

Inevitable Change by J. Conrad Guest

As one gets older, one discovers everything is going to be exactly the same with different hats on.

—Noel Coward

CHANGE: DOES IT COME EASILY TO ANYONE? Not to me; never has, never will. Yet I change every day, as surely as we all change. Barely, imperceptibly sometimes, and then one day we wake up and ask ourselves, “What happened? I was never like that before.”

We like to think we control change. We make New Years resolutions to lose weight, to eat less, exercise more, to curse less, to spend more time with family, less at work or in front of the television. But other changes just occur. When my parents passed away, within eleven months of one another, I was no longer someone’s son, and I was faced with my own mortality in the absence of the two people who’d been in my life for the “forever” that had at that time composed my 42 years on this planet. My life was irrevocably changed as a result of their loss to me. Perhaps, with no children of my own, I was prone to focus on the family that had left me behind rather than on the one I would one day leave behind.

Some changes are symbolic. After my parents passed on I changed residence. My reasoning was that I needed a new start, wanted to make changes; so I changed jobs and chose a new career, yet my life stayed pretty much the same save for a new environment. Perhaps the end result was a misconception on my part that new surroundings could be the catalyst for other changes.

Sometimes we are victims of change, or as Heraclitus wrote: “All things flow. Nothing abides.” No matter our rank in life we are all bit players in the grand scheme, and one thing is certain: change is one thing on which we all can count — from the changes mirrored before me during my morning shave, the changes taking place in my body (changes I may not relish but am powerless to withstand), to changes thrust upon me, some the result of my own irrational actions (a failure to live my life, as we all should, as if it were an open book), others unwelcome and perhaps undeserved (bad things sometimes happen to good people). If good people are capable of bad deeds, then it must be considered that bad people are capable of good deeds. A bad deed cannot erase a good deed any more than the obverse. That a serial killer

might donate money to a worthy cause doesn’t change his monstrous actions. Who are we to judge? Yet judge we must in the absence of a higher authority, even if we all are accountable, at a later time, to that higher authority.

Change is part of the human condition, and perhaps we would do best to consider it part of life’s process, perhaps evolutionary, as we move toward life’s fifth season, for surely we are on any given day a product of the changes that occur to us — those that we allow to happen as well as those we chose to make.

I’ll be fifty-two this year, and more changes are in the works: a recently completed novel to market to publishers and agents, a new novel in the works, new characters from whom I can learn, even as other changes are on the horizon, in my personal as well as my literary and professional lives; some of these changes I embrace even as others I’m loath to accept.

Change: It may not always come easily, but it comes as surely as do aging and death.



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