

22/8/24

Johan stepped off the plane, the warm embrace of Tenerife's climate enveloping him like a familiar blanket. His eyes, accustomed to the flat grey of the Dutch landscape, squinted in the stark contrast of the Canarian sun. He looked around, the airport a bustle of activity, yet the chaos of holidaymakers didn't touch him. He had come here to be alone, to find something he hadn't been able to find in the ordered neatness of his hometown.

He picked up his luggage, the weight of the extra baggage a silent companion. The boulder from Mount Darband near Tehran was wrapped in layers of bubble wrap, the sound of its potential freedom echoing through the plastic with each step he took. The drive to Punta del Hidalgo was scenic, the car's engine humming a steady rhythm as he wound his way through the island's serpentine roads. The volcanic rock of the mountain range loomed ahead, a silent sentinel over the land. Johan felt a strange kinship with these rocks, as if they understood his need to escape the confines of his life.

Once at the base of the valley, he found a quiet spot, far from the tourist trails. He stepped out of the car, the warmth of the sun caressing his skin as he popped the trunk. With a grunt, he hoisted the boulder out, feeling its weight against his body. The moment of truth had arrived. He took a deep breath, the scent of the ocean mingling with the earthiness of the volcanic soil beneath him. With a sense of reverence, he approached the edge of the cliff, the boulder feeling like an extension of his own burdened spirit.

The valley below was a tapestry of greens and browns, a stark contrast to the urban sprawl he had left behind. It was a place untouched by the modern world, a sanctuary for ancient secrets. Johan felt a strange thrill at the idea of contributing to this timeless scene. He took a moment to appreciate the view, his eyes tracing the jagged horizon where the sea met the sky. It was a line that seemed to stretch on forever, much like the path he had chosen for himself.

With a deep sigh, he positioned the boulder at the cliff's edge, his heart racing with anticipation. The wind whispered around him, carrying the distant cries of seagulls and the scent of the ocean's briny embrace. He took a step back, savoring the moment before he gave the rock its new destiny. It was a simple act, one that held a profound significance to him alone.

Johan's arms swung back, muscles tensing, and with a grunt of effort, he pushed the boulder forward. Time seemed to slow as it tumbled through the air, the plastic wrapping fluttering away like the shed skin of a snake. The rock spun in a silent ballet, a dance dictated by gravity's relentless pull. He watched it plummet into the

abyss, the sun glinting off its surface as it disappeared from view. The sound of its impact echoed through the valley, a dull thud that seemed to resonate within his very soul.

The moment the boulder left his grip, Johan felt a sudden lightness, as if a piece of his own weight had been cast off with it. He stared into the valley, the spot where the boulder had come to rest obscured by the foliage. Yet, he could almost feel its presence, a new part of the landscape that had been shaped by his own hand. It was a strange, almost primal satisfaction, one that seemed to resonate with the very core of his being. He pondered the boulder's journey, from the heights of Tehran to the depths of Tenerife, and wondered if his own life was not so different.

Turning away from the cliff, Johan made his way back to the car, his thoughts swirling like the dust kicked up by his shoes. He had always felt out of place, a nomad in a world that craved stability. This ritual, as peculiar as it was, gave him a sense of belonging, a connection to the earth that transcended borders and time. It was his way of leaving a mark, of saying, "I was here." As he drove away, the mountain road curving into the distance, he couldn't shake the feeling that he had done something significant, something that would outlast him.

The days passed in a blur of solitary exploration. He wandered the beaches, his feet sinking into the black sand, and hiked the trails that wove through the ancient forests. Each step was a silent conversation with the land, a whispered promise to keep its secrets. Yet, the question lingered: why did he feel the need to be alone? Why was it that every relationship he'd ever had ended in a whirlwind of misunderstandings and unspoken regrets? He thought of the boulder, now nestled among the native rocks of Tenerife, and wondered if it too felt a sense of displacement.

One evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon, casting the sky in hues of fiery red and gold, Johan found himself drawn back to the spot where he had thrown the boulder. The valley looked different now, cloaked in the soft embrace of twilight. The shadows grew long and mysterious, hinting at secrets hidden just out of sight. He approached the edge of the cliff, his heart pounding like a drum in his chest. He had come to realize that the act of displacement, of moving something so heavy and permanent, mirrored his own life's journey.

The wind picked up, whipping his hair into a frenzy as he stared into the abyss. The rustling of leaves and the distant calls of night creatures painted a symphony of solitude. He felt the weight of his loneliness press down on him, a heaviness that was both comforting and suffocating. It was as if the boulder had taken a piece of his pain with it, leaving a hollow space that the Tenerife air couldn't fill. He wondered if he was destined to be a solitary figure, forever searching for meaning in the most unlikely of places.

Johan's thoughts grew introspective as he pondered the paths that had led him here. The faces of past lovers and friends flitted through his mind, each a ghost of a connection lost to time and distance. He had always been the one to leave, the one to seek the thrill of the unexplored. Yet, as he stood on the precipice of the valley, he questioned the authenticity of those connections. Had he ever truly allowed anyone to know him, to understand the restless spirit that drove him to wander? Or had he been the boulder, impenetrable and solitary, letting only the surface be touched?

The wind grew stronger, carrying with it the whispers of the valley below. It seemed to beckon him, to share the secrets it had held for millennia. Johan's gaze drifted to the spot where the boulder had landed, and he felt a strange kinship with the immovable object. It was as if the rock had become a symbol of his own unyielding nature, a silent sentinel to his solitary existence.

He decided to climb down into the valley, driven by a curiosity that had been simmering since the moment he had released the boulder. The descent was steep and treacherous, the rocks slipping beneath his feet as he navigated the shadowy path. His breathing grew ragged, but he pressed on, driven by an inexplicable need to be closer to his creation.

The sun had fully disappeared by the time he reached the valley floor, the moon casting a pale glow over the landscape. He searched for the boulder, his eyes scanning the jumble of rocks and vegetation. Finally, he spotted it, a distinctly out-of-place piece of Tehran nestled among the volcanic bones of Tenerife. It was as if the rock had chosen its new home, a declaration of its intention to stay.

Johan approached it, his steps deliberate and slow. As he neared, he could see the indentation it had made in the earth, a small crater that would, over time, be filled with the detritus of life and erosion. He reached out and touched it, feeling the warmth it had absorbed from the day's sun. The roughness of the stone against his skin was a stark reminder of the permanence of his action.

He sat beside the boulder, the coolness of the night air seeping through his clothes. He thought of the people in Tehran, going about their lives, oblivious to the small piece of their mountain that now rested in this foreign valley. The silence was absolute, save for the occasional whisper of the wind. It was a silence that allowed him to hear the thoughts in his head, the ones he usually drowned out with the noise of civilization.

Johan felt a strange kinship with the rock, a bond formed by the shared experience of displacement. He had always felt like a boulder out of place, too heavy for the gentle hands of love and friendship to move. Yet here it was, nestled in this valley,

surrounded by life that had grown around it. He pondered if he too could find a way to integrate into this new environment, to allow himself to be part of the tapestry of life that surrounded him.

The valley was alive with the whispers of the night. The soft rustle of leaves and the distant howl of a wild animal painted a picture of a world that continued to thrive, unbothered by the burdens of the past. Johan sat in silence, the weight of his thoughts pressing down on him like the gravity that had brought the boulder to rest. He realized that he had been holding onto his solitude like a shield, using it to protect himself from the potential pain of rejection and misunderstanding.

He leaned against the boulder, feeling its warmth seep into his back. It was a strange comfort, as if the rock understood his plight. In the quiet of the night, Johan spoke aloud to his silent companion, sharing his fears and dreams, his regrets and his hopes. The boulder, a mute witness to his confessions, seemed to absorb his words, offering no judgment, no advice, just a solid presence that grounded him to the earth.

As he talked, he became aware of a change in the air. It was subtle at first, a shift in the scent of the night, a coolness that wasn't there before. The whispers grew louder, swirling around him like a gentle breeze. He looked around, his eyes trying to pierce the darkness, but there was nothing to see. The whispers grew clearer, morphing into a chorus of voices that seemed to emanate from the very ground beneath him. They spoke in a language he didn't understand, yet the emotion behind the words was unmistakable.

The voices grew more insistent, and Johan felt a strange tugging at his soul. It was as if the earth itself was speaking to him, sharing its secrets and yearning for a response. He closed his eyes, letting the words wash over him, trying to discern meaning from the cacophony. And then, as suddenly as it had begun, the voices fell silent. The air grew still, and Johan was left with only the sound of his own heartbeat echoing in his ears.

The silence was deafening, yet it felt as if the world was holding its breath, waiting for his next move. He knew that something profound had just occurred, a bridge built between his solitary existence and the eternal cycle of life around him. He felt a burgeoning sense of belonging, as if the very earth had accepted him as one of its own.

Johan took a deep breath, filling his lungs with the cool, damp air of the valley. It was a scent that seemed to carry with it the whispers of a million untold stories, a scent that was now forever intertwined with his own. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small notebook and pencil, feeling an overwhelming urge to capture the

moment. His hand trembled as he wrote, the words spilling onto the page in a rush of emotion.

The voices had left him with a gift, an understanding that his restless spirit was not a curse but a part of the natural order of things. Like the boulder, he too could find a place to rest, to become a part of the fabric of the world around him. The realization brought with it a sense of peace that was as vast and unyielding as the night sky above.

Johan returned to his rented apartment in hotel flat Altagay, his mind buzzing with the revelations of the night. He sat at the small table by the window, the moon casting a silver glow over the pages of his notebook. He wrote feverishly, his thoughts spilling out in a torrent of words and images. The boulder had become more than just a symbol of his displacement; it was a talisman of connection, a bridge to a world that had always felt just out of reach.

The whispers of the valley lingered in his mind, a siren's call that grew louder with each passing day. He found himself drawn back to the spot time and again, each visit bringing a newfound sense of belonging. The boulder had become a beacon, a silent confidant that held the key to unlocking the mysteries of his soul.

On one such visit, as the sun dipped low in the sky, casting the world in a warm orange glow, Johan noticed something different. The indentation the boulder had made in the earth was now surrounded by a ring of small, delicate flowers. They grew in a perfect circle, as if the rock had left an imprint of its essence behind. He reached out to touch one, the petals cool and velvety against his fingertips. It was a sign, a message from the earth that his burden had been accepted, that he too could take root.