

Exercise: Your Last Day on Earth

Writer

Paul Day

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Life is full of firsts. The first day you walk, the first day you talk, your first tooth, your first drink, the first time you can drive a car, your first love. But life is also full of lasts. The last day of school, your last day as a teenager, the last time you were happy and your last day on Earth. There's a reason we were not meant to know when that last one happens, it's what keeps us going, keeps us hoping, keeps us living. If a person knows the day they will die, all hope is lost and all reason for living gone with it.

I couldn't imagine what it would be like to know your last day on Earth. But now I do. We all do.

Humans are preoccupied with three things, where their next meal is coming from, how they will fill their day and what they will do tomorrow. Anything beyond that is pointless even contemplating. But when the whole of humanity is forced to accept their mortality in the most extreme way possible, that all changes. No longer are you concerned about what you will do tomorrow, when you know there is no tomorrow. Suddenly, your thoughts instead are concerned with what comes after that.

Is this the final judgement? I don't know if there is a God. I don't know if there is a heaven. I only know one thing. Tomorrow, the whole world will meet its end. An Asteroid, scientists aptly named ELE2013, discovered only days ago, was confirmed to be on a collision course with Earth. So massive is this rock that all agree it will be the end of all life on Earth.

Today is New Years Eve. I woke up this morning feeling hungry. By force of habit I went to the kitchen to make myself a coffee and some toast. It did not immediately occur to me that this would be the last time I had breakfast. Every New Years since I was 15, my family would head down to the beach, set up tables and chairs and sit and enjoy nibbles, wine, coke and bon bons. It was always a fun time. Last night my wife and I had a "discussion" about whether we would bother going.

"What's the point." she said and then turned over and went to sleep.

Sleep. It's something I did not want to do. I tried to stay awake as long as possible, knowing that sleep would bring the next day on even quicker. I read from H.G Wells The Time Machine. If ever I needed a way to escape the present it was now. I imagine Wells himself must have felt the same way from time to time. When I got to the section about the Moon exploding, I put the book down and went outside. I looked up at the Moon and began to wonder what it thought of all this. The Earth and the Moon had been companions for millions of years. What would little brother do when big sister was no longer around?

For some inexplicable reason, we had visitors after breakfast. Family. In good times and in bad, we always had family. But this time when they called, it was more like a wake. It wasn't until my Uncle Pete got out his banjo that things began to liven up. There was something about that sound that always brought a smile to everyone's face. It wasn't long before we were all singing along as if tomorrow didn't matter.

In movies about apocalyptic events, people are always depicted as opportunistic animals taking advantage of others and rioting on the streets whenever it was the "end of the world". I find it odd that now that the end is here, people are calm and going about their normal lives, as if everything they did still mattered. Maybe it is an act of defiance, a final statement in the face of unprecedented calamity. Maybe it is sheer stubborn pride. Maybe it is a quiet acceptance that the end is here and there is nothing anyone can do about it, so, ironically, life goes on.

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