

Death, Be Not Proud Summary

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Death is not Scary

The speaker talks directly to Death. He tells Death not to be proud. Some people think Death is very strong and scary, but the speaker disagrees. He says Death is not really powerful or scary at all.

The speaker says that when Death thinks it kills people, it does not really kill them. People do not really die. And the speaker says Death cannot kill him either. The speaker says that rest and sleep are like small images (or pictures) of Death. We enjoy rest and sleep. So, Death must also be something peaceful and full of comfort. The speaker says that good people die young and go to Death early. But this is not a punishment. It is just the resting of their body and the arrival of their soul to the afterlife.

Death is Not Free

The speaker further belittles Death. He argues that Death is not free. Death is controlled by fate (destiny), chance (luck), kings (who order executions), and desperate men (who may kill themselves). This means Death depends on these things to come. Death lives with poison, war, and disease.

Death will Die

The speaker says that even drugs (like opium from poppy) or magic can make us sleep as peacefully—or even better—than Death does. So why is Death so full of pride? At the end, the speaker says that Death is just a short sleep. After it, we will wake up and live forever (in heaven). So in the end, Death will be defeated. Death itself will die.