

The Man in the Park  
by J.M.

The man sits, every day, on the bench. The weathered, broken, old bench that had seen better days. It had become a sort of routine for him to start each day on the bench. To the bystanders, he seemed to be another lost soul; another elderly man wasting his days on a bench in a park. To them, his memories are meaningless; the way his hands shook with every movement meant nothing; the way he always looked like a groomed gentleman was merely a choice, nothing more. To them, he was another one of them. Nobody bothered to learn what possessed him to come to that particular park, when so many others could be just as nice, just as green, just as happy. Why did he continue to stare at the big oak tree, decades old, standing strong with bark as old as he? Others did not care, it was none of their business. Perhaps his memories would inspire some, if anyone knew. Perhaps.

On this particular day, the sun was rising in the sky. The man sat, as usual, on the bench in the park. He took in his surroundings; the green grass swaying in the wind; the flowers bloomed and at their utmost beauty; the tree. His chest fluttered as his respiration increased, he gazed lovingly, yet depressed, at the tree. The huge oak tree, with big green leaves and many branches, thick and thin. The tree sat directly across from the bench on which the man sat, about five meters away. The man's wrinkled face grimaced, the face that had witnessed years of the world. A breeze of a wind wrapped around his body, already warmed with a crisp, ironed snow white dress shirt tucked under a burgundy wool sweater. The breeze threatened to uncomb his salt and pepper comber. The most peculiar thing about the man is his everlasting brown sandals with white socks. The man pulled a gold watch out of his pocket, glanced at the time and laid it in his lap. He sighed.

It was much too early to leave the park, yet the man rose. The pocket watch fell to the grass beneath him; he showed no sign of recognition. Adults, children, pets, all kinds laughed and played around him, happy with their lives. The man hobbled over to the tree, his hunched shoulders struggled to sit upright on his body. No such luck. He stood before the dark brown tree and gingerly reached out to touch it. Seeming to be too much to bare, he slowly returned to the bench. His movements were made tinted with sadness, and slow. He sat carefully, and gazed at the gold wedding ring that had always been on his wrinkled finger. A silent tear slid down his cheek and with a shaking hand, wiped the tear away. He stood as the elderly should slow and with care, and followed the pathway out of the park.

That day, he left his pocket watch at the park. That day, was the last day he ever returned to the park. Nobody knows where he went, nobody cares. Perhaps the tree longs for the days when that old man sat for hours on the bench in the park. The only memory of the man was the gold pocket watch glistening in the summer sun, forever engraved into the grass beneath the bench in the park.