

A Child of Death by Alice G Baxter

As the grim reaper severed his last head, and his last life of the evening had been taken, the sun's blood began to seep across the valley. Satisfied, he crept to the stairs of the attic. It was time to go. It simply would not do to be noticed.

Nor would it do to be late.

The angel of death slipped through the second floor of the house swiftly, only stopping to gaze at the lifeless plant on the wood-polished table in the hall. As he paused, he heard something. A cry of some sorts. Curious, he followed the noise of woe, drawn to its sorrowful plea, until he reached a door of solid oak, buffed to perfection.

He pushed it open, and glided towards the cradle from which the noise was coming from. It grew increasingly loud and though it agitated the reaper, he lent over the side of the cradle, before drawing himself back up to his full height and recoiling in disgust.

An infant.

Its face scrunched up and a stark shade of scarlet, the child was ugly. At most, Death thought, it could be considered... a spritely creature. He turned away, ready to sweep out of the room as briskly as he had entered, only to notice that the inherent wail had ground to a halt.

He twisted back to look glance at the child, and upon seeing its' face, slipped out of the lonely room, which seemed void of character.

He drew out his list as he stepped down the stairs, and stared at it, as though hoping to find that he had missed something. 'Well,' he thought, folding the list once more and sticking it into the folds of his wretched cloak.

His mind became somewhat penitent as he drifted through the corridor at the end of the staircase. The child, he had realized, had no one.

And, he realized, no one would notice the child as it lay in its cradle. It had been newborn that very evening, on the last stroke of midnight, and its mother lay still in her bed, its father gone, his carriage laid to rest in the ditch halfway to the main town.

It would be days before people came to the house to claim the objects that they believed they were owed, by which point the servant of death would have called one last time to the quaint little house in the countryside.

No one would have heard the muffled infants' cry as night came to a close.

No one would notice the angel of death creeping out of that small, odd house, with a small bundle in his arms.

And certainly no one would have heard the

Cold. Dead.

Whisper, he bestowed upon the orphans' ear. "This is our... little... secret..."