

THE INEVITABLE

A skeletal figure, resembling the Grim Reaper, is the central focus. The figure is dressed in a dark, heavy, hooded robe that obscures its body, leaving only its bony hands and face visible. It holds a large, curved scythe across its chest. The background is a dark, atmospheric blue with wisps of smoke or mist, creating a somber and ominous mood. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the figure's skeletal features and the texture of the robe.

WILLIAM PATTISON

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By

William Pattison

Dedicated to my mentor Harlan Ellison.

I could feel his spirit guiding me as I wrote...

Have you ever really contemplated your own death? I mean the moment you let go of this mortal coil and move on to that undiscovered country that none return from. What is a dying person's last feeling at the moment of death? Do you know? I do. The feeling is that of surprise.

I know what your response is. You question it. Why surprise? Why would a person be surprised at that moment?

The reason is quite simple. The person who is dying suffers from the irrational hope that they can cheat death. That somehow the Grim Reaper will carelessly pass them by and the hourglass of their life will somehow find hidden sand to keep going. It is a foolish hope for you see the problem is death is not careless. Death does not make mistakes. Death does not make deals and doesn't debate right or wrong. There is no reasoning with death. Death doesn't care about what you want or what you need. Death has a job to do and it won't be deterred from doing it.

People have claimed to have cheated death but they are fools. It just wasn't their time, but they arrogantly believe they changed

their very destiny. What a pathetic joke. You cannot change the inevitable. Death is inevitable. Death has dominion.

Immortality is an illusion. Yes, some beings may have longer lives and appear to be immortal, but death is always in the background and in the end death will even come for these beings. Angels, demons, gods, humans, animals, worlds, galaxies, universes, multiverses, and creation itself eventually ends. It is the way of things.

I can see the look on your face, that look of defiance. Oh, no not me! I'm going to go down kicking and screaming. Death can't have me. I won't go without a fight.

Death won't give you a chance. If it has come to take you, it will do just that. No ifs, ands, or buts. It will just happen and, as I said, all you will get a chance to feel surprise and that will be it. Game over.

How am I so knowledgeable about this? Why do I know with such certainty that I'm right? I've personally observed Death making his rounds, that's how I know...

It happened a little over fifty years ago when I was seven years old. I was in the hospital for an operation and after I got a nasty staff infection. I had a high fever and was sweating profusely.

The boy in the next bed had problems with his lungs and would whistle as he breathed. He had an oxygen mask and a noisily whirring air system. He would periodically get coughing fits and would take off the mask long enough to spit in a bowl on the table next to his bed. It was just a joyous time for me.

Every couple of hours, from what I gathered, the nurse would come in and check on us. She kept telling me to try and get some sleep. Unfortunately, sleep evaded me.

The problem was quite simply that the noise of my roommate's breathing problem prevented me from falling asleep. I would lay in bed and want the peace and rest of sleep only to find myself wide awake and uncomfortable in the dark stillness that enveloped both myself and my roommate. The time dragged by and felt endless.

But then to my surprise I saw movement in the shadows. A figure, which was shrouded in black that was darker than the shadows, moved with a flowing motion toward my roommate's bed. The thing in black raises its arm and I saw a flash of pale white as its skeleton-like hand came down and touched my roommate's forehead. Then I heard in a soft voice say, "Rest." And suddenly the whistling breathing stopped, but then an alarm went off.

Before disappearing the cloaked figure turned to me and I actually saw its skeletal face and glowing red eyes. It pointed its thin finger at me and from its sardonically smiling mouth I heard it say, "Not your time...Yet."

Then it simply melted into the shadows just before three nurses came rushing into the room to try in vain to revive my roommate. When they finished they pulled the privacy curtains around him, like that was going to hide the fact that I was in the room with a dead body. I guess they wanted to keep from traumatizing me. Good luck there.

It was hours later when the nurses moved my roommate out and set up the bed for another occupant. The next one was an annoying selfish asshole who would constantly have the nurse change the TV channel when I was watching something. Also, the little bastard snored. Thankfully I only had to endure him a couple days before my fever broke and I was moved to a private room until I recovered enough to go home.

This was not the last time I saw Death himself. I saw him when my father died and ten years later when my mother died in same hospital I had been in when her heart decided to go out and she spent her last minutes with a respirator strapped to her face.

A few years ago my aunt died. I wasn't there, thankfully, but I can imagine my old friend came to her bedside to stroke her hair and send her on.

So, now I'm feeling my mortality. I've suffered a heart attack and though I have recovered I know I'm not completely out of the woods.

But, am I afraid of Death's eventual coming? No. Why should I be? Death is inevitable. Death is part of life. Death is what reminds us to try and live our best life, because we don't want to have it end with us having wasted it. No, I don't fear death, because even if he comes in a cloak of darkness and is pale and skeletal he comes to comfort you and help your transition. There is no reason to fear death for death gives life meaning, for we only live once. He is our companion that welcomes us at the end of our journey. Why would I fear that?