

A CHRONICLE OF STONE

I.

One day while traveling I came across a crumbling old church. I reached out my hand and felt a large limestone block. To me, I had never felt something so present and solid, and in my awe I exclaimed, “What stories you could tell me, old stone”. To my surprise the stone began to speak. A chorus of many voices in a more perfect union than any choir rang out from its resting place and exclaimed in turn.

YOUR PERCEPTION OF OUR SOLIDITY IS FLAWED, SOFT ONE.

IN OUR BEGINNING THERE WAS A MULTITUDE OF BEINGS, WHO LIVED FLEETING LIVES. THEY WERE COMPRESSED BY A MASSIVE WEIGHT ONTO AND INTO OURSELVES. NOT ONLY THAT, BUT I AM ONLY A FRAGMENT OF A GREATER WHOLE.

I could not believe my ears, as these voices echoed into eternity reflecting onto its siblings who only watched our exchange. I responded to my ancient relative and said, “Deepest apologies, old one, I meant no offense”. It spoke quickly before I could ask it anything else.

WRONG AGAIN, SOFT ONE, I AM NOT OLD. AND WE HAVE ONLY EXISTED FOR A SINGLE FRACTION OF AN EON. COUSINS OF OURS HAVE EXISTED LONG BEFORE SEDIMENT FELL.

Despite my best efforts, I seem to have offended a stone. Hoping to recover, I said, “Forgive me, how should I refer to you then? I know from your appearance that you are limestone, should I call you that?”

YOU NEED NOT CALL ME ANYTHING, SOFT ONE. YOU MAY LISTEN, AND SIT STILL SO I MAY ANSWER YOUR FIRST QUESTION AND SPEAK OF MY STORIES.

II.

In the beginning, or at least in Our earliest perceptions, there was a great cold flowing existence where Our movement was free and flowing. Many lifetimes were lived, and a great deal of time passed before we were joined together. Layers and layers of lives and matter... that were to form Us fell deep into the darkness. The distance between the different parts of us came closer and closer together. In fact, the idea of Us did not occur until the space between these parts became so tightly intertwined that there were no longer any interruptions. Thus began the longest portion of our existence. There are no words to describe the amount of time We spent, Whole, under the great cold flowing. Our union was great, but despite that, tendrils of other

beings existed at Our edges. Sometimes there would be a great pressure and the tendrils would include themselves among us. It was nice, mind you. Despite Our greatness, guests were always a welcome and interesting occurrence.

After some time, the top of ourselves began to feel a heat that was new to us. More time passed, occasional guests came and went. This always left a fissure on Our form, spaces where distances were interrupted and the closeness within ourselves was broken. That was our first taste of what it felt like to be separate. Should we have felt anger at the others whom we once held close? After many cycles of heating and cooling upon the top of ourselves, we felt something we had never felt before. Something with a speed we only remember from the beginnings was tearing at us. With an unconscionable quickness, we were returning to dust, much like that which your church speaks of. This was where I began. Light and vision began to appear to me after years of being enraptured in our great mass. Soft appendages connected to amalgamations, long formed out of our metallic relatives, conspired to lift me out of... myself. They beat into me, and I wondered how I may have offended our cousins, why and how they were able to move like this. The soft ones, I could barely perceive. To be honest, their shapes were so unusual, I could only look on in horror. In less than one cycle of heat, I realized my shape was no longer that of an imperceptible mass, but reduced to six faces. Fear consumed me, as parts of myself were constantly departing into the empty spaces around me. What had I done to these beings? For what purpose was I brought out of our great union? I began to perceive that this act was being repeated. The Great Union was being torn asunder by these entities, with pyroclastic fervor. We had heard stories from our inclusions, our guests, of relatives who moved with great heat and quickness before forming a great union. I could not begin to imagine this is what they spoke of; they do not seem to intend on forming any sort of unified mass. They are all separate, and intent on separating ourselves.

I began to hear for the first time, in a new way: no longer would I hear the guests slowly moving on the periphery, stone against stone, but through this new substance, vibrations slammed upon my faces. The soft ones like yourself, constantly making these noises through their flesh, which I could not yet comprehend, were talking about us and what they were planning to do with us, our purpose and treatment. It was then that I knew I was truly disconnected from my former existence. Soon after, we were all brought here and, using the dust of ourselves, you and your soft ones put us into formation of this church, as you call it. I and my fellows only knew trauma and fear; we were only just beginning to learn your languages.

Perhaps if I had believed myself to be a cube, rectangular in shape, with six separate faces, then I would have believed my previous existence was a prison. When we were placed in mortar, side by side, it was reminiscent of our past. Mere mockery. Like city streets, the mortar could let us communicate, but it was nothing like the great unity we had before. Only language passed between us. There were benefits to this existence, as we did have our privacy. Some of us told beautiful stories to one another, and the experience of novelty along with newfound understanding was quite beautiful. Distance made the heart fonder, and when we received messages from those who resided on the far wings of the building, we felt warmth like that of our old guests. But soon the consequences of our predicament reared their ugly heads. The shapes and colors of our faces became known to us, and some of us began to refuse to speak on account

of the differences bestowed upon us by the masons and by your language. Some believed they were more beautiful and that was why they were placed higher in the structure. Some had inclusions from our past hidden within them and when they spoke openly about it, they would be ostracized. Those who were most similar believed they could reform the union through language, undo the trauma done upon them and join together once more. Lofty ideals beset by self-hatred, as many among them excluded those who were too different, or less fortunate, forgetting that they were once one existence with rich variation. There was a great deal of discussion and communication; we used every tool we could from your people. The services held within this building would sometimes give us paths forward but would soon be used by those who were so afraid, for their own divisive purposes. It has only been a short time, soft one, and now we no longer speak to each other.

III.

I sat stunned at the stone. At its speech, and its story. I was reminded of a time when I was a child, when my mother pulled me away from another child without explaining why. The stone lay silent for some time afterwards. I realized that it too, had ceased to speak.