

[Creating a Muted Crescendo]



I

The intense rays of the sun powerfully reflect upon the golden color of the Parc Monceau gate, emphasizing the warm, tranquil and yet exciting atmosphere of the Parisian park. The portals at the entrance mightily beautify and glamorize its surroundings, as their golden chroma is mirrored on tree leaves, pebbles on the concrete, and sweating faces of the numerous cyclical runners. They always seem tired and somewhat sad or gloomy, but today they look different; strong, determined, and content.

Everything seems to be unfolding and taking place in slow motion: people laughing, eating under the green plentiful trees, and children running around, chasing each other from one end of the park to the other. Each individual seemingly suppressing troubled and distressed thoughts when visiting the French environment, unconsciously influencing its ambience and climate.

The world looks pleasing, delicate, and ravishing, as

citizens greet each other with a smile, instead of weak and weary eyes.

Standing still, beneath the gates of the park and illuminated by the balmy sunlight, made it impossible not to observe who was entering or exiting the area. Every entity was unique, each carrying their own history, wearing distinctive vestments, and following different paths; nonetheless, all of them conveyed the same feelings and emotions through their voyeuristic and calm gazes.

A boy is being pulled by her mother through a rope, as he stands on a protracted skateboard, and observers at the location, his eyes fixed on the numerous children surrounding him. He looks at his mother and smiles, begging her to increase the speed of his ride. She glances at him in sign of disapproval, but later fulfills his dream, enjoying it herself through never-ending laughters.

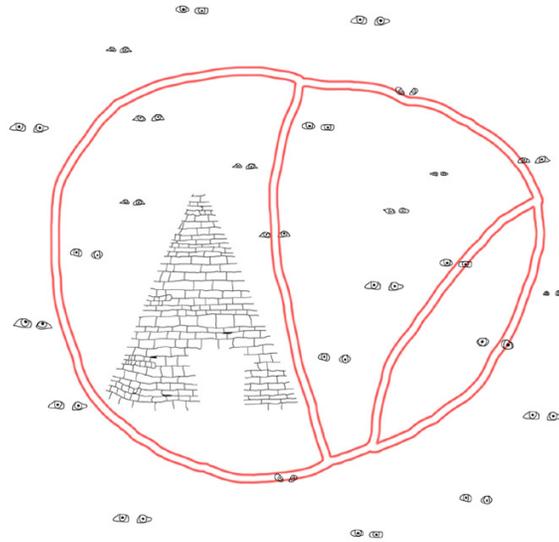
The sound of people's rugged and hefty boots continuously echoes in the distance, as the silvery concrete pebbles are kicked around exhaustively, the way children entertain themselves through infinite passes of a multicolored ball.

At the center of the dominant golden gates stands the Rotunda, a ring-shaped structure that holds hands with the golden gates when joyfully greeting its visitors. One can easily stroll within the glorious walls of the Rotunda, and notice how it connects the magical and paradisiacal park to the monotonous and achromatic reality that surrounds it. On the side facing the Parisian streets are established toilets, for both men and women, which underline the difference between the two sections.

The elongated green leaves of one of the many

plants near the park's entrance shines vigorously, bringing its yellow and orange contour lines in distinct evidence. Its branches delicately swing from left to right, every time a man, woman, child or dog crosses its path, and allows the rays of the sun to form dazzling changing shapes upon the sparkling concrete floor.

Movement is inevitably captured when drifting along Parc Monceau's busy alleys, as trees sway back and forth on windy mornings, and people dance along the pathways, as if jazz music resounds within them.



II

She stomped heavily on the ground; tears dribbled down her face. The swings were screeching, the merry go round went up and down to a circus tune. The crunch of her footsteps radiated as it faded to silence. Mothers and fathers were on a midday stroll with their children. You could see them everywhere, kissing faces and pinching red cheeks. Children on horseback, in strollers, climbing on towers, pyramids and arches. Did anyone notice her?

The adults looked on, as they were eating their sandwiches and salads on a park bench or a checkered blanket spread across the grass. Yet no one said anything to her, or even about her. This was a day to end in heavy feet, achy bodies, tired eyes but a light heart, for all except this young girl. It was the kind of day when you run until you can not run anymore. You laugh until your belly hurts. The time of day stays unacknowledged until you hear the famous line “it’s getting late.”

She stopped restraining her tears. The route she was

walking had tall trees and a narrow path...It hid her from facing the public. The “public” that couldn’t face her. A herd of young school boys dressed in cargo shorts, blue button-up shirts and tan kerchiefs were an added attraction to the liveliness. The boys all wore berets with pins stuck on. One of the taller boys held a large stick with a flag flowing in the wind. The group sang their songs and cheered. They all stood at the base of the pyramids and raced up them. A small boy with blond curly hair reached the top first--he beat his chest with one hand and screamed in victory. The taller boy waved the flag high and they all sang the anthems. She passed them, staining the path with her tears. The path opened to a wider, more open, more vulnerable section. She was overwhelmed by the sound of trotting, as a group of smaller children aged three to four rode past her atop small ponies. They sat on the saddles, hands in the air, eyes wide with amazement. Their parents nervously guided their children’s positions to make sure they were secure in their saddles.

Turning her head to the opposite side. She tried to contain herself but the sound still boiled out. The next steps of her journey were alone. People chose not to see her because it was easier to ignore her sadness. She climbed over the short fence onto a bed of grass. She wandered over to an empty spot and sat down. The tall grass outlined her crisscrossed legs. She listened to the purring and chirping of small animals. Small flies fluttered above the ground in clumps. The smell of crepes, waffles, and Ice cream wafted over from the stand that was next to the carousel. For the first time she lifted her head, bringing the sleeve of her striped shirt to her puffy red eyes to wipe away the tears. Although she had been angry and alone, no one offered to aid her sorrows, she now saw why. She understood that this was a place for childhood, freedom, and relaxation. Her isolation, her sadness, was a threat to this. The park-goers

were caught up in the beauty and the pleasure of their own experience. So she stayed invisible... even though her tears, her footprints and the indentation of her shape in the lawn were plain to see.



III

L'inverno

He is breathing heavily, the cold air rasping in his warm, heaving lungs. Only fallen leaves that had been floating, drifting aimlessly on the water for what seems like weeks now, interrupt the perfect plane of the mirror like ice under his numb fingers. They move slowly, tentatively feeling every indent and change in the surface, reaching as far as he can away from the safety of the frosty bank. The frozen grass crunches beneath his knees when his weight shifts forwards, as he desperately tries to reach the ball that sits resolutely just a few inches from his straining outstretched grasp.

After a final attempt at retrieval, and the sound of fracturing ice, he forgets himself and looks at the mesmerising mirror on which he is kneeling.

He stares, perplexed. The thing that he has been avoiding for so long, now stares back at him, reflected in the perfect ice below. His heart is now thundering in his chest, at a pace he can hardly contain. The power of this seems as though it may completely crush the ice that is protecting everything below from the harsh winter months. As his internal melody reaches its crescendo, and he relaxes – he then takes in what he sees. He is almost unrecognisable now – even to himself.

Lestate

He used to watch, observe from afar. That's what he had always done, content in his own little world. He wiped his damp brow. In the sweltering heat, not even the shade from the oldest oak could offer him relief. He followed the meandering stream, which was flanked by the grand stone colonnade, as it opened out on to the idyllic pond. The water there is still, broken only by the wake of a paddling duck. This is when he quickly steps away, returning to his reclusive spot on the bench. He can't chance it. It's not worth it. So he sits there, under the sprawling branches of the ancient oak, all alone.

Lautunno

As the first leaves fell, and the colour quickly changed from a vivid green to a vibrant array of oranges and yellows, he sits again under the old oak, but no longer alone. His companion waits patiently. More relaxed than its owner, it lies upon the soggy leaves, taking in the surroundings. There are children on the swings, squealing in delight, couples sharing a cup of hot soup on the bench, as runners, panting, pass them all in a silent, and secret race. As a duck lands not so gracefully on the pond, his companion jumps

up, tugging at its leash towards the disgruntled birds. Shaken by the sudden interruption to his thoughts, he hastily stands, striding away from the once again peaceful pond, toward the bridge. He could not risk being towed down to the bank of the pond. He just couldn't risk it.

L'inverno

He is almost unrecognisable now – even to himself. For so long he had avoided looking in the mirror, unable to bare the grotesque person staring back at him. But as he knelt on the ice, staring at his reflection, it dawned on him – the dog had helped him accept himself for who he now is. He got the dog back in the spring, because his therapist said it would be good for him to have company. He realised now that the unwavering love of his dog had brought him out of his shell, no longer would he hide under the ancient oak but run with the dog. He would run with the others, join them on their silent, private crusades. He would come out from under the oak and watch the ducks from the waters edge. No more would he be afraid of seeing his reflection in the majestic waters, that reflect not only his own face, but also the beautiful colonnade, and the blooming flowers that sit at the waters edge. He realised at this moment, of clarity that he has been changed – for the better. He shouldn't run away from himself, but accept himself, just as the dog had unconditionally done to him.



IV

He was different than others. He knew how to stand out from the crowd, without even trying. When he was passing by, any place was fading, simply losing its importance, the beauty and tranquility. Every single place was freezing from his presence. When he was surrounded by the crowd of people, the crowd could not stop glancing, or sometimes even staring at him. He was like an exotic fruit, everybody wanted to come closer and examine him. Looks like no one ever thought that all those glances and talks behind the back in addition to endless hours of observation can create any feeling of discomfort for him. While observing and treating him like an outcast, no one ever thought how he feels. He was able to experience the tension growing around him just because he was different than others. The one who was not able to meet the expectation of surroundings. Day to day he tried spending time in passive and ignorant atmospheres. He wanted to get some rest and time

for himself. He was running away from following glances but people voices were not leaving him alone. Why he needed to run? Is it because of his appearance? Or there is something about his moves and gestures? Maybe it makes him to stand up from the crowd.

It is obvious that for a young man he looks too pale. His skin and his eyes have yellowish tone, which right away reveal the tiredness, but at the same time brings some sort of aggression to the look. His yellowish skin craves the attention but his inside wants to be the same as others. Everyday he goes through person vs. Self conflict. His desires contradict each other. He wants to be like others but he is not willing to adapt. He is not able to ignore his own personality to be a part of the mass. He is also unusually tall, his height is maybe two meters, or a little bit more. The height makes him stand out even more, as most of the time he is the highest of all. The dark lustrous hair is moving with him in the same direction as he walks.

As he moves his gestures are very uncertain, uncomfortable and awkward. This shows that he still doesn't know how to live as an outcast. He is not trying to adapt even though he knows that it would help him to increase his self esteem. The knowledge that he is constantly watched usually makes him feel lost. He tries to ignore the environment and he tries to be himself. His attention catching figure has no desire to impact others. While others have a huge impact on him and his personality. He knows how loudly they are thinking of him. Because of that he never knows how to act naturally, as he looks like a lost alien but at the same time always very concentrated on his destination. He goes where he needs to go, wearing the ignorant face, trying not to care what is happening around him.

Today he is spending time here, in the park. His

tense expression brings discomfort to such calm and peaceful place. For few seconds he stands in that same place, attempting to decide where to go. Finally turns left. Today he wants to be an observer. Turns right. Observes the trees. His confused gestures clearly alienate him from the environment. He observes the historical arc, thinks that it might have meant something long time ago. He goes and sits on the arc, tries to slow down his naturally fast but clumsy moves. His main intention here is to observe not to be observed. He tries to hide himself from those who treat him like an outsider. He wants to find the forgotten peace and simply stay himself. Turns head to the left.



V

Whilst taking in the sweeping rolls covered in a green blanket, and continuing to meander along, an underlying trembling becomes apparent. A beating, with passion and persistence. *Maybe*. It could be the heartbeat of something below the surface of the ground, something bigger. Something who's skin makes up the gravel and limbs are constructed by trees. There is a need to move now, not sure if it is out of urgency or pleasure; is it a need to run or sprint?

Spotting space on the open grass and sprinting forward – feet pounding the earth double the tempo of the heartbeat. There is a feeling now, of being followed or watched. *Maybe*. It could be just the mind playing tricks, but can't take any risks – play it safe, stay alert. Just hop the fence and follow the path.

The trees, or limbs, around start to become enclosed – not a friendly impression. *Maybe.* The atmosphere is electric, still buzzing with excitement, still sprinting. The floor is trembling now, it feels as though it is about to open up, as if it were about to reveal what lies beneath the earth's crust – it is ready to consume anything that falls into it. *Maybe.* One whole bite, must keep running – don't turn around for fear of unintentionally slowing down.

Feet still hitting the ground, the pace begins to slow. The heartbeat of the park still prevalent, though now with a warmer atmosphere and it begins to move in harmony with its inhabitants as apposed to working against them. *Maybe.* The harmonies coincide with the fluctuation of flora in the park, from extremely overt green blankets, to dark intimidating cages. Everything in this moment seems calm. *Maybe.* But it is, for this reason, not an easy calm. It is more of an edge-of-your-seat calm, waiting-for-something-to-pop-onto-the-screen-in-a-horror-movie calm.

Quick. Pivot.

The beat has just dropped off, find another path to follow. The tress returned to limbs and cages, birds this time chime in to attack those taking in the wonders of this park. *Maybe.* It is becoming slowly apparent that there is no one else running. No one else is even here. *Maybe.* No children, no worried babysitters or loved up couples. *Maybe.* No, not even people taking lunch breaks from work. No one. Keep going.

A cabin, newly built and not very abandoned, makes itself known. One corner protrudes from the forest's edge and a gate separates it from the path. Running turns to walking. Approaching it slowly and no longer focusing on being followed, the details of it become more apparent. It is

dark in colour, but is some how very inviting.
This will make a nice refuge until the park calms.

Maybe.

Or my mind.

Maybe.

Which ever happens first.

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Upon exiting the cabin, the front gate swings open, leading onto the once intimidating and encapsulating path. For the duration of the hideout, no one came home – it was complete solitude, it was very needed. With a calm mind, the park was clearer. Children now occupied the once empty merry-go-round and pathways. Parents and babysitters frantically chased after them. Loved up couples intoxicated by one another filled the benches and picnic spaces, feasting on a plethora of the other's emotions. And food. Lots of food, between those escaping work and the love birds, the smell was overpowering. It would have caused another episode, if one's mind wasn't already recovering from the last entrancement.

That was enough, more than enough, excitement for one person. It is time to leave.

Walking out of the gates, the gold leaves now blending with the autumn coloured trees, leaving behind the unique experience presented in this all encompassing environment.

Epilogue

Parc Monceau, with its ability to house multiple atmospheres, offers a refuge for varying personas to reveal themselves or discover terrifying truths hidden by our subconscious. The fiction of the atmospheres, the ones created by the parks inhabitants, is as fictional as one would create a muted crescendo. Neither exist and yet both equally as present in the mannerisms of society and the depths of our consciousness. Our minds have the ability to create an augmented reality, where what we think we are experiencing bares no weight on the truth surrounding us.

These are just five snapshots of a much bigger picture. It a mask. A mask of the muted crescendo we created. The mask of the crescendo we force the park to hide behind. A mask of a crescendo for the park that allows us to find and express ourselves.

