

I Have Been To Places Of Great Death

by [NoLo Segundo](#) (July 2025)



Sailboats on the Inland Sea (Yoshida Hiroshi, 1930s)

I Have Been To Places Of Great Death

I have been to places of great death:
Walking the battlefield of Gettysburg,
As a lusty young man of no firm belief
Who stepped between the great rocks
Of Devil's Den and felt his soul shudder
as though he had been a soldier there,
and died in fear a long, long time ago.

I taught my tongue to the gentle Khmers
As civil war raged and the killing fields

Were being sown—I left before the
Heartless murdering began, the killing
Of over a million: teachers and students,
Doctors and farmers, the old, the young,
Each with a photo taken before dying,
Their pictures taped to classroom walls.

And when I visited Hiroshima, now myself
Chastened by death's touch, and knowing
My soul real, knowing of meaning absolute
And of unseen forces that work good or ill,
As I stood at the first ground zero, I once
Again shuddered to feel the pull of madness
(though I knew not if it was my own or some
Remains of that evil which brought the fire
And brimstone of a world wide war...)

But by then I knew I could pray, and so
Opened my desperate heart and sought
His mercy—and then I saw a sort of angel,
Who took me from that place of insanity,
Healing me while we wandered by the
Beauty of the Inland Sea as my storm
Calmed and left me, never to return...

I have been to places of great death, and
I have felt death's cold, careless hands.
But I know now what death itself fears:
The Light, the light eternal which carries
Souls beyond time itself, like the winds
Of a Love exceeding all understanding.

I Sing to Eternity
To an unmet friend:

You see the mortal world
And for you man is machine
Little more than a device
For the vagaries of evolution,
Faith is illusion, hope lacks
Weight—and love? Can love
Be other than mere sex,
Nature's sole mandate?

And your science now tells
You: what can I ever know?
All is a quantum topsy-turvy,
And mother nature part
Whore, part illusionist...
Your thinking breaks all
Down to little pieces,
And nothing matters
As matter is all while
Science the only god
Left for us to worship.

And we are nothing,
Not even dreams
Anymore, just bits
And pieces to be
Examined, classified
And then ignored—
For science is all,
And faith but a
Refuge for fools.

You are honest,
I know—you see
Yourself as just
Another machine,
Destined for decay,
Then destruction—

Your sentience but
A cruel joke told
Yet again—and
No one laughs.

You and I,
We breathe,
We think,
We live—but
You would stop
At death while
I begin there...

I sing to the eternal,
Quell not my songs,
As they rise above
The despair born
Of your vacant
World, following
Stars streaming
Their wondrous
Light in a dead-
Cold universe.

I sing to Eternity,
I sing to my soul!

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Nolo Segundo is the pen name of a retired teacher (America, Japan, Taiwan, the war zone of Cambodia, 1973-74) who became a published poet in his 70s in over 240 literary journals in 21

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