

Dread
(part one)

EXT. MARKETPLACE STREET - MORNING

The sun is peeking through a slight overcast in the morning. With what little rays of gold, a MAN is standing in the cobblestone street, smoking a cigarette while waiting for the café to open. The street is quiet, and the only things to occupy the café patio are several plain, small round tables.

EXT. CAFÉ PATIO

The MAN watches the SERVER unlock and open the front doorway, then enter the patio with two chairs, setting them down at a table. As the SERVER leaves, the MAN remains to look at that table with its chairs. After a moment, he comes to sit down. He is familiar with this place.

The SERVER enters again with two more chairs, sets them down suddenly, and runs back inside. Within a moment, the SERVER returns with an ashtray.

SERVER
<En Francais>
What will you have this morning?

MAN
<En Francais>
The usual, please.

SERVER
Right away.

The SERVER turns to pick up the two new chairs and arrange them at another table, then goes inside.

The MAN flicks his cigarette in the ashtray, and stares up at the overcast sky. He is occupied in thought. He blinks and becomes conscious of his cigarette. He extinguishes it. The SERVER comes and sets down a cup of black coffee, a tin of hot cream, and a pastry (the kind plain and shaped like a heart). The MAN looks up and acknowledges the SERVER.

The MAN takes the coffee, smells the steamy brew. His expression is unchanged. He takes the tin and pours hot milk into the coffee. As he stirs, he seems slightly changed by this, as he is recalling something sentimental. The stirring becomes gentle, until he stops. He slowly moves to smell the brew. And as he does, he is slightly afflicted by the familiarity.

He looks up at the sky again. He smiles a bit. But then the smile fades. He looks at the coffee again, and takes it to drink. He closes his eyes, and sips. While holding the warm mug in both hands near his face, he is momentarily swept away by a memory of the most precious magnitude. The kind of memory that can only be savored for a moment before realising that it's only nothing but a memory. And then pleasing moment fades and a bitterness moves in to replace it.

The MAN's eyes well up as he sets the mug down, and then he looks down and closes his eyes. He is completely still for a drawn moment. Then he looks up and his eyes are empty. All of what he had just felt is gone. The welling up had drained, and not a drop of sorrow nor joy remains on his face. He is dry.

EXT. CAFÉ PATIO - AFTERNOON

He is still staring ahead, smoking again. There are two cups now, one is empty, and another half full and cold. The plate that held the pastry is gone, save a few crumbs. The time is noon, and there are people bustling about the café.

SERVER
Are you finished?

The MAN dismisses the dishes with a gesture from his hand. He continues to look ahead. As the SERVER picks up the dishes, the MAN extinguishes his cigarette and lights another one.

EXT. CAFÉ PATIO - NIGHT

The SERVER lights a sidewalk torch and then approaches the MAN. The café is no longer bustling; there is no one else around.

SERVER
Are you finished?

The MAN dismisses the dinner dishes with the same kind of gesture. He continues to look ahead. As the SERVER picks up the dishes, the MAN extinguishes his cigarette and lights another one.

He takes a deep inhale, and then lets it out slowly. The smoke suddenly occupies him, as he becomes slightly amused by the nebulous cloud. But as it dissipates, so does his smile.

He looks ahead again for a few moments. Then he flicks ashes into the ashtray, reaches into his wallet, lays down his bill, and leaves.

He does not look back.

In the past-- even a long while after she left me-- I thought about Anny. Now I think of no one anymore. I don't even bother looking for words. It flows in me, more or less quickly. I fix nothing, I let it go.

Through the lack of attaching myself to words, my thoughts remain nebulous most of the time. They sketch vague, pleasant shapes and then are swallowed up: I forget them almost immediately.

Jean Paul Sartre, *Nausea*.