



I Had To Die Before I Could Write a Poem About Death

By

Connie Woodring

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...*

There is something about this first-person narrative poem that is so overwhelmingly genuine. It shakes and stirs you like a martini, straight up, with a twist of lime--a wisp in time--emphasis on the twist. Connie Woodring begins gravely and goes beyond--fret not. "I felt quite magical as I slowly swam through their bodies, feeling no resistance. / No sign of recognition. No fearful or suspicious looks." "I was dead, and I had more opportunities now than when I was alive." Do go on...(Spacing is poet's own,)

I Had to Die Before I Could Write a Poem About Death

The night I died I was lying on my back in bed. I could not open my eyes or move.

I heard heavy footsteps slowly come up the wooden staircase to my room.

I wanted to see who it was, and I struggled to open my concrete-shut eyes.

At last, I could see.

To my left at the bottom of my bed stood a ceiling-high white figure.

No arms, legs, face, only the typical sheeted Halloween ghost.

I didn't think I could be afraid after I died, but I was terrified.

I closed my eyes, blinked, and it was gone.

I found myself floating out of the room and into the guest bedroom.

There was no one in the bed.

I looked back at my bed, and I was lying in it, eyes closed, stone-cold silent.

I floated under the bed, my haven for so many years past.

Afraid of nuclear bombs going off.

If I was under the bed, perhaps the blast of light would not have blinded me.

The bombs didn't kill me.

Since floating was beginning to be my only mode of transportation, I slowly dove down through the floor boards and into the dining room.

Jane and Bithy were talking about me.

"She doesn't usually just get up and leave us to finish the dishes."

"She did look a bit grayish, but I'm sure she'll be alright."

I felt quite magical as I slowly swam through their bodies, feeling no resistance.

No sign of recognition. No fearful or suspicious looks.

When would they know that I am dead? And how did I die? I felt light-headed, nauseous and sleepy but no pain, blood or need to groan.

I continued my new journey.

I flew up to the top of my favorite 60-foot black walnut tree in the front yard.

It was still light out, and I could see the neighbors' houses, the Blinkens' Shetland pony, the Crawfords' three ponds, even Lake Quetnac.

I was dead, and I had more opportunities now than when I was alive.

I could go anywhere in an instant just by thinking.

I wondered how long this journey would last---a half hour, a year, a million years?

When would I see others like that ghost on my bed?

I wouldn't be afraid of it anymore.

I looked at my hand to see if I still had my wedding ring on. There was no hand, arm, torso, legs or feet. All I owned were my eyes, ears and mind.

I wish I could tell everyone not to be afraid of death. It becomes second-nature.

Before I could contemplate further on this amazing turn of events, I was skimming along the surface of the waves of an ocean. I dove underwater and could breathe with no effort.

I wanted to tell my friends about my experiences.

Would they find me dead and try to revive me?

"Should someone check on Connie to see if she's ok?"

"Yes, 'I'll go check."

Bithy walked into the room. She shook me, but I didn't move.

"Connie, are you asleep?"

She waited, looked at me, listened to my silent heart and touched my limp hand.

"Oh! God!"

Bithy ran down the stairs and yelled, "I think she's dead!"

Jane laughed.

"She's just writing another of her death poems."

THE POET SPEAKS: *Since I have been writing poetry since 1963, I would have to say that any and everything has inspired me to write poetry: Ex-boyfriends, ex-first husband, nature, feminism, politics in general, metaphysics, death of my mother and more recently the death of my husband. Stylistically, I started out as an avid follower of e e cummings and the 'the beats'. Nowadays, I write narrative poetry, but also some prose and experimental. Poetry has always been on the back burner. At certain times of my life (like now, since I am retired) it is a more active pursuit.*

AUTHOR BIO: I am a 77-year-old retired psychotherapist who has been getting back to my true love of writing after 45 years in my real job. I have had many poems published in over 40 journals including one poem nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize by Dime Show Review.

