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Senior Category
Gold Award

There is no Planet B: How will Climate Change affect you and your community?

“Wake up!”, I heard a familiar voice yell into my face.

I immediately jolted awake, sitting upright in my hotel bed. I saw my best friend, James Ronson, fully dressed as if he were attending an important meeting. As soon as I came to my senses I picked up the alarm clock to check the time. Panic filled my eyes and I leapt out of bed.

We were crammed into that musty hotel room in Washington on a cold November morning because we'd both signed up for the Planet B initiative by PlanetCorp. PlanetCorp's headquarters was in Washington, which coincidentally is also where NASA's main headquarters are located. “It's just so they can steal ideas and market them as their own,” James had commented. To me, I found PlanetCorp's initiatives intriguing, especially the Planet B initiative. To imagine and see a world exactly similar to Earth, and to have it populated by our species. It's the next step towards human colonisation of the galaxy!

“Hurry up, we're going to be late!” James shouted from the room as I struggled with my hair.

“Alright, alright, I'm coming,” I said, smoothing my hair as I stepped out of the washroom to see James standing impatiently at the door, checking his watch for the umpteenth time.

As we entered the lift of the hotel to descend towards the lobby, a news reporter on the screen in the lift grabbed my attention. “This just came in, reports are coming from across the globe about ferocious hurricanes, flash floods, and even a worrying increase in animal attacks. Experts believe that all of these disasters that have occurred in the year 2051 have to do with climate change, although they cannot provide any substantial evidence just yet...” The female voice faded away as I became lost in my own thoughts. Over the past decades of my life, civilization had reached its peak. Urbanisation and globalisation had swept the globe, but not many of the world leaders had thought of what effects their actions might bring to our planet. Over the years, climate change and global warming have become sky-high, and it's only a matter of time before the worldwide chaos shows its ugly face as a result-

“Hey, Eric! Snap out of it! We're getting out,” James spoke to my face, snapping my out of my trance. I shook my head nonchalantly and followed him out of the lift. We were greeted with the familiar smell of cheap perfume and musty carpets that filled the air of the lobby. We got into a taxi cab at the entrance and I told the driver where we were headed: PlanetCorp Headquarters. The driver gave me a surprised smile.

“So you two are going to PC too, huh? I just had two other customers headed there as well. Are you two part of the Earth B initiative too?” We both nodded. “It's incredible, isn't it? I always knew that Hubble would eventually discover an inhabitable planet. Can you imagine the excitement the project managers would feel when they found it? That's an immediate pay rise right there,” he chuckled to himself. “Must be nice, huh?”

Throughout the journey, I stared out the window, taking in the scenery of Washington D. C. in the winter. It was warmer than expected; we'd had no need to wear any more than a single jacket when we headed out. Of course, rapid deforestation, vehicle emissions, factory waste and open burning were to blame, but obviously no one would like to admit it.

In PlanetCorp headquarters, we were greeted by a well-dressed, wealthy-looking man. "That's Justin Hubble, the President of PlanetCorp and the grandnephew of Edwin Hubble himself," James whispered to me. We were led into an auditorium which was already full of people, who presumably had enrolled themselves in the Earth B initiative.

President Hubble entered the front of the auditorium to address all us participants. He explained the procedures we would have to go through on the journey to Earth B, and what tasks we had been assigned. All the participants had specific roles, and were separated into groups according to their roles. James and I were in Group 7b, which focuses on engineering and architecture. We would get the opportunity to design and build some of the first buildings ever on Earth B. "Great, at least on Earth B we won't have to struggle with job opportunities, or lack thereof for that matter."

"Earth B is like a paradise," President Hubble continued. "We have never discovered a planet more hospitable to life than this one. If the images captured by the Hubble 2.0 telescope personally designed by me are to be believed, that is." On the huge screen behind the President, images were displayed that had been taken of Earth B. Several gasps of awe were audible. It truly was a paradise. The plant life and the land structure looked unlike anything on our planet, yet it looked even more incredible. "On Earth B, all of you will get a fresh start, a planet free from the effects of climate change and destruction by mankind. Essentially, Planet B."

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

After the President had finished his speech, there were massive cheers and applause from the volunteers. I could not stop thinking and talking excitedly about going to Earth B. I knew it would change my life forever.

The date was December 16th, 2051: the day of launch. James and I, along with nearly two thousand other volunteers, were now aboard the Spacecraft Duospe, the spacecraft we would be riding to Earth B, being briefed by a PlanetCorp staff member. We would be put into hibernation in specialised pods designed by PlanetCorp's tech division to keep us in a suspended animation for nearly fifty-two years until we arrive at Earth B. The hibernation pods would wake us up on arrival by returning our body temperature to normal and injecting us with specialised drugs to boost our metabolism again.

As a PlanetCorp staff member was running the last health checks on me while I was in the hibernation pod before putting me under, I took the chance to ask her out of curiosity, "What does Duospe stand for?"

"It means 'second hope' in Latin," she replied to me. Whoever came up with this name is a genius, I thought to myself, but not for long, as the staff member had started the hibernation procedure. Everything went black.

My eyes suddenly shot open as I was awoken. The pod opened up and a robotic voice played through an unseen speaker around me. "Good morning, Mr. Stompton. The date is October 31st, 2103. We are on the Spacecraft Duospe. I'm pleased to inform you that we have safely landed on Earth B." I had a headache from waking up after 52 years, but I could not contain my excitement. I immediately sat up and saw that the other passengers had also been woken up. I got up and looked for the entrance.

On my way to the entrance, I passed by a few of the crew members. They looked a little confused or distraught. Probably just a side effect of hibernation, I told myself. I could not wait to get out and witness my new home once and for all.

The moment I opened the entrance, I immediately felt a burning sensation in my lungs and I started coughing. James and one of the crew members rushed towards me, James supported me as I fell backwards, while the crew member frantically pressed buttons to close the entrance. When I had regained my composure, I asked them what was going on.

"We made a mistake. I don't know, maybe we should've never trusted Hubble and his new telescope. Gosh, I should've known he wasn't qualified just because his granduncle was Edwin Hubble."

"What do you mean?" I asked, confusion swirling in my gut.

"I mean, Hubble 2.0's view was probably millions of years behind. There's been at least a couple of mass extinctions here on Earth B, and everything is dead; it has been for eras. The entire planet is barren, the atmosphere is almost nonexistent, it's no better than Mercury or Mars in our own solar system."

My stomach began to churn, and I felt a pang in my chest. Had I just thrown away my entire life to end up on this wasteland?

"Eric," James said with a solemn look on his face.

"There is no Planet B."



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