

The Wall

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The Wall

by [sub_divided](#)

Summary

They rounded a ridge and there it was, just as Killua had known it would be.

"Wow," Gon said, "that thing's huge."

"I've seen bigger," Killua lied. Not even the gates at Kukur Mountain were as massive as these, or as solidly imposing. Black iron and highly polished, the gates shone as if they were new; but they didn't look new, they looked ancient. The wall grew out of them like a cancer, great irregular arches and grills of rusted brown metal that extended from one side of the plateau to the other, and beyond – down into the canyons and up again on the other sides.

Everywhere along the wall there were jagged exposed edges, hidden crevices, pillars to duck behind and shadows to duck into -- an assassin's playground. Killua looked over to Gon, who was practically drooling, and had the sudden urge to hit him.

So he did.

This is an experimental, metaphorical and dreamlike story exploring the characters' attitudes toward death. The Wall represents the concept of Death and we get to see how the HxH characters react to the need to get past it!

Notes

This story was inspired by one of those symbolic personality tests... you know, where you are asked to imagine a cube, a ladder, a storm, a horse, etc and the things you imagine are supposed to represent aspects of your personality?

Some examples:

<https://www.higherperspectives.com/walk-in-the-woods-test-1406161837.html>

<https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/quick-personality-test>

While googling to find the one I used for this story (where you are asked to imagine a Wall, representing Death), I read an article claiming that these personality tests are actually a pickup artist technique??? No idea if this is true or not, I learned these from friends in college. This is actually pretty old - originally written in September 2005 (before the palace invasion came out in the manga) - but I think it holds up so I decided to repost it here.

This story is kinda weird but I hope you enjoy it anyway!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Part 1: Leorio and Kurapika

"-disappear! Vanish! Be gone, crumble, fall-"

"It obviously isn't working," Kurapika said from behind a book.

"Open sesame- shut up, I don't see *you* trying anything – disinteOW!"

Kurapika looked up to see Leorio balanced precariously on one foot. His other foot was cradled in both hands, and he was swearing coarsely. The wall didn't care – it squatted, flat black and massive, exactly as if it hadn't just been kicked, punched, cursed at, pleaded with and even, in one of Leorio's more ridiculous moments, wiped with a handkerchief.

Kurapika sighed, stretched, laid his book neatly aside, and got to his feet. "Let me see," he said.

EARLIER

Leorio set his medic's bag on the ground, rotated an arm and popped his neck. "Time to take a break!" he announced to the hills. He dropped straight down to the ground, and was asleep with his legs crossed in front of him and his chin tucked against his chest before the dust had settled.

He woke up after what seemed like moments. He checked his watch -- but he hadn't known the time when he'd stopped, and he didn't know what time it was supposed to be now. He looked up but the sky was unhelpfully overcast. Then he looked down at the path he'd been following, and saw the wall.

Something about the wall was profoundly unsettling. It might have been the way it was smooth without reflecting light. It might have been that there were no gates or other markings. It might have been the way it followed the lay of the land – or rather, the way it didn't. If Leorio had been more superstitious he'd have said that the *land* followed the shape of the *wall*.

It was also a little freaky the way it'd appeared out of nowhere like that.

Leorio looked behind him to check – yes, this was definitely the same path he'd been following earlier. Same dips, same clump of small purple flowers, small narrow-soled footprints. (You couldn't really call it a path, though. More like a trail, a bit of scuffed grass and bare dirt worn into the hillside. Overhead, thunder rumbled.)

Well. Freaky wall or not – and Leorio would never admit just how freaked out he was – this was the way his trail went. Right up to the wall, not even a hint of a bend or fork. If his way was on the other side of the wall, he'd just have to find a way to get there (and back, a voice at the back of his mind said. It would be pointless if he couldn't come back).

He tried to climb over, but there were no footholds. He tried to walk around, but the wall went on forever. He tried force, and all he got were bruises. He yelled until his throat was

hoarse, he tried blunt instruments and only damaged the instruments, he tried to vault and, well, the less said of that attempt the better.

By the time Kurapika wandered over the hills with a book in his hand and a faraway expression, Leorio had almost forgotten his original reason for wanting to get to the other side. This wasn't a matter of necessity anymore; no, now it was *personal*.

Kurapika settled down to wait.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

"Let me see."

Leorio freed one hand to gesture, go ahead. "You didn't seem interested before," he noted reproachfully.

Kurapika spoke sharply. "I'm not interested. I have absolutely no desire to cross this wall and it would be better if you didn't either." But he rose to his feet and crossed over to the wall anyway. He stopped just before it and ran his hands over it, like he was looking for gaps.

I've already tried that, Leorio thought. But he only said, "Why's that?"

"Don't you know what it means?" Kurapika stooped to run his fingers along the bottom. From his expression the situation was just as he'd expected it to be. He dug his hands into the dirt a little, to check.

Leorio eyed him suspiciously. "What are you talking about? It's just a wall, walls don't *mean* anything. And another thing, if you don't like it, don't help me! I was doing fine on my own."

Kurapika snorted. "I came looking for you, idiot. Who knows what kind of trouble you'd get into without – hmm."

Three things happened at once: Kurapika pulled back his arm, a skeletal hand came away with it, and the world shifted. Leorio closed his eyes to keep from being sick.

When he opened them the blank black wall was gone, and in its place was a long high line of human bones.

"The meaning of the wall," Kurapika said, his voice too steady and his eyes too bright, "is death. And this-" he took a deep breath - "is my wall."

Leorio just stared. How many skeletons in that thing?

"If you still want to go, we can cross this one. Easily."

Leorio kept staring – at the bones, at his hands and the water running down them, at the sky (it was really raining now), at Kurapika. Now that he knew, he realized...that he still had to go. As a doctor, he needed to know Death inside and out.

He had to go, but it was too much to ask Kurapika to come with him. He opened his mouth and hated himself for saying, "You'll be okay?"

Kurapika nodded.

"Let's go, then."

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Part 2: Killua and Gon

The mountains were desolate, full of red rocks and dust. As they walked along the spine of the range, there was nothing to see but more rocks and some small, scrubby bushes. Then they reached the top of a particularly tall mountain and there it was, just as Killua had known it would be.

"Wow," Gon said, "that thing's huge."

"I've seen bigger," Killua lied. Not even the gates at Kukur Mountain were as massive as these, or as solidly imposing. Black iron and highly polished, the gates shone as if they were new; but they didn't look new, they looked ancient. The wall grew out of them like a cancer, great irregular arches and grills of rusted brown metal. It extended from one side of the peak to the other, and beyond – down into the nearly vertical canyons and up again on the other sides.

Everywhere along the wall there were jagged exposed edges, hidden crevices, pillars to duck behind and shadows to duck into -- an assassin's playground. Killua looked over at Gon, who was practically drooling, and had the sudden urge to hit him.

So he did.

"Ow! What was that for?!"

"Nothing."

"So," Gon said, a little too brightly, "do we climb over it, or do we try the gates? Although it almost looks like we could squeeze through those gaps in the wall and--"

"No," Killua said. "It doesn't."

Gon just looked at him, then nodded. "Okay, so going through is out. I'm not sure we'd have fit anyway." (It was possible, Killua knew, but only if you were willing to leave pieces of yourself behind. Look up, you idiot, he wanted to say. Does it *look* like it ever rains here? What kind of liquid do you think rusts this thing? I'll give you a hint, not water. But somehow the words were all stuck in his throat.)

Meanwhile Gon was already trying the gates. "Hey, Killua, give me a hand here!"

Killua pushed half-heartedly, Gon pushed enthusiastically, and after nine or ten minutes the iron gave a half-inch. Gon stopped to wipe at the sweat in his eyes with his shirt collar and the gates swung shut again.

"Aww, man!" Gon was suddenly struck by a thought. "Killua, are you even trying?"

"Of course I am," Killua lied.

Gon looked at him, then nodded. (Stop accepting everything I tell you, Killua wanted to say, but couldn't because truthfully, he liked Gon that way. Even if it wasn't good for Gon.) "Okay. Maybe we should climb over instead."

Enough was enough, Killua thought. "Look, Gon, I know you want to go forward, but is this really necessary? You can tell this thing is bad news, right? Let's just drop it."

"No, there are enough pieces sticking out that it really shouldn't be a problem to climb over and-"

"Those pieces are sharp, idiot. You'll cut your hands off."

"Oh yeah."

Gon looked crestfallen. Killua hastened to reassure him, then caught himself. The last thing Gon needed was encouragement in this. "And that's not what I meant! It isn't worth it. Even if we made it to the other side..."

Gon looked at him curiously.

'...even if we did, it's not somewhere you want to be. Trust me."

Gon tapped one foot against the ground as he considered. Killua dug his fingers into his palm, hoping he'd see reason. If Gon decided to go through with this he'd have no choice but to stop him; and he was *really* not looking forward to hauling his best friend's unconscious body back over the cliffs they'd been climbing with both hands all morning.

"Killua?"

"Yeah?" He sounded thoughtful, that was a good sign.

"Look that way. What do you see?"

Killua blinked. "Rocks?"

"How about over there?"

"More rocks."

"What about back the way we came?"

"Rocks and the path we climbed up on. What's your point?"

Gon pointed. "On the other side of that wall, there's something that isn't more rocks. The path goes forward here. There's nothing but cliffs to either side of us. If we turn around now, we'll only be able to go back the way we came."

"So?"

Gon just looked at him. "I want to catch up with my dad," he said. "What do you want to do?"

And they stood there, and they looked at each other, and Killua thought about all the times he'd spent hidden in the rusted iron, before he'd met Gon. Standing in Death's shadow, never far enough within the wall to see what was on the other side, but never quite emerging either. Leaving pieces of himself behind.

Until Gon.

"I want to follow you, I guess." Even there (especially there).

END

End Notes

Thanks for reading, guys. Comments appreciated.

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