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American Literature

Mr. Baker

Amidst the dark was light, and in the light was dark. Streaks of light shown through the darkened foliage and projected in carelessly placed strips upon the forest floor. It was quiet. It was the kind of quiet further muffled by the environment to create further quiet, which created a deafening silence, a din of solitude. The foliage parted to reveal a less dense area – not exactly a clearing, but a kind of path. But it wasn’t exactly a path either; however, what are paths if not simply hypothetical possibilities of travel? Two *paths* appeared before me, split off-center. City roads are split near-perfectly, which is why the lack of precision of the split between the two paths took me aback. Unlike the city roads, the paths were not measured and split perfectly.

The longer the thought resonated with me, the more perfect this path seemed; it wasn’t trying to be perfect, it had given up on that dream. The road was measured, plotted, paved, re-paved, perfected and attempted perfection but could realistically never reach it. This path, however, was perfect in its imperfection. This path was stylistically and aesthetically more pleasing because of its obvious imbalance. It was evident the lack of use this path received in this yellow wood, which drew me to it. No one is afraid of the dark, just what might be lurking in it. Just as no one is afraid of tall heights, only of what might happen if they were to slip off. People are inherently afraid of the unknown – we imagine murderers in our kitchens when we hear noises at night, and we run upstairs after quickly turning off the basement lights. This fear is what draws me: what we know is boring. I do not have the temerity to say I investigate every noise I hear at night, but it does certainly provoke alluring thoughts of wonderment. It is for this reason I found myself taking the less used path in the thick woods near midnight.

Near the side of the path was an old, wooden chessboard. What seems like a stark contrast of the natural affect of the environment pragmatically blended seamlessly because of the chessboard’s agrestal feeling. The small pieces were all accounted for, and surprisingly organized on the board, save the one white pawn. This pawn alone caused me to stop and examine the board further. The lack of the pawn made the board feel annoyingly incomplete, and it bothered me for a reason I couldn’t determine. I looked around the ratherish moonlight illuminated earth, but to no avail. The pawn would remain missing and while it evaded my physical embrace, it invaded my thoughts for a surprising duration and intensity. It was just a pawn.

I continued my promenade along the path not quite adjacent to the place in which I sat: the path less traveled, the dark and unknown path yet to be plotted or discovered. I walked, not because I had the intention to get somewhere, but because I wanted to see what was on the other side. If one were to walk down the streets of Boston as I walked, they would see a completely different city. When people walk around cities, they’re thinking about various things: they’re not paying attention; they’re lost in thought about this and that. They walk with purpose, these people, they walk in lines as a connection from the first point to the last, occasionally with various points inserted intermittently, but not changing the fixed, defined nature of the journey. Given the command, most would find it more difficult than it would initially seem to just walk. People need direction and a place to start; it’s a pleasing thought to have utter and complete freedom without responsibility or defined activity.