

This is an excerpt from *Imaginary Year*, a work of serial fiction by Jeremy P. Bushnell. Visit the *Imaginary Year* website (<http://www.ImaginaryYear.com>) on Mondays and Fridays for new updates.

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1.

Did you know, Fletcher says, taking a sip from his beer, —that there's a Fletcher Street in Chicago?

—I guess, Clark says, shrugging.

—I think next time I move I'm going to try to find an apartment there.

Clark snorts.

—Come on, Fletcher says. —To be Fletcher on Fletcher Street? You've got to admit that that would be cool.

—That would so *not* be cool. *Especially* if you moved there *on purpose* to look cool.

—Admit it, Fletcher says.

—No, Clark says, flatly.

—Admit it, Fletcher says.

—No, Clark says. —Listen, there's a Clark Street in Chicago, too, but you don't see me wanting to move *there*, do you?

—No, Fletcher says. —But that's because your street sucks.

—Drop dead, Clark says.

2.

—So how are things with Janine? Fletcher asks.

—They're not, Clark says. She sighs. —We've been totally avoiding one another at work. We haven't gotten together outside of work in *weeks*. I think she knows.

—Knows what?

—I don't know. Knows that I'm not interested anymore.

—Are you not?

—I don't know. I don't think so. I just don't feel it with her. And that's hard for me.

—Why? Fletcher asks.

—Why, Clark repeats. She drains the last of her vodka tonic, uses her tongue to secret a few slivers of ice away in the pouch of her cheek. —I kind of went into this thing thinking that it would be an adventure, you know? This big self-discovery thing, where I finally become, you know—bi. *For real* bi instead of just *pretend* bi. And I *wanted* that. It fits with who I am; it fits with what I do; it *makes sense*. But I think I'm starting to realize that you don't always get to *have* a sexual orientation that *makes sense*. I'm thirty years old. I'm almost thirty-one. And maybe—I don't know, maybe it's time for me to realize that I'm just *not bisexual*.

—Hm, Fletcher says. —So it's back to guys for you, eh?

—Eh, Clark says. —Sex with guys has never been that great for me either.

—I hate to break it to you, friend, but there's really only two options here.

—I don't know, Clark says. —That's not really accurate.

—You mean there's something new? Fletcher says. —*That'll* shake things up around here.

—Nothing *new*, Clark says. —It's just—I mean a third option would just be to kind of *get out of the game*, you know?

—To get out of the game?

—To just *give it up*. Just—sometimes when I'm having sex I just get this feeling of like *what's the point?* I'm just—sometimes I feel like I'm totally *asexual*, Clark says.

—You're planning to reproduce by *budding*, I guess?

—Now, I *know* you're just trying to be a dick, but I'm going to remind you anyway that I *don't* have much interest in kids. That maternal impulse just never took root in me. And I mean—it just seems like lately I don't feel a lot of desire, for men *or* for women. If I'm to be honest I have to admit that I never really have. I mean, I've always been all sex-positive, because that's what the culture demands, for everybody to be like *ob, sex is the greatest*, but for me it *isn't*, and it never *has* been, and maybe I'm just *ready to say* that. Sex just isn't that *important* for me.

—Huh, Fletcher says. —It is for me.

Her eyes flicker up to meet his. —Are you sure?

Sure I'm sure, he wants to say, but the words go dead in his throat. He thinks. It's been over two years since he last had sex with someone. And he hasn't really pursued any of the leads he's had during those two years. Sometimes he *feels like* he misses sex, but other times he doesn't seem to. When he notices that he hasn't been missing sex he gets concerned: he sometimes feels like he'd better start *missing it more*, in order to confirm that there's nothing really wrong with him.

He thinks here about what gives him the most satisfaction and he is somewhat surprised to find that his first answer is *my work*.

—Sure I'm sure, he says.