

Tale of Munt – The Story of a Verbosely Eloquent Overthinker

Note to the Reader: Munt is an entirely fictional character with no basis in reality. Any relation to an existing, real human being is entirely coincidental.

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As he waved his tearful parents and hyper little brother goodbye, Munt could scarcely contain his excitement. He had finally made it. All those endless nights studying, mindless school assemblies, and ridiculously undisciplined fools he was subject to for four years had led to this moment. Placing his suitcase on his bed, he opened the window of his new dorm room and breathed in the musky college air. There was an odd tranquility about the afternoon, and he let a slight smile cross his face as he examined the campus he would call home for the next four years. It was a sight to behold. The sunlight glistened off the glass windows of the newly built School of Architecture, striking a delicately balanced ray of high-energy photons right into the heart of university emblem emblazoned upon the 300-year-old Department of Mathematics. Such was the nature of the university—a perfect blend of old and new, with a collection of mite-sized students interspersed throughout. Or at least, that’s the size they appeared from his 11th floor dorm window. Munt pondered the backstories of his soon-to-be colleagues as he looked out on them.

A bookish young woman was making her way toward the chemistry labs. Probably a graduate student, crumbling under the weight of her poor life decisions and abysmal salary. Likely went through high school and undergrad at the top of all her courses, spending her mornings frantically scrambling down lecture notes and her evenings studying in the library. Definitely single, with no interest or time to start a relationship anyway. She did have a kind of brainy attractiveness behind those small windows she called glasses, though, so it wouldn’t be surprising if she were involved in an affair with her advisor. Munt wondered how someone who clearly possessed some level of intelligence could choose the so-called “pursuit of knowledge” over the triple-figure salary she could have gotten as a scientist in industry.

Near the central fountain, an older gentleman sat on a wooden bench, a cup of coffee in one hand and a mathematics textbook in the other. The intrigued look on his face suggested an attempt at solving some ages-old problem, the only thing professors ever thought about. Well, that and the paramours they called students. Some of the greatest minds in the world, and yet unable to carry on a simple conversation without digressing into some obscure theory far removed from reality. Perhaps they were learned and intelligent, but that certainly did not make them capable. Munt fantasized about how amusing it would be to show this particular one up during a lecture.

Orthogonal to the man, at the eastern side of campus, a teenage boy about Munt’s own age tossed a frisbee to his dog in the woody pastures near the School of Engineering. It was a Golden Retriever, undoubtedly dragged with the student from his home in some rich suburb. What interesting creatures dogs were. Content to sit around all day and do nothing other than wag their tails and pant with those insufferable tongues of theirs sticking out. How foolish did –

“HEY NEW ROOMIE!”

The door swung open, and a stout, overly peppy boy who looked like he should still be in high school barged in. He had ginger, unruly hair, freckles interweaved throughout his chubby face, and was holding an oversized suitcase over his shoulder. Munt immediately regretted his decision to turn down his old friend Hilsa in favor of “trying out” a random roommate.

“Nice to meet you! My name’s Chuckie! I’m not even supposed to be here, actually. I’m still only 16, but my dad is a lecturer down in the history department, and I’d completed all my credits, so they let me in. Anyways, I can’t wait to get to know you! We’re going to stay up all night talking and laughing, it’s going to be great!”

“Uh, hi, my name is Munt.”

Great, thought Munt, I have an overexcited and annoying prodigy for a roommate. What a great start to the year.

Shaking the thought from his head, Munt went over and lay down on his twin-size bed as Chuckie blabbered on about some scholarship his dad was going to sponsor. *It’ll be fine. I probably won’t spend much time in this box of a room anyways. I’m going to love it here, and do everything I’ve ever wanted. But for now, I don’t have to be at orientation for another few hours, so I may as well rest. I’m exhausted.* And with that, Munt closed his eyes and drifted off, imagining the low drum of the mini-fridge was his brain’s delta waves humming him to sleep.

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Munt did not believe in love at first sight, but the way he currently felt was a damn good challenge to his skepticism. Orientation had started out just about as dull and contrived as he would have expected, with a stupid icebreaker requiring everyone to share his or her name, intended major, and favorite ice cream flavor. He had not paid much attention, giving his answer when his turn came and employing fake smiles and nods for the rest of the exercise. Then, the group leaders set aside 15 minutes and told everyone to introduce themselves to at least two new people. *I guess some things never change*, mused Munt to himself as he recalled his shy and diffident young self struggling to make friends the first day of middle school. A feeling of self-satisfaction spread through his body as he considered how far he had come.

“Hi! What’s your name? I’m Hue Tran, but my friends call me Hue-Hue.”

Munt struggled to find the words to respond when he saw the girl standing in front of him. He was not one to get frazzled, and was somewhat taken aback by his own lack of composure. Even his critical mind failed to find a single blemish in the form now before him. The setting sun shone on the silky, black hair flowing down her neck, the golden and black intermingling to underscore the clarity of her tan skin. She had chocolate brown eyes, delicate eyelashes, and sharp, perfect cheekbones. Her pearly teeth formed a smile exuding such warmth that the irrational part of Munt’s mind convinced him he’d melt right on the spot.

“Oh, uhh ... I’m Munt. It’s—ahem, um, it’s really nice to meet you.” He shook her hand. It was soft.

“What a cool name! Where are you from? My family is from Vietnam, but I grew up in Arizona. It was a pretty small town, so being at this huge university is really intimidating.”

“I agree. My family is from Yemen, but I also grew up here, in Southern California. My hometown is a decently sized suburb, but coming here is still a gigantic change for me.”

“I bet. So Munt, tell me about yourself. Who is the man that is Munt?”

He was a bit thrown off by how forward she was. That was less of an icebreaker question and more of a first date question. Alas, the desire to continue speaking to Hue-Hue overpowered any cautionary intuition he had against catching feelings so soon.

“Oh, well, I really like to read, and I want to try and major in computer science and go into industry when I’m—”

“Oh, forget about school! We’re going to be getting plenty of that the moment classes start. I want to know who YOU are. What do you like to do? Your hobbies? Any special talents?”

Just then, the group leaders told everyone to come back to the center of the field for the last activity before dinner. Something about a human knot.

“God, I hate that game; it’s so uncomfortable getting so close to people you’ve only just met,” said Hue-Hue disinterestedly. “What do you say we go to dinner early, and you finish telling me about that job in industry?” she beamed.

Before Munt could respond, she was jogging off toward the dining halls, and Munt, much to his disappointment in himself for the lack of self-control, could not help but follow.

“How do you feel about starting college?” inquired Hue-Hue, picking at her flavorless chicken tenders.

Munt scratched his head, as if to indicate he was deeply considering the question, but his mind was somewhere else. They’d been talking about their pasts for over an hour, and it seemed that Munt became more attracted to Hue-Hue with every word she spoke. Apparently she was a huge humanities buff who loved philosophy and psychology and found great pleasure in sitting and talking to other people, both familiar and foreign, about such topics. Her voice radiated a sort of calm confidence, revealing a peaceful and self-assured soul Munt was amazed to find in someone his own age. However, his fascination with Hue-Hue was subtly challenged by anxiety from being with her in the first place. He observed the back-and-forth going on in his head between his left and right brain.

Left: What are you doing here? It is your first day, and you’re letting yourself get distracted by a girl you’ve only just met! You should be at orientation, learning the skills you’ll need to be successful here.

Right: What skills? Learning how to untangle oneself from a sweaty mass of intertwined arms? Lighten the hell up. If you're enjoying talking to her, then talk to her. College is about more than just acing all your classes.

Left: There will be plenty of time for that. If you get distracted now, you'll regret it later. All that finding balance stuff is a myth put forth by incapable dolts who never possessed the ability to succeed anyway. Is that what you want to be?

Right: Just relax. Things aren't always so black and white. Allowing yourself to have a social life will only aid you academically, and –

Munt was startled out of his thoughts by a stale sweet potato fry to the head.

"I asked you a question, Koala Brain," she giggled. "Get out of your own head and answer me."

But there was no chance of that, for Munt's cycle of overthinking had already begun to suffocate him. As always, he had been having a great time, and it assaulted him out of nowhere.

"Uh, ..., sorry, I, um, I have to go," mumbled Munt, stumbling out of his seat and heading toward the exit.

"Wait, hold on a sec—"

But Munt was already out the door and restlessly pacing back to his dorm room, crumbling under the weight of his self-created anxiety.