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Bones of Ink

Henry Memmer

I remember the days when I could sit down at my desk for hours at a time, writing about anything and nothing in particular, to feel the joy of creation, to reflect on a simpler past. To escape the stress and monotony of algebra classes and history assignments and focus on something more interesting. A place to put pen to paper in order to escape the constant internal clamor of voices trying to yell at each other. Voices which would say things like “why can’t you be more like your sister,” or “have you ever thought about why you were the only one hurt when the first Forester crashed years ago?”

That desk was once a birthplace for ideas, where unsorted stacks of paper, varying in size and color, would sit neatly in the corners. Some containing new ideas, some holding continuations or repetitions of the same things. Now it’s a graveyard, filled with the pale, ink-stained bones of abandoned pages, forgotten under piles of the same. Pages, like landscapes now turned barren, once filled with unfulfilled potential.

“... Steamcatchers used excess steam and water from the other machinery of the Guildhalls and converted it back into purified, usable fluids. Sun lamps allowed crops to grow even far underneath the punishing dunes above, allowing the hall’s residents to stay away from ~~the frequent dust storms which constantly plague the surface...~~”

Each killed by the same thing, doubt sown by the whisper of a voice, followed by the scratch of a pen. “You can’t just rip the setting directly from *Dune* or *Fallout*.”

But I haven’t even read Dune.

“You know the general concept well enough.”

~~“... Kel pointed his light down the icy tunnel, leading far beneath Frijo’s snow-covered surface. The bright beam didn’t illuminate a bottom. Fastening a rope to icy lip of the tunnel, Kel grabbed his climbing picks and prepared to descend...”~~

“You can’t just change the sand and dust to snow and ice and call it a day.”

~~“... underneath the roiling surface, a colorful array of fish and marine life swarmed coral-stained rocks. Larger creatures caused the schools to disperse, revealing massive sea plants rooted deeper, tall enough to almost poke out of the ocean...”~~

“Now we’re stealing from *Subnautica*? Find something more original.”

There are no original concepts anymore. Another piece of paper flies into the corner, the once neat piles slowly transforming into a haphazard mess. The voice continues to scoff. “Then make one.”

~~“...”~~

~~“Why do you beseech me, young writer?”~~

~~*I seek a guiding light to lead my pen.*~~

~~“And why, young writer, would I help you,~~

~~after all the blood of My children of which you have spilt for naught?”~~

~~“...”~~

“This took you 3 months to come up with? Poetry isn’t that hard.”

I don’t play with words, I simply set them down to play amongst themselves and watch them dance.

“You’re trying too hard. Maybe this is a continuation of the punishment given by the God of Ink for wasting so much of His blood on your mindless ramblings.”

Another piece of paper, this one crumpled into a ball, flies into the corner. The irregular shape knocks some of the pages lining the desk’s edges to the floor as it bounces, ~~reducing the mountain of paper to a flattened mound~~, scattering in a scuffle of noise across the floor like tree leaves in a light storm.

“You don’t have to hyperbolize *that* much. The image is already there.”

Yet, despite the discarded papers and wasted ink, the pen keeps scratching. The sounds of writing drone on through the onset of sensory adaptation for hours on end, until they become as hollow as the prospect of fully constructing an idea. ~~The voice only grows magnitude and frequency to fill in the volume it had consumed, until nothing remains except it, hidden by the concept’s outermost crust.~~

Now the voice features a mocking whine. “Again with the hyperbole. I’m not that annoying, am I?”

Yes you are.

“Too bad. I’m a part of you. You can’t just get rid of me.”

A final page flies into the pile, spilling the topmost pieces of paper onto the floor. Each with less writing than the last, and more scratch marks. Some even featured slight tears where too much force was applied to the flimsy surface.

“You know you have to clean that up now, right?”