



## EXTREME DOCUMENTARIES: A LONER SURVIVING UNIVERSITY

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*University Geographic Special Report*

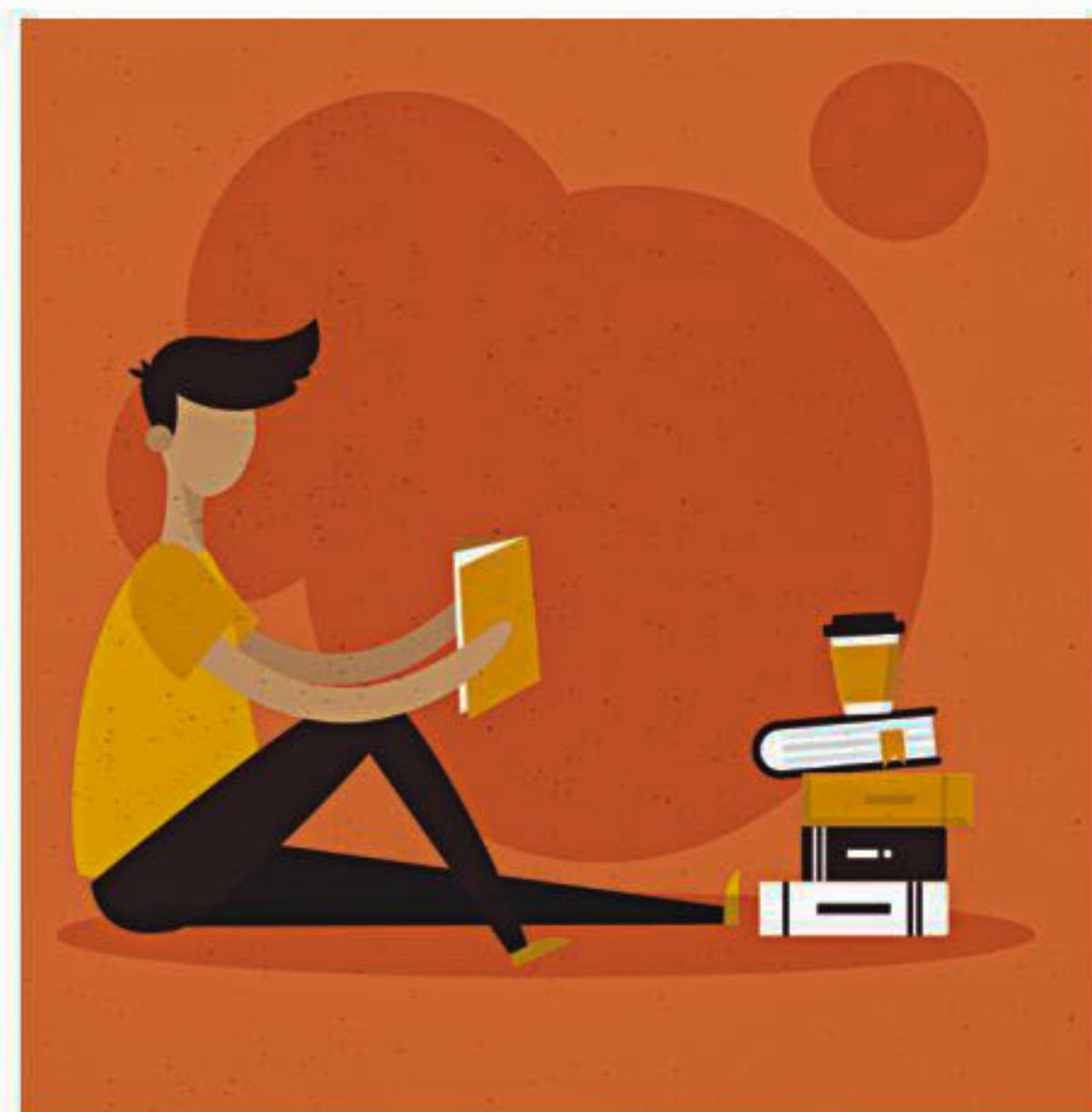
The loner. A solitary creature living among us in plain sight. Their purpose in life, unknown. Their lonesome lifestyle, often mocked by the ones who choose to be surrounded by friends whom they later refer to as 'snakes' on social media. The loner usually nests in the corner of his room where the only thing that can reach him is his Wi-Fi signal. This peculiar species dreads social contact and hence, they try to avoid it no matter the cost. However, thanks to the circle of life which involves the need to be educated at a university, they have to come out of their natural habitat and into the wild.

University is the promised land of happiness and life. It is where you get to discover yourself and meet the people who will be there for you till the end of time. As long as you open up to others and talk to them, university isn't that bad of a place. But what about the loners? How do they go on to survive this habitat which portrays the very thing they dread?

On campus, no matter where the loner goes, they will always find themselves surrounded by people engaged in 'meaningless' acts of socialising. Be it the fields or the university cafeteria, students are busy with their peers talking about love, life and what not. Besides the usual groups of friends, there are also the couples doing itish-pitish in some corners. The best away to avoid these people and to pass time is to take out a pair of headphones, plug it in your phone and crank up the volume to maximum.

This is what loners do. Music keeps the world at bay for them, just like it does for anyone else. Apart from music, loners can often keep themselves busy on their smartphones for prolonged periods of time. Music, games and YouTube all play a vital role in helping loners survive university.

But not every loner will enjoy spending time on their smartphones. They seek something better and more intense that will nullify the need for



human contact at a greater extent. For them, there is no better option than to get lost in the pages of a book. Thankfully, the university has just the place for this. The library; a bookworm's paradise and a loner's asylum. Here, loners are able to grasp the peace and quiet they seek on the university grounds. No one to bother them, no one to question their loneliness. They can spend all eternity immersed in the words of

their favourite authors.

Being solitary in nature, the loner is placed at the bottom of the 'attention chain'. They're often hunted by predators, the ones at the top of this chain; the popular kids. The hunt is not direct, it's somewhat an involuntary conflict of thoughts where one resents the other for being what they are.

Then comes class time. Lectures that can last up to eighty minutes or more, depending on the mercy of the course instructor. It's hard to get by some of these lectures without falling asleep. Hence, the loner tries to make small talk with the ones sitting next to him. Just the usual conversation about the course or exam dates. Many have trained themselves to sleep with their eyes open and their heads programmed to nod at certain intervals. As the class comes to an end and everyone breathes a sigh of relief, the course instructor decides to drop one last bombshell. "Group project."

"Oh boy, group projects! Just what I like" - said no loner ever. Forget loners, even the most social and extroverted people often dread this academic norm which makes individuals collaborate with one another to have an end product that reflects the necessity of the sixth habit of highly effective people. The thought of getting involved in such group work sends shivers down a loner's spine. Certainly there is no escape from it since it will probably have around ten marks that add to the final score of the course. Then how do they survive this?

Loners are not slackers (at least not all of them) and hence, they don't have any problem working on a project. But

forming a group is where the trouble is. If the teacher sorts everyone into groups, that's great. But if forming teams comes down to the students, the loners have a hard time getting in one. The smart ones are easily picked by others, but the ones who have a reputation for their lack of skills and professionalism, they probably need to wait till the end and end up in a group as the last one remaining. Loners often unite to form a separate group themselves, though how they make things work is still a mystery to be solved.

There are times when the loners feel the need to come out of their shell and embrace evolution. They too seek companionship at times. But for some reason, many of them feel insecure when it comes to approaching new people. So, to try their luck, many of them join clubs. Of course, the initial purpose is to get involved in co-curricular activities but at the same time, to meet new people and probably make a couple of friends. Sometimes things work out, sometimes they don't. If the will to actually open up to others is not there, loners will end up feeling left out even in the most popular of clubs.

As the daily university routine comes to an end, the loner begins to feel an ease in their minds. Back at home, they get back to their comfort zone; away from the world, as they plan another day of survival in the wilderness we know as university.

*Faisal wants to be the very best, like no one ever was. To survive university is his real test, to graduate is his cause. Send him memes and motivation at abir.afc@gmail.com*