

The Change

By Don Citarella

"The gifts we have around us were the product of failures rather than successes. Farfallow and the lands outside our village have been born out of mistakes."

The wizened teacher paused to gather breath, washing down the dust in his throat with a gulp of water from the glass beside his chair. An orange ray of sun wavered through the slit in the tent blowing in grit and throwing shadows on the class. The students, a mixture of boys and girls of various age, followed their teacher's struggle to return the glass to the floor. His slow and deliberate movement brandished creaks of wood and bone.

"But why, Vieusagi? Why were they mistakes?" A wisp of a girl, visible only as an upraised arm, peeped behind the shoulders of an older classmate.

Vieusagi studied the delicate fingers and approximated the girl's age. Her knuckles hadn't begun to protrude, as was accustomed by the village children's labor, and her skin had only slightly taken on the grayish patina of the land. Dimples gave way to bone after a year of working the mines. The child would be seven or eight, but the pinkish hues of her skin, absent of the discoloration by Farfallowan diet, led him to believe she was much younger.

"Come closer, daughter. What is your name?"

A face bobbed up behind the shoulders as the children resituated to make a path for her approach. As she stood, Vieusagi recalculated that the girl was much younger. A five-yearling at most.

"Calla, teacher," the girl said as she tiptoed between the squatting class. Her agility in step reminded the old teacher of the deer that would run through the forest of his youth, before the war scorched the land and choked the green from their roots.

"The people of Farfallow were from surrounding cities back then, and Farfallow itself did not exist. Where you're sitting right now is a place that I had visited when I matched your years. My parents had taken me and my sister here to see the butterflies," Vieusagi recalled. "The trees were lush green, and you could look up to see layer upon layer of canopies and spy only specks of blue sky poking through.

A rustle among the children, murmurs and grins, denoted the fantasy of the time. The class knew blue and green only from books and stories, as their last natural appearances in Farfallow had vanished decades before they were born. Above them now were slow eddies of charcoal and ochre dust. The hollowed fossils of trees, which jutted at angles like rib cages, were leached to a marbled grey. Green had been choked from their lips and branches years before.

"I remember the flitting crepe of wings that danced through the trees," Vieusagi said. "Their chrysalises lay protected by great folds of bark and shadow."

Calla perched at the teacher's toes, pretzeling her legs and leaning back in a sun worship pose to listen to Vieusagi's words.

"It was a very different land back then. The surrounding cities lived in fear of their neighbors and strengthened their defenses to protect them."

"But if they were all in fear of each other, Father," Calla interrupted, "should none of them have cause to be afraid?"

"The response to their fear, little one, was what caused the others to be afraid." Vieusagi smiled and studied the entranced girl's face. The rose of her cheek was bound to abandon her,

like the wonder of her eyes. For the present, however, she was still beautiful and the old man cherished that she called him *father*.

"If your neighbors built a wall, you could no longer see what happened in the yard next to yours. Blinders for horses generate peace. Blinders for people generate fear."

"It's illegal to build walls in Farfallow," a teen-aged boy chimed in. His demeanor was proud, but cautious.

"Imagine that it was not," the teacher replied. "Your parents might insist on a taller wall than theirs, hoping to protect themselves from whatever the neighbors might be planning."

"Would not the neighbors build a taller wall in response to yours?" Calla peeped.

"Yes, child. Precisely what the old cities had done," Vieusagi smiled. "None of our ancestors were acting in aggression. They simply wanted to protect themselves. And their very hope for security was perceived as hostility by others." He paused to let the children understand, and to take another sip of water to cool his burning throat. When the murmurs and creaks had silenced, he continued.

"Now imagine that the walls were not walls at all, but weapons. First there was Lightcrux, which shadowed their lands. Then, Ice-8 would protect their waters. Then, they produced A.S.H. to vaccinate their people against disease. Then, A.S.H. failed, so they built stronger and better immunities."

"My father said Lightcrux killed the trees," the broad-shouldered boy retorted.

"The cities' scientists grew careless with the politicians demand for defense systems," Vieusagi replied. "And Ice-8 strangled the fish spawn, just as A.S.H. produced quirks in the cities' children."

"Is that why we have The Change?" Calla said.

"Nobody knows for sure, daughter. A.S.H. was supposed to strengthen immune systems and prevent genetic mutations in the children. This is what politicians feared the biological warfare would target."

"But father, was there ever any war?"

"No, Calla. Everyone was busied by defenses to prevent a war that never existed. And in their haste, they spread a war among themselves—among their children. My parents and my parents' neighbors hoped to save their children and lands with science. Instead they poisoned us. If they never built their walls, we could be sitting beneath the trees and watching the butterfly migration. If they had not made these mistakes, we would not have The Change. This is why we must remember the war-that-never-came."

The slit of light dwindled to a vermillion ray and ebbed across the stony horizon. The teacher leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes to dismiss the class. The students collected their things, awakening the dust as they stood, and exited the tent. The teacher felt their shadows dancing on his closed eyelids and rested his body in quieting chair. A blurry shadow blocked the dance of light and cooled his face.

"Yes, little Calla," he said without opening his eyes.

"Vieusagi?" she started, and then fell silent. She turned and walked toward the slit in the tent. Reconsidering, she turned again. "Vieusagi?"

"Yes, girl."

"Walls are banned in Farfallow to try to stop The Change?"

"Yes, daughter. As are all other structures, and science, and vaccines."

"Teacher, have you undergone The Change?"

Vieusagi remained silent, as he'd always done when a student would ask this question. He knew that the town was built on a delicate balance of fear and respect. And in this case, as

with all questions about The Change, there was no right answer but none at all. The girl studied his silence and began her exit again. Through the open slit of light, she turned a final time.

“Father?”

“Yes, Calla?”

“What color were the butterflies?”

Vieusagi took slow, careful steps as he walked out of the tent into the cooling night. His 80-year frame hung from his bones as the tent hung from its wooden posts. It would skitter in the wind and droop with the beating of the gritty, mid-day heat. His pitcher clanged against his belt as he steadied his gait and probed the earth with a weathered cane. He had been summoned to the edge of the wood and though his will was strong, his body and heart were begging for rest.

Looking around, he saw some of his older students beginning their nightly labor regiment, sifting bugs and edibles out of the sandy bed of Farfallow, trudging toward the mines on the east end of town for silkworms, moss and mushrooms.

The citizens of their land were the remnants of the barren cities of his youth, their parents having migrated to Farfallow to escape the effects of Lightcrux, Ice-8, and the vaccines. A half-century later, their origins were abandoned with their worries for defenses. The inner wars of the cities had been brought about by their own actions, virtually unbeknownst to each other. Spies were blamed for the even spread of the tainted vaccines, hoping to advance their own science faster than their neighbors. In Vieusagi’s city, as in the neighboring ones, The Change was home grown. And no one of his generation could recall a harsh word spoken between travelers, much less the war they insisted was coming.

What use was it to point fingers at who originated A.S.H., as every child and grandchild would be born to expect The Change? What relief would it cause to isolate the heritage of scientists responsible for Lightcrux or Ice-8, or any of these other weapons of defense that murdered their lands? Their boat was the same, and each bed was personally made. The only natural response that permeated the cities inner wars was to bury their fear deeper, and desert their homes.

Vieusagi looked up at the dwindling light and tried to remember the cooling canopies of a blue, cloudless sky. He stretched his toes hoping to feel the chill of a rich, fertile soil. They’d long forgotten the serrated, yielding touch of a blade of grass; the wisp of a butterfly’s wing as it fluttered past his cheek.

The first appearance of The Change occurred with Vieusagi was a boy. He sat in a metal desk and gazed out the classroom window at the clouds that drifted lazily behind the cityscape. Great, bloated nimbus clouds buffed the reflective surfaces of the buildings, dulling their steeples and weathering their brick. Vieusagi was warmed by the light and seconds from falling asleep when the girl behind him sneezed.

The sudden outburst and gush of wind brought Vieusagi back to alertness as he turned to complain of the dampness on his neck.

The girl wiped her nose with her sleeve and squeezed the tears from her eyes. She look startled to see Vieusagi glaring over his shoulder and remained fixed on his gaze. Vieusagi’s argument locked in his throat as he stared back at the girl.

“What?” she said.

“Y-your eyes,” was all he could muster.

The children pivoted in their desk to see Mara, known for her seemingly oversized acetylene-blue eyes, had undergone a small, but unprecedented change. The teacher ebbed closer as Vieusagi scrambled out of the desk, tripping over the leg, and landing with a thud on the floor. The girl flushed with the attention and turned among the imploring faces of her peers, who gasped as her gaze locked on each.

Mara’s eyes, in the flash of a sneeze, were now a golden yellow.

The news of the sneeze hung on the lips of the city and puzzled their government. Scientists refuted the change as *rara avis*—a genetic quirk that may occur in an infinitesimally small number of children who had been administered A.S.H., now in its fourth term of redevelopment. Newspapers, unsure of the children’s safety, jumped to print accounts of transformations across the city. Mothers, who’d notice a child had shot up in height, had brought the mysterious inches to a public forum. Doctors, under the guise of anonymity, reported increased numbers of prehensile tails or polydactyl babies.

Parents flocked to physicians to treat impending metamorphoses and grew angry at the lack of a cure. The government, in response to the outcry, developed placebos to vaccinate the *vaccines*, but the panic could not be lulled. Spies reported that The Change occurred in the surrounding cities and the fear only increased when rumors of their cures broke the surface. But a cure would never exist, and just like the potential wars among the cities, the lies were only the result of fear.

The quirks weren’t bound by age or reason and would arise seemingly out of random. The limits of The Change no longer resided in tails and pinkys but escalated to impossible mutations. In a neighboring town a teenager led his prom date to the dance floor and froze his classmates solid as they passed. He realized what occurred only when he found the icy statue of his love was too heavy to slide behind him. A toddler, irate for his parents’ insistence on finishing a floret of broccoli, blinked to find himself at an empty table, bursting into tears when he saw the family dog had evaporated too. The Change held no reference to physics or imagination as the unrest grew to violence. Parents refused to condone marriages to fiancés who may not have undergone The Change. At the same time, however, they prayed for matrimony, afraid of what change could occur.

The inter-city fear was reborn in microcosms between neighborhoods, families, and couples. Siblings shared toys, unsure of the wrath that would arise. Neighbors demolished walls to appease each other, while also praying to catch a glimpse of The Change. People relocated, scattered, and fled to save themselves. Children were abandoned as easily as they were adopted by strangers. Their fear begot respect. The chaos generated order.

And somewhere between news of levitating children and teens who could vaporize houses, Vieusagi found himself in Farfallow. The trees that he’d wandered through a summer before had disappeared. The deer no longer pranced through the barren land and butterflies died dormant in the coffin of their chrysalises. Each year, people continued to flock to Farfallow to escape the slow dissension of their cities to rubble. When the property lines were bare, the walls of their houses were disassembled. When the hierarchy of the workplace was stripped, the businesses collapsed. When the government declared anarchy in fear of the rule of their people, society vanished.

The random collection of Farfallow immigrants sat in their tents and bound the door-flaps closed to hide from The Change. Their fear of themselves and each other had taken over so

people ceased to live their lives and provide for their families. Frequently, neighbors would smell the funk of decay emanating from nearby tents, for one too afraid to live was soon to become one that would not live. Vieusagi's sister, neglected and mal-nourished, was among the first to die. Looking to his parents, he felt guilty for not incurring The Change. He remembered their sickly eyes as they clutched at blankets and stared him to sleep from across their tent. He remembered their furious scramble to provide him with a crude but sustainable diet, paranoid of what would happen when the mutation came to him. That evening, in the darkness, he dragged his only sibling to the forest. Before burying her between the mausoleum trees, he caressed her peaceful face and thanked god she had escaped The Change.

The boy, now eight-years-old, had pretended time and time again that he'd grown a little taller, or that some nearly invisible freckle had marked his Change. But his parents' trust would never return. And a person's knowledge of their Change would become their deepest secret. Its occurrence would simultaneously destroy the mutual fear and respect if it was benign. If it wasn't, they would become exiles.

So when Dalis Toran said he'd experienced The Change, and the result was his ability to burst people into flame, Farfallow listened. They'd already woken a number of times to see burning, charred corpses lighting the dust and casting angry shadows on tent walls. Dalis had declared that Farfallow would abide by a new constitution. He invited anyone who opposed the law to approach him in protest, but no one would. The three rules would be simple and punishable by a fiery death:

1. There will be no science.
2. There will be no family.
3. There will be no talk of The Change.

What resulted was a communistic society where everyone labored and everyone survived. Children would float from tent to tent and adults would provide food and shelter for each other. Outsiders were welcomed with trepidation and reverence. And for decades the town grew to accept their strange harmony. Vieusagi found himself an adult, but never married or sired child. He relished the idea of teaching the family of Farfallow and helping enforce the rules by expanding their minds.

And when Dalis Toran's own son, Saridan, opposed his father's law by declaring his Change had occurred, his aging father was forced to greet him in protest.

Saridan's Change was brought about on a foraging mission. He found himself at the boundary of Farfallow and saw the ruined city of his childhood. He was filled with so much anger for the scientists and officials that he burned for retribution. Saridan gripped his hands and closed his eyes, stomping in ire from the edge of his land. Upon opening his eyes, Saridan witnessed a vortex that swirled in the chalky air above the city. Within seconds, the city was gone.

Dalis and a group of elders walked to the forest's edge and gazed to the horizon where a city once stood in ruin. In finding only barren acres of nothingness, he knelt before his son and surrendered his rule for the good of Farfallow.

It was this very spot that Dalis had now summoned Vieusagi. And remembrance had taken the old man nearly the entire way through the forest. He clutched at the stony, rotten trunks as he passed, partially for support, partially in the hopes of awakening their slumber. He spotted a cluster that reminded him of his sister's grave, and prayed he wasn't trudging across her resting place. He didn't want to wake the peaceful face he saw in his dreams to this day.

"Vieusagi?"

Startled, the old man turned to find his sister at his side. Her face was glowing and cherubic as it had been in his youth. He staggered in fear and collapsed against a tree behind him, squeezing his eyes closed.

"Father, it is me. Calla." Vieusagi reopened his eyes to see his student advancing toward him, tears in her eyes. He struggled to catch his breath and, only when he felt certain, accepted the girl's hand. He rose, ashamed, and cursed his eyes for betraying him. But, for a brief flicker of a second, Vieusagi was overjoyed that his sister had come to take him home. He thought he, too, had escaped The Change.

"Daughter, you must not be here. You run along and get back to your labors."

"I have been hoping," she whispered, eyes on her feet, "hoping to spot a butterfly. I thought that maybe one may still exist."

The teacher smiled and touched the girl's chin, drawing her face up to see her eyes. "I've spent many hours out here praying the same, little one. You hold onto this hope as it no longer resides in me."

He watched her wipe the tears from her eyes and attempt a fractured grin.

"But now, it is not safe, Calla. Promise me you'll return to your labor and leave the forest."

"I promise, father."

He gazed lovingly at his student and searched her face again to ensure there was no remnant of his sister. He ruffled her hair and used her shoulder to pivot back to the direction of his summons. Over his shoulder, he said goodbye.

It took another quarter of an hour to reach the edge of the wood, where he found Dalis and Saridan waiting impatiently. He'd been summoned by Dalis on many occasions, but only to the warmth of his tent in the center of Farfallow. The journey had left the old man parched and he reached for his pitcher to quench his thirst.

"Honored teacher," Dalis smiled, and welcomed Vieusagi into an embrace.

"Hello, brother," Saridan said from afar.

"Dalis." Vieusagi returned in the embrace. Over the leader's shoulder, the teacher nodded to his new leader.

"I apologize for asking you to trek this distance," Dalis said as he drew away. "I was amazed at how much further it seems to be each day." He turned his back on the teacher to gaze at the unbroken horizon and watch the dust clouds eddy and tangle. "Since only last year, when my son shared with me his Change, I feel the distance has doubled." He looked to Saridan, who watched them from the edge of the clearing. "In a way, brother, I still feel it has."

Vieusagi felt his brother's sadness. "I've missed our conversations, Dalis. I'm regretful that we haven't had time as of late." The men shared a moment of stillness and turned again to admire the vista, imagining the forgotten city that lay in the dust. Saridan, unnerved by the silence, interrupted the old men's peace.

"Father, we should discuss with the teacher the reason we burdened him to travel this far." He turned to Vieusagi. "Unfortunately, this meeting isn't for sight-seeing and memories."

Vieusagi, assuming as much, turned to face Saridan. "How may I help you, brother?"

"As you know, my father is weakening each day," Saridan began.

"We all are, brother."

"We believe that his remaining time with us is short. The passing of leadership from Dalis to myself has ensured that the future of Farfallow is peaceful."

"I have no doubt of that," Vieusagi replied.

Dalis stepped back to the conversation, between the teacher and Saridan. "My son is seeking more than just compliments, Vieusagi. He needs your allegiance."

"Of course," Vieusagi replied. "My allegiance is to Farfallow and our new leadership."

Saridan interrupted. "And you would do anything to protect the serenity of our society?"

"Anything within my power," the teacher said.

The Torans exchanged a glance before Dalis continued.

"The truth, dear friend, is that a Change has not occurred in Farfallow since the beginning of our days here." He paused to see the confusion on the teacher's face, but resumed quickly to anticipate the questions. "When I first arrived, I saw that people were starving themselves and their families. They refused to live in a society out of fear for their lives. They abandoned all hope of rejoining humanity. I watched as people died; your sister included." Vieusagi felt a pang of guilt and remorse, but kept his burden inside.

"I knew something needed to be done. I invented my Change, the same as any child might do to comfort their parents. But my Change was to comfort the city."

"But the bodies..." Vieusagi questioned.

"Some were those that had starved, dragged to the street and set on fire." Dalis said.

"Some were those that refused our society," Saridan interrupted, as his father shot him a glance. "Over the years, my father had been protested by quite a few. And, ironically, their deaths served our cause."

"I don't understand," Vieusagi said. "So you have not incurred The Change?"

"No," said Dalis. "None of us have."

"And Saridan?"

"A charade," Saridan replied. "In order to keep stability, we needed to invent a greater Change so that the natural succession of our leadership would not be questioned by the people of Farfallow."

"But the city is gone," Vieusagi said.

"When my son went on his foraging mission, he left Farfallow to re-enter the city. The people that didn't abandon their homes found them to be their coffins. Their bones were in the streets, in the school desks, everywhere."

"A few had survived and their Change was evident." Saridan said. "Some were mutated beyond capacity for life. Others warred among them for food. They were destroying each other."

"So Saridan took it upon himself to assist them. He found an arsenal created for the war-that-never-came. And unleashed their destruction upon the city that created them."

"You vaporized the city." Vieusagi said.

"But not with The Change, teacher. With science."

"Why are you telling me this, brother?"

Dalis stepped forward again. "You must help my son maintain the balance by ensuring our people continue to follow him."

"Continue to fear me," Saridan interjected.

"You must continue to teach The Change so that every child will respect it. They must perform their labors and obey the three rules."

"But if there is no longer The Change, leader, there is nothing to fear anymore. Families can return to their lives together. People can come out from their tents, unafraid of the world and each other. It will be," Vieusagi reminisced, "like before."

"We cannot risk the evil the cities created. We must hold onto the way Farfallow has adopted in order to survive. No one can know that The Change is no longer. Do you understand?"

Vieusagi was enraged by his leaders lying to him after all these years. He thought of the children, too weak from their labors to absorb his teachings. He thought of his parents and the look on their faces as they stared him to sleep. He thought of his sister and the fact that her death could have been prevented.

And in the face of all the lies and fear, he remembered how his teaching had enlightened the children. And the constant manipulation of the government of the cities: spying, vaccinating, generating deception and disease. He couldn't let the family of Farfallow endure what he experienced as a child. There must not be another Lightcrux, of Ice-8. The children should never endure the vaccinations of A.S.H. and the mutations it created. Regardless of the suffering the town now felt, he knew the leaders were right.

"My allegiance remains with you," Vieusagi said, regretfully.

The three heard, as Vieusagi spoke his oath, a timid, muffled gasp. Saridan, the fastest of the men, ran in the direction of the sound and disappeared among the stony fossils of trees. In seconds, he emerged dragging a screaming Calla.

Unable to control the girl by dragging, Saridan grabbed her and threw her over his shoulder. She beat his back with her hands and cried for Vieusagi's help. Re-entering the clearing, he threw the girl to the ground where she landed with a thud. Regaining her senses, Calla scrambled to the arms of her teacher.

"What did you hear, girl?" Saridan hollered.

"Vieusagi," she said. "If there is no Change, we are once again free." She pleaded with her eyes as he held her close.

"You don't understand, daughter," the teacher said. He stroked her hair and calmed her pleas. "The Torans are right. It must be this way so that Farfallow has a future; even if they are not to be free."

Dalis, who'd remained quiet through the girl's discovery, approached the couple.

"I'm sorry, brother. I have spent my entire life protecting our way." He looked into Vieusagi's eyes while producing a knife from his belt. "She cannot live if we expect our society to thrive."

"She can, brother," Vieusagi cried, edging backward. "This is Calla, a student of mine. She can be trusted with our secret. She understands the consequences and I can vouch for her. Please, spare my daughter."

"I'm sorry, my friend. It is the only way." Dalis said.

Vieusagi pushed the girl behind him and shielded her from Dalis's advance.

"It will be over in a moment," Saridan leered, approaching from the side. "And her disappearance will be rumored as a consequence of protesting their new leader. The effigies of your generation will be the missing children of mine."

"You cannot have her," Vieusagi said.

"But we will. And when we are through with her, we'll select more people from time to time, to keep the fear strong. It is for the best of Farfallow."

"You CANNOT have this girl!" Vieusagi hollered.

Saridan, too, withdrew a knife and continued to approach the old man.

"Step back, brother," Vieusagi burned.

The men circled the teacher and girl.

"STEP AWAY!" Vieusagi screamed. His anger consumed him as he clutched the girl close, hugging her tightly. He squeezed her to his breast, attempting to shield any vulnerability from their view. Staring up to the sky, he saw a twitter of light dancing among eddies of dust. The dance of color slowly descended above him and, only when it was inches from Vieusagi's face, did he recognize the butterfly's shape.

Calla clutched him hard and cried into his arm as the butterfly landed on the old man's nose and radiated with a halo of forgotten blue light. As Vieusagi fainted to darkness, the world was suddenly silent. Even the constant dusty wind could no longer be heard.

Vieusagi held his father's hand and followed him through the trees. Up ahead, his sister danced among the swirl of butterflies, dappled in sun and warmth.

"Teacher?"

A voice brought the old man back to consciousness, but he dared not open his eyes; fixated on the memory of the dance.

"Father?"

The burst of light that entered his eyelids was overwhelming as tears streamed down his face. He saw his angel weeping over him. She was cradling the old man's head. Feebly, he blinked away the last remnants of dream and sat up with Calla's support. Gazing out, the two saw a cloudless blue sky and lush green trees. The grass was wavering in the breeze and dotted with thick drops of dew. Butterflies flittered through their branches and traced drunken shadows across the forest floor.

"Father, what happened?" Calla whispered, scared.

"I don't know, little one."

Their admiration of the rejuvenated world was broken with a cacophony of cries behind them. Vieusagi spun around to find a newborn child lying in the grass. The baby writhed as it cried and Calla arose to pick it up. Slowly, the screams subsided and the baby gurgled and cooed in her arms.

"Is this...?"

"Dalis Toran," Vieusagi finished.

Looking down, the two found themselves standing on a circle of dusty, dead earth.

Realization washed over Vieusagi as he looked into glowing blue eyes of the child. The teacher, after years of pretending in a village where mutations did not occur, had finally experienced The Change. He smiled at Calla and ruffled her hair. The girl slowly began to understand.

"Does this mean, father, that Saridan is gone?"

"Not gone, little one. I suspect with this child grows to a man, Saridan will be born again."

Vieusagi lifted his cup from the grass with a protest of creaks from his bones and chair. He looked out at the children and noted that most of their skin had lost their ashen hues and been restored to the healthy colors of his youth. He soothed his throat with a sip of water and returned the glass to the green earth below.

"Teacher," a young boy inquired. "What happened next?"

Vieusagi struggled to remember his place in the lesson.

"The gifts we have around us were the product of failures rather than successes," the old man said. "But every once in a while, nature is forgiving and helps us correct our mistakes. All that remains of the dead Farfallow," he said, "is a small patch of dusty earth in a clearing on the

edge of the forest. And with the rebirth of the lands, our civilization was also reborn. This is why there are no longer any rules.”

“But people still follow them, even though they don’t exist,” the boy said.

“Yes,” said the teacher, “but why is it different now?” The class looked to each other for an answer but produced only silence.

“Because.” a voice said from the tent flap. Vieusagi looked up to see a silhouette of Calla among the blinding blue light. “Because, now we are free to choose them.”

Calla entered and hugged the old man. He ruffled her hair as she sat down among the class.

The young boy raised his hand again.

“Teacher? The dead circle in the clearing...is this circle where you saw the butterfly? Is it,” he paused, “the place where your Change occurred?”

Vieusagi smiled at the question, knowing now he was also free to answer the question. Instead, however, he leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes.
