

## Readings for T264 – Death

**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 the 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 the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it is 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.

**Summation** by Susan Daily

“I have divided him up, “My grandmother  
speaks  
Into the phone at 1:00 in morning.  
“He is everywhere now, all over this world.”

She has been moving around the house for days,  
Classifying the many parts of you,  
Sorting and making lists, making sense.

She tells me, rapidly, where you are,  
Who has you. She talk extensively, down  
To the very last item that you cared for.

And you are spread out all over this world.  
Your eyeglasses are on the faces of  
Six people in a third world nation.

Your tee shirts slouch across the chests of  
thirty-five men in homeless centers  
In large northern cities.

Your braces for arthritis steady  
The wrists of nine patients, too sick  
To leave their own homes.

Your gardening pants and wooly socks  
are browsed over and examined by bent ladies  
and young men in rural Salvation Army store.

The hundreds of babies brought into this world  
By your strong, steady hands are grown and  
Working in the gas station down the street.

Your dress shirts are being ironed for  
Twenty men at Veteran’s Hospital,  
Getting ready for a big night on the town.

Your robes and pajamas and velvet slippers  
Pad the nighttime wanderings of men  
In Kentucky nursing homes.

Your suits are on my father as he goes  
To his first job after being unemployed  
For five impossible months.

Your red sweater rides on my sister’s shoulders  
As she hails a cab in New York City  
On her way to one more audition.

Your wedding ring of fifty –nine years lies  
In my cousin’s bureau drawer, awaiting  
The hand of his first bride.

Your one pair of good leather shoes twitch  
On the feet of my brother, as he leans in to kiss  
His first girlfriend under the glow of the porch  
light.