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THE VILLA BORGHESE

The men on horses wear uniforms that are reminiscent of times long ago when cruel men sat high on tamed animals and inspired fear in those on their path. The horses breathe deeply and exhale into the cool morning air. I imagine them with rods in their hands ensuring submission to royal authority. But there is no power on display here, only men playing in the early morning air, playing with horses as men have done for thousands of years.

This is Rome, the eternal city and this park, the Borghese, has been here for centuries dating from the 1620's. The air is still fresh, the coolness of the night still hanging underneath the clear blue sky. How many people, I wonder, have walked beneath these trees wandering with reflections not unlike my own?

Walking, I wonder why I cannot find clarity? Why does my calling seem so elusive just at the time of my life when all things should have become clear? There are so many choices yet I vacillate between believing that it matters greatly what I do and the equally compelling view that it matters very little. At 45 time is running faster and yet I am slowing down, content for this day to live within the rhythm of this green place.

Perhaps I am doing this morning precisely what it is I should be doing. Walking quietly amidst green places, the smell and taste of cafe Americano waiting for me just beyond the ancient Roman walls on the Via Veneto. Perhaps surrendering to the rhythm I feel at this moment is precisely my calling or at least to somehow find in my vocation the same centeredness I find in my vacation.

It seems that my whole life has been spent waiting for my calling to ring in my ears and yet my life has unfolded all the while that I have been waiting. Could it be that I am precisely where I am supposed to be and that surrendering to a lost sense of urgency will make the path ahead clear and sure?

When I entered the park it occurred to me that I should check e-mails before my café, but for now my desire to be touched has taken over my need to be "in touch." It occurs to me that this is precisely the issue, that being in touch is my way of allowing the external world to pull me in directions and shielding me from allowing enough quiet space that the path might find me without so much unnecessary longing.

Somehow I know that it does not matter what path I wind up choosing. Long before in this eternal city Marcus Aurelius once said "within a short time you forget everything and everything forgets you." Millions have walked these streets but only a few are remembered and for a very few things. Maybe it is not up to me to save the universe after all, but only to join its eternal chorus and accept my place within its larger voice.

For now, a peace comes over me, if only for a moment. The counter at the café has all the ingredients I need for now. The city is awake and so am I.

-- John Izzo, August 2002
