

An Ordinary Day

It all started as an ordinary day. There were no omens, no portents, no presages, no heralds, no foretokens and no premonitions that this was going to be an exceptional day. No one really considered it, but the night's repose seemed untroubled by disturbing dreams. The morning's modest red-orange waves of the light spectrum that illuminated the high, thin cirrus clouds in the eastern sky gave no hints that anything unusual was in store for the earth and its occupants. There were no scattered patterns of fleecy clouds with symbolic shapes or figures to predict a rare day. Birds babbling over their seed feeders gave no hint of remarkable events to be unfolded. The trees were deviously silent as the wind gave no tell-tale hints of things about to transpire. No earthly tremors yielded any clues to signal exceptional manifestations from beneath the crust of the planet. No human or deific oracles proclaimed extraordinary activity for the day. Astronomers failed to announce any celestial events of significance at all. News network journalists and newspaper editors and reporters searched in vain for occurrences of consequence.

And so it was, at last, a completely ordinary day. No one noticed anything in particular that was remarkably tasty or unpleasant about the morning's repast or other meals for that matter. Food wasn't appreciably too hot or too cold; and no one gave the impression that it was too spicy, too bland or just right, either. Morning coffee was satisfying, but not distinctly pleasurable. The choice of wardrobe for the day hardly mattered since nothing special was on the calendar.

In the big picture on that day, our own Milky Way Galaxy was (in the words of the narrator in the movie *Cannery Row* based on John Steinbeck's novel of the same name) "spinning in greased grooves" without any noteworthy disruptions. Our own sun, bright as usual, displayed no temperamental solar flares in the course of its twenty-two year cosmic cycle to hint at anything special in the day's offering for the rotating planet. The earth stayed its normal course in its 100,000 year elliptically shaped, cyclical orbit around the sun and also maintained its predictably consistent position in the 23,000 year precession pattern of its axial wobble. The earth kept its customary $23\frac{1}{2}$ degree position of its obliquity tilt cycle of 41,000 years in relation to the sun to perpetuate the four distinct seasons, in the temperate zones, at least. There were no full moons, no eclipses and no mystical alignments of satellites, moons or planets to suggest that the day was different than any other. No comets, asteroids or previously undiscovered planets appeared to harbingers the occurrence of celestial anomalies.

The overall composition of the atmosphere remained remarkably consistent with no rapidly elevated influxes of ozone, methane or carbon dioxide to radically warm the earth. The layers of the atmosphere, from the troposphere to the ionosphere hugged the earth and maintained their positions in spite of whirling winds and frigid temperatures aloft. Deadly radiation from the sun was filtered by the ozone layer, as usual, to protect the globe.

Closer to home, there was no momentous shifting of tectonic plates resulting in other than nominal earthquakes, tsunamis or volcanic activity. There was no mountain

building and no cataclysmic subductions of the earth's crust. The Old Faithful Geyser was as faithful as ever. The polar and subtropical Jetstreams aloft behaved in predictable patterns as did the circulating warm and cold ocean currents. Tropical storms in the South Atlantic and the South Pacific Oceans were on holiday on that inauspicious day, as well as, the El Nino and La Nina weather patterns. The Arctic and Antarctic polar icecaps receded on at their normal paces as did the snows of Mount Kilimanjaro and the glaciers of Canada and Greenland. Rainbows, solar halos, lunar halos and perihelions (sundogs) escaped the attention of almost everyone without illuminating any grand schemes for the people of earth or its politics.

The oceans' depths revealed no clandestine mysteries of shipwrecks or planes lost at sea on that day. Researchers uncovered no new deep water dwelling species, no new formations of mountains or trenches on the ocean floor. There were no major shifts in the earth's magnetic field. The lost city of Atlantis remained lost.

The blue sky was neither bright nor dismal; temperatures were not particularly warmer or colder. The weather, like most ordinary intricacies, went largely unnoticed by a scurrying populace. The gentle breeze did not assert itself from any particular discernible direction. The blue sky was there for those who looked and was invisible to those who did not. The horizon seemed to be there, but was so indistinct it escaped the notice of everyone. The smells in the air were so familiar that they went completely unnoticed. In the biota, there were no noticeable transitions in the evolution of flora or fauna.

Trees and leaves and grass and birds seemed to escape detection from all but the most attentive. Pets being fed and wildlife scampering to the safety of cover and rocks did not provoke undue attention. Livestock accepted feed and hay with only moderate anticipation and without remarkable comment.

Folks were oblivious to cars and concrete and cracks in the street as they lugged themselves to and from work, school and social obligations. Citizens carried on with their lives without any noteworthy awareness of their political affiliation. Religious differences and disagreements were below the level of awareness. On that day, greetings seemed somehow irrelevant and unnecessary, causing most to avoid them and the rest to disregard them. Speech did not appear to be necessary. Dear friends and favorite colleagues were taken for granted as the comfort and the reassurance of friendship went undetected. Fanatics were devoid of their usual fervor and zealots contained their fervor in favor of ordinary business. New conspiracy theories were held at bay as the seconds and minutes ground relentlessly onward.

Students appeared to learn without effort but without noteworthy gains. Instructors seemed conscientious with leading their charges and taught without certain inspiration on that particular day. After class, they gathered and milled without enthusiasm. Receptionists in offices were professional and helpful but without noticeable warmth. Police officers making traffic stops avoided their usual swagger and wrote routine citations without animosity. Clerks and waitresses and mechanics and truck drivers attended to their duties without a sense of rush or dilatory hesitation. Lovers loved

perfunctorily. Lonely people didn't seem to mind being alone on that day. Stock markets coasted without fear or eagerness. Universities, hospitals and governmental institutions seemed to operate instinctively.

Nothing much happened on that day, no one was murdered, no world leaders were assassinated, no one starved to death and road accidents resulted in only minor injuries. Stressed out parents seemed a bit more tolerant of their children and obnoxious neighbors seemed not to disturb the neighborhood. No new wars were started on that day, but then no treaties were signed, either. Ceasefires held and tactical military advances seemed to stall.

Workouts at the gym seemed to be just a little bit easier but no more rewarding or fun than usual. No new hits opened on Broadway, but then no new plays bombed. Homework came easier to thousands of students as they prepared for mid-term exams. Good old times gently remembered didn't appear to be all that good, although, most people didn't spend that much time reflecting on the past or focusing on the future, either. Human pheromones remained subdued and global biorhythms appeared to be compatible for one brief period.

Any number of people who had quit smoking appeared to be less concerned about wanting a cigarette on that particular day. Very few people made new lifelong friends that day, but there were fewer than usual fallouts between dear friends. No civil or religious holidays spawned exuberant celebrations.

No vast new oilfields or rich veins of gold were discovered on that day. No great inventions were produced in the minds of scientists, engineers or tinkerers. No great advances in medical technology or the cures for cancers were discovered. Composers, choreographers and authors failed to produce symphonies, ballets or the great American novel. No great masterpieces were rendered to canvas, stone or bronze. No new weapons of mass destruction were invented.

Of course, this was a wonderful and most unusual day. For once, the cosmic algorithms were in unison. People were not necessarily lazier than usual; routines were carried out all over the planet. Jungles remained wild, forests remained dense, deserts remained arid, wetland swamps remained wet and plains remained grassy on that day. For once, no child went hungry. All in all, for an everyday, ordinary day, it turned out to be an extraordinary day!

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