

VIEW FROM THE TERRACE

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[Assignment: Describe a place, an object, a work of art, a view--your choice is nearly unlimited--creating a logical method of observation and description: spatial, chronological, emphatic. Rely on good specific language considering connotations as well as words themselves. Your description must be subjective but interesting enough to force your reader to share your dominant impression.]

(1) Standing on the terrace, looking down on the city from forty stories above, I shivered though I was not cold. The air that brushed gently across my bare neck was a welcomed relief on that warm May evening.

(2) I took a deep breath and the soft scent of something burning filled my head. It was not the foul, polluted sort of burning smell that one would expect to pervade a crowded city. It was a sweet burnt scent, like one that drifts from a fireplace as damp wood is consumed in a crackling fire, or when a candle is extinguished and smoke swirls gently upward for a moment until it finally disappears. I took another breath and stopped shivering.

(3) The view from that height was what had caused me to tremble for a brief moment. I had never looked upon the city in the same way as I did that night. The sky was a deep blue--almost black. Thousand upon thousand of tiny lights dotted the dark background like the true stars that rested just above the horizon. Some lay scattered, their purpose unknown, but still persisting. Others lay in patterns, outlining the many highways, buildings, and bridges. Between the rows of lights along the roads ran pairs of smaller lights belonging to invisible cars, holding invisible passengers and their unknown thoughts. It was well after midnight, but enough light still shone from the towering buildings to reveal their outline against the dark sky. In those offices, people had worked diligently over their tasks during the day, unknown to most of the city, unknown to me standing on the terrace. The only present evidence of their existence were the lights.

(4) As the clouds blew by, the lights seemed to flicker on and off but were always glowing, never darkening completely. It was just an illusion from the dust in the sky. High above, the dark, star-filled sky met the glistening cover of city lights and together they formed a warm quieting blanket for this city, its people, its problems, and its faults.

(5) From up on that terrace, the city--the world--seemed a better place. The people who lived there, with all their problems, could not be seen. The poorer sections of town could not be distinguished from the more

wealthy ones. The angry nervous tension of the city's inhabitants could not be felt from this height. I could hear no crying.

(6) In fact, the only audible sound on the terrace was the soft sound of the breeze blowing between the buildings, winding in and out of dark lonely alleyways and around empty street corners. There were no honking horns, no angry voices, no voices filled with despair. What I "heard" was the precious sound of silence itself, a "sound" so calming and peaceful that it drowns out all other thoughts, a "sound" that hypnotizes and relaxes. As I stood there gazing into the speckled sky, thinking no specific thoughts, I began to feel that terrible problems were not so terrible after all. The sky had drawn all cares--mine and the city's--into itself, held them, and then melted them away a little at a time.

(7) This terrace, this platform far above the city, had provided an escape. It was separate, apart from the turmoil of the world below. What I had experienced here--the blanket of lights, the cool evening air, and the soft scent of smoke pervading the darkness--could mesmerize anyone. Others who came here would be captured and led into a peaceful, unlonely solitude, kept there for a stationary moment in time, and then released back into the real world with a renewed sense of awe and wonder. They, too, for this moment would become free of the weight of their flawed humanity.