

An Introduction to the Pithy, Untitled Account of Julian Smith's Nondescript Life

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I.

He couldn't remember what he was supposed to do. He had already slept in; he noted the angle at which sunlight passed through the dusty blinds into the squalid apartment. It was at least noon. Whatever his chore had been, probability now dictated that it would not be completed-- not that day, at least. He tried to reverse his erratic thought progression, to recall what Eva had asked of him. However, a period of stupor allowed an impassable chasm to form between his present state of consciousness, and the one during which he had last spoken to her. His memory was not altogether irretrievable, although it was obscured sufficiently. He could remember the cadence in her voice, the general vowel sounds, and even her facial expression. The words, and, perhaps more importantly, their collective meaning, was lost.

After overcoming the inexplicable inertia that had held him in bed, Julian was welcomed with a somewhat more anticipated bout of lethargy. Merely getting dressed seemed to exhaust the energy that his body had allegedly accumulated during the night. Nevertheless, he was ultimately able to create a visage that he imagined would look remotely presentable according to society's standards, then descended the precarious wooden stairs and exited the building, where he found himself on a street that, in retrospect, made his apartment seem invitingly clean.

Although he cursed the unforgiving sun throughout the summer, in the gray, mid-November cold, he now missed it. Subsequently, the three-block stroll to his favorite cafe felt more like a march. He complained inwardly until his arrival at his intended destination, but upon entry into the building, the walk was probably discarded from memory, although he would undergo the same procedure on the way home. He was aware of this, but was powerless to prevent his insignificant disdain for tolerating the weather for even a small period.

The cafe was warm, but Julian would leave his jacket on for the duration of his stay. Upon entering, he glanced around, hoping not to see any acquaintances. He detested the thought of engaging in small talk with virtually anyone, as he was barely comfortable speaking with close friends, let alone select individuals who probably could not recite his name, should he have the audacity to request it from them (and it may be noted that his assumption that others have a desire to talk to him whatsoever was false, and perhaps aloof to the point of egoism). Rather, he was content to spend his life inside his mind, effectively minimizing interaction with others.

After having found a table in the corner that satisfied his reclusive inclinations, he sat, patiently awaiting a server. With minimal delay, a young woman approached his table, bearing a sole carte. Julian instantly appreciated her aesthetic quality, but as it was unlikely that he would see her again, he truly was uninterested in speaking to her in anything but a prim manner. She silently and carelessly tossed the carte onto the table and promenaded back to the counter, where she pretended to occupy herself by rearranging the items resting atop it before returning to the secluded table in the corner. Meanwhile, Julian himself was pretending to read and evaluate the items available; he had known what

he wanted before he left his room.

“What would you like, sir?” She said with flagrantly forced politeness.

“I would like espresso, ma'am,” he retorted. Upon hearing that title, which she deemed inappropriate for her age, her brow descended, and she missed the subtle sarcasm in his request, as she devoted her attention to determining whether she lacked the beauty of youth, or simply youth itself. Perhaps he hurt her feelings, but Julian reasoned that this new preoccupation would alleviate the tedium that was causing her to treat the customers like millstones, without leaving her altogether unproductive, and perhaps she would begin to view herself as a *serveuse*, rather than an *ornement*, in the cafe. She returned a few moments later with his order, and a ignorantly pensive expression on her face. After having imbibed the insipid beverage, Julian left the cafe, and no gratuity.

“Damned cold,” he amnestically uttered upon greeting the acute November air. His facial expression reflected this sentiment until he reached his next destination: the library. He intended to find reading material not for entertaining, but merely for occupying, himself. He felt that if he were allowed to think openly for more than a few moments, the ensuing anxiety would be too great to vanquish.

“Marching, marching, marching. Always marching.”

Julian habitually bent his neck to an excessive degree while walking about town. Not only was he disinterested in those whom he strolled amongst, he actively avoided having to make any personal contact with them. Whenever a passerby offered a salutation, which typically would be perceived as a genuinely benevolent attempt at communicating with another human being, he found it offensive and simply pretended not to hear the contemptible intruder of his solitude.

“What might I read today?”

He mulled over the possibilities, then decided that he ought to brush up on Latin. Soon thereafter, he arrived at the imposing stone stairs before the athenaeum. Despite his dread of scaling them, he found that such engagement brought to his extremities a welcome influx of blood.