

# A train to nothing

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The world turns on you sometimes. I guess that's nothing new to most, but it hurts like hell just the same when it happens to you. They used to say I'm still young, and that I can go the distance; if I only reach that potential inside I'd have a great future to look forward to.

"When did that change?" I wonder out loud to myself.

It's been four years since I've last heard those optimistic words of encouragement. Now all I hear is "get a job," "Finish school already," and "Just settle on something before you end up with nothing." Damn those words hurt more than people think they do. Why didn't anyone tell me potential had an expiration date?

"End up with nothing they say..." I think about those words more to myself "or do they mean end up as nothing?"

The concept of becoming nothing to the world has scared me for a while now. It's not something I really had to consider up until a couple years ago, when I was being forced into choosing a college major. I look over to my right and see a man sitting down only a few seats from my own on the almost empty night train. He looks only 5 years older than me physically, but his pale and worn-out appearance makes it look like he's lived a hundred lives. His outfit was a simple business suit, one you would wear if you worked in lower management at any typical office building. I don't usually take the train, In fact this is my first time ever taking a train, and maybe that was why this man gave me an odd feeling. I couldn't even image the man he used to be, but some unseen force desperately made me want to.

I started to mentally list off the bullet points of his life. Raised by parents who divorced early in his life, Robert, the name I had given him, was an only child. He saw his parents fight his whole life. At five it was fighting to stay together. At eight it was fighting to be apart. At ten it was fighting for his affection. At thirteen, when they each found new families, it was fighting to see who would be forced to take care of him. Robert never cared though, he became skilled in minding his own business over the years. He worked his way through school at the local deli and made enough to afford tuition at a nice local college. Now with a degree in accounting, after a couple years of pursuing art then chemistry back to art, he works with numbers for some company he doesn't even care to know the name of. Not that they would ever know his. Socially he dated a few nice girls, and a few more bad ones, but none lasted. He told himself they just weren't right for him, but deep down he knew he just never learned how to love in that selfless way. Friend on the other hand he could handle. He loved long nights drinking and playing video games with a few of his best mates. That didn't last though, once they all found jobs and spouses things became too "complicated". Yeah that's what they would call it, complicated. If work wasn't keeping them busy it was the spouse, if not the spouse it was the kids, if not the kids it was a sudden illness. Every second of their lives were accounted for. Robert was no different. Live until you die, but what is living? Most would give the basics. Career, family, and house is what everyone dreams of. That being said, are we only meant to live to work ourselves to death trying

to fit into these basic society dreams? Isn't success and happiness subjective terms? If I don't have a family, and I nothing? If my career doesn't even have a title, am I nothing? If I live in a van and just drive through life, am I nothing? I live so I must be something. Right? I glance back at Robert, and I notice a slight glistening on his cheek. It took me a second to realize this was a tear. He was crying. My normal reaction, as I'm sure most would share, would be to awkwardly ignore him. That being said, that's not what happened. What did happen, is that I started to cry too. It honestly didn't matter what he was crying about, because him and I were connected on this train. His sadness linked me of my own. Our sadness mirrored each other in perfect harmony. Nothing felt more surreal to me in my life. I got up and with tears starting to cloud my vision, I walked over and sat next to him. I put my hand on his shoulder, and said nothing, but I believed I communicated exactly what I wanted to. We may be nothing to the world, but right now on this train, we can be anything. As long as we are still moving, as long as we are still feeling, as long as we are still connection, we are anything. He looked up and gave a small smile. The smile could mean anything, but for my own comfort I believe it to be one of hope. The train then reached my stop, and removing the tears from my eyes, I give him one final pat and stand. As I get to the door I hear a tiny voice call out to me.

"Thanks, mister!"

I look back and where once sat a defeated, crying man. Now sitting there was a boy of no more than five, wiping tears out of his eyes, and showing me the most passionate expression I've ever seen. I matched that look and responded right back to him.

"Thanks yourself."

He runs up to me and grabs my hand "What's your name?"

I pause for a second and then respond "Robert."

"Okay! Bye, bye Robert!" He lets go and waves as he runs back to his seat

I step out onto the platform. The sun is hiding behind a sea of clouds, but I don't mind. It's not like you need to see things to know what's right. I start moving down the road. I feel the world around me. I connect with every person I meet. I'm ready to be anything.