

The End

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There are five days left until the world ends.

Imogen and I are walking through the supermarket. The shelves have been ransacked. What's the point in raiding the supermarket when we're all going to die in less than a week?

Imogen wanted a chocolate cake for her birthday and seeing as it's going to be her last one, I figure we better get one. We've given up on finding one in the bakery section. The glass cabinets hold only crumbs. We're rummaging through the shelves, trying to find ingredients to make our own. Fat chance. No flour left. Can't see any sugar either, or eggs. I'm about to give up but I hear Imogen scream from a few aisles down, followed by hurried footsteps. She slides around the corner brandishing a boxed cake mix.

'Happy birthday to me!' she cries.

I applaud. So does the cashier. We take it to where he stands behind the checkout counter in his green uniform, his name badge reading 'Jeffrey'.

Jeffrey scans the box. 'There you go,' he says, handing the cake mix to Imogen.

'How much?' I ask.

'Doesn't matter,' he says.

Imogen and I are walking down the street towards our apartment. We walk past a large group of people who are parading along the road. A man at the front of the group holds a large wooden cross on a stick above his head. They're all chanting different things so we can't make out exactly what they're saying. The few words I catch are 'messiah', 'second-coming', and 'saved'. They seem excited. Good for them.

I take my keys out of my jacket pocket and unlock our front door, not that it really needed to be locked in the first place because someone already broke in three days ago and took all our stuff. We didn't really mind. We're not going to need it anyway.

Imogen and I enter the almost empty apartment. Imogen kicks her shoes off, but I leave mine on.

It's night now and Imogen and I are sitting outside on the footpath, eating chocolate cake. It's on a big green plate and we didn't cut it into slices, we're just eating it with our hands. The apocalypse makes barbarians of us all.

'It's funny what we took for granted, isn't it?' Imogen says.

'What do you mean?' I say.

'Cake. I think I took cake for granted.'

'Speak for yourself,' I say. 'I never took cake for granted.'

'I wonder if there's cake in the afterlife,' she ponders, licking chocolate icing off her dirty fingers.

There are four days left until the world ends.

Imogen hasn't slept since her birthday. Her eyes are bloodshot, and her hair is all tangled because she hasn't brushed it in a while. She's starting to lose it.

'Imogen,' I say. 'You're starting to lose it.'

She chews her nails aggressively, rocking back and forth on the carpet in our ransacked living room. 'I'm losing it,' she whispers.

'Let's play a game,' I say. She needs something to distract her from the end of the world.

'Where are Mum and Dad?' she whispers.

'I don't know, the phones don't work. Should we play cards? Or Rummikub? I think that's still in the cupboard.'

'Miriam,' she whispers. 'I want Mum and Dad.'

I've taken Rummikub out of the cupboard and I start to set it up on the floor. 'You can take fourteen tiles,' I remind her.

Disturbing little whines are coming out of her throat. There's snot running out of her nose onto her top lip.

I pick my tiles and set them up on the black stand. I have a joker tile. I wait for Imogen but she isn't picking up any tiles, she's just crying and rocking and she's descending into madness which is not good. I start without her, using my joker tile on my first move.

There are three days left until the world ends.

I'm in the bathtub, soaking in warm water with a couple of candles flickering on the sink. I'm alone now. Imogen is still hanging in her closet. I know I should probably take her down and maybe put her in her bed or bury her outside or something, but to be honest, I don't want to touch her dead body. It won't matter in a few days anyway. I'm a bit annoyed that she couldn't wait a few more days with me. Now I have to endure the end of the world all alone.

But I guess I don't really blame her.

I can hear music coming from outside. Someone is having a party. Maybe I'll go and join them. Then I won't be alone. I get out of the water and pull the plug out of the bath. The water screams at it gets sucked down the drain. I dry off with my orange towel. Imogen's red towel hangs on the rack. I leave my wet towel on the floor because it doesn't matter. I walk to my room naked and feel a bit nauseous as I open my closet because I'm thinking of Imogen hanging in her closet, but my closet only has clothes in it so it's ok. I pull out my silk black dress and put it on with no bra and no underwear. I leave the house to find the party, following the bass beat. I step on a rock, and it hurts because I forgot to put my shoes on.

I find the house with the party, and I let myself in. A man is sitting in his living room drinking a bottle of vodka. He's sitting on the floor so his furniture must have also been stolen. His hair is long and greasy. He has a rash on his arm. He looks up at me and smiles.

'Hey!' he says. 'How you doing?'

‘Fine,’ I say. ‘Are you having a party?’

‘A party? Sure. Yeah, a party. Sounds like a good idea. Let’s have a party!’

I sit down next to him and he hands me his bottle and I take a swig.

‘You wanna have sex?’ he asks me.

I shake my head. ‘I like girls,’ I tell him.

‘But it’s the end of the world!’ he cries.

‘I still like girls,’ I reply.

He nods thoughtfully. We sit and drink, listening to the music, enjoying our party.

There are two days left until the world ends.

The man at the party took a lot of pills last night and fell asleep. He didn’t wake up.

I’m walking down the street and I see the group of people again, carrying their cross. They’re the only people who haven’t gone mad.

I walk over to them in my silk black dress and bare feet. ‘Hey,’ I say. ‘How’s it going?’

‘Rejoice!’ a young girl cries. ‘He is returning! We are saved!’ She is smiling wide, but her eyes have a hint of doubt. At least she’s trying. The others cheer and the man at the front pumps his cross up and down in the air.

There is one day left until the world ends.

I walked all the way to the beach yesterday and slept on the sand. It was soft and warm. I wish I had done that more often, but maybe it was only nice because the world is ending.

The air is hot. There’s a constant humming in my ears. I think I’ll just sit here on the beach today and look at the ocean and focus on not going mad. That humming in my ears is making it difficult though. I lie on my back and watch the clouds, which are not white but almost an illuminous blue. I wish the clouds were white again. White clouds are also what we took for granted.

A siren starts to wail. Sounds like it's coming from the city. Sirens are a good way to induce panic. I close my eyes and try to focus instead on the sound of the waves, but I realise that there aren't any. I sit up and look at the water, which is still, like glass. I stand up and take off my dress. I'm naked but it doesn't matter. I walk into the still water and it's cold which is nice because the air is burning. I wade into the coolness. I've grown used to the sound of the siren, so it doesn't bother me so much anymore. The beach is so empty, like it would have been when God first created it. The water has grown warm around me now, making me sweat. I figure this must be it. There are no more days left. I float onto my back and close my eyes, floating in warmness. Everything is still. Everything is empty. This is what we took for granted.

The end.