

## Prologue

“Why should I bother living anymore?” That’s the question I fell asleep to last night, and it’s the same

question I’ve asked myself for the last few months.

But I know I want to live. I have very fond days of my life that I cherish. I want more of those days.

But I have many more days that I would rather forget. And those are the only days I remember. And those days seem to be the most recent days of my life.

The only positive I’ve had is my wife. I love my wife. I love her so much. And she loves me back. She’s been there for me through this season of my life. Because it wasn’t always like this.

I never

doubted my life or the purpose of living—that never happened. But one day while working my current

job, something happened that I still can’t describe to this day.

I was overcome with fear, but I didn’t know what I was afraid of. I just knew I was afraid.

Before this, I had been thinking about death, and my mind started spiraling from there, and next thing I

knew, I was bawling out of fear into my wife’s shoulder. Since then, I haven’t been the same, and I

don’t know if I ever will be. But I know that as soon as I’m out of this job, the job that started all of

this, everything will be back to normal.

Because now, my mind can start spiraling at any moment—normally, when I least expect it. And the fear from that builds and builds until it all comes out in a panic attack, for lack of a better term.

But this now affects my entire life. It impacts my sleep, my love life, the few relationships I have, my work, and every other facet of my life.

Like I was saying about the job, my job is about to end. When it ends, I’m scheduled to leave on a rocket that will take my wife and me to a spaceship that’s ready to take all its passengers away from

Earth to start a new life. Right now, Earth is in utter disarray. Water is becoming more and more scarce,

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riots and looting fill the streets, no one feels safe anymore, disease is rampant, overpopulation grows to

be more of a concern by the hour, and food is as scarce as water.

My life is a mess, just like the world around me. But that will all change once this job ends and I’m among the stars.

## Chapter 1

“Why do you want to leave the planet?” the interviewer asks.

“Why wouldn’t I?” the man replies. “The world has gone to crap.” The man blinks several times and gulps before continuing. “I can’t find a job, my family is starving, and I just want to live knowing that there will be food on the table three times a day and a roof over our heads.” The man blinks several times again.

“You can get whatever is in your eye, sir,” the interviewer says.

“There’s nothing in my eye.”

“Then why are you blinking?”

The man gulps several times before replying. “I’m fine. Next question, please.”

I write “Tourette’s?” on my evaluation paper and bite the back of my pen.

“What do you have to offer to the other folks you’ll travel with?” the interviewer asks.

“I’m good at fixing stuff.”

“Have you ever worked on any of the gen three ships before?”

The man readjusts. “No. I work more with appliances and other household items.” The man gulps again as he waits for the next question.

“That’ll be all, sir. Thank you.” The interviewer sticks his hand out and the two shake hands.

The video dies shortly after, the projector turning off.

With the room left in darkness, I sit longer than I should, just staring at the empty wall. This job is crap. The same thing day after day. Nothing new. Nothing interesting. Just the same darn thing day after day.

I finally grab the remote on the table next to me and press the Blinds button. The giant window wall to my right starts to appear as the blinds are rolled up into the ceiling, letting in the now setting sun.

I thought this view would never get old, but unfortunately my disdain for my job has crept over into the other facets of my life.

I take the evaluation paper off of my board and roll up the paper, stuffing it back in the slot in the Video Cylinder, or Vidcyd, as I call it, next to the projector lens. Twisting the lid back into place, I

feel the magnets catch and lock the lid in place. I take it off its stand and put it back in the delivery

tube. With the door closed and sealed, I pull the floor holding the Vidcyd and watch it fall. I still don’t

understand how the Vidcyd is shot from the ground all the way up here.

And another boring day is over. I make my way to the sliding door behind me and enter the family room. Across the room is the open-concept kitchen. I grab two plates and silverware and set the table.

This is the only time of the day that I somewhat enjoy. Talking to my wife till I go to bed. Just talking till we can’t talk anymore.

With the table set, I grab our two boxed meals and toss them in the warmer.

As I watch the boxes turn in circles, someone comes up behind me and wraps their arms over my shoulders. I grab my wife's hands as she sets her head on my left shoulder. "How was your day?" she asks.

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"Same as all the other days. Did you expect any different?" I lean my head against hers and close my eyes, enjoying her warm touch.

"Yes. I expected an elephant to smash through the roof and have a tea party with you. What was I thinking?"

We both laugh as the warmer beeps. My wife lets go, and I bring the food to the table. Tonight's meal is potato casserole with green beans. We hold each other's hand while we eat.

"So, who did you get today?" my wife asks.

I take another bite before answering. "I had a guy with Tourette's, another guy who lost an arm, and a widow with three kids. And the rest were all normal. Nothing special today. That is, except you."

I squeeze my wife's hand, and she smiles back at me. "What about your day?"

"Boring, like always."

We eat our food in silence as the sun dips below the window line.

My wife finishes her food and leans back, still holding my hand. "What would you like to do tonight? We could watch that new movie they sent up."

"I didn't see it. What's it about?"

"I think some new sci-fi movie by that big director."

"That Dave guy?"

"I think so. It didn't jump out at me."

"Nothing ever does anymore." I grab our dishes and bring them to the kitchen. The boxes go in the trash cylinder next to the sink, and an orange flash lights up the cylinder as the trash is incinerated. I

run the dishes under the water, dry them, and put them back on the shelf with the other dishes.

My wife still sits at the table, looking out the window at the dying light, but looks at me as I approach. "Let's watch that movie." I hold my hand out to her.

She grabs it and we slowly walk the seven steps to our bedroom. We change clothes, and she wraps herself in her blue blanket and snuggles against me. I hold her and start the movie.

"How likely are we to forget this movie?" I ask.

"If the last . . . however many we've seen . . . are any indication, I'd say we'll forget it by morning."

As we watch the movie, the same questions keep running through my mind. What's the point of this? What's the point of any of this? To work, do something with my wife that I'll probably forget in a

couple hours, and do it all again the next day. What's the point?