

Dead Silence

A Short Story

Martin E Ericson Jr



Dedicated to my little boy, Johnny
Without whom none of this matters

Dead Silence

“She’s dead, you know.” His dark, piercing eyes stare directly at the young woman sitting in the chair half way across the small living room. “I killed her.” He chuckles softly, briefly closing his eyes to relive the moment.

Moving just her eyes, the young woman glances around the room. It’s small and dark, the shades pulled tightly closed. Only the smallest sliver of moonlight finds its way into the room. There’s matching, comfy chairs sitting to both sides of the long sofa, facing a near-empty wall containing just a few small, framed pictures. She sits in the chair to the right of the

sofa, closest to the short hall leading to the bedrooms and bathroom. The confessed murderer sits in the other chair, turned slightly, directing facing her.

“You’re comfortable?” The man sits with one leg casually crossed over the other, swinging freely to the side. His face is partially hidden by the long shadows reaching out to touch the room. He looks to be just on the other side of middle age, perhaps in his late forties or early fifties. Immaculately shaven with short, dark hair just beginning to grey at the sides.

“Yes.” Her long, dark hair falls across her face, completely hiding one eye.

“Good. Good.” He chuckles loudly, making a show of it. His voice is deep and hollow, matching the look in his eyes. “It’s one of my charms. It’s why she...” He uses his head to gesture down the hall. “... let me in the house in the first place... and why you agreed to come in and sit down when I answered the door.” He clicks his tongue. “I don’t suppose it was me you had come to visit. No. No. I was a surprise.”

He takes a moment to look the room over. He’s only been here for about half an hour, and most of that was spent dragging his prey to the bathroom where the mess could be better contained. He thought he may want to rest here for the evening, and he didn’t need a dead body staring at him while he was relaxing. That would be awkward.

But for the moment, this place is still new to him. When his prey had asked him in, he immediately felt the darkness, the lack of lights and screens, and things that flicker and disrupt. And he knew that he had made the right choice.

“Her name was Elisabeth.” His eyes settle on the small array of pictures on the wall. “Though she probably went by Liz, Lizzy or Beth... or something equally upsetting.” He scowls and makes a distasteful smacking sound with his lips. “Ah.” He sits up a little straighter, almost leaning forward. “There it is. Your heartbeat. It just spiked. And now it’s beating just a bit faster.” He shows a blood-soaked smile. “Almost imperceptible. Most wouldn’t notice. But I do.”

The young woman briefly looks him in the eyes before tilting her head to the side as she looks over to the wall of photos.

“It’s another of my charms.” Again, he chuckles, but this time lightly, with a hint of menace. “I can feel the blood... flowing through your veins...” He closes his eyes, and breathes in, holding the breath before slowly releasing it. “... even from here.” He smiles, showing a mouthful of bright teeth, long and sharp.

He reaches to his side, taking a small teapot in one hand and a cup in the other. He carefully pours himself some tea and sets it on the side table.

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“Would you like some tea?” Without waiting for an answer he picks up the second cup and pours some tea into it. “Unfortunately it’s a dessert tea... that’s all she had.” He grins. “Fitting though.”

“Sorry. I don’t like tea.” The young woman’s voice is soft, controlled. She glances up, and to her left as she pulls the the hair from her face and loops it behind her ear.

In an instant, the older man is standing just behind her, teacup in hand. “I insist.” He leans down and places it on the table beside her.

She can feel his cold breath on her neck as he slowly breathes in, inhaling the smell of her long, dark hair. And instantly, leaving a dark smokey trail, he’s back across the room in his chair, taking a sip from his cup.

“You’re unfazed.” His eyes seem to darken even more, pulling what’s needed from the shadows. “Another of my charms.”

The young woman turns her head, looking back in his direction, studying his long, lean build. He’s dressed in a dark suit with a matching black shirt. But no necktie. His collar is open with the top two buttons unhooked. He reminds her of a handsome predator, perhaps a puma, just sitting there waiting for the inevitable moment it will pounce.

“She was a ballerina.” He thinks for a second. “Or ballet dancer. I’m not sure how they refer to themselves in this time period.” Again he smiles, showing his teeth. “I’m getting old. My time has long passed.”

And in the blink of an eye he's standing at a long, wooden, stereo cabinet. He picks up a short stack of albums, settling on something classical by someone he's never heard of. As the needle hits the vinyl, he's back in his chair, the dark smoke slowly pulling within him.

"I spent some time watching her over the last few days. She has a small studio..." He clicks his tongue. "... ugly little place... just down the street, in that dying strip mall." Again he clicks his tongue and frowns. "She teaches." He frowns. "Taught. She taught."

The young woman sighs almost silently.

"There it is again." He leans forward. "Your heart jumped... took an extra beat. You're upset that I've killed her." He chuckles especially menacingly, enjoying the rise in her blood pressure. "She's in the bathroom, you know. It's quite a mess." He licks his lips while staring directly into the young woman's eyes. "I drained her the best I could... but there's always some that ends up on the floor... the walls."

Instantly, he's standing behind the young woman, leaning down close.

"Sometimes they writhe about for a while... as death slowly takes them." He motions with his head as if listening. "But not this one. Shhh. Listen. See." He chuckles softly. "Dead silence."

And then he's standing at the wall, looking at the photos in their plain, black frames. He takes one from the wall and holds it up, taking advantage of that slim piece of light, looking at the picture closely.

“She could be your sister. Same dark hair. Same dark eyes. Small and thin. Tiny... but with immense strength. A dancer’s body.” He turns his head, a terrifying smile on his face that never reaches his eyes. “Are you sisters? You’re younger... which I must confess... I find... intoxicating.” Again he is instantly standing behind her, breathing in long and deep. Putting on a terrifying show.

And then he’s back in the chair. He’s showing off. Like a cat playing with its food.

He smiles broadly, knowing very well that the young woman can see the smokey trails he leaves behind as he moves around the room with such ease. But it changes nothing. She just sits there comfortably. Watching. Waiting for the inevitable.

“Well... are you?” He takes another small sip of tea, still making a show of it like everything else he does. “Is she... was she... your sister?” He uses an outstretched hand to gesture to the untouched drink at her side. “Please... you haven’t touched your tea.” He drops the manufactured smile.

“No.” The young woman’s voice remains soft. “And I’m a bit older, I’m afraid.”

“Hmmm.” The terrifying smile is back. “That’s too bad... I like them young... the younger the better.” He snorts, reaching down to adjust the front of his suit jacket. “Well... within reason, of course. I’m not a complete monster.” He clicks his tongue, and chuckles at his own joke.

Becoming bored with this encounter, the young woman completely stops her heart from beating, wondering how long it will take for him to notice.

“And only the pretty ones. I don’t have time for the others.” His head tilted down, he looks up directly into her eyes. “Anything less than perfection… I would find insulting.”

The young woman stares back, her eyes showing complete indifference. It’s something that he hadn’t noticed, and it’s completely new to him. He’d been misreading her calm as his doing. Over his many years hunting his prey, he’s become accustomed to a quiet, pleading terror in their eyes. A scream that he’ll never let reach their lips. It’s become the norm. But this one shows nothing of the sort. And he just now sees it.

In the blink of an eye he’s standing just in front of her. He reaches down towards her shoulder, her chest, but stops just before touching her. He can’t feel the blood running through her. He can only imagine that he feels a faint heartbeat.

And he’s back in his chair, finishing the last sip of tea as he considers this new prey. “I’m… I’m sorry. I’ve… been rude.” He bows slightly forward while sitting. “I’m Nicholas… I’m also a bit older than I appear.” He chuckles softly, attempting to regain control. “And you are?”

“Azrael.” And for the first time, the young woman grins, showing a gleaming smile.

And in a heartbeat she's standing behind her prey, leaning down to whisper in his ear.

“I’m Death.”

And she’s instantly back in her chair, as Nicholas chokes and fumbles, dropping his teacup to the floor at his feet.

Death casually reaches down pulling her long, black dress up, showing her bare feet as she pulls them onto the chair beneath herself. She’s comfortable. She’s always been comfortable. It’s who she is. It’s one of her gifts.

And in a last effort to regain the control he has never before relinquished, Nicholas becomes an instant trail of smoke leading right up to the young woman. But as he solidifies, she thrusts her arm out, grabbing him by the throat before he can become completely whole again.

As he hangs there in the air, a shocked, terrified look on his blood-stained face, he looks down into Death’s dark eyes as an inky blackness pours from them into the surrounding air. The shadows in the room pull back into the farthest corners, retreating from the overwhelming darkness of Death itself.

And with that, Nicholas is unable to move his body. His hands, arms, legs are sluggish and stiff. Breathing is difficult. His eyes water as he fights to move them, to blink. “Wha... what... are...” His voice trails off as he can no longer speak. For the first time in over four hundred and

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fifty years, Nicholas is overwhelmed with terror as a cold sweat envelopes his body.

“Do you hear that, Elisabeth?” With a slight smile on her beautiful face, Azrael looks up to her left, to the dark-haired, young woman standing at her side. “Shhh. Listen.” Death chuckles softly. “Dead silence.”

As Elisabeth fades away, taken to her eternity, Azrael’s grin grows wider.

“Now.” She looks up at her prey. “What shall I do with you? Something quick and simple? Perhaps explosive?” She tilts her head to the side. “Or should I allow myself a little fun?”

Thank you
I hope you enjoyed my little story



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