

Madison P.

Live Like There's No Tomorrow

The world will end in 24 hours. All animals, besides humans of course, have been pushed to the point of extinction. Every drop of water is too polluted to drink. Trees are scarce and the buildings that take their place are just a painful reminder of how selfish homo sapiens can be. I'm ashamed to say I'm one of them.

The world will end in 22 hours. That means I just wasted two precious hours staring at my bedroom ceiling thinking of what I would be doing if I had more time. I'm sure I'd be sleeping at such an early hour, but I'm more awake than ever. Do you know that feeling you get when you procrastinate until the last minute and then you're scrambling to finish what should've been done a long time ago? That seems to describe my situation. My task? Do something meaningful with my life. The deadline? End of today.

I ponder the thought for awhile before I yawn. I try keeping myself awake by blinking rapidly, but in the end I fall asleep.

The world will end in 17 hours. I wake up gasping for air. It takes a full five minutes for oxygen to begin circulating through my lungs again. Feeling lightheaded, I stumble down the carpeted staircase and into the kitchen where I'm greeted by my parents wearing what appears to be an oxygen mask.

"Good morning?" I ask, confused by the mask.

"Morning," my mother said emotionlessly.

She looked over at my father, who was busy reading an article on his smartphone, and nudged him.

"Morning," he said "Sorry, I was busy checking the news."

"Any new predictions from scientist?" I asked eagerly.

My father shook his head. I frowned and started hacking like I did when I first woke up. My dad jumped up and sprinted into the living room. He came back to the kitchen table carrying a brown cardboard box that had already been opened. He pulled out an object covered with bubble wrap and carefully unwrapped it. Too busy desperately trying to get oxygen into my lungs, I didn't get to identify the mysterious item before my dad stepped behind me and placed it over my nose and mouth. I inhaled and exhaled quickly before my breathing finally leveled. I assumed it was an oxygen mask.

I didn't have to ask why we had to wear it. I knew why. More trees were dying. We were getting closer to the end. I stared at the watch I had started wearing recently.

The world will end in 16 hours. I needed to do something that would top all the other days I had been alive, but what could I do? I turned to my parents to see how they'd spend their last few hours. Surely adults would be wise enough not to waste their time, right?

"What now?" I asked.

My parents shrugged. I cocked an eyebrow. "Seriously?"

"Sweetie," my mom said softly. "I know as a mother I should be encouraging, but there's nothing we can do."

My dad added, "I agree with your mother. Besides, we all work hard everyday. Maybe the universe is telling us to take a break."

"Take a break? That's all we do!" I yelled in a voice so loud it made my dad flinch. "Winter Break, Spring Break, Summer Break, Fall Holiday, weekends. Whatever happened to the saying 'Live like there's no tomorrow'? There is no tomorrow, so let's live!"

Unphased by my yelling, my mother stood up and kissed my head. "I wish more people thought like you," she said softly before taking a seat on the living room couch.

I pondered her words for awhile before mumbling, "Challenge accepted."

I stood up, grabbed my jacket, then retrieved my skateboard from the corner near the front door. My dad stopped me in my tracks saying, "You're going outside in your pajamas?"

I smiled before responding, "It doesn't matter, does it? I'll never see these people again."

He sighed. "Be safe. And do not take off your oxygen mask!"

I nodded slowly before heading out the door and down the street. I skateboarded to the place I knew most people would be: The Marion Town Center. When I arrived, there was a small crowd listening to an angry man. I assumed he was discussing his anger toward the government.

I shouldered through the crowd, but by the time I reached the front the man was done talking. It wasn't until now that I noticed everyone was wearing an oxygen mask.

“What should we do now’s?” echoed through the mob.

“Live,” I suggested.

People stared at me, frustrated at my response. “Just do the things you wanted to do, but were afraid to,” I explained. Spend all your money on that thing you don't need. Tell your crush you love them. Just do it.”

One by one faces seemed to show signs of calming down. They nodded and talked before dispersing. One boy remained. He was hunched over on the sidewalk, coughing violently. Alarmed, I ran over to him.

It wasn't until I got closer that I realized it was Trevor, my crush. The second thing I realized was that he wasn't wearing a mask. Without hesitating I removed my mask and placed it on him. After a few deep breaths his breathing leveled.

“Why’d you give it to me?” he questioned.

“Because,” I said, feeling dizzy. “I gave people hope in a bad situation. I did what I wanted. Now it's your turn.”

He stayed silent. I filled the empty space by coughing.

“But-”

“Go...”

He hesitated for awhile before I gave him a smile. I waited till he was out of earshot before I started coughing again.

My watch continued to tick as if if it were teasing me.

“You have 14 hours,” it said.

“No,” I replied tiredly. “I have now, but he has time to live till...”

“Tomorrow?” it asked.

“Tomorrow...” I whispered.