

Waiting For ...

by Mark Ladouceur

“No,” whispered the old man as he slipped out of the world. In his little apartment, one of hundreds in the city, he died; alone.

It came as a surprise then to be sitting across the room from his body. There was someone else there too; sitting beside him also watching the body. He wanted to look at whoever it was sitting beside him, but didn't, because he knew who it was, and he knew that such a person shouldn't exist.

“So, why are you still here?” The voice came from beside him.

“What?”

“I said, why are you still here?”

“I don't know.”

“I'll tell you, then. You are waiting because it's all you've ever done. You waited in school for the teacher to call on you, never bothering to volunteer. And then she would always pick someone else. You waited and agonized over asking out that pretty redhead in college until it was too late, and she fell for your roommate.

Waited for the promotion you deserved, hoping your boss would notice all your hard work. But they wanted someone who could take charge, and that wasn't you. Waited to invest the money you inherited until the day you realized you had already spent it all.

That's only the highlights of your life. The tedium of your day-to-day existence as you waited for happiness to find you is incredible.

And then you waited for this.”

“So why am I still here?”

“You're waiting for eternity to come. You died the way you lived, waiting, always waiting for what's next.”

“I'm so sorry.”

“That's unfortunate, but this is a hell of your own making. If you had even a few times reached for what you wanted, gone after your dreams, I could take you away from this. It's too late to change now.

Well, I must be going.”

The old man turned then and looked, and saw himself at fourteen years of age.

“My appearance surprises you.” the young man said in answer to the unspoken question. “I do not appear with the black robes and scythe. It is easiest to appear to as the person you were when you died. I appear so young because this is when you died inside.”

The young boy was gone.

The old man turned back to watch the body that had been him, and watched the clouds outside, and waited for something to happen.

END

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