

Flames & Shadows



In the stillness of the night, the crackle of the fire echoes through the room, filling the quiet with its restless warmth. Shadows from the flickering flames dance along the walls, painting the space in hues of orange and gray. The air is thick, heavy with something unspoken, a somber veil that seems to press against everything it touches. The young man sits slouched in an old armchair near the hearth, his elbows resting on his knees, his head cradled in his hands. The firelight catches the edges of his face, highlighting features both youthful and burdened. Though he is just twenty, the weight he carries makes him seem far older.

He stares into the flames, his gaze unfocused, his thoughts lost in some distant, unreachable place. The flicker of the fire reflects in his eyes, but there is no light within them—only the shadows of questions he dares not speak aloud. His breathing is slow, steady, but the tension in his shoulders betrays the storm within.

They say that Death, that ancient shadow, appears in forms as varied as the hearts of men. To some, it is a distant figure on the horizon, shrouded in mist, a shadowy companion all must meet at the end of their road. Yet the first encounter with Death, so near and inevitable, is a thing of wonder and dread. Those tales—the ones about that first, inevitable encounter—filled my mind, swirling like restless embers.

Yet the first meeting with Death is a tale both fascinating and fearful, for it is said to be an experience unlike any other. To the living, its visage is a matter of myth and whisper—some call it a vision of surpassing beauty, so radiant and enchanting that the soul, ensnared by its grace, longs to depart the weary, tarnished world. Others speak of it as the most fearsome apparition ever beheld, a monstrous force that chills the marrow and banishes all courage.

These whispers roam the lands, scattered like leaves upon the wind. Whether believed or not, all know, deep within their hearts, that one day Death will come to claim them. The young man's thoughts swirl like restless embers. He remembers the words of a friend, spoken with an air of certainty. "Death reflects the life you've lived," the friend had said. "For those who walk the righteous path, Death takes on a form so wondrously captivating in order to keep the person at peace while he ascends to the heavens to meet his lord. But for those who sow corruption and evil, Death becomes a creature of nightmare, a reflection of all the darkness they cast upon the earth."

He spoke of the passing of the wicked as a vision of pure terror, a moment so dreadful it defies description.

Shadows creep into every corner, swallowing light and hope alike, and an icy chill seeps into the soul, paralyzing it with dread. Then, Death emerges—its form so Horrific, so Gruesome, that it burns its imprint into the mind of the doomed. Its face is a nightmare made flesh, a sight so horrifying that eyes bulge out, the pupils shrinking to pinpricks of fear as the body convulses, gripped by an uncontrollable seizure. The body, in its final struggle, fights with all its strength to keep the soul within, every fiber of it pulling desperately to hold on to life. But Death, cold and unrelenting, tears the soul away with ruthless force. The body is left hanging in the air, frozen like a bird struck in mid-flight, unable to stop its fall, until it finally drops, lifeless and still.

Silence follows, deep and suffocating, as though even the air dares not disturb the aftermath of such horror. And so, Death drags the soul to its final reckoning. Whether to endless torment or unrelenting despair, none can say. These are the stories whispered in trembling voices, reminders of the grim fate that awaits those who tread the path of darkness. For when Death comes, it comes as a terror beyond comprehension, an end so horrifying that no mind can truly prepare for its arrival.

In the deep quiet of the night, with only the flicker of a dying fire, he stared into the flames, their shifting patterns pulling him deeper into his musings, the thoughts turned inward, heavy and unrelenting. The tales of Death, its beauty or its terror, played over and over in his mind like a haunting melody. He could not help but wonder—when his time came, what face would Death wear for him? The young man focused on the fire, on the questions that have no answers yet. He did not look up, and the presence did not make itself known. I simply watched, waiting, as the hours stretched on.

The fire crackled softly, pulling him from his thoughts for but a moment, before his mind turned once more to the life he had lived and the choices he had made. What if Death did not come with a face of comfort? What if it bore the likeness of those he had wronged? The friend he had betrayed in his youth, the stranger to whom he had turned a blind eye, or even his own brother, whose trust he had failed to honor?

As the fire's last embers sputtered, casting long shadows across the room, his mind became a battleground of thoughts, each more terrifying than the last.

As the fire's embers sputtered, casting long shadows across the room, his mind became a battleground of thoughts, each more terrifying than the last. He imagined the moment when Death would finally arrive. He wondered—what face would it wear for him? What form would it take? Would it come as someone he knew, someone he loved? Or would it be a stranger, a monstrous figure that bore no familiarity at all?

His grandfather came to mind first. The old man, wise and gentle, had once been a comforting presence, his stories and laughter like a balm for troubled hearts. In his youth, the man had taught him the value of patience, of kindness, and of family. He had always been the rock, the steady hand that guided him through the storms of life.

But what if, in his final moments, Death chose to show his grandfather not as the wise old man he had always known, but as something darker? Perhaps, in that final moment, the face would be twisted with sorrow—eyes dull with regret, mouth drawn tight in disappointment. His grandfather's loving, gentle face could become a mask of unspoken judgment, reflecting all the times he had failed to live up to the lessons learned. It would be the face of beauty turned horrifying, a reminder of how little he had done to truly honor the wisdom his grandfather had shared.

Then his mother came to him in his thoughts, her face soft and nurturing in his memory. Her arms had always been a place of safety, a shield from the harshness of the world. The warmth of her love had been unyielding, ever-present, like the sun in the sky. She had shown him nothing but unconditional love, even when he had faltered.

But what if, in his final moments, Death came to him as his mother, her face no longer serene, but twisted in pain and sorrow? What if it was the face of a mother who had seen her son squander his potential, waste his chances, and turn away from the very love she had given so freely? That face, so full of tenderness in life, could turn sharp with the anguish of seeing her son drift away from everything she had hoped for him. In that moment, Death would not be a peaceful guide but a horrifying reflection of a mother's deepest despair, and the guilt he would feel would be more than his heart could bear.

His father, too, appeared in his thoughts, but with a complexity all its own. The man had been both a pillar and a silent judge, his gaze steady, unwavering. His father had taught him strength, discipline, and honor. There had been times when his father's silent disapproval weighed more heavily on him than any words could. His father had been the silent guardian, the one who expected more, always more, and never settled for less.

What if Death came to him with his father's face—no longer the man he had admired, but the judge, cold and unyielding? The disappointment in his father's eyes would be the last thing he saw. It would not be the embrace of a protector, but the stern gaze of a father who had seen too much failure, too many broken promises. The beauty of his father's love would be obscured by the shadow of unmet expectations, and in that final moment, Death would not be a gentle guide but a cold, unforgiving presence that crushed the soul with regret.

And yet, despite the terror that these images brought, there was still a flicker of hope in his heart. He thought of those moments in his life when he had honored his family, when his actions had been worthy of their love. He thought of the times he had helped his mother, listened to his father's lessons, and shared his grandfather's wisdom. Perhaps, in the end, Death would come not as an accuser, but as a reminder of all that was beautiful—love, family, the bonds that held them together.

But as the fire faded and the shadows deepened, he could not escape the fear that the faces of his family might show him the truth he had long avoided—that for all the love they had given him, he had not been enough. And in that realization, Death might become the most horrifying thing of all.

The room was now dim, illuminated only by the faint flickers of the dying embers in the fireplace, casting a gentle, wavering light upon the walls. The man sat in quiet contemplation, his thoughts swirling like the smoke that rose from the hearth. His heart, heavy with the weight of doubt and fear, had begun to soften. For a moment, he found solace in the quiet darkness, in the remembrance of the love and lessons of his family, His Allah. A flicker of hope, like a small flame in the vast night, began to grow within him.

The fire weakened, the shadows closed in, his pulse hammered in his ears, and his thoughts scattered, they no longer held the comfort they once had. The temperature dropped, a chill that could not be explained, creeps through the room. The flame that once flickered softly was now a distant, faint glow. The warmth gone. His limbs grew numb.

His eyes, his thoughts, once filled with fear and guilt, began to clear. He remembered the stories his grandfather had told him, the lessons of patience and faith. He remembered his mother's unwavering love and the sacrifices his father had made, his lord to whom he shall return. He remembered, in that moment, that death was not the end, but a transition. The fear that had once bound him now loosened, and he felt an unexpected peace settle over him. And then, the stillness shattered. I moved forward, my presence cutting through the silence like a sudden gust of wind, stirring the air around him. The shadows that had once held the room in their embrace receded, leaving behind only the weight of my arrival. His thoughts, which had drifted away, snapped back. I was here, and he could feel it, even before he saw me.

At first, he did not see me, his eyes still closed in quiet reflection. But he felt it, a heavy, undeniable presence, standing just beyond the threshold of his mind. And in that stillness, I appeared. The moment was here. Now, he could see me.

He opened his eyes. I was cloaked in shadows, yet my shape was unmistakable. It wasn't a face he recognized, but it wasn't foreign either. His fate, hidden in shadows, stood before

him familiar, as if it had always been there, quietly waiting, as if he'd known all along that this moment, this presence, would find him here.

I moved towards him, not with the rush of lightning, but with a quiet inevitability, as though it was simply the next step in a journey, he had always known he would take. He felt no fear now. In its place, there was only a sense of acceptance, of release. The terror had melted away, leaving room for something far more profound.

Death's voice was not a loud roar but a calm caress, as though it were woven into the very fabric of the air around him. "La ilaha illallah, Muhammadur Rasulullah (SAW)," he said, the words flowing like a river through the silence of the room. "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad (SAW) is Allah's messenger." He felt it slowly, as though his body was losing its grip on the world he had known.

His breath caught, shallow and uneven, as his heart swelled with a powerful, unnamed emotion, an emotion he could not name. It was neither fear nor sorrow, but something altogether different—something profound. In the face of the inevitable, there was no shame, no regret, only a deep, overwhelming peace that settled over him like a blanket.

He closed his eyes, allowing the stillness to consume him, and as his breath slowed, he whispered those same words that had been his anchor through a lifetime of uncertainty, in his voice trembling, but certain, "La ilaha illallah, Muhammadur Rasulullah (SAW)."

In that fleeting moment, the world around him began to dissolve. The shadows that had clung to the corners of the room began to recede, not in haste, but gently, as if bowing to the truth that filled the space. The air, once cold and still, now carried a warmth—a deep, unshakable comfort that came not from the flames, but from something far more enduring. The truth, it enveloped him, not with force, but with the quiet embrace of clarity and understanding.

I had not come as a monster, nor as a judge to condemn him that isn't my job, but as a guide, showing him the way to what lay beyond.

The fire, its embers now spent, gave way to the soft, unwavering glow of truth, lighting the room with a warmth far deeper than flame. It was a light that didn't burn, but healed, a warmth that went far deeper than any flame could ever reach. His spirit, once weighed down by the earthly burdens of life, now felt weightless, free. It was as though all the heaviness of his existence had been lifted, leaving him light, unburdened, and whole.

The figure of Death, no longer a shadow, but a figure of light, holding his hand gently and led him from the room, into the unknown. The path before him, though unseen, was illuminated by the truth, and in that light, he walked, guided by hands that had always been there, waiting for him to find them.