

Extract from **FINAL EXIT**

*The practicalities of self-deliverance
and assisted suicide for the dying*

Derek Humphry

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About the Author



Derek Humphry, president of the Euthanasia Research & Guidance Organization (ERGO) and founder and executive director (1980-1992) of the Hemlock Society USA, was a newspaper reporter for thirty-five years, working for many British journals. During his fourteen years with the London *Sunday Times*, he began to write books on racial problems, law enforcement, and civil liberties. In 1978 he moved to the United States to work for the *Los Angeles Times*. The international acceptance (seven languages) of the story of his first wife's death, *Jean's Way*, now considered a classic account of assisted rational suicide, launched his campaign for the right to lawful physician-assisted suicide. In 1980 in Los Angeles he and friends formed the Hemlock Society, the first such group in North America. Hemlock closed in 2003. From 1988 to 1990, Derek Humphry was President of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies. He is the author of *Let Me Die Before I Wake*, *The Right to Die*, and *Freedom to Die*. This book, *Final Exit*, was 18 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list and has been translated into eleven languages. He lives near Eugene, Oregon. E-mail: derekhumphry@starband.net



AUTHOR'S NOTE

As many of the readers of this book will be people with poor sight, it has been set in large type to assist them. Also, this book assumes the reader's ethical acceptance of the right to choose to die when terminally ill and thus the arguments for and against are not addressed. The history and controversy of this issue can be found in three of my books, *The Right to Die: Understanding Euthanasia, Dying with Dignity*, and *Freedom to Die*.

CAUTION

If you are thinking of ending your life because you are depressed, or cannot cope with the pressures of this difficult world, do not use this book. It is for dying or hopelessly physically ill individuals who need such information and may find it a great solace.

I ask people with suicidal thoughts to share them with family or friends, and if this does not help to call one of the hot lines or help lines listed in their local telephone book.

Please respect the true intentions of *Final Exit*: explaining the right of a terminally ill person with unbearable suffering, or one with advanced degenerative condition, to know how to choose to die.

This book is not intended as a substitute for legal advice of attorneys. The reader should consult an attorney with regard to questions of a legal nature.

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The Cyanide Enigma

Is death by ingestion of cyanide the best means of self-deliverance? Is it as fast and as painless as it appears to be in the James Bond movies where the villain appears to die in twelve seconds? Is death by cyanide painful? Does it always work? Where can I get some? These questions come to me frequently from people planning for a quick and painless death.

Some of the most famous suicides in modern history have been by cyanide. Hermann Goring escaped the gallows at the Nuremberg trials in 1945 by biting on a glass vial of cyanide within a brass bullet that had been smuggled into his cell. Wallace Carothers, the inventor of nylon, who had a doctorate in organic chemistry, committed suicide in a hotel room in Philadelphia in 1937 by drinking potassium cyanide in lemon juice.

Perhaps the world's most unrecognized genius, Alan Turing, who developed the theory behind the computer in the 1930s and was a key player in cracking the German Enigma secret military codes, took his life in 1954 while under personal stress. Like Snow White, he bit into a poisoned apple dipped in "witches' brew." But, unlike the fairy tale, Turing had dipped his fruit in a jar of potassium cyanide solution and there could be no awakening by a prince's kiss...

How Do You Get the “Magic Pills”?

The most difficult question, after deciding when is the right time to die, is where to get the drugs that will work quickly and painlessly. It is not as simple as some people think. For instance, one woman wrote this note to me: “I enclose two dollars. Please send one pill for me and one for my friend Mary.”

Despite a physician-assisted suicide law operating in Oregon since 1998 and the majority of public opinion in favor of such services, many doctors are afraid to directly help people die. Their dread of being caught up in an expensive legal controversy, and the publicity circus that inevitably accompanies it, makes them shy away. Before going to prison in 1999, Dr. Kevorkian may have aroused the public’s interest in euthanasia more than ever before, but almost all the medical profession regards him as a terrible example of *how* it could be done. They are repulsed at the thought of ever being labeled a “Dr. Death” either by name or style.

Because of this stigma, worldwide laboratory research is going on to find the one pill that can be swallowed by a terminal patient and bring certain, painless death immediately. *But it has not yet been found.*

Some call it the “magic pill.” In Australia this as yet unknown substance is called the “peaceful pill.” Probably the first to solve the problem will be the Dutch, with the...