

Signals at Sea

—Charles H. Cugle, *Cugle's Practical Navigation*,
1936

(If the flags in A's hoist cannot be made out, B keeps her answering pennant at the "Dip" and hoists the signal "OWL" or "WCX.")

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| CXL | Do not abandon me. |
| A | I am undergoing a speed trial. |
| D | Keep clear of me—I am maneuvering with difficulty. |
| F | I am disabled. Communicate with me. |
| G | I require a pilot. |
| P | Your lights are out, or burning badly. |
| U | You are standing into danger. |
| X | Stop carrying out your intentions. |
| K | You should stop your vessel instantly. |
| L | You should stop. I have something important to communicate. |
| R | You may feel your way past me. |

Deathbeds

—Edward S. Le Comte, ed., *Dictionary of Last Words*, 1955

(The poet essentially can't be concerned with the act of dying.)

—Henry James, preface to *The Wings of the Dove*

This is too tight; loosen it a little. I pray
You give me some sack! Bring me last year's apple,
If you can, or any new melon. A dozen cold oysters.
My children! My papers! My book, my unfinished book!

From my present sensations, I should say I was dying
—And I am glad of it. The world is bobbing around.

Do you know the Lord's Prayer? Cover me.
Shut the door. Can't see you any more.
I must go home. I am very forlorn at the present
Moment, and wish I was at Malvern.

Am I still alive? Do I drag my anchors?

So here it is at last, the distinguished thing!
Is this dying? Is this all? Is this
All that I feared, when I prayed against a hard death?
O! I can bear this! I can bear it!

Now I have finished with all earthly business
—High time, too. Yes, yes,

My dear child, now comes death.
Is it come already? Here, here is my end.
Wait a moment. Do you not hear the voices?

And the children's are the loudest! The chariots

And horses! I do not know how this happened.
I can account for it in no way.

Watty! What is this? It is death.
They have deceived me. It has all been very interesting.
I should like to have a good spin down Regent Street.
Four o'clock? How strange! So that is Time!

Sing to me, if you have the heart. Draw
The curtain. Turn me over. Perhaps I may
Sleep a little. Cover me up warm,
Keep my utterance clear . . . I'm doing well.

Ah, Catherine, how beautiful you look.
Yes, love, yes. Oh! dear. Good-bye,
Harry. Good-night, Lushington. I wish
Johnny would come. Will you please turn
This way? I like to look at your face.

Already my foot is in the stirrup. Lift
Me up, lift me right up! Now farewell.
We are over the hill; we shall go better now.

I am coming, Katie! John, it will not
Be long. Supremely happy! Excellent!
My dearest, dearest Liz. We are all going;
We are all going; we are all going.

This is it, chaps. Take me home.
I believe, my son, I am going. That's it.
Good-bye—drive on. Cut her loose, Doc.

I'm going, I'm going. At a gallop!
Clear the way. Good-bye, God bless you!
Good-bye, everybody. A general good-night.