

Armageddon
By Josie DeBord

Science. Everyone hated sixth-grade science. The only thing we ever discussed was either rocks, or how climate change was going to kill us all. Our teacher, Mr. Norbert, on the other hand, loved it. "You'll be the generation to fix all this," he'd say whenever he pulled up a video of how Earth was being killed by our CO₂ emissions. "Jake, can you turn the lights off?" He asked, turning to me.

"...It's Jack, but yeah." I sighed as I stood up, switching the lights off and sitting back down in my seat. Today was no exception to any kind of depressing video.

...Except, it was. The YouTube video, or the "tape," as Mr. Norbert called it, started playing as usual.

Five minutes in, the Wi-Fi cut out. Or at least, that's what we thought had happened. This wasn't unusual; the Wi-Fi at school was terrible anyway. Mr. Norbert sighed and tried to reboot the website. After his third try to refresh the page, a broadcast from the world-famous Brooklyn Institute of Technology cut in instead.

"Attention, listeners!" A scientist in a laboratory said. His voice was scratchy, like an old radio broadcast. On the other hand, the camera quality was so clear; it was almost like we were standing in the lab itself. The whole scenario was strangely unnerving. "Scientists at the B.I.T. have discovered revolutionary technology that will change our methods of transportation forever! Teleportation -the act of splitting molecules and reforming them all in the same position has only been an idea, and thought to be impossible!" Mr. Norbert was watching intensely rather than trying to turn off the broadcast.

"This machine here is pulling the molecules apart, memorizing the combination and the way it did so, and sending the information to another teleporter in less than half a millisecond!" The man in a lab coat placed an apple between two white bars about an inch thick, with what looked like fluorescent indigo lights. His hand hovered over a large, red button. "One push of this button, and-" The man stopped talking abruptly, and sirens were heard in the background. Other women and men in white lab coats raced anxiously by, holding clipboards with papers flying about the room. One man's clipboard accidentally hit the button, and the apple, still placed strategically between the two white bars, vanished in a poof of red dust. Only, the dust kept getting darker, and closer together. A woman frantically grabbed the camera and gave a rushed speech on the dark matter energy and their relations to black holes.

My class erupted in terror.

"MR. NORBERT?! IS THAT GONNA BE A BLACK HOLE?!" One of my friends screamed. Mr. Norbert was scarily calm.

“Even if it was, you wouldn’t feel a thing.” He sighed. Then everyone got worse. Kids were screaming strings of profanities, others were running through nearby classrooms exclaiming the news. Someone even flipped over a desk. “EVERYONE BE QUIET!” Mr. Norbert yelled, fed up with our nonsense.

Everyone froze in place. “We should check what’s going on before we panic.”

“-So yes,” A scientist continued, “we have deduced the reconstruction of the apple’s particles are going to form a black hole. Theoretically, death will be painless and instant. We have...” He looked behind the camera, and we all watched the color drain from his face. “Thirty seconds Left.”

It was the shortest thirty seconds of my life. There was no point texting our parents; they wouldn’t see it in time. Yet, we all sent the fastest ones we could, despite the tears clouding our eyes. A few girls were praying in a small circle.

Time was up, and Mr. Norbert was wrong. So very wrong. In one painfully strong burst of air, gravity gave out and we were all suspended in the air for a split second. Then, the ground fell from beneath our feet, ignoring us as the whole Earth seemed to shake and fall below us. I survived the ceiling crashing down, and the Earth sank down. You were suffocating, drowning in your own blood as you passed through the atmosphere.

We were now above Earth with bodies and debris floating weightlessly. The planets spiraled closer, and the heat was unbearable. The force of the sun began to melt us alive, while the freezing temperatures of Pluto started to freeze us solid. All the planets seemed to be shedding a skin, and it would’ve been the most remarkable thing we would’ve ever seen if we weren’t mostly blinded by pain and the sun. There was a light at the end of the tunnel, and I realized I must have died.

I was one of the only ones to survive. Earth, or, what used to be Earth, was now stripped of most of its crust. The people here were like me, bloody and bruised, weak and sick, and in a disgustingly cold sweat. We were all scarily thin; the only possible explanation for our state was the toll all of that had taken on our bodies.

There was no longer much of an atmosphere. I could easily see other planets, but whatever they were, they definitely weren’t what they used to be. There was a sun, but it was much smaller and orbiting what was left of the Earth like it was the moon. The Sun was now our Moon. In place of the sun, a ginormous moon.

Someone grunted behind me and I turned, yelping at what I saw. I didn’t mean to be rude, but the man was missing an eye and a deep gash on his leg. He was wearing what was once a lab coat, but it was now blood-stained and Torn.

“Pretty, ain’t it?” He snarled, and a few more torn up people limped over. The man glared at the other planets and didn’t so much as flinch as another man dropped dead beside him. “First thing we’re gonna do is survive. Yeah? Before death takes us all first.”