

I ran faster. My legs stretched further. Dodging low branches, and jumping over fallen logs. I pushed myself to speed up. He wasn't far behind. After ten years, he is still tracking me down. I had gotten use to this constant running, constant changing of environment. I ran through another thorny bush, feeling the sharp branches dig deep into the skin of my leg. I scolded myself for having chosen to wear shorts. I could see a clearing, finally some way out. I swatted the feeble branches in my way, I stopped and stared ahead of me. A lake. Perfect. I took small steps towards it. I turned and looked at the at the dense darkness. The first thing I spotted were his eyes. Then, I started to see the outline of his dark robe. I looked over my shoulder to survey the lake. The descending moons light reflected peacefully over the water, illuminating it. I could see myself, so I smiled to give me small encouragement. I turned back towards the woods, and there he stood. The one...the only...Death.

He towered over me. His robe run ragged by years of capturing and delivering souls. His face hidden by the darkness in his hoodie. All that could be seen were his eyes...those...haunting...persistent...bright red eyes. His hands, concealed by his long sleeves, aged drained, sickened, and eventually killed whatever he touched. A small circle of gray smoke surrounded his bare, disgusting feet. He put his hoodie down revealing his rotten face. A smile spread across his pale face. He lifted his purplish lips with his grin and revealing his darken, chipped teeth.

“So...You've finally given up?” His voice boomed through my skull.

“Just wanted to see that beautiful face of yours.” I smiled back “ Amazing hygiene.”

He chuckled. “I see you still haven't lost your sense of humor.”

I shrugged, “It’s not good to be dead serious all the time.”

He nodded towards the lake. “Water too cold for you?” He took a step forward.

I took one back. “I can’t swim.” I lied.

Death laughed, his voice as deep as a boom of thunder. “I can't either, it was hell during Titanic!”

I snapped. “Enough of the goddam chit-chat! When are you going to leave me alone?!”

His smile disappeared. “Honestly, I wish I could, you’re a pain in the neck to hunt down, but it’s my job, and like all my jobs...” He stepped closer, “It gets done.”

I stepped back. “Wait!”

He stopped. “Yes?”

*I took a deep breath. I couldn't keep running. I thought, scanning my head for anything that*

*might help. Death was created by sin. What sins would help me..? I thought of things that were opposite of good. Then it came to me. Gambling. Perfect.*

“What about a wager?” I stepped back a bit so that the sole of my sneaker was touching the brink of the lake.

Death's eyes narrowed with interest, “A Wager..?”

“Yes, I can tell we both want something.” I saw his shoulders relax in curiosity.

“Go on...” He had been hooked.

“Let's be honest here, Death. That old body of yours is...disgusting.” I expressed my disgust with my facial expression “You need a replacement...” I pulled at my caramel skin. “And I want my immortality.”

His nasty smile reappeared,” So when I win...I get a new body...and your soul?”

I nodded, “ And if I win I get immortality.”

He let out a cocky laugh, “ What do I have to do to win?”

I looked at my watch. 5:42 am. “The sun will rise in about eight-teen minutes, if I can survive, without you catching me I win, and obviously, If you catch me you win.”

Death's tone was cocky “ So when will we start -”

I spun and dived into the cold water of the lake. As I went down I felt his fingertips reach and decay the sole of my sneaker, which was encouragement to push myself as far in the lead as possible. I stayed underwater hoping to lose him with the darkness of the lake. I tried to visualize where I was heading. I remember that the shore line for this lake was only a good three hundred to four hundred meters from the spot I had started from. It was too dark for me to be able to see what was beyond the shoreline, but whatever it was I know I had to use it to my advantage. My lungs started to burn and I knew I would have to rise soon, yet I forced myself to hold my breath a little more. I guessed I was half way to the shoreline, but I pushed myself further than normal. I couldn't take the pain of my lungs, so I arose to survey where Death was. To my surprise he wasn't as far from me. He hovered on his gray cloud as the gray smoke manifested through the surface of the lake. His arms crossed over his chest as he shortened his distance between us. A smirk stained his face. I took a deep breath as I started cutting through the water using front crawl. Arm after arm, left after right, I sped towards the shoreline. No more looking back. In my mind, he was right behind me, inches away from grabbing me. I couldn't afford to slow down, so I pushed past the pain in my arms.

I made it to shoreline in less than a couple of seconds, I stumbled on the shore and cursed when I noticed the terrain beyond the shore. More woods. Again, I was dodging low branches, running

through bushes, and jumping over the fallen dead logs. I stopped behind a tree and rested my back on the bark and closed my eyes breathing heavily. My heart pumped blood fast through my veins, my legs shook from the exhaustion. I opened my eyes, my vision pumped as if everything had a pulse. I turned and tried to look through the morning darkness. Out of it appeared a boney hand; it reached for my chest. I could feel my soul giving up to it slowly and slowly leaving my body. It wouldn't move, my body wouldn't move. My legs were rooted to the floor as Death became more and more visible, his hand closer and closer to touching my chest. I started to breath slower, my muscles started to relax. I couldn't be giving up. My vision was dimming. No...I couldn't give in. Move...move....MOVE. I glared and forced my soul back into my body. I jumped back and started to run. I could feel my heart beating, pumping adrenaline through my veins. I ran faster than ever.

I came to a small mountainous hill and I started to climb. The rocks dug into my palm and into my fingertips. I climbed faster as I started to see the gray smoke circle the hill. Pushing myself up, I started to leave blood marks over the jagged rocks. Those same rocks dug into my legs and knees tearing flesh from my shins. I stepped on a rock and as I pushed myself over a small ledge, the rotten sole of my sneaker caused me to slip and I slammed my leg hard against those sharp stones. I roared in pain and lifted myself onto the ledge. I looked at my watch, it blinked 5:57 am. Just three more minutes. I stared at my legs and saw blood mixed with flesh stream along my legs. What was I doing? My body ached painfully, and I know wouldn't win. He is going to win. He knows I won't be able to make it. This was way too much, I knew I couldn't do this anymore....all this running, changing places all the time, leaving people behind, turning my soul in seemed easier to do. But what's the point of taking the easy way? What if I did win? I could gain immortality. Living forever...not having to change places, change identities, and best of all no more running. I had to strive for that, screw how hard it was, screw the pain, the exhaustion. I can do this, I will not give up.. I stood up and weakly started to climb upwards more. I needed to get to the top, I winced as I lifted my leg and pushed upward. I grabbed a rock which dug into a wound in my hand already, forcing more blood to stream out of it. They were starting to become slippery for my feet from the coating of blood from my hands. I looked down. Death slowly hovered upwards and I saw his red eyes stare up at me through the gray fog below me. I climbed more and I pushed myself onto the top of this hill. I tried to stand, and I barely succeeded. I limped as farther away from Death, who was literally behind me. I limped more, I dropped to the floor and slammed hard onto it. I wasn't going to give up and I started to crawl. I felt his feet touch the floor and he walked next to me as I crawl and stopped in front of me blocking my path.

His voice was serious. "That was a valiant effort kid..."

I tried to crawl pathetically backwards, His presence was already pulling away at my soul. Only thirty seconds more. I could see the outline of the sun and I started to gain more space between us.

“ Stop trying. It’s over,” He lifted his sleeves exposing his hand, with long rotten nails “ Good run, kid..”

Death casted a shadow covering my eyes from the morning sun and I smiled to myself. My soul was starting to leave me slowly. Words were becoming extremely hard for me to form. I forced my hand up and pointed a weak finger at the morning sun. Death stopped reaching and looked back, He let out a long sigh and looked at me. I could feel my soul slowly going back to where it belong. Slowly the small ounces of strength I had left over were coming over.

He smiled at me, “ Good job...”

I rolled over on my back, “ I want my immortality....”

He laughed loudly, “ Alright, your name has been crossed from my list. I will no longer search for you.”

I closed my eyes, “ Finally..”

He put a thumbs up, “ Well kid, I'll see you around. I'll see you around.” His smoke surrounded him and faded away.

I closed my eyes and released a loud sigh of relief. A big smile stained my face. I let my exhaustion coax me into sleep. Tomorrow I start my days as an immortal of this world.