

SUNBEAMS

Death is the sound of distant thunder at a picnic.

W.H. Auden

Death is everywhere. It may be the headlights of a car on a hilltop in the distance behind. They may remain visible for a while, and disappear into the darkness as if they had been scooped away; only to appear on another hilltop, and then disappear again. Those are the lights on the head of death. Death puts them on like a hat and then shoots off on a gallop, gaining on us, getting closer and closer. Sometimes it turns off its lights. But death never stops.

Carlos Castaneda

The graveyards are full of indispensable men.

Charles de Gaulle

How this feels is I'm just another task in God's daily planner: The Renaissance penciled in for right after the Dark Ages. The Information Age is scheduled immediately after the Industrial Revolution. Then the Postmodern Era, then the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Famine. Check. Pestilence. Check. War. Check. Death. Check. And between the big events, the earthquakes and tidal waves, God's got me squeezed in for a cameo appearance. Then maybe in thirty years, or maybe next year, God's daily planner has me finished.

Chuck Palahniuk

To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know. No one knows whether death may not be the greatest of all blessings for a man, yet men fear it as if they knew that it is the greatest of evils.

Socrates

The leaves move in the garden, the sky is pale, and I catch myself weeping. It is hard — it is hard to make a good death.

Katherine Mansfield

Life is tough . . . What do you get at the end of it? A death. What's that, a bonus? I think the life cycle is all backward. You should die first, get it out of the way. Then you live in an old-age home. You get kicked out when you're too young, you get a gold watch, you go to work. You work forty years until you're young enough to enjoy your retirement. You do drugs, alcohol, you party, you get ready for high school. You go to grade school, you become a kid, you play, you have no responsibilities, you become a little baby, you go back into the womb, you spend your last nine months floating — and you finish off as an orgasm.

George Carlin

When one cannot be sure that there are many days left, each single day becomes as important as a year, and one does not waste an hour in wishing that that hour were longer, but simply fills it, like a smaller cup, as high as it will go without spilling over.

Natalie Kusz

That is what they call being reconciled to die. They call it reconciled when pain has strummed a symphony of suffering back and forth across you, up and down, round and round you until each little fiber is worn tissue-thin with aching. And when you are lying beaten and buffeted, battered and broken — pain goes out, joins hands with Death, and comes back to dance, dance, dance, stamp, stamp, stamp down on you until you give up.

Marita Bonner

Old age cannot be cured. An epoch or a civilization cannot be prevented from breathing its last. A natural process that happens to all flesh and all human manifestations cannot be arrested. You can only wring your hands and utter a beautiful swan song.

Renee Winegarten

The goal of every culture is to decay through overcivilization; the factors of decadence — luxury, skepticism, weariness, and superstition — are constant. The civilization of one epoch becomes the manure of the next.

Cyril Connolly

I have always looked upon decay as being just as wonderful and rich an expression of life as growth.

Henry Miller

When the signs of age begin to mark my body (and still more when they touch my mind); when the ill that is to diminish me or carry me off strikes from without or is born within me; when the painful moment comes in which I suddenly awaken to the fact that I am ill or growing old; . . . in all those dark moments, O God, grant that I may understand that it is You (provided only my faith is strong enough) who are painfully parting the fibers of my being in order to penetrate to the very marrow of my substance and bear me away within Yourself.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Death is only a change of condition: time and space are in you; you are not in time and space.

Swami Vivekananda

I am letting go of my idea of time. I see that eternal life is not a question of "I will be forever," but of "Now I am." Eternity is time dying in me.

Jean Lanier

Sunbeams are welcome and may be sent to The Sun, 107 North Roberson Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516. We're sorry, but we're unable to respond personally to your suggestions.