

Deaths and Entrances

by Angie

'And death shall have no dominion'

Dylan Thomas

Prologue

The poet's image was largely one he had concocted and reinforced himself – wild, brilliant, devoted to words. He had known he wanted to be a poet from his teens. It wasn't for romantic reasons – he was truly driven ... destined, perhaps. He often told people that.

No one denied he had a way with words (on and off the page), not even in those early schoolboy days. He was educated, loved, coddled even at home. He had suffered from chronic lung problems early in childhood, and that weakness drove him too, perhaps contributed to the mad desire to do it all, soonest, before it defeated him.

His father, a teacher of English literature and his mother, a seamstress, worked at making their lives pleasant and comfortable ... and as close to that of the gentry as their circumstances would allow. They were all proud.

Although his father was fluent in both English and Welsh, the would-be poet wrote only in English, the better to attract attention and patrons. He did not care to actually live in the poverty poets claimed inspired them. He never had.

His good looks and mellow, mesmerizing voice (when he chose to do readings of his work) had given him enough celebrity that he made a great deal of money on occasion, and was able to attract the generosity of patrons willing to make up any deficit. He drank heavily, and worked intermittently, but what he produced was considered exceptional.

He knew his market and made good money – better than many others of his day. He also spent it quickly, often on liquor, taxi rides, travelling, hotels and food -and private schools for his children. They were often short of cash in consequence.

He was not superstitious or particularly religious, but the legends of his native Wales had often been told to him by his father. The imagery and legends of that harsh and beautiful land had therefore permeated his poetry, and his prose. His countrymen revered him, the boy poet who had escaped and managed to wrap Englishmen (and women) around his little finger. His success had inspired generations of Welsh schoolboys.

In April 1953, he returned to New York, where he renewed an affair with the assistant of a fellow poet. She had met him at a poetry reading. She encouraged him to finish 'Under Milkwood' - after all, it was the reason he was in New York. However, he died just a day or two before the recording could be accomplished, and Welsh actor Richard Burton was replaced in the recording studio, giving even greater renown to that epic poem.

But before his death on November 9, 1953, days after his 39th birthday on October 27th, the poet had been regularly bedding that young woman, and they were seen together in restaurants and in the Hotel Chelsea, where he was staying. He drank heavily and didn't always remember everything about their assignations, where both drank and ate to excess. Added to this, he was ill in the last weeks of his life with bronchitis and was taking medications, both oral and injected, to keep him on his feet. He was told to take better care of himself and not to drink alcohol. He ignored the last and went out drinking in the wee hours one morning. Returning to his mistress, he claimed to have downed 18 whiskies in a row. He collapsed not long afterwards and went into a coma, from which he never awoke. He had been taken to the nearby St Vincent's Hospital.

After his death, his paramour had dropped out of sight, and when the child was born the following January, she quietly divested herself of it before anyone was the wiser. She did it carefully and quietly, praying that the child would not suffer. Her son was unlike any other child of her limited experience. She assumed that the poet's drinking and drugs had done something untoward to the child in her womb. Of course, she was not without blame, and she did not spare herself either. But she never knew about the superstitions and premonitions of his early years. He never told her.

She, for her part, remained part of the poetry scene, contributing much and variously, led a full life, later married and moved away from New York, and died at the age of 80. If she wondered what had happened to her child, she never said so to any confidante.

Dylan Thomas, though, was not quite done with life. He had done as his premonition had foretold.

That day in Vincent's life began as they so often did, even now, as he forced himself to participate in the life of the tunnels - with a request. Mouse signalled over the pipes for Vincent to help him with some doors. Doors! There was an ongoing demand for them, and Kanin had made a point of adapting some chamber entries to take them – and many tunnel residents were hoping for a door to be found to fill them.

Vincent was tired; he was always tired these days. He spent a good part of every night searching for Catherine, but it wasn't something he could not do. He would not give up. He would search for her until he died. He had sworn so.

He was not eating as well as he should either, as Father repeatedly pointed out. There was no time now for anything either. He was needed. He answered Mouse, tapping out that he was on his way and asked if a dollie was needed. Mouse replied that he had one and clarified that he was waiting under West 23rd Street and Seventh Avenue.

Vincent put his heavy gloves into his cloak pocket, picked up his lantern, and made his way to the location. He found the irrepressible Mouse in a tunnel deep in dust and cobwebs. No one came this way because there was no reason to. Vincent himself had decided not to explore it unless there was evidence it had been disturbed. There never had been. He hated cobwebs on his clothing, and particularly on his face.

Now, a large swath of the industry of the spiders had been cleared, and in the light of Mouse's

lantern, plus his own, Vincent could see that several ancient doors were leaning against the tunnel wall. They were all dirty white, chipped, battered and abused, but they were solid and heavy - as Vincent discovered when he hefted the first one after putting on his gloves. He walked it to the dollie and laid it on top, while Mouse kept a booted foot on the wooden wedge under a front wheel, to prevent the cart from moving.

“Where did you find these, Mouse?” Vincent asked as he took a deep breath to recover from the unaccustomed exertion.

Mouse pointed down the tunnel, where Vincent could see a crude opening hammered into the wall. He walked down to it and held up his lantern to peer inside. The inner room was even more derelict than the tunnel. Spider webs hung in festoons, and dust covered everything so deeply that he could barely discern exactly what the obviously long-unused room held. Footprints had disturbed the dust near the entry only, and scrapes showed where the doors had been dragged out. Mouse had dragged those door out to the tunnel ... on his own? Vincent realized just how degraded his strength had become. He must not continue like this, he silently berated himself!

He looked around. More doors seemed to be lined up against the nearer inside wall. Several had been moved. Some were varnished wood, one was red with an eye in the top middle, and one was yellow. Two had a battered metal number or two on the upper middle panel. They must have come from a hotel or rooming house!

Vincent called up his mental map of the area and realized they must be under the old Hotel Chelsea. This must be a long-forgotten storage room, a place to put items too broken or needing too much work, he guessed.

He raised his lantern and looked around. There was a dumbwaiter panel, nailed shut with wide scrap planks. A set of rickety stairs let upwards near one corner, but they had not been used in a very long time - and were probably unsafe. At the top of them was a hatch, probably unusable also – perhaps even nailed shut from above, or covered by carpet, or perhaps it went to yet another old storage room. The old buildings in this part of the city often boasted stacks of old cellars.

Vincent was satisfied that this place was not likely to be investigated. That was encouraging.

He returned to Mouse and took a good look at one of the doors waiting to be moved onto the dollie. It looked no better close up, but when he touched it, he felt a frisson of ... something. He pulled the door from the wall and looked at the back side, then the hinge side and finally the side which had once had a lock. He spotted something unusual. Just above the lock hole was a familiar signature in fountain pen ink.



“*Dylan Thomas*,” he exclaimed, astonished. Of course, Thomas had lived at the Hotel Chelsea for a time. Could this have been the door to his suite? Thomas had died in 1953, apparently at St Vincent's Hospital. The coincidence of that had not escaped Vincent, considering his own close association with that venerable old building.

Vincent leaned against the wall and closed his eyes. Something was trying to get his attention, something about this door, perhaps, or the poet. His brain, more tired than he cared to admit,

refused to enlighten him. He gave it up. There was work to do at present, so he shook off the feeling and helped Mouse move the next door onto the dolly. He put the autographed door on the top of the pile.

"I would like this door in my chamber," Vincent informed Mouse, pointing at the top one. He had to have the door, although he had never expressed a desire for one before. He wasn't sure why he wanted it, just that it presented a puzzle he had to solve.

"Vincent wants door? Okay good. Take rest to storeroom. Kanin said," Mouse commented.

They pulled the heavy cart to the stone staircase and rested. Vincent removed his door and leaned it against a nearby wall while they hauled the others down to the storeroom level, then after them the cart. They loaded the cart again and moved the remaining doors into the storeroom.

Vincent reported that four doors were now waiting and more were available in a place Mouse had found. He then returned for his own door and carried it to his chamber, more slowly and carefully than he preferred, but he couldn't rely on his strength. He leaned the door against the metal rungs of the ladder to the pipe conduit, for lack of anywhere else. Then he washed up and sat down to catch his breath and sip some cold tea he had left on his table earlier. He couldn't be bothered to make fresh.

The door, though, would not let him rest for long. It drew him, seemed to beg him to touch it. Vincent rose and approached it cautiously. He idly touched the hole left by the absent lock mechanism and his index finger nail prodded it unconsciously. He felt something soft and peered into the opening. Carefully, he extracted a piece of paper. It contained just four words in Thomas' solid handwriting – *'To the wild child '.*

Shocked now, both by the reference to one of the darker of Thomas' poems, and the inscription on the piece of paper, Vincent went to his bookcase and located a book of poems he knew included *'Vision and Prayer'*, the pattern poem the poet had written in 1944, probably not long after his 30th birthday. He found the poem and read the first group aloud, but quietly.

*Who
Are you
Who is born
In the next room
So loud to my own
That I can hear the womb
Opening and the dark run
Over the ghost and the dropped son
Behind the wall thin as a wren's bone ?
In the birth bloody room unknown
To the burn and turn of time
And the heart print of man
Bows no baptism
But dark alone
Blessing on
The wild
Child.*

Vincent touched the front of the door and once again, felt something, like a very mild electric charge, when he did so. He closed his eyes to concentrate. Sometimes, he could discern the history of an object when he touched or held it. The little piece of paper was not telling him much beyond the poetry reference, but the door ... the door seemed to almost speak to him.

And then it did, in a deep, mellow voice, with just a hint of its Welsh heritage, overlaid with Oxford diction. It was a pleasant voice, soothing, the words slowly enunciated - and it was addressing him by name. Vincent's eyes popped open, but he quickly closed them again, the better to concentrate. The voice, which had ceased at his surprise, continued.

"Poets write of our world from their viewpoint. But they are self-absorbed – they see what they wish to see. In 1944, I had a series of dreams, as if I had attracted the attention of the hobgoblins of my native Wales. Born in the days between Samhain and All Hallows, I felt them pushing me, prodding me, eagerly awaiting my acknowledgement. So one day, with a glass of whiskey to hand, I composed the poem I called 'Vision and Prayer', based on those dreams. Were they ... and it ... a premonition? I believe so. It did not strike me so at the time, but later, much later, I wrote my name on this door, and left a little note to you.

After I was dead and you were born, I came to understand. I was never good at taking advice I didn't wish to hear. I did not while I was alive, and I did not rest quietly after death. I needed ... more.

I didn't know she was pregnant with my child, but when I returned to the Hotel Chelsea that last morning, I heard the rumour. Later, I DID haunt that place, until I could find out where she had gone and when she would deliver. I was there in that hospital, listening from outside the window, not daring to show myself lest I frighten her. I was so sure she would see me. Thus it was that I saw you, my wild son, my bright child.

I
Must lie
Still as stone
By the wren bone
Wall hearing the moan
Of the mother hidden
And the shadowed head of pain
Casting to-morrow like a thorn
And the midwives of miracle sing
Until the turbulent new born
Burns me his name and his flame
And the winged wall is torn
By his torrid crown
And the dark thrown
From his loin
To bright
Light.

You dazzled them, amazed them, for you were perfect, beautiful in your way, as a lion cub is beautiful. They could not understand how you had come to be born as you were, but in their wisdom, they did not speculate. Their work was to see you both lived.

But she ... she knew she could not keep you. No one could in the world we knew then ... or now. The nurses encouraged her to care for you, give you your first milk, but they could not let her stay long. You were both healthy ... and a hospital was for the sick.

They were not unkind, those nurses, nuns all, but they had no answers to such as you. Life was precious, patients a sacred trust, but you ... you were not so easily defined.

As soon as she was strong enough, she put on her clothing and shoes and left. They did not ask where. They dared not. Thus they fulfilled their duty to life. They knew she was not poor, and there were others who needed their help more.

She took only a blanket, one large enough to wrap you well, more than once. Then she left by the back door and wandered down the alley, thinking. I followed her. It was a bitterly cold January night; I knew this by the way smoke hung near the ground. I could not feel it of course, but she could and you could. I saw your breaths linger like small clouds as she moved, the crackle of her footsteps in the dry dusting of snow.

She kissed you once, then stooped beside a clutter of garbage cans and placed you down. Then she prayed that you would survive, that you would not suffer, that your life would be a blessing for however long it lasted. She could not stay, it was too cold and she was too tired, but she stood there some while, before forcing herself to leave.

I stayed there, my child, watching, unable to do anything else. I saw you shiver, heard your thin little mewling cries. And I watched. I feared for you, prayed for you, called down help for you. I wanted to hold you, but I could not. I was almost mad, even by my standards.

*When
The wren
Bone writhes down
And the first dawn
Furied by his stream
Swarms on the kingdom come
Of the dazzler of heaven
And the splashed mothering maiden
Who bore him with a bonfire in
His mouth and rocked him like a storm
I shall run lost in sudden
Terror and shining from
The once hooded room
Crying in vain
In the cauldron
Of his
Kiss*

And miraculously, a woman dressed in many layers of old clothes and an over-sized wool coat, wearing men's boots well-padded with thick socks, shuffled into the alley. She rooted through the bundles there – obviously something she did regularly. She found you. I heard her murmur, amazed, and I rejoiced, because she took you away. I knew, since she put you inside her coat, that she would keep you safe, that you would be cared for and loved for what you are. I knew this, from my dreams so long ago, the ones I did not understand, and was now beginning to.

*In
The spin
Of the sun
In the spuming
Cyclone of his wing
For I was lost who am
Crying at the man drenched throne
In the first fury of his stream
And the lightnings of adoration
Back to black silence melt and mourn
For I was lost who have come
To dumbfounding haven
And the finding one
And the high noon
Of his wound
Blinds my
Cry.*

And so she did as I'd hoped, my son. The Hotel Chelsea knew me no more, although I did return occasionally to frighten the tenants of my former room. My wife returned to Wales, but I remained in New York, waiting, for I knew not what. The hotel changed, grew frantic, seedy, attracting even more dissolute entertainers, until it seemed it must collapse under the weight of accumulated depravity and art.

I ... I sought out and followed your spirit, found you, watched you grow from that timeless place I inhabited, living in the shadows of this place, by candlelight and lantern. Sometimes, I think you sensed me. I stood watching you from the shadows that were my haven now, even as they were your birthright. For you were denied sunlight, my son. Ah, so seldom had I seen that brightness in my daytime recoveries from a night of debauchery and drink. I took it for granted. But you ... you could not. An irony that did not escape me. But did I not write poetry the world admired, even so?

*There
Crouched bare
In the shrine
Of his blazing
Breast I shall waken
To the judge blown bedlam
Of the uncaged sea bottom
The cloud climb of the exhaling tomb
And the bidden dust upsailing
With his flame in every grain.
O spiral of ascension
From the vultured urn
Of the morning
Of man when
The land
And I
Die*

You cannot perhaps understand how happy I was, happy that I was dead, yet did not depart. I was given a gift that many would die to have. You were my Adam, the one who begat all that I wanted for my offspring. You were magnificent, a fantasy made real, and I was the one who had helped you to be. I could not be but grateful. And I watched you grow.

*The
Born sea
Praised the sun
The finding one
And upright Adam
Sang upon origin!
O the wings of the children!
The woundward flight of the ancient
Young from the canyons of oblivion!
The sky stride of the always slain
In battle! the happening
Of saints to their vision!
The world winding home!
And the whole pain
Flows open
And I
Die .*

But not all was well with you, my son. The people who protected you, cared for you, loved you; even they could not prevent you from knowing yourself. Ah, the poet in your soul and brain warred with the one in your limbs, your muscles, your stamina pumped by that great heart. You learned to kill, to protect, to love even – and to lose and despair. But you feared to lose even more. You feared to lose yourself. As do we all ... all men. For we are all fighters, hard-hearted at need, never considering the pain we cause in that cause. You, my son, were better equipped to survive, that is all. I was proud of you.

*In the name of the lost who glory in
The swinish plains of carrion
Under the burial song
Of the birds of burden
Heavy with the drowned
And the green dust
And bearing
The ghost
From
The ground
Like pollen
On the black plume
And the beak of slime
I pray though I belong
Not wholly to that lamenting
Brethren for joy has moved within
The inmost marrow of my heart bone*

But there was more. We are all tortured on this earth. Yet, there is beauty in the most unlikely places, deep despair and ugliness in some of the best. You, with your poet's soul, know this. Your world is all that can be claimed in the world above ground. It is home. And the love you felt was the love that was reflected from you. You made them understand love, in a new dimension, accept what would have been unacceptable in that other world ... my world. Would that I could have done as much. Ah, I did less than I wished, although more than I dreamed or hoped in my youth. Does anyone do all?

*That he who learns now the sun and moon
Of his mother's milk may return
Before the lips blaze and bloom
To the birth bloody room
Behind the wall's wren
Bone and be dumb
And the womb
That bore
For
All men
The adored
Infant light or
The dazzling prison
Yawn to his upcoming.
In the name of the wanton
Lost on the unchristened mountain
In the centre of dark I pray him*

Love is a vision which may destroy. I knew that. You discovered it also, as I watched you become a teenager. Did you feel me that time, as you writhed in the flames of madness, the madness that youth and love bound you to know? Ah, I think you did, although you could not know it. I was bound by my own self, my love of poetry, of what it meant to be a poet, an honoured one at that. But it was no easy life, my son. I prayed for you, to whom or what I could not say. But one of those days, you listened to your guardian read, and his reading reached your soul. I heard my own poetry read, dark though so much of it is. You absorbed that literature as my father would have wished, avidly, greedily. Ah, that I could have been a better son to him, a better father to you.

*That he let the dead lie though they moan
For his briared hands to hoist them
To the shrine of his world's wound
And the blood drop's garden
Endure the stone
Blind host to sleep
In the dark
And deep
Rock
Awake
No heart bone
But let it break
On the mountain crown
Unbidden by the sun*

*And the beating dust be blown
Down to the river rooting plain
Under the night forever falling.*

And soon, calm returned to you and you found peace again, in this place of stone. You again knew the love of your companions, your friends, your family who were not family, for you had none that could claim you. You rediscovered the beauties of this place, of your place in it, and patrolled again, often the nights in the world above. For now they were yours in truth. You had survived the darkness of the soul. No mere night could touch you now. You knew it ... and it accepted you.

*Forever falling night is a known
Star and country to the legion
Of sleepers whose tongue I toll
To mourn his deluging
Light through sea and soil
And we have come
To know all
Places
Ways
Mazes
Passages
Quarters and graves
Of the endless fall.
Now common lazarus
Of the charting sleepers prays
Never to awake and arise
For the country of death is the heart's size*

And so your life continued, that of a scholar, a warrior, perhaps a poet, but not yet a lover. Perhaps never a lover, you thought. I know you thought this in the long watches of the night. I heard you sigh, I knew you dreamed the impossible ... or what you thought to be such.

You saw sunlight only reflected, leaking from the world above the stone passages. Yet, one foggy night, all that changed and sunlight nevertheless entered where it was least expected, but always awaited.

*And the star of the lost the shape of the eyes.
In the name of the fatherless
In the name of the unborn
And the undesirers
Of midwiving morning's
Hands or instruments
O in the name
Of no one
Now or
No
One to
Be I pray
May the crimson*

*Sun spin a grave grey
And the colour of clay
Stream upon his martyrdom
In the interpreted evening
And the known dark of the earth amen.*

Darkness does not hide completely, it is merely the absence of light. Any light will cast it aside. I saw you find your love, carry her to your place of refuge, which became hers also, as she healed. And I rejoiced that you had found her, that she loved you as you loved her. Ah my child, is there any joy that can compare to that of seeing your offspring happy, even as they struggle to find themselves and their place in the world? No one escapes challenges, my son.

You were not allowed to completely forget your 'Long-legged Bait', she who had driven you to madness, for she returned. Then you were caught between a former love and a current one. One who wished to use you and one who would use only what you gave her. My poem meant more to you now. You had grown, and that old love had not. She had not learned to. She was still bait, and willing to be caught by men who wanted a possession, not a wife, not a soul-mate. You knew the difference. She cared not to. She was as driven as I – and sought the same recompense.

Later still, after a time of terrible darkness and poison, you felt the tides of despair wash over you. Perhaps you had done too much killing, taken too many risks for the one you loved ... or it was because you had not known the solace of the physical love you desired above all else? Any and all tipped the balance. Yet, still you found something speaking to you from my poetry. You quoted the one that meant most to you, and her, to the night air. You could not know how I grieved for you.

Ah, life has no answers, my son. Death fewer than life. I observe, but I cannot change. Despair, desolation, denial, depression. You have known these. You will survive because you must, because now you have a son. I would have you see him, hold him. I want for you everything I was denied.

I could not do much, but I could do one thing well, still. I could haunt. And I have done so where it would be most effective. You will find her, now, waiting, at that place where you and she enjoyed a thunderstorm. Appropriate. The storm will be hardly less now – but it will be a warm rain, tears of joy.

My son, you can do what I could not – accept life and all its challenges and joys, as well as its shortcomings and betrayals. Go there now, my son. Find her and bring her home. She waits. She is patient. She knows you will go to her.

Live as you were meant to, my son. I will not linger. I am content now. I am ready. Farewell.

Vincent sat up straight and opened his eyes. What had he just heard? He was to go to the music chamber? There he would find ... he hardly dared to think her name, to hope.

Rising, he ran down the tunnels, without his cloak and uncaring, arriving breathless, skidding to a stop at the entry to the music chamber, straining his eyes to adjust to the stripes of dark and blinding bright, the almost noonday sun shining through the grate. Yes, there was a figure sitting on the cushions there. He ran in, stopped and looked down at her, still not quite believing it. She looked up at him, her eyes now damp with tears and her lips smiling. His name on her lips was the most beautiful thing he could ever hope to hear.

"Vincent."

She said it softly, calmly, as if they had only been separated for a few hours, instead of months. He reached down as she extended her hands up to him, and pulled her to her feet, realizing as he did so that she was very pregnant. He said nothing about that, merely holding her to him, glorying in the feel of her, the smell of her, her pressed against him. He did not want to let her go.

"How?" he managed at last.

She murmured into his vest and he felt her head shake in disbelief.

"Gabriel let me go, Vincent. I don't know why. He was white as a sheet, said almost nothing. I had heard there was to be a raid, that Joe was leading it. I didn't care. I didn't argue. He gave me back my clothing and purse and had the nurse drop me off at my apartment. I stayed there just long enough to put on something more comfortable, then I came down. I knew I had to wait here for you. I don't know why. I ... just knew."

Vincent looked down at her. It was all too much. Dylan Thomas ... was he indeed his father? It seemed impossible, but then so was Catherine's presence here, unexpected, unbelievable – yet real.

"You must not stay here. It's chilly," he told her. He lifted her into his arms and carried her back to his chamber. He let her stand briefly while he pulled back the covers on his bed, then lifted her carefully onto it.

"Rest," he ordered her, covering her. She smiled at him and nodded.

"*I am* tired," she admitted.

He watched over her until she fell asleep, and then removed his outer clothing to crawl in beside her. He slept as he had not for months, deeply, without dreams.

She was still there beside him when he awakened, looking at him, and still he found it almost unbelievable. He must have looked awed, for she gave him her slightly off-centre smile and stroked his face.

"So long have I wanted to see you, Vincent, to touch you, hear your voice. I feared I would not, ever again, except in dreams."

Vincent gathered his wits and sat up, helping Catherine to do so also. He gazed at her and knew the truth. Dylan Thomas had told him ... she was carrying his child. He could have no doubts about that. He could not remember everything from that dark cavern, but he was sure of that much, now. It was as if a door had opened, an entrance blocked by pain and loss, now open to sunlight and fresh air, as if the darkness had never been. The marvel of it left him momentarily speechless.

"Are you well, Catherine?" he asked finally, unwilling to broach the subject more directly.

"I have been well cared for, Vincent. It was boring, I didn't like the company, or the place, but they fed me, kept me warm, monitored me, especially when they discovered I was pregnant. They guessed the child was yours."

Vincent closed his eyes. Snow ... and Gabriel. They had known he existed. That had been careless of him. Would they have kept her alive if she had not been pregnant, if they had not known of it? He had to assume not.

"How did this happen. Vincent? I was sure they would not permit me to survive the birth of our

child.”

Vincent looked over at the old door. It looked very ordinary now, yet it had been the means of a revelation. He did not know if he could ever explain it to Catherine. He was not sure he understood ... or believed it ... himself.

Instead he recited the last part of the poem, the part Dylan Thomas had left unsaid.

*I turn the corner of prayer and burn
In a blessing of the sudden
Sun. In the name of the damned
I would turn back and run
To the hidden land
But the loud sun
Christens down
The sky.
I
Am found.
O let him
Scald me and drown
Me in his world's wound.
His lightening answers my
Cry. My voice burns in his hand.
Now I am lost in the blinding
One. The sun roars at the prayer's end.*

“*Vision and Prayer*”, Catherine commented. “His poetry has given us so much, Vincent. Remember, you read me ‘*Fern Hill*’ once? It seems an age ago.”

“Yes,” Vincent replied and quoted the last lines, which seemed singularly appropriate now.

*“Time held me green and dying,
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.”*

Catherine nodded. “The first line is mine, I think. ‘*I was young and easy in the mercy of his means*’.”

He bent down to kiss her. There would be no more separations now. Nothing else mattered for the present. His world was again complete – because of a ghost. That door would be fitted to his chamber entry. He could not bear to part with it now. Someday, perhaps he could tell the tale to Catherine. For now, he had more pressing concerns. They both ... all ... needed to eat.

And so they did, amid the kind of rejoicing only loved ones can offer. And in time, Vincent held his son. He put his hand flat on the door and silently thanked the ghost of Dylan Thomas for a life with fewer limits than he could ever have imagined. There was no answer, no sense of that restless spirit, but he hoped it had found peace, at last.

END