



Life is bullshit.

Consider your life for a moment. Think about all those little rituals that sustain you throughout your day—from the moment you wake up until that last, lonely midnight hour when you guzzle a gallon of NyQuil to drown out the persistent voice in your head. The one that whispers you should give up, give in, that tomorrow won't be better than today. Think about the absurdity of brushing your teeth, of arguing with your mother over the appropriateness of what you're wearing to school, of homework, of grade-point averages and boyfriends and hot school lunches.

And life. Think about the absurdity of life.

When you break down the things we do every day to their component pieces, you begin to understand how ridiculous they are. Like kissing, for instance. You wouldn't let a stranger off the street spit into your mouth, but you'll swap saliva with the boy or girl who makes your heart race and your pits sweat and gives you boners at the worst fucking times. You'll stick your tongue in his mouth or her mouth or their mouth, and let them reciprocate without stopping to consider where else their tongue has been, or whether they're giving you mouth herpes or mono or leftover morsels of their tuna-salad sandwich.

We shave our legs and pluck our eyebrows and slather our bodies with creams and lotions. We starve ourselves so we can fit into the perfect pair of jeans, we pollute our bodies with drugs to increase our muscles so we'll look ripped without a shirt. We drive fast and party hard and study for exams that don't mean dick in the grand scheme of the cosmos.

Physicists have theorized that we live in an infinite and infinitely expanding universe, and that everything in it will eventually repeat. There are infinite copies of your mom and your dad and your clothes-stealing little sister. There are infinite copies of you. Despite what you've spent your entire life believing, you are not a special snowflake. Somewhere out there, another you is living your life. Chances are, they're living it better. They're learning to speak French or screwing their brains out instead of loafing on the couch in their boxers, stuffing their face with bowl after bowl of Fruity Oatholes while wondering why they're all alone on a Friday night. But that's not even the worst part. What's really going to send you running over the side of the nearest bridge is that none of it matters. I'll die, you'll die, we'll all die, and the things we've done, the choices we've made, will amount to nothing.

Out in the world, crawling in a field at the edge of some bullshit town with a name like Shoshoni or Medicine Bow, is an ant. You weren't aware of it. Didn't know whether it was a soldier, a drone, or the queen. Didn't care if it was scouting for food to drag back to the nest or building new tunnels for wriggly ant larvae. Until now that ant simply didn't exist for you. If I hadn't mentioned it, you would have continued on with your life, pinballing from one tedious task to the next—shoving your tongue into the bacterial minefield of your girlfriend's mouth, doodling the variations of your combined names on the cover of your notebook—waiting for electronic bits to zoom through the air and tell you that someone was thinking about you.

That for one fleeting moment you were the most significant person in someone else's insignificant life. But whether you knew about it or not, that ant is still out there doing ant things while you wait for the next text message to prove that out of the seven billion self-centered people on this planet, you are important. Your entire sense of self-worth is predicated upon your belief that you matter, that you matter to the universe.

But you don't.

Because we are the ants.

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I didn't waste time thinking about the future until the night the sluggers abducted me and told me the world was going to end.

I'm not insane. When I tell you the human race is toast, I'm not speaking hyperbolically the way people do when they say we're all dying from the moment our mothers evict us from their bodies into a world where everything feels heavier and brighter and far too loud. I'm telling you that tomorrow—January 29, 2016—you can kiss your Chipotle-eating, Frappuccino-drinking, fat ass good-bye.

You probably don't believe me—I wouldn't in your place—but I've had 143 days to come to terms with our inevitable destruction, and I've spent most of those days thinking about the future. Wondering whether I have or want one, trying to decide if the end of existence is a tragedy, a comedy, or as inconsequential as that chem lab I forgot to turn in last week.

But the real joke isn't that the sluggers revealed to me the date of Earth's demise; it's that they offered me the choice to prevent it.

You asked for a story, so here it is. I'll begin with the night the sluggers told me the world was toast, and when I'm finished, we can wait for the end together.