



Death's Compliment

You have fought well, said Death
from within the absence of his cowl.
Many whine and cringe
and ask “why me ? Why me ?”
And then the one claim that really annoys.
“There must have been some mistake.”
As if it could be the man down the road
who was my intended
or the old woman
below your rickety stairs.

Mistook !, how can I be mistook ?
Am I not the plainest of plain fact ?
Taxes are avoidable, not me.
Some who know this even try to bribe me !
Do they not know how I love my work ?
The easy sweep of my practised blade :
the whispering cut through the brittle stalk
that copes as well with fresh green weeds ;

no stance more perfect balance than mine
but, you cheeky monkey, have a strategy :
no threat could make me wobble,
the most violent move leaves me unimpressed
but one invention might cause my grip to slip :
the one about what the Irishman said
climbing out of the helicopter wreck
and nobody else would have laughed but me.

Phil Poole (1944-2010)

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