

# Harper's Art Desk

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*Death always happens  
To somebody else,  
Not the dead.*

*Somebody—friends,  
Somebody—aunts,  
Cousins, nephews, mothers,  
Fathers, sisters, brothers—  
Not the dead.*

A photograph by James Van Der Zee from *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, which will be published this month by Primary Information. Originally published in 1978 by Morgan & Morgan, the book features Van Der Zee's funerary photographs onto which he superimposed celestial figures, poetry, biblical scenes, or portraits to compensate for lack of adornments, such as flowers, or to fulfill the requests of his subjects or their families. The accompanying poem by Owen Dodson was selected by Camille Billops, who edited the 1978 edition.