

Alan Wake fan fiction: Scratch and Genesis

I: Meeting Miss Scratch



She moved in a way I doubt I ever could with the fluid grace of a serpent. The expensive pantsuit made her look like one of the high powered executives that you only see in movies. She was well groomed and oozed confidence in a way I could never pull off. It wasn't like watching a video of yourself, where you see your mirror image and hear how your voice sounds outside of your own head. Maybe this is what having a twin felt like, seeing someone with your face and likeness, but shaped by an entirely different life and experiences.

My doppelganger was draped across a hotel room bed, one leg dangling over the side and her heeled foot toeing playfully at the cheap carpet. Her chin rested atop her folded hands as she regarded the camera she was peering into, or perhaps it was another television set like the one I was watching.

"Hello, baby," she purred. Her voice was soft as velvet and sounded like one of those voices you usually only hear from a caricatured vamp in a b-movie. Yet at the same time it was /my/ voice, which gave it a sick vulgarity that felt like a violation.

She gave me a moment to recover, perhaps the only mercy she ever was willing to show me.

"I'm strapped for time here, baby," she continued, putting emphasis on all the words that made me flinch. "but I wanted to make sure you were managing okay in that little playground I made just for you. The puppies have been playing nice and everything?"

I had spent the past hour driving up a stretch of road with the high beams on and my foot barely ever touching the brake. Black shapes had thrown themselves into my path and the sedan had rammed them each in turn, scattering them like pieces of burning paper in its wake. I knew that if I had slowed a fraction they would have swarmed the car, dragged me out, and done who knows what. By some miracle, or perhaps more dream logic, I had not run out of gas along the way.

She grinned, perhaps sensing my thoughts or imagining the how the scene played out herself. "Well, baby, I wouldn't want you to be idle too long. You seem to like keeping busy." Her predatory eyes darted offscreen for a moment as an electric chime played. "And there's my appointment. You know, you were really running your business inefficiently. I just finished an auction on that art site you play with and offered some alone-time with your character via instant messenger to the winner. We almost got to four figures, and all I have to do is pretend to like someone for a couple of hours." She ran her tongue along the edge of her teeth. "I guess you might call it something like phone sex, but I get paid a hell of a lot better for a hell of a lot less work." She wriggled her manicured nails at me. "Ta-ta, baby. It's time for the grown-ups to play."

The screen went dark as I lunged and the empty glass only bruised my knuckles as I struck it.

I wish it had shattered.

II: The Benevolent Helper



Scratch's expression was one of impatient boredom as she glanced at me through the television. She held up a hand in a quelling gesture usually reserved for noisy children and focused her attention on the laptop. Her fingernails clicked lightly on the keys as the light from the monitor painted her face in a myriad of colors. The reflected light gleamed in her predatory eyes.

"You know what's nice about the internet, baby?" The tip of her tail flicked side to side. "It's full of little lost souls. So lonely, so desperate to find meaning, so hungry for any little scrap someone is willing to throw at them. And all you have to do is smile and nod and pet them like a sad little dog; and in return they worship you."

Tap tap tap tap. "I feel like one of those talk show hosts who takes random calls and dishes out words of wisdom, you know... those little platitudes that sound special but don't mean a thing? They're just warm bodies that need someone to talk to, and all I have to do is tell them what they want to hear."

My hand tightened against the handle of the revolver. I'd held the thing for so long that it felt almost grafted to me. I wanted to fire a bullet into the screen, but I knew I'd need every single round against the army of shadows Scratch sent pouring after me. All I could do was watch and seethe.

She closed the laptop and rested her fingertips on the plastic case, clicking her nails to punctuate her words. "You remember that old bone they told you as a child about how the

nasty drug dealers got poor little babies addicted to to their little pills and things? They give the first dose for free. Well, affection can work like that too. You toss them bits of esteem and euphoric little words that make them feel soooooo good.” She stretched the words into a soft moan. “ And then you make the next hit cost them a little, and then a little more... and a little more....”

It took all my resolve to keep my face blank. I didn't want her to have the pleasure of seeing how she was getting to me. My thumb clicked against the button on the flashlight I gripped in my other hand. Fragments of hair and blackness were still stuck to it in places from an extremely close call I'd had before finally dashing into the shelter of the lit building.

“And before too long they throw everything they can spare at you just to feel special. You become a living drug. They /need/ you, baby. Eventually they don't even care about the petting, they just need their time with you to make their sad little lives feel a little less sad.” She walked closer to the screen, swaying her hips with every slow step. “See, baby, I'm not the villain here. I make them feel good, and they compensate me for my trouble. Win win.”

There was a rumble outside of my shelter, punctuated by an agonized scream. I could see the shapes beyond the window, straining against the darkness like a dog testing a leash. And I had the unfortunate luck of being that scrap of meat they wanted.

The screen was filled by Scratch's face. “Personally, baby, I think you're just selfish. You have all of these people who need your help but you won't help them. And yet somehow I'm the bad one? Perspective, baby. You could use some. Take my advice.” She winked. “So many other people do.”

As the screen blinked out the building shook and the lights fluttered. I thumbed the flashlight on and ran to the door. Better to face the monsters on my own terms outside than let them corner me.

III: Bad Memories



As an artist, I'm an inadvertent recluse by trade. I will sometimes go days without leaving the house because I've no need to. I don't watch television, I don't listen to radio, and often avoid the news on account of watching it tends to make me angry. I have my little social networks over the internet, but even the more popular ones I often avoid. I can count the number of Skype sessions I've had on one hand. I stay hidden and quiet over chat lines on account of not wanting distractions while I try to focus on work.

But in my childhood? I was outside from sunrise to sunset, and sometimes a little more. I had a bicycle that I would go miles and miles on, often times fearlessly farther than a child is normally allowed to go. An advantage of having a neglectful parent is that they don't care where you go as long as you don't get into trouble. I rode everywhere I could, to libraries where I could spend hours upon hours reading voraciously. I rode to stores and malls and arcades and duckponds and to the public pool and so many other places.

Memories come in good and bad though. The landscape I roamed was crafted from pleasant memories of familiar buildings and long stretches of road, and the darkness found all the little dark scraps I had tried so hard to bury.

When I was twelve I lived in crappy duplexes owned by a slum lord and managed by my mother. There was a housing edition nearby that I would cut my bicycle through because it kept me away from the more brutal main road and its complete lack of a sidewalk or bike trail. A pack of boys lived there who didn't care much for me, and at one point they swarmed my bike as I was cutting through. Their ringleader grasped my handlebars and slammed the front

down hard enough that the bike's tire snapped off. They probably would have done something similar to me had someone not caught sight of the event while driving by, rolled down a car window, and told them to stop.

As the shadows circled me I knew there would be no guardian angel appearing to rescue me this time. They had finally managed to wreck my car and I had been forced to move on foot. Like in my past I had cut through a familiar side path in the hopes of avoiding the mass of shadows waiting for me along the main highway. But now they swarmed me like a pack of rabid dogs, their wispy voices echoed the jeers and threats from my memory

When I was a child I was meek and quiet, I needed someone to rescue me. I retreated as the shadows advanced. The light of my flashlight painted back and forth across them, burning them just enough to keep them from charging. This tactic served me until the light flickered and the battery started to wane.

The pack charged like a single creature, rushing like sharks sensing blood. I stood still and raised my arms protectively over my face, perhaps appearing to whatever mind controlling them that I was giving up, or still clinging to the hope that an angel would come down from the heavens again.

It's a shame they never bothered to look down. They might have avoided the flashbang I'd dropped in their path. I heard the explosion and as soon as the light faded my arms dropped and I easily picked off the remaining dregs of the group with a few well aimed bullets.

I had someone who taught me to fight my own battles and how to be strong. He'd even given me the handgun lessons that had given me the resolve to fire that first shot. On my left hand I wore a ring he had placed there. I wasn't that meek child anymore, no matter how hard this world tried to convince me otherwise.

This is an actual memory from my childhood and it happened exactly as I wrote it. Some boys who didn't like me decided to take offense to me biking through my neighborhood and swarmed me with the intentions of beating me up. A woman drove by, noticed it, and stopped them. (I consider it my only sighting of my guardian angel.)

When I returned home I told my family what happened and my sister ended up sending one of her stoner boyfriends out, and as best as I can assume he put the fear of God into the boys. From that point on they would say hello to me when I passed by them and there were no further repeats of the incident. Still, it makes for good nightmare fuel considering the genre.

IV: Tending to Injury



One of the shadows had nicked me but the damage was mostly collateral. The scythe had caught the edge of my shirt and for a brief moment I'd been snared. Thankfully the momentum of the swing and me desperately trying to wrench myself away had disentangled us. I'd managed to shoot the creature but took a tumble into packed gravel and limped to the small shed to lick my minor wounds.

I was too tired to notice the television, otherwise I probably would have picked it up and hurled it out the door before it could turn itself on. Alas, all I was focused on was the first aid kit on the wall.

"Baby's got a boo-boo?" Scratch's voice was tinny on the cheap set, but her image came through clear enough, even through the layer of dust coating the screen. "A shame you don't have anyone to kiss it and make it all better." She was still in the cheap hotel room, but it had been rumpled and thrown into disarray. I also couldn't help but notice that the bed was occupied, and the backside of the head I caught over her shoulder was not familiar.

Scratch worked by trying to rile me. She succeeded more than I cared to admit, but I had chosen to simply not respond to her at all when she baited me. If she got me to talk, she could also get me to say too much. I had to assume that she had all the skills I did, and I'd

always had a knack at guessing people's minds after just a few words.

She ran her fingers through her hair. "Don't worry about my guest, you know how men are. Wham bam and out like a light." Scratch glanced at the lump in the bed and made a soft tittering noise. Her partner had apparently not impressed her very much.

This realm was still made from my own memories, and the kit I found didn't have alcohol or peroxide disinfectant. It had Mercurochrome -- stuff we called monkey's blood. I remembered how it seemed to make a little tomboy's injuries heal a lot faster. You couldn't get the real thing anymore because it contained tiny traces of mercury. Still, after the initial sting my scrapes seemed to fade considerably even if it did stain bright orange wherever it touched. Maybe the stuff really was good, or maybe it was a little bit of that dream magic. Hopefully I'd never have to really put its power to the test.

The television flickered as if trying to get my attention. "I want to share an observation I've had. You'll like it. It's about fetishes. You know, the weird kinks people are into?"

I resisted the urge to roll my eyes.

"See, I've noticed that a lot of fetishes are based on trauma or personal issues of some kind. People have a desire to be in complete control, so they tie people up. Other have a desire to be controlled and let themselves be tied up. Even things like cannibalism fetishes and things often have a root in some horrible or deeply memorable event." Scratch chuckled, her manner reminded me of an adult when they pretend they're sharing a great secret with a child. "No other creature chooses to solve its problems by having crazy sex with it. Isn't that just fascinating, baby?"

I had managed to gather a few useful things from the shack and stuffed them in the small pack I carried. In the real world an abandoned little shack would probably be full of dirty syringes, broken beer bottles, and cigarette butts, but the stark contrast of fantasy made it a temporary haven for a few small desperate little things I could use. Unfortunately it also served as a point where Scratch could pierce the shadows that separated us and taunt me from the other side.

She stretched lazily. "There's also a matter of want and need and hunger. Do you think people start out having fantasies about being devoured alive? About crushing tiny people under their feet? I suppose some do, but the truth is most start off small. But then that thrill that they get the first time starts to fade and they need more. Then they need dark things because normal things won't thrill them. A few people get so lost that they forget friends, family... themselves. Those are my favorite."

"You know what the problem is with wanting more?" I asked, loading fresh rounds into my

revolver. My arms looked like they had odd tribal warpaint on them now thanks to the Mercurochrome I'd spread on the gravel burns.

My doppelganger blinked and stared at me, surprised that I actually spoke.

I moved to leave the shack, pausing to hook my foot against the set's power cord. "You can never have enough, and in the end it leaves you with absolutely nothing at all and nothing to show for the effort."

Her look of rage as I yanked the cord from the wall was priceless. A shame I only caught a glance of it before the screen went dark.

V: Lack of Tools



The one thing this world had pointedly denied me were my tools. I was used to the scrape of graphite on paper, the indelible smear of india ink, the waxy layers of colored pencils and deep stain of marker as I turned a blank canvas into a window. But this place did all it could to keep that from me.

If someone wanted to deny me my art, then this place in my life was perfect for it.

Nothing I created during the time I lived here existed anymore. My mother had been meticulously neat and thought nothing of sweeping up a pile of sketches and throwing them away. I have no paper at all from up until I was seventeen or so. No homework, no report cards, no photographs, nothing. Oh, I'm sure that in a drawer or a computer somewhere there's a record that says I existed and I did this and that, but the familiar old memories that people box away and revisit had been destroyed as fast as they had been created for me.

All of this allowed the shadows to strip the world of anything useful for creating. Pens and pencils were empty and broken, paper was dirty or crumbled at my touch.

Scratch probably had tools, but they were useless to me even if I could somehow get to them. The art she created was beautiful at first glance, but the characters were vacant and soulless. They existed to please the eye (or something a bit lower), but there was nothing else to them. The ones that almost crossed that line had some vulgar aspect added in that completely killed any deeper meaning they might attempt to have. And no doubt in my hands her art supplies would either refuse to work, or produce the same bland and blatant images, utterly refusing any attempt I made to instill a soul into the artwork.

I could attempt to improvise, of course. But in a world where familiar objects hold power, picking up random debris to create a picture would be useless. My tools held power because they were familiar and comfortable, and recreating that from nothing would be next to impossible.

There was no other choice. I was stuck in a never ending cycle and the only way to end it would be to meet Scratch on her terms. And to do that, I needed power of my own.

Another Alan Wake Meta vignette thing. Gen sips a soda while she tries to figure out her next move and considers her very limited options.

This is why you'll never see any early drawings from me. There are none. And no, I'm not angsty about this fact, although it probably explains why I'm not attached to my artwork like some artists are and can let it go fairly easily.

VI: Pushing



The air was brutally dry. I was used to the humidity of home, but in my past I had lived in drier climates. The novelty of sweat that actually evaporated off my skin wore off as soon as my mouth dried and my lips cracked from the kiss of the dusty air. Even if I only ever caught glimpses of the sun, teasing me at the horizon and then vanishing again, I felt it constantly. The assault of brutal heat with no light at all was one of the crueler torments of this place.

I think the building was a municipal place, a closed post office or similar. The important thing was that the lights still worked and the water was on. I rushed to the bathroom and stuck my face under the first sink, drinking the water in desperate gulps. It was messy and the water tasted like rust, but I was so thirsty it didn't matter.

I shouldn't have been surprised to see Scratch in the reflection of the bathroom mirror, but I was surprised she had decided to make a personal appearance this time. Maybe her hotel room was being cleaned up. I regretted that she had caught me like this: Dirty, half my face and hair sopping wet from the sink, and me with my face stuck in it like a thirsty dog at a bowl.

"This is starting to get boring, baby," she purred. "I mean, the novelty of owning a hamster in a cage wears off after awhile, and at that point it becomes a stinky thing you have to tend to. And you, baby, are ripe."

My first instinct was to shoot her but I knew it wouldn't do a thing. Scratch was different from the shadows I'd been fighting all this time. And she wouldn't have bothered to even show

herself like this if she wasn't positive of being perfectly safe.

"You know, people are saying I'm your opposite. Everything I am, you are not." Scratch traced a finger along the wall and shook her head, scowling at the filth. "I like that belief. I'm successful, beautiful, desired, charismatic... not to mention about fifty pounds lighter."

I choked down my laughter. "The best you can manage is to say I'm fat?" The sink resisted my attempts to shut it off. The fixtures were old and partially corroded. When it finally relented I made motions to look as if I were checking my face in the mirror. It allowed me to keep an eye on the thing behind me. "By that same logic, wouldn't you be male and a virgin?"

She snorted and I scolded myself for finally rising to her bait. "Now now, baby. You know what people do with pets that misbehave. Ever seen Old Yeller?"

My hands slammed down on the edges of the sink. "Then do it." Scratch breathed in to retort but I cut her off. "You're all talk! If you could kill me you would have stomped my head in when I first got here. You're a good liar about a lot of things, but this is bullshit and we both know it."

The whole building seemed to explode around me, throwing rocks and choking debris through the air as the floor disintegrated and I fell. Scratch's laughter echoed in my head as everything faded away.

I don't know how long I was out, but I woke up in a field of rubble. Everything hurt, but I was alive. And through the cuts and bruises I was almost giddy. I'd been right.

Since this meta universe thing is based off of my memories and experiences, I conjured up one of my long walks in the dry Oklahoma summer a few times. Once I desperately needed a drink and the only place I managed to find one was from someone's garden hose. I'm grateful that the owner didn't notice or didn't care, because I was dying.

I also recalled the memory of someone who constantly threatened litigation when confronted with a situation that she couldn't handle or win. And sometimes when someone makes a threat, even if they might make good on it, the only real way of fighting back is to dare them to bring it on.

VII: An Imperfect Mirror



Scratch had claimed that she was my evil twin or my opposite, and although on the surface she might appear as such it was far more complicated than that.

I'm going to let you in on a secret, one of those secrets everyone knows: Artists are crazy.

Now, we're all crazy. Some of us don't like to admit it, but we are. We all have our insecure paranoias, social quirks, broken thoughts, and terrified fears. Those things that make us less than perfect. But people deal with their insanities in different ways. Some work through them, some apologize about them, some ignore them, and some embrace them.

But the life of an artist can bring out the worst. You invest hours of your soul into images, you sell yourself along with your work, and when you finish an image it's available for people to judge in seconds. And they can either worship it or rip to shreds. Sometimes they do both. Things like that can harden someone, or make them feel like the greatest person in the world.

I have seen artists become so reclusive that they are terrified of communicating. I have met artists who have decided that their skill makes them royalty and deserving of being treated as such. From hermit to superstar, attention affects the artist.

One of my guiding motivations is bad example. I had made several promises to myself because I have seen a lot of bad examples in my time. Scratch was the embodiment of that and was everything I had sworn not to be. She was the one who was all about the bottom line

and willing to do whatever she could to pull a profit. She saw everyone as nothing but something to exploit and manipulate. She had no qualms about using the weak willed and the emotionally needy if it meant her gain.

She was the one who had no respect for anything but herself, and no love for anything but money and power. If you weren't useful, Scratch had no use for you. If you were useful she was your best friend. She smiled to your face, held you in her arms and told you she loved you; and then when you were emotionally dependent on her she used you and drained you and laughed about it to anyone willing to listen. In her path she left a trail of broken, empty people, and her only outrage over it came when her toys failed to provide for her needs.

And the most dangerous thing about her is that she actually had convinced herself that she wasn't doing anything bad and was, in fact, providing a beneficial service.

Scratch wasn't an evil twin, she was not my opposite. She was one step away of what I could become if I dropped a few little qualms. It wouldn't be hard. We're all crazy, remember? I could simply tell myself that your brand of crazy meant you deserved to be treated like nothing. That somehow who I was made me better than everyone else and it gave me free reign to talk down to anyone I wanted. I could walk the high ground of saying that if someone really didn't want to be used, they wouldn't let me use them. That's the thing about evil, it's really easy to justify it, and just as easy to wave your hand at the good and point out all the dirt and flaws. To spin speeches about shades of gray and how good is bad and bad is good.

They say that the person we are most prone to hate is someone exactly like ourselves.

Scratch is based off of several people I have filed away as evil. Not the epic evil that people tend to think of, but more like the small selfish and subtle evils that people don't notice. Evil that hides as virtue, evil that preys on people through their emotional weaknesses.

She cultivates her army of coddlers and white knights. She purrs sympathy in your ear and then whimpers fake fears to get you to break yourself to help her back. She's the emotional vampire, the manipulator, and the ruthless predator on the hunt for the weak and the sick to prey upon.

VIII: Caught in the Act



No place was completely safe. Every building held good and bad memories in some measure, and that meant that no safe house was free from being cracked. The best I could manage were islands that were very low on the bad. They were hard for the darkness to find, but they were also out in the middle of nowhere and didn't serve to help me find an edge. They were safe havens, but they were empty.

And I knew I couldn't hide or run forever. I needed to fight.

Scratch found me in a place I expected she thought I'd avoid. I had been taking refuge in a friend's house, a place where I sometimes went when my home was too much and I needed to be away, but it was in walking distance to a condo owned by my family. I'd hoped to find art supplies there, but when I did not I still chose to start my work there. I needed a balance of positive and negative, and this was probably the best place for it.

Lacking real paper I had draped a sheet of Christmas wrapping paper on the wall with the blank side facing out. It was thin and glossy, but it was the only thing resembling paper I found. Since the only tools I had managed to dig up were crude, I chose to try to make something large.

She caught me kneeling at my makeshift canvas, preparing to begin a sketch. My charcoal smeared as if I were drawing on plastic. And I was so caught up in trying to draw without ruining the whole thing with a single smudge or tear that she easily slipped behind me,

grabbed my arm, and threw me across the room as if I were a ragdoll.

Scratch clucked her tongue at me. "Really, baby. Is this the best you can do? Or are you just trying to spread some Holiday cheer?" She wiped her hands off on her suit as if she'd just touched something filthy.

I'd impacted a couch, which meant that if I survived the day I'd just be sore as hell. A small mercy over being tossed through the window a yard away. That didn't change the fact that the room was now spinning wildly and my gun had been knocked who knows where.

She studied my handiwork and I was suddenly glad I hadn't made much progress on the portrait, because I could tell she was examining it for the simple sake of visually nitpicking it. Every flaw she could find she would hone in on and use as proof of my failure as a sentient life form.

"So what were you trying to do, baby? Revisit old memories? You know this place was a black hole for you. Sure, you created a lot here, but you lost all of it. All of the papers, all of the pens, all of the books. There's nothing." Scratch tittered in mock-pity.

"There's plenty," I countered, trying to keep the pain out of my voice as I shifted enough to sit. "Half of the characters I created came to life here. I learned to draw here."

Scratch laughed. "Would you like me to go into the intangibles here that I know about as well? Why you don't sleep properly? Why you hate Memorial day?" She grinned. "Want some more?"

I pulled myself up to stand and waved her away. My legs were shaky. "Take it then. Put it on your fridge or something."

And just like that she grabbed the paper and yanked it down, laughing madly.

Oh crap, guys!

IX: In Her Image



I have noticed that many artists shun the flaws a person has. When they make a representation they do it with an ideal form in mind. The hair is perfect, the figure is beautiful, the face is completely flawless. Even things like scars and burns are painted across the skin like decorations instead of crippling disfigurements. Scratch was a physical embodiment of this, a flawless objectification of an idealized image.

And that was her weakness.

As she ripped what she thought was my canvas away, she found herself staring at her portrait, carefully drawn and colored on the white plaster of the wall and hidden under the drape of wrapping paper. I'd made her think she had interrupted me just beginning to attempt to create, when in fact I had been quietly working for days; silently sneaking into the house by a twisted path that avoided any contact with television sets, and instead of engaging the shadows I'd slip past them. If I was spotted I'd make it look as if I were going somewhere else, rummaging for food or supplies. It had been the most dangerous gamble of my life, but it had worked.

It was the Mercurochrome that had given me the idea. I had remembered how it stained everything it touched with a sickly orange. True, I used it to heal my own injuries, but this was my picture and I could bend the symbols to mean what I wanted. Mercurochrome was made from toxic mercury, that's why you couldn't get it anymore. And when used it stung with a blinding sharpness, often more agonizing than the wound itself ever was. I'd used it to tint her hair and lips, staining them with poison.

The whole thing had been outlined in the charred remains of the flares I'd used, the things that fought off hundreds, if not thousands of the shadows. It was a stronger symbol than blood, fragments of a blade that had cut down so much evil before finally being put to rest, and I had used it to visually box her in, scratching borders and shadows to force the image into a solid shape.

I was most proud of the eyes, there was only one time blue dye had any impact on my memory, and that was when my mother had bought a bottle of sludgy indigo shampoo that she insisted would bleach her hair and despite all of our words to try and convince my mother otherwise, she had smeared the goop on and went to bed. The next day she had huge blue patches in her hair which she attempted to ineffectually ignore out of existence until they faded. It was a memory of someone suffering humiliation because they refused to listen -- and I had applied two small daubs of the stuff in her eyes.

It was still Scratch, with her perfect hair and slinky shape, but it held tangible and visual threat and menace. Her smile was more like a predator's snarl, and her lipstick was smeared and hastily applied, making it look cheap. I'd shaded hollows around her eyes, giving them the sunken look of someone who doesn't use their bed for sleep and who was living life by burning the candle at both ends, except that candle was almost completely burned out. With an alabaster stone that I'd found in a garden I once played in, I had scraped white at her temples, but not in the wizened way of someone who was growing dignified with age. Instead I had scribbled it so that it looked like the undyed roots of an old woman desperately trying to appear young and failing horribly.

The closer you looked the more flaws became apparent. Her eyes were bloodshot, her teeth were yellow and pitted, her hands were spidery and old.

It drew her in. Scratch's teeth clenched as she moved closer to the image, until finally she reached out a hand to strike it. Another weakness of hers was that she refused to believe in anything that did not agree with her worldview. In her mind she was completely in power and

held all the cards, and refused to believe I might have scraped together power of my own.

So when her hand sunk into the image and stuck, I knew it was already over. The wall was like a cross between quicksand and the tar baby. She was trapped and the more she struggled the more entangled she became.

The torrent of screeching abuse that she screamed only served to make my likeness of her all the more accurate. Her flimsy mask of benevolence and mock friendship shattered as she spat out every vulgarity she could think of, her screeching voice flinging every threat and insult at me that came to her as my trap pulled her down...

...near the end when she was almost gone she was pleading, promising me anything and everything if I would just let her go. That was probably the hardest part to hear, but even then I saw the teeth in her words, and when she saw me unmoved by her pleading she went back to cursing, throwing every last thing she had including taunts from my childhood and memories of past failures. Anything to get a last word, a final jab in before the end. Even in her final moments her only thought was of causing as much damage as she could.

And then she was gone, devoured by her likeness.

Scratch coming to an end by her own image seemed appropriate. When I started these vignettes I had no ending in mind. Like my fictional alter ego I did not have a plan at all, but like her as I considered how one makes an image without pens or pencils, I remembered the cheap paint on the walls of my family home that seemed to suck up any stain you put on them, and then I realized, perhaps having done so subconsciously, that Scratch's hair was the color of the Mercurochrome.

And even at her end she's manipulative. She finds that one weak heartstring and pulls on it hard, and then when it's plain that she is not going to win her only goal is to do as much damage as possible on the way out as she can. She is the little child who would rather throw the candy she stole into the trash than find herself forced to give it back.

X: Here Come the Sun



I'd felt drained and wanted nothing more than to lie down and rest but there was one last job to do.

Nearby was a can of gasoline that I had stashed away. I hefted it reluctantly and approached the image of Scratch I had spent so much time on. Never had I drawn a picture so large, and it was probably my best work, even if the subject matter was grotesque.

I didn't know if my bit of magic had transformed her into the picture or if she was simply trapped in whatever place villains go when you lock them away. But I remembered the stories: Whenever a gateway was left behind, the creature inside would always escape.

So I poured the makeshift solvent on the wall. The picture melted and dribbled down like a sidewalk mural etched in chalk melting in a rainstorm. The puddle of toxic goo on the floor was a sickly looking blackish red. And the remaining smudge was no longer recognizable as anything other than something left by an accident or a vandal.

I hadn't thought that my words about wanting more and more were prophetic. I had simply spoken an observation. There is a certain gratification that comes with working for something

and then holding the fruits of your labor in your hands.

But there is also a forbidden thrill in taking what isn't earned, and a dark power that boils up from obsessive thoughts of desire of what someone else has. I don't mean a will for growth or improvement, but instead simple gluttonous hunger and envy. I had told her that addictive desire for something was fruitless. When nothing is ever enough and you want more and more of something with no end or satiety to be had, eventually you either find yourself completely spent by the effort, or you consume yourself. Either way there is never any joy or satisfaction. Perhaps little jolts of relief and false hope that come with each stolen hit, but it fades like frost against the morning sunlight.

When you go to war to fight an enemy, no matter how righteous the fight is, you know that you're still walking onto a field to hurt someone if not end them completely. I think one thing that shaped the final showdown was my belief in that there is an ultimate good and an ultimate evil, and that there are some things in this world that are beyond redemption. Ending them, although not a virtue or something to be celebrated, is something that needs to be done. When a dog goes mad and tries to kill everything it can catch, the dog is put down.

I don't celebrate death, but I also find solace in knowing that the mad dog can't hurt anyone anymore.

Outside the house that I had spent so much time in growing up the sun was rising. The eternal night was over and I would be leaving soon enough. I had power again and there were memories I could ride to escape before my prison faded away. In my own way I was still lost and far from my true home, but I had stepped a little closer today, and perhaps would be closer still tomorrow.

It was simply nice knowing that now there really would be a tomorrow.

XI: Epilogue

I feel like I should write an epilogue to my epilogue, so here goes.

I didn't intend this to become the miniature epic it became. I can't bring myself to preen too much under the compliments as none of this was my original concept and it is far easier to build up on something someone else created than invent your own thing. But I'm also not one of these people who find fanfic an inherently bad thing as it's as useful for writing as stretching is for exercise. (I dislike bad writing, which means I'd rather read well written fanfic over bad original fiction anyway) Plus the world intrigued me. The concept of a creative person having to use that creativity in a strange otherworldly place is not a unique one, but Alan Wake took it to a much more sinister and subtle level than I've ever seen it before. Plus I have to admit that the idea of having to confront your inner demons made my inner armchair psychologist squee many times.

The first vignette was just meant to give a voice to the image Scratch I had initially drawn. I did a second one after that because some of the comments about how she was sexy and alluring made me want to get folks to understand that her beauty was paper thin, and there was a horrible creature under the disguise. Number three came when I thought it might be fun to do what they did in the Wake universe and have things from my memory shape the landscape, so I pulled up an old childhood conflict. After that I had momentum, and enough people had grasped my concept of Scratch strongly enough that they wanted to see her ended. So I needed to write an end.

So I'm glad you enjoyed my little indulgence.

All characters, writing, and artwork © Genesisw (FurAffinity) 2012

Artwork created using Copic markers and gel pens on canvasboard.

Writing based loosely on the Universe within the Alan Wake video game.