

Fade Away, or the Artist

Jeremy Rider

Lone Voice Press (Mar 1, 2022)

\$16.95

979-898527480-6

Fade Away, or The Artist is a literary novel about ennui, loneliness, and finding one's place in the world.

In Jeremy Rider's literary novel *Fade Away, or The Artist*, a young man navigates new adulthood.

Jimmy, who grew up in a loving home, is now in his twenties, single, works for decent pay at a magazine, and is part of an exuberant friend group. Still, Jimmy grapples with his sense of purpose. After experiencing episodes of “fading,” during which his memory falters, Jimmy goes to see doctors, rabbis, and psychiatrists in the hopes of finding a solution to his ennui. Meanwhile, his friendships and potential romantic partnerships help him to combat his loneliness.

The book is set in Washington, DC in the 1990s, and is thoroughly of that moment: Jimmy rides his bike thirty miles from DC and has a fading episode; without a cellphone, he hitches a ride from a stranger to return home. Discussions of mental health are taboo, which influences Jimmy's choices for treatment. And cultural attitudes toward women shape Jimmy's perspective on his own place in society.

The women in the book relish in the fact that they have successful careers. Their personalities are strong, and their interests are progressive. Still, Jimmy and the other men in the cast maintain that traditional gender roles are important to relationships. Much of Jimmy's existential crisis centers on his loneliness and lack of clarity about what he wants in a relationship; he puts significant weight on a woman to make him happy. Often, this involves blurring women's complexities in his mind, even those of close friends; his men friends are also clouded by his biases. The prose supports his beliefs, though they come to seem unrealistic. Still, the text is cunning about capturing Jimmy's perspective—and still allowing for hints that others are not as uncaring or annoying as Jimmy perceives them to be.

Ultimately, Jimmy is an antihero: most concerned with himself, he's given to both introspection and pessimism. Despite all of the thinking he does, he comes up short on self-awareness. But his limited appeal is also irrelevant to the story, in which each move he makes and word he says is a reflection of his ennui.

Instead of moving his story forward much, the short, fast chapters center on single events in Jimmy's days: a brief talk with a friend about her writing, or a bike ride through the woods with another friend. The result is a subtle tale that only hints at Jimmy's potential to recover from what ails him.

Fade Away, or The Artist is a literary novel about ennui, loneliness, and finding one's place in the world.

AIMÉE JODOIN (December 22, 2021)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.