

Death,

Death strolled through the village, hands held behind his back. It was a glowing summer day and the August winds played between the squat cottages. Nobody else was out walking, but it seemed some should be. The sun was just beginning to dip behind the mountains surrounding the valley. Shards of the last light bounced around to each peak, as if trapped in an inescapable circus ring. But they would be gone when the sun moved along.

Death walked to the end of the houses, where the dirt road turned past a yellowing oak. He paused at the tree and stepped off the path to stare at its branches. He focused on one leaf, darker than the others and closest to him. It was a beautiful, deep orange that seemed to hold the waning sunlight and glint with a waxy shine.

Death addressed the leaf, "You know, of course, that I only make a personal appearance for deaths of historical significance."

The leaf nodded demurely.

He reached out and softly plucked it from the tree. Slipping the leaf into his pocket, he returned to the dirt path and continued walking.