

THE WELL

He was born without a name, without announcement, without the slightest indication that his arrival had been witnessed by anything other than the earth itself. No cry endured, no echo claimed him. The vineyard stretched outward, motionless, exhausted, its twisted vines rising in a rigid stillness, as though time itself had passed around them without ever touching them. The soil, split by thin cracks, seemed to have forgotten the gesture of nourishment, and the pale sky sustained a sickly light that never fully settled upon things. There, within that witnessless silence, the child opened his eyes.

There was no recognition in the gesture, only sudden exposure. The light did not receive him; it imposed itself. His eyelids yielded with difficulty, as though they had not yet been made to withstand what entered through them. Blinking offered no relief. Vision was, from the beginning, a burden without explanation. And yet he did not look away, for there was nothing from which to avert his gaze.

He moved his hands. Not as a deliberate act, but as a response that did not seem to originate within him, a response that appeared instead to pass through him. His fingers descended toward the earth as though drawn by something seeking support, and upon touching it, something fastened itself into place. The surface gave way slightly, only enough to allow the soil to infiltrate beneath his nails, to cling to the skin, occupying every fold with a persistence that did not abandon him when his hands withdrew.

He plunged them in again, harder this time, and within repetition a silent order established itself, a continuity whose interruption caused something imprecise yet insistent to shift out of alignment within him.

He dug.

Time did not present itself as measure, but as erosion. His hands ceased to be soft; the fingers acquired a firm clumsiness, a new shape, as though the act itself were molding them. Deeper down, the earth offered a different resistance, denser, more compact, and in piercing it there emerged a sensation difficult to locate, something that did not come from outside, but instead forced its way upward from within.

He stopped once.

Only for an instant.

The wind crossed through the vines with a faint murmur lacking any clear direction, and within that interval an absence insinuated itself without ever arriving at the condition of being named. It did not remain long enough to take form. His hands, tense within the pause, returned to motion without any decision intervening.

They continued.

The light began to withdraw slowly, without rupture. There was no moment in which it ceased to exist; it simply became less. His eyes adapted poorly to that loss, dry, irritated, incapable of retaining what little remained. Blinking became an increasingly burdensome gesture. The hands, meanwhile, displayed no such difficulty.

They persisted.

His nails darkened, then split along the edges, first almost imperceptibly, later with greater separation. They did not cease digging. And when they began to break, the movement did not stop. The soil, mixing with blood, acquired a denser consistency; it adhered with greater firmness, occupying the exposed spaces without resistance. The burning did not recede. It remained. And the stench of that mixture, rather than repulsing or alarming him, seemed to incite him further.

He descended deeper.

His body adjusted to the shape of the well without visible resistance. His spine curved inward, his shoulders closed upon themselves, his ribs began to mark themselves beneath skin tightened by deprivation. He did not eat. His mouth, dry, slowly lost its teeth; they loosened, fell away, without altering the gesture of digging. His tongue wandered across cavities that no longer appeared to possess any function. His breathing became irregular, as though the air could no longer entirely reach the place where he remained.

At times he paused for slightly longer, scarcely enough to notice that difficulty, and then the hands continued again, as though incapable of admitting delay.

Thought did not arrive all at once. It insinuated itself through repetitions, through small interruptions that never fully developed. Something resembling direction persisted, though without clear form. There was no certainty, only continuity. And yet, in certain moments, when the earth yielded more easily, or when the air seemed scarcer, another sensation emerged, brief and difficult to sustain, incapable of becoming idea.

It did not remain.

It dissolved before it could affirm itself.

The nails, now separated from the fingers almost entirely, hung loosely, barely attached. Some disappeared without his ever registering the precise moment. The skin opened in irregular sections; the soil occupied those spaces with a naturalness that encountered no opposition. The blood no longer flowed quickly; it mingled, became part of what surrounded him.

The pain neither increased nor diminished.

It persisted.

The space grew narrower, or else his body became more willing to inhabit it. The difference ceased to be clear. Each movement demanded a minimal adjustment, a slight alteration in angle, though never enough to disrupt the continuity of the act. His hands descended, ascended, repeated. At times they lingered motionless for a little longer, suspended, as though something were about to interrupt itself definitively.

It did not happen.

Until it did.

The movement did not stop abruptly. It weakened. Strength diminished without announcement. His hands descended once more, less precisely, and upon attempting to withdraw them, failed to complete the gesture. They remained pressed against the earth. His body, inclined forward, lost the tension that had sustained it. No attempt was made to correct the posture.

His chin descended first, striking the bottom with a dry impact that produced no echo. His head shifted backward at a slight angle, sufficient. His neck yielded without visible resistance. The remainder of the body followed that motion with a slowness that encountered no opposition.

He remained motionless.

From the half-open, emptied mouth escaped a minimal sound, scarcely an exhalation that never fully formed.

There was no other.

For a time—indefinite—nothing changed.

Then the earth began to descend.

At first in isolated falls, minor collapses that scarcely altered the surface. Later, with greater continuity. The grains slid inward toward the well without haste, occupying the spaces, covering whatever remained exposed. There was no violence in the process. The accumulation was sufficient.

With time, the surface leveled itself. The well ceased to distinguish itself from the rest of the terrain. The vines, motionless through long seasons, continued allowing the wind to pass among their dry branches, and that constant movement eventually erased every trace.

Where there had once been an opening, there remained only the same cracked expanse.

Further below, where the earth had settled into greater density, something began to alter itself without urgency. The roots, extending downward, encountered resistance, then continuity. They insinuated themselves between distinct layers and advanced. At first there was no visible sign upon the surface. Later, barely perceptible, a slight variation in growth.

And so, within that soil which offered neither explanation nor need of one, what had descended remained integrated, indistinguishable, while above, the wind continued its passage among the vines as though no interruption had ever existed at all.