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by Thomas Karst

He sits naked on the floor of a shallow cave, his face mud-smearred, muttering soundless incantations. Pressing his hand to the cold floor, leaving a print behind. Standing, pacing, returning to the cold rock floor, he is waiting. He is alone.

He is young, maybe eight years or so, boney but strong. Legs and arms scarred from running through the wild old brush. Skin the color of ancient wood covers the boney structure, so his insides wont escape. The boy's matted dark hair hangs over his shoulders and moves like so many pendulums telling time. Time, which cannot be reckoned in his dark eyes, hangs in suspense as he paces over the cavern floor. Eternity haunts that place.

The barren sand colored wall warms as sunlight pours across the interior of the hollow, blank except for the cracks and texture, time-splattered in stone. The boy crouches before it enamored, he is motionless. For a moment, he seems to be a piece of the wall that grew legs and could walk away glancing at his origin. But he does not move. Only his breath stirs the air as he stares; the precipice before his eyes.

Sunlight warms his back, but still he does not move. In the air a death-calm remains like the whisperings of ancestral breath, piercing his skin, violating his lungs, becoming [a]part of him. And the wall stands. Silent. Motionless in the late daylight, watching over the boy like a sentinel, a blank slate projecting a presence or reflection.

The smell of a smoldering fire creeps into the open mouth of the cave, past lips and teeth of stone. Smoke-black spirits move in and out of space and time like ghosts trapped between here and now, this world and another. Rushing translucent like veils between the wall and the young eyes so intent upon it. The boy does not blink to close off the wisps of smoke from his eyes. Tears form and fall splattering in the dry dirt at his feet, painting trails that are left running down his cheeks leading nowhere and everywhere all at once.

Again moving, he stops at the fireside peering into the blackness of charred wood around the outside of the ring. The red-orange flames contrasting with the burnt-black remains of once illuminated timber, like memories running over each other leaving emptiness or vague recollections.

The boy brings handfuls of charred and powdered soot to the base of the unrelenting wall still starring at him from the back of the cave. A pile of black dust is beside the boy as he crouches before the wall, still peering into it like a mirror without reflection. Only time is reflected there in that place.

As he reaches a single blackened finger to the void, he pauses indefinitely for moments, like a statue in time, unaware of itself or its relation to another within, trapped like a ghost between wall and self, between cave and world, between here and now, between space and time.

The late-day sunlight warms the wall like leaves in autumn or incandescent filaments as they ignite or are put out. Orange hues like candlelit backdrops in cheery country houses reflect off the oblique mirror, recalling memories of homeliness to homeless beggars on crowded streets before night has overtaken. More like dawn breaking than one would guess at an hour of sun falling over the distant horizon in the background. And he stands, as if hung between two worlds, for the benefit of spectators he still doesn't know exist, waiting – though his is a waiting unheralded, unmatched, unaware, yet almost aware. Still, he is alone.

As night falls he stands finger upheld in anticipation. The twilight radiates upon the wall, like a dream of humanity glimmering before it awakens in cerebral shocks of reality existing in the mind. Night continues and yet he is unmoved as the moon creeps across the sky through ether like a reflection in water, the sunlight cool upon its face. It speeds toward the horizon before the cave, spewing translated light over the wall. Its light is somehow different than the starlight, yet intermingling with it carrying remnants of the ethereal in photonic form which vanishes in a spectral display as it collides upon the blank state.

As the day breaks, turning the blackened sky into a foggy grey that descends upon the world merging together the certainty of night and day like a translucent veil starlight vaguely glows through, the cry of some mystical beast looms over the plains, creeping through the mouth of the cave as a hushed muttering echoed in that hallow for an eternity. The boy moves his blackened finger caked in charred remains toward the blank wall. He presses the flesh to the cold rock like the meeting of souls before they are torn apart

forever. He lingers.

Torn, in the noonday sun he stands unmoved, again frozen in time. And as the sun creeps toward the horizon, he waits for the veil of daylight to be pulled back letting the stars pierce the dome above. Gradually, slowly, again they break through the transparent as the sun removes its shroud over the world. And he moves. A finger in soot smeared onto the rock wall leaves behind a line remembering its origin, similar but something altered.

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Forever, but I just arrived.
 It is cold. I am cold.
 Feels like the ground will be iced over tonight.
 Who...
 Who am I? Afraid?
 Yes, afraid.
 Of the shadow creeping out from you, the breath, the char-black
 emptiness painted on a blank slate?
 Who...
 Who am I? Remember?
 Ree...
 Remember! Remember. Remember?
 I remember a...
 A wall! A graffiti covered wall. Black like night, like
 shadow, like a cold nothing painted in time, moving through me vaguely. Then
 clearly, clearly! Recalling yesterday, place outside this rock tomb, I moved
 like smoke through eyes, eyes, so many unseeing, and then sight. The veil of
 twilight revealing starlight against the cold rock, but it was black and empty,
 swallowing the light, the rocky hallow, the world, even myself into brilliant
 darkness, no longer blind except to everything, all of it.
 I am...
 Yes! Shaking. Afraid?
 And cold.
 Cold and afraid. Because of the darkness?
 Because of...
 because of me?
 Yes, because of myself.
 I...
 Where are you?
 I am here. I've been here forever, a shape, a movement, more than
 you can count, like water pouring over sand, or a reflection, a cry in the night
 howling in response.
 What...
 What do I remember? I remember that line, my first, as it
 remembered me. Telling me where it came from, what it was. A creation. My
 creation! I. I the creator, have made it.

Startled, I turned, looking out at the world.
Where? How? What? am I. I am here.

Hot in
the mo
uth of
the ca
ve with
the sun
light di
rectly a
bove. W
ind mo
ving pa
st my fa
ce, spirit
s no dou

bt, other eye's from somewhere I cant... And
it will end, I know it will, unless, unless I can...

am

Terrified.

Silence outside, no different...
it is different, just a thought. Where? Where? Where? Where?

Cant outrun this...
feeling...
murmuring...
I am afraid.
alone and

On the wall | reminds me...

I am a creator. I will create again.

My ha
nd co ve re
di n b la ck
so ot li ke
the da wn co vers
the stars; I trace my self
onto the stone wall,
an image in the
likeness of ...
I.

ALONE
Don't leave me
If he goes I'll be stuck here
Franklin
Chardines

Cant sleep. I'm staring back at myself now from
the wall. Cold, grey and ghostly in the twilight I
can trace my own steps, I DONT NEED YOU
HELP! Whether or not you hear that is... doesn't
matter anyway; there's nothing that can be done
I've never been so bold and now the walls of this
place are closing in on me. Me! [] hear that?
Not from out there I guess. But [] will, I pr

||
I'
ve
le
ft
[a
lp
art
of
my
self

some where on a wall.

