

Faces of the Nihilist

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The Child

Wide-eyed and full of wonder, ignorant of good and evil, infinitely skeptical toward authority. When restrained or punished she is genuinely hurt and cries deeply. When coddled, she falls instantly in love.

Curious and wise, disloyal, whimsical, and free.

Joyous when she is destroying, petulant when oppressed.

She sees not beyond the here and now, except when she dreams, and when her reality does not bear the fruit of freedom she passes immediately to despair.

Idealistic and tempestuous in undertakings, impatient with process, blind to the hurdles between herself and her ideals.

Her simple nature can be a joy or an exasperation.

Flighty and adoring; chaotic and demanding.

She knows well that the safest place to keep a burning passion is behind an impenetrable laugh.

Loved by her friends and resented by the rest. They are sure she mocks them when they are not there.

Life is but a game, and nobody knows the rules.

“That’s the twist.”

The Idealist

Graceful as the waves, deep as the sea, he bears the ideal as the waters bear their creatures: fully and possessively.

His vision is his lover, all-consuming, perfect. He is infinitely jealous, even as he imagines himself to be infinitely generous.

“I sleep but to dream, I rise but to dance.”

Life is for him but a canvass—all the more fitting for its emptiness—on which to let blossom the colors of his inner world, all the more beautiful for its unreality.

The idealist is an artist’s brush, and he paints what none but himself can see. Everything he does is to symbolize his devotion. Nothing he does is good enough.

Humble before the greatness of his vision, he carries onward, “having little, being much.”

The Thief

Parasite of society, reveler in invisibility, dweller of the underworld. Extravagant in taste. Her crime is her rebellion, and her delight rests light-footed upon the sense of the illicit and dangerous.

Agile and clever, quick and alert. Friend of the shadows, companion of the night.

Mistress of deception. Subterfuge and subtlety are her way. Ever ready to sink her dagger into the back of the enemy, she does not waste her energy in protest or head-on combat.

For her, every moment stolen by school, work, family, god and country must be taken back, whether by sleight of hand, cloak and dagger, or seductive power.

For her, to be seen is awkward, to pay is an embarrassment, to work is humiliation. Worst of all is to be caught.

Hardly ashamed of her ways, still she has nothing to say to her captors. Neither remorseful nor defiant, with all her intricate disguise stripped away, she can only stand silent or else spin pretty webs of lies.

The Witch

An enigmatic solution of sensitivity and judgment, she moves through the world with an irreducible sense of the forms that things must take.

She is severe in her wisdom as to the ways of the world.

An oscillating ball of force, she moves creature and object alike to her will and desire. And to her, will is nothing but the shortest route to making things become what they will become anyway.

Her righteousness is her respect of fate.

Short of temper, protracted in bitterness, slow to forgiveness.

Others, blind to what is most obvious and resistant to what is most inevitable, provoke her rage.

Most often ignorant of herself, whether through social deprivation or sheer terror in the face of her capacities, and often most dangerous when swept unconsciously by the intensity of her unleashed emotions.

When keenly in sense of herself, she is most in touch with her power. She often takes hold of her power with a stranglehold and becomes religious and weak. When she learns to harness it with a rider's touch, however, then in the dynamic balance of power and desire, she is unstoppable.

The Militant

Strong of arm and of will, single-minded in pursuit of his aims. Steadfast in the ideal, he wears it as badge and shield.

While perhaps not especially possessive of courage, he especially holds it highest as value and banner.

For him the enemy is clear and manifest. It must be confronted face to face. Anything less is weakness.

The militant does not sleep except when weary of battle, and then his sleep is restless.

For him, to die in combat is glorious in itself. What matters glory after death?

He does not long for death—he loves it and worships it. For him, life is nothing but the elaborate dance of seduction with his black widow.

Reserved of emotion, generous of heart.

Firm of voice. Proud to the point of arrogance.

He is a sword trailing blood. His enemies ever before him, comrades always at his side. What is behind him he does not know, only that it smells of gore and drives him ever forward.

A warrior poet singing his serenade to death.

Pleased only by battle, satisfied only by victory, driven only by defeat.

Concerned only with the material, he scoffs at what he cannot kill. For him war is the only thing eternal, the wheel on which his fate hangs, the dance that will carry him to the nuptial bed.

His element is steel. Fire too, but this only to temper the steel.

Everything soft and round is useless and an obstacle to his blade. But whatever is hard and dull may at least serve him as a sharpening stone.

Quick to love, devotedly loyal, he is quicker still to cast out and denounce as traitor a former comrade who strays from the path of duty.

There is a whole world to destroy. If there is a world to come, it will be fattened on blood.

The Orator

The thermometer of the masses.

Highly dependent.

Voice of fire, soul of ice.

Steady of hand, porcelain of mood.

His life is a mask, and it is heavy indeed.

The people are an orchestra, the revolution a symphony. His honorable task is to conduct.

He is bendable that he might make bend, malleable that he might mold.

“I was granted the gift of speech,” he says, “How could I not put it at the service of liberation?”

He would cast himself as a mirror so that the people might recognize their oppression and discern their potential. This is why he must make himself so flat, so surface, so unbearably shiny.

“The people is the greatest mass, greater than the earth itself. Once in motion nothing will stop it. And when it is at rest it cannot be moved but by the most awesome force. The spoken word is that force.”

With a steady hand and an implacable will, he moves the unmovable, in his struggle against inertia.

“Give me a place to stand,” cries he, “and I will move the world!”

The Watcher

World-weary, devoid of hope, she holds at arm’s length everything that buzzes and bustles.

Sensitive to the extreme, put-upon, suffering, her freedom can only seek itself far from the clutches of the people in their tireless prattle.

Patient to the extreme, she would spend a lifetime for the chance to taste for a moment a wondrous nut of truth.

Sparing with her social energies, easily annoyed, she chooses friends with a connoisseur’s taste. For her, what is valuable is what is rare, for no other reason than its rarity. And what is rare is not to be squandered. She enjoys a friend’s company as she enjoys a good book: delicately and with savor.

Minimalist in possessions, as if every object weighed down the flight of her mind.

She is comforted by and attuned to entropy and the slow decay of all order.

“Radicals heretofore have been far too anxious.”

The leaking faucet, the disappearance of socks, the mess-ups large and small that sabotage every attempt at finally getting it right, these are for her a solace and a secret promise not to be fulfilled within her lifetime.

“One must suffer quietly, and alone, so as to suffer less.”

The Loadbearer

Few are the devotees of the ideal humble enough to see themselves as the stepping stones on which the new people will walk.

To the loadbearer, the role of the brick is noble indeed, so long as the brick is well placed.

And in her nihilist refusal of the old architects, the loadbearer wanders ever in search of the right place to stand under the weight she knows she must bear.

Long-suffering, impeccably modest, self-effacing and dogged, the loadbearer accepts all insults and every affront. These might be well-earned, they may be true, but in the end they are of little consequence to her task.

At times she believes in all sincerity to have found her place in the world, as the sustainer of some small milieu, project, or helpless person. It seems that she might stand here forever, and often she does stand there still, after everything has fallen to pieces, cursed her, and run off.

Sad but undefeated, too deeply rooted to move on, she waits with every manner of a tree for the new world to fall from the sky and lay its blessed weight upon her back.

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