

# charles, 0

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From the day that he was born, Charles knew that one day he would die. As a result, he spent his entire life stringing together a seemingly endless number of *deja vus*. When his kindergarten teacher asked the class what they all wanted to be when they grew up, Charles simply answered, "a dead person," which got him sent directly to the school psychologist. "You're going to be a dead person someday, too!" he cheerfully reminded his teacher as she ushered him out the door. "You all will be!" One of the girls in the class cried as the door shut behind him. She knew that dead people smelled bad and didn't want to be smelly when she grew up.

The sense of *deja vu* first came to Charles as he walked from his kindergarten classroom to the school psychologist's office on the other side of the building. Here's what he knew about the world at that point: he was born, and sometime later he would die, and everything in between happened as if he was only re-enacting a dream that he had while still in the womb. So he already knew that he would be thrown out of his kindergarten class for being inappropriately morbid for a five-year-old, and he already knew that the school psychologist would ask him a lot of uninteresting questions about his life and how he got along with his parents and what he thought of the other children.

What he didn't know was what any of it meant. He could never determine what the exact consequences of his actions would be before making the decision to do anything, but the resulting situation was never a surprise to him. So he calmly returned to class once the school psychologist determined that he was not any more dysfunctional than the usual young boy with an over-active imagination who had perhaps overheard some fatalistic philosophers having a discussion in the park one day.

This is how Charles experienced his childhood. He smiled and spoke politely, was pleasant to adults and friendly to children his age, and only explored the boundaries imposed on his life very occasionally just to see if he would discover that same sense of having already known what was going to happen if he did. Adults found his precociousness alarming at best, and eerie at worst, while children were wary of him and avoided contact whenever possible.

It wasn't until adolescence when this feeling started to bother him. The usual cause of angst for adolescents is the inability to cope with change in their body chemistry; for Charles, it was the unsettling feeling that while nothing in life surprised him when it happened, none of his choices ever seemed to make a

different in the flow of his life. This lack of control over his life slowly terrified him more every time the world seems to respond to his increadinly reckless actions with the exact same uncaring consequences as usual.

So Charles made the decision that if he could control nothing else in his life with utmost certainty, he would be the complete master of the only thing in his life that he was certain of: his death.