

'The Silenus'

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*Written & performed by Matthew Doyle,
Jason King & Max Negrelli
for the exhibition "Dissociative
Experiences Scales" (Circuits & Currents,
July the 9th 2016, Athens). With Marino
Pascal in the role of the silenus.*

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*Two men in the park where a few
crumbling walls remain from the ancient
academy. It is early summer. In the pale
light, it is hard to tell faces apart. The
silenus stalks in the bushes.*

Sculptor: I'm tired. I'm tired.

Chorus: But, still, can we go over it again?

Sculptor: Our actor says he is on his way.

Chorus: How is our actor?

Sculptor: Our actor is in turmoil.

Chorus: Once more, for me. Either you were never in the park in Naples, and these photographs of you were somehow faked. Or, it is you in the photographs, and you're forgetting.

Sculptor: I am as certain that it is me in the photographs as I am certain that I have never been in the park.

Chorus: I still do not understand how that is possible... to be certain of two things that contradict one another.

Sculptor: Unfortunately it is very simple. I cannot deny it is me in the photographs and I cannot deny that I was never in the park.

Chorus: Just say you forgot!

Sculptor: I do not want to be talking about this when our actor arrives. Why are you doing this?

Chorus: I'm not "doing" anything.

Sculptor: Yes, yes you are. You are leading me to my annihilation.

Chorus: I want you to just admit that you forgot you were in the park.

Sculptor: I was never in the park. I was never in the park high above the city, I never stood before that Caravaggio. I've never seen the man without a nose holding an urn on his head.

Chorus: You forgot you were in the park above the city, you forgot you stood before the painting, and you forgot the man with the urn on his head.

Sculptor: Why would you want me to say that I forgot something I certainly would remember?

Chorus: You're killing me.

Sculptor: No, what would "kill" you is if I had been in the park and forgotten. This is not any easier for me than it is for you. To see photos of you taken in a place you know you've never been to, to be certain of two things that... contradict one another...

Chorus: It's called uncertainty. You are uncertain. You've forgotten. To have molded so many heads, and have so much trouble with what goes on inside your own...

Sculptor: Yes, to have molded so many heads, and have so much trouble with what goes on in one's own... You know, I remember so vividly you sitting across from me long ago and saying, "I cannot spend my entire life with a sculptor."

Chorus: I never said such a thing.

Sculptor: Are you certain?

Chorus: No.

Sculptor: I'm through with talking about this. I don't know what is taking our actor so long. Are you hungry?

Chorus: No. This park smells like cum. Is it a kind of tree? I think I hear someone on the path—

Sculptor: It is our actor.

Chorus: Why is he coming that way? Would it not make more sense to come from the other direction?

Sculptor: Yes, but he prefers the opposite entrance. He even walks beyond the park, in order to enter it from the residential side. It's a narrow path through a small gate, there is a church to the side which neither of us has ever visited. He goes down the first flight of stone steps into the ruins of the gymnasium, then up again

and down again into the ruins of the palaestra, then up once more, crossing over the sports field until he arrives...

The actor enters.

Sculptor: ...here, where we find ourselves now.

Actor: Hi.

Sculptor: Hi.

Chorus: Hi.

Actor: You have been here a long time. Discussing the photographs all the while?

Chorus: Yes.

Actor: And what has been decided?

Sculptor: I still am in the photographs. I still have never been in the park.

Chorus: The photographs still have not been faked.

Actor: Our sculptor still is in the photographs. Our sculptor still has never been in the park. The photographs still have not been faked. That is what I feared.

Sculptor: Have you tried eating?

Actor: I had some toast.

Sculptor: And are you feeling any better?

Actor: No, everything still feels like it's coming apart at the seams.

Sculptor: What took you so long?

Actor: I was held up on the way.

Sculptor: By whom?

Actor: The silenus.

Chorus: There is a silenus in this park? I hear they possess ancient wisdom.

Actor: He is rather annoying, really. He lives on the path between the two sets of ruins. The path our sculptor, out of modesty, failed to mention in his description of how I enter the park. The path flanked by our sculptor's figures. The figures commissioned by the Ministry of Culture.

Chorus: The twelve heads.

Sculptor: The twelve heads. Karaiskakis, Kolokotronis, Kanaris, Mariyannis, Miaoulis, Feraios, Papaflessas, Bouboulina, Canaris, Mavrogenous, Miaoulis, Androutsos...

Actor: (with the sculptor) ...Kanaris, Mariyannis, Miaoulis, Feraios, Papaflessas, Bouboulina...

Chorus: (to the actor) Does this park smell like cum to you?

Actor: It's a kind of tree.

Sculptor: A kind of tree! A kind of tree!
What fucking tree?

Actor: Pear.

Chorus: Have you looked at the
photographs again?

Actor: A thousand times. I'm certain
they're real.

Chorus: You no longer believe I faked
them.

Actor: No, I'm sorry to have suggested it. I
was beside myself. I am.

Sculptor: Do you believe me, then, when I
say I was never in the park?

Actor: I believe you when you say you
were never in the park above Naples.

Chorus: And you believe it is him in the
photographs I took?

Actor: Yes.... Yes.

Chorus: You're both delusional.

Actor: I do feel that we are losing ourselves.

Chorus: Did the silenus have anything to say about all of this?

Actor: As a silenus tends to do, he said something wise... about trace and presence. You know, "everything is futile" and so on. At one point, and this I remember well, he said "man is the animal that bears contradictions." But I was too distressed to really follow.

Chorus: That is maybe for the best. A silenus only ever makes things worse.

Sculpor: Where are the photographs?

Chorus: I've already packed them away in my suitcase.

Actor: It's okay. I've memorized every single one.

Sculptor: Tell me again what's in the photographs.

Actor: Are you sure?

Sculptor: (nods)

Actor: In the first photograph, you have your back to the camera. You are probably unaware the photograph was being taken. Before you is the park's sloping lawn, with its palms and ferns and towering trees that reach outside of the frame. To your left are the foundations of the palace, to your right Indian men are playing cricket under the tree canopy. I want to say you have come to a full stop before the scene, because your feet appear not to be in motion. In the second photograph, you are in the palace. You stand before the painting by Caravaggio, facing the camera. You strike the pose depicted in

the painting. Hands clasped behind your back, eyes rolled upwards and mouth agog, your torso bent to the right and head resting on your shoulder. It's very funny. In the third photograph, you are blurred and exiting the right of the frame. You move past what I assume to be a greenhouse. I believe the photograph was taken not of you, but of the window, dirty with bright green plants pressing against the panes. The word "rats" is spray painted on the outside of the window in orange spray paint.... You want me to go on?

Chorus: Go on.

Actor: In the fourth photograph, it already appears to be dusk. You stand facing the camera. You wear a mischievous grin as if you are sharing a joke with the photographer. Your body is contorted, there's one shoulder pulled backward at an angle that suggests you may have

been in the middle of turning around. The bottom half of your body is not in the shot. Behind you, in the distance, is the edge of the gardens. Three tunnels telescoping into darkness. At the entrance to each is a statue, but they are tiny in the photograph. I cannot make them out beside their human forms. In the fifth photograph, you are in the gardens. You sit on a bench, one hand stretched across the bench's back, head turned upwards toward a statue on your right. A noseless man in nothing but a sarong, discolored with age, standing contrapposto with an urn balanced on his skull. On one side of the urn, a handle protrudes around which one hand of the statue grasps. The other hand hangs by the statue's side. Your face, as you look upon this statue, is inscrutable. In the sixth photograph—

Sculptor: Stop it, stop it!

The silenus laughs.

Sculptor: I was never in the park in
Naples! I was never in the park in Naples!

-Intermission-

The silenus watches two men through the trees of the park where there are ruins of the ancient academy. In the light, faces are becoming more distinct. The chorus, departing with suitcase, pauses before the sculpted heads.

Silenus: (mocking) "I've never been in Naples!" "I've never been in the park!"
"But the photographs!"

Chorus: (to himself) Kolokotoranis...

Silenus: Kolokotronis!

Chorus: Karaskakis...

Silenus: Karaiskakis! Georgios
Karaiskakis!

Chorus: Boubalina...

Silenus: Laskarina Bouboulina! She blew up the enemy's ships! Boom, boom! Bouboulina!

Long pause.

Chorus: What are they doing?

Silenus: The one guy is surveying the other guy's body for wounds.

Chorus: Wounds from what?

Silenus: I don't know! I don't care! But I keep watching anyway.

Chorus: (to himself) He was never in the park high above the city. He never stood before the painting. The man with the urn on his head... but how can he? The pictures—

Silenus: Blah, blah, blah, blah! Why do you care so much about pictures? Everyone that comes to this park always

talking about pictures. Pictures this, pictures that. Where was I? Do you see me! It's so boring!

Chorus: You are the silenus, are you not? The actor said he came across you on his way to the park.

Silenus: The who?

Chorus: The actor. The one with the wounds.

Silenus: I don't remember, all you boys look alike to me.

Chorus: Do you remember meeting him here on the path? He said you told him something wise.

Silenus: For centuries there have been boys going through these bushes, for centuries I have been telling them wise things, I can't keep them straight.

Chorus: The ruins of the academy.

Silenus: Yeah, whatever.

Chorus: You know, Silenus... coming here to visit, I had no idea what to expect. It was so stupid of me to bring these photographs, what was I even getting at? I think I did want to make the actor... jealous, or something. Or, maybe I just wanted the sculptor to remember. But what did I want him to remember? It's scary, how suddenly love—

Silenus: Leave me in peace! Take your babble elsewhere! There is nothing that bores me more than humans babbling about love and death. You stupid little insignificant time-things, always going on about love and death. Look at these heads along my path! You think you can put a trace somewhere! But you *are* traces! What is funnier than a trace trying to leave a trace? (laughs) You are nothing but a scratch on the unending plane. No one would be talking about anything if it

wasn't for you! A scratch, on the infinite
ass! Scratch on an ass! (laughs)

Chorus: But what about— ?

Silenus: Give up, you little scratch!
Wounds don't ask questions. There is only
one thing you can do, as a wound: go on
hurting! And when through hurting, you
shut up!

-End-