

## MONDAUFGANG

The rhythmic click of footsteps reverberated throughout the New York Gallery of Art. An art critic, pompous in appearance, strode elegantly across the marble-tiled floor which chequered the elaborate hallways; adorned with rich and vibrant colour. His face upturned, the echoes of his assured parade meandered in his wake which, joined by his crimson arrogance, lingered lazily along the vast hallways. With sinuous hands clutching a small notebook, the critic slid from painting to painting, murmuring his mellow voiced appraisals on each.

The critic was obviously an eccentric man: he was attired in an old mustard-brown suit; clasping the tattered maroon notebook in one taloned hand, and grasping a crumpled bowler hat in the other. Being very much the archetypal academic, the critic possessed one particularly evident quirk: constantly flicking rogue locks of unkempt, golden hair from his defined face. Spectacles perched, peering over his sharp nose, he proceeded to contemplate the paintings; blue enthusiasm twinkled in his fervent eyes.

One particular painting seized his attention and stimulated his imagination.

The captivating depiction consisted of vibrant flashes of neon hues and irregular blocks of contrasting shades. Instantly, the critic recognised the abstract metropolis as his own - New York - and he was startled by the juxtaposition of light and dark; day and night. Soon, the infinite labyrinth of the mind burst open as suddenly, before his eyes, the illusory city sprung to life... The gleaming moon arose like a silver phoenix from the jumble of giant skyscrapers, entangled in a curling wisp of chromium cloud. Below, amongst the sinister silhouettes of buildings, a hopeful sun peered up, composed of bright colour: gold; orange; amber; and yellow. Adipose raindrops hurled from the velvet sky like falling daggers, filling the oily puddles of the raven-black streets; everywhere, masses of people rushed chaotically with umbrellas hoisted high as protection from the onslaught. The scurrying mass filtered through wide streets, with row upon row of giant edifices, pulsating in the water-drenched heart of a magnificent city. "Rat-race" thought the critic.

Inner-city ghettos, graffiti-green, developed in the critic's fantasy: the erratic beats of hip-hop music, combined with the harsh red shriek of sirens emanated from this city sector. Vandalism was scrawled everywhere; etched messages of social defiance.

Then, the critic's vision was altered again...

Now, he found himself in a vast expanse of foliage and greenery, a menacing blue tinge in the moonlight. A vagabond sat slouched on a wooden bench at the side of a thin pathway; a charcoal ribbon, wandering through the mysterious trees and slicing down a slope of grass. This was Central Park. In daylight, this was serenity compared to the busy streets and crowded squares of Manhattan; but now, in this ghostly, faint white light, it was a surreal location, masked by the twilight glow. Twisted dark trees wallowed in the shadows, their gnarled boughs withering in the blackness. Next to the vagabond's bench, an ornate street light illuminated its close vicinity with a splinter of light: an ashen-white glow.

Through the catalyst of the painting, the critic was transported throughout various scenes in New York: the triumphant green monument - the Statue of Liberty - with a host of thrilled tourists aiming their cameras; the wide

boulevards and plazas - Times Square and Fifth Avenue - awash with thronging crowds, bordered by shops and boutiques. Yet, in contrast to these scenes, images of suffering were also revealed; this famous city had lived and thrived for centuries, but now it existed in the ominous grey shadow of terror; riddled with paranoia. A shadow loomed at the forefront of the painting. Indeed, as the critic witnessed the Manhattan sky-line from its water front, a fluttering United States flag piercing a pile of rubble, Ground Zero, seemed to be testament to this icy terror. And yet, as the rippling, lucid waters surrounding Manhattan Island sparkled topaz and magenta in the moonlight, he sensed a nation's pride.

Until now, the clouded imaginations of the critic had been vague yet realistic; now, though, the muddied pool of his thoughts smoothed to a quiescent mirror. He had returned to his original setting: in the centre of a bustling city centre, with the spears of rain bombarding leaden streets. And there, right in the middle of the shifting bedlam, he saw a tall man, dressed in an old mustard-brown suit, holding a bowler hat and a maroon notebook, standing motionless in the epicenter of the sea-green whirlpool of people. He stood, rivulets of clear rain flowing down his drenched face, his blonde hair plastered to his forehead. Then, in the downpour, the ink in the maroon notebook began to deteriorate, as the pages – brimful of eloquent writing – began to disintegrate. Anonymous faces were visible in the crowd, sneering at the critic's petty arrogance and its futility. As the last page of the notebook quivered, writhing on the oily wet street and its navy blue ink slipped fluidly into black puddles, the critic realised that he had invented his own pretension to conceal his insecurities...his fears. All this time, he had been masquerading as something he was truly not.

The pomposity was a façade.



The critic stool with limp posture in the New York gallery of Art. Struck by the clarity of his realization, he stepped back, gazing at the painting: a crystal window with a candid view. He looked at the title on the ornamental brass plaque below the composition:

“Mondaufgang, by Paul Klee”

