



## **THIS JUST KILLS ME**

Reading how researchers  
have discovered that  
*all* human brain activity  
does not cease at once  
the moment a body is  
pronounced dead

when your heart stops pumping blood  
the EEG flat-lines  
your brain stem reflex arrests  
but all your cerebral cortex cells  
do not instantly go dark

you may briefly know  
that you have died  
you might even hear a voice  
“Okay that’s it.”

Say you are lying on an operating table  
and you didn’t make it    2:19 p.m.

precise time noted for the certificate

a cluster of your *thinking* cells

have not yet collapsed

ten seconds, maybe twenty

you know that you have died.

You might startle: am I really dead

or think damn I'll miss my meeting

or my flight to Hong Kong

So what might flicker

across my dimming brain

perhaps *hey I get it* but I can't

shout it out or whisper it or weep

or perhaps I'll recall a line

of Mary Oliver poetry

or Ecclesiastes a time to be born

and a time to die

or perhaps

no words

a visualization

Eve

me as Eve

rising

in

my

lush

perfumed

garden

\*

**THE POET SPEAKS...** *To the oft-asked question about fearing death, I might answer that I'm not wild thinking of not being here (how would I know what happens tomorrow?) Now an octogenarian, and losing loved ones, thoughts of illness and death are circling. In a variety of forms and colors. Some of my work has been deeply sorrowful, writing while sitting near my husband's grave (with a spot for my plaque next to his). I read poetry aloud there, too, because what else can one do at a graveside visit? However, glad to mint wit, an internet research article about the brain set me considering what one might think in that small yet poignant last moment of 'life.'*

*My writing reflects the emotional person I am. While I admire glorious poetry of nature and spirituality, like that of Mary Oliver and Yehuda Amichai, I lean more towards the work of Dana Gioia, Billy Collins, and Tony Hoagland. I need to write about people, families, relationships, conflict, irony, being the outsider. . . the other. As I wrestle with feelings, I am mindful of the universality of emotional struggles. It's a bonus if readers can say that my expressed feelings or experiences resonate with them.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** Nancy is author of thirty books for young readers, and due to life-changing necessity, a reinvented writer of poetry and creative nonfiction. In addition to her poetic

narrative, MOMENTS OF DAWN (Conflux Press), a decade caring for her husband with Alzheimer's, she has had work published in numerous journals, including Rat's Ass, Panoply, Voice of Eve, Jewish Literary Journal, Constellations, The Copperfield Review, and elsewhere. An anthologized essay, "Online Dating in the Golden Years," was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.