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Who is the Saint of the 21st Century?

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He leads a solitary life. Often he'll go days, sometimes weeks, without speaking a word. When he does speak, his voice sounds far away. It sounds like an echo, like a river, like a breeze. Have you ever met a man who spoke so softly, so slowly, so sweetly and serenely? Have you ever met a man who spoke in a minor key? Upon hearing his voice, you'll get that same beautiful melancholy feeling that comes when listening to a song in the key of E minor. It brings a sense of nostalgia, but the kind of hopeless nostalgia that has the power to send you tumbling down into the abyss.

He leads a gentle life. He spends his days roaming the streets, paying close attention to the world and its complexities. He notices when new graffiti pops up in the city. He takes pictures with his drugstore camera and tapes them up beside his mattress. He notices married couples, who give him a feeling of pity with a hint of jealousy. He notices the sun and the moon (and he charts their movements in his notebook) and the silhouettes of trees when 6 o'clock approaches. He notices the endless, listless, anxious flow of traffic. He notices the strange way that people look at him. Some smile sympathetically, some avert their eyes quickly.

Softly, slowly, he transitions from hazy sleep into the waking world. He wipes dried-up tears from his eyelashes. He heaves the window open, takes a breath of fresh air, takes his pen and notebook from the windowsill, and begins writing down his dreams.

Last night they were vivid and colorful. He remembers walking through some sparkling city with pale-yellow cobblestone paths. The sky was golden and the clouds were bronze. Time moved strangely in his dream. He felt like he was in another country, maybe Italy or Lithuania. He was alone, walking through a deserted alley. Everything was made of bricks, and everything had a strange pale-golden-yellow tint to it.

He emerged from his dreams with a flickering sense of nostalgia.

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Your world is my world

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She leads an inspired life. She's always smiling, always throwing her head towards the sky with blissful abandonment, always passionate. She breathes deeply whenever the wind comes. She spends her life dreaming a kaleidoscopic dream, never in black and white.

She walks with a passionate skip-bounce-dance-step. Her wild eyes take in the trees and the grass and the dogs and the dirt.

She walks quickly, out of necessity. She's late to work again. She whistles and hums along with the music of the world. Ah, how beautiful it is, the music of the world with its swirling layers of sound! She hears fragments of conversations as people pass by her, and continues these conversations in her own mind once she can no longer make out what's being said. She hears the rustling of leaves, and the frantic laughter of children, and the birds, my god, the birds!

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Don't forget your origins

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The air is cold but he's not feeling bitter about it. He walks through the city holding a coffee-filled mug, more self-conscious than usual. He drags his feet. He walks slow and people pass by him, left and right. He walks so slow that he can feel fellow pedestrians becoming annoyed and confused and alert. He tries not to let their emotions affect him. He tries his best to live just for himself.

The park awaits him. He will probably spend most of the day here, sitting on a cold metal bench facing the sun, hunched over reading his book. He will listen to the leaves rustling in the wind, and he will listen to fragments of conversations as people pass by. He needs trees and grass and dogs and dirt in order to survive this city.

At the entrance to the park, under the shade of a golden maple tree, there sits a beautiful old man with ocean eyes. He appears to be homeless, with his ragged army jacket and his torn winter hat and all of his belongings thrown into a giant green backpack. They make eye contact and the old man beckons him with his hands. Slowly he makes his way to the old man under the golden maple tree and sits beside him. They share a long, sad, satisfied smile, full of sentiment and understanding. They can see each other clearly, they know intuitively that they share a deep otherworldly connection. They speak to each other silently with their glistening eyes. The old man smiles and says, “You have a beautiful soul, and you come from a beautiful place. Don’t forget your origins.”

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Is this really reality?

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She continues her skip-bounce-dance-step through the park, along the rain-grey cobblestone path. She’s on her way to the coffee shop in which she spends the majority of her time. As she tells the people in her life, “They make the shittiest coffee in the city, but at least they pay me. I’ll give them credit for that.” She works too many hours, but she doesn’t mind too much. She appreciates the free (though shitty) coffee, which she downs by the hour, and she appreciates the inspiration she gets from customers. The promise of cheap (though shitty) coffee attracts mostly passionate poor young people.

It attracts travelers and transients who tie their dogs to bike racks and keep a trained eye on them while they sip by the window; it attracts college students who seek inspiration for their term papers and poetry assignments; it attracts writers, artists, filmmakers and musicians who need an escape from their dark lonely dens. She engages in conversations with these people about time and space, dreams and reality, counterculture movements, clouds, astrology, astronomy, Taoism... And she listens closely to other people’s conversations, sometimes stealing lines and writing them down in her notebook.

The way that she speaks is rhythmic, frantic, musical, prophetic. Poetry leaks from her pores.

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Was there ever a time when time existed?

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Time moves strangely, flowing sporadically and haphazardly. Time doesn't exist here or there, time doesn't exist anywhere.

He was born, he believes, with something he likes to call "Multiple Realities Disorder". His world is always spinning, his reality is constantly shifting in and out of focus. He lives in a dream world, one that is sometimes beautiful and sometimes dreadful. He never knows what time it is and he rarely knows where he is, who he is, what this life is. But then again, to a certain extent, isn't that the case for everyone here? Some people are just better at masking their confusion. The majority of people go through life (this strange blue haze) with an air of false confidence. He goes through his life with an awful case of crippling self-doubt. He rarely knows what to do or say... but at least he's genuine.

Beauty, he believes, can be found in overwhelming disorder. He has abandoned all routines. His life is no longer lived within the field of time. He doesn't own a watch, he doesn't own a clock. His perception of time has been erased, let go of, reformed, screwed with, turned to shit. His reality is becoming more confused, more distorted. Nothing is linear, nothing is logical. His world is constructed by sounds and colors, swirling beautifully and haphazardly. His world shakes, quivers, flashes, unsure of its own existence.

He sits on his cold metal bench and watches the mothers with their bundles of joy, the young girls holding their silent vigils, the middle-aged men with their habits and routines. It's sunny for the first time in a week and a half, which means there are more people making their way through the park. These people march militantly; some run, none walk with any sense of serenity. He can't relate to any of the people that he sees, but he can understand them on a certain level.

When he observes from a distance, he feels that he can begin to grasp the beauty, the cruelty, the unparalleled complexity of the human race. Sometimes distance is necessary if you want to see anything up close.

He sees, he senses, he feels, he fears.

His mother used to tell him, “You’re a sensitive soul. Always be proud of that”.
He knows that he’s a sensitive soul, but he sure as hell isn’t proud of it.

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The light of the day is constantly changing

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The park benches are oriented towards the sun. She walks by the people sitting on these benches and smiles deeply at them. They look so beautiful, she thinks, so angelic, so golden. The people sitting on benches are blinded by the sun. They can see her shape, her silhouette, but they can’t see her face. She’s a shadow, she’s a dream, she can’t quite be seen.

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Respect the privacy of the soul

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He doesn’t eat enough, he’s been told. He fills the void with coffee and cigarettes. He doesn’t smile enough, he’s been told. He refuses to be fake, refuses to be fake for the sake of others. His silence is contagious and oppressive, and he doesn’t smile enough (or so he’s been told).

A pack and a half of Camel Filters, at least five cups of coffee, usually one meal per day (consisting mostly of cheese, meat, salt, hot sauce, MSG... the only foods that smokers can really taste). He leads an incredibly unhealthy life, or so he’s been told.

He lives in a crumbling house. The landlord refuses to fix the leaks, and so he refuses to pay the rent. Every interaction he’s had with the landlord has been confrontational and unfortunate. His house is molding and the walls are beginning to chip away. He has very few possessions. A mattress to sleep on, a few T shirts, one pair of jeans, a vase in the kitchen with some beautiful decaying red flowers. His jacket is starting to fray at the collar and the cuffs, his shoes are

stained with spilled coffee, his guitar has a hole where the pickguard used to be. He likes things better that way. Old, grimy, worn-in, genuine.

He has assumed the role of the starving artist. He doesn't have a paying job and he spends very little money. In order to obtain the small amount of money that he does spend (on coffee, cigarettes, some food), he works labor-ready jobs when he needs to. Right now he has \$193.53 to his name, which will last him a while. He spends his time walking, and sitting in coffee shops, and writing, writing, reading, writing.

He leads a literary life, or so he likes to tell himself. He's trying to write a novel. He doesn't believe he has anything to say, but nevertheless he feels the need to write. He is an excessive consumer of paper. He writes his thoughts, his dreams, his complaints, his to-do lists, his observations, and yes, his novel, in a spiral-bound notebook. He goes through one of these notebooks in about a month. He stacks the finished notebooks in his closet and subsequently forgets about them.

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America, please wake up from your reality TV dream!

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She leads an inspired life, a healthy life, a passionate life, a revolutionary life. She's hopelessly in love with her world, but at the same time she wants to reform the world. She's optimistic but that doesn't mean she's blind. She carries a silver paint pen everywhere she goes and writes poetry and draws peace signs in the bathroom stalls.

She wants to shake up society. Rebellion is her main form of expression. She participates in protests and rallies, she puts bumper stickers on her car. She encourages her friends to pay attention to politics. She wears strange clothes and she rarely brushes her hair, in an attempt to get some sort of reaction from what she calls "bourgeois society".

Her faith in humanity is constantly being shattered and restored, shattered and restored.

Work is busy today. She's tired and she's been yelled at a few times already. Most of the people who have come in have been depressed and bitter, none of them smiling and all of them staring blankly and intensely at their laptops. When she makes her rounds, wiping tables and refilling napkins, she sees that the majority of them are scrolling through various forms of social media (the endless desert). Their expressions are blank and they never look away from their screens.

She tries her best not to be judgmental, but HOLY SHIT, she screams internally, They're fast asleep! They're in a deep dark trance! Today, her faith in humanity is being shattered. Tomorrow, surely, it will be restored. That's usually how it goes.

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I kept you in my dreams

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The coffee shop door is covered with flyers and posters and graffiti. He's never been to this one. It's only a few blocks away from the park but he hasn't noticed it until today. He shoves the door open after spending a few moments looking at the graffiti. It's grimy inside. The coffee is cheap (though shitty).

He sits by the window (he must always sit by windows). The sky is slightly blue and the windows are slightly blue. When combined, the outside world looks vividly blue, perfectly blue, uncompromisingly blue.

In this blue haze he sees a sweet-looking german shepherd, tied to a metal post. It just sits there, staring, calm and confused.

"Dogs are angels", he writes in his notebook.

He sees an old couple dressed in rags, rolling cigarettes on the table outside. They argue and they don't smile with their eyes.

"Never fake a smile", he writes in his notebook.

He sees a young woman outside, taking a break from something, burning her lips on her tea. She stares at the sky and the clouds, which seem to be moving much faster than usual. She stares for a long time, longer than most people would.

"I wish I could find someone to help me through this world", he writes in his notebook.

The girl with her head turned to the sky, she looks like someone he's seen before, maybe somewhere in some dream. She looks as if she's radiating pure golden light.

He hears a scream from across the street. He tears his eyes from the young woman and searches for the sound's source. There's a man, a rough looking man in a rough looking pickup truck with a skull and crossbones spraypainted on its side. He yells and shakes his fist at a yellow-haired man with a cowboy hat, who's accompanied by a drugged-up girlfriend. The rough looking man stalls his truck right there at the intersection, gets out and starts walking towards the couple across the street. He pulls out a crowbar and holds it high above his head. The man with the

cowboy hat yells obscenities and the drugged-up girlfriend considers running away and forgetting this life.

The light of the day is constantly changing. What is reality when shadows are undefined and sunlight is blinding? What is reality when life is nothing but a dream?

The screaming continues. Mothers cover their daughters' eyes and ears, shielding them from the obscenities of the world. His heart races. He chooses to focus once more on the young woman, who watches and continues peacefully sipping her tea.

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Life continues to be continuous

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She works too many hours. She's incredibly sleep deprived, exhausted, loopy. To counteract this feeling she drinks too much coffee, buzzing like a fly. She talks excitedly, she moves fast, she dances and she bounces up and down.

It's a hazy Sunday.

Her boss comes in looking tired. He keeps his sunglasses on. She thinks he's a sweet man, very genuine. He has a silver hoop in his ear and he covers most of his grey hair with a beret.

"Just stopping by to check in, see how business is going," he says with a faint smile.

"Not bad, boss. Business is busy. How's your day so far?"

He shrugs his shoulders and says, with doomed depressed defeat, "Fucking awful."

She lets out a tragic gasp and runs toward him, throws her arms around him, comforts him a bit with her warm careful femininity. He hugs her back weakly and says simply, "Break up", which she responds to with another tragic gasp. He asks for a cup of coffee (which she pours gently, with tender care) and leans against the counter, sighs, looks out the blue haze window.

He thanks her kindly for the coffee and the hug, hands her a few rolls of change for the cash register, and slumps out of the door.

She looks down at the ground and sighs. She lets other people's emotions affect her too deeply.

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I worry, I worry, I worry my days away
Music keeps the abyss at bay

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He's always tried to be optimistic but sometimes it's impossible to ignore the pain that inevitably comes when you're forced to be a human being, when your only choice is to participate in this utterly cruel and confusing world.

He spends a great deal of time noticing all of the shadows that are emitted from the objects and structures of the world. Everywhere he looks, he sees shadows. Blurred shapes, bland colors... mostly grey and black. Sometimes he sees beauty in the shadows, but only sometimes. He tries to deaden the pain with coffee and cigarettes. Anything to keep the abyss at bay, anything to fill the void.

Music keeps the abyss at bay. He knows this, and so he listens to music literally every moment of every day (except for the brief period of time it takes to get up from his chair and flip the record over). He listens to music when he showers and when he sleeps. He listens with headphones when he has to leave his house. Sometimes, when his world starts getting darker, he has two songs playing simultaneously, one from the record player and one from the cracked MP3 player. This usually helps. Music, for him, is necessary for survival. Anything it takes to keep the abyss at bay.

When he was nine years old, he did away with speaking for a while. It didn't last very long; it was really just a silly game that he liked to play with his parents. Instead of speaking, he would write them notes in his swirling handwriting, saying things like "Can I go play outside?" or "What's for breakfast?" or "I love you!". And they would respond with smiling eyes. He saved those scraps of paper in his pockets until the end of the day, when he would lie in bed and read everything that he had successfully avoided saying. He felt good about the fact that he had said so much without speaking at all. He was in love with the blissful sense of solitude that comes with silence. After a few days of this, his parents would say that they wanted him to take a break from the quiet game. He reluctantly obeyed and began speaking again (he's always hated conflict). They would clap their hands and exclaim, "We missed hearing your soft sweet voice!"

and he would smile shyly, unsure of what to say. He felt more comfortable living his life in silence.

And now he has the freedom to do exactly that. Often he makes friends and acquaintances and love interests uncomfortable with his affinity for silence. He chooses not to speak unless it's absolutely necessary.

His silence, he's been told, is contagious and oppressive.

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Remember those rare moments of infinity

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The new guy, the one that was just hired a week ago, comes just in time for his shift. He moves like a nervous habit. She says hello and smiles a genuine smile, hoping to comfort him just a bit. He nods and returns the smile, very faintly.

Finally, finally, her shift is over! And the sun is still out, even though 6 o'clock is already approaching. She makes herself a cup of green tea, packs up her things, says goodbye, runs out the door. She decides to walk aimlessly through the sparkling city until the sun sets. The sky is golden and the clouds are bronze. The world has a strange dreamy pale yellow tint to it. Here it is, nostalgia at its finest.

She walks along busy sidewalks, people coming and going, left and right. These people move with a purpose, marching militantly, staring straight ahead. She feels alone on these golden streets, but in a comfortable and satisfied way.

She takes a turn into a strange alley, nestled in between two buildings with pale-yellow brick walls. She walks slowly. She sees an old man with ocean eyes, leaning against the wall. She walks slower. This old man is vaguely familiar; he reminds her of a dream she once had. They make sudden intense eye contact. His ocean eyes gleam, his ocean eyes speak volumes. He smiles the most genuine smile she's ever seen. He speaks with a sweet unassuming voice. "You're the second one I've seen today!" "The second what?" He just smiles and says, "You have a beautiful soul and you come from a beautiful place. Don't forget your origins."

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Our realities are constantly, subtly intertwining

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He walks, he wanders, he slowly makes his way back to his crumbling house. He listens to Bob Dylan's musical poetry through his headphones and silently hums to himself. Time passes slowly, time flows strangely and sporadically. His mind moves in and out of the present tense.

He shoves the door open. Is it just his imagination, or is his house in an even more dilapidated state that it was when he left in the morning? Now the ceilings are dripping some strange liquid onto the already-stained carpet.

He puts a record on and sits in the corner by the window. He stares blankly for a while, overtaken by cloudy thoughts. He takes out his notebook as if he were performing some ritual. He moves into a bit of a trance.

He writes for a long time, it seems, occasionally looking up to survey the scene. The sun has set and he can see his reflection in the window. The glass is warped and his reflection is strangely, cruelly distorted.

He stares at his reflection for a long time, it seems. Softly, slowly, he speaks in a minor key. Softly, slowly, he asks his reflection, "Who is the saint of the 21st century?"