

# What Makes a Good Death?

by Shana Alexander

Freedom from pain.

Acceptance of the idea that "it's time to go."

People whom one loves nearby.

The knowledge that one's affairs are "in order,"

and that one's legatees

are the right ones.

# My Ideal Death

by Nancy Pickard

As a mystery writer, I am aware of an infinity of bad ways to die, and I want to avoid all of them. I do not want to be taken violently by surprise. I do not want to go while I'm unconscious, unhappy, or angry. There will be no drifting away in sleep, if I can help it. If I have a choice, here is what it will be:

In this ideal, personalized scenario, all of my affairs are in order. I leave no messes, literal or figurative, behind me. (No one is tempted, later, while sifting through my estate, to exclaim in frustration, "Oh, I could just kill her!")

I am not in pain.

I am wide awake.

I have lived my life so that

I am content either to live or to die,

whichever happens in the next moment.

I see it coming.

I feel wonder, not fear.

I am able to articulate to other people what is happening to me.

At the last minute, I smile and wave good-bye.

The people who love me yell,

"Bon voyage, Nancy!"

No one is left miserable by my going.

On the other side, after my ideal death, I find

beauty,

love,

peace,

friends,

and a job.

I send word back.

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*Shana Alexander has had a continuing interest in bioethics since her pioneering 1963 Life magazine article, "They Decide Who Lives, Who dies," a report about the so-called God committee, a group of citizens charged with determining entry into the city's hemodialysis program.*

*Nancy Pickard is an award-winning mystery writer.*