

## [The Write Place At the Write Time](#)

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### **Writers' Contest!**

Here we will announce the winners of the winter edition Writers' Contest. First place goes to thirteen year old Kendall Junger- we applaud the depth of her emotional piece. Ms. Junger will receive a \$15 gift certificate to Barnes & Noble bookstore. Second place goes to Thomas Lucas for the wit and humor of his entry. Third place is a tie- shared by Kevin Vorshak and David Lovato; for Mr. Vorshak's power of description and Mr. Lovato's philosophical perspective. The challenge, designed by Cheryl Sommese, really got writers buzzing and the quality and volume of submissions for this contest made it difficult to judge but a pleasure to sort through. Read the winning entries below!

Here is the original prompt along with the rules:

*The Mayan calendar ends on December 21, 2012.  
Assume this indicates one of the following:*

- A. *The end of the world.*
- B. *The end of a cycle.*
- C. *The beginning of a new era.*

*Write a short story in no more than 500 words using one of the three scenarios to describe the protagonist's reality shortly before the big day. For example, is she/he calm? Excited? Fearful? Indifferent? Preparatory? Weave the words "Christmas", "New Year", "winter solstice", "redemption" and "apocalypse" into the narrative. Good luck!!!*

"Goodnight"

by Kendall Junger

I clutch my old winter jacket against my chest, and bury my face in its warm fluff, not wanting to watch the scenes unfolding on the screen in front of me. Mothers crying with their children, entire towns flooded or burnt to a crisp, lifeless lovers' fingers still intertwined. I hate myself for looking, but I need to know when it will be my turn, our turn, to join them, wherever death may take us. Kay shifts positions at my side, hiding her eyes from the TV like I did, and burrowing into her favorite blanket. She may still be a toddler, but Kay is in no way stupid. She knows, just as well as I do, what's coming for us. I only need to know when.

A shiver runs up my spine, so I pull up the hood on my jacket. The night of the winter solstice doesn't exactly bring sunshine and warm fronts, although, with the events of the past year, I wouldn't be surprised if it was hot enough to roast us all like peanuts. Ever since New Year's Day, the world seemed to tip upside down, and we've been left here to fall off the edge. Now, almost a full year since the beginning of the end, the grand finale is upon us. So we wait for it to awe us

in its glory.

Suddenly, a number flashes across the TV, and everyone stirs around me, but remains silent. Many people hold their breath, daring to hope that our town may have redemption from the end, that we would all be spared from the apocalypse. But the number begins to decline.

A countdown.

I pull Kay closer to me, and she weeps on my shoulder. I'm too old to be scared, but a tear trickles down my face anyways as I stare at the clock, only holding a minute and a half. Time sure does fly when you're mortified. I regret not enjoying my life while I had it, because now, I have no time left. The world will be gone and forgotten. The Christmas lights around me glint through my tears, sparkling and beautiful.

Twenty seconds.

It starts with us, two sisters who are trying to keep themselves pure and calm while everyone else despairs.

*“Silent Night, Holy Night  
All is Calm, all is Bright”*

Ten seconds. It is calm, and it is bright. Everyone falls silent; many bow their heads and hold the hands of one another. No one is alone anymore.

*“Round yon Virgin Mother and Child  
Holy Infant so Tender and Mild”*

Five. I know Kay deserves better than me. She's so sweet and sincere, while I am only a bad sister. I just love her so much. My baby sister.

*“Sleep in Heavenly Peace”*

Three. Be peaceful wherever you go, Kay. Know that I love you, Kay, know it and don't ever forget it. I close my eyes and bow my head along with everyone else.

*"Sleep in Heavenly Peace"*

Goodnight.

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"Hi Mom"

by Tom Lucas

Stan was on the phone with his mother. Which meant that Stan was chained to his phone. It currently weighed 1000 pounds.

Mother was never one for the quick call. When Stan's phone would ring, and he would look down at its screen to see who was calling, seeing "Mother" was always stressful.

Do I pick up? Do I really have an hour?

Mother not only couldn't have a quick chat, when time finally came to end the call, she had to say goodbye at least six times, and in as many different ways.

At least half of the time, Stan would just let the call go to voice mail. Today, being the day that it was, he took the path of mercy and picked up the phone.

Today was supposedly the end of the world. December 21, 2012. At least that's what every talking head had been blathering about for weeks now. Here was the big day, and Stan had pretty much turned everything off, as all the static was giving him a headache.

Mother was fully lathered up. She had always been one of those new age

types. Pyramid power, ancient aliens, Bigfoot, ghosts, Ouija boards, angels, all that crap. And she was worried.

Currently, she was grinding on about the Winter Solstice and its importance to Druids. And the little folk.

Little folk? What the hell was she talking about?

Stan had perfected the art of the well-timed affirmative monosyllabic response.

Yeah?

Right.

Sure.

As long as he peppered his end of the conversation with these elements, Mother would continue without question. He just had to wait it out.

Had he taken precautions? Was he sad there would be no Christmas or New Year's to celebrate?

Stan hadn't even thought about that stuff. He had been too busy at work to even notice the holidays' rapid approach. He didn't really care.

You know this is the apocalypse today? Have you told your friends how much they mean to you?

Yeah. Right. Sure.

Mother was really testing his patience today. He tried to be a good son; it was the right thing to do. But Jesus, it could be really annoying.

The end will bring about the redemption of mankind.

Wow, she was really going at it today.

Redemption?

“Hey Mom, I gotta question for you,” said Stan.

Mother paused. She suddenly seemed very excited. “Go ahead dear.”

“This end of the world thing today. What time zone does it start in?”

“I am not sure I understand, sweetie.”

“Ok, so today is the end of the world. But what time zone determines that? It’s already tomorrow in Japan?”

The answer was not as fun as the question. She didn’t even realize he was messing with her. She went on and on about latitudes, longitudes, and something called ley lines.

For no real reason at all, Stan looked out the window, and noticed a massive burning meteor about to hit his apartment building.

“Mom, gotta go. Love you.”

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"Survival Rights"

by Kevin Vorshak

Though expansive, the facility still felt like a tomb to Colonel Witherspoon as he made his way along the passageway. Rock walls extended almost thirty-feet to the roof in corridors half again as wide, supported by massive limestone columns left during the original construction. It amazed him still that the location’s existence remained secret. The Government built it right under the nose of the city of Bettendorf under the pretense of mining the

limestone - which in essence they did - until its closure some thirty years before. Then came the internal renovations. The completed facility extended for almost a mile underground, and branched out over three. It contained ten levels, most of which held food and other necessities. *God damn ant hill if you ask me.*

His footfalls echoed eerily as he moved along, merging with those of others, mostly Senators, Congressman, and other high-ranking government officials. Many looked at him with whitened, fearful faces as he passed. He thought he might get used to it, but it annoyed him more than the rhythmic dripping of a loose faucet. Less than twelve hours now.

He didn't understand their choices on who lived and who died. The world faced an apocalypse greater than anything ever written about in the bible, and they build a multi-billion dollar complex to shelter people in the waning years of their life. He likened it to filling the ark with two of every living creature too old and barren for offspring. To what end? So that a dead world might have a government? What redemption might the human race experience had they populated it with Adams and Eves instead? He couldn't help but see the irony that, in the winter solstice of the human race, the sun might never rise again.

Witherspoon felt that few of the facility's inhabitants earned the right to survive - including himself.

He found the door to the General's office open. Stepping inside, he saluted.

“Christ, Witherspoon, you don't need to do that.”

“Sorry, sir. You know how rank can be. It's better for me to not forget my place, even with an old bastard like you.”

General Lawrence laughed. “Ahhh, Bill,” he said wiping at his eyes. For a moment I almost forgot we don't have long left.”

“Any word?”

"It'll strike in a few hours, just like the damn Mayans predicted. The trajectory has it impacting near Belgium."

"Thank God for that, Sir."

"I don't think God has anything to do with this, Bill."

Colonel Witherspoon looked at his friend. "Grant, is the President going to give any warning?"

"I don't know. I hope he doesn't."

"But people have the right, and rumors are already spreading -"

"Yes, mostly discounted as kooks and fear mongers. Bill, let people enjoy what's left of the Christmas season. There will be no New Year for them," Grant said, pouring them each a drink.

Witherspoon saw wetness forming in his friends' eyes and lifted his glass. "To blissful ignorance."

"Aye," Grant responded.

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"Words at the End of the World"

by David Lovato

The panic started weeks before the apocalypse. That's how we knew we wouldn't make it to the new year. Hell, we wouldn't even make it to Christmas. Everyone was terrified; those who weren't taking to the streets were boarding up their houses to protect themselves from those who were.

I didn't mind so much. Like most people I stopped going to work just before the winter solstice. There was no point, right? Who wants to spend their last hours working?



Most people gathered with their families. I didn't have one. I didn't have a lot of things. No lover waiting at home, no calls from relatives or friends, I didn't even have a dog to feed. I never thought about any of this until the end of the world, but that's how it goes, doesn't it? We reach our deathbeds and suddenly those things we put off are a lot more important. Those letters we didn't send, now we never will. Those words we didn't say, well now it's too late. But most people don't have to worry about that until they're old. I'm not old but I have to worry about it all the same; I can walk around but it's still my deathbed. There's no last minute epiphany, no chance for redemption.

And that's when I realize that I did have to worry about those things all along, I just didn't know it. People tried to warn me, but every one became another case of "seize the day, gotcha" syndrome. We're told to savor our lives, and we just nod and go about them, not truly living at all. I guess it's my fault.

When I went to bed on the 20th, I did it because I was just plain bored. My twin mattress became my death bed, and it called to me, and I decided it was best to just get it over with.

The next day the sun came up. And the next day. And on Christmas, and on New Year's Day.

Some people celebrated. People do that. But what's the point? It was just another day all along. They're all just another day, aren't they?

When I woke up this morning, the sun was shining. I think I'll write a letter. I still have so much to say.



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