

The Grim Reaper

NUJHAT ASLAM

On your last breath you feel
His dark cloak fluttering with the wind.
A cold whisper with satire,
Grim Reaper says, "Finally we meet."

You take his hands, unsure,
Convinced there is no cure.
Your lifeless self sleeps alone,
Your soul drifting further above.

A somber cave on a shore,
His scythe unlatches a door.
As you near, your memories —
Are all captivated there.

Like a flash they move,
One brighter than the other.
No longer scattered around,
Like a whirlpool they surround.

First comes a distant memory,
From your very early days.
When you saw the mirror
First in your life as a toddler.

The shades shall change now
Turning more bright and vibrant,
Your friends beckoning you
Patting firmly on your back.

The shade's crimson now
Is it reflecting your temple?
When you saw at a distance
Your first love smiling back.

Then with a gust of wind,
Pages of your life turn.
Some beautiful, some grim,
Others evanescent — fading apart.

When it ends, you try to blame —
"Wasn't life too short?"
The Grim Reaper smiles, amazed to find,
"They always have the same question."



Wither away

SHAHRIKH IKHTEAR

My name's Julian Thomas.
Strange name for a man, I always
thought. Although, these are
stranger circumstances under
which I'm telling you this story.
My hat is dripping wet and I can't
even carry the weight of my
drenched clothes any more. The
finger yearns to make the final
push. Yet still, I need to get this
off my chest.

See, I've never gotten used to
the act of letting go yet I feel
nothing when time comes for me
to see off another friend to a
distant land or when I lose
another love interest to cruel fate.
It's second nature, yet it feels like
a fresh wound. A blood clot scab
picked away at for so long that I
can't even feel the pain.
0.357 calibre rounds.

Every single time I encounter
something delightfully new or
exciting in my life, I cannot help
but think "When will this leave

me too?"

How fast will the bullet travel?

It's all just a ticking time bomb
for me. Everyone and everything
has an expiration date. I can't be
certain if "forever" is an actual
word anymore. Who coined this
in the first place anyway? To me,
forever lasts as long as a life
allows it to. As long as another
life is loyal to you, you will stay
with it forever. As long as life
keeps giving you opportunities to
prove yourself, your career will be
fruitful forever. As long as life
lasts, forever does too.

*Will the cycle keep repeating
itself?*

Thing is, life isn't cut out to be
unpredictable. So you predict the
unpredictable to have some sort
of certainty, right? You safeguard
yourself against everything by
assuming the worst to happen or
you could assume the best, or
maybe both?

What if it misfires?

Yet here I stand again at the

precipice. Teetering on the edge of
my feelings regarding whether I
should be shocked about yet
another loss or should I let the
blood flow from my fictitious
wound without batting an eye.

I still see vivid flashes of the
horrifying incident. Senior
doctors rushing for the
defibrillator, nurses crying in the
corner, and blood. So much
blood. At the end of it all, was the
patient the one who passed away,
or was it I? That I can't remember.

I'm shaken back to reality by
the roaring thunder. By now, my
knees have sunk into the wet
mud.

I read the words on the
tombstone and I finally know
what I need to do.

"Here lies Julian Thomas Jr. A
life that ended before it could
begin."

Forever is just a gimmick, and
my forever ends today.

I lay the gun down beside the
grave and walk away.

