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Palais de Mari

In the world at large, a person running over micro-landscapes of earthen terrain. Plant life and pavement that give to each running step, the solidity of the earth as indeterminate as the lone psychology in mid-stride, bodies in perpetual movement. A person who sometimes has difficulty occupying the world outside of such movement. And even—the truth is as material as soil and concrete—within the intensive, measured pace of running. And in moments of liberation. All beneath a sky whose vastness seems, to the one sweating and pounding pavement over distances, ambiguously close.

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His relations in the world, running, cavorting with ideas.

In the between world of spring merging with summer, one cannot help but greet with exuberance the light and warmth flooding the body when undertaking the running lifestyle, the degree to which these tan the body moving and strip one down, in moments of intense running, to what one might call, at the height of abstract thought, pure immanence. I am happy, one thinks, weather is happy, calmly secure.

Green is the color most commonly associated with the exuberance of oncoming summer, terribly difficult to transfer to a painted canvas, he was told, though what surrounds one in the forest, in patches of unspoiled earth between urban structures, is something other than crayon green. Plays of light that determine shades, bringing out yellows, heavier, darker colors enveloping one, the shadows of one's limbs. One becomes aware of cloud formations that obstruct, or drift to allow, light.

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The forest is unspoiled by human neurosis, his own vague maladjustment cultivated over years of living among travesties of mental health, otherwise solid, professional people. And others, of course, who give him something, an advanced person, for which to strive. It appears dishevelled, the forest, to the one temporarily escaping the city, a routine of concrete, though he makes calculated efforts to abscond from his neurosis when running on forest trails and locates an order of things there. A palace of shades, wooded lines that emanate from nowhere and everywhere he can and cannot see. Such beauty underfoot and everywhere around him. He runs today with the pleasure of one who can become lost in the forest, in the city whose street signs mean nothing when each step is as powerful and forthright as the last. Kilometers, precise measurements mean nothing to him. The next bend, where the sound of stream water becomes acute, let us say today, shall be the halfway mark. There are, after all, responsibilities beyond the running that require one's attention, one's turning back at some point, though I could keep going, he thinks.

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In the activity of his daily routine.

His partner, urging him relentlessly to eat more. She suggested he have something else to eat. In the routine of his daily program, he makes a vague reference to blended fruit that she ignores. She says the word sandwich and proceeds to retrieve items from the refrigerator. He contests that mayonnaise is no longer acceptable food to him, his refined palate, whereupon she removes the knife that she has just dipped into the mayonnaise, licks it clean and reaches for Dijon mustard—a slight domestic disturbance. Music on their stereo. They are out of ham, so she asks him about the acceptability of a cheese and tomato. He is satisfied with an episode of vegetarianism but expresses discomfort over her preparing food for him. Feminist, she says.

His partner sits beside him as he eats (is it already lunch time? such designations have disappeared for him), increasingly, it seems to him, when she could be devoting attention to her own work activities, the things that drive her in the world of people, conglomerations of careers. She herself only seems to eat as an adjunct activity to monitoring the food that enters his mouth. She monitors his nutritional

intake with knowing eyes, her own small bites, on the rare occasions that she is home in the afternoon, her mouth that, on occasion, becomes a smile he enjoys. Though she is not a nutritionist, he is certain. Her work life and nutritional habits, an ongoing mystery to him.

He glanced up at her, such a moment that requires only quiet togetherness, quiet tenderness, the thoughts that can preoccupy one. My knee didn't hurt while running today, he said finally. Resilience, she said. It had been six days since they had been carnal, too long, he thought.

He contemplates analogies between his own working office and other spaces while occupying his office during times of non-running—a brown-upholstered station wagon with six desks, an underground bunker in the event of nuclear devastation, a brown coffin, a brown device for augmenting inferiority, and finally, he thinks, a brown, windowless rectangle, the arid brain of a bureaucrat—nevertheless, he is drawn there, sometimes over the call of duty, sitting before the computer screen there,

electronic mail, his connections to others, clarifications of his daily routine. He is often alone there, listening to music. He prefers the light to be dim rather than flush fluorescent, unnatural, far from that which crystallizes through the forest when a run is in progress.

He had no interest in triathlons. People who excel in transportation. Various ways of moving through space that require more than a decent pair of running shoes. Water, luxury bicycles. The runner strips it down. People who have more to prove than longevity, endurance, well-being. Their pedalling, their breaststrokes. Obsessives, he thought.

The trail winds through the nature reserve as though it has come into being along with other natural phenomena, massive tangles of tree limbs and greenery, low to the ground plant life that divides and multiplies. That the trail is a product of human ingenuity, rather, is unimportant to him, his measured pace; he is glad for the relatively smooth surface and the minimization of obstacles today. He glances at his watch and processes the information over a period

of micro-seconds. Eighty-six minutes and counting, it's incredible, he thinks. I could run forever, and today, I will, I won't turn back, I'll keep going until the trail circles round, as it does, if I remember correctly. And it matters little if I'm wrong. The progressiveness of human-made trails winding through various terrains of the city. How delightful for local politicians to make laws regarding trails. He rarely pondered numbers when running.

Or in the city proper, today I shall run among government workers and buildings, women in heels and business suits whose mere presence commands me to optimize my stride, and men in ties who last ran as teenagers when commanded to do so by flawed physical education instructors. A less contemplative energy in the city proper, he thought. Though inspiring in its own style of movement. The ant-like moving of people through the city streets. People in a hurry to meetings and beating the clock, or their small joys in stretching the time of a lunch break (lunch? already?), they laugh with one another as a mechanism of sustaining their energy to work. I respond to the simulated chirping of bird sounds that inform us of the time to cross the street or the time to stand still.

I never stand still. I run in place. At the edge of the crosswalk. To the small delight or confusion of others near me waiting to reach the other side. Women in their inspiring sex appeal, confused men.

Their home, an apartment building in the city with wide corridors and a dated style that he appreciated. He often found himself admiring where they lived. His partner was dubious of the issue. She made strides to ornament their home to both their tastes, his input was often forthcoming and welcomed. She had learned to cast a knowing smile on the corridors outside their apartment. Inside, they often sat on a comfortable sofa listening to music. They observed pictures on the walls, television, in rare moments of curiosity regarding contemporary culture, and light as it played on the walls around them, the light changing over the course of a day, car headlights projecting luminous shapes on the walls and ceiling in the night. A modest size, bedroom, kitchen, bath, shared study divided by bookcases, they operated well together. You should eat more, she would say.

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