

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

his usually.

**"Appointment in Baghdad"** retold by Edith Wharton

One morning the Sultan was resting in his palace in Damascus. Suddenly the door flew open, and in rushed a young man, out of breath and wild with excitement. The Sultan sat up alarmed, for the young man was his most skillful assistant.

"I must have your best horse!" the youth cried out. "There is little time! I must fly at once to Baghdad!"

The Sultan asked why the young man was in such a rush.

"Because," came the hurried reply, "just now, as I was walking in the palace garden, I saw Death standing there. And when Death saw me, he raised his arms in a frightening motion. Oh, it was horrible! I must escape at once!"

The Sultan quickly arranged for the youth to have his fastest horse. And no sooner had the young man thundered out through the palace gate, than the Sultan himself went into the garden. Death was still there.

The Sultan was angry. "What do you mean?" he demanded. "What do you mean by raising your arms and frightening my young friend?"

"Your Majesty," Death said calmly, "I did not mean to frighten him. You see, I raised my arms only in surprise. I was astonished to see him here in your garden, for I have an appointment with him tonight in Baghdad."

☞ What do you suppose might have happened if the youth were at the Sultan's palace instead of going to Baghdad?

# I Have a Rendezvous with Death

BY ALAN SEEGER

I have a rendezvous with Death  
At some disputed barricade,  
When Spring comes back with rustling shade  
And apple-blossoms fill the air—  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

5

It may be he shall take my hand  
And lead me into his dark land  
And close my eyes and quench my breath—  
It may be I shall pass him still.  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
On some scarred slope of battered hill,  
When Spring comes round again this year  
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

10

God knows 'twere better to be deep  
Pillowed in silk and scented down,  
Where hushed awakenings are dear ...  
But I've a rendezvous with Death  
At midnight in some flaming town,  
When Spring trips north again this year,  
And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

15

## Notes:

rendezvous – *n.*, from the French word for an appointment, sometimes romantic in nature  
fail – *v.*, to miss an appointment

1. When will this rendezvous take place?
2. Spring is also personified in the last stanza. How has Spring changed from the previous stanzas?
3. How does the speaker portray Death? (When do we usually use the word “quench”?)
4. Who else will not miss the rendezvous?
5. Make comparisons with Death in this poem, in The Book Thief, and in “Appointment in Bagdad.”