



The Scroll That Stole His Future

Muhammad Afaq





A vibrant cartoon illustration of Leo, a 19-year-old with exaggerated, tired but hopeful eyes, slumped on a beanbag chair in a messy, cozy room. His face is brightly lit by the glow of his oversized smartphone, which is comically large in his hands. Bold, clean outlines define his relaxed posture and the playful clutter of gaming controllers and snack wrappers around him. Bright, cheerful colors fill the room, but a subtle, soft purple hue emanates from the phone, hinting at the late hour.



A dynamic illustration showing Leo in a slightly different pose, perhaps leaning forward, eyes wide and fixed on his phone. His thumb is a streak of motion across the screen. The background is a swirling vortex of bright, cartoonish social media icons and notifications, pulling him in. His expression is a mix of intense focus and underlying fatigue, with a small, almost imperceptible frown. The colors are still cheerful but with a slight desaturated feel around him, contrasting with the vibrant screen.



Leo's eyes are wide open, hands frozen in mid-air above his phone, which is now glowing intensely with a soft, ethereal light. The screen is a brilliant, shimmering white, with no apps or feeds visible. His mouth is slightly agape in surprise, and his hair is playfully askew. The room around him is cast in the strange, pulsing glow, creating exaggerated shadows. The lines are smooth and flowing, emphasizing the magical moment.



The oversized smartphone screen is now vividly split. On the left side, a cartoon illustration shows "Future Leo 1": an older, slightly heavier version of Leo, still slumped on a couch, eyes glazed over, staring at a slightly smaller, yet still prominent, phone. The room is duller, with muted, desaturated colors, hinting at stagnation. This Leo has a perpetually tired expression and simplified, less vibrant features. The lines are still bold, but the overall feel is less dynamic, more static.



A close-up on the left side of the split screen, showing "Future Leo 1" in more detail. He's surrounded by generic, unkempt items – a half-eaten pizza box, discarded clothes – all rendered in muted, slightly grimy colors. His posture is slouched, and his eyes are vacant, reflecting the endless scroll. The exaggerated proportions make his slumped shoulders seem even more defeated.



The right side of the split screen now dominates, showing "Future Leo 2." This Leo is depicted with a bright, energetic aura. He's standing tall, eyes sparkling with determination, holding a sketchbook or a camera, actively creating or engaging with something. The background behind him is full of cheerful, bright colors, perhaps a workshop or a bustling, inspiring outdoor scene. His features are simplified but highly expressive, conveying joy and focus.



A close-up on the right side of the split screen, showing "Future Leo 2" fully. He's depicted with an exaggerated, joyful grin, perhaps covered in paint splatters, or holding a beautifully crafted wooden sculpture. His clothes are practical but stylish, reflecting his active life. The background is filled with playful, cartoonish tools or elements of his craft, all in vibrant, contrasting colors. His dynamic pose suggests energy and purpose.



Leo is back in his room, hands still hovering over the phone, but his expression has completely changed. His eyes are wide with a mix of shock and dawning realization, his mouth a perfect "O" of surprise. Sweat beads are comically exaggerated on his forehead. The two futures are still visible on the phone screen, casting contrasting light on his face – one dull, one bright. His body is slightly tense, poised for action.



Leo is depicted gently placing his phone face down on the beanbag, the glowing screen now hidden. His hands are moving with deliberate slowness, emphasizing the weight of his decision. His head is lifted, eyes focused on something beyond the frame – perhaps a window, or a corner of his room he hadn't noticed. His expression is serious but hopeful, a newfound resolve in his simplified features. The room's colors seem to subtly brighten.



A vibrant, dynamic illustration of Leo, now full of energy. He's no longer slouched but standing tall, perhaps holding a book, or a pen and paper, or even a small, symbolic plant he's tending. The background shows subtle hints of future projects or skills he's developing – a half-built model, a canvas, a computer screen displaying code. He has a determined, joyful grin, and his eyes sparkle. The colors are bright and optimistic, with smooth, flowing lines conveying movement and progress.