

**DEATH 1.** Mutti's cancer had progressed to her bowels. The hardest thing for her to accept about being old and sick was to be incontinent - she couldn't deal with that at all. She said she didn't enjoy life any more; I was very, very sad to see it had come to this. I went to Germany when she was released from hospital - she was frail. I visited her five times over the next two years; since I had to travel from Australia, that was more than I could afford. But I needed to spend that time with her. We talked on the phone a lot too. Mutti was clear in her mind right until the day she died - that made it even harder for her to bear her condition; she always had been contented, with a strong sense of style, but there wasn't much style left. She resisted giving up her home, but was lonely. On my next visit I moved her to the nursing home. Over the following months her health deteriorated rapidly and I went over to visit her again. On that visit, a few weeks before her death, Mutti asked "why am I dying?" I explained to her how her cancer had destroyed many of her organs and she could not process food anymore. Mutti decided - backed up by my brother and myself - not to be fed intravenously to prolong her life\*. I had to go back home again, for work. We talked on the phone every day; but I felt her life fading away. Soon after I had returned to Australia the nurse said my Mum was not well at all and would probably die within a few days. I flew back the next day. Mutti had lost so much weight; she was hardly more than skin and bones, with her eyes set deep into their sockets. She had stopped eating and drinking.

*During the years my mother was dying, I employed a thought-process that helped me greatly with my emotions. I made myself aware that a person does not 'pass away', but 'passes on'. I think of our selves, our soul, as living eternally; our current life on earth is just a brief appearance of soul in a body - temporary, fleeting and over in little more than an instance. For us to accept this belief may bring us inner peace. Then we can move toward resolving any issues we may have with friends or relatives. We realise that they - or ourselves - may 'pass on' any day, any minute, any second. All along we know that dying is natural, inevitable and normal. The best we can do is be ready and put ourselves at peace with our loved ones ... and indeed with all of humankind.*

*\*This course of action prompted her doctor, a Catholic, to suspend treatment and stop seeing her - whereas it was supported by the management of the Protestant-run hospice.*

*\*\*When my Mum mentioned her Near Death Experience, I asked her to tell me more - but she did not elaborate. For information about NDEs, go to [www.near-death.com](http://www.near-death.com)*

*\*\*The observance of passing through a dark tunnel toward a light at the time of death is a well-documented neurological phenomenon - probably not a religious experience.*

The nurses put a mattress on the floor for me, next to Mutti's bed. There she was, mouth half open, eyes nearly closed. Her breath was heavy. I watched her chest rise and drop - any minute, I thought, it would not rise again. I didn't move from her bedside for the next twenty four hours. Every now and again she came to - she would acknowledge me with a faint smile and a gentle squeeze of her hand. Next morning Mutti woke me asking "are you asleep?" Not any more, Mutti. She ate a couple of pieces of mandarin, but she vomited it all out right away. I said to Mutti, I hadn't thought she would make it through the night. Well, Mutti replied, she had to return; she had been on her way through a dark tunnel, going toward a light, but she had to go back - something took her by the shoulder and turned her around.\*\* Mutti had never thought about an afterlife - and what did I think about that? I told her I thought when we die we go to a place where we are one with those we love. She asked "will I then see Vati?" I said, maybe, but there's something better awaiting her: She will be one with the universal consciousness that includes Vati, our ancestors and her loved ones still alive. She replied "oh, that's good." I added, I didn't think in that region were any individuals; and I also told her I experience the same in my meditation. When I asked if she was afraid of dying she said "I'm not." I said "is there anything else we should talk about?" "No". I told her "I love you, Mutti." She said "I know." My Mum died soon after - and I was not the least bit sad.

*But how do we cope with an untimely or violent death? Probably the only way to come to terms with such a situation is to believe in karma. In a spiritual sense, a person dying is never untimely - the time of death is in our destiny. And the kind of death we endure is governed by our karma. Worldly justice must be done, of course, but again, in a spiritual sense, a death is never unjust. So how does one deal with a murderous drink-driver? For the victim, the violent death is a karmic debt repaid. But if the person who has caused this death is not brought to justice as we would like to see justice done, only the belief in higher justice can put us at ease. Then we know that due karma is assigned to the perpetrator, who must repay it - if not in this, then in a future life.*