



## The Dog of Orange Ochre

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The crowd swelled through the huge glass doors, a rainbow of moving colour. Marble lay underfoot, glass and concrete towering over my head. "Typical," I thought. Of course, Noah chose here, of all places.

Sighing, I scanned the crowd, lazily looking for something to bring me out of my boredom. People milled around, bending to read plaques or to inspect long-dead creatures behind the glass. I shivered, thinking of myself trapped, confined to a lonely glass cell.

Noah was two years older than me, but people tended to forget that. "Just take your brother out from under my feet," Nell had said that morning, pressing \$20 into my hand.

As I turned away, I glanced at the plaque on the case to my left, my eyes drawn to the object inside. A rock lay on soft felt, perfectly preserved, but it was the image painted on the rock that my gaze lingered on. The outline of a dog. Bright colours etched onto rough rock. It was simple enough, but somehow I couldn't tear my eyes away. Leaning over, I pressed my finger to the glass; there was something familiar about it.

There was a tug at my sleeve. "What do you want, Noah?" He didn't answer, of course, just pointed at the rock. I followed the direction of his finger. The dog's tail was wagging slightly. It took me a moment but then it dawned on me. The painting was moving, but how?

Intrigued, I bent towards the image. The dog barked. Time froze. No one moved. It was like we were in a spotlight. A spotlight no one else seemed to see. A spotlight that, after a few seconds, raced away in a whirl of colour. Back. Further and further away from the museum. Away from the present. Back to the past, into the time of the rock.

It was another painting, this time enlarged onto the flat expanse of rock that formed the wall of the cave. Looking closer, I realised that it wasn't one painting, it was thousands. My eyes drank in the beautiful strokes and curves, all telling their own story. But what caught my interest, was the one small patch of rock that wasn't covered in ochre.

Turning towards Noah, I opened my mouth, the question forming on my lips. Then he spoke.

"Draw."

Confusion clouded my mind. "What?"

Looking at me passively he spoke again, "Draw."

Anger and confusion threatened to overwhelm me. "I don't know what you mean!" I cried angrily. "Just tell me what you mean!" Looking at me blankly, he picked up some ochre from the floor of the cave and began drawing.

He drew the towering pines down by the stream where we would play on hot summer days; he drew the times of adventure as a cardboard knight or the two astronauts flying in their makeshift rocket, discovering new planets; he drew the nights spent camping in the backyard, telling scary stories under the blanket. Finally, he drew the day mum and dad died, the black funeral and how everything had gone wrong. Families weren't made just to be torn apart. Noah stopped, looking at me questioningly.

Stepping forward, I brushed my fingers into the soft coloured dust. After a moment, my thumb a deep, dirty orange, I drew the dog. My dog. Charlie. Left behind when they took us to the first foster home. My fingers brushed against the smooth rock wall, barely smudging the dog's body, and we were gone.

We were back in the museum. The crowd swirled around us. Everything was normal again. Well, almost everything. Looking up at Noah, I took his hand smiling and led him out through the swinging doors and onto the street.