

A Visitor

by Rob Boone

A man came to my door today. He said little and invited himself in. He only stood in the doorway, a bit menacingly, if you ask me. He was dressed very darkly in a long grey coat and hat, and seemed bent on not allowing the light of day to pass through (he was of formidable size).

I offered coffee or tea, and he denied. I offered a warm chair and blanket, but he did not move.

I began to feel uncomfortable, not knowing his business, or why he was here. I felt a slight chill, and warmed my hands in the fireplace, taking my eyes off of the stranger for only a moment. When I turned, he was gone.

He came again the next day. Same clothes, I think, but he wore a determined scowl. This time, I invited him in. He stepped across the threshold, one pace inside the doorway, and there he stayed. Still, he did not speak.

I excused myself and made some coffee, thinking that perhaps he would pull a disappearing act in the meantime, but when I returned, he was there. I offered coffee, which he turned down, but not before flashing what I believe was a mild look of longing towards the cup.

I noticed the wrinkles for the first time, extending like the roots of a tree, almost growing, from the corners of his mouth, his eyes.

I sat, and reached for a quilt to cover my cold legs. When I looked up, the visitor was gone.

The following day, as I made my morning coffee, I looked out of the kitchen window and saw snow. It was light snow, and was not

covering the ground. It seemed determined only to pass by my window, without any intention of reaching its destination. To make me aware of its fleeting presence seemed its only purpose.

I took a sip of coffee and realized that I was waiting for the visitor.

I smiled faintly when I heard the knock on the door. I let him in, and there he stood, in his spot in the doorway. His frame now enveloped the entire entryway, and I could not see the snow behind him.

I sat in my chair with my quilt and my coffee, and, content to silence, I looked on my visitor. He neither smiled nor scowled. He wasn't even there, it seemed. He only was- a very odd sort of thought that left me comforted, somehow.

We had an understanding, this visitor and I, and every day — for months, for years — he came, dutifully, faithfully. We never spoke, but were satisfied to simply be in each other's presence.

More years passed, and one day, the visitor did not come. I wept- for him, for the familiarity which I no longer felt. There was no visitor, and I was alone again.

Then I heard a knock.

I almost ran to the door. There was indeed a visitor standing before me, but this stranger was smaller, was smiling, and was clad in vibrant colors- orange and blue and green.

“Who are you?” I asked. “What do you want?”

The visitor smiled.

“You are not my regular visitor. Where is my regular visitor? Do you know him?”

"Yes, I do. He and I have come to visit you for many years now."

"He and you? I've never seen you. My visitor always traveled alone."

"No. I've been here, though, on every visit- only you couldn't see me. He's bigger than me, you see, but I was always behind him, on your porch. I have stood on this porch, every day, waiting for you to invite me in for coffee or tea. But you never asked, because you never saw."

"You were here? With him? Who is he? Who are you?"

"Forgive me. Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Joy. The visitor you long for is my brother. His name is Pain."

