The Pataphysical Tourist

by John Olson

We all get in a carriage of tin and volcanic glass and go a-touring. We had quite an itinerary to fulfill, all of it loosely applied to the principle of serendipity. We toured Luxembourg and tossed pretzels to the bankers who did tricks for us, somersaults and complex credit transactions. By we, of course, I mean the royal we. I am, in fact, a creature of solitude. But also, it can be remarked, a constellation of cells, a distressed vessel of mitochondria and protoplasm in a quest for meaning at the frontiers of destiny, freedom from the anxiety of death and pettiness of habit. We saw an Andy Warhol android eat a bowl of tomato soup in Wankendorf, Germany and last night, in a little town in Scotland, I swirled around in bed forsaken and Gothic, longing for a still pasture, a sweep of land steeped in glorious history, where I could cease my dromomania, and immerse myself in germaniums and grapefruit. I got down on the carpeted floor and began a dissertation on the profligacy of the swimming pool. This was fatal. For it clearly indicated that my odyssey had hardly begun. I performed a series of breaststrokes until I fell back asleep. In the morning, after a fine breakfast of sweet jams and local honey, I renewed my determination to pursue that ignis fatuous we call sightseeing, which is really just a gallivant, dressed up as a pilgrimage, & consummated in a Senegambian stone circle, with dancing and impromptu cries, a ceremony drawn from the Druids, & practiced in the open. I studied a rococo faucet in Antwerp & stood - enthralled and discombobulated - by the abounding Farin Ruwa Falls in Nigeria, when I was exhausted from the heat, and meeting so many new people, many of them, as it turned out, the product of fever and hallucination. The bedspread in Haapsalu, Estonia had potatoes all over it. The bedspread was dirt. But then I realized my error. I'd mistaken a farmer's field for my hotel room. It's the mists. They play havoc with one's sense of direction. The pansies in Pucklechurch, England spoke to me in some privacy, and I blushed to hear their thoughts. I kissed a gypsy in Arles. I heard the music of

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the spheres above Woolloomooloo. And wherever in the world I went the chimeras whispered their needs and drew me further into the mist.