

Kalan and the Twin Stones

by Adan Marroquin



Woof! Woof!

Woof! Woof! Woof!

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Woof!

That sound had been going on for so long that freezing morning, even the birds had gotten upset about. An unfamiliar shouting from outside the fence had made the guardian abandon his mat earlier than the usual time. Normally, he would not let unimportant matters alter his rest, so whoever was outside must have been screaming tirelessly that Kut' had bothered barking repeatedly. It was that last part that consequently woke Alan up.

With his vision still a bit blurry, Alan trawled his steps toward the door to find out by himself who had dared to shout his nickname before the rooster's regular chant. Definitely not his favorite moment to start the day.

"Lannniix!" he would hear a last time, before he unlocked the old timber door that led to the walkway, on the right side of the house. It took him a bit more effort than he expected. The drizzling from the night before had caused the door to swell; Kut' stood next to him ready to attack. When he finally managed to open the door, Kut' simply wagged his almost unnoticeable tail, and turn back to his kennel. It was Alan's brother at the door.

"So, are you ready?" He exclaimed in a hoarse voice -the low temperatures during that season of the year had transformed his cheerful tone into an indistinguishable one.

David had come from the other side of the hill, where he and his family lived. As the great family-man he was, he would always visit his mom every time he could, specially during the corn-planting season, normally early in the morning.

Alan was totally the opposite, he would stay late in bed every day, thinking about whom he really was. "A silly head, asking silly questions!" his siblings would repeat to him constantly, including David. Their mother would think otherwise, "a pathfinder by birth" she would often insist. When Alan was a child, he wanted to scout all the places he could. Soon when he finished the elementary school, he emptied his only backpack from school supplies, and filled it right after with nothing more than his eagerness to explore the city, further than what he had seen in his textbooks. Yet, not even the city could answer the questions in his head, so not very long after, he started missing home.

Whenever possible, Alan would pick up his old backpack and take a shuttle back to his village, Twi'-wutz. Those were long and tiring rides, seven hours to be more specific. Twi'-wutz was located in the Guatemalan western highlands, a place where you can see the clouds floating to the sky every morning, specially during July. The landmarks from the windows of the bus along the road, resembled an extensive multicolored piece of garment, reminding Alan of the traditional clothing of the inhabitants of his village. Another good reason to take that chicken bus trip every time he could. And here is one of those times.

Two evenings had passed since Alan came back home. During the coffee time, he and David had exchanged words about their younger years. They both agreed that one day they would visit the old riverside -it had been so long since the last time Alan went there, pretty much since he left his village, exactly nine years ago.

That long conversation had taken him back to his childhood memories, when he used to accompany his older sister to wash clothes in the affluent of the river. He had not forgotten how hard it was to carry big lumps of wet clothes to the top of the rocks and leave them there for hours, until the sun-rays had evaporated all the water from them. Those were unforgettable moments for him. Whenever the time allowed, he would lay down on the cold surface, and doodle all sorts of creatures in the sky. There were days when he felt that his imagination had somehow transferred into reality, and someone invisible was calling him at the distance. Only then, he would run down to his sister and wait for her to finish the ubiquitous Saturday chores.

"Isn't it too early?" Alan inquired David surprisingly.

"The earlier we go, the more time we will have for exploration", David replied.

"At least let's have breakfast first" Alan insisted.

"Well, so long you brought something delicious from the city," David joked. He knew Alan was the type of man that would only carry a backpack, and inside of that, there was room for only two things: either an empty sketchbook, or a comic book about heroes and warriors.

Right after breakfast, their adventure began; David was the type of person who enjoyed rushing things up. "At this moment of the day, the sunbeam is still soft", he argued. Alan shook his head up and down, as a sign of approval.

During their journey, Alan did not stop examining the blossoming of the peach trees alongside the trail. The walk way was still wet, and his shoes lost their track a few times. Alan stumbled trying to catch up with his brother's pace, he had spent so much time away from home that forgotten how to walk between mud and stones; he admitted David's predisposition to do this trip took him by surprise. Nevertheless, he was excited to see the long riverside again after a very long time.

Forty-five minutes later, a peculiar chant at the distance took Alan back to reimagine those old days. The chirping of the motmot merged with the sound of the river flow announced that Alan and David were getting close to their destination. In a blink of an eye, Alan was standing where he used to hear someone calling his name. To his disappointment, that place was no longer the same. The river stream was narrower than what he had kept in his heart. The crops had vanished most of the forest, which made the rocks he used to climb look much bigger than he remembered. The remains of the forest resembled

a slaughtered town that was fading slowly at the distance. An anger and sadness invaded Alan's heart, like if it was his home being destroyed.

For David, it was not all bad news, it made it easier for him to put up a tent to rest, as the sun was hitting harder each minute. While he was entertained finding sticks, Alan started walking towards the rocks on the other side of the river. The litter had covered the flow of what was once a growling monster, so after a few jumps, he was already standing on dried ground again. It was then when he perceived a familiar voice calling him by his intended name. "Kalan!" very few people knew the story of his name, so he did not bother responding.

Kalan! He would hear clearer a second time.

This time, he turned around, but only the air moved his hair from one side to the other.

Kalan meant *guardian* in his native language. He had been given that name by his father, who hoped that when Kalan grew, he would guard his lands in his older years. To his misfortune, when the day came to register Kalan at the mayor's office, the notary in charge that day had a hearing impairment, so he only heard Alan,

"With one or two Ls" the old man inquired.

Chalo, Kalan's father replied, "one please".

He assumed that the man was referring to having one or two first names like the rest of the children. Of course, he wanted his last-born son to have only one name. In his opinion, having two names make a man's head confused. He learned it that way from Kalan's grandfather.

"Kalan!" He heard louder a third time - this time he was sure his mind did not make it up. He turned around to find out who it was, but he only heard the wind waiving the canopy of the cypresses, yet he replied, "hello old-forest-friend" It's been a long time eh?

Right then, he distinguished a silhouette of a small boy sneaking through the bushes. A tell from his grandmother came to his memory, "a q'e twi' tx'otx' ja q'ij twi' q' mux'a, me'ja te, te k'wach' abj' te", "we belong where our navels were buried, but you, you belong to the twin stones"

Suddenly, he noticed he had reached the end of the trail. Right in front of him, a pair of humongous rocks reclined on one another, covered in all sort of roots, like if they were tied to each other by some blessing or some curse. The whispers duplicated at this point.

You're back!

Kalan is back!

He was never meant to leave!.

He never left!

Kalan's memories reeled, and everything began coalescing. He blinked for an instant, and when he opened his eyes, the dry leaves had formed a whirlpool at his feet. It was then when the silhouette of the boy emerged from the air whispering,

You belong here! Not north!

Not south!

Here near, not far!

He pointed at Kalan's feet, and said, "you must never hide them again, you must never chop them off again, or else, we both die!" Kalan looked down and cried.