

Before Death

By Brooke Allen

Frank stares out the clear window and peers at the bleak night. The flickering streetlight next to his house heaves out the last of its energy. Shadows of the willow tree in his front yard flash, but the darkness consumes the dancing shadows. Without blinking, he waits. He glances at his soaked wrist watch repeatedly. Tick tock, tick tock.

A dagger twirls around his fingers and occasionally he digs out pieces of rotten flesh from underneath his orange nails. His tongue glides across the blade soaking up the remnants of its last victim. He smiles.

His eyes shift behind him to the dining table. A cold, slumped man resides in the chair, dripping onto his hardwood floors.

Five seconds before death, Frank's dagger kisses the man's torso and sucks out his remaining breath. The copper smell of fresh blood fills his nostrils. He becomes dizzy from the lovely smell.

Five minutes before death, Frank claws at the man's face. Streaks of blood roll onto the man's bare collar bone. He cries out in pain as the nails puncture his soft cheek.

Fifteen minutes before death, the man is unconscious and bound to a chair. His hands are already bruising from the tight grip of the rope. The black curtains are drawn. They welcome the darkness. Light footsteps echo around the room.

Thirty minutes before death, Frank peers out his window. A stranger who is jogging on the decaying street appears out of the corner of his eye. The man's hands are on his knees as he attempts to catch his breath.

"I see you."