

# COMING FOR TO CARRY ME HOME

*A Guide to Living and Dying Consciously*



Wendy Hayhurst

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CARRY ME HOME

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*Guidelines for living and  
dying consciously*

Wendy Hayhurst



**Venus Group Publishing**

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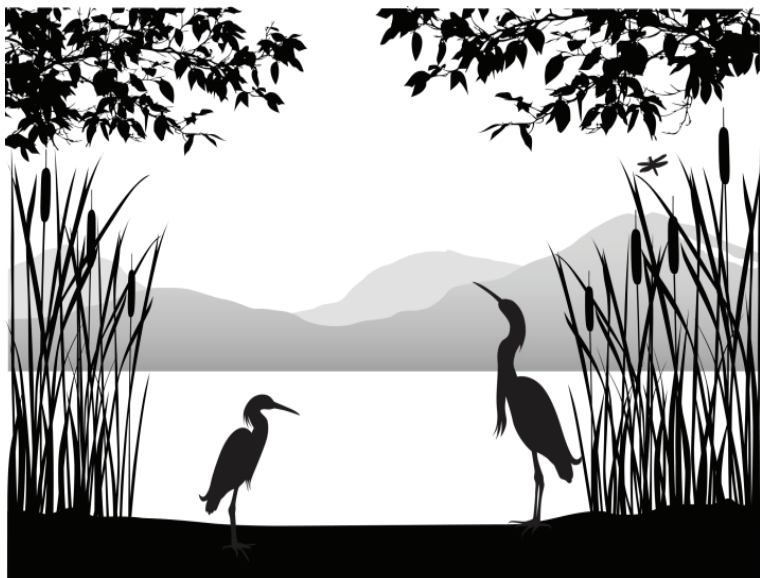
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*Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*  
*Coming for to Carry Me Home*  
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*Coming for to Carry Me Home*



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This book is for you, whether you are being challenged right now by your own mortality, are a carer for someone who is, or are simply living your life putting off any consideration of our greatest taboo. I hope you find value in these pages and come to understand that death is but a transition and that, in accepting its inevitability and shedding our fears surrounding it, we can truly live our lives to the full.



## *Acknowledgments*



MY HEARTFELT GRATITUDE GOES TO:

On this wondrous yet frequently challenging journey through life, I have been fortunate enough to have worked and met with numerous beautiful beings to whom I owe a huge debt of gratitude. I wish to thank my parents; Mum, for your warm and generous mothering love and your gentleness of spirit; Dad, for your wicked sense of humour, the invaluable teachings you shared from working with the Earth, and your journey home – you saved the best till last. I thank my siblings, Gill and Rupert, with whom I shared the Garden of Eden of my childhood.

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I send my deepest appreciation to The Brigitte Trust and all the special people who give their time and love freely to walk alongside people facing life-threatening illness, offering them emotional and practical support. I have grown tall from all those times of sitting together in 'Support and Development'. Great thanks to Jutta, Hannah, Leslie and all my finest teachers—the dying, whose final legacy taught me how to open my mind and heart to death.

Now for those closer to home; I have overwhelming love and gratitude to my four beautiful sons: Doran, Adam, Jonathan and Greg—thank you for honouring me with the gift of being your mother, I am so very proud. To my daughters-in law, Claire and Mel, for all that you are and all that you give. Boundless love to, at the last count, my five darling grandchildren, Myfanwy, Gabriel, Bili, Joseff and Arlie—you are all beautiful fruits of the Tree of Life. To my beloved husband, Mark, my soul mate and best friend, my rock—thank you for your extraordinary wisdom and support and for walking this path hand in hand with me, for suffering my faults and always seeing through them all to find the very best in me. We cannot walk this journey by ourselves and I celebrate our continuing adventures together.

I thank the ancestors and all those unnamed ones. And most importantly, I offer eternal thanks and gratitude to the Mother and Father of us all.

## Foreword



by Dianne Arcangel  
Author of *Life After Life* & *Afterlife Encounters*

As I began to read through *Coming For To Carry Me Home*, a one-word description repeatedly popped into my mind. *Balance*. It describes the book and the author, each exemplifying balance.

Bereavement specialists have long discussed the problem of writing for the public, especially the bereaved. If we explain concepts in professional terms, then we lose the average reader, especially the young and those in a fog of grief. If, on the other hand, our writing is too simplistic, then the more sophisticated readers, those who have experienced the topic, find the material unchallenging. Boredom leads them to put the book aside.

Wendy Hayhurst has enlightened the predicament. In *Coming For To Carry Me Home*, she presents the concepts of death, dying, grief, and transcendence in a way that is multigenerational and will satisfy many levels of expertise. Throughout the text, she intersperses tender, often personal, stories at just the right moment for readers to assimilate what they learned rather than sink into information overload. By levelling all of the scales, she has created an interesting, meaningful, and compelling read.

While working as a hospice chaplain, I observed high staff turnover, which is normal in our field. Maintaining equilibrium is imperative for serving the terminally ill and their families. Our hearts offer unconditionally acceptance, while our minds ensure they are safe. We appreciate others for who and where they are along their individual journeys, but at the same time we honor our own. Although we have no desire

to change anyone, we can pass along information that leads to transformation. By understanding death, we truly live every millisecond.

As a midwife to the dying for more than a decade, Wendy Hayhurst has remained steadfast, blending compassion with knowledge. As an author, her heart and intellect inscribe words, sentences, paragraphs. It was from that rare and perfect balance that she has written *Coming For To Carry Me Home* for all of us.

Dianne Arcangel  
Houston, TX, 2010

## Introduction



*The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.  
Don't go back to sleep.  
You must ask for what you really want.  
Don't go back to sleep.  
People are going back and forth across the doorsill  
where two worlds touch.  
The door is round and open.  
Don't go back to sleep.*

Jallaludin Rumi

Living, as we do, in a modern world which has a need to analyse and understand, many of us forget the powers of our own inner knowing, leaving them unacknowledged, undeveloped and untapped. With our fast pace of life it is common for many of us to use the busying of ourselves as a means of avoiding thoughts of death and our own mortality, reinforcing what has become an almost universal taboo. We become absorbed in our thoughts and the daily routines of our own minds. We have forgotten the sense of soul, fearing sickness and death rather than accepting them and embracing them as part of our great journey.

We have our *Mother Earth* upon whom we live. She gives us life and she takes life from us. Women have played an important and intimate role in death. Feminising death invites us to start thinking about her in a different way, with less of the masculine aspect of a *Grim Reaper*, and more of the mother figure who is all loving, all embracing, and all welcoming.

We fail to establish a relationship with Death, yet she is the only certainty in life, coming when she chooses—whether or not we are ready. Everybody fears death and nobody wants



to talk about her; people say that she is too depressing and morbid to discuss. It is not fashionable to get old and die. We are so desperately fighting to live that we don't give ourselves time to learn how to die.

Death remains a subject which people often find difficult to face, yet closing our eyes to death simply creates fear. Fear can be all consuming and limiting, causing us to withdraw and contract, whereas what we need to do is expand. We are looking to deepen our understanding of death: we cannot ignore the pain and suffering that death brings, but entwined in this suffering are experiences of prophetic peace, great tenderness and infinite love. As we experience this miracle called death, all who are involved are taken to greater depths than we have ever known before.

Dying is like being born—souls are coming in and souls are going out, through the same ethereal doorway. With many similarities between the labour pains of birth and those of dying, midwives are required on either side of this sacred threshold to guide a safe delivery. We are seeking and drawn to the light at the end of the tunnel in both of these major transitions. They are moments of great vulnerability, but preparation for death is never practised in our Western society in the same manner as when we prepare for giving birth.

In recent years, there has been a movement away from childbirth being something which happens in a hospital environment, surrounded by machines and busy nurses. Natural methods have become widely recognised as healthier, more empowering, more enjoyable and more beneficial. Women now have a more informed choice in how to deliver their babies via various pre-natal classes featuring open and clear discussion. Fathers and close family members are encouraged to play a role in the birth, especially when women

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choose to have the baby at home assisted by a midwife. It is a powerful and magical moment when a baby is born, one which touches the very depths of the soul for those present, and creates a deep bond for all who share in this miraculous transition to earth.

In contrast, death has come to be treated as something that occurs away from the home, with many spending their final days and hours hidden away in the alien and sanitised world of a hospital, in a stark and clinical environment surrounded by technology and strangers. Ironically, advanced medical technology itself has banished a lot of awareness we had to die consciously; it has unconsciously separated and alienated us from our own selves, from the roots of our own beings, and from our own souls. We no longer play an active role in the deaths of our loved ones, and instead become more of a spectator. With this has come uncertainty of what to expect and what to do, compounding our feelings of discomfort and disempowerment when we are with the dying.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, most people died at home, tended by their families and communities, but sadly, this is not the case now. Hopefully, pre-natal preparation has helped to pave the way for pre-death preparation, and we will again see the dying more empowered and more knowledgeable about the choices they have so that they can make informed decisions when the time comes for them to leave.

Death is a natural transition, and learning about her is the most informing and heartening lesson we can ever undertake to prepare us for what is one of our greatest adventures in life since birth. The knowledge and wisdom we garner from our learning will teach us how to not only die consciously, but also to die with a deep sense of peace and love. This kind of peaceful and dignified death is our natural birthright. As we

stand at the threshold between this world and the next, we are more naked than ever, but, in our vulnerability, we begin to feel truly alive. As we explore dying, it releases not only the *fear of death* but also the *fear of living*, as it is only when we have learned how to die that we learn how to live our lives to the fullest.

Whether we are young or old, healthy or ill, we are all in the process of dying and our journey home starts now—not when we are on our deathbeds. Let us step away from the world of harsh criticism, emotionless faces and false roles, and instead explore the mystery of the unknown. Let us pray for the strength and courage it requires to move beyond these roles and to cultivate the seeds of understanding and awareness which grow in the fertile depths of our consciousness. Let us become true to our values, familiarising ourselves with the landscape of our inner being rather than avoiding it through fear of losing control of who we believe ourselves to be. As we move through this transition, let us recognise that the mystery of death is to be experienced and not ignored or dismissed.

My hope is that we can cease to deny death; that we can bring her back into our homes and integrate her into our lives so that we may have a conscious and peaceful passage. As we prepare ourselves for our own transition, not only will it guide and empower us on our own journey, but it will also allow us to be true companions with the dying so that our final prayers are ones of gratitude rather than ones of desperation.

## Jutta



*If ever there is tomorrow when we're not together... there is something you must always remember: you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. But the most important thing is, even if we're apart... I'll always be with you.*

*Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne

Thirty-three years ago, Jutta came into my life. I was following a guru at the time and held talks—known as *satsang*—at my house, where we would share our experiences together. Her car had broken down, and a friend who was coming to the talk rescued her from the roadside and brought her along. She sat in the corner radiating the most beautiful smile and, from that moment on, we became firm friends. Throughout the changing seasons of our lives, the bond between us continued to grow. She split from her husband, her children were scattered around the country, and she was finally happy living in a cosy ground-floor flat. Just prior to her cancer diagnosis, she had a fire in her flat, and I spent weeks cleaning and painting it for her. I would work and she would share her stories, of which she had many: she had been forced to endure great hardship and had witnessed horrors as a young woman in Germany as World War II came to a bloody close.

I was on my path as a *midwife to the dying*, but nothing would prepare me for this journey we embarked on together, other than the journey itself. We went together for the results of her test, where we queued in an overcrowded, dingy hospital corridor for an agonising length of time. In our allotted ten minutes, the doctor delivered the devastating news that Jutta had cancer of the bowel and that the only option was surgery

to remove it or to suffer a very painful death. It appears he had said that it was only palliative surgery, but neither Jutta nor I had heard this.

Her life sentence was passed in a makeshift hospital room no bigger than a broom cupboard. I pushed her in a wheelchair to various hospital appointments; we talked, laughed, learned, cried and prayed together as we prepared for her transition from this Earth. I took her shopping; she bought 4 pairs of knickers and said they would last her this lifetime.

An opportunity for the operation suddenly became available while I was away, and I came back to find Jutta at death's door with her having had two operations, as complications had arisen from the first. Her body expanded to twice its size as poison invaded it, and she had a heart attack but somehow still survived.

As a friend rather than a family member, I was not told about Jutta's condition and had no say in how she was treated, even though most of the time I was the only one there for her and she begged me to be her voice. All communication from the medical staff was with her children, usually by telephone, and I garnered only titbits of information from the nurses.

When Jutta regained consciousness she said to me, 'Wendy, I don't know what is happening to me, they won't tell me.' I sat with tears streaming down my face as I told my dearest friend that they could not get all the cancer. 'Oh dear,' was her reply.

I watched as her body shrank to skin and bones, but still each day she was painfully hoisted from her bed into a chair: even though there were big burly male nurses, they were not allowed to lift patients for fear of damaging themselves.

Jutta was so sensitive she would cry in agony as she was slowly and painfully hoisted from her bed, which she didn't want to leave. She was left in her chair for hours on end under

the pretext that it was good for her; she would cry to get back into bed, and it could take me hours to find and cajole two nurses who had the time to lift her up in the hoist. This contraption, rather than sparing her indignity, was her bane, and left her fragile body bruised all over.

She desperately wanted a shower and one day, as I prepared to move her from her bed to a wheelchair, I was threatened with the consequences if I dropped her: I could have lifted her with one hand, but feeling the wrath of the hospital staff, I succumbed to disempowerment—which, I'm ashamed to say, happened frequently. They lost her false teeth within the first two weeks, and she had to suffer yet another loss of dignity. With bowel cancer, diarrhoea was constantly flowing and Jutta's bottom was raw meat. She would howl as they cleaned her up and she begged me to do it whenever I was there, as I was so much gentler.

One day, I arrived at the hospital to find forms being filled in because they said that Jutta (who, despite forty years of living and working in England, had never shaken off her strong German accent) had accused two male nurses of 'raping' her. I soon discovered that she had said that they were 'ripping' her, as they had cleaned her up too forcefully. She fell out of bed on two occasions as they were short of beds with rails. She was moved away from the window so that the nurses could see her from their desk outside: in so doing, they robbed Jutta of her only access to nature and freedom. She was so depressed at this move.

The nurses would find sleeping tablets in her bed and reprimand her for not taking them, but she didn't want them! For whom was this sedation? The nurses had to spend so much time filling in unnecessary forms and completing administrative tasks that they no longer had the time to do the

most important jobs of nursing—offering a loving hand and sharing their time. Modern medicine had lost its way.

Food and drink would be left out of her reach, and sometimes even if she could reach it, she didn't have the strength to feed herself. The nurses fitted a catheter against her wishes, which she found incredibly uncomfortable. They kept assuring her that it would get easier—yet it never did. One day, she pleaded with me to pull the catheter out; she had been a nurse so she knew what it entailed. I didn't know how to take it out and had to pull so hard it must have felt like giving birth, but she never uttered a groan; she was so grateful. Later, I heard the nurses telling her off and pondering how she could have done it. I cringed.

Jutta was the gentlest and most caring human being I have had the pleasure of knowing, and yet her family were told that she was an awkward patient and they believed what they were told. She experienced horrendous morphine-related hallucinations which petrified her.

One day as I arrived, Jutta cried out to me, 'Wendy, I'm dying, I'm dying.' A nurse hastily hushed her and told her to not talk like that. She was on a palliative care ward with only days left to live. I hugged her and she clung to me for dear life and, with uncontrollable tears, we sobbed *The Lord's Prayer*. The worst kind of solitude and distress is not being able to talk about death yet, at that moment, death was happening; we had both been buried in a coffin of silence and denial, and left abandoned. Jutta would look at me anxiously, and I regularly found myself trapped between her distress and the cowardice and denial of truth that the medical staff seemed to fall back on. I so frequently felt inadequate as this denial compromised Jutta's sacred journey home. Why is dying considered a

failure by people and *death* treated by people as if it were a blasphemous word?

The lights there were too harsh, both day and night; the beds hard and narrow. Sedated, vacant faces were sat in front of TV screens, and the smell of incontinence was always flavouring the air. Jutta lay dying, slowly and painfully, amidst twelve other sad and lonely people on her ward. She only felt safe to sleep when I was there, and she would cling to my hand and put her head on my shoulder. How could such a dear soul's life end like this? I would whisper and speak soothing words as she finally drifted into a peaceful sleep.

The Sunday Jutta died was the day that her youngest son came to visit, and I decided to spend the day re-energising at home. At about 10pm that night, a call came from one of her sons to say that the hospital had rung them with the news that Jutta had taken a turn for the worse. As I prepared myself to go, the phone rang again to say that Jutta had died.

When I arrived at the hospital, Jutta was still in her usual lonely place, with the curtains drawn around her. She was propped up with her mouth wide open, showing her two teeth stumps surrounded by bare gums. I gently tried to close her mouth but she was stiff: she had been dead for hours.

Those last four months of her life in hospital were spent in such pain, and with an illness that robbed her all too quickly of her dignity and the ability to prepare properly for what was to be. Jutta died an undignified, unnecessarily painful and lonely death. We had shared a momentous journey together, often desperately distressing, yet one which informed me deeply and, despite all that sadness and suffering, I believe it was a gift and a privilege which will always mean so very much to me. That night, as I sat at home in vigil with Jutta, knowing that the stories and the tears, the pain and the hope were now behind



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her, I saw that she was once again free to dance and sing her soul's song. Although we were saying 'She is gone', I knew that there were those on the other side eagerly awaiting her, crying 'Here she comes'. That is what I saw the night Jutta died; angels so lovingly welcoming her home.

Thank You for enriching my life, sweet friend.

*'We all die, but the way in which we get there matters. This book is for all who consider the path to death and how we can be supported and nourished all of the way. In a world where medical care is more about treatments and interventions than soul-care, we need to affirm the humanity and compassion that should attend our dying.'*

—CAITLÍN MATTHEWS

Author of *Singing the Soul Back Home* and *The Celtic Book of the Dead*

*'Written with the love and compassion any of us would be grateful to receive on our deathbeds Coming for to Carry Me Home introduces us to the idea of dying and envisions for us a magnificent journey home. It is time to look the greatest adventure of our lives squarely in the face - and when the time comes I hope we'll all be blessed with a midwife like Wendy by our side.'*

—DAVINA MACKAIL

Author of *The Dream Whisperer*

It is the essential right of every human being to die with love, dignity and grace and to be reassured that they are cared for at the moment of their greatest vulnerability with support and guidance available to them. Despite the need for care of body, mind and spirit as death nears, we rarely address more than the physical needs and there is a lack of other forms of help when they are required in the days, weeks and months leading up to passing and as the moment draws near.

We have a right to be treated with care and respect, enabling the transition to be a loving and sacred experience. As we explore dying it releases not only the fear of death but also the fear of living, as it is only when we have learned how to die that we learn how to live our lives to the full.

At a time when confusion, fear and suffering often take centre stage, **Coming for to Carry Me Home** offers a clear guide to dealing with our challenges by harnessing them to create empowerment and healing. This book provides practical keys to help us identify and face our fears so that we can greet this great adventure with both wisdom and compassion.

**Wendy Hayhurst** has worked as a Midwife to the Dying for over a decade and is trained in a variety of healing therapies. She teaches on the subject of death and dying, running workshops and seminars as well as walking alongside those preparing for their final transition.  
[www.WendyHayhurst.com](http://www.WendyHayhurst.com)

