



# Death

*Poems For The Grieving Heart*

*D.N. Sutton*



# Death

*When The Time Comes...*

"...Then, with joy exploding  
Into God's universe we go,  
without foreboding.."

# *Death*

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*by D.N. Sutton*

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*For My Father*

*The "Brave Rider" whose joyous life experience  
and swift death inspired many of these poems.*



# Death

## *Poems For The Grieving Heart*

Brave Rider	1
Death Is Not Doom	2
New Hills	3
Clear Bell	4
Proud Galleon	5
Heroes' Shore	6
My Mother Sleeps	7
I Will Not Weep	8
Grief Grown Small	9
Sweet Goddess	10
Death Song	11
Even Though I Go	12
Elegy For A Young Traveler	13
Teenage Touchdown	14
Empty Spaces	15
I Will Go Into Death	16
Incline	17
High Wire	18
When I Lie Dying	19
And So One Day	20
Death Duel	21
For Sylvia Plath	22
Karen, Are You Myth?	23
When The Heart Is Eager	24
Small Death, Large Life	25
You Will Not Leave Unknown	26
Person Unparalleled	27
Too Soon For Tumbleweed	28
Know Only Joy	29
Is It Ever Too Late?	30



## *Brave Rider*

Sing out  
O dying heart  
To the new unknown-ness.  
Throw your life's lariat  
And mounting the swift horse of change  
Ride beautifully into the beyond!

In earth's energies  
Harnessing for entry  
Into the raceways of the Infinite  
Deny terror.  
Gladly go, with  
Sweet, bruised banners flying  
Saddled in the tender Allness of the Father.

You, O hero-child  
Coming at the call  
Let go the shadowed body  
Consciousness trailing dreams like smoke  
And loosening all reins  
Ride out  
Cutting a bright new swath  
In the terrain of the eternal.

Sing out  
Brave rider  
And with God's own breath  
Put the lie  
To man's small dream of death.



# *Death Is Not Doom*

Death is not doom  
Take the loved one's leaving  
Without grieving  
With joy  
Knowing  
Death is transition  
The return trip home.

We, on loan to life, on holiday  
Come from God's place  
Go back again  
Adventure done  
New phase begun.

Death is the ultimate move  
Homecoming  
Warm welcome  
Healing.  
Dark symbols, grim thoughts  
Are error  
Eliminate terror  
Joy is the feeling.

Death is drama  
End is beginning.  
Trauma  
Lies in forgetting  
The larger plan  
We are not God  
But human.



## *New Hills*

Now you are going  
As you came  
Alone  
Slipping down the misted path  
Footsteps fading  
Crumbling stones quiet.

Still in our mind's eye we see you.  
Your climb up the hillside  
Brave, headstrong, dashing  
And now your descending again  
Into the uncharted canyons of your being  
Eyes conveying bewilderment, hurt  
Body thrashing refusal.  
Still, faithful to your longings  
You linger only to leave  
Wanting to go  
Knowing you are gone.

We listen  
Catch in throat  
Until  
Sensing your leap over the barriers  
We hear your whoop of joy  
At finding new hills ahead.



## *Clear Bell*

So now you are in transit  
Magnificent barge of life cut loose  
Drifting downstream to the open sea  
Of death.

You go, a king  
Nobility clear  
Liability softened  
Love, the one strand left  
Linking you to us on shore  
Ego gone, body crumbling  
Love lights the passage fore and aft  
Sounding a clear bell from soul to soul.

Go now in majesty...  
Calm currents bear you  
Out of narrow waters  
To oceanic space  
Compass pointing  
To your star.



## *Proud Galleon*

I saw you go with my own eyes  
The proud galleon of your life  
Set sail  
Leaving harbor mouth for ocean swells  
Old landmarks  
For unfamiliar seas.

You left, log clear  
Course set  
Past the rocky point  
Trailing a clean wake  
Into deeper waters  
Tide impelling you  
Beyond sight  
But not beyond love.

Bonds  
Stronger than vows  
Surge with you  
As swift currents  
Bear your noble craft  
To its destined harbor.



## *Heroes' Shore*

King, Viking  
Inspired passage to you  
In your wondrous craft of Death.

Winds sanctified to bear you  
Sweep you beyond the headlands  
To seas vaster than your visions.

Strong flashes of memory  
Of your selfless courage  
Freedom from all guile  
Illuminate the night-sky of our grief  
As compass unknown,  
Your valiant vessel courses  
To the heroes' shore.



## *My Mother Sleeps*

My mother sleeps in the cave of the winds  
Water lapping on silver stones  
Does not disturb her ancient bones.  
Sometimes she stirs; her lidded eyes  
Open and close: she smiles, sees  
Then sleep transcends.

My mother lies on a golden litter  
Life suspends  
Her bed, her bier  
Sensing always that love is near.

My mother hears the silken sounds  
Of planets whirring  
Music playing  
A child again she feels the warmth  
Of sunlight streaming  
Past, present fuse in her dreaming  
No shadow falls on her unseen walls.

My mother lives on  
In unknown space  
Lingering in a state of grace.  
My mother awaits  
Her final leaving  
Her life, her death  
Interweaving.



# *I Will Not Weep*

I will not weep for Frances  
I will not weep  
I will think of her asleep.

I will forget  
Her pain  
My own  
I will let  
Grief alone.

I will accept  
Fate fulfilled  
Beauty distilled.

I will think of her awake  
Life unfinished  
Legacy of love  
Undiminished.



# *Grief Grown Small*

Frances  
You are gone  
Filling other spaces  
With the fragrance of yourself  
But still here with us  
In these places  
Cameo gift  
Softening death's rift.

Instinctive southern belle  
Exquisite beauty  
Your essence everywhere  
In the garden, on the stair.

You made spacious  
Narrow corridors  
With gracious talk  
Voice birdsong  
In the parlored air.  
Spirited, yet soft, serene  
Unconscious echo  
Of the ante-bellum scene.

Mystique lingers on  
Grief grown small  
More penetrable now  
The magnolia wall.

# *Sweet Goddess*

Goddess  
Sweet Goddess  
Remembered...

You still stand  
In mind  
In heart  
Classic work of art  
Grecian statue  
But intact  
Nothing missing  
Not fingers  
Hands or toes  
Nor chip off the chiselled nose  
No dent in the flawless chin  
Your damage did not show  
It was within.

Internally, unseen  
Cancer took you from us  
Piece by piece  
Ravaging the inner courtyards  
Of your being  
Tearing down the barricades  
Of your splendid self.

In your coffin you lie radiant  
As though fresh from an historic grave  
An archaeological find  
Discovered in an ancient Eastern field  
Now poised to ascend into the present life  
Adorn our personal museums  
Illumine our darkened lives  
Painting over our pain  
With the poetry  
Of your desperately needed beauty.

Sweet Goddess  
You still stand  
In our souls  
You stand.



## *Death Song*

Do not be sad  
My husband  
Do not be sad  
Rejoice with me  
My darling  
Make your spirit glad.

Do not weep  
My husband  
Do not weep  
Think of me  
As always  
Smiling in my sleep.

Do not grieve  
My husband  
Do not grieve  
There are sweet mysteries  
Beyond this life  
If only we believe.

Love so vast  
My dearest  
Love so vast  
Was never meant to perish  
But to last.

So do not fear  
My darling  
Do not fear  
Hold me close forever  
Keep love's presence near.



## *Even Though I Go*

Even though I go  
I will never leave you  
I will love you from behind the veil  
Through the mist  
Be with you, hold you.

Memory brings  
A cooling touch  
A warming hand  
A playful message in the sand.

Even though I go  
Still I stay  
In the silken air  
The emerald pool  
I will not be far away.

If you call me  
I will come  
Bring butterflies  
Spark the brightness  
In your eyes.



## *Elegy For A Young Traveler*

Now his pillow is a star  
Now he lays his head upon it  
Even though he is afar  
God's love is with him every minute.

Now the nightwind cools his brow  
Now the sunlight warms his limbs  
Now the planets dance and bow  
And sing out joyful hymns.

The young prince moves across the skies  
Angels bear him as he lies  
There are snowflakes in his crown  
Clouds are ermine in his gown.

Propelled by earthling's rain-soft tears  
He sails among the heaven's spheres  
He has God's promises to keep  
And, smiling, keeps them while we weep.



## *Teenage Touchdown*

He is taking off to find you  
Knows you are there  
Sky Mother, Grandmother  
He seeks you  
Longs for you,  
Uncomprehending.

He does not quite grasp  
He has made it over the great divide.  
Circling in over the rim  
He is descending  
Eyes open wide, vision dim  
Still loosely hanging on to the controls.

Some, like comets, enter flaming  
But he is wafting, sometimes aware  
As brilliance gleams, then fades.

He senses, loved Grandmother,  
You are in the tower  
Awaiting his touchdown  
His finest hour now  
A circling spiral to your open arms.



## *Empty Spaces*

So still the beach  
Lonely bay  
Grasses listless in the wind  
Since you went away.

You filled it all  
No one knew  
Until the empty spaces  
Wept for you.



# *I Will Go Into Death*

I will go into death  
Singing  
If I have breath.

And there is no doubt  
I will be dancing  
In life I could not do without  
So I will dance  
In death.

One thing I know  
I will be laughing  
At the wry joke  
Of singing  
Even as I choke.

And dancing  
Even as I lie,  
Such an unconventional notion  
Of a way to die.



## *Incline*

In the body's long dip  
Into the decline of death  
There is incline  
Upsurge of soul, spirit  
Awareness of the world  
And all that's in it  
New perception  
Bringing resurrection.

It is nature's enduring charity  
A given  
Sent by heaven  
That obscurity be  
Replaced with clarity.



## *High Wire*

In the matchless dance of life  
There is discernment of death  
A quieting  
Where once  
A lively stepping  
A calming  
Of intense pursuit.

The high wire of our being  
Held taut at either end  
Slackens  
Even as it quivers  
With the music of our souls.

The dance goes on  
Tempo alters  
But not the melody  
Life and death entwine  
In destined harmony.



## *When I Lie Dying*

When I lie dying  
Kiss my lids  
My lips  
My hair  
So I sense you there.

Hold me  
In that flame and light  
That clean eclipse  
Before my astral flight  
Stars, bright pebbles  
On a lofty beach  
Within our reach.



## *And So One Day*

And so one day  
You will ripple down on me  
From a high space  
Winging in  
And I  
Running on the beach  
Will see you coming  
Silver winged  
Sparkling tipped  
Singling me out.

I will feel my heart extend  
In its furthest reaching  
I to you  
You to me  
You will embrace me in your velvet wing-span  
And I will lighten  
To be lifted  
Leaving behind my song  
And an empty, unneeded shell.

# *Death Duel*

Oh, my child  
I sensed death  
As death drew near  
Wings beat  
Close to my ear  
Deep fear.

I felt heat  
In the night's cold  
Short breath  
Blue vein  
Sharp cry  
Profound pain.

I sensed death  
Death came,  
Death hovering  
At the year's end  
I shivered at  
Its grim portend.

But I held death off  
With scorn and shame  
Vows, fury, passion, blame  
I held it at bay  
As judge and jury  
Blew all logic  
With threats and pleading  
Sank to wheedling  
Playing the game  
Of praise and blunder  
Panic and of prayerful wonder.

I raised heaven and earth  
Bruised the conscience  
Of saint and devil  
Imploring end of this struggle  
Anything to save my child.

Storm done  
Wildness settled  
Dawn came in  
And I, embattled  
Saw you live,  
Death gone.  
Oh, my child!

# *For The Poet, Sylvia Plath*

1932 - 1963

Even after long years  
Death by one's own hand  
Still evokes pain...  
Bewilderment and sadness  
In those who remain.

What if you were deliberately to die  
Would you do it silently  
Without outcry  
Put your head  
In an oven, vomit gas  
While babies cry?

Or if you could, would you  
Seek a more poetic setting  
Just as swift  
Without bloodletting  
Perhaps on the beach  
Where giant breakers welling  
Spew salt tears  
Broken dreams expelling?

If choice were yours  
Would you go in sorrow  
Or in soaring  
With all the love  
Of life and God  
Outsinging  
And outpouring?

The truth is  
Who would choose to go at all  
Unless that compelling call  
Hurled one through  
The barrier wall?

Sylvia  
We grieve for you...



## *Karen, Are You Myth?*

Where are you, Karen?  
Where, when the sun's gold fingers  
Warm the world, are you?  
Where, when the night turns velvet  
Do you lie, no arms to hold you  
Dreaming dreams dead as fallen leaves?

Do you still live, are you still here?  
You, your hair shining, your walk music—  
No one's thought more crystalline than yours,  
Are you memory, now?  
The lighted halls long in vain  
For the peal of bells that was your voice  
Is the only echo emptiness?

You, life-sparkling, heiress of earth  
Have you abandoned living  
Tossed yourself away  
To crawl into the bowels of nothingness  
Bride of the self-made dark?

Sunshine girl, gone? Are you gone?  
Is death-in-life your choice  
Your loss, your wish?

Where are you, Karen  
Or is Karen myth?



## *When The Heart Is Eager*

Even if ears are plugged with stone  
Nerves dead, no vibration in the bone  
We hear, if with the heart we listen.

Even though eyes are blinded  
White with cataract, red with pain  
We see if we are open-minded  
Still see rain-drops glisten  
In the sunlight of the brain  
Vividness of loss our gain  
No matter if resource meager  
When the heart is eager.

Ears, eyes, hands are nothing without intent  
The Life-force in its longing to be well-spent  
Keeps us from being impotent, absurd  
Empty in gesture and in word.

The miracle of being, given us to grasp  
Is ours to revel in, until the last  
Sweet gasp of bursting breath...

Then, with joy exploding  
Into God's universe we go  
Without forboding.

# *Small Death, Life Large*

In sleep's small death  
We die  
Only to be born again  
Not to perish  
But awaken  
To each dawn  
Unshaken  
Another day  
To claim, to cherish.

Life surges  
Even as it ebbs.  
Tide, sand, sun, storm  
Following hidden laws  
Perform  
Entangling us in cosmic webs.

We on heaven's ladder climbing  
Conform  
To celestial timing  
Respond to  
Stellar pantomiming.

Listen, listen  
Distant voices  
Faintly, sweetly chiming...  
So near, so far, so numerous  
Our pinpoint lives  
Made luminous  
In astral light.

Constellations  
In the changing skies  
Reveal patterns  
To unseeing eyes  
Small death  
Life large  
Vision vast  
And hope, hope  
For Paradise.



## *You Will Not Leave Unknown*

You will not go unloved  
Unknown  
Into anonymous night  
Believer in life  
In light  
You will go enthroned  
In inherent wisdom  
Grandeur of spirit undisputed  
Facing the Godhead  
Without fear.

Then others  
Will nod their heads sagely  
Whisper loyalty  
Admire your strength  
Knowing all must live  
On their own cross  
Some unthinkable to bear.

No, you will not go  
Unloved, unnamed  
You will not leave unknown.



## *Person Unparalleled*

You were there for us all  
More than you knew  
More than any of us knew.

We, at your memorial  
Are your monument  
Testament to your  
On-going influence  
Your incisive insight  
Clarity, wit  
Your peerless presence  
With us yet  
Unrestricted warmth  
And strength  
We all feel  
Know and admire  
Person unparalleled  
Priceless in our hearts.

## *Too Soon For Tumbleweed*

In the young years  
In the cool and lonely dark  
You came  
Touch like fire  
Kisses like hot rain.

Now in the numbing cold  
In a night grown old  
You toss  
Sheets crackling like fallen leaves.  
With each intake of your breath  
In pain  
The night wind grieves.

I grieve, too  
A keening loss  
Trembling at your hurting  
Longing to hold you  
Help you bear it  
Whisper prayer.

Not for lack of love or spirit  
Is there this long default  
There is no halt  
Time makes its claim  
But this change  
Too swiftly came.

No, no, not yet the beloved body's crumbling  
Too soon, too soon for tumbleweed  
Not yet the scattering  
Of the soul's seed...

For this, for you  
For us  
For love transcendent  
God, I pray  
Do not take his life away.



## *Know Only Joy*

Do not grieve  
When death comes  
Know only joy.  
No one, no thing is lost  
Change is the surge of life  
Birth and death are one.  
End is beginning, beginning end.  
Night shades into day  
Day to night  
Beyond all horizons of the mind.  
Intellect is not the compass  
Only joy can take you there.

When death comes, rejoice!  
Sing out hosannas that the tide is in  
Gathering up its own to the breast of the sea.

When death comes  
Bathe in its baptismal power  
Its antiseptic beauty, clean of guilt.  
Warm yourself deeply  
In the presence of the universal  
For what is man, in all his vast intelligence,  
But a small sandcrab on the beach of time?

Be glad, be glad!  
Sand and sea go on and on and on and on  
Ever into eternity.

## *Is It Ever*

### *Too Late?...*

*N*ot a good night to be out. Driving was hazardous, with rain coming down in sheets.

The dark pavement seemed too dark, slippery. And such a gale! The wind whipped around, not only from the ocean, but from every direction.

At least she was wearing her black trenchcoat. There were two steps down to the quaint little cottage on Coast Highway, one of the last of its kind still in service. It had been a realtor's. Now the sign said "INSURANCE". She hesitated, then reached for the door when a sudden gust threw her against it, plunging her into the small front room.

"Pardon me," she said, laughing. "I didn't mean to burst in like that!" "My pleasure, a great pleasure," he assured her, with old-world courtliness. "In fact, I have been waiting for you."

He rose from behind the big sprawling desk. On the side was a fireplace with a roaring fire, warming and welcoming. He took her black trenchcoat, dripping wet, and hung it on the rack next to the door.

Then he seated her in the handsome upholstered chair, itself a work of art, next to him. His every move was almost ceremonial. For her it was a high moment, a new experience.

"I'm glad you came. I have been looking forward to this meeting with great expectation."

"Have you?" She was wary, somewhat skeptical, but she liked his gray hair, his demeanor, and his evident delight in seeing her.

"I have always admired you," he was saying. "You were my favorite movie star. More than Gloria Swanson, more than Greta Garbo. I followed your career. I saw every one of your films."

"You did?" How was she to respond? Being an over-the-hill celebrity was a difficult way to live a life. She was basically shy, never talkative. This time she felt even less like talking. She just liked sitting there, out of the storm, appreciated by this attractive, elegant man. He brewed tea and served it in china cups.

"You are so beautiful, with the firelight putting half your face in shadow. The kind of lighting Rembrandt liked...the great photographers..."

She did not know how to answer. But before she could think of something to say, bedlam broke loose outside. Sirens blared. Police cars, an ambulance, fire rescue vehicles materialized, lights blazing.

"Let's open the blinds wider and watch the show," he suggested.

There it was, right outside the window, the vintage Rolls Royce wrapped around the light pole. People coming from nowhere, milling around. Reporters from local newspapers, already on the job. Then, finally, seemingly interminably, the slender black-coated figure was placed on a stretcher, blanket pulled over her face. Clearly, the driver was dead. The show was over.

"Come," he invited her warmly, "let's settle in and talk." It was plain to see he was fascinated with her, doting on her and she felt pleased to be wrapped in the glow of his attention.

"So dear lady, what is the most important thing in life to you?" he asked.

She did not have to think. "Oh, love. Love, of course. I had four husbands. I loved each one

of them, in different ways, I guess. I often thought, if the attributes of all four could have been in one man...it would have been...perfect!" She laughed, that still-remembered bell-like laugh that was once her trademark.

"Is it still possible to find that man?" He was looking at her with such gentleness, with such meaningfulness, she wondered, could this be the great love she had always been seeking? It was as exhilarating as a ski slope, as relaxing as a tropical beach. She was slightly uneasy that it seemed all too fast, unlikely, but somehow it was credible. This was an unbelievable evening.

After awhile, she became aware that she was losing track of place, time. She did not know how long she sat there with him, sensing his wondrous acceptance, his intuitive response. She felt dreamy, enraptured. It seemed like a long and glorious eternity, but at the same time an all too short moment. This must be what she was born for. Never had she felt so complete.

"Could you love me, my star, my dream girl?", he was asking. When she assented, he rose to embrace her and even as his arms enfolded her, she noted that her black trenchcoat was no longer there.







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Grieving Heart*

by  
*D.N. Sutton*

**D.N. SUTTON** has been writing poetry since age seven, published first at age eleven in the Miami Herald and in numerous newspapers and magazines since.

As her books of poetry attest, she is a person who believes in the romantic dream-- that all dreams can in some measure be fulfilled. On this theme, the course she created *Presentation of Self* taught in colleges and universities, has inspired her students to bring the beauty and joy they wish for into their lives.

Trained for the theater, she was a professional photographer's model, a poetry editor, active in radio publicity and public relations. She continues to write poems, plays and letters-to-the editor, which she considers a privilege Americans can enjoy.

To read a collection of D.N. Sutton's poetry on the world wide web, visit the SoulSite: <http://www.SoulSite.com>.

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