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Forty Tales from the Afterlives

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In the afterlife you relive all your experiences, but this time with the events reshuffled into a new order: all the moments that share a quality are grouped together.

You spend two months driving the street in front of your house, seven months having sex. You sleep for thirty years without opening your eyes. For five months straight you flip through magazines while sitting on a toilet.

You take all your pain at once, all twenty-seven intense hours of it. Bones break, cars crash, skin is cut, babies are born. Once you make it through, it's agony-free for the rest of your afterlife.

But that doesn't mean it's always pleasant. You spend six days clipping your nails. Fifteen months looking for lost items. Eighteen months waiting in line. Two years of boredom: staring out a bus window, sitting in an airport terminal. One year reading books. Your eyes hurt, and you itch, because you can't take a shower until it's your time to take your marathon two-hundred-day shower. Two weeks wondering what happens when you die. One minute realizing your body is falling. Seventy-seven hours of confusion. One hour realizing you've forgotten

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someone's name. Three weeks realizing you are wrong. Two days lying. Six weeks waiting for a green light. Seven hours vomiting. Fourteen minutes experiencing pure joy. Three months doing laundry. Fifteen hours writing your signature. Two days tying shoelaces. Sixty-seven days of heartbreak. Five weeks driving lost. Three days calculating restaurant tips. Fifty-one days deciding what to wear. Nine days pretending you know what is being talked about. Two weeks counting money. Eighteen days staring into the refrigerator. Thirty-four days longing. Six months watching commercials. Four weeks sitting in thought, wondering if there is something better you could be doing with your time. Three years swallowing food. Five days working buttons and zippers. Four minutes wondering what your life would be like if you reshuffled the order of events. In this part of the afterlife, you imagine something analogous to your Earthly life, and the thought is blissful: a life where episodes are split into tiny swallowable pieces, where moments do not endure, where one experiences the joy of jumping from one event to the next like a child hopping from spot to spot on the burning sand.