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Death Sleeps at the Foot of my Bed

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DEATH SLEEPS AT THE FOOT OF MY BED

AVENLEA GAMBLE

Death sleeps at the foot of my bed. It is usually quiet, and doesn’t take up much space. But sometimes Death is talkative, and we chat, two old friends. We discuss how our days have passed in the other’s absence, As Death makes thousands more absent in those solemn moments. And sometimes I bear witness to Death’s morose profession. It is not cruel, but it does not know how to comfort when I mourn.

Death complains of an aching spine when it rests in my presence, And I think of Atlas, cursed to hold up the world on his shoulders. In bitterness I ask my dear friend if it is similarly cursed to hold up the world.

For I would think that it would lighten its burden daily, By spiriting away all the bad luck children, The comatose romantics, The hopeful, hopeless, and those lost amidst. The flesh of the world is a despairing husk, and you lighten that burden, layer by layer By taking my friends and my family, those I love and those I never got to meet How can we curse you then, my friend, if you lighten your curse? Death dismisses its persecution Alas, life is more infectious than death Nearly twice as many first breaths are taken to replace the final exhalations.
It is all Death can do to not be buried with its victims in the face of so many births.
I apologize.

Sometimes at night, when insomnia enfolds the both of us,
We gaze out the window above my bed, lingering on the lights dotting the dark above
Stars die too. Do you claim them as well?
Stars don’t argue with their fate so much when I pay a visit.
What fuels their apathy?
Even when stars die, their light prevails for thousands of years more.
Their light is their trace of memory.
Do humans have a trace of memory?
Humans are social, and when one expires, others grieve and remember.
Stars are not social, so their memory is allowed to shine for a while longer.

We come to a quiet consensus that night,
Gazing at the stars, all of whom look alive but many are already long since deceased.
We agree that while death is mournful, it is not a finale,
For as long as a memory lives on,
Whether as a light in the sky or a mind’s memoir, our story has not ended.
And eventually when that light is extinguished,
Or the memory succumbs to tragic forgetfulness, it will be okay.
Everyone has their fame, and everyone has their curtain call.
Living forever is a rather dull thing.
Death would know. It tells it to me in lullabies as I fall asleep.
And I let Death live with me, another time into the waning dark.
Death sleeps at the foot of my bed.
Good night, my friend.