



OUTSIDE  
BY THOMAS KARST

THOMAS KARST lives in Jacksonville Florida and studies English and Anthropology at the University of North Florida.

He and his wife have recently been enjoying a new son, changing diapers, and losing sleep (which is why he is writing this in the third person).

I find inspiration for fiction in the stories which constitute my life and the lives of those I encounter.

Life is a story – it ebbs and flows.

And I find myself drifting through it, swimming in words.

Confused I awaken to a sense.<sup>1</sup> The dripping of the storm drain above has ceased. Only the motion of blood in the ears, the knock of the heart fills the silence, thick in the void. The memory is present, soundless. You are there. In your place of never, in stillness, you are there. She is there, cold and small, a body. Again, reciting. In the silence, the absence, lost and fusing with an intimate infinity. I retreat. I retreat to a place outside of me.

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<sup>1</sup>He was born into a small family in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1977. He was the youngest of three before the sun broke upon his adolescent eyes, his father woke him to take him out to sea. They left the wildness of the sea with her voice. At times she sang, and he listened as the motions of the waves his soul.

<sup>2</sup>He was born in Soweto, a large township in Johannesburg, South Afrika in 1953. It was a place of waste silence. It was here that he woke to the intrusion of the night. The walls ripped down around him. The Zaire. And he met her; starved, pregnant, asleep on the side of a muddy road. If ever there was someone faintest shadows of the night, that he would walk, hand in hand, with his daughter. They crept into the invoke terror drove them. At these times the villagers would abandon their homes for the safety of the

<sup>3</sup>He was born in Ausburg, Germany in 1918. The star of his family even at birth, he was a strong boy with teaching the local children to read. And if the silence impressed life upon him, teaching endowed that life people's, and his own, superiority came with time and training. He was not a soldier at heart, perhaps he loaded onto railcars to be separated efficiently from the pure population. Corralled into their railcar cells, the chamber, the final corral of the unwanted. As he prodded the line of jews through the doors there was known in this place. As he reached to grasp her wrist, she moved her hand to meet his. Flesh on flesh. He

In de road de dus clouds dunc in sheypes. De sweerl arund me an come into de lungs.<sup>2</sup> Ahrugh. De caravan of trucks moved an lef de dus here. De town ees silent. Only lef de screams an' de tears, soundless but here. You are steel dier. On de side of de tin walls, you steel dier. She is dier wif her li'l nuked body. Cry-ing into en'less nu-ting. I run. I run to a place nut inside me.

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Ze morning alarm zounds as I move toward ze block buildzing.<sup>3</sup> Ze silenze in zis place is over powering. In ze stillnez I hear death, ze heart is gone. Only ze motions remain. Ze pounding on ze doors is a memory. Present, and zoundless. You are zhere. Ze small naked body, smeared in ze shit from ze hundred oter jewz, you are zhere. Ze eyes glaised and cracked, she is zhere. Again, sing-ing ze song of Moses. In ze silenze, ze death, lost and present. Unending zis infinite horror. I retreat. I retreat to ze place outside of me<sup>3</sup>.

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I wrench into consciousness without you. The first without you and her. The door wide open, never to return, I run. I run into the endlessness, the vacant populous, the ever present absence. And you are there. Your eyes dimly fading as the knocking ceases, you are there. In your

children, all boys. His favorite childhood pastime was to walk the cold, rocky shore as he waited for his wharf as the sun's first faint light appeared on the horizon, a dull glow at the corner of the world. The recollected in the melody. Their daughter's infant cries became the shadow as the howling wind. It was The phone rang into the night, disrupting the silence. Wife and daughter ... the waves, no longer silent, and refuse, the excrement of the city. The landscape was miles upon miles of scrap-houses, constructed final cries of his mother and the gurgling breaths of his father were thick in the darkness as he was he wanted to rescue from the darkness of the world, it was her. The years that followed moved them surrounding trees, the aroma of the leaves clearing their lungs, and continued to the edge of the large trees, and return to rebuild. It was late and the night felt tangibly present when the first warning of blue eyes, which even then pierced through to the soul. He attended the schools in Munich, excelling at with its purpose. It was during these times he felt truly alive, and that his surroundings were alive as well. lacked the courage to be confronted with death; perhaps some part of his soul clung to the presence of the the beasts reeked of filth. He rode with the other guards in a separate railcar away from the stench of the never a moment of silence. Empty cries filled the rank air. The air was almost palpably present. They had never felt a silence so alive. He felt it now. She moved toward the door, slowly, her boney legs

writhing fits of coughing, you are there. She is there, already cold and still – the breath left her little lungs, leaving the door wide open. Again. Again, re-being. No motion, but I retreat. I retreat to a place outside of me.

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I wutch you wail as you burn. Dey beat me to keep me from you. She is dier, burning wif her li'l nuked body, reciting de songs tru de flames an' de tears. De rubber meltet to your skin. Nu-ting close for help. I run. As de club swings at my face, I run to a place nut inside me.

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I exzamine ze vapor filled chumber. Ze door locked, ze silenze broken as ze absence approaches. Pain and fear on ze floor agonizing. Contortions of ze dance. Ze death is dense, and present. And you are zhere. In your naked twisted horror, undone on ze floor, you are zhere. Calling and crawling, crying softly, she is zhere. Ze chest shudders last, little head collapse. And I retreat. Standing present at ze post, I retreat to ze place outside of me.

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Waiting. The helpless terror grasps into the absence, the unknown, the possibilities and

father (a fisherman) to return from his trips at sea. The cool sand and stone against his bare feet spoke waves, no longer silent, rolled and dropped under the bow – the motion was their voice. As the sun rose here, with them, that the emptiness of the world was drowned from his thought. He would walk hand in dropped and rolled through him ... drunk driver ... the wind howled the emptiness within ... the collision and reconstructed, entwined with constantly shifting dirt roads. His home, built of tin and limbs housed dragged out into the night. No faces, only hands around his waist, pulling off the tattered pants covering into the wild countryside and away from the depravity of the city. He built their home in the middle of a grove. Here, looking out over the savannah his mind was free, the silence of the early morning wind danger was heard. He sprung from his cot, calling urgently to his wife, and holding his daughter close. everything he put his hands to. The summers of his adolescence were spent in the Austrian countryside at By his early twenties he graduated from university and planned to teach as a career. It was in teaching that mountain air. He did not want to lose the calm and life found in the silence, yet he found its recollection prisoners. Discarded. That is what needed to be done with these creatures, these jews – there was no grabbed at his clothes as he shoved each of them through the doors into the chamber. He closed the door. moving confidently across the cold brick floor. He followed. Her hand still in his as they reached the

probabilities, running rampant in the silence. The images fading slowly from her eyes now nearly hollow. Almost darkness. You are there. Gasping every breath, you are there. Fading, she is there. Again. With every sigh a little sob, with every cry an agonizing fear, she is there. Again, again. Again reciting. Everywhere and nowhere, everything and nothing come crashing into here, and I run. As I sit holding your hand and caressing her face, watching life vanish into the world around, I run to a place outside of me.

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De darkness is close. I feel de breath inside de cloth bag ova my hed. I heer de screams as dey rape you. Hepless. I am deir, I can do nu-ting. I strain as de rope cuts my wreests. As she screams against a tin wall, de teeror grows an' all hope has lef me. She is dier, in de house cry-ing. You are dier, violated next to me, your breat' heavy tru de screams. Blud feels my mout' as I breat'. I run. I can nut move, but I run to a place nut inside me.

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I look into ze eyes, through ze observation window in ze door, as zey begin to fill with tears. I know ze fear on your face will be forever wis me. Ze eyes at that moment, silent but unveiled,

soundlessly of the wildness of the sea. The wind howled the emptiness of the world in which he walked all was silent – the gulls sobs stuck in their throats, the movement of the waves suspended in time – in hand with his wife and child down the shore of his childhood, the voices of the world quelled by the

him, his father, and mother. The thin tin walls of the shanty were all that kept him separated from the his boney legs. Pain coursed through his body. Violated. He wretched. He could see nothing. Alone. eucalyptus grove a great many miles from any city. As time moved on, others came to share their home, swept across the grass and into his lungs. He breathed in the silence from moment to moment, and the

his family's summer home – he craved this escape from the stark, monotonous life of a student in some sense of the mountain calm, the life of his adolescence, was maintained. His plans, however, gradually more difficult to stir in his memory. He was to be a guard – no killing or being killed. The human quality he could see in them ... not now. Upon arrival at Auschwitz he found this was almost At the front of the next line stood a young female, perhaps age eight. The jews around her wailed and door.

will haunt me. Ze surrounding jews trample each oter in ze madness. Zey curse ze god of zhier ancestors. In ze next breath zey plead wit ze jewish god. Abandoned, no anszer has come. Still, she is zhere. Silent in ze madness, weeping through ze sadness, you are zhere. Every moment is ze last, every breath is taken fast. You are zhere. Ze door sends a shudder through me as it slams shut. And I run. I close myself, and I run to ze place outside of me.

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The heart pounding silence cannot be ruptured as I go to find you. The waiting is dizzying. The fear of loss is almost more than I can bear. You are there. As I drive to our last meeting on the corner of a street, you are there. And she is there, I know that I will lose her, but I'll kiss her one last time. And I run. As my heart throbs, lungs nearly exploding through my chest, the fear of absolute emptiness creeping over me, I run to a place outside of me.

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I hear de trucks coming tru de trees. I know deir is no escape. I run. I cannot leave wit'out you, but I run to a place nut inside me.

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as it blew across the shore spiraling the sand, their voices mingled in midair. Only the waves remained anticipation of the moment. He would seldom find this silence on the shore, but he would be haunted by moment. And they would stand, watching the sun retreat over the horizon, the shadows creeping over the

terror of the nights. At times the shrieking of a nearby rape in the night or the gurgling of some passerby's Absolutely alone. There was nothing left between himself and the night. The night had come inside him. developing into a small village. His daughter, now eight years old, was her mother and father's prized presence of his daughter brought the silence alive. From time to time the village came near to

Munich. The countryside was full of wholesome air which, even in the silence of the midday mountain were changed by the persuasion of close friends to enlist in the war effort. Though completely uninvolved jewish population, vile flea-ridden creatures, needed to be isolated, quarantined. And so he would guard exactly the orders from the national government. Able bodied males and females would be kept for work pleaded. She was silent. No tears came from her eyes, only an unveiled calm, only the same silence

Ze hand at my side grips harder as ze door comes closer. As you turn into my eyes I see ze calm, ze silenze, ze dread, ze life of ze mountainz of my childhood. Ze hand now clenching mine, I remove. As you claw at my heart pleading, clutching my clozing, I tear away and push you through ze door. Ze silence never to be heard again, ze emptiness only to remain in me forever. Only now, in this moment, do I know and understand the desire for the silence. Time has slowed down and I know, I know what will be said as the wind and sand and rocks mingle together. Their voice is an inescapable doom. But before, immediately before, the sunlight breaks the horizon and the sounds erase my soul, all is silent in anticipation of the moment. The words are your destruction, as the wind howls. And I am haunted by silence.

unabashedly silent to him, despite their roaring and crashing – it was only empty sound. One morning, it. At twenty-two he was married – his bride was able to fill the emptiness of the wind, and maintain sand and stone under their bare feet. All was silent in anticipation of the moment. And the silence haunted ... sand and stone against the back of his throat ... silence in anticipation of the moment ... last breath kept him awake. The memory, the sounds were forever ingrained, and nothing worse than He ran. In the following years he ran from village to village working – running. Rhodesia, Botswana, possession and ultimate joy. It was during the early hours of the morning, when the sun cast away the destruction from the terrorism of rebel groups. Young men with nothing to live for, and only the desire to She sobbed loudly, for fear of the night. calm, was present with life, and in each moment life breathed into the silence. His afternoons were spent in his country's politics, he felt somehow a duty, some national obligation to enlist. The realization of his Germany from the infection of these creatures. Eventually, the ghetto he guarded was vacated, the jews – he could not understand why – and the others would be disposed. He was in charge of the doors to present in each moment of the midday mountain air. She stood naked, the only symbol of life he had She turned her secure gaze toward his piercing eyes – all her life and his revealed in a moment.