

There's a theory that says there are billions of other universes, parallel to the one we live in, and that each of them is slightly different. There are the ones where you were never born, and the ones where you wouldn't want to be born. There are some parallel universes where I'm having sex with a horse, and ones where I win the lottery. There are universes where I'm lying on the bedroom floor, slowly bleeding to death, and universes where I've been elected president, by a landslide. But I don't care about any of those parallel universes now. The only ones that interest me are the ones where she isn't happily married, with a cute little boy, the ones where she's completely alone. There are plenty of universes like that, I'm sure. I'm trying to think about them now. Among all those universes, there are some where we've never met. I don't care about those now. Among the ones that are left, there are some where she doesn't want me. She tells me no. In some of them, she does it gently, and in others – in a way that hurts. I don't care about those now, either. All that's left are the ones where she tells me yes, and I choose one of them, a little like you choose a piece of fruit at the greengrocer's. I choose the nicest one, the ripest one, the sweetest one. It's a universe where the weather is perfect, never too hot or too cold, and we live there in a little cottage in the woods. She works at the city library, a forty-minute drive from our home, and I work in the education department of the regional council, in the building that faces hers. Sometimes, from my office window, I can see her putting books back on the shelf. We always have our lunch together. And I love her and she loves me. I'd give anything to move to that universe. But meanwhile, until I find the way there, all I can do is think about it. I picture myself living there, in the middle of the woods. With her, in complete happiness. There's an infinite number of parallel universes in the world. In one of them, I'm having sex with a horse; in another, I win the lottery. I don't want to think about those now, only about that one, the one with the cottage in the woods. There's a universe where I'm lying with my wrists slashed, bleeding, on the bedroom floor. That's the universe I'm doomed to live in until it's over. I don't want to think about it now. I just want to think about that other universe. A cottage in the woods, the sun setting, going to bed early. In bed, my right arm is unslashed, and dry. She's lying on it and we're hugging each other. She lies on it for so long that I can hardly feel it anymore. But I don't move, I like it that way, with my arm under her warm body, and I keep liking it even when I can no longer feel my arm at all. I can sense her breathing on my face – rhythmic, regular, unending. My eyes begin to shut. Not just in that universe, in bed, in the woods, but in the other universes too, the ones that I don't want to think about. I enjoy knowing there's one place, in the heart of the woods, where I'm falling asleep happy.