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A Day of Eternity

Ethan Kroll

“High in the North in a land called Svithjod, there is a mountain. It is a hundred miles long and a hundred miles high and once every thousand years a little bird comes to this mountain to sharpen its beak. When the mountain has thus been worn away a single day of eternity will have passed.” - Hendrik Willem Van Loon

It was dawn again. The snowy peaks of the Svithjod mountains woke quietly with the sun, punctuated by the sounds of the animals that called this place home. The mountains here stretched far and wide, but none are older or greater than the hundred-mile mountain. Over the millennia, kingdoms have risen and fallen, lives have been lived and lost. All were eventually washed away by the sands of time, but the hundred-mile mountain has stood through it all.

This particular mountain once had a name, but those who knew it or populated the tundras of Svithjod have long since been swept away, a time long forgotten. A mountain such as this does not come to be by any normal circumstances, rather it existed on this Earth far before colors covered it, at the birth of the planet itself. It was forged in a way that nothing can break or even chip it, not fire or tools or the shifting of the planet’s plates. The only thing that can break it is one, and somewhat magical, small blue bird. Every thousand years, this bird comes to sharpen its beak on the mountain, scraping bare flecks of dust off before it returns to explore the Earth. This cycle is as old as the mountain itself and consistent as the rising of the sun. This morning was another day in the cycle, and the mountain expected another visit from the bird. As if on cue, an energetic blue bird crested a near hill and came to rest on a tree.

“Good morning, mountain! Oh, how pretty the world is becoming! just the other day I saw a flower that was so pretty I almost cried!” The bird had always enjoyed bringing news of what was happening in the world when it came to visit, and the mountain was eager to learn about what lay outside the icy borders of Svithjod.

“It sounds beautiful, little bird.” The mountain replied in a deep but soft voice, wishing it could see such a thing. “Didn’t you say something similar last time you came to visit me?”

“Nope! Last time it was a river that flowed through a forest! I wanted to stop and stay by the water for a little bit, but I knew I had to come see you! my beak was getting a little bit dull, and i needed the strongest rock in the land to help me!” The bird’s excited feelings and kind words never failed to cheer the mountain up.

“I was happy to help then, and I'm happy to help now. Would you like to go to the usual spot? Or would you like to start somewhere new?” The mountain was, of course, referring to the small indent near its peak that the bird usually went to sharpen its beak.

“The usual, please! I'm making quite some progress, too! It's almost big enough for me to sit in! I can't even imagine how long it will be before I can scrape you entirely away!” The bird flew up and landed in the little indent and proceeded to sharpen its beak against the mountain's smooth dark stone. “You are, indeed, little bird. I'm sure it will be quite some time yet before you get that far, but you have made good progress. What are the people up to now?” The mountain mused, remembering that the bird had recently mentioned something about these people that have started kingdoms and tried to conquer the world.

“Oh yes the people! they have made things called cars that move on their own and machines that can fly through the air and bombs that make big explosions and a crazy thing called the internet that lets people talk to each other from different sides of the world! oh I wish I could show you all the marvelous things that they've made!” The bird jumped excitedly around its little hole and flew closer to the peak of the mountain.

“How about this,” The mountain began, a hint of optimism in its voice. “How about you continue to wear me down until I am little more than a pebble, then you can show me all that this world has to offer. We can explore and see the beauties of the new world together, and we would be able to spend the rest of this eternity truly together.”

“I love it! I cannot wait until I can carry you around in my claw and show you my favorite places! you would love all of my hidden paths and trees and friends! I am so excited!”

“Me too, old friend. Now go! Explore the world! When you come to see me again, tell me about your trip!”

With that, the small blue bird flew away over the hills and past the horizon, destined to always return. The mountain stayed put and enjoyed the blissful morning shining over the mountains.