



I wake up most mornings wishing that my existence wasn't allowed. Or...maybe I'm just not a morning person. For me, breakfast is a sad excuse of the human experience. But then again, I don't have the time to cook myself the country breakfasts I had growing up. Coffee is really the only thing that interests me, as it's the only thing that provides me with enough desire to do work and start yet another day.

It's not that I don't like my job, but more so that it lets me do the things I like to do. It gave me a nice car and large apartment and even a small get-away place in the Cape.

Dentistry gets monotonous, as teeth—although unique—seem all too similar to me at this point in my life. Appointments are all the same. People come, people go. My tools relentlessly impede my patients' ability to respond to my small-talk questions wherein my indifference to relationship is scathingly apparent.

I don't think that I always used to be as indifferent as I am now, but then again, I never wanted to be a dentist. With debt and reality lurking at the corner of Life Avenue and Future Road, it seemed

like the most sensible option. And, you know, I think it was, but that doesn't take away from the fact that when I was younger all I wanted to do was help people. I justified dentistry as a career because I felt like it let me help people while also putting a little money into my pocket.

If my younger self could see me now, he would be incredibly disappointed to see my view of helping people today. Granted, I was much more religious back then. Now, I tell people that the only God I worship is fluoride.

My younger self will get over it though, as I am dead now...or, at least, I was. As confusing as it may sound, it is. I don't know what to make of it either.

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The chest pain started when I was running by myself through Klyne Park. Well, I wasn't by myself at the time but was distantly following a young woman, whose body transfigured in tight running pants was providing me with motivation. I stopped abruptly because the pain wouldn't let me go further. When I realized that something was seriously wrong, I

tried yelling at the woman I was 'following' but she couldn't hear me because she was running with headphones on.

After that, all I remember is waking up in sort of a blank space. At first, I thought I was back in a Crate and Barrel store with my first wife, but soon I realized it was much worse.

There was a figure—one very similar to an Apple store genius bar clerk wearing all white—and I asked him, "Where am I?"

The figure continued to look at me with an unwavering demeanor until he finally said, "Are you surprised?"

"By what?" I asked.

"That you're in heaven," the 'genius clerk' replied.

I began to look around and realize that I was not in the right place. Similar to the feeling that one gets when in a foreign country where no one speaks your own language. I was uneasy for two reasons:

First, I was dead? Not possible. And second, Heaven and Hell aren't real? Just not possible.

The man dressed in white came up to me as I was still trying to figure out what to make of my current predicament, and he said to me with an eager yet soft tone, "Welcome."

Unrelenting to the truth at hand, I retorted, "Welcome to where? Who the hell are you—Steve Jobs?" (A seriously lame joke, I know, but the place really did remind me too much of an Apple store).

The figure then gave me my space and waited patiently for my response. After sometime, I went to talk to the man by asking, "So what is this place again?"

"It's Heaven," he responded with austerity.

I paused with indignation and exclaimed, "Christ! But I'm too immoral to have made it to heaven. Three wives, multiple affairs, and God knows what else!"

I paused in fear that the figure was somehow God or Jesus and that saying God in Heaven was 'against the code' or something.

Then I continued, "Plus, I didn't ask to be here. I want to go back. Oh and also, *I* was the one who took Tim Crowley's juice box in the second grade and then lied to both him and the teacher about it."

I stopped a minute to collect my thoughts and ended by saying, "So, my point is that I'm not exactly Heaven material."

While I was awaiting for his reproach, the figure remained transfixed in a stern gaze towards me. He then motioned me to follow him as he turned and walked into something that looked like a giant bed sheet sale rack out of Bed Bath and Beyond.

I followed, but then spoke again, "Please don't tell me that my second wife is here. That pious bitch was too much for me. I want to go back."

Without pause, he retorted, "She isn't here. She didn't truly understand her meaning. "

Shocked, I replied, “Wait, why not? She lived life better than I did. Look, she was a bitch but not enough to put me in heaven above her. At least she went to church every Sunday.”

As we kept walking, he asked, “What was your understanding to living life?”

“I don’t know,” I said, “I guess I realized when I was young that I felt like I could attain some sort of wholly fulfillment. At first, it was religion. I felt that God would make my life better. Then when that wasn’t enough, I thought that maybe becoming successful would be enough. Yet, this too was short. Then I understood that all of my ideals were trying to escape from being human—making all worries just magically go away. When I got older, I just realized that this perfect world that I had constructed—the one where I was to become the President of the United States who eradicated world poverty—wasn’t possible. I began to accept my humanness and kept on living in spite of the fact that it can be a pain in the ass.”

I took a minute to stop and catch my breath, as I wasn’t feeling my usual self. Then I kept on by

saying, “And, you know, now that I think about it, most people live their lives drunk—with the alcohol of their choice. And sober may not be as fun or stimulating as being drunk, but at least I’m not living some sort of illusion.”

“Exactly,” rejoined the figure. At the same time, we walked into the opening of what seemed to look like the combination of an ancient Roman bath complex and the largest IKEA superstore that Sweden has to offer.

The figure then turned to me and said, “You figured out the meaning of life in this way. Continuing your analogy, even though you chose to live sober, you *still* lived without inhaling your own laughing gas.” Raising his hand in the air and motioning to the scene before us, he proclaimed, “Now, we have chosen you.”

Confused, I asked, “Who is ‘we’?”

He replied, “the Ultimate.”

“Like the frisbee?” I asked with a tone of sarcasm.

He chuckled and then started to say, “Well, I would have to say no, although a few of us here are fond of the game. The Ultimate is...”

At that moment, I heard a ringing sound while I was simultaneously jolted backwards. I was extremely irritated because it shocked my chest tremendously, so I yelled at the figure, “Is this some sort of joke?”

Immediately, things turned back into a blank space. And the jolting happened again. And again. And again. Until finally, I was staring at the face of yet another figure dressed in white—except this figure was more human in character. She was actually quite attractive but I am a sucker for woman in scrubs (my third wife was a nurse, you know).

The woman shouted, “We have sinus rhythm!” I was confused as to what she could mean by this. I began to ask myself, “How could one’s sinus have a rhythm?” Concurrently, there was an annoying beeping in the background that made my thoughts even hazier.

And then as soon as she asked, “Can you hear me? Do you know where you are?” I began to understand what was happening.

I have been in the hospital for two days since this all happened. And on the third day, I died.