

the
green fuse
book
of
poetry
and
words
for
funerals

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower,
drives my green age. Dylan Thomas

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Love and Friendship

From A New Belonging by Henri Nouwen ©

The deaths of those whom we love and who love us open up the possibility of a new, more radical communion, a new intimacy, a new belonging to each other. If love is, indeed, stronger than death, then death has the potential to deepen and strengthen the bonds of love

The death of the one you love bears fruit in many lives. You and I have to trust that our short little lives can bear fruit far beyond the boundaries of our own time. But we have to choose this, and trust deeply that we have a spirit to send that will bring joy, peace and life to those who will remember us.

Adapted from Our Life Must Be A Continuation of Theirs by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh © Cruse

When someone we love dies, we must live up to the great encounter of a living soul with a living God. We must let go of everything that was small, that was separation, alienation and estrangement, and reach out to that serenity and greatness, newness and abundance of life into which the departed person has entered. We should not speak of our love in the past tense. Love is a thing that does not fade in a faithful heart. We must keep our love alive in a new situation, as actively and creatively as when the person was with us. Our love cannot be dead because a person has died. Our life must be a continuation of theirs, with all its significance. We must reflect on all that was beauty, and nobility, in that person, and make sure those around us do not lose anything through the death. This applies to all families and friends as well as the immediate bereaved, so that the seed that has fallen may give a hundredfold harvest in the hearts and lives of others.

Farewell by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) © adapted

I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my friends!
I bow to you all and take my departure.
Here I give back the keys of my door
- and I give up all claims to my house.
I only ask for last kind words from you.
We were good friends for long,
And I received more than I could give.
Now the day has dawned
And the lamp that lit my dark corner is out.
A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.

How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count The Ways by Elisabeth Barrett

Browning *Note: If you prefer, substitute 'you' for 'thee' throughout the poem*

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints-I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! - and if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Where do the flowers go? from treatise on cherry blossom by Hua-Kuang

The blossoms weep dew or fill their cups with mist droplets as if they were sad and lamenting. They can endure sharp frost and snow. Some are large, some small, some stand erect, others lean over. They announce Spring's earliest beginning. Shyly blushing they turn their laughing faces away from the sun. Then they open wide, before they start to fade. The buds are like strings of pearls, protected from cold and chilling mist, well-sheltered until spring summons them to open. Then come the bees and butterflies, and finally the wind. So is their life-cycle fulfilled, but from the moment when they open to when they fade away they radiate love.

I loved her like the leaves by Kakinononto Hitomaro

I loved her like the leaves,
The lush green leaves of spring
That pulled down the willows
on the bank's edge where we walked
while she was of this world.

To the shimmering wide fields
hidden by the white cloud,
white as white silk scarf
she soared away like the morning bird,
hid from our world like the setting sun.

Farewell my friends by Gitanjali Rabindadrath Tagore (Gitanjali)

It was beautiful
As long as it lasted
The journey of my life

When you live in the hearts
Of those you love
Remember then...
You never die.

I have no regrets
Whatsoever save
The pain I'll leave behind

Those dear hearts
Who love and care
And the heavy with sleep
Ever moist eyes
The smile in spite of a

Lump in the throat
And the strings pulling
At the heart and soul

The strong arms
That held me up
When my own strength
Let me down
Each morsel that I was
Fed with was full of love

At every turning of my life
I came across
Good friends
Friends who stood by me
Even when the time raced me
by.

Farewell
Farewell
My friends

I smile and
Bid you goodbye
No, shed no tears
For I need them not
All I need is your smile

If you feel sad
Do think of me
For that's what I'll like

LOVE SONNET LXXXIX by Pablo Neruda

When I die I want your hands on my eyes:
I want the light and wheat of your beloved hands
to pass their freshness over me once more:
I want to feel the softness that changed my destiny.

I want you to live while I wait for you, asleep.
I want your ears still to hear the wind, I want you
to sniff the sea's aroma that we loved together,
to continue to walk on the sand we walk on.

I want what I love to continue to live
and you whom I love and sang above everything else
to continue to flourish, full-flowered:

so that you can teach everything my love directs you to,
so that my shadow can travel along in your hair,
so that everything can learn the reason for my song.

Loss and Grief

In Blackwater Woods by Mary Oliver

Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfilment,

the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,
And every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is

nameless now.
Every year
everything
I have ever learned
in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side
is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

Always Saying Farewell by Adlai Stevenson

We are always saying farewell in this world, always standing at the edge of a loss, attempting to retrieve some human meaning from the silence, something which was precious and is gone.

Adapted from: The Old Pattern and the New by Colin Murray Parkes

Because we are one people, one community, the death of one is the concern of all. In the face of death each one of us can achieve grandeur, but if we turn our backs on death we remain like children, clinging to a land of make-believe. For death is a necessary interruption, and through the painful work of grieving we rediscover the past and weave it afresh into a new reality.

Our aim is not to cancel out the past, to try to forget, but to ensure that the strength and meaning which gave beauty to the old pattern is remembered and reinterpreted in the new pattern now emerging. Every one must die, but the world is permanently changed by each person's existence. At the point of death we meet the forces of our own evolution. We may back away in fear, refuse the chance to change, drown our pain in drugs or alcohol or meaningless activity, or we may accept the pains of grief and begin the long struggle to rediscover meaning in a life whose meanings can no longer be taken for granted. There is no easy way through the long valley but we have faith in the ability of each one to find his own way, given time and encouragement of the rest of us.

Evolution by John Banister Tabb

Out of the dusk a shadow,
Then, a spark.

Out of the cloud a silence,
then, a lark.

Out of the heart a rapture,
Then, a pain.

Out of the dead, cold ashes,
Then life again.

Often When the Heart Is Torn with Sorrow by Helen Keller ©

Let us not weep for those who have gone away when their lives were at full bloom and beauty Who shall say whether those who die in the splendour of their prime are not fortunate to have known no abatement, no dulling of the flame, no slow fading of life's perfect flower.

On Pain by Kahlil Gibran

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding. Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun, so must you know pain. And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy; and you would accept the seasons of your heart, even as you have always accepted the seasons that pass over your fields, and you would watch with serenity through the winters of your grief.

"Companion Through the Darkness" by Stephanie Ericsson

Grief is the ashes from which the phoenix rises and the mettle of rebirth. It returns life from the dead. It teaches that there is nothing absolutely true or untrue....Grief will make a new person out of you; if it doesn't kill you in the making.

Elegy by D H Lawrence

Since I lost you my darling, the sky has come near,
And I am of it, the small sharp stars are quite clear, ## or near?
The white moon going among them like a white bird among snow-berries,
And the sound of her gently rustling in heaven like a bird I hear.

And I am willing to come to you now, my dear.
As a pigeon lets itself off from a cathedral dome
To be lost in the haze of the sky. I would like to come,
And be lost out of sight with you, and be gone like foam.

For I am tired, my dear, and if I could lift my feet,
My tenacious feet from off the dome of the earth
To fall like a breath within the breathing wind
Where you are lost, what rest, my love, what rest!

To Daffodils by Robert Herrick

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon:
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong;
And, having prayed together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay as you;
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you or anything.
We die,
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

Let Me Go by Anon

When I come to the end of the road
And the sun has set for me
I want no rites in a gloom filled room
Why cry for a soul set free?
Miss me a little, but not for long
And not with your head bowed low
Remember the love that once we shared
Miss me, but let me go.
For this is a journey we all must take
And each must go alone.
It's all part of the master plan
A step on the road to home.
When you are lonely and sick at heart
Go to the friends we know.
Laugh at all the things we used to do
Miss me, but let me go.

May Time Soften Your Pain by Anon

In times of darkness, love sees....
In times of silence, love hears
In times of doubt, love hopes ...
In times of sorrow, love heals
And in all times, love remembers.
May time soften the pain
Until all that remains
Is the warmth of the memories
And the love.

Be Swift To Love by Henri Frederic Amiel

Life is short and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are travelling the dark journey with us. Oh, be swift to love, make haste to be kind!

A Different Self Susan Jacoby (1945-) ©

Most people manage eventually to make their way through the painful stages of grief and eventually regain their emotional balance. What they need desperately are caring friends and relatives who allow them to grieve in their own way, at their own pace and who, above all, will not insist that they act like their "old selves." For no one who has suffered a terrible loss will ever be their old self again. She may be a different self or even a better self, but she will never regain the identity that was untouched by grief.

On Pain Kahlil Gibran (1883- 1931) LD/CL Grief

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding. Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun, so must you know pain. And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy; and you would accept the seasons of your heart, even as you have always accepted the seasons that pass over your fields, and you would watch with serenity through the winters of your grief.

From The Slow Wisdom of Grief Georgia Harkness (1891-1974)

First, one must accept the inevitable. One may be too stunned at first to believe it can be true. Yet it is true. The person who was a warm, sweet, living presence is no longer here, and will not be again except in memory. No fruitful re-ordering of life is possible until this fact is accepted.

One must not expect all at once to adjust to it. It is part of 'grief's slow wisdom' that only time can heal the poignancy of the hurt. To try to hurry the process is not so much disrespect toward the deceased as the creation of new inner conflicts in the living.

One must give expression without shame to his grief if one feels moved to weep in private or in public, it is far better to do so than to keep it bottled up. Repression can work serious havoc by driving the poison of sorrow inward.

from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,
and you shall see that in truth you are weeping
for that which has been your delight.

Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow,"
and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."
But I say unto you, they are inseparable.

from Companion Through the Darkness by Stephanie Ericsson

Grief is the ashes from which the phoenix rises and the mettle of rebirth. It returns life from the dead. It teaches that there is nothing absolutely true or untrue....Grief will make a new person out of you; if it doesn't kill you in the making.

This Being Human Is A Guest House by Rumi.

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning is a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.
Welcome difficulty.
Learn the alchemy
True Human Beings know:
The moment you accept what trouble
you've been given, the door opens.

Comfort and hope

A Song Of Living by Amelia Josephine Burr

Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.
I have sent up my gladness on wings, to be lost in the blue of the sky.
I have run and leaped with the rain, I have taken the wind to my breast.
My cheek like a drowsy child to the face of the earth I have pressed.
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

I have kissed young Love on the lips, I have heard his song to the end.
I have struck my hand like a seal in the loyal hand of a friend.
I have known the peace of heaven, the comfort of work done well.
I have longed for death in the darkness and risen alive out of hell.
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

I give a share of my soul to the world where my course is run.
I know that another shall finish the task I must leave undone.
I know that no flower, nor flint was in vain on the path I trod.
As one looks on a face through a window, through life I have looked on God.
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

The Dragonfly

Once, in a little pond, in the muddy water under the lily pads, there lived a little water beetle in a community of water beetles. They lived a simple and comfortable life in the pond with few disturbances and interruptions.

Once in a while, sadness would come to the community when one of their fellow beetles would climb the stem of a lily pad and would never be seen again. They knew when this happened; their friend was dead, gone forever.

Then, one day, one little water beetle felt an irresistible urge to climb up that stem. However, he was determined that he would not leave forever. He would come back and tell his friends what he had found at the top.

When he reached the top and climbed out of the water onto the surface of the lily pad, he was so tired, and the sun felt so warm, that he decided he must take a nap. As he slept, his body changed and when he woke up, he had turned into a beautiful blue-tailed dragonfly with broad wings and a slender body designed for flying.

So, fly he did! And, as he soared he saw the beauty of a whole new world and a far superior way of life to what he had never known existed.

Then he remembered his beetle friends and how they were thinking by now he was dead. He wanted to go back to tell them, and explain to them that he was now more alive than he had ever been before. His life had been fulfilled rather than ended.

But, his new body would not go down into the water. He could not get back to tell his friends the good news. Then he understood that their time would come, when they, too, would know what he now knew. So, he raised his wings and flew off into his joyous new life!

~Author Unknown~

Kindness by Naomi Shihab Nye

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers, eating maize and chicken
will stare out of the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes any sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and purchase bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

I am there by Iris Hesselden

Look for me when the tide is high
And the gulls are wheeling overhead
When the autumn wind sweeps the cloudy sky
And one by one the leaves are shed
Look for me when the trees are bare
And the stars are bright in the frosty sky
When the morning mist hangs on the air
And shorter darker days pass by.

I am there, where the river flows
And salmon leap to a silver moon
Where the insects hum and the tall grass grows
And sunlight warms the afternoon
I am there in the busy street
I take you hand in the city square
In the market place where the people meet
In your quiet room – I am there

I am the love you cannot see
And all I ask is – look for me.

I Go Among Trees by Wendell Berry

I go among trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places
Where I left them, asleep like cattle .

Then what I am afraid of comes.
I live for a while in its sight.
What I fear in it leaves it,
And the fear of it leaves me.
It sings, and I hear its song.

The Peace Of Wild Things by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting for their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Miss Me - But Let Me Go Anon

When I come to the end of the road,
And the sun has set for me,
I want no rites in a gloom-filled room,
Why cry for a soul set free?

Miss me a little, but not too long,
And not with your head bowed low.
Remember the love that we once shared,
Miss me - but let me go.

For this is a journey we all must take,
And each must go alone;
It's all a part of life's great plan,
A step on the road to home.

When you are lonely with heavy heart.
Go to the friends we know.
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds;
Miss me - but let me go.

If I should go tomorrow by Anon

If I should go tomorrow
It would never be goodbye,
For I have left my heart with you,
So don't you ever cry.
The love that's deep within me,
Shall reach you from the stars,
You'll feel it from the heavens,
And it will heal the scars.

What Is Precious by Stephen Spender ©

What is precious is never to forget
The essential delight of the blood drawn from ageless springs
Breaking through rocks in worlds before our earth.
Never to deny its pleasure in the morning simple light
Nor its grave evening demand for love.
Never to allow gradually the traffic to smother
With noise and fog, the flowering of the spirit.

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields,
See how these friends are feted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
Born of the sun, they travelled a short while toward the sun
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.

Of Death from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

Then Amitra spoke, saying, 'We would ask now of Death'.
And He said:
'You would know the secret of death. But how shall you find it
unless you seek it in the heart of life?
The owl whose night-bound eyes are blind to the day cannot
unveil the mystery of light.
If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart
wide to the body of life.
For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.
In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent
knowledge of the beyond;
And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams
of spring.
Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.
optional
Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when
he stands before the king whose hand is laid upon him in honour.
Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he shall
wear the mark of the king?
Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling?

Adapted from **Death Cannot Kill What Never Dies** **William Penn**

Those who share friendship and love cannot be separated by death. Death cannot kill what never dies. Death is like crossing the sea. You may be far from your friends and those you love, but you live in one another still. This is the comfort of friends, that though they may be said to die, yet their friendship is ever present, because immortal.

This Heritage **Anon**

They are not dead, those who leave us this great heritage of remembered joy.

They still live in our hearts, in the happiness we knew and in the dreams we shared. They still breathe in the lingering fragrance, windblown from their favourite flowers. They still smile in the moonlight's silver and laugh in the sunlight's sparkling gold. They still speak in the echoes of familiar words we've heard them say again and again. They still move in the rhythm of waving grasses, in the dance of the leafy branches. They are not dead; their memory is warm in our hearts, their comfort in our sorrow. They are not apart from us, but a part of us. For love is eternal, and those we love are with us for all eternity.

You'll Never Walk Alone **Oscar Hammerstein (1846-1919)**

When you walk through the storm
Hold your head up high,
And don't be afraid of the dark.
At the end of the storm
There's a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark.
Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain.
Though your dreams be tossed and blown.
Walk on. walk on with hope in your heart,
And you'll never walk alone.
You'll never walk alone.

Adapted from: Death Cannot Destroy Love by Charles H Brent

Of course no one can help the suffering which comes with loss. Indeed, who would escape it if they could? It is the one means left to us by which to declare the reality and depth of our love for the one taken from us. We feel the agony because we have loved. Go on in the comforting knowledge that you and those you love are tied by a bond against which death is as powerless as a colour to extinguish the sun or a hammer to destroy a moonbeam.

Love is Stronger than Fear

Mark DeWolfe

Know that the love which blooms inside you is stronger than fear, for people who love find strength they don't know they had. Know that the love inside you is stronger than illness, for people who love hang in when physical health is gone. And know that love is indeed stronger than death, for people who love are like stones tossed into a pool. The circles of love radiate out and echo back long after the stone has come to rest at the bottom.

Adapted from Often When the Heart Is Torn with Sorrow by Hellen Keller (1880-1968) ©

Let us not be sorry for those who have gone away when they were in full flower, at the height of their power and blazing with beauty Who shall say whether those who die in the splendour of their prime are not fortunate to have known no fading of the bloom, no abatement of the energy, no dulling of the flame,

Adapted from O God, Whose Ways Are Hidden in Common Worship; Pastoral Services, C of E

O God, whose plan is unknown to us, who makes nothing without purpose and loves every creature and object; we give You thanks for Your son/ daughter (Name), who was so dear to us, for his/her life and his/her love, and for the light and peace and contentment which he/she brought to us. Comfort us, whose hearts are weary and sore with grief, and grant that we may so love and serve You in this life by love and service to others, that with Name we may obtain the fullness of Your promises in the world to come. Amen

If I Should Die by A Price Hughes

If I should die and leave you here awhile,
Be not like others, sore undone, who keep
Long vigils by the silent dust, and weep.
For my sake, turn again to life and smile,
Nerving thy heart and trembling hand to do
Something to comfort weaker hearts than thine.
Complete those dear unfinished tasks of mine,
And I perchance may therein comfort you.

Prayer for those Who Have Committed Suicide **by Vienna Cobb**
Anderson

Bless, O God of eternal life,
all who have died
by their own hand.
Grant them peace
from their inner turmoil
and the compassion of your love.

Comfort those who mourn
their loved ones.
Strengthen them to face the questions of pain,
the guilt and anger,
the irreparable loss.

Help us to reach out in love
to others who prefer death
to the choices of life
and to their families who grieve.

Simon's adaptation

We ask for the unconditional love of true compassion, the blessing of eternal life and the blessing of peace for all those who chose their own death over life. We ask for comfort for those who mourn them, the strength to forgive any hurts and misunderstandings, and freedom from any guilt and anger resulting from their irreparable loss.

Look To Each Day Sanskrit Poem

Look to each day, for it is life,
The very life of life.
In its brief course lie all the realities
And truths of existence:
The joy of growth,
The splendour of action,
And the glory of being.
For every yesterday is only a memory
And tomorrow is only a vision.
But each day well lived makes
Every yesterday a memory of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well therefore to each day.

From: Ailey, Baldwin, Floyd, Killens, and Mayfield Maya Angelou ©

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.

Transition, eternity and divine love

Divine Love Cannot Change by Leo Tolstoy

Loving with human love, one may pass from love to hatred; but divine love cannot change. Nothing, not even death, can shatter it. It is the very nature of the soul ... Love is life. All, all that I understand, I understand only because I love. All is, all exists only because I love. All is bound up in love alone. Love is God, and dying means for me a particle of love, to go back to the universal and eternal source of love.

A Gateway to a Better Place by Cardinal George Basil Hume

Death is a formidable foe until we learn to make it a friend. Death is to be feared if we do not learn to welcome it. Death is the ultimate absurdity if we do not see it as fulfilment. Death haunts us when viewed as a journey into nothingness rather than a pilgrimage to a place where true happiness is to be found.

The human mind cannot understand death. We face it with fear and uncertainty, revulsion even; or we turn away from the thought for it is too hard to bear.

But faith gives answers when reason fails. The strong instinct to live points to immortality. Faith admits us into death's secrets. Death is not the end of the road, but a gateway to a better place. It is in this place that our noblest aspirations will be realised.

It is here that we will understand how our experiences of goodness, love, beauty and joy are realities which exist perfectly in God. It is in heaven that we shall rest in him and our hearts will be restless until they rest in God.

A New Quietness fills our Heart James Gordon Gilkey ©

Why do we claim that the world beyond death is a world without terrors? Because we believe that a God of love, unfailing and all-including love, planned this vast scheme of things. We cannot believe that God would frighten or hurt any of his children, either in life or after death. When terrifying things happen here on earth they are (we believe) the work of something or someone other than our God in heaven. And the life after death? We believe that it is through a quiet door the dead pass, that it is in a friendly world they find themselves, that there they retain their identity and their love for us. At that point our speculations stop, but meantime our fear has faded. In place of dread a new quietness fills our hearts. We are confident that our dead are safe, and that around them as around us is a never-failing Divine Love.

Adapted from The Miracle of Transformation by Rufus Jones ©

I never go to a funeral without thinking of this miracle of transformation which brings the bird out of the egg, the flower out of the seed, the dragon-fly out of its water lava. The body is only the empty shell, the shattered seed, the old husk, which the forces of nature will slowly turn back again into its original element, to use over again for its myriad processes of building. After death the bird sings, the flower blooms and the dragon-fly snaps its wings open and floats away.

Adapted from the Night by Henry Vaughan

There is in God (some say)
A deep, but dazzling darkness. Perhaps we
Say it is late and dusky, because we
See not clearly;
O for that night! where I in him
Might live invisible and dim.

Adapted from A Return to Eternity by John Muir

The rugged old Norsemen spoke of death as home-going. So the snow-flowers go home when they melt and flow to the sea, and the rock-ferns, after unrolling their fronds to the light and beautifying the rocks, roll them up close again in the autumn and blend with the soil. Myriads of rejoicing living creatures, daily, hourly, perhaps every moment sink into death's arms, dust to dust, spirit to spirit - waited on, watched over, noticed only by their Maker, each arriving at its own Heaven-dealt destiny. All the merry dwellers of the trees and streams, and the myriad swarms of the air, called into life by the sunbeam of a summer morning, go home through death, wings folded perhaps in the last red rays of sunset of the day they were first tried. Trees towering in the sky, braving storms of centuries, flowers turning faces to the light for a single day or hour, having enjoyed their share of life's feast - all alike pass on and away under the law of death and love. All are our brothers and sisters enjoy life as we do, share Heaven's blessings with us, and die. They come with us out of eternity and return into eternity.

Separated By the Thinnest of Veils Abbe Henri de Tourville

We must think of the dead as alive and joyful and we must rejoice in their happiness, remembering that we are in close and constant communion with them, our life only separated from theirs by the thinnest of veils. We must remember, too that this does not separate us either from God - our eternal joy, who more than makes up all that we lack - or from the companionship of those who are with God in infinite time and space. Let us be brave and keep the eyes of our souls wide open to all these realities; let us see clearly around us those things which others only care to see dimly.

White Owl Flies In And Out Of The Field by Mary Oliver

Coming down
out of the frozen sky
with its depths of light,
like an angel,
or a budda with wings,
it was beautiful
and accurate,
striking the snow and whatever was there
with a force that left the imprint
of the tips of its wings –
five feet apart – and the grabbing
thrust of its feet,
and the indentation of what had been running
through the white valleys
of the snow –

and then it rose, gracefully,
and flew back to the frozen marshes,
to lurk there,
like a little lighthouse,
in the blue shadows –
so I thought:
maybe death
isn't darkness after all, but so much light
wrapping itself around us –
as soft as feathers –
that we are instantly weary
of looking, and looking, and shut our eyes,
not without amazement,
and let ourselves be carried,
as through the translucence of mica,
to the river
that is without the least dapple or shadow –
that is nothing but light – scalding, aortal light –
in which we are washed and washed
out of our bones.

The Buddha's Last Instruction

"Make of yourself a light "
said the Buddha,
before he died.
I think of this every morning
as the east begins
to tear off its many clouds
of darkness, to send up the first
signal - a white fan
streaked with pink and violet,
even green.
An old man, he lay down
between two sala trees,
and he might have said anything,
knowing it was his final hour.
The light burns upward,
it thickens and settles over the fields.
Around him, the villagers gathered
and stretched forward to listen.
Even before the sun itself
hangs, disattached, in the blue air,
I am touched everywhere
by its ocean of yellow waves.
No doubt he thought of everything
that had happened in his difficult life.
And then I feel the sun itself
as it blazes over the hills,
like a million flowers on fire-
clearly I'm not needed
yet I feel myself turning
into something of inexplicable value.
Slowly, beneath the branches,
he raised his head.
He looked into the faces of that frightened crowd.

Rumi

Why hold on to just one life till it is filthy and threadbare? The sun dies eternally and wastes a thousand lives each instant. God has decreed a life for you and He will give another, then another and another.

The Summer Day by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean--
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down--
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Life And Death Are One by Kahlil Gibran

Life and death are one, even as the
sea and river are one
In the depth of your hopes and desires
lies your silent knowledge of the beyond,
And like seeds dreaming beneath the
snow your heart dreams of spring.
Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden
the gate to eternity.

For what is it to die but to stand
naked in the wind and melt into the sun?
And what is it to cease breathing but
to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and
expand and seek God unencumbered
Only when you drink from the river of
silence shall you indeed sing,
And when you have reached the mountain
top, then you shall begin to climb,
And when the earth shall claim your
limbs, then shall you truly dance.

Moccasin Flowers

All my life,
so far,
I have loved
more than one thing,

including the mossy hooves
of dreams, including'
the spongy litter
under the tall trees.

In spring
the moccasin flowers
reach for the crackling
lick of the sun

and burn down. Sometimes,
in the shadows,
I see the hazy eyes,
the lamb-lips

of oblivion,
its deep drowse,
and I can imagine a new nothing
in the universe,

the matted leaves splitting
open, revealing
the black planks
of the stairs.

But all my life--sofar--
I have loved best
how the flowers rise
and open, how

the pink lungs of their bodies
enter the fore of the world
and stand there shining
and willing--the one

thing they can do before
they shuffle forward
into the floor of darkness, they
become the trees.

The Ship by Victor Hugo

I am standing upon the shore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength and I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and the sky come down to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says "there, She's gone". "Gone where?" "Gone from my sight, that's all". She is just as large in mast and spar and hull as ever she was when she left my side; just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of her destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her. "There, she's gone". There are other eyes watching her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout. "Here she comes". That is dying.

Crossing The Threshold by Rabindranath Tagore (Gitinjali)

I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life. What was the power that made me open out into this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight. When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother. Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me.

This Heritage Anon

They are not dead, who leave us this great heritage of remembered joy. They still live in our hearts, in the happiness we knew, in the dreams we shared. They still breathe, in the lingering fragrance windblown from their favourite flowers. They still smile in the moonlight's silver and laugh in the sunlight's sparkling gold. They still speak in the echoes of words we've heard them say again and again. They still move, in the rhythm of waving grasses, in the dance of the leafy branches. They are not dead; their memory is warm in our hearts, comfort in our sorrow. They are not apart from us, but a part of us, for love is eternal and those we love shall be with us throughout all eternity.

If I Be the First of Us to Die Nicholas Evans ©

If I be the first of us to die,
Let grief not blacken long your sky,
Be bold yet modest in your grieving.
There is a change but not a leaving.
For just as death is part of life,
The dead live on forever in the living.
And all the gathered riches of our journey,
The moments shared, the mysteries explored,
The steady layering of intimacy stored,
The things that made us laugh or weep or sing,
The joy of sunlit snow or first unfurling of the spring.
The wordless language of look and touch.
The knowing,
Each giving and each taking,
These are not flowers that fade,
Nor trees that fall and crumble,
Nor are they stone,
For even stone cannot the wind and rain withstand
And mighty mountain peaks in time reduce to sand.
What we were, we are.
What we had, we have.
A conjoined past imperishably present.
So when you walk the woods where once we walked together
And scan in vain the dappled bank beside you for my shadow,
Or pause where we always did upon the hill to gaze across the land
And spotting something, reach by habit for my hand,
And finding none, feel sorrow start to steal upon you,
Be still.
Close your eyes.
Breathe.
Listen for my footfall in your heart.
I am not gone but merely walk within you.

I'm Free by Anon

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free,
I'm following the path God has laid for me.
I took his hand when I heard his call
I turned my back and left it all,
I could not stay another day
To laugh, to love, to work, to play
Tasks left undone must stay that way
I found the peace at close of day.
If my parting has left a void
Then fill it with remembered joys -
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss
Oh yes! These things I too will miss.
Be not burdened with times of sorrow.
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow
My life's been full, I savoured much,
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your hearts, and peace to thee -
God wanted me now, he set me free.

Adapted from The Beyond by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

It seems such a little way to me.
Across to that strange country, the Beyond;
And yet, not strange, for it has grown to be
The home of those of whom I am so fond;
They make it seem familiar and most dear,
As journeying friends bring distant countries near.

And so for me there is no sting to death,
And so the grave has lost its victory;
It is but crossing with abated breath
A journey across a little strip of sea,
To find the loved ones waiting on the shore,
More beautiful, more precious than before.

Death Is Nothing At All by Henry Scott Holland

Death is nothing at all. I have only slipped away into the next room. Everything remains exactly as it was. I am I, and you are you. The old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged. Whatever we were to each other then, that we are still. Call me by my old familiar name. Speak of me in the easy way which you always used. Put no difference into your tone. Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow. Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together. Play, smile, think of me. Let my name be ever the household word that it always was. Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it. Life means all that it ever meant. It is the same as it ever was. There is absolute and unbroken continuity... why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight? I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just round the corner. All is well. Nothing is past; nothing is lost. One brief moment and all will be as it was before - only better, infinitely happier and forever - we will all be one together (in Christ).

There are no dead. Anon

There are no dead people
There are only the living
On earth and beyond.
Death is real,
But it is nothing save a moment
A second, a step.
The step from ephemeral to permanent
From temporal to eternal.
So when a *child / young person / man / woman / person* dies
From the caterpillar emerges the butterfly
From the grain, the full blown ear.

Intimations of Immortality - by William Wordsworth

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
Trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Adapted from There Is No Death by A. Perry

There is no death.
The dust we tread shall change between the showers
To golden grain or rainbow tinted flowers.
And ever near us though unseen,
The Immortal spirits tread
Through all the boundless universe in life,
There are no dead.

High Flight by John Gillespie Magee ©

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of; wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there.
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air;
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights, with easy grace,
Where never lark nor even eagle flew -
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

Do not stand at my grave and weep by Mary Frye

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there, I do not sleep
I am a 1,000 winds that blow
I am the diamond glints on snow
I am the sun on ripened grain
I am the gentle autumn rain
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled light
I am the soft star that shines at night
Do not stand at my grave and cry
I am not there; I did not die.

Adapted from Let Us Go Hand in Hand by William Morris (1834-1896)

We are all going the same way, so let us go hand in hand. You help me and I'll help you. We shall not be here for very long, for soon death will come and rock us all to sleep. Let us help one another while we may.

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore by Shakespeare

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end,
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time, that gave, doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow;
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

A Common Destiny/Words about life and death by David Eaton ©

All living substance, all substance
of energy, being, and purpose,
are united and share the same destiny.

All people,
those we love and those we know not of,
are united and share the same destiny.

Birth-to-death
we share this unity with
the sun, stars, earth,
our brothers and sisters,
friends and strangers,
flowers of the field,
snowflakes,
volcanoes and moon beams.
Birth - Life - Death
Unknown - Known - Unknown.
I pray that we will know the Awe
and not fall into attempting to explain it away.

The mystery *can* be our substance.
May we have the faith to accept this wonderful Mystery
and build upon its everlasting Truth.

Life Does Not Take Death Seriously Rabindranath Tagore ©

Life as a whole never takes death seriously. It laughs, dances and plays, it builds, hoards and loves in death's face. Only when we detach one individual death do we see its blankness and become dismayed. We lose sight of the wholeness of a life of which death is a part. It is like looking at a piece of cloth through a microscope. It appears like a net; we gaze at the big holes and shiver in imagination. But the truth is, death is not the ultimate reality. It looks black as the sky looks blue; but it does not blacken existence, just as the sky does not leave its stain upon the wings of a bird.

edited extract from WHITE ASHES by Renyo

In silently contemplating the transient nature of human existence, nothing is more fragile and fleeting in this world than the life of a person. Life swiftly passes and who among people can maintain his form for even a hundred years? Those who leave before us are countless as drops of dew. When the winds of impermanence blow, our eyes are closed forever; and when the last breath leaves us, our face loses its colour.

Though loved ones gather and lament, everything is to no avail. The body is then sent into an open field and vanishes from this world with the smoke of cremation, leaving only the white ashes. There is nothing more real than this truth of life.

The fragile nature of human existence underlies both the young and the old and therefore we must, one and all, awaken to the ultimate source of life.

By so understanding the meaning of death, we shall come to appreciate fully the meaning of this life which is unrepeatable and thus to be treasured above all else. By virtue of true compassion let us together live with the thought of *Name* in our hearts.

The City of Brahman from the Chandogya Upanishad

In the city of Brahman is a secret dwelling, the lotus of the heart. Within this dwelling is a space, and within that space is the fulfilment of our desires. What is within that space should be longed for and realised.

As great as the infinite space beyond is the space within the lotus of the heart. Both heaven and earth are contained in that inner space, both fire and air, sun and moon, lightning and stars. Whether we know it in this world or not, everything is contained in that inner space.

Never fear that old age will invade that city; never fear that this inner treasure of all reality will wither and decay. This knows no ageing when the body ages; this knows no dying when the body dies. This is the real city of Brahman; this is the Self, free from old age, from death and grief, hunger and thirst. In the Self all desires are fulfilled.

Adapted Some things Will Never Change by Thomas Wolfe

Some things will never change. Some things will always be the same. Lean down your ear upon the earth, and listen.

All things belonging to the earth will never change - the leaf, the blade, the flower the wind that cries and sleeps and wakes again, the trees whose branches clash and tremble in the dark, the slow voice of the stream in the night, a woman's laughter in the dark, the delicate web of children's voices in bright air - the glitter of sunlight on roughened water, the glory of the star, the innocence of morning, the smell of the sea in harbours, and something there that comes and goes and never can be captured, the thorn of spring, the sharp and tongueless cry - and the dust of lovers long since buried in the earth - all things proceeding from the earth to seasons, all things that lapse and change and come again upon the earth - these things will always be the same, for they come up from the earth that never changes, they go back into the earth that lasts forever. Only the earth endures, but it endures forever.

Pain and death will always be the same. But under the pavements trembling like a pulse, under the buildings trembling like a cry, under the waste of time, under the hoof of the beast and above the broken bones of cities, there will be something growing like a flower, something bursting from the earth again, forever deathless, faithful, springing into life again.

I Am Not I by Juan Ramon Jimenez, translated by Robert Bly

I am not I
I am this one
Walking beside me whom I do not see,
Whom at times I manage to visit,
And at other times I forget.
The one who remains silent when I talk,
The one who forgives, sweet, when I hate,
The one who takes a walk when I am indoors,
The one who will remain standing when I die.

The Spirit of the Redman by Anon

I am not separate from My Creation
Any more than your thoughts are separate from you.
I am not the Reality behind the world
But the Reality that is in it.
For I am the world with you
In all your life, wherever you are,
Wherever you go, wherever you look.
You can see Me in the Moon
And in the Stars That bring forth light out of the Darkness.
You can feel Me in the breeze that kisses your cheek.
You can hear Me in the flowing waters
That refresh and renew.
The tiny seed that grows to a mighty oak
Contains My power
And the bud that blossoms forth in flowers
Enfolds My fragrance.

I am with you now
In the ever-changing Present that is true Eternity,
Closer than breath that brings your body life,
Closer than thought that springs within the mind
That ignorant men call finite;
Closer than the beat that keeps your heart in tune.
For I am to be found nowhere but where you are.
For I am the One that is All and can be seen in all.
Anywhere. Everywhere.
And I am the All that is One in everyone.
So find Me now. Touch Me now. Feel Me now.
And love Me now. Wherever you are.
Then you will walk the Earth in Beauty.

A Moment In The Story Of A Single Atom Of Carbon

from The Periodic Table by Primo Levi, translated by Raymond Rosenthal

Our atom of carbon lies for hundreds of millions of years, bound to three atoms of oxygen and one of calcium, in the form of limestone. Already it has had a long cosmic history. Time does not exist for it, or exists only in the form of sluggish variations of temperature as, for the good fortune of this tale, its position is not too far from the earth's surface.

At any moment – which I, the narrator, decide to be the year 1840 – a blow of a pick axe detaches it and sends it on its way to the lime kiln, plunging it into the world of things that change. It is roasted and, still clinging to its oxygen companions, is issued from the chimney and takes the path of the air. Its story, which once was immobile, has now turned tumultuous.

It was caught by the wind, flung down on the earth, lifted ten kilometres high. It was breathed in by a falcon, descended into its precipitous lungs, but did not penetrate its rich blood and was expelled. It dissolved three times in the water of the sea, once in the water of a cascading torrent, and again was expelled. It travelled with the wind for eight years: now high, now low, on the sea and among the clouds, over forests, deserts, and limitless expanses of ice; then it stumbled into capture and the organic adventure.

The atom we are speaking of was borne by the wind along a row of vines in the year 1848. It had the good fortune to brush against a leaf, penetrate it, and be nailed there by a ray of the sun.

It has entered to form part of a molecule of glucose. It travels from the leaf to the trunk, and from here descends to the almost ripe bunch of grapes. What then follows is the province of the winemakers.

It is the destiny of wine to be drunk. Its drinker kept the molecule in his liver for more than a week, well curled up and tranquil, as a reserve aliment for a sudden effort; an effort that he was forced to make the following Sunday, pursuing a bolting horse. It was dragged by the bloodstream all the way to a minute muscle fibre in the thigh. Only some minutes after, the panting of the lungs was able to supply the oxygen necessary, so a new molecule of carbon dioxide was returned to the atmosphere.

Once again the wind, which this time travels far, sails over the Apennines and the Adriatic, Greece, the Aegean, and Cyprus: we are over Lebanon. And the dance is repeated.

The atom is now trapped in the venerable trunk of a cedar, one of the last. It is our whim to abandon it for a year or five hundred years: let us say that after twenty years (we are in 1868) a wood worm has taken interest in it. There it has swallowed and then it has formed a pupa, and in the spring it has come out in the shape of a gray moth which is now drying in the sun, confused and dazzled by the splendour of the day. Our atom is in one of the insect's thousand eyes.

The insect lays its eggs and dies, lies in the undergrowth of the woods, buried by the dead leaves and loam, but the death of atoms is never irrevocable. Here are at work the omnipresent, untiring and invisible micro-organisms of the humus. The carapace, with its eyes by now blind, has slowly disintegrated and the ex-drinker, ex-cedar, ex-woodworm has once again taken wing.

We will let it fly three times around the world, until 1960. It is again among us in a glass of milk. It is swallowed, crosses the intestinal threshold and enters the bloodstream: it migrates, knocks at the door of a nerve cell, enters, and supplants the carbon which was part of it. This cell belongs to a brain, and it my brain, the brain of the *me* who is writing.

What are years? by Marianne Moore

What is our Innocence,
what is our guilt?
All are naked, none is safe.
And whence is courage:
the unanswered question,
the resolute doubt,-
dumbly calling,
deafly listening in misfortune,
even death, encourages others
and in its defeat, stirs
the soul to be strong?

He sees deep and is glad,
who accedes to mortality
and in his imprisonment rises
upon himself as the sea in a chasm,
struggling to be free and unable to be,
in its surrendering finds its continuing.
So he who strongly feels, behaves.
The very bird,
grown taller as he sings, steels
his form straight up.
Though he is captive, his mighty singing says,
satisfaction is a lowly thing,
how pure a thing is joy.
This is mortality .
this is eternity .

When Death Comes by Mary Oliver

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps his purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles pox;

when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering;
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth
tending as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was a bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

Mockingbirds by Mary Oliver

This morning
two mockingbirds
in the green field
were spinning and tossing

the white ribbons
of their songs
into the air.
I had nothing

better to do
than listen.
I mean this
seriously.

In Greece,
a long time ago,
an old couple
opened their door

to two strangers
who were,
it soon appeared,
not men at all,

but gods.
It is my favourite story--
how the old couple
had almost nothing to give

but their willingness
to be attentive--
but for this alone
the gods loved them

and blessed them--
when they rose

out of their mortal bodies,
like a million particles of water

from a fountain,
the light
swept into all the corners
of the cottage,

and the old couple,
shaken with understanding,
bowed down--
but still they asked for nothing

but the difficult life
which they had already.
And the gods smiled, as they
vanished,
clapping their great wings.

Wherever it was
I was supposed to be
this morning--
whatever it was I said

I would be doing--
I was standing
at the edge of the field--
I was hurrying

through my own soul,
opening its dark doors--
I was leaning out;
I was listening.

Antidotes to Fear of Death by Rebecca Elson

Sometimes as an antidote
To fear of death,
I eat the stars.

Those nights, lying on my back,
I suck them from the quenching dark
Til they are all, all inside me,
Pepper hot and sharp

Sometimes, instead, I stir myself
Into a universe still young,
Still warm as blood:

No outer space, just space,
The light of all the not yet stars
Drifting like a bright mist,
And all of us, and everything
Already there
But unconstrained by form.

And sometimes it's enough
To lie down here on earth
Beside our long ancestral bones:

To walk across the cobble fields
Of our discarded skulls,
Each like a treasure, like a chrysalis,
Thinking: whatever left these husks
Flew off on bright wings.

I have been thinking ... by Kabir translated by Robert Bly

I have been thinking of the difference between water
and the waves on it. Rising,
water's still water, falling back,
it is water, will you give me a hint
how to tell them apart?

Because someone has made up the word
"wave," do I have to distinguish it
from water?

There is a Secret One inside us;
the planets in all the galaxies
pass through his hands like beads.

That is a string of beads one should look at with luminous eyes.

Are you looking for me? by Kabir translated by Robert Bly

Are you looking for me? I am in the next seat.
My shoulder is against yours.
you will not find me in the stupas, not in Indian shrine
rooms, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals:
not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding
around your own neck, nor in eating nothing but
vegetables.
When you really look for me, you will see me
instantly --
you will find me in the tiniest house of time.
Kabir says: Student, tell me, what is God?
He is the breath inside the breath.

There's a moon in my body... by Kabir translated by Robert Bly

There's a moon in my body, but I can't see it!
A moon and a sun.
A drum never touched by hands, beating, and I can't hear it!
As long as a human being worries about when he will die,
and what he has that is his,
all of his works are zero.
When affection for the I-creature and what it owns is dead,
then the work of the Teacher is over.
The purpose of labor is to learn;
when you know it, the labor is over.
The apple blossom exists to create fruit; when that
comes, the petal falls.
The musk is inside the deer, but the deer does not
look for it:
it wanders around looking for grass.

My body and my mind... by Kabir translated by Robert Bly

My body and my mind are in depression because
You are not with me.
How much I love you and want you in my house!
When I hear people describe me as your bride I look
sideways ashamed,
because I know that far inside us we have never met.
Then what is this love of mine?
I don't really care about food, I don't really care about
sleep,
I am restless indoors and outdoors.
The bride wants her lover as much as a thirsty man
wants water.
And how will I find someone who will take a message
to the Guest from me?
How restless Kabir is all the time!
How much he wants to see the Guest!

The bhakti path... by Kabir translated by Robert Bly

The bhakti path winds in a delicate way.
On this path there is no asking and no not asking.
The ego simply disappears the moment you touch
him.
The joy of looking for him is so immense that you
just dive in,
and coast around like a fish in the water.
If anyone needs a head, the lover leaps up to offer
his.
Kabir's poems touch on the secrets of this bhakti.

From East Coker by TS Eliot

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.
There is a time for the evening under starlight,
A time for the evening under lamplight
(The evening with the photograph album).
Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter.
Old men ought to be explorers
Here or there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.

Love After Love by Derek Walcott

The time will come
When, with elation,
You will greet yourself arriving
At your own door, in your own mirror,
And each will smile at the other's welcome.

And say, sit here, Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
To itself, to the stranger who has loved you

All your life, whom you ignored
For another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the shelf,

The photographs, the desperate notes,
Peel your image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

Peonies by Mary Oliver

This morning the green fists of the peonies are getting ready
to break my heart
as the sun rises
as the sun strokes them with his old buttery fingers

and they open –
pools of lace,
white and pink –
and all day the black ants climb over them,

boring their deep and mysterious holes
into the curls,
craving the sweet sap,
taking it away

to their dark, underground cities –
and all the day
under the shifty wind,
as in a dance to the great wedding,

the flowers bend their bright bodies,
and tip their fragrance to the air,
and rise,
their red stems holding

all that dampness and recklessness
gladly and lightly,
and there it is again –
beauty the brave, the exemplary

blazing open.
Do you love this world?
Do you cherish your humble and silky life?
Do you adore the green grass, with its terror beneath?

Do you also hurry, half-dressed and barefoot, into the garden,
and softly,
and exclaiming their dearness,
fill your arms with white and pink flowers,

with their honeyed heaviness, their lush trembling,
their eagerness
to be wild and perfect for a moment, before they are
nothing, forever?

Births by Pablo Neruda

We will never remember dying.

We were so patient
about being,
noting down
the numbers, the days,
the years and the months,
the hair, the mouths we kissed,
but that moment of dying:
we surrender it without a note,
we give it to others as remembrance
or we give it simply to water,
to water, to air, to time.
Nor do we keep
the memory of our birth,
though being born was important and fresh:
and now you don't even remember one
detail,
you haven't kept even a branch
of the first light.

It's well known that we are born.

It's well known that in the room
or in the woods
or in the hut in the fisherman's district
or in the crackling cane fields
there is a very unusual silence,
a moment solemn as wood,
and a woman gets ready to give birth.
It's well known that we were born.

But of the profound jolt
from not being to existing, to having hands,
to seeing, to having eyes,
to eating and crying and overflowing
and loving and loving and suffering and
suffering,
of that transition or shudder
of the electric essence that takes on
one more body like a living cup,
and of that disinhabited woman,
the mother who is left there with her blood

and her torn fullness
and her end and beginning, and the disorder
that troubles the pulse, the floor, the
blankets,
until everything gathers and adds
one more knot to the thread of life:
nothing, there is nothing left in your memory
of the fierce sea that lifted a wave
and knocked down a dark apple from the
tree.

The only thing you remember is your life.

God Exists Quietly from A Night Without Armour – Jewel Kilcher

God exists quietly
When I sit still and contemplate
The breeze that moves upon me
I can hear Him

For hours I would lay
Flat upon the meadows
Stare at the endless field of blue sky
And revel in the divine placement of all things.

I would walk alone
In the woods and let my mind wander
Freely, stumble across theories
On the origins of myself and all things.

In nature I knew all things had their place. None supreme,
None insignificant and so
Great peace would come to me
As I fit neatly in the folds
Between dawn and twilight.
Living in sync with the rhythm of the earth,
Creating myself in the vast silence that existed.

I grew to love
The nature of God.
I knew Him best not in churches,
But alone with the sun shining on me through the trees.

I breathe a space in me
That would continue to crave the sacred
And demand sanctity
As my life took slight
And lit out to travel the world.

It has grounded me
And held me steady
In the strong winds
That have carried me
So far from
Where I have been

Prayer is the greatest
Swiftest
Ship my heart could sail upon.

In celebration

from An Elegy on the Death of John Donne Thomas Carew

..The flame of thy brave soul, that shot such heat and light
As burnt our earth, and made our darkness bright.....

Epitaph on a Friend by Robert Burns

An honest man here lies at rest,
The friend of man, the friend of truth,
The friend of age, and guide of youth;
Few heads like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd:
If there's another world, he lives in bliss:
If there is none, he made the best of this.

One Man's Life

T S Eliot (1888-1965)

To do the useful thing, to say the courageous thing, to contemplate the beautiful thing;
that is enough for one man's life.

One Person

Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869)

Sometimes only one person is missing, and whole world seems depopulated.

I will not die an unlived life by Dawna Markova

I will not die an unlived life
I will not live in fear of falling
Or catching fire
I choose to inhabit my days
To allow my living to open me
To make me more accessible
less afraid
To open my heart
Until it becomes a wing, a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance
To live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom
And the which came to me as blossom
Goes on as fruit.

The Journey by Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice--
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do--
determined to save
the only life you could save.

Thanks and Remembrance

What Is Precious by Stephen Spender

What is precious is never to forget
The essential delight of the blood drawn from ageless springs
Breaking through rocks in worlds before our earth.
Never to deny its pleasure in the morning simple light
Nor its grave evening demand for love.
Never to allow gradually the traffic to smother
With noise and fog, the flowering of the spirit.

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields,
See how these friends are feted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
Born of the sun, they travelled a short while toward the sun
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.

After Glow

Anon

I'd like the memory of me
to be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an after glow
of smiles when life is done.
I'd like to leave an echo
whispering softly down the ways,
Of happy times and laughing times
and bright and sunny days.
I'd like the tears of those who grieve,
to dry before the sun,
Enjoy the happy memories
I leave when life is done.

So Many Different Lengths Of Time by Brian Patten

How long does a man live, after all?
Is it a thousand days, or only one?
One week, or a few centuries?
How long does a man spend living or dying
and what do we mean when we say 'gone forever'?

Adrift in such preoccupations, we seek clarification.
We can go to the philosophers
but they will weary of our questions.
We can go to the priests and rabbis
but they might be busy with administrations.

So how long does a man live after all?
And how much does he live while he lives?
We fret and ask so many questions -
then when it comes to us
the answer is so simple after all.

A man lives for as long as we carry him inside us,
for as long as we carry the harvest of his dreams,
for as long as we ourselves live,
holding memories in common, a man lives.

His lover will carry his man's scent, his touch;
his children will carry the weight of his love.
One friend will carry his arguments,
another will hum his favourite tunes,
another will still share his terrors.

And the days will pass with baffled faces,
then the weeks, then the months,
then there will be a day when no question is asked,
and the knots of grief will loosen in the stomach
and the puffed faces will calm.

And on that day he will not have ceased
but will have ceased to be separated by death.

How long does a man live, after all?
A man lives so many different lengths of time.

She is Gone by Anon

You can shed tears that she is gone
or you can smile because she has lived.

You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back
or you can open your eyes and see all she's left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see her
or you can be full of the love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember her and only that she's gone
or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
or you can do what she'd want; smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

You can shed tears that she is gone by Anon

You can shed tears that she is gone
Or you can smile because she has lived.

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Or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what she'd want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

A Song Of Living by Amelia Josephine Burr ©

Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.
I have sent up my gladness on wings, to be lost in the blue of the sky.
I have run and leaped with the rain, I have taken the wind to my breast.
My cheek like a drowsy child to the face of the earth I have pressed.
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

I have kissed young Love on the lips, I have heard his song to the end.
I have struck my hand like a seal in the loyal hand of a friend.
I have known the peace of heaven, the comfort of work done well.
I have longed for death in the darkness and risen alive out of hell.
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

I give a share of my soul to the world where my course is run.
I know that another shall finish the task I must leave undone.
I know that no flower, nor flint was in vain on the path I trod.
As one looks on a face through a window, through life I have looked on God.
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

The Commemoration by Anon

In the rising of the sun and in its going down
 We remember them
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter
 We remember them
In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer
 We remember them
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn
 We remember them
In the beginning of the year and when it ends
 We remember them
When we are lost and sick at heart
 We remember them
When we have joys we long to share
 We remember them
So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are part of us
 And we remember them

**When we are Weary and in Need of Strength Adapted from The Yizkor Service,
Jewish Funeral Service Prayer Book**

When we are weary and in need of strength,
When we are lost and sick at heart,
We remember him.

When we have a joy we crave to share,
When we have decisions that are difficult to make,
When we have achievements that are based on his,
We remember him.

At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,
At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring,
We remember him.

At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer,
At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
We remember him.

At the rising of the sun and at its setting,
We remember him.

As long as we live, he too will live,
For he is now a part of us,
As we remember him.

from **For The Fallen Lawrence Binyon** ©

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end they remain.

Ailey, Baldwin, Floyd, Killens, and Mayfield

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall
in forests,
small things recoil into silence,
their senses
eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly,
see with a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines,
gnaws on kind words
unsaid,
promised walks
never taken.

Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.
Our souls,
dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance,
fall away.
We are not so much maddened
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance
of dark, cold
caves.

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of soothing electric
vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed

Young deaths

Adapted from: At a Child's Grave by Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899)

I know how impossible it is to soften such a grief with words, but should we fear death or embrace it? We cannot tell whether life or death is the greater blessing. We do not know whether death is the end of this life, or the door into another. What we think of as the night could really be the dawn.

Death adds to this life, even though it is painful. Perhaps it is because those we love die that they are so precious to us. Maybe this common fate keeps from our hearts the weeds of selfishness, indifference and hate. It is better to live and love and bear the loss, than to live without love.

We do not need to fear that those who have died suffer. If they live again, their lives will surely be at least as good as ours. Otherwise they fall into the slumber of peaceful, gentle death and eternal Love. We are all children of the same mother, and the same fate awaits us all. Let our lives provide help for the living and hope for the dead.

Prayer for a Baby Who Died by Vienna Cobb Anderson (dates? look up)

She was so small, so beautiful,
so full of hope and promise
What a blessing she has been
to all of us who knew her
those few short months.

She taught us to love,
to hope beyond expectation,
to trust in that which is unseen.
She drew us together
in our anxiety,
our moment.

Adapted from: It Seems Such a Waste by Edith Nesbit

Perhaps it seems such a waste, such a senseless waste. His great thoughts, his fine body that loved life, all the friendship, the aspiration, the love all thrown away, gone, wasted for ever.

But who says that it is wasted? It is his body that has served its term and is cast away. The great thoughts, the friendship, the aspiration, the love; can we say that these die? Certainly not, these live in the hearts and minds of all of you, and you pass them on to others. Nothing is wasted.

For Ben Anon

Eyes that twinkle sunshine,
A face that breaks your heart,
That special look of innocence
Remains while we're apart.
We had you for a short while,
But you brought so many joys.
Now play in peace our baby,
Enjoy your angel toys.
Time will bring us comfort
While waiting for the day
When we will be together again
Not just a whisper away.

Epitaph Upon a Child that Died Robert Herrick (1591-1674) Epitaph

Here she lies, a pretty bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood;
Who as soon fell fast asleep
As her little eyes did peep.
Give her strewings, but not stir
The earth that lightly covers her.

Epitaph on a child by Thomas Gray

Here, freed from pain, secure from misery, lies
A child, the darling of his parents' eyes:
A gentler Lamb ne'er sported on the plain,
A fairer flower will never bloom again;
Now let him sleep in peace his night of death.

Final farewells and committals

Adapted from: Divine Love Cannot Change by Leo Tolstoy

Divine love cannot change. Nothing, not even death, can shatter it. It is the very nature of the soul ... Love is life. All, all that I understand, I understand only because I love. All is, all exists only because I love. All is bound up in love alone. Love is God, and dying means for me a particle of love, to go back to the universal and eternal source of love.

Lord, We Turn to You from the Jewish Funeral Service Prayer Book

Lord, we turn to You in our grief and our bewilderment, for a mystery surrounds the birth and death of man. Your will summons us into this world and then calls us to depart, but Your plan is so vast and Your purposes so deep that our understanding fails, and our reason cannot follow. Yet You have taught us that time and space are not the measure of all things. Beyond them is the life of eternity. We do not die into the grave but into the love of God.

It has been Your will to receive the soul of *Name*, to bring her/him to life everlasting, and she/he is beyond the tragedies of this world. We find our comfort in Your teaching. Beyond the grave we shall meet together in the life that has no end.

Adapted from: We Seem to Give Them Back to You by William Penn

We now give *Name* back to God / Nature, who gave them to us. As God / Nature did not lose them in giving, so do we not lose them by their return. That is true giving, for what is God's / Nature's is ours also. Life is eternal and love is immortal, and death is only a horizon. A horizon is nothing, save the limit of our sight. When a ship crosses over the horizon, although we cannot see it, it still sails. *Name* will be welcomed on some far shore, unknown to us.

Adapted from: Epitaph on a Child by Thomas Gray

Here, freed from pain, secure from misery, lies
A child, the darling of his parents' eyes;
A gentler Lamb ne'er frolicked on the plain,
A fairer flower will never bloom again;
Few were the days allotted to his breath;
Now let him sleep in peaceful, gentle death.

Adapted from: Farewell by Anne Bronte

Farewell my Love! But not farewell
To all my fondest thoughts of Thee;
Within my heart they still shall dwell
And they shall cheer and comfort me.
Life seems more sweet that you did live
And men more true that you were one;
Nothing is lost that you did give,
Nothing destroyed that you have done.

Epitaph on a Friend by Robert Burns

An honest man here lies at rest,
The friend of man, the friend of truth,
The friend of age, and guide of youth;
Few heads like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd:
If there's another world, he lives in bliss:
If there is none, he made the best of this.

God Be in My Head by Anon

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at my end, and at my departing.

Adapted from: A Gravestone by William Allingham

In quiet, fair field dig his/her grave.
On some green mound beside the wave;
To westward, sea and sky alone,
And sunsets. Put a mossy stone,
With his/her own name and date, a harp
And bunch of wild flowers, carven sharp;
Then leave it free to winds that blow,
And patient mosses creeping; slow,
And wandering wings, and footsteps rare
Of human creature pausing there.

Into the Darkness we Lay You Down by Iona Prayer Book

Into the darkness and warmth of the earth
We lay you down

Into the sadness and smiles of our memories
We lay you down.

Into the cycle of living and dying and rising again
We lay you down.

May you rest in peace, in fulfilment, in loving
May you run straight home into God's embrace.

Into the freedom of wind and sunshine
We let you go.

Into the dance of the stars and the planets
We let you go.

Into the wind's breath and the hands of the star maker
We let you go.

We love you, we miss you, we want you to be happy
Go safely, go dancing, go running home.

Alternative version adapted by Kim Farley

Into the open arms of nature
We lay you down

Into the cycle of living and dying
We lay you down

Into the freedom of wind and sunshine
We lay you down

Into the smiles and the sadness of memory
We lay you down

Into the warm damp dark earth
We lay you down

Into the silent hands of time
We lay you down

Into the turning of the seasons

We lay you down

Into the mystery of what is beyond
We lay you down

We love you
We miss you
We mourn you
We lay you down now

Forever to be held in the remembering heart

Like Dew Drops by Senryu Karai

Like dew drops
on a lotus leaf,
I vanish

Loss by John Bannister Tabb

For one extinguished light
Of Love, all heaven is night;
For one frail flower the less,
The world a wilderness.

Mother Earth, Father Sky Hindu Ascetic

Oh Mother Earth, Father sky,
Brother Wind, Friend Light, Sweetheart Water,
Here take my last salutation with folded hands!
For today I am melting away into the Supreme
Because my heart became pure,
And all delusion vanished,
Through the power of your good company.

Adapted from Our coming, Our Going by Kozan Ichikyo

Empty-handed we entered the world;
Barefoot we leave it.
Our coming, our going
Two simple happenings
That got entangled.

Our Revels Now Are Ended by William Shakespeare

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

For Every Thing There Is A Season based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For every thing there is a season,
(and a time for every matter under heaven):
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to reap;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time of peace.

From The Beauty of Death – Tears and Laughter by Kahlil Gibrain

Take from me all earthly clothing and place me deep in my
Mother Earth: and place me with care upon my mother's breast.
Cover me with soft earth and let each handful be mixed
with seeds and bulbs of daffodils and lilies; and when they
Grow above me and thrive on my body's element, they will
Breathe the fragrance of my heart into space;
And reveal even to the sun the secret of my peace;
And sail with the breeze and comfort the wayfarer.
Leave me then, friends – leave me and depart on mute feet,
As the silence walks in the deserted valley.

The Realms Of Love – source unknown

May *Name's* soul make it's way to God. May God sustain and enfold his/her soul in the heights of hope and the realms of love.

This Existence Is Transient.

As the Buddha said "This existence of ours is as transient as Autumn clouds. A lifetime is a flash of lightening in the sky."

Life Is A Flame Spirit from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

(Life) is a flame spirit in you ever gathering more of itself,
While you, heedless of its expansion, bewail the withering of your days.
It is life in quest of life, in bodies that fear the grave.
There are no graves here.
These mountains and plains are a cradle and a stepping-stone.
Whenever you pass by the field where you have laid your ancestors look well
thereupon, and you shall see yourselves and your children dancing hand in hand.

Nothing Gold Can Stay by Robert Frost ©

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

From Elegy by Wendell Berry ©

He goes free of the earth.
The sun of his last day sets
clear in the sweetness of his liberty.

The earth recovers from his dying,
the hallow of his life remaining
in all his death leaves.

Radiances know him. Grown lighter
than breath he is set free
in our remembering. Grown brighter

than vision, he goes dark
into the life of the hill
that holds his peace.

He is hidden among all that is,
and cannot be lost.

The Desire To Become One With The Universe from The Story of my Heart **by Richard Jeffries**

Having drunk deeply of the heaven above and felt the most glorious beauty of the day, I desire now to become lost and absorbed into the being or existence of the universe. Deep into the earth under, and high above into the sky, and further still to the sun and stars, still further beyond the stars into the hollow of space, losing thus my separateness of being to become a part of the whole.

With the glory of the great sea, I pray; with the firm, solid, and sustaining earth; the depth, distance, and the expanse of ether; the age, timelessness and ceaseless waves of the ocean; the stars, and the unknown in space, by all those things which are most powerful known to me, I pray. Not in words, my soul prays that I may have something from each of these, that I may have in myself the secret and meaning of the earth, the golden sun, the light, the foam-flecked sea. I desire a greatness of soul, an irradiance of mind, a deeper insight, a broader hope. Let my soul become enlarged; I am not enough.

The Beauty of Death from Tears And Laughter by Kahlil Gibran

Carry me upon your friendly shoulders and walk slowly to the deserted field. Take me not to the crowded burying ground lest my slumber be disrupted by the rattling of bones and skulls. Carry me to the special field and dig my grave where violets and poppies grow not in each other's shadow.

Adapted from I Shall Not Be Forgotten by Samuel Butler

He/she falls asleep in the full and certain hope
That his/her slumber shall not be broken;
And that though he/she be all-forgetting,
Yet shall he/she not be forgotten,
But continue that life in the thoughts and deeds
Of those he/she loved.

Epitaph on a child

Here, freed from pain, secure from misery, lies
A child, the darling of his parents' eyes:
A gentler Lamb ne'er sported on the plain,
A fairer flower will never bloom again;
Now let him sleep in peace his night of death.

Thomas Gray (1716-1771)

Blessings

May Time Soften Your Pain

Anon

In times of darkness, love sees....
In times of silence, love hears
In times of doubt, love hopes ...
In times of sorrow, love heals
And in all times, love remembers.
May time soften the pain
Until all that remains
Is the warmth of the memories
And the love.

The Prayer of St Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand.
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Adapted from O Help Us To Think Wisely

A soldier's prayer Anon

O help us to think wisely.
To speak truthfully,
To act courageously
And to live purely.
Support us in life
And comfort us in death.

A Blessing for Presence by John O'Donohue

May you awaken to the mystery of
being here and enter the quiet
immensity of your own presence.
May you have joy and peace in the
temple of your senses.
May you receive great encouragement
when new frontiers beckon.
May you respond to the call of your gift
and find the courage to follow its path.
May the flame of anger free you from
falsity.
May warmth of heart keep your presence
afire and anxiety never linger about
you.
May your outer dignity mirror an inner
dignity of soul.
May you take time to celebrate the quiet
miracles that seek no attention.
May you be consoled in the secret
symmetry of your soul.
May you experience each day as a sacred
gift woven around the heart of wonder.

Adapted from Prayer for those Who Have Committed Suicide by Vienna Cobb Anderson

We ask for the unconditional love of true compassion, the blessing of eternal life and the blessing of peace for all those who chose their own death over life. We ask for comfort for those who mourn them, the strength to forgive any hurts and misunderstandings, and freedom from any guilt and anger resulting from their irreparable loss.

Blessing

May the light of love shine forth on you, on those for whom you care and on those who care for you. May you be ever blessed with peace and understanding as you travel through your life and may you come to the end of your journey in gentleness and joy.

Gaelic Blessing

Deep peace of the running weave to you
Deep peace of the flowing air to you
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the heart of peace to you.

Irish Blessing

May the road rise to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face
May the rain fall softly on your fields
Until we meet again
May (God) hold you in the hollow of his hand.

Blessing

Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth
Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust
Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace
Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe...
So be it.