

The smirking lamppost

On any old walk to work, Julio would pass at least 5 works of graffiti. Though certainly not annoyed by the artwork (in fact the graffiti added flavor to the neighborhood that he rather appreciated), there was one piece that really stood out to him. It was a smirking face painted on the base of an otherwise industrially metallic lamppost.

Julio liked to think that this smirking face gave the lamppost a kind of character that stood in opposition to its standard construction and very corporate position just outside the CVS. The face seemed to say “Of course I do my job, but I’m certainly not one of *them*.”

One day, Julio turned the corner to see that a slight flourish had been added to the smirking face. Just above the curve of the grinning cheek, there was a small scar that Julio thought was made of shimmering white paint.

Being that the face was a sort of daily reassurance to him, Julio was a little annoyed at this change. He inspected the face a bit more closely and discovered that, rather than being paint, the scar was actually a small divot in the metal that gave the face a more rugged, though not unappealing, look.

At first, Julio was put at ease by his closer inspection. The scar was added by the hands of time and not some malicious actor that, only moments ago, he was ready to chastise for this ridiculous act of vandalism. Julio shrugged thinking “this makes old lumpy look a little more dignified” and continued on his way, a small grin added to his own face.

As the days and months went by, other divots and scratches appeared on the smirking face until Julio realized it no longer appeared to be smirking at all. Instead, the face just looked tired and, well, old. Still, Julio considered this to be the natural way of things and always gave the face an appreciative little series of pats as he walked by.

On one particularly sunny day, Julio was contentedly whistling a new tune as he walked to work, but jerked to a stop when he came across the face. The sun was beating down upon the face at just the right angle for Julio to see how exhausted it had become. White pocks marred every curve and crease of the face. Julio’s hand instinctively went up to his own face. He palpated old pores and new wrinkles searching for signs of damage. There were none.

His inspection complete with no surprises, Julio tried to shake the strange feeling thrust upon him by the exhausted face. He looked down at his watch and remembered that he had to hurry or he’d be late for work. As he restarted his determined walk, he took steps to restore his good mood, mindfully focusing on his gait and the pleasure that the morning sun and chirping birds gave him. Just as he felt he was getting his groove back, a giant sign outside the CVS slingshotted him back into unease. “WE’RE EXPANDING” declared the sign and Julio couldn’t

help but let his mind wander to thoughts of opportunities, opportunity costs, and opportunities lost.

The next day, construction of the expanding mega pharmacy began and the exhausted lamppost was unceremoniously removed. It was gone, but so was Julio.