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And the parade marched on

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And the parade marched on

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I hate the rain. I hate being homeless even more. But being homeless in the rain is a monstrosity."

Cover Page Footnote

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Gillian Scruton

And The Parade Marched On

I hate the rain. I hate being homeless even more. But being homeless in the rain is a monstrosity.

In the park, in the rain, fighting a cold breeze, I wear a thin Pittsburgh Steelers rain jacket that does nothing to keep my pathetic body warm. The trees do little to shelter me from the drizzle either, and this "Renter's Guide" I picked up from Tops does little to protect my face from the relentless shower. I don't even bother to flip through the pages and look at all the homes I would never be able to afford, I just put it on my face as I lie down on the wood bench, *my* wood bench (it had been for the past three months). The 'free- take one' magazine protects me from having to look at the faces of walkers-by. They always look at me with disgust, hate and pity. These people strolling down the park with their colorful umbrellas. Twirling them around, taking them for granted, having them perfectly coordinate with their fancy raincoats; it all made me grossly jealous.

Being homeless in the rain and without an umbrella is pure hell.

* * *

Drowning in the weather. Drowning in societal hate, being forced into self-pity, I doze off into a much drier state of mind.

* * *

The sun had been swallowed by the graying clouds and they showered us with an unwelcome rain. The parade, however, still marched on- the bands still played, the floats still rolled by and the spectators still adorned the sides of the road. It was wonderful, the rain was what brought us together, strangers shared the shelter of their golf umbrellas, large garbage bags were converted into makeshift macs, the puddles became playgrounds for the neighborhood kids.

The happiness expressed on everyone's faces despite the rain was completely surreal. The fact that I had my umbrella was surreal. I didn't even bother to express joy about having a long camel rain coat, shiny black shoes, or the weight of the wallet in my back pocket.

The parade's completion was followed by a stroll through the southern part of the public park. While strolling down the path, I noticed a man lying on a bench, with nothing to protect him from the rain but a 'Renter's Guide' that he had precariously placed upon his face. He looked like a sponge lying there pitifully soaking up the rain.

"Ha!" I thought to myself, "must be shitty to not have your own umbrella in weather like this."

I groped the wooden handle carved like a duck head and felt the pride of owning my own umbrella rush through my chest. The rain still poured down but the multi-colored umbrella with the duck handle / owned, and I was drier than that deadbeat lying on the park bench.

As I left the park and headed toward my house, the clouds turned black, the calming breeze changed into an unrelenting gale, and the drizzle strengthened into a storm. I clutched the duck head handle and mathematically tilted my umbrella to act as a shield that could withstand the savage gusts. Each step took more effort than the last. Each step found me more and more isolated.

In a flash of complete disorientation, fear, and weakness, the wind took control of me. The grasp that the wind had of my umbrella far exceeded the strength that I had. In the end, it ripped the duck handled, multi-colored umbrella from my hands, turned it inside out, bent the spokes and sent it tumbling down the street with a surreal speed and swiftness.

* * *

I was wet again. The rain got to me, so had the dream I thought it was real. The pain of having shelter being swept away from me startled me and forced me out of my slumber.

I went to tear the "Renter's Guide" off my face and see what a brief sleep had done to change the weather. I didn't have to. During my sleep it actually had been taken away by the strength of the augmenting wind. The lack of any shelter left me with no options except to abandon my bench and head for the 'Friendly Market' once again.

The walk was straining. The strength of the wind was challenging mine and each step proved itself more fatiguing than the last. After only a few dozen yards, I found myself completely

alone. The streets turned dark, and the storm had denied the lights power to shine and guide me through the entangling streets. I had not other place to go but underneath the awning of 'Peter's Piano Repair.'

I crouched down on the wet pavement and held my legs close to my chest with my head resting against my knees. I didn't want to look up at the world that had turned dark, and offered me no place to get out of the storm.

* * *

A crack of thunder blasted through the clouds and my eardrums. I looked up to find the rain still pouring down as hard as ever. I looked down both ends of the street and saw no one, no streetlights, and no sign of clearing weather. Though I did see a multi-colored umbrella blowing down the street at a surreal speed. I stood up. I kept my eye on it. And as it grew closer to 'Peter's Piano Repair,' the storm calmed more and more. Until finally, the umbrella rested at my feet.

I bent down to pick it up, examined the duck head of a handle, and the bent spokes that had ripped through the cape. "An umbrella, oh my god, I finally have an umbrella!" I thought. Who cared if it was turned inside out? It doesn't take a genius to fix an umbrella.

As I shook it dry, the clouds ceased to rain, the winds ceased to blow and the sun peeked through and had a chance to shine on the streets once again.

While examining the state of the bent spokes in a state of disbelief (that I actually had my own umbrella), I noticed a man in a black raincoat, collar up, hair drenched, pant legs soaked, walking hurriedly towards me. I ducked my head thinking he would be one of those pitying types, or even worse- the kind that decided they hated me at first glance.

But on, he gave me a nod of the head as I looked at him out of the corner of my eye, and said, "Some weather huh? Well, at least the parade still marched on."