

**Welcome, Home.**

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Welcome, Home.

I'm not a very good actor, I just happen to be terrible at everything else. One way or another life lead me down its windy paths, and has lead me here, now.

Where is here? and know? you might ask? Well, here I am in an apartment, sitting on an absurdly uncomfortable armchair whilst I heat some water for some tea, In front of me is a small stove burning away. I look into the flame and hear the hiss and pop of the rapidly burning pinewood, I stare and stare into the nothingness of the flame, slowly my eyes jump from flame to the next, the glowing embers incandescent and...

hssss , I'm pulled out sharply from my reverie , the tea has finally boiled. I stand up and head slowly to the kitchen it is adjacent to the living room. Just like in all of the rooms in this apartment, I drift from one room to the next having to cross each and every one to get from one end, to the other. The living room is the second room in this linked array of rooms. The first is an entrance and storage room, the second is the living room, the third is the kitchen, the fourth is my room and the fifth is the bathroom.

My hand grabbed the kettle with the help of a rag as to not burn my palms as I had done not 3 days before.

was this my life? was there nothing else to it? just endless drifting, pretending to be busy, trying my hardest to live as if I was in the start of 20th century Paris? What kind of cruel joke was this? I am no Picasso, or Soutine, I have no idea how to occupy my time without commodities of this era, no television, no soap operas, no friends ( television series), no phone, no rap. I seriously looked ridiculous, I was dressed as a pauper pretending to be cold in a completely central heated building, ridiculous I repeat ridiculous, but mostly I was incredibly bored. I looked to my right through the huge glass panels that sectioned the apartment off on the right side. I could see people looking at what I was doing as if I was some sort of creature, a freak that we take pleasure in observing and pointing at. I wish I could have broken the small kid's finger, I really do.

I was stuck in here like some goldfish in a bowl, whilst they had the time of their lives in their dreamland Paris. I sometimes wondered if







goldfishes don't have it easy; at least they didn't remember the ordeal they had to go through time and time again. Repetitive would be an understatement.

I looked to the horizon and could I see the Tour eiffel ( miniature version), to my left on an artificial hill is the sacré coeur in all its glory of stucco and paint. further along is the mega ferris wheel hanging from the massive and cavernous structure in which we find ourselves. everything is pristine, the ceiling is painted with clouds and blue sky and in some parts it is glass to see the exterior. It really is a strange feeling I feel when I looked over this Little Paris, I felt conflicted : it was of amazing proportions, that escape rime and reason, this colossal structure transcended me and I couldn't help but feel small, and humbled. The space felt distorted as if we are no longer in the same dimension anymore, a parallel dreamlike existence. But, in a sense I also loathed it, I guess it was probably jealousy of those who are living the dream whilst I rot in this glass box.

I turned my back to the glass panel, once again in the faubourg-ien type habitation that my job is to occupy.

I sighed, and headed back to my chair by the fire, kettle in hand. I poured myself some boiling hot water and prepared some tea. cheekily I checked my watch : only 3 hours before my shift was up.

I sat down an sip my tea, my eyes drifted back onto the flames.

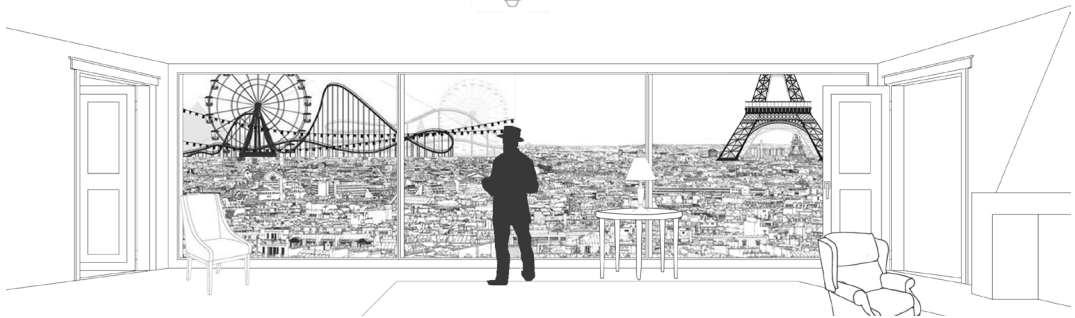
Somebody shook me, all of a sudden my eyes snapped open and I could hazily see the face of the actor taking the next shift come into focus « come on man, time's up you can finally get out of this shit glass box, i'm up next, wish me luck. » he said.

Agh its john I recognized his voice, and instants later my eyes focused themselves and adjust to the dim light.

« Hey, dude, is it that time already? hmm must have fallen asleep, management is going to snap at me again, but seriously it was worth it » I say as I stretched in an exaggerated manner.

I didn't wait for a reply and rapidly went out the door and onto the backstage, the intestines of the operation.





Minutes later I was back in the streets of Paris, « ahhhhh at last » I exclaimed to myself, my relief only lasted a painstakingly short instant, it was pouring outside. The weather could easily be compared to the act of being inside a washing machine, it wasn't raindrops but buckets that were falling on the rooftops of Paris.

No breaks for a loser like me I guess, I pulled my coat closer to my skin and walked into the shit-storm that was rocking Paris.

One day faded into the next, nothing ever changed, I had come to the realization that my life whether at work, or outside of it was empty. I spent my time complaining inside of the glass box but yet hardly did anything different when I was back at home, or out with my friends. I had to do something I couldn't live in this redundancy.

My logic went as follows: My life outside of work was many more times complicated than it was in work. It would therefore be many more times easier to fully immerse myself in work.

I was going to become a man of the start of the 20th century through and through.

My first move was to jettison what my life was at that point. I left my apartment, told people that I was moving away and finally asked management to be able to occupy the apartment full time and use the amusement park as I felt fit.

They thought I was crazy , and they were probably right. I hadn't felt as excited in quite a while, I was scared at what I was doing. Lately I had kept having this recurring dream, it never seemed to disappear from my subconscious. As soon as I felt the hand of morpheus bring me under I was immediately in a panicked state, no sooner unconscious was I spinning uncontrollably out of control. My reference points made no more sense than my wildly spinning interior compass, my stomach lurched, and each and every time I had to restrain myself from hurling all of my imaginary dinner into my dreamscape. Slowly things usually came back into focus, and I realized that I was falling, and gaining momentum. Every second I was getting closer to the ground, every second I could make out more and more details of what exactly I would be falling on: the color of the roof, the detail of the tiles,



the texture of the road...etc.

I was falling... falling from the eiffel tower. Around me I could see the sacré coeur, with the sprawling buttes Montmartre at its base, strangely though space seemed contracted or distorted, I had no recollection of the eiffel tower being so close to Montmartre, or there being what looked like the Jardin des Tuileries so close to Montmartre. I looked to my right and saw the Palais de Versailles, to my left a simili of the Musée d'Orsay. Just what was this place? the scale was wrong too.

I blacked out for several instants, my death was imminent I was sure of it, I just waited with my eyes closed for what seemed like an eternity. Finally out of patience, and curious to what exactly had happened to me, I opened one eye tentatively.

Quickly I opened the other, I was suspended in the middle of my fall, as if time had come to a halt.

on the brink of a nervous meltdown, but slightly relieved to put off my death for a few more instants I looked around me again.

I was still falling from the eiffel tour, but the proportion of things had changed, Paris sprawled out as far as the eye could see, and I could make out the sacré coeur in the distance.

This was the Paris I knew.

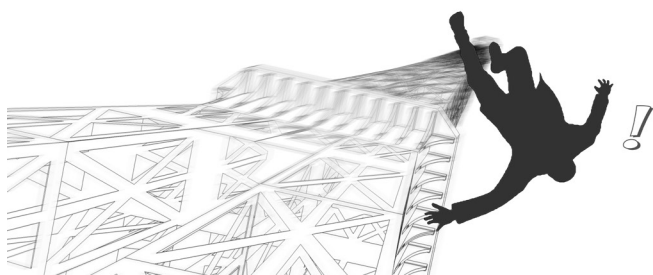
I closed my eyes again for an instant. When I opened them I was no longer in my reality, or the first one for that matter. Everything looked fake, like a doll version of paris, cardboard and paint in every direction. Strangely there seemed to be a huge man, a giant peering over us.

As if to catch up for lost time I feel myself propelled towards the ground, the realities start overlapping and intersecting with one another. A couple of seconds later I impacted with the ground.

I woke up.

This dream puzzled me quite a bit. I had no clue of what it could possibly mean, but I was sure that a Psychiatrist would tell me I had quite a few things to figure out for myself.

One thing was for sure, the helplessness I felt whilst falling was unbearable. I couldn't let myself fall to my death in such a way. I had no way of understanding the meaning of different versions of Paris that I had



travelled through in my Imagination. Perhaps it was linking my real life to my life in the amusement park?

I had to take control. Most of my actions of late, had been in this precise goal. A smile crept up to face as I thought of myself: master of my own destiny.

My demands were refused by the amusement park to start with, and I was told to see a psychiatrist, I knew that this was probably good advice but couldn't help but think that I could deal with it better than some lazy fake doctor. A few weeks after my initial demand, the director caught wind of it, how rumors fly.

Soon I received an email giving me clearance for my demands. I smiled to myself. I was about to shed my worm skin to become a butterfly.

The next day I arrived to Little Big Paris, with two suitcases in hand. These two suitcases represented all I had decided to keep, as well as a few vintage clothes I had found to look like the bohemian from 1910 that I was to be.

I looked at the entrance of the park, there it was , my future life lay in front of me, my old one behind me. I turned around for an Instant, took a deep breath , saluted Paris, and disappeared into the entrails of Little Big Paris.

I found myself waiting behind a family in the queue to enter the Park. the line was huge and I could not help but feel as if I was waiting to go through customs, an immigration line to the promised land if you will. An Ellis Island of the contemporary society.

The children in front of me were hysteric, they couldn't wait to be inside the park, they kept talking about this ride and that, all of which I knew nothing about. I couldn't help but feel excitement swell up inside of me.

I've worked here for more than a Year but this is my first time visiting the attractions. I couldn't help the euphoria. This time I would be on the other side of the glass box. I would be able to be both observed and observe. I grinned.

it takes over an hour to reach the counter, but every instant of the wait only accentuated my excitement. By the time I reached the counter I



was as hysteric as the children that had been in front of me, if not more. I give the cashier my details and am permitted to enter the park. I exhale. I was in.

Too excited to go to my apartment to put down my stuff, I decide to get to know my new city, to walk around and get a feel for it.

I looked up at the ceiling of the station, it was magnificent. I dandily walk around with my head in the clouds. The smell, the sound it felt so authentic. This was what Paris should be like.

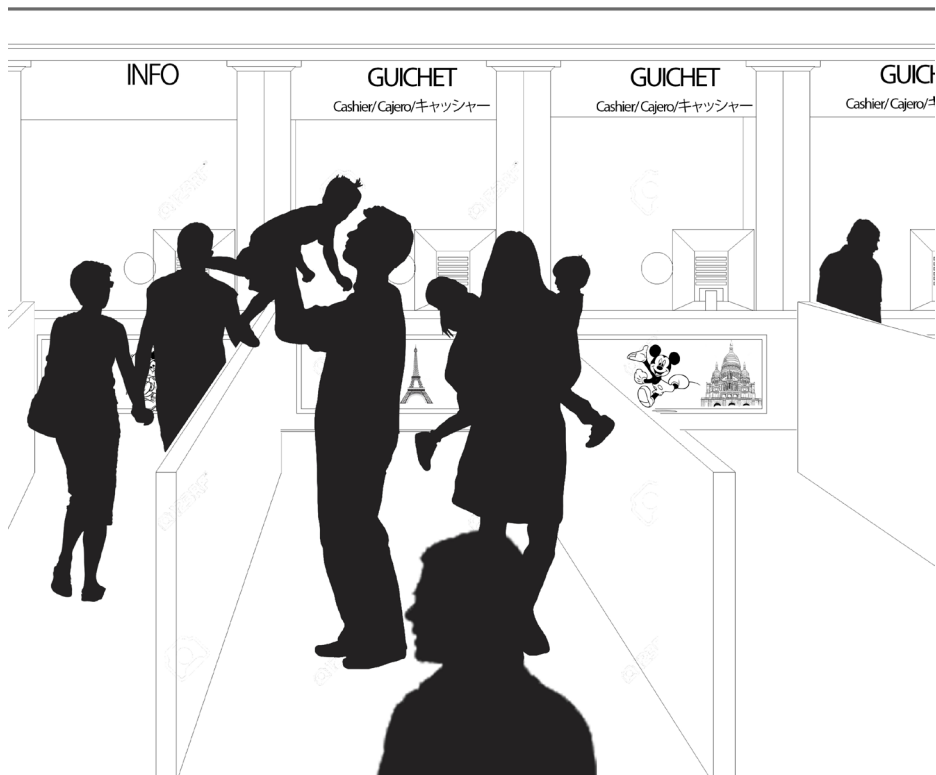
I walked out of the station, My jaw dropped. I had to catch it as I had a feeling that it would otherwise be gawking for the next several years. the view was of epic proportions, colors flew in every direction, people were hurrying from one place to next next, a fragrance of coffee, wine, cigarettes and perfume wafted through the air.

In the backdrop I could see the beautiful eiffel tower, surrounded by a sort of champs elysées with beautiful attractions in every direction. as I look up I can see several hot-air balloons making their way to different locations around little big Paris. The sky was blue. To the left a massive rollercoaster winds its way through different corners of the park, ducking and looping in and out of itself, it really was quite a site.

I slowly walk down the remainder of the steps separating the station from the rest of the urban fabric. After a few minutes I found myself in the very center of what reminded of st Germain des prés. Luxury surrounded me, La durée cafés, and restaurants, A fashion oriented attraction, an ice-cream stand, a pretty little fountain, outdoor tables with families and couples lounging around taking a break from all the excitement..etc.

This was Life, I looked at people's faces, half expecting to see their frowning or stressed out faces that I was so used to encountering in every day occasions. To my utmost surprise no-one here looked unhappy, everyone seemed to be enjoying their time. Smiles were everywhere, people saluted others and spoke with random strangers. How was this even possible, were these the same people that instants before had ignored each others existence and pushed people out of the





way trying to get to work on time? All of this happiness was having repercussions on my already terrific mood. Did I remember any point in time where I had been this happy? I didn't remember, maybe as a child? but those memories had long since faded.

I walked to the nearest bench and sat there, minutes later an old lady asked me if she could sit next to me, surprised, I stuttered but finally told her « it would be my pleasure. »

She smiles, sits and started people watching, as was I. Hours passed in silence, but not the awkward kind, we both understood our need for silence and respected it.

As I was growing weary and decided to start heading back to my apartment, she says.

« see you soon. » matter a factly.

I am puzzled, how would she know that I would come back? the bags? as on cue she says

« deary, don't be surprised, I'm not a psychic or a witch, it 's just that most people come back. As for me I come nearly every day. The smile I saw on your face, I see it all the time on people around here. Their whole body feels uncomfortable with it, so its quite easy to see. »

-« Uncomfortable with what? »

-« Happiness » she said

I Must have looked awfully shocked because she continued.

-« Most people today haven't had a moment of Happiness in the last 10 years if not more, me included. Before coming here I couldn't remember the last time I had felt free of problems and just enjoying the moment. Here all that is impeaching our happiness is left at the door. » I couldn't think of what to say, I had much too much to think about, I smiled weakly and said

-« thank you »

She nodded her head and started people watching again.

I picked up my bags and headed in the direction of Montmartre, close to my apartment. I could have used the train or the hot air balloon but instead decided to walk, it wouldn't take long, maybe 10 minutes. Walking, I thought about what the old lady had told me.



I felt I had made the right decision, would I have ever been happy out there? Maybe, Maybe not.

But here everyone was happy, this bubble out of time and space, this was what I needed.

I smiled and decided I was going to make the most of it.

Determined, my walk turned into a trot. I slowly started humming and soon felt like singing my happiness to the world.

I stopped, Filled my lungs with enough air, and there and then started to sing.

Everybody stopped what they were doing around me to look at what this new attraction was. I didn't care though and actually felt great, I went up to random people and pulled them into my song. before long I had a small crowd of 10-20 people following me in the streets of Little Big Paris , singing their hearts out and dancing to their heart's content. The closer I got to Montmartre the bigger the momentum grew, soon hundreds if not thousands were singing by my side. I felt amazing Sooner than what I would have expected I was in front of my building. The crowd was there waiting for me to do something.

I opened the door to my apartment building and ran up the « old » stairs to my apartment. I threw the door open and got the nearest openable window. There I looked down on the crowd and sang the last verse to the crowd, they sang it back at me in beautiful unison. I waved , and closed the window.

I got a few logs of wood to start the fire, heated up some water for tea, and got my bags unpacked. more or less half an hour later I am sitting in my good old armchair, with some mittens on not to get cold. A book in my hands and some tea on the table.

« It's good to be home »





