

A Walk

Robert Perdan

He's one of those real authentic creatures of the night. The ones bound to solitude, societal sacrilege, and generally all things not quite typical. Presently, he's wandered off again, out under blue-black sky scattered scantily with dots of light. Dots forming patterns that, in antiquity, were held sacred, exalted even. These patterns are few tonight--broken and separated by low hanging, slightly ominous clouds. The clouds have been thick for the preceding days. Days so a-plenty it's hard to remember last time Big Ol' Sky showed his true face. And, assuredly, long enough to have an impact on this here protagonist.

Not sure of what compels him on his jaunt this dark early morning, he ambles on in no particular direction, counting instead on intuition to carry him to where he ought to be. The air is cool, but the wind's at otium. A sound he does not hear, not presently at least.

Nearby sits a lake, clad with two immaculate white birds - swans held captive there, and not by their inability for flight, but instead, their contentment with life. The life of such a highly revered bird ain't so bad. Constant queues of children wait to feed these royal creatures - a bit of bread maybe, or on a lucky day a bite of taffy or liquorice. Yes, not so bad indeed. Ah, if life only catered to him more, he might be more complacent. More apt to flow with the current in which so many have been taken up. He might loosen hold on his barren, lonely rock and finally barrel downstream towards everyone else's future. But not tonight. Tonight is for him.

Once this lake has procured for him all that it has to offer, he turns his head and steps off, off towards something he's still not quite sure of. He approaches a tall brownish building with bits of incandescent yellow highlighting its crevices, its imperfections. A door stands alone afoot this monstrous stone structure, hidden from the stain of light. A-a-and what's this? Some absentminded custodial technician seems to've left this darkened door off the latch. Is it destiny, or a bit of luck? Either way, he'd be a fool to ignore such an opportunity. So he swings the door open and, not before a slightly paranoid glance about, marches up the hollow staircase. Fluorescent lights shake shadows on the wall. The thud of each step echoes through the column, bouncing from white brick wall to white brick wall, off yellowed ceiling to cold stone stair and back again. The sound, intrinsically unsettling, does nothing to ease his trespassing mind. But, ignoring his better thoughts,

he forges forth, trusting that this endeavour ought to be worth any chance assemblage with gun toting men who hide behind tiny silver shields. And once the final step has been reached, a little out of breath, he forces the last door open to reveal a rooftop view of, well, more brownish buildings in their own yellowed luminous glow. But it isn't the view that takes him, no, it's the taste of the air. Even just these few stories above that mundane circus below him there's a sweetness with each breath. It tickles his lungs and lays a horizontal crescent of pink flesh and white upon his face. Yes, it was worth it.

It's about this time a sign noting Video Surveillance comes into field of vision and this promptly encourages his descent, and one a bit accelerated to be sure. Once outside, and with time enough now to weigh his options, he decides he has no hunger for return home, not at this point. Still, within him burns an unsated desire for aimless adventure. So his feet carry him farther down the road. Farther from what he knows.

He comes, eventually, to another building--one very stately, imposing, palatial structure. More majestic than his last affair and, so he thinks, demanding a more honorable modus operandi for its close analysis. He hides behind a tall bone-white pillar, elegantly carved, though structurally simple--essential. He contemplates its being whilst relieving himself in the darkness of its shadow. Something so basic, stripped of all excess and extravagance, left with efficiency and competency, but somehow retaining beauty (does this provide some new insight into that densely complicated term?). And yet, ironically, atop this pillar and his three identical siblings sits an intricate, ornate pediment. One which frames the symbol of growth and indulgence--the grape-vine-crowned Dionysus. *Certainly He would endorse my journey*, he thinks. *Certainly He would endorse this hedonistic style of life.*

So he takes a moment beneath the elaborate relief, leaning on his new friend Pillar, and takes in the surroundings. It is now that the silence of this early morning is finally and tactlessly interrupted. Off in the distance a train violently shakes its rails. A constant roll of thu-duh-thu-duh-thu-duh! brings in the lows. Teamed now with the ahhs-woos of winds screaming through train's cars, and the engine roaring mad and determined - a sick harmony in an indeterminable key. The final note in this dissonant orchestra comes with the shrill and unsettling laughter of horn--houaaaaa houa houaaa, crazily cackling at this masterpiece. This cadenza has no composer, no conductor. Instead it relies on earthly cause and effect.

But the train passes, and soon silence is again heavy in the air. But now silence has changed. It no longer stands independent. It relies on that

chaotic music. It counts the rests between movements. And so with this new interpretation he finally marches on, marches to the beat of silence back to home. Maybe just a small revelation was all he was looking for.

Robert Perdan is am majoring in English with a minor in Philosophy. He was born in the Quad Cities, but spent most of his younger years moving around the Midwest. He spends his time reading, writing, and listening to music. His most prized possessions reside in bookshelves and guitar cases.