

Frosted

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by [SLWalker](#)

Summary

(2235) - He couldn't think, but he could see patterns; he couldn't remember his name, but he still knew how to fight.

Notes

It references a lot of things, though the full explanation takes some time. Sort of the direct sequel to 'Now'.

The voices outside were raised; they were muffled through the door at first, and represented in blurred shapes through frosted glass. It was a break in the pattern, if nothing else; that was how it caught his attention.

Mostly, the shadows through the glass didn't speak loudly. At least-- he didn't *think* they did.

His memories were in fragments, after a point. Shattered into brief, tortured pieces, impossible to draw a line through. Linear time no longer existed, and he wasn't even sure how long ago that had started. Just that it *felt* like a long time.

And everything from before was so hard to reach.

But he still knew how to recognize patterns, in all that. And this was not a part of the pattern. Not part of any pattern he recognized.

The voices got briefly louder, then the door opened.

He was back into the corner in an instant, heart rabbiting. Another pattern instead: they would come in threes and pull him out of the corner; there would be a flash of silver and a hiss somewhere on one of his arms or maybe neck and whatever clarity of thought or action that he had summoned up would be gone.

Whatever came after, he didn't remember. Whenever he came back, his head would hurt -- like it had been scraped raw from the inside -- and sometimes his nose would be bleeding, and he would feel hollowed out and a kind of crushing *loneliness*, a singularity of it in the center of him, and he would want to stop being then, but couldn't.

And at some point (when? how long?) he would be able to do something like thinking again, but any attempt to pick up the pieces and *understand* would inevitably dissolve. And then it would repeat.

And repeat.

And *repeat*.

Time could not really resume shape. He felt cored, battered. He was so tired; he didn't know how much longer he would be able to keep breathing before stopping became the only way out.

But he knew this pattern. There was only one of them, not three, there was no silver, but it didn't matter. He bared his teeth; it was a hopeless, pointless defiance, but it was all that he had left.

No matter how many times he lashed out, he always lost. No matter how many times they came for him, he always fought anyway. He didn't know how to do anything else.

This time, though, the figure stopped well back; made a noise that sounded hurt. That was different, but not different enough. It said something, and the sense of familiarity increased; somewhere in the fog there might have been a name that went with that voice once, maybe even one that knew *his*.

Outside the door, there were more voices. He didn't even bolt for that open door; he already knew it would be futile and that it was better to save his energy to try to fight, instead.

(It would only be later that the words being spoken out there -- painstakingly put back together, with him cutting his fingers on the shards of memory as he did -- would become recognizable.

-- ken what ye were *thinkin'*, Caitlyn! Yer own firstborn, and ye let these hacks have at him?!"

It would only be later, too, that he would learn he'd been there a month. Whatever those words meant, pieced together, it had been a month. There could never be any reconciling that. There could never be a returning to *before* that.)

For now, though, he lashed out when the half-blurred figure came closer, grunting from the impacts of his fists, making a startled noise for his *teeth*--

--but then arms clad in brown were wrapped tight around him, holding him still but not hurting him, and somewhere between the voice and the *scent* (of hay and horse, of the last kind place he could go, at least until there were no kind places left) there was a name, even if it wasn't his.

(He slept a dead, exhausted sleep in his uncle's arms; it was only a day later he remembered his own name, and two days later that he learned he was now thirteen.)

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