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Cats, Tents, and Storms: a Non-Academic Study of Why Life Makes No Sense

Life is defined as a set of conditions “that distinguishes animals and plants from inorganic matter.” No matter how different organisms are, they all struggle to meet these conditions. To live. All of this started billions of years ago, back when the earth was young. Our insignificant but precious world came into bloom, manifesting in the form of life. Everything that we see, from Van Gogh’s *Starry Night* to splatter paintings of blood in the streets of Rwanda, originate from this moment. But after finding life, what happens? After we go extinct, maybe octopi will inherit our throne— which we took by default after dinosaurs were exterminated by chance. It’s incredible, isn’t it? We are a product of possibility.

We start four years ago. I’m on the last hiking trip of summer camp. Our group is small, and the only other camper with a Y chromosome is Steven: my partner. It’s the final night of our trip, and we got lucky. It was supposed to storm all week long, but we barely got any rain. Everyone was relaxing, enjoying mac n’ cheese with pepperoni. I was stuffed. And satisfied. It had been an amazing last hike. The world was perfect. The storm had missed us. We could see it in the distance between two mountain peaks. But we were safe. We had control. The storm grows impatient.

It was like watching an antelope eating — not mac n cheese, probably some form of grass. The world was peaceful. Thirty feet away, a tiger crouched, eyes on our antelope. Its claws unsheathed. Hunger on his mind, but underlying it a feeling, pure and raw. *You know what to do.* He’s tired of waiting. One more second, then he’ll strike. It begins. The antelope looks up.

A raindrop kisses my face. My perfect world stands still for a moment. Then the ambush. My group runs to the tents for cover. The antelope tries as well, but it’s too late. We’re both caught. The storm and tiger roar as one. Steven and I try to keep the tent from being ripped to shreds as the tiger’s teeth dug in, every fiber of its being telling it *This is what you were meant to be. Go.* The tiger is free, just like the storm. It’s doing what it was meant to — fulfilling its purpose. In that moment, it is happy. The world is his. Steven and I scream as the storm strikes again and again. With life. That’s the best way I can put it. We were alive. We were being punished by the chance that is nature. We got a week’s worth of storm in one night. We had no control over what happened. We were trapped. In that moment, we were happy.