

LAST CUP OF TEA

Written by

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EXT. MUSEUM - EVENING

The sun sets behind the buildings of a small town street.

ARTHUR, 76, steps out of the *Agnes Theodora Johnson Museum of Fine Art* and walks north on the sidewalk.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

A light wind blows. Rain drops fall. Arthur opens his umbrella. The wind causes it to snap.

ARTHUR
Bloody cheap umbrella.

Arthur shoves it into a trash bin and walks on.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
They don't make things like they
used to.

POE, 45, lurks in an alleyway. He watches Arthur. He checks a pocket watch that he pulls from his vest. *

Rain pours down. Arthur huffs, pulls a newspaper from under his arm, unfolds it, and tries to cover his head.

A HORN honks. Arthur stops as a car races by. He mutters.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Kids these days. Who taught them to
drive? Stevie Wonder?

Poe stands in the shadows. He checks his pocket watch. Arthur continues his walk.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FLOWER CART - CONTINUOUS

Arthur grabs a bouquet of roses, pays the attendant, and crosses the street.

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Arthur steps under the awning. He sees Poe walk towards him.

ARTHUR
You've been behind me since the
museum. Why're you following me?

A car barrels down the street and passes through Poe.

Arthur grabs the doorknob and trips into the diner.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Arthur stumbles and catches the counter to balance himself.

A WAITRESS, 55, comes over to aid Arthur.

WAITRESS
Are you okay, sir?

She places a hand on his shoulder.

ARTHUR
Why yes, thank you.

He dusts himself off and straightens his tie.

WAITRESS
Would you like to take a seat and
wait out the rain?

Arthur glances out the diner window. He sees Poe standing in the street.

ARTHUR
Yes, ma'am. First, can you tell me
if you see anyone in the street?

The waitress peers around Arthur and shakes her head.

WAITRESS
No, sir. Just rain. Are you sure
you're okay?

ARTHUR
Yes, thank you. Just an old man
seeing things.

The waitress leads Arthur to a corner booth. The seat SQUEEKS as Arthur sits down. The waitress pulls out her order pad.

WAITRESS
Anything while you wait, sir?

ARTHUR
A cup of Earl Grey, please. Add a
dash of sugar and some lemon.

WAITRESS
Coming right up.

She gives a smile and heads off. Arthur looks toward the entrance as Poe glides through the door, his watch in hand.

Arthur waves the man over to his table. Poe places the watch in his vest pocket and walks toward him.

ARTHUR

I've noticed you following me and saw you get hit by that car. Why can't anyone else see you?

POE

It is not their time.

Arthur guffaws.

ARTHUR

Time for what? A silly magic show?

Poe pulls out his watch, he holds it out for Arthur to see.

POE

Their time to die, mate.

Arthur looks at the watch and sees a stack of clock hands ticking down. Each bearing a name. ARTHUR C. HEMINGSWORTH is the closest to zero.

ARTHUR

That's my name. What is going on here? Is this a prank?

Poe shakes his head.

POE

No prank. It is time to go.

ARTHUR

No, I need to say bye to Alice, these flowers are for her. I can't die, I haven't made this plan, yet.

POE

We don't have time. I have an alligator attack in Florida, a nursing home in New York, and rush hour in L.A. to get to.

Arthur studies the pocket watch. He points at one of the hands of the clock.

ARTHUR

Look! The person after me is not set to die for another ten minutes.

Poe glances at the watch.

POE

You're right. Wendell J. Pinkerton won't be bit in the rear for a few minutes. The gator doesn't get him until the ninth hole.

Arthur grabs his coat and the flowers then stands up.

ARTHUR

I do have time then.

POE

No, you don't.

Lightning crashes and the lights flicker in the diner.

Arthur stops in his tracks and slumps his shoulders.

POE (CONT'D)

Too cliché with the lightning?

ARTHUR

Just a tad.

POE

Regardless, it takes you thirteen minutes to get home. You'll die in the streets before you get there.

ARTHUR

At least give me one last moment.

POE

Give you? I don't owe you a thing. Come on then, mate. We have to go.

Poe reaches out his hand to grab Arthur. Arthur steps away.

The waitress returns to the table and sets down the tea.

WAITRESS

Leaving already?

Arthur slides back into the booth.

ARTHUR

Not yet. Just stretching my legs. Thank you, ma'am.

The waitress leaves and Poe sits opposite of Arthur.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

This cup of tea. Give me this last pleasure and I will go with you. No chasing involved.

Poe strokes his chin and glances at the watch once more.

POE

Interesting proposal. You have eight minutes before I take you, willing or not.

Arthur reaches for his cup, stirs the tea, and sips.

ARTHUR

Nothing like a cup of Earl Grey to finish the day.

POE

You mean life. Finish your life.

ARTHUR

Presently, they're both the same.

Arthur blows over his tea and takes another sip. Poe taps his fingers on the table. He checks his watch.

POE

Come on with it, mate. I've got to keep moving.

ARTHUR

You granted me one last moment. Let me enjoy it.

Arthur grabs his newspaper and flips to the obituaries.

POE

Oh bloody hell. What are you doing?

ARTHUR

I'm trying to see who I'm going to be standing with when I pass over.

POE

A man with a plan. I'm impressed. Aside from trying to buy time, you're taking this pretty well.

Arthur puts down the paper.

ARTHUR

I've lived a good life. I married my only love, had two great kids, four grandchildren, and worked a job I loved.

Poe clasps his hands under his chin.

POE

A younger lad would be running away from me. Except the emo/goth kids. They're just disappointed that I wear white.

Arthur cracks a smile.

ARTHUR

A younger man hasn't lived life.

Poe checks his watch. The arms tick down.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

And to be honest, The white was a bit of a surprise. You not being a skeleton is pleasant, though.

POE

Yeah, the stereotypes never end. I'm also supposed to carry a sickle and wear a hood. Have you tried using one of those blasted things with a hood over your head?

Arthur wraps his hands around his cup and stares off.

ARTHUR

No, can't say that I have. That's more of a backwoods Alabama thing.

Poe grins.

POE

Well, it isn't easy, mate. I stopped using them in the 1930s.

ARTHUR

Why the 30s?

POE

I liked Colonel Sanders. His look grabbed me. So, I stopped wearing the hood and started wearing this white suit.

Arthur stops mid sip of tea.

ARTHUR
Colonel Sanders made you change?

POE
Yes, of course. That bloke really
knew how to make some chicken.

Poe looks at his watch.

POE (CONT'D)
So, on top of taking all this well,
you don't seem scared of me. Why?

ARTHUR
Oh, you're terrifying. I just know
there's nothing I can do about it.
Plus, I'd rather go out with some
dignity, not as a blithering mess.

Poe tips his hat to Arthur.

POE
Fair enough, mate. Noble, even.

Arthur nods and sips his tea. The level is halfway down.

ARTHUR
So, what is your real name? You
don't just go by Death do you?

POE
I go by many things. However, I
prefer Poe.

ARTHUR
Poe? Like Edgar Allan?

POE
Yes. I liked his mystery stories.

Arthur leans back into the vinyl booth.

ARTHUR
Mystery stories? Not the darker
stuff? I'm surprised you read.

Poe stares at Arthur.

POE
Of course I read. In every language
thank you very much. And yes, his
mystery stories.

(MORE)

POE (CONT'D)

I influenced his darker stuff, I don't need to read about myself.

He checks his watch.

POE (CONT'D)

Hurry up. Bloody hell, I don't have all day.

Arthur puts his hands up.

ARTHUR

Whoah! I didn't mean any offense. Just surprised that you have time to read. You know, with you doing death things and all.

POE

I'm not the only soul retriever. I'm only doing this to pay my way through college. Now, get on with it. Drink up.

Arthur relaxes and grabs his tea.

ARTHUR

You're in college? How old are you?

POE

Older than time, but it's never too late to further my education.

ARTHUR

So, there's multiple reapers --

POE

Soul retrievers.

ARTHUR

Right. So, there's multiple soul retrievers and a college for eternal beings?

Poe taps on the table.

POE

Yes. You literally just repeated what I said. I thought you were supposed to be a college professor.

Arthur throws his hands up.

ARTHUR

Apologies. I'm just trying to enjoy
a conversation before I go.

POE

You're just stalling.

Arthur resigns to his tea. The last bit sloshes in the cup.

ARTHUR

Perhaps you're right. I have been
stalling. I've lived a good life,
but I still don't like surprises.

POE

Get over it, boy-o. You can't
control everything.

Arthur nods. Tears form in his eyes. He pulls his wallet out
of his pocket, takes out some cash, and stares at the picture
of his wife and family.

ARTHUR

I have to some degree. You're
sitting here talking to me while I
drink tea. That's a small victory.

Poe tips his hat.

POE

Touché

He checks his watch again. Wendell J. Pinkerton is on zero.

POE (CONT'D)

Finish your tea, mate. It's time.

Arthur hangs his head and sips the last bit of tea. He places
the cash on the table and puts away his wallet.

ARTHUR

You've been kind to an old man.

POE

You've given me the first decent
conversation I've ever had. Call
your wife. Keep it quick, though.

Arthur reaches in his pocket and pulls out an old flip phone.

ARTHUR

Thank you. You're a saint.

POE
Don't insult me like that. Just
make your call.

Arthur dials a number and puts the phone to his head. A smile
widens on his face and tears form.

ARTHUR
Yes, honey, it's me. I just wanted
to tell you that I love you. Always
have and always will.

Arthur waits as he listens to his wife's reply.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Yes, dear. Everything is fine. I
was just having tea and thought
about you.

He looks at Poe who taps on the face of his watch.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Tell the kids and grandkids I love
them, Alice. I have to go now. I
love you forever more.

He snaps the phone closed and straightens his tie.

POE
You ready?

ARTHUR
As ready as I'll ever be.

POE
Good lad. I'm late. You're coming
with me to Florida and New York.

Poe gives Arthur a wink as they stand up. They shake hands
and walk toward the door. Poe opens it for Arthur and gives
him a bow.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Arthur puts on his hat and follows Poe down the sidewalk.
Rain pours as they disappear into the night.