



WAS, IS, WILL BE

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My name is Tepners and here I'd been standing with two rather strange bedfellows, origins of our appearance in this room unknown.

I say the word 'room', but without the conventional axioms. No walls, ceiling, floor; it was just some blank spot somewhere in a corner of reality, with light at just the right intensity seeming to shine out of nothing and where the stream of time cascaded much faster.

The younger one was called Tasp. In the time that I've known him, he's been so sprightly and cheerful, even now, as I tell you of what was, is and will be, he runs about back and forth, hardly pausing for a breath and laughing all the while. Watching him, I smiled his smile, bittersweet nostalgia pricking and warming my heart.

"What wouldn't I give to look that happy again," the older one spoke and I noticed a touch of wistfulness. His name was Turefu, withering away gradually. He had been standing with me some time back, but he had long since sat down with a sigh, his joints wearier, his hair steadily passing into lighter shades of grey.

"I feel the same way," I replied heavily. Turefu chuckled and said, "I could say the same while looking at you, boy."

"I'm not a boy," I started saying rather heatedly before Turefu waved me off halfway, saying, "In your own head, sonny, maybe not, but you have plenty to go through." He looked me in the eye, as if to prove his point.

Tasp came running back and exclaimed happily, "It's so nice and bright in here! Why don't you two come with me?" Turefu smiled and said regretfully, "I would have loved to, Tasp, but I'm rather tired. Why not take Tepners here?" Tasp grinned and clasped my hand and managed to drag me off before I could react. We played together for a while, a game of tag, before I told him I needed to rest and headed back to where Turefu sat. There was a wry look on his face as he said, "Done already? I could have sworn you had more energy in you."

I laughed and said, "I thought the same. The years really don't do us good, do they?"

Turefu, however, did not reply. He continued to look at Tasp, the wistfulness clearer this time. For a moment, I could have sworn I noticed some deeper emotion, but it flitted away before I could

really put a finger on what it was. Some silence passed between us, with Tasp still playing in the distance. We could see him slowing down, losing his initial vigour. Turefu sighed, and quoted, "It's so nice and bright in here."

"Was, not is," I corrected. Turefu laughed wryly and replied, "Was, indeed." He paused for a moment again, before asking, "You got used to the shadows?"

For a moment, I didn't say anything. Tasp's words kept playing in my head. Before the rotting shades of black began to appear, I hadn't seen a single shadow here. Not even my own. I looked now at the strange black light at the horizons, wisps of it here and there. They had been growing for a while now, drawing closer.

I breathed heavily and asked, "Won't you tell me anything, Turefu?" I hadn't intended on it, but my voice had taken on a pleading tone. Turefu closed his eyes and said, "You'll get there anyway. What was, is, or will be, shouldn't always intersect."

"Bull," I cried out. "I have to know! Why won't you just tell me?" The old man burst out laughing weakly and my fists clenched in anger. His laughter subsided and he looked at me. "Alright

then," he said, "Why not go tell Tasp about the shadows?"

I froze and Turefu smiled. "It's not as easy as 'telling' someone. They won't always understand and you don't always have the heart to tell them, young man." He closed his eyes again. With a start, I noticed his hair had turned snow white. It was time.

He lay down now, his hands clasped on his belly. "You'll make it," Turefu smiled, the same smile as Tasp and I, as the shadows continued to thicken around me. Behind me, I heard Tasp yelp as he saw his first glimpses of the black light. I continued to watch Turefu in his last moments, the rise and fall of his belly, the crests growing smaller. Strange, I always missed the exact point that he died, vanishing. And I always missed the entrance of the newcomer, giggling and gurgling, bubbling with childhood innocence and ignorance. Tepners now stood beside me, watching the child as I did.

A soft breath leaves my mouth as my joints grow weak. My hair takes the shade of a very dark grey, and it will only get lighter. I know more than before.

My name is Turefu and here I'd been standing with two rather strange bedfellows, and another cycle has passed.