

Caring

Carl cared about caring. He cared about his family, his work. He also cared about society. There was not enough caring and it seemed to grow worse every day. Pretty much everyone could care less about caring (Carl was never sure what that meant—care less about caring or careless about caring? It was confusing.) As if confirming his judgement, society did not care about Carl. It did not even know who he was. No societal care packages for Carl. How could Carl make society care?

Society cared about royalty—movie stars and politicians and celebrities. Society completely ignored the average person. The average accomplished nothing worth celebrating, except staying alive and trying to enjoy their lives. Carl wrote his area politicians, pushing hard for an “I’m Just Me Day,” to honour the average person and caring about them. No luck. He tried posts on social media—no reaction, nor was he able to get on TV.

No one cared about his caring about caring. Not even care givers.

Carl began to seriously wonder whether he cared too much, that he was wrong. But he knew he was right and decided to go extreme. Being a very talented neurophysicalbiologisthacker (an little known profession,) Carl created mental influences by putting drugs in the nation’s water supply and subliminal messages on the web and airwaves. The purpose? To increase peoples’ caring for others.

The changes were gradual, Carl seeing them first in public political arguments, which became polite and respectful. Then he noticed changes around him at work—it was friendlier, there were less promotions and more awards for service. Production slowed as concern over safety and comfort increased. After half a year, the nation had grown into a kinder, gentler country.

Which was when astronomers detected a huge asteroid heading straight for Earth.

Yes, this was an unexpected twist but these things happen. Deep underground shelters were hastily constructed in the hope of saving some of humanity. However, no one went in. The people selected cared too much about leaving others behind. The asteroid hit, there was immediate devastation followed by two years of crud in the sky, blocking the sun, after which 90% of life on Earth was dead. Bugs and slugs were left and all they cared about was eating and breeding.

Caring had become theoretical.

At least the politicians were gone.