

Introduction to Death

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Death meets each of us some time. But perhaps, the most vivid memory of death springs from the first introduction. I shall never forget the little duck named Ivory, who acquainted me with death.

Ivory was the neighbors' pet and my play-fellow. At this time, I was three and possessed no sisters as yet. Thus, Ivory and I waddled around the yard together, enjoying each other's company. He belonged to me more than he did to his owners.

One day the painters came to redecorate the house. Thoughtlessly they deposited their ladders in the yard and went out to lunch. With typical childish curiosity, Ivory and I pattered around their paraphernalia. Eventually, we began playing with the ladders, which had been laid on their sides in the yard. Ivory darted between the rungs and I hopped over them. The accident happened so suddenly. My foot must have caught on a rung, and Ivory couldn't scramble out from under the falling ladder in time.

I didn't know what was wrong with my little pet. I'll never forget how I tried to stand him up, and he kept falling over. The downy little body was so hard and still. Death was unknown in my young life.

Finally, I rushed into the house and crawled in my bed. I became violently ill and Mother called the doctor. There was a huge knot in my stomach and throat. I couldn't speak. I couldn't even cry.

About this time, the neighbor arrived and informed Mother of Ivory's death. The fallen ladder told the whole story. Mother took me in her arms and explained away my fears and the knot in my stomach. That evening I helped bury Ivory in a cigar box in the garden.

Although this incident occurred years ago, whenever death appears in my life, my thoughts go rushing back to Ivory's stiff little form that wouldn't stand up.

