

(either gender)

Death and Payton are sitting in a coffee house.

PAYTON

You must enjoy this.

DEATH

It is my work, why not?

PAYTON

But to separate loved ones, put many through pain, agony, sadness.

DEATH

If I did not, your world would be senselessly overcrowded. Is it not already?

PAYTON

Maybe, what about a conscience, you must not have one.

DEATH

Again, it is my job. Does the worker in the slaughterhouse feel terrible every time a cow is killed? I have purpose, reason for being. Let me ask, does death not often bring enlightenment to the living? Open their eyes to life? The fleeting days.

PAYTON

Also denial, anger, grief, loneliness.

DEATH

It brings those who haven't seen each other for years together for a celebration of a life. Toasts are made, connections revived, happy memories relived. And, most are grateful to see me.

PAYTON

Somehow I can't believe that.

DEATH

Once they know a simple universal truth, they immediately accept.

PAYTON

Accept dying? Isn't life our reason for being? They do not look forward to the day?

DEATH

The moment.

PAYTON

Excuse me?

DEATH

Death is but a moment. What goes on before is dying.

PAYTON

Semantics. It ends the same.

DEATH

Ah, the first wise thing I've heard you say.

PAYTON

Sarcasm is not lost even on death?

DEATH

Why should anything human be. There is a spectrum of emotions present in that final moment. But it always falls onto sadness. Why not joy the pain is over, why not laughter at the jokes once told? Yes, I have to admit, at times, my job wears on me. So many are so sad, unhappy, if I weren't so focused on the task, I'd likely kill myself. Would it hurt to say a joke? Have a laugh? Be, welcoming?

PAYTON

You sound conflicted.

DEATH

Pardon?

PAYTON

You say such hardened things as "it's a job" but yet your yearning?

DEATH

Yes, unfortunately, I have feelings, compassion, sympathy, empathy.

PAYTON

So, you admit that your "job" does cause you inner conflict?

DEATH

Well...

PAYTON

Denial too? I'm quite surprised to find you so...

DEATH

Would it not take a human to kill a human? You are all so well practised.

PAYTON

Point taken. But...

DEATH

How do you think I feel when a girl of seven, dying of cancer, is before me. Her family around her, she welcomes, she easily accepts, I've, hesitated.

PAYTON

Hesitated?

DEATH

I've made the mistake of looking into such a child's eyes. The depth of love there, children are always both the easiest, and the hardest to take. Only the pain in her body releases me from my hesitation.

PAYTON

So. You are human and have...

DEATH

A conscience? Feelings? Yes. You feel the need to gloat? Would it level the playing field between us? Let me tell you, many could not handle the ugliness I've seen. The suffering...

PAYTON

The internet serves that up well.

DEATH

Not in the least. What I see is the intimate, unedited, unbiased, bare truth. I've, leaned to only step in at the last possible moment now.

PAYTON

So, you have rules?

DEATH

Rules?

PAYTON

When you take someone there must be guidelines or, do you simply follow your own instinct? I mean, if there were no rules one, especially if one were human, it would be easy to abuse your power.

DEATH

I admit it is powerful to be, a sort of god, of the Greek sort.

PAYTON

Would you consider it a gift or a curse?

DEATH

Both. It is a power I truly wish I could use more often. As I've said, I now wait for the last possible moment. I wish to avoid, the suffering. A machine, if I could be a machine. Imagine seeing a starving child, full of pain, hunger, who has to suffer for another week, or, a child in the hands of a paedophile. A child calling out to me for an end, one becomes, haunted.

PAYTON

How do you deal with it?

DEATH

By sitting in on the funerals. Listening to the eulogy, seeing the joy a life brought to the lives of others.

PAYTON

Did you sit in on mine?

DEATH

Really, you are lucky you've had this time to speak with me at all.

PAYTON

I don't mean to be narcissistic, I hope that my family...

DEATH

They loved you. That is all you need.

PAYTON

Thank you.

DEATH

We should go, we've a long trip.

PAYTON

Yes.

They get up and leave.