

when the sun bursts

There is a meteorite barreling 60 minutes away from the sun. But Thomas, unlike most of the population, is not raiding stores or hiding in his house. Thomas is in a now-abandoned bowling alley. He and Marley sit facing each other at the end of one of the lanes. Thomas is lanky, and his brown hair is layered in little curls atop his head, freckles line his cheeks and he is expressionless. They sit criss/cross/applesauce. Knees touching. Completely silent. The only light comes from a disco ball spinning unnaturally slow in the middle of the room. Marley has strawberry blonde hair. Her freckles almost mirror Thomas' and she closes her eyes. Deep breathe in, 4 seconds, hold, 7 seconds, deep breathe out, 8 seconds.

Marley and Thomas have always been best friends. You can't have Thomas without Marley, or Marley without Thomas. Their mothers were friends. And that is how Marley and Thomas met, Marley and Thomas have always been best friends. Inseparable even, but there is a meteorite flying 59 minutes away from the sun, and they are sitting in the bowling lane, shiny silver illuminating their faces, and this is where they kiss.

There is now a meteorite rampaging 30 minutes away from the sun. And Clark is alone. He sits in his parent's basement and plays video games. The kind where you kill zombies and aliens. He is 18, not that it matters, but an hour before he realized he will never be able to drink vodka legally. Naturally that's what's in his plastic Paw Patrol cup, resting on the table besides him. He takes long swigs every five seconds. Upstairs his mom, and dad, and little sister Chloe are sitting around the living room, listening to old Beatles records. Reminiscing. He hates their

acceptance. That they will all die in the next day or so. He is in a state of denial, as-is the five stages of grief go. Mourning for oneself is still mourning in a narcissistic kind of way.

When Clark was twelve his parents began trying for another baby. They had always wanted a little girl- had hoped he would be a little girl. But unfortunately (for them) he was Clark, and they fell into a slump. Then 12 years passed and they were finally out of that slump. This was their time to shine! But three years passed with no baby in sight. Clark was tired, and his parents were tired, and then eureka! The miracle baby conceived! The parents adored their little Chloe, and forgot about their little Clark-y even more. Thus, Clark grew bitter, and now he's here, four years later, waiting for his imminent death.

And Clark is getting tipsy now, and screaming at the top of his lungs. Young Chloe is too little to understand what's happening and her parents are sobbing now, into each others' arms. So she goes downstairs and sees her big, strong brother curled up in a ball. Muddled in sweat and sticky all over. He does not notice her, and will not notice her until many moments later. But suddenly she's thirsty, and her brother is using her favorite plastic Paw Patrol cup for water, so she takes a sip. The water burns, though. Real bad down her 4-year-old throat. And there is a meteorite flying 29 minutes away from the sun, but Chloe is all tingly inside. She lays next to her brother, snuggled into the crook of his neck, and contemplates taking another sip of the fire.

There is a meteorite careening toward the sun, 15 minutes away. And Aila is cleaning her glasses, rough. She sits in her room, alone, scrubbing at the prescription glass. The room is bright

and small. Four lamps, one for each corner of the room, give Aila a way of sight. The generator is working in the basement, for 18 Lilac Street lost power three hours ago. Aila's parents went out for drinks two days ago when the meteorite was discovered, and her boyfriend, Broc, left two hours ago. This has turned Aila to heartbreak. She knows her parents will not return. It is Broc who truly tore her limb from limb and left her in a state of perpetual cleaning. Because there is a meteorite flying 14 minutes away from the sun, and Broc left Aila to sleep with another girl. So Aila sits in her overlit room, cleaning her glasses with the upmost intensity.

There is a meteorite colliding with the sun. And Aila's glasses are laying, broken, on the ground. She is silent, staring at the full length mirror across from her bed. She is pale, and very red, all the same. And her eyes tear up. From the window there is fire bursting in the sky. Flying around and falling onto the earth. But Aila can't be bothered because her parents left, and Broc left, and her glasses are stupid, dusty, and useless pieces of shit, and the world is ending, and Aila will die alone, and she finally lets her tears fall.

There is a meteorite colliding with the sun. And Marley and Thomas have not moved a muscle. They are still cuddled together on the bowling alley floor. Marley plays with Thomas' hair, curled rings around her finger. The disco ball has slowed even more so and it is flickering. A loud crash comes from somewhere outside and Marley loves Thomas. And Thomas loves Marley. But they never tell each other so. And they will never go to prom together, or have a real first date, because,

There is a meteorite colliding with the sun. And Clark has passed out. Chloe is still cuddled up to him, her light snores fill the room. A loud crash rings over the world. Clark jolts. And it occurs to him that he never got to live his life. He will never meet a girl next door and fall in love like Marley and Thomas. Let alone feel heartbreak like Aila. Never have a first kiss, or feel love. Hell, he won't even meet Aila, or Marley, or Thomas. And the meteorite hit the sun. A ball of fire engulfing the Earth. Clark looks down at his sister and takes her into his arms. He starts sobbing into her hair. Fire emits from all over as Clark whispers: "I love you and nothing will change that."