

We are all doomed.

By Aedan Azeka

It was the second day of summer school and I felt nervous. Okay. *I can do this... Maybe I can make some new friends or something*, I thought, sounding like my mother. Glancing down at my schedule, I groan out loud seeing the first class. Sky and Air... Room B1. *Why would Mom choose Sky and Air? I told her I wanted drama class...* My thoughts were interrupted by a bubbly, sandy blonde haired girl bumping into my arm.

"Hey Rachel." I say glumly

"What's the matter?" She asked in a voice too cheerful for this time in the morning

"Sky and Air is the matter," I said, "What class do you have now?"

"I'm with you, Sky and Air, Room B1."

We walked to the classroom to discovered a line of kids already waiting. We chatted for a few minutes about Rachel wanting to dye her hair. Suddenly, the door swung open and our heads whipped toward it. Out came a tall, middle aged man, who suddenly noticing the ruckus he made, gave a small and an awkward wave. He disappeared in the classroom again and everyone walked in. We were greeted by a slightly goth, bored looking redhead with a nametag that read 'Remy'. Rachel and I sat at one of the small desks that were arranged into a circle facing the projector. On the board it read 'Sky & Air' in swirly, cursive letters. A tall, dark skinned girl that looked exactly like me, except for the black hair, sat next to me. "Hi! I'm-" She started but was suddenly interrupted by the tall guy earlier.

"Hi!" He said, "My name is Mr. Nick and that's Ms. Remy, my teaching assistant!" *He is a very cheerful person, too cheerful*, I thought, as I pulled my journal out of my bag. He continued to blabber on about the class and what we would go on to do for the next five weeks, but I wasn't paying attention. I was staring out the window, towards the classroom that had a colorful, almost loud sign that read 'DRAMA'. I sighed and turned my head back to Mr. Nick,

just as he was saying "...so I thought it would be fun to start the first day off with a quick documentary featuring, everyone's favorite scientist, Stephen Hawkings!"

He fiddled with the settings on the projector as Ms. Remy turned the lights off and closed the blinds. The documentary started with something about the creation of stars but after every unnecessarily long word, I felt my eyelids getting heavier and heavier.

"Okay! Let's take a quick snack break!" I heard a cheery voice say. I woke with a start and tried to act nonchalant while wiping the drool off of my desk. I head outside with Rachel and, the girl who tried to introduce herself earlier, Karly. They chatted about different theories from the movie while I rubbed the sleep out of my eyes. After everyone finished their food, we headed back inside to finish the last half of the movie. This time I stayed up, and it was pretty interesting until a new segment of the film started called 'We Are All Doomed'. The scenes before my eyes were...interesting. But also terrifying. Stephen Hawking's robotical voice talked about asteroids headed to kill us, the sun exploding, little chance of human survival, and plans to colonize mars before the global warming takes over. It was a lot to take in. After the movie ended, I sat dumbfounded, while the rest of the class had a discussion about creation of the universe. I kept picturing my family and friends in place of the SGI humans being killed in different ways. I was sad, to say the least. I stood up to ask to go to the bathroom and then it hit me. We could be killed right now. Without any way of knowing. Aliens could come or the sun could die early or even an undetected asteroid could cause major trouble. And that just space. North Korea could decide to launch their nuclear weapons or terrorists could decide to come to this very school. I was hyperventilating. Fast. *Stop it*, I thought. I couldn't. And I was scared that I couldn't. Ms. Remy, noticing my unexpected panic, immediately took me outside.

“What's wrong?” She said in a surprisingly alert voice, considering her expression was completely and utterly bored looking. It almost made me laugh. Almost. She stared at me expectantly, and it all came out. All the thoughts I had just a few minutes earlier. By the time I finished, I was bawling my eyes out. She chewed her lip, deep in thought, and put on a softer expression.

“It's okay. You know, they're just theories.”

Theories created by certified geniuses, I thought.

“And it's just made off of observation, it's not like they know that asteroid will hit us in 2048.”

This just made me cry harder.

She tried a different approach “You know what the bible says?” She asked. I shake my head microscopically “There are no tears shed in heaven.” She said thoughtfully. I force myself to stop crying, to show her I appreciate her trying to cheer me up, even though I'm an atheist. I don't tell her this though.

A few minutes later, she sends me to the office. I ask the receptionist if I can call my Mom. She answers after three rings.

“Hello?” I hear in a familiar voice

“Mama?” I ask, weakly

“What's wrong?” she asks

“I'm sad.” I say

“Do you want to go home?” I hear her ask in a gentle, slightly irritated voice

“No, no,” I say, not wanting to trouble her, “I just wanted to say I love you.”

“Love you too, see you after after school.” She said, distracted.

I put the phone back and a tall man with white hair walks out of the office that has a makeshift sign on the door reading ‘Summer School Coordinator’. He walks toward me. “Aedan?” he asks. I nod.

“Come with me.” I get up and follow him into the small garden. We stop in front of a bush of pink hydrangeas and stand in silence for a

few moments. I think about how, even though I don't like pink, the color was very pretty. The Summer School Coordinator broke the silence.

"My name is Tod, by the way." He said

"Mr. Tod?"

"Just Tod."

"Tod. Why am I here?"

"Ms. Remy told me about what happened."

"No, why do we exist?" I said more slowly

"Oh, well, God-"

"I'm an atheist." I interrupt, shocked at how the words flew out of my mouth.

He thinks, with a thoughtful look on his face for a few moments.

"Well, why do you think so?" This stumped me.

"It was an accident. They said so in that documentary we saw earlier. The one that made me... sad." I finish lamely

"Was it an accident, or a carefully crafted intention?" He said seriously

I thought about this for a second and he walked toward a bench shaded by a small palm tree. When I joined him, he said simply said "Tell me." So I did.

Mom pulls up as soon as the only other kid in the pick up area gets into their car. When I get in, I'm ready to spill, but I see a very smiley face. Right... I forgot. We were supposed to see a movie with Chloe. I can't just cancel because of my own selfish reasons. We ride to the movie theater and I try my best to make small talk, but I'm just not in the mood. I force myself to talk, though, because it's not Chloe's fault that I'm sad. While Mom was paying for the tickets she tells me how much fun her family has been having in Hawaii and how the beaches here are so clean compared to California. I snort at this. Then I realized that was the first time I've laughed all day. We watch the moderately funny animation but I'm only half paying

attention to the plot. The other half of my attention is focused on the short video of the Earth exploding, looping in my head. Chloe gives me a weird look and I realize that I had been grimacing through an, apparently, hilarious part in the movie. I quickly put on, what I hope, was a convincing smile. She turned, with that funny look still on her face, and I turned back towards the screen, resuming my gruesome thoughts.

After Chloe's Mom picked her up, we headed back home. The car was silent then Mom said, "So why were you sad today?"

I had thought she'd forgotten.

"We saw a movie today... It was quite...grim."

She cocked her head to the side, silently urging me to say more.

"Well, it the documentary we watched was pretty interesting but then...."

By the time I had finished, we were home. Mom said nothing, thinking probably, and I went into the house. When I was just getting into bed, Mom informed me that a good friend of mine, Tash, had invited me to a sleepover on next week Friday. I was half happy because I wouldn't be forced to attend school, but the other half of me was scared, because of new people and human interaction. I mulled over these reasons for a bit then accepted. *It will be fine*, I thought as I dozed off.

For the next few days I spent most of my Sky and Air class time with Tod. We talked, and walked, and admired the plants in the garden. But we mostly talked. We talked about his family and my family. We talked about existence and my anxiety over meeting new people at the sleepover. When Thursday finally rolled around, I decided to stay in Mr. Nick's class. That day they were making everyone's favorite moon out of paper maché. I chose calypso, mostly because the shape was so weird and asymmetrical, I had to try to recreate it.

By the time I had finished, class was already over, and I realized that this was the happiest I'd been since...the documentary. Which was sad, because I wasn't even that happy. I smiled as I walked out, but then I saw the moon, already out. My mind scrambled to find a reason for this, but I only saw ridiculous, bad sides that made no sense. *It's getting bigger. Maybe it'll fall down and crush us!* My smile faded and my thoughts got darker. *Don't be ridiculous!* I told myself, *You're making a big deal out of nothing.* But I was still pondering this until Mom picked me up.

I awoke earlier than usual and thought about the people I might meet that day. I tried to go to sleep again but the excitement and anxiety kept me up. I got out of bed and went to the kitchen in search of breakfast. I had to tiptoe over to the fridge, fearing that too loud a sound could wake up my parents. As I scavenged for cereal in the cupboard, I tried to calm my thoughts. The things I were thinking were ridiculous, even though they kept going through it over and over again. *What if we all die of a horrible disease that no one knows about and, when we do find out, it would be too late? What if one of the other girls kills us in our sleep? What i-*

"Stop with the what if's!" I say, perhaps a bit too loudly, to myself. I hear footsteps coming from the hallway and and silently curse myself. My Mom came into view and picks up our cat. She smiled at me sleepily and asked "Excited for the sleepover?"

"Yup." I said shortly

"Alrighty then!" She said, grabbing almond milk out of the fridge.

When we get into the car I triple check that everything is there. *Toothbrush, pajamas, phone, eternal loneliness, nuclear weapons.* I sigh and put my duffel bag on the back seat. Mom starts up the car and when we get to the top of the huge hill in their gated community, I brace myself for new, unknown mystery people. I get

out, wave a sorrowful goodbye, and press the code in the pad. The gate opens and, a giant mastiff hound comes bounding out from behind the rose bushes.

“Hi Jaguar!” I say as he came up to sniff me

“WOOF!” He said in approval.

I pet him a bit more before Tash come out of the mansion she calls a home. A few seconds later we’re in their Christmas room (yes they’re rich enough just to have a room dedicated to Christmas) and she introduces me to the three other girls sitting on the overstuffed couch. Erica, with the straight black hair, Loisa with the curled purple tips, and Elane with the spiky mohawk. I stare at their hair longer than I should and they stare right back. I already like these girls.

I’m ashamed to admit we did stereotypical sleepover things like making cupcakes and having pillow fights, and it was actually pretty fun, considering this scene in a movie would make every feminist sick to their stomach. The night comes and we set up our sleeping bags around each other.

The next day, Erica woke me up and we helped Tash with her chores, which seemed like a weird sleepover activity to me, but I wouldn't dare go against her frightening mother. Once we were finished, Tash informed us that she had already gotten permission from our parents to have a second sleepover, that night at her Mom's beach cottage on the other side of the island.

At the end of the day, all of us pile into the car, even Jaguar and Cupcake, Tash’s sisters yappy new dog. The ride was torture, and having to stop every few minutes because someone had to go to the bathroom made the ride even longer. When we finally got to the “Small cottage” as tash called it, I was relieved to breath a breath of fresh air. We went inside and for some reason, Tash’s Mom’s

boyfriend brought his parrots to the cottage. They had they're own room and everything! Meanwhile, we all had to share a room with Tash's sister and her sister's friends! It was so cramped.

After we settled our things in the small room, we changed into our swimsuits and went paddling. Erica, Emaline, Tash's sister's friend, and I were all on the same team. Since I didn't really know the other girl well, I mostly talked to Erica. She was like my fraternal twin! We had everything in common. We had the same favorite color , we listened to the same music , and we even had the same taste in books. We didn't win the race, but that was okay, I was happy that I had made a new friend. We went to sleep early so that we could go surfing tomorrow morning before the parents came, but Erica and I stayed up discussing which Harry Potter book was the best.

The next morning, after we finished surfing early because Eline got coral cuts, Tash's Mom told us we were going to the grocery store. All of us. So we grudgingly piled into the car and braced ourselves for the next hour.

At the grocery store, Tash sneaked in her sister's tiny, yappy dog, and I tried not to worry too much about non-existent scenarios that were happening in my head. Then again, I have no control. Fake videos looped in my head of the manager of the grocery store yelling at us and throwing us outside with Tash's Mom giving everyone hateful looks. "Honeydew or watermelon?" I hear. I turn from the blank wall I was staring at and see Tash's Mom holding up the two melons.

"Watermelon." I say distractedly. We left with an even smaller amount of leg space because of the bags and bags of groceries.

When we arrived back, I saw a cluster of parents on the porch furniture, talking. I spotted Mom talking with a woman who had

straight black hair like Erica's. We took a few trips to put the groceries in the kitchen and helped Tash's Mom cut up some watermelon for the guests. We took out the bowls and talked for a few hours. The sun was just touching the horizon, when we sped off. I stretched my legs in front of me, savoring the leg space in the car when Mom spoke

"I think you should go to a therapist!" She said loudly and suddenly
"What?"

"I think you should go to a therapist!" She said more slowly, but just as loudly

"Why?"

"Have you seen yourself?" she asks, exasperatedly, "You barely talk, that lunch was the most you've said in ages! You're depressed!"

"I'm not depressed..." I say, "I'm just a little...sad."

She looks at me for a second and said "You're going. Whether you like it or not!"

"Who would I go to?" I say

"I have a friend."

"Who?"

"Dr. Wong. I worked with her before."

"Is she good?"

"She's exceptionally good! I'll set you up for an appointment on Wednesday!"

I harrumph, not being able to think of any other questions. I slide down on the seat and stay like that for the rest of the way.

Wednesday comes to fast. Tod insisted that my mother's ludicrous idea was correct

"You're depressed!"

"No! I said I'm just sad."

We continued walking, and I kicked a rock which made a scuff mark on my shoe. This day just keeps getting better and better, I thought as I tried to rub it away.

Mom came to pick me up early and we headed to Dr. Wong's building. The first thing I thought when we enter was "Hospital". It was impossibly cold, and smelled of cleaning chemicals. We went up the stairs and down a hallway. We stopped, almost at the end, at a giant, hot pink door. We were about to knock when it swung open. Behind it emerged a jolly, plump woman with blonde hair. I smiled to myself. She looked exactly like Mrs. Weasley.

"Come in, come in!" she said in a raspy, yet singsong voice.

She ushered us in and I notice a giant, elevated sandbox in the middle of the room. Surrounding it were shelves and shelves of tiny figurines doing random things. She had miniature families roasting marshmallows in a glowing bonfire to microscopic knights brandishing swords on their trusty steeds. I keep staring at them as we sit on a big leather couch at the back of the room. Dr. Wong sat in an uncomfortable looking plastic chair in front of us.

"How are you feeling?" She said simply

"Fine..." I said

"Are you sure?" She said, quizzically

"Not really..."

She turned to my mother and they began talking about the film that started it all. I was still transfixed by the shelves. Dr. Wong followed my gaze and said, "Would you like to make a snapshot?" In an almost giddy voice

"What's that?"

She was full on excited now, "It's like a little scene you can create with my figurines!" She turned her head toward the sandbox and I got up. They continued talking and I worked my magic with the tiny things. Placing one there and another here. Finally, when my session was almost over, I called them to take a look. They wandered over, cautiously, and saw my masterpiece. Inside the sandbox I meticulously placed dark green pine trees in seemingly random places, the tents were arranged in neat rows, the barbecue area was

filled with small families, couples, and small dogs. It was like something out of a stock photo website. I smiled down at the family roasting marshmallows in the bonfire I noticed earlier.

“What...? How...? This is extremely impressive! One of the best I've seen!” Said Dr. Wong

“It is quite amazing!” Mom exclaimed

I beamed happily. Mom thanked Dr. Wong and we walked out to the car.

The first days of school have always my enemies. Something always goes wrong. So you can understand how nervous I was walking the halls and everyone staring at me. I think my friends were shocked I wasn't talking or I wasn't enthusiastic enough about school. Now, walking to the cafeteria, I wasn't sure I could face their cheerfulness. Sometimes it was just a bit too much. I decided to sit at the edge of the table, where no one would talk to me. Then Lana slid over.

“Hey.” She said cautiously

“Hello.” I said back.

We sat there for a few awkward seconds.

“I know what happened!” She said loudly

“Shhhhhhhh!” I said, “What do you mean?”

“You know what I mean. Rachel told me!”

“Did Rachel also tell you she was sworn to secrecy?” I asked impatiently

We stood silent a again for a few minutes

“No...” she said slowly

“Didn't think so.”

“But I don't understand.” She said, clearly puzzled

“What's not to understand?” I say in a voice that I would use to talk to a 4 year old.

“Why are you so sad?”

“Rachel told you everything, yes?” I said. She nodded. “Then I don't know what you want me to say.”

“I mean, I know we're all going to die and stuff, and earth is going to be destroyed one day, but that's in like, a billion years!”

I sighed. So young, Lana was.

“Yeah, but Earth could die earlier than that! And wouldn't the fact that your great, great, great, great whatever grandkids will be killed from the SUN!” I exploded. She that there in thought, and I was tired of waiting. I swiftly turned around.

I didn't know where Rachel was, but I was so mad, I had to get away from the table. Finally I discovered her new pink hair and rushed over.

“Can we talk privately?” I said, glancing at her friend

“Sure!” She said oblivious to what I was going to say to her.

We walked out the the cafeteria door.

“I swore you to secrecy.” Was the first thing I said in the calmest voice I could muster.

She bit her lip, hard. I was scared she would draw blood.

“Look, I'm really sorry, it's just that Caitlyn was really worried and-”

“CAITLYN!” I practically screamed, “I'm talking about Lana!”

“Oh...” she said looking down

“Who else did you tell?” I demanded

She looked past me and I followed her gaze. Madison. She told Madison. The biggest gossip in the school.

“When did you tell her?” I said, strangely calm, considering how frustrated I was inside.

“I'm really really sor-”

“When did you tell her!”

“This morning.” She muttered so quietly I had to strain my ears to hear her.

I throw my hands up in the air, exasperated.

“GREAT! Now everyone knows.”

Rachel bit her lip again. I stormed away, for the second time that day, and ate the rest of lunch in the classroom.

Mom pulled up almost as soon as I walked out of the school. I could see her smile through the windshield. I forced a smile that could match hers and climbed into the car. I was about to throw my stuff in the back when I noticed a large rectangular bag with a photo of a family that matched the figurine in Dr. Wong's office, bonfire and all, with a large green tent behind them. I turn my head back slowly to face my Mom. She breaks into an even wider smile. "Do you like it?" she said with a hint of nervousness.

"What is it?" I asked, dubiously

"A tent!" She practically screamed

"Why?" I say, already knowing the answer

"Well, since you created your entire snapshot based on camping I was thinking we could camp. You know, like in the back yard!"

"When?" I say, my excitement building up

"Friday!"

"Friday!"

All of a sudden, a car honks from behind us and Mom pulls out of the pickup area.

Friday comes slowly and I spend most of my time avoiding everyone, but mostly Lana, Rachel, and Madison. Mom picks me up at exactly 4:30 and we speed home. She grabs the tent and heads to the back yard while I grab the sheets, pillows, blankets, and the air bed, which Mom insists on because the ground is 'too hard'. When we finally get everything set up, the sun has gone down. We get in the air bed and watch a movie on my iPad. When we are finished with the gory zombie thriller, I don't want to fall asleep. I lay face up and listen to Mom's snoring for a bit. I start to think about that horrible, zombie infested universe, and how glad I am not to live in it. Then it hits me. Everything will die, and we're all doomed, but my

life could be much worse, and for right now at least, everything is alright. Sleep concurs my thoughts and I dream of big dogs and dystopian worlds.