

EndOfThisWorld

an online collaborative novel in 25 chapters

<http://www.endofthisworld.com>

August 2, 2008. Chaps. 1--4

1 In the Morning

He walks into the bathroom. It is too early to go for a walk... at 4.31 am. He decides to shave. No. That will make too much noise. He heads to the kitchen to make coffee. In the cupboard, the coffee jar is not to be found. He thinks about going back to bed but he has the jitters. No. The TV is a better option. He plonks down on the sofa and flicks the TV on. A straight red line appears against a mute black screen. It is too much. No sleep. No coffee. And now no TV. He throws the remote control down and decides to go for a walk.

Back in the bedroom, Lana is asleep, curled up peacefully under the soft white covers, her head tilted toward her chest, like a droopy flower hanging over its stem on a hot summer day. Her dark, thick lashes just visible against her pale face that matches the wanton hint of light filtering into the room. She is a moonbeam. He needs no other light than Lana in his life. Pants on. T-shirt on. Sneakers? Where are they? He can't find them but does not give up on the walk. An old pair of boots he finds at the back of the closet will do.

Outside the air is misty, white and beautiful. It is cool, too, like ice cubes moving quickly over your skin. He wraps his arms toward his middle to ward off the shiver. And then he thinks of the night he just spent with Lana. Making love to her is special. She gives herself to him completely, without holding back unlike other women he's known. He can tell the fake from the real. Lana is the only

woman where he has the feeling of her body joining his, melting into his at the height of the lovemaking. It is a surreal experience. Oh shit! The keys. I forgot the keys. Now I have to wake Lana to get back into the house. What about walking until she wakes? No. That's three hours away.

He walks for an hour, and then around a quarter to six, he buzzes the doorbell... hoping the sound won't wake Lana and hoping that it will. A minute passes. He buzzes again and waits. Lana's footsteps drop onto the floor like the sound of a child's small feet pitter-pattering. She is delicious in every way but mostly in her innocence. Her child and woman energy blend together so that she is deeply mature but playful and light at the same time.

"Who is it? Babe, is that you?" Lana's voice questions on the other side of the door.

"Yes, yes. It's me... I'm sorry to wake you..."

The door opens. Lana opens her arms wider and hugs him.

"I left my keys at home..."

"Don't worry about it. I'm just so happy to see you. You had me worried when I didn't see you in bed because I usually hear you go out for a walk." She gushes, and kisses him on the neck, softly and slowly like a butterfly taking its nectar from flower blossoms. He melts, and makes a mental note to forget his keys more often.

"Let's go to bed." She murmurs. He makes a bold type, large font mental note to forget his keys more often.

Two lovemaking sessions later, he rises from bed to get ready for work. The alarm clock shows 6.30 am... the time he usually comes back from his walk. He shaves. He finds the coffee and enjoys two strong cups. The first with milk

and two sugars. The second, black with one sugar. Suited up, laptop in toe, fitness bag with sneakers inside (that's where they were all along), he makes his way to Lana still snug in bed. He loves seeing her this way... but work is calling. A small, sweet pang takes hold of his heart when he kisses her goodbye but it doesn't last too long. It is taken over by the feeling that he has the rest of his life to enjoy many moments with her. Plus he loves his job and can't wait to get into the office to present his ideas on a new creative pitch for a big media client. The job is his second passion.

The moments in the morning when Lana has the house to herself are pure pleasure. After a shower, or sometimes even a bath if she has extra time, she puts on a soft cotton robe, wraps her hair up turban-towel style, brews tea in a teapot that is elegant and refined like herself, prepares muesli and yoghurt, and carries the tray of breakfast goodies over to the sofa where she sits amidst the pillows and treats herself to queenly moments of peace, taken alongside the morning TV news shows. She loves these shows, the presenters with their great big smiles who look like they have the best job in town but really if you think a bit deeper they must be up at 3.00 am just to get into the office on time! Not a job she'd like but one she respects because they give her a morning fix and get her into the swing of the day.

She switches the TV on but there's a strange red line across a black screen. Hmmm. She tries another channel. Nothing changes. She tries all the channels -- this time her fingernail digging into the channels button. The red

line is still there. The remote mustn't be working. So she walks over to the TV to change the channel the old fashioned way. Come on, don't bust up now. Still the same red line and black screen. Okay, this can wait. She wasn't planning on an interrupted peace this morning. I have to get dressed for work. Red can fix it tonight.

2 Mob Mentality

Los Angeles, CA -- 2:25PM

Star approached the intersection at Fairfax and Olympic, rolled down her window, lit up a joint and cursed her life. For over an hour she sat trapped in her car, traveling no more than a mile, convinced she would surely die as a result of smog-induced lung cancer. With four cars separating her from the intersection, Star peered ahead and noticed the cause of the mess the traffic lights were out, and people, typical for L.A., were not yielding. Cars were entering from all directions, swerving, horns honking, and tempers flaring. Star smiled as a vision wildebeests entering a crocodile infested river popped into her head.

As she waited her turn to cross the river, Star took an opportunity to ruminate about her life and what she was about to do. Nothing had turned out as she had planned - whales were still being slaughtered in Japan; plastic bags littered Santa Monica Bay; her writing was going unnoticed, and teaching yoga was not paying the bills. Star sighed and

stared out the windshield at the brown, hazy sky and resigned to the possibility that it might take another two hours to reach her fathers house a routine she had grown to regret she would ask for money, an argument would erupt, he would agree to the request. The scene was repeated every six months and to Star, there seemed to be no end in sight. She sighed, took another hit from her joint, opened a party-sized bag of cheese-puffs and tried not to think about the money.

Taking advantage of the delay, Star shifted her car into neutral, set the parking brake, leaned over and dug around her glove compartment for her favorite Lucinda Williams cassette. She found it under a stack of parking tickets and covered with lint and crumbs. She wiped the cassette on her skirt and blew off all visible debris, popped it into the player, turned up the volume and stared into the traffic. Earlier she had tried to listen to the radio, but all the stations on the dial were broadcasting white noise. She suspected this had something to do with the red line that glowed on her television screen and was confident that FOX was somehow involved. In the rearview mirror she could see a blue Bentley idling away the earths resources and to her left a blonde woman in a black Porsche convertible was dialing and redialing her iPhone in a frustrated and dramatic manner. Star smiled and imagined the woman's life story - high school dropout, actress/model/porn star and future plastic surgery devotee. The woman caught Star looking, mouthed the word "freak," rolled up her tinted windows and continued dialing. Star chuckled, popped a cheese-puff in her mouth, licked the sticky yellow residue off her fin-

gers, and crept forward another car length.

For the next twenty minutes Star finished her joint, munched on her cheese-puffs, sang aloud and allowed her interaction with the Blonde to invade her brain. Tomorrow Ill be 30, she thought. I have a Liberal Arts Degree, no prospects of a job, no prospects for a husband no prospects. She looked to her left and stared at the Porsche. No prospects The Blonde Woman raised the convertible top. Star waited a moment, and then yelled out "You're a Fucking Evil Cow!" Nobody looked, but Star quickly rolled up her window anyway, turned up Lucinda, took her place at the intersection and prepared to enter.

The scene in front of Star was complete chaos. In the middle of the intersection, a new Honda with dealer plates was stuck attempting to make a left turn, its turn signal flashed red and in vain. Cars circled around, insults were yelled and rude hand salutes danced to an orchestra of car horns. Star had planned on making the same left turn, but decided instead to continue up Fairfax, even if that meant sitting in traffic longer. She took a deep breath, rubbed the belly of a small gold Buddha on her dash and ground her car into gear. She looked left, then right and slowly entered the intersection. Suddenly, the Blonde Woman in the Porsche sped into action, swerved around the car attempting to turn left, and cut in front of Star, stopping short of a collision with car in front of her. Star slammed on the brakes, quickly checked her rearview mirror and pressed hard on her horn. "That fucking plastic bitch," she yelled to herself. The Blonde Woman stretched her arm out of her window and flipped Star the middle finger. All Star saw at

that moment was an enormous diamond flash in the hazy sunlight. No prospects Star reached for another cheese-puff, took deep breath and steeled her resolve. "Enough of this shit." She shifted her car into first gear, knocked Buddha from his pedestal on the dash, and pointing her car in the direction of the Porsche, stomped her foot onto the gas pedal with full force.

3 Dark Rivers of the Soul

Staring intently across his cell, his eyes fixated on the passport photograph centred precisely in the middle of the white baron wall. The only object adorning his cell was the face of perfection, a vision he had observed and studied faultlessly over the past 4 years, 8 months, 10 days, 16 hours and 30 minutes. This single image was situated on the wall as a symbolic testimony; she was the centre of his universe. Nothing else was of importance she took precedence over all other beings, objects and desires. Even the loss of his freedom was insignificant she was worth every second of this incarceration.

Sat cross legged on his bed in a meditation pose his peripheral vision caught sight of a shadow pass his cell window to his left. Turning his head 45 degrees he sighed at the distraction of his curiosity, taking his attention away from his feminine idol. The window, a square barred view of frosted glass was nothing of interest to him, he

often pondered at the irony of this pointless aspect of his world. Suddenly a black figure arose from the depths eclipsing the light of day, then as quickly as it vanished, the light returned and a lonesome shadow appeared at the glass. Good morning Frank he spoke as a partial grin appeared on Nathaniels face. Why do all your entrances have to be so abrupt he questioned the crow. No reply came as Frank stood silently. He would often perch himself there surveying the ground below which consisted of nothing more than waste land with a boundary fence, encaging the hospital wing. A world where time slowed to a monotonous speed for the majority except Nathaniel, for him an eternity of looking into her eyes would be more enticing than staring at the pearly gates of heaven.

Frank opened his wings plunging the room into a shadowy world, and then flew away into the distance, the black shrouded mass joining the many other distant blurs. Farewell my friend, watch over her closely he uttered as he turned to face the visionary once more. However, once again another distraction caught his eye, the TV situated above the iron door which had displayed nothing but a red line across the centre all morning had disappeared to be replaced by static, the grey and black collage of squares shimmered in silence.

Nathaniel arose from the bed, and stepped forward placing his index and middle finger on the picture, covering the forehead nose and mouth leaving only her eyes. Which stirred in him an erotic feeling of desire that swept throughout his body, closing his eyes as though to trap this feeling inside him forever.

Not even the sound of the cell door unlocking disturbed this moment, the electronic latch released and the bolt disengaged with a loud clunk, the door opened an inch with a slow creak. Still he stood his hand against the wall, his head lowered and his eyes closed as in worship of his idol. After what appeared a life time had passed, the emotion now subsided and he removed his hand before opening his eyes and turning his head ninety degrees to see the door ajar. Walking towards the door he felt as though he was walking on air, surely even the most potent and powerful drug couldnt leave him feeling this way, like a thousand climaxes simultaneously. He raised his left arm and with his four fingers pushed open the door. He was only now aware of the shouting and screaming from along the corridor. He looked above his head, the static of the TV had now been replaced by black emptiness.

The door was now fully open, lowering his head a figure ran past him dressed in white, the man appeared to be running from the devil himself. The orderly was being pursued by a man whos face was possessed with a crazed desire for violence. The mad mans overalls were spattered with blood from a gaping wound he sustained to his head. The crimson liquid flowed down his forehead over his brow and poured down the ridge of his nose, almost as though the taste of his own blood fuelled him with rage he passed Nathaniel in the doorway without noticing him, like a tiger in pursuit of a deer his focus remained intently on his prey.

Turning his head Nathaniel followed the chase, the orderlys screams becoming drowned out by the other shouts and calls of mercy. Swinging his head around to the left a

nightstick came hurtling towards his head, another orderly, his facial expression covered in fear and blood, shirt torn open. Nathaniel raised his left arm blocking the imminent blow, like a sword of fire the night stick hit him with an immensely powerful force, followed by the sensation his forearm was on fire. Nathaniel swung up his right hand with lightening speed and guided his outstretched fingers towards the throat crushing his windpipe, his nails punctured the skin and entered the throat, like bullets they tore through flesh until they hit what felt like bone. Phillip as his name tag read fell to his knees, blood splattering Nathaniel. The nightstick fell, at the same point Phillips face hit the floor between Nathaniels feet.

Knelt in what appeared like a position of prayer Nathaniel looked down at Phillip Irony seems to have a sense of humour. No alarms, he looked to the left then the right the cell doors now open, inmates were running towards the end of the blood strewn corridor. Their destination, freedom.

Nathaniel turned, looking inside his cell. Now was his chance to stare into those deep foreboding eyes as he would stand before their possessor, reunited with her, he shall take his beloved angel to their eternal resting place, where his dream will be fulfilled to gaze into her eyes for eternity. Nathaniel stepped across Phillip, his bare feet now scarlet red, still on a high the excitement of meeting her once more overwhelmed him. The shiver returned and was too much to bare, his heart, his hands, his loins yearned for her. He left his cell for the first time in 4 years, 8 months, and 10 days. The only object that remained was the photo, the centre of his being, that perfect creation that is Lana.

4 Slowly Rolls the Tide

Stuart "Red" MacHeath allowed himself the smallest of smiles to creep into his otherwise dismal day, as he shoved his Freightliner further into the intersection. From his vantage point out the side window of his truck, in what had the feel of a front row seat to the demolition derby, he watched the young girl in the Ford Tempo smash violently and in his professional opinion, intently, into the much more expensive Porsche. In his rear-view mirror now, he could see the two women locked in a screaming fit, mere feet from the intersection at Fairfax and Olympic; tempers were definitely flaring on this particularly nasty travel day.

He surely would liked to have refereed that match. That young one in the Tempo showed some spunk, but his journey was to come to an end in a little more than a mile further along the San Vicente Boulevard, at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center if he could ever get there.

He'd picked up the load of medical supplies with the Urgent stamp emblazoned all over them, at the cross-border facility in Tijuana, Mexico a little before 6 in the AM, and things had been running smoothly right up until... he checked his watch to verify reality rather than just guess at what it felt like... only an hour ago. That's when "curious" gave way to "chaotic" as the traffic lights all stopped functioning at strangely enough, the same time both his satellite and terra-based AM/FM radios stopped receiving their signals. If he got the opportunity he would turn on

the television set he kept strapped down on the shelf in the bunk, but he had this sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach that there wouldn't be a signal on that medium either.

"... seems to be the problem?"

Red's introspective was interrupted by the elderly lady calling up to him from the car creeping alongside. It wouldn't be the first time that fellow victims of traffic jams asked him for information; trucker's CBs were a bridge of knowledge in situations just like this. Today however, it was eerily different.

"I'm not sure Ma'am," he replied. "It seems that there's some kind of power outage. The traffic lights aren't working and I can't get any news from the radio."

Frustration evident, but with that oh well, this is L.A. resignation, she returned herself to the car and rolled the window back up to wait it out.

He checked his watch again. Twenty-five after three; he'd been gridlocked for over two hours. The medical facility that heralded the end of this journey was in sight, a mere three blocks away but it felt like he was swimming in mud. He'd promised his sister that he'd stop by after he got unloaded, and at the snail's pace he was managing, it would be for supper rather than the late lunch they'd planned on.

The thought of his sister brought another smile. Attractive, witty, talented. She had everything it takes to make it in the acting business... everything but the "me first" attitude of course. Screen test after screen test fell by the wayside when she refused to allow personal favors to rule the direction her career was going to take. He remem-

bered a particularly difficult evening several years ago, when he had to get physical with an up-and-coming director who just would not take no for an answer. His fingers found the scar in the center of his chest where the fellows knife bit deep... that was far too close! It was then that she fell into her second calling: Nursing.

She'd been trying to set him up with her lady friends ever since, but Red's particular career wasn't one that made for the starting of long-term relationships; the last one failed miserably just prior to the altar. He'd accepted it as a blessing in disguise and resigned himself to a life of bachelorhood.

Just past 3rd street, he flicked on his turn signal to let the rest of the sea of autos know that he needed to make 75 feet of truck and trailer turn left onto Gracie Allen Drive. Then it would be a quick left onto George Burns Road, back into the docks and let the afternoon shift receivers take this "Hot Load" off the deck of his trailer. He could use the inter-hospital phones to call Lana. She said she'd be working today.... and she had some great news that she wanted to share.

To be continued...

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