part of. Your own story fills you."

"What happens to me now?" she asked, in a worried voice. "I've never been solid before."

"You're not solid yet. You're becoming solid. I'd call you translucent, I think, at this stage. Look. Hold your arm next to mine."

She did so, and they could both see the difference. His arm was opaque, quite firm, and hers still glimmered with backlight. But it was true that she was no longer transparent.

"What happens now?" he said, repeating her question. "You bring all of that solidity to your work. And someday perhaps you will use it to teach a young dream-giver."

They hurried on but her brow was furrowed. She tugged at his arm, stopped him, and looked up into his wise, kind eyes.

"I feel terribly sad," Littlest One confided, "about the boy, and about the filling-in."

"Quite so. Change means leaving things behind..."

(For some reason the blogmaster doesn't allow me to indent paragraphs.)

So: Nobody dies! Yay! But things are relinquished. And we all move forward, as life demands.

And that's what I like best to write about.

Tags: Untagged