



THE DONKEY

written by anugerah

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How many times have you witnessed vehicular manslaughter in your entire life? Never mind how often; the fact that you know the term means you've seen it—on TV, in movies, or buried in a grim newspaper column. They said, *"It went so fast, that I hardly noticed the car was already disfigured."* The victim that survived might report, *"I heard a loud horn and I was gone."* Those accidents? They are death incarnate. Often, we hear about how death comes in a moment unnoticed, just like those accidents caused by cars and motorcycles. You're riding high through life, nonchalantly and arrogantly stepping on the gas, going past the speed limit—now, this is not a PSA on speeding or traffic safety. I'm writing about Death himself.

The idea of Death just appearing—teleporting out of nowhere—seems absurd. Well, I'd like to think of it that way; that would be easier. In reality, as much as I disliked this, he came with a mule; a donkey.

I am Death. I was born dead, for millions and billions of years, since the first heartbeat on *"Earth."* God has everything in store, and She has called me to do the dirty deed—just like one of those *Mafiosos*. But She doesn't want to make it easy for me either. Instead of a *Cadillac*, *McLaren*, or *Porsche*, She'd given me a donkey—yes, a donkey. Have I visited your family? Chances are, I have. The last thing they saw? Me, inching forward on a donkey. It wasn't my intention to make them die in laughter; that wasn't a

part of my contract. But God be damned, they just couldn't help but laugh at the sight of me and my ass.

I've travelled the Earth—through fire and frost. Throughout those journeys, of all the lives I've taken, there's no other being harder to kill than a human—and that's not a compliment for them. I've plunged into the ocean's darkest trench to silence a sea beast without effort. An eagle soaring through the air, I've got to shoot with my rifle. But the so-called critical and rational being always talks too much for comfort.

One time I rode into the valley of Kashmir just to find my target sitting in front of a crooked chessboard with all the pieces already in place.

"You can't take me just yet," he said.

I replied, *"There's no way out of it. Your time has come!"*

He pointed at the empty chair opposite him. *"Please, take a seat."*

I knew for a fact that he was going to negotiate something, and it was going to be a pact. These people are known to give something in return for their life. At least, that was what I thought...

I sat down.

"Black or white?" he asked.

I looked at him while resting my scythe on the ground. *"What is it that you're offering me?"*

"We're going to play chess," he said. "If I lose, you'll take my life. And if I win, you'll have to let me live." He then asked, "Do you know how to play?"

I shook my head, and he cleared his throat.

He burned thirty minutes of my time just teaching me the rules. The game lasted fifteen minutes. I won. While playing, I asked him about the silly idea of playing chess for his life. He managed to explain to me, for 10 minutes of the game, about a film called *The Seventh Seal*. Apparently, the film depicts Death playing chess with a man—and Death lost.

See, that's what I mean. One time I went to France and every single one of them asked me to dance with them before I took their life. It's like I'm a clown for hire.

I should've started with this story first. I was born mute. I'm Death—my purpose is to adhere to God's command without a second thought. Every now and then, God gives me names, and I look at them and nod. Although mute, I am not illiterate. I feel this job requires immediate and swift *execution*—so no time to talk, more time to kill. But the so-called critical and rational being always talks too much for comfort.

It all started with yet another man, this time from the western hemisphere—the *United States of America*. My target was inside a shabby, run-down bar in a narrow alleyway. The owner of the bar was cleaning glasses by the counter, and he was there, knocked out on the wooden floor.

Before I reached him, the owner stepped beside him and lifted his head to rest on a folded towel he had used to clean the glasses. By God's grace, he didn't wake up to the sound of actual footsteps, but when it was my steps, he woke up immediately from his drunken slumber. He had a look of terror and disbelief.

"You're the one they've been talking about!" he said.

I could see the owner being unbothered by this.

"No, no, no, no, I'm not ready to leave yet!"

I stood there in confusion. I hadn't learned any of this lingo yet. You'd be surprised how many deaths happen in sleep.

He sobbed like a toddler. *"Please, I still want to live,"* he said—as if that was up to him.

I raised my scythe, confused but ready to swing

"So be it!" he yelled.

I saw this man struggling to get up from the floor and vomiting a disgusting amount of beer.

"C'mon, Jerry, go home—get lost already!" the owner said.

He hauled himself into the closest chair and threw it at me.

"Over my dead body, you will!"

"For Christ's sake, stop it, Jerry!" the owner said, irritated.

While Jerry was throwing things and trashing the place, telling me to bugger off, the owner had just had enough of his antics.

"That's it. You had it coming, Jerry." He locked Jerry's body with his broad arms and threw him out of the bar.

I made myself invisible so he could calm down.

"Yeah, that's right!" he said.

"Nobody's going to take me, not even death!" he boasted.

I waited until he went back to his apartment and fell asleep. I could take his life anywhere I'd like—I just didn't want it to seem like the owner had killed him. Safe to say, Jerry was the one who started it all with this spoken language stuff. It wasn't long before I learned the English language—and others too.

Thanks, *Jerry*.