

OH DEATH

Traditional Old-Time and Bluegrass Song; **DATE:** Early 1900's; **CATEGORY:** Early Country and Bluegrass Songs; **RECORDING INFO:** Carter Family; (Charlie) Monroe's Boys; Dock Boggs; Sarah Ogan Gunning; Ralph Stanley; New Lost City Ramblers; **OTHER NAMES:** Money Cannot Buy Your Soul; Death Have Mercy on my Age/Soul; Conversation With Death; Death Is Awful; Awful Death; **NOTES:** A gripping version of "O Death" is sung by Ralph Stanley on the soundtrack of the movie "O Brother, Where art Thou?" Oh Death is found in both the white and black tradition from Texas to the Georgia Sea Islands and is available today in widely contrasting settings: unaccompanied vocal solo, hillbilly duet (with guitars), and bluegrass band. A similar dialogue with Death turns up in the traditional English song "Death and the Lady" published by J. Deacon between 1683 and 1700.

D * frequently F natural C D

What is this that I can see with i - cy hands tak - ing hold on me.

2 *

I am death and none can ex - cel I'll o - pen the doors to

C D 2 D

heav - en or hell. Oh death oh

C D 2

death. Can't you spare me o - ver til a - noth - er year.

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D C D
Well what is this that I can't see, With ice cold hands taking hold of me?

C D
"Well I am death, none can excel, I'll open the door to heaven or hell."

D C D
Chorus: Oh, death- Oh death- Won't you spare me over til another year?

Whoa, death, someone would pray. Could you wait to call me til another day?
The children pray, the preacher preached; Time and mercy is out of your reach.

"I'll fix your feet til you can't walk, I'll lock your jaw til you can't talk,
I'll close your eyes so you can't see- This very hour come and go with me."

"In death I come to take the soul, Leave the body and leave it cold;
To drop the flesh off of the frame; The earth and worms both have a claim."

My mother came to my bed, Placed a cold towel upon my head,
My head is warm, my feet are cold, Death is a-movin' upon my soul.

Oh death, how you're treatin' me, You close my eyes so I can't see.
Well, you're hurtin' my body, you make me cold, You run my life right out of my soul.

Oh, death, please consider my age. Please don't take me at this stage.
My wealth is all at your command, If you'll remove your icy hands.

"Oh the young, the rich or poor, All alike to me you know.
No wealth, no land, no silver or gold, nothin' satisfies me but your soul."