Life-Altering Decisions

I used to wander through the world aimlessly, unthinking, and half-asleep. Lived my life on autopilot. I was trapped in a monotonous cycle and I never stopped to think “why?” One day something broke that cycle. It started out like any other day. I woke up, showered, and got on a city bus headed for work. The bus started moving towards the next stop, and I scrolled through Instagram on my phone, paying little attention to what was around me. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a large truck swerve in front of the bus. I was flung backward in my seat as the bus collided with the truck, the metals bending aggressively on impact. I felt my body be launched out of my seat. The last ten years of my life flashed before my eyes. I had wasted it.

At that moment something in my brain changed, and time slowed down and I was floating above the seats, watching the chaos unfold around me in slow motion. I felt like I was floating in the vacuum of space. As soon as that thought crossed my mind, the headlights of cars outside turned to stars in an endless pitch-black ocean. I gasped in shock as time and gravity came rushing back, the space outside returned to the city, and I fell, smacking my head into the ground.

I woke up in a hospital bed with several broken bones. I couldn’t waste any more time; I had to do something with my life. I heard my legs crack and warp, and the casts on my legs fell apart like a sand castle in high tide. I was so determined to make something out of my life that I failed to consider the absurdity of what had happened in front of my eyes. I got out of bed and waved my arm to the side, feeling the bones reconnect and the cast flow off like water. I ran out of the room and down the hall.

“Sir, you’re not supposed to be out of bed!” a nurse said as I ran towards the nearest door I saw. He froze like a video being paused. I ran through the door and ended up in my apartment. I closed the door behind me and stopped to catch my breath, leaning my back against the door. I stopped to think about what had happened today. I stopped time, sent my bus to space, regenerated my bones, and turned casts into sand and water. And then I ran through a door in the hospital and ended up in my apartment. I felt like I was going crazy. I turned around and opened the door. The hospital hallway was still on the other side. I closed the door and thought about my street. I opened the door and there it was. I pinched my arm to see if it was a dream. I splashed cold water on my face, trying to wake up. This was not a dream.

At this point, there were two possibilities. One: I was in some kind of coma. Or two: after years of barely thinking for myself and making choices based solely on what seemed like the objective best option regardless of what I wanted, I now had control over reality and the laws of physics. Both possibilities scared the hell out of me. But at the same time, now my choices had an impact on the world.

The next day I decided to test out my new control over the world. I grabbed an apple from my kitchen and put it on the counter. I concentrated on it, thinking about it being sliced. The apple split into slices. I thought about it going back to normal. The pieces pulled together like magnets. Next, I turned it to stone, then into bubbles, then I made it grow five times its original size. I returned it to normal, leaned back in my chair, and took a bite. I had tried it on inanimate objects, but I thought maybe I should try it on something living.

I went to a pet store and bought a goldfish. I placed the fish bowl on the counter and thought about what I should try to do. I didn’t want to hurt it, so I didn’t transform it into anything. First I tried stopping it in time, and then I had an idea. What if I made it hyper-intelligent?

“Hello,” I said.

“Hello,” said the goldfish. “I assume it was you who froze me in time and altered my brain structure?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you think you could maybe give me lungs? Or limbs?”

“I could just make you a human if you want.”

“No, I quite enjoy being a fish, but I’d like to leave this small bowl.”

“Ok, sure.”

The goldfish, having acquired limbs and legs, swam to the top of the bowl and hopped out. He then went to my bookshelf and started reading. Somehow, a talking bipedal goldfish reading in my apartment didn’t even seem that strange anymore. He was just a new roommate.

It’s been about a year since I was in that bus crash. Things couldn’t be more different now. I woke up this morning and turned to my bedside table, where there used to be a cactus. Now there’s a tree that grows different breakfast foods every morning. I grab a pancake off the tree and eat it while walking to the living room. I turn on the TV and start watching the news as a scientist tries to figure out what’s been happening the past year.

“I’m off to work,” said Reginald, my hyper-intelligent goldfish roommate wearing a tiny three-piece suit and holding a small briefcase.

“ ‘Kay.”

In the first few months of controlling reality, I did what anyone would do–established world peace, ended world hunger, turned cars into sentient beings, turned the moon into a large eye, replaced all spiders with really tiny cats, and made it possible to swim in the air. Things anyone would do. With no war, world hunger, global warming, or spiders, I thought everyone would be happy, but they’re mostly concerned about the ever-changing fabric of reality.

I could have anything I want at any time, or bend the world to my liking, but it’s starting to get less fun. None of it feels earned. Sure, I could give myself millions of dollars, but what would be the point? I think I need to get rid of my control. Bending reality when I want a sandwich seems dangerous. What I need to do is find someone who’s responsible enough for this power.

I could give it to Reginald, but he’d just turn the world into a big ocean. The fish would love it but the people wouldn’t. I can’t give it to any leaders of countries, because they’d only use it for their own country. Putting absolute control of the universe into the hands of anyone in the world would be stressful, and the power would absolutely go to their heads. Maybe it doesn’t need it to be someone who’s responsible; maybe it just needs to be someone with absolutely no bias.

“Ow,” something bites my hand. I look down and see an ant crawling on my index finger. Of course! An ant would be the perfect creature to control the universe! They have zero bias and can’t have too many thoughts in that little head. I give the ant control over time and space, and at first there’s no change. At this point I think I had made a genius decision. I realise that I wouldn’t be able to just summon things anymore so I go to the grocery store. When I open the door to my apartment I realised my mistake.

The street outside had become a large ant tunnel, and ants the size of dogs walked around next to normal people. It’s really not that bad once you get used to it, living in a giant ant hill. Sure, it can be tough navigating through the tunnels. And yeah, it can be a bit weird having a giant ant serve your dinner, but it’s not the end of the world. It took a while for everyone to calm down, but there really haven’t been any other big changes to the world since it became an ant hill. Most people have just accepted it by now.

I’m doing fantastic. My apartment still has everything I made when I was in control, including my breakfast tree-- and an absurd amount of money I made before giving up my power. I couldn’t help myself. Most of my time is spent hanging out with Reginald or going on little adventures. I tried skydiving and ziplining, and swimming with sharks, and yeah, it’s not as crazy as permanently altering the structure of the universe, but I finally feel like I'm living my life in the driver's seat. No longer just going with the flow of time, but choosing what I want to do and doing it. Living my life to the fullest.