

AVERAGE

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Who am I? he thought to himself. *Genuinely, who am I?*

A superficial question, on one level; he was Maximilian Koblinski, mild-mannered short-haul truck driver. Twenty-four, unmarried, childless. Two siblings, one sister and one brother, both younger than he. He had his own apartment, but still saw his parents often; they loved him, and he them. He had played mediocre baseball in high school, and had recently grown a beard. At the moment he had a truck full of bread he was hauling for the hungry masses.

But genuinely, Max had to ask himself: who am I?

He'd never really exerted himself, in school or in work. He'd never been *lazy*, exactly; he'd passed all his subjects, gotten a perfectly average number of hits and committed a perfectly average number of errors, graduated on time, done his work, rarely been late, and never missed deadlines. Still, his effort would best be described as "rote". He did these things not because they were good things to do, not because of any high ideals about the importance of education or the value of honest work. He did them because—well, because what else was he supposed to do?

All in all, Max knew, he was at best an average person. No scoundrel, to be sure, but certainly no hero. So in a split sec-

ond—less than a second—his choice would certainly be an average one, when he was called to make it. Who would expect heroism from Max Koblinski? Who would blame him for being what he was?

So when he pressed on the brakes and nothing happened, what could he do? To the left was a woman getting out of her car parallel-parked on the side of the road; to the right, a sheer brick wall; in front of him, a small car already nearly stopped at the light. He was an average person; it's what he was, what he'd always been. He had a choice: turning right would ram his truck into the wall, at his speed almost certainly killing him. Going straight, he'd crush the car in front of him, but it would stop the truck, and he'd be okay, if likely a bit worse for wear. Going left, he'd flatten that poor woman like a pancake; but the scraping of the truck against the cars on the side of the road would surely stop him, and he'd make it out okay. Straight, life; left, life; right, certain death. It was easy.

Average. That's who he was, how he'd been made. Just a regular schmuck. He was definitely Clark Kent, not Superman.

He spun the wheel. Average? Maybe. But Max Koblinski knew what he had to do.

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