

When it Matters Most

by Charles Schmelzer

Premise:

The world is going to end in ten minutes, and you are just standing there. Everyone knows the world will end. How it will end is unknown, but we are here to alleviate your nerves and talk you through your last moments.

Characters:

Sam: a twenty-year-old college student of any race or gender, who had a falling out with their dad because of their mother's passing and their sexuality. They are an only Child.

Receptionist (R): the person here to talk you through the end of the world, not robotic but they can answer your questions or connect you to whoever you want to talk to in a very sales person esq tone.

Dad: Sam's father who loves Sam but does not support them because of his religious beliefs.

On a dark stage we see a receptionist's table with a computer and phone and a chair, with one chair sitting on the opposite side of the desk ENTER (R) holding a coffee mug as they sit at their desk

Lights UP as SAM walks in confused

(R)

Hello, and welcome to the end of the world. You have approximately ten minutes to live, and I am here to guide you through this world-shattering news and help you make the most of your remaining time.

SAM

What?!

(R)

I know this information can be quite shocking but trust me human number: 116,984,107,916 you do not want to spend the next ten minutes confused. The world is going to end? Yes. Is there anything you or anyone can do about it? No. So, please take a seat and let me know what I can do for you? Would you like anything to drink?

SAM sits in the chair hesitantly

SAM

I'm good I'm not thirsty but, call me Sam getting called a number is just weird. Also, where the hell did you get that number there's only like 8 billion people on earth.

(R)

Well, Sam though there are only 8 billion or so living humans in total, you were the 116,984,107,916th human born over the course of 200,000 or so years in which that metric has been tracked. Is there anything else you would like to know?

SAM

Um... I don't know, um... how is the world going to end?

(R)

I unfortunately do not have the answer to that question, it could be an asteroid, time could stop working entirely, some guy in a basement somewhere could have made a black hole, the entire world's nuclear weapon supply might be targeted to destroy all the populated landmasses on earth. The sun might have just exploded, and the light won't fade for 8 minutes. If you would like we can spend the next four minutes listening to "it's the end of the world as we know it" by REM a song that has a high likelihood of describing the end of the world.

(R) begins typing on the computer frantically. They are pulling up the song

SAM

No, I don't want to waste four minutes of my precious time.

(R) hits backspace on their computer stopping what they were doing.

If anything, I want to talk to someone. Can you bring someone else here?

(R)

I unfortunately cannot bring in someone unless You know their Identification number, and before you ask no I cannot go off of their name, do you know how many Muhammad Muhammed's or James Smiths there are in the world. I have your parent's identification numbers if you would like to talk to them.

(R) begins typing again as SAM stands out of the chair and begins pacing

SAM

Wait, you can connect me with my mom.

(R)

Unfortunately, as I'm sure you are aware, your mom passed away 2 years ago, and we cannot connect the two of you. However, I can allow you to talk to your father.

SAM

No. I wouldn't talk to that man even if it was the end of the world. But speaking of a religious nut like that, is there an afterlife like which religion system got it right if any.

(R)

Unfortunately, no matter how much I wish I could give you the "*The Good Place*" Doug Forcett speech about an afterlife or a god, I unfortunately won't have the answer to that question for another 12 minutes.

SAM

Aliens. do they exist

(R)

Yes. In a universe as infinitely large as ours there is intelligent life on other celestial bodies out there.

SAM

Meaning of life, the universe and everything?

(R)

42.

SAM

Zodiac Killer

(R)

It was actually like 7 different guys, but one guy just showed up with meaningless cyphers to make them all look connected

SAM

What did the Inception ending mean

(R)

I don't think we have time to unpack that one

SAM

Will they ever get the one piece

(R)

Yes, on episode 4,753

SAM

Other universes?

(R)

Probably

SAM

How many 4th graders?

(R)

74

SAM

How many 3rd graders?

(R)

87

SAM

Hotel

(R)

Trivago.

The Phone on the Desk rings and (R) picks it up and after listening for a few seconds and making affirming noises reaches out to hand the phone to SAM

It's your dad

SAM

What?! I told you not to call him.

(R)

I didn't call him. He called you.

SAM thinks for a second, reaches out for the phone then stops before grabbing it.

SAM

Put him on hold. If he's still there after a minute and IF I want to talk to him then I'll talk. For the amount of shit that that man has put me through he can afford to waste a minute.

(R)

Alright I guess, I do recommend you talk to him though. I mean, there are people dying every second who can't even see the end of these ten minutes, and about 2700 babies who will only ever know these ten minutes and imagine their poor mothers and all other women who are in labor who will never be able to hold their babies. I would consider you a lucky one. Getting this opportunity to talk to someone who cares about you.

SAM

Sure, someone who cares about me huh... what does that man care for me. He clearly cared so much about who I care about and love so: do we have someone out there who is destined to be with us

(R)

I don't have the answer to that question, but it isn't about being destined to do something with someone else, its about finding someone and making it work. You find problems and fix them or live with them. Love is about communication and making a difference in the other person

(R) shakes the phone in an attempt to get SAM to grab it

SAM

Ok how many people have I made a difference for.

(R)

You know I don't have that number. Just by existing you change the lives of those around you and tangentially those around them so the number I would get would be about 8 billion people. But in these last moments you can change one more.

SAM grabs the phone

DAD enters stage right staring deadpan to the audience with a phone to his ear.

DAD

Sam please. Please Sam, please pick up the phone.

SAM puts the phone to their ear and takes a deep breath

SAM

Hey dad.

DAD

Oh my, Sam are you alright.

SAM

Oh, so now you care about my well being.

DAD

I know I messed up.

SAM

MESSED UP?! You kicked out your 17 year old child because you didn't approve of their sexuality. You did a lot worse than a little mistake. You absolute-

DAD

I don't want to waste any more time. I'm sorry.

SAM

What, so since it's the end of the world you finally feel the need to say something? So only when whatever you do has no consequences is when you finally say something.

DAD

What do you mean by means nothing. We have four minutes left and I chose to call you to try to reconcile things

SAM

Oh, you mean get it off your conscience. I mean if you believe that what you say to me truly matters then I want you to own up to your mistakes and apologize. Not just saying that you made a mistake.

DAD

I'm sorry, I admit that what I did was wrong. I don't want the last thing that I would have said to you to have been to get out of my house.

SAM

And.

DAD

And what I don't know what else to say.

SAM

Say that you were wrong. That just because I'm not straight doesn't mean I was a mistake, that you still love me no matter who I love. That if you could take back these past 2 years you would. I don't know say anything of substance

DAD

I'm sorry that because of my beliefs that you and I had a falling out.

SAM

Oh my god. Even when the world is going to end you still can't admit that you were wrong. If you want to fix this, then I need you to admit that.

DAD

I said I was sorry Shouldn't that be enough.

SAM

Maybe if we had a fight about sneaking in past curfew or scratching the paint on the car but not when you kicked your child out on the streets because you didn't approve of something they cannot change.

Beat

Well.

SAM walks over to the desk and slams the phone down hanging up. SAM addresses (R), the phone continues to ring

Do you see what I have to put up with? God; He can't even admit he was wrong in his last few minutes. He was going to do everything in his ability to make me admit that I'm sorry. Well, I'm not sorry. I'm sorry that I ever had to live with that Asshole. I'm sorry that he had a skull so dense that He was willing to kick me out because I was "too old for conversion therapy" and He had no means of accepting me for who I am. And I'm sorry that my mom had to put up with his bullshit for 3 months without me at home. I'm sorry that That night was the last time I saw her. I'm sorry that the way I had to find out my own mom died was through an obituary in the paper.

(R)

That was a first step. But you weren't listening. He felt bad. Even though he didn't say the words you were looking for but he genuinely wants to make things better.

SAM

What so he can get into the "good afterlife" if there even is one.

(R)

Think about it like this he has ten minutes left to live and he was willing to spend the rest of his time trying to make amends with you.

SAM

Because I'm sure he was in the same boat as me and I was the only one he could have called.

(R) begins typing on the computer again

(R)

Actually, he could have called his sister or his brother. And he chose to call you, and he's still trying to call you. So, I recommend you get off your high horse for the last twenty seconds of your life and listen to what he has to say.

SAM picks up the phone after a few seconds of thought

DAD

Sam, I'm sorry for everything. I love you

SAM

Dad. I'm sorry I love you too.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF SCENE

END OF PLAY