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Incidents Of Egotourism In The Temporary World



Synopsis

Churning like a third-world traveler's stomach, *Incidents of Egotourism in the Temporary World* is a travelogue about finding the unexpected in familiar places. A frustrated shipper of rare books at a Boston bookstore (who refers to himself as "The Egotourist") returns to his parents' suburban New Jersey home to work temporary jobs and earn enough money to take a hundred buses to Cuzco, Peru. Alternating among essays, dialogues, and short spiels, *Incidents of Egotourism in the Temporary World* rolls with the Egotourist's restlessness as he tells of long-distance love, Black Sabbath cover bands, flirtatious administrative assistants, minotaurean secretaries, and camaraderie in copy centers, all of it heading toward a hard-earned trip south of the border. Ultimately, the Egotourist discovers that what he sought in far-flung destinations is just as easily found in the unexpected exoticism of home.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

...I looked at this right away, and I'm afraid it's way over my head... -- Another Literary Agent...It is terribly overwritten, but overwritten in a way that makes us want to frame a page on the wall... -- A Literary AgentYou have a unique writing style - reminding me at times of Kurt Vonnegut or Henry Miller... -- Yet Another Literary Agent

Lee Klein was born in NYC, raised in Lawrenceville, NJ, and graduated from Oberlin College with a degree in English Literature. He's lived in Austin, Boston, and Princeton, NJ, and in May 2004 will leave the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn where he's been for the last four years and move to Iowa City, where he'll attend the Iowa Writers' Workshop in the fall. He edits a semi-literary website called

Eyeshot. Everything else can be gleaned from the book if you buy it.

Man I love this book. The title alone, when you stop and consider it will make the hills and valleys resound with the peals of your hysterical laughter. (At least that's what happened here in Vermont. Maybe your laughter will be absorbed by the fabric walls of your cubicle, but laugh you will.) The title makes you think that you are going to be in for some GÃ¶del/Escher/Bach type philosophical/mathematical/existential noodling, until you realize that this mysterious "temporary world" is merely the world of the minimum wage earnin' water cooler gabbin' no health insurance havin' Temp Employee!! But when you get comfortable with that idea, you find that you are plunged into that more mysterious and philosophical world of the Mobius strip of the Egotourist's life. If anyone can change the inherent blandness of an MFA writing program, the redoubtable Mr. Lee Klein is the man who might shoulder this write man's burden. In IOEITTW we find raw talent that contains the spark of life and an individual pov on the many things that have made up Mr. Klein's sparkly life. But will this young firebrand of a writer be tamed? Will his work be so muted by the various proprieties of the academic writing life that we won't even recognize him when he comes out the other end of the writer mill smiling sheepishly, holding in his hand (to extend the wooly metaphor beyond good sense or taste) the sheepskin he has earned? Or will he maintain his unique voice? I must believe the later to be true and I await his next fully realized work, which IOEITTW presages will be a thundering success. And I think finding out the answer to these questions holds no small degree of excitement. That is, if you care about writing, and this writer in particular. Who, remember, is one Lee Klein, of whom it could be said: "Non destare il cane che dorme". A phrase he might have done well to remember at the Black Sabbath band picnic he so nimbly limns in IOEITTW. "Egotourism" has a banal grandeur -- the sort of hyper-real moments in our lives when something happens and we get chills though we don't know why. It was James Joyce who described those moments as "epiphanies". There are a lot of those in this book. Or as I like to think of it -- it is one long chill, from start to finish. And the magic of it is we don't even know why we are feeling that. Does Klein know? Who knows? Not me, that's for sure. (Disclaimer -- I have met Mr. Klein and we have traded words back and forth, though not enough to be considered friends or anything of the sort, really. In fact, he might harbor some dislike for me, lord knows why, but he might. And he might consider me nothing more than a speedbump on his road to literary fame and fortune. If so, forget the good things I said about his book. If not: Yo Lee! You go!!!)

I read this in between 'Desolation Angels' and '100 years of solitude' -- a large theme of the book is

being in-between adventures and finding weird magic in the middle planes--so it fit its position very well. It's a gentle read (goes very fast) that brings together random characters in highly detailed ways to deepen the many themes it juggles--aging, transition, ennui, loss and those rare moments of suburban magic. The way I read it at least, at its confused, uncollected, strangely beautiful center, it is both a coming of age work and the photo negative of this--a discovery of childhood in your twenties.

I could write a better book than "Incidents of Egotourism in the Temporary World" by bashing my head repeatedly against a computer keyboard while the machine was running "Microsoft Notepad." I could take a cr@p in one of those grade school composition books with the black and white camouflage pattern on the front and rear covers, place said book in a lawn and leaf garbage bag full of beer cans and stray whiskey bottles, shake the contents, reach inside the bag, and remove a much finer novel. But then again, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Kwisatz Haderach, the Dog's Bollocks. My f@rts smell like roses and sound like Tchiakowski. My urine cures all known diseases while tasting like a 1991 Beaujolais...In short, even though I may be able to defecate a better book than this, that doesn't mean it isn't a good book, one that I highly recommend.

I typically enjoy reading non fiction, however this book by Lee Klein embodies every inner monologue that I have dreamed. It is uplifting, entertaining, and quite brilliant.

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