



Eternity

Matt de la Peña

SCHOLASTIC INC.

For Ryan Byrne, warrior and reader.
— M.d.l.P.



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Library of Congress Control Number: Available

ISBN 978-0-545-66535-3
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 14 15 16 17 18

Cover illustration by Michael Heath

Book design by Keirsten Geise

Back cover photography of characters by Michael Frost © Scholastic Inc.

First edition, September 2014
Printed in China 62

Scholastic US: 557 Broadway · New York, NY 10012
Scholastic Canada: 604 King Street West · Toronto, ON M5V 1E1
Scholastic New Zealand Limited: Private Bag 94407 · Greenmount, Manukau 2141
Scholastic UK Ltd.: Euston House · 24 Eversholt Street · London NW1 1DB





PROLOGUE

THE HEAT from the fire was unbearable as Dak Smyth tried to claw his way out of the elaborate seat belt. Sweat streamed down his face. It soaked his shirt and pants underneath his bulky suit. It even soaked the protective diaper he found himself wearing. He was glad Sera wasn't around to see *that*.

Or even worse, Riq.

But the diaper was no laughing matter. The more sweat that collected in the suit, the more difficult it was for him to move around. He glanced at the fire inching closer to the control panel. Closer to him.

He needed to get out of the way *now*!

But there was nowhere to run. That was the problem with being in outer space. Well, *one* of the problems.

Fire didn't behave the same on a low-gravity spacecraft. The flames didn't shoot upward in a peak the way they did back home. Up here, they hovered around whatever was burning, a deep blue hue.

"Come on!" Dak shouted as the belt slipped out of his gloved fingers again. A drop of sweat ran into his right eye, momentarily blurring his vision. He blinked away the stinging sensation and looked to his left, where the two other astronauts—who weren't much older than

him — were now peering out the window, screaming like little babies. “Uh, little help over here?” Dak shouted.

They didn’t even turn around.

He heard a low buzzing sound, barely audible over the screams, but when he looked all around, he couldn’t identify the source.

When Dak was finally able to free himself, he drifted awkwardly out of the cockpit, toward the wall with the fire extinguisher. He snatched it in his gloves, removed the safety, and aimed the nozzle at the angry blue flame, which now claimed almost a third of the cockpit. Instead of shooting out straight, though, the white substance oozed out at an upward angle, toward the ceiling. He’d forgotten to take into account the lack of gravity.

Dak adjusted his aim accordingly and drew closer to the fire.

But just as he was starting to gain control of it, the guys near the window started screaming even louder, this time diving toward the center of the cockpit, ignoring the flames, holding on to each other.

Dak dropped the extinguisher and bounded over to the window to see for himself.

And suddenly he was screaming, too.

His eyes were bugging out of his head.

A massive asteroid, more than twice the size of their vessel, was spinning recklessly through space directly toward them. . . .



PART ONE



Looking to the Sky

THE FORCE of the impact slammed Dak against the floor.

He opened his eyes, gasping for breath, expecting to find a hole torn into the ship's main control center, but all he found was a harmless stick lying on the grass next to his face. He stared at the gnarled thing for a few long seconds, trying to wrap his head around where he was—and *when* he was.

He looked up and found his best friend, Sera Froste, standing over him, grinning. A panting dog stood by her side. It looked like it was laughing at him.

"Oops. Sorry," Sera said. But the "sorry" sure sounded sarcastic to Dak.

"What . . . happened?" he asked.

"Errant toss," she said, picking up the stick. "My bad. Nice shoes, by the way."

Dak rubbed the side of his head and sat up, looking at his new pair of checkered Vans as reality slowly crept

back into place. He'd been hit by a stick, not an asteroid. And he'd fallen out of his hammock. "Dude," he said, glancing over Sera's shoulder, at his parents' barn—the SMYTH FOR MAYOR signs still scattered throughout the large yard. "I just had the craziest . . . It was like a Remnant, I think. I was on this space shuttle with these two other astronauts, who were both kind of cowardly, to be honest, and out of the blue comes this asteroid. . . ."

"Yeah, that's not a Remnant, Dak," Sera said. "It's called a dream. Happens when you sleep all day."

Dak was about to argue but lost his train of thought when the mutt began licking the side of his face.

"I think she likes you," Sera said.

"Gross," Dak said, nudging the dog away and climbing to his feet. He wiped the slobber off his cheek and forehead with his shirtsleeve. "What's the deal with the pooch?"

Sera tossed the stick and the dog took off after it. "Long story."

"Oh, I forgot," Dak said, giving her a little sarcasm of his own. "We have so many other important places to be right now." He paused for effect. "Not."

Sera rolled her eyes and called for the dog. "Here, Zoe. Here, Bella. Come on, Maxie."

Dak couldn't help but give Sera a hard time. After fixing all the Breaks in history, thus steering the world away from the horrors of the Cataclysm, they'd been safe and sound at home for over a month now. No more

history-saving anxiety. No more running from the SQ's thugs or being forced to wear crazy ancient outfits like loincloths or togas. No more warping into dangerous situations, the stress of which had probably taken years off Dak's life of cheese connoisseurship.

In other words, he was bored out of his mind.

Dak and Sera had been arguing for the past two weeks about whether or not to take the Infinity Ring out for a little joyride. All their previous warps had been business trips, Dak argued. Didn't saving the world warrant a "time vacation" or two? Maybe a quick trip back to ancient Hawaii, before anyone had set foot on the islands? Or what about the grand opening of Disneyland in 1955, where they could ride all the rides with the original Mouseketeers? Dak told Sera he'd even consider a more science-oriented trip. Anything to keep him from sleeping away the rest of his days in his parents' itchy hammock.

But Sera believed traveling without a purpose was irresponsible. What if they inadvertently altered some minor detail that set off a chain reaction that changed the world forever—after they'd just spent all this time and effort *fixing* it? She even went so far as hiding the Ring from him.

Before falling asleep, though, Dak had come up with a brand-new argument. And it was perfect. If this one couldn't get Sera to change her mind, nothing could. He just needed to find the right moment to spring it on her.

After all, “timing” was everything. Dak grinned a little at his clever internal wordplay.

“What’s so funny?” Sera asked.

“Nothing,” Dak told her, wiping the grin off his face. He thought he heard a subtle buzzing sound, like the one he’d heard in his dream, but when he turned toward the barn, he didn’t see anything. “Seriously, though,” he said, focusing on Sera again, “give me the lowdown on the canine. She looks a little . . . Do you know if she’s had her shots?”

Sera gave Dak a dirty look and whistled for the dog to bring back the stick. “Fine,” she said. “On my way home from the store yesterday, I found her sitting in the middle of the street, staring up at the clouds like she was in some kind of trance. And then a car came barreling around the corner. I dropped my groceries and sprinted out into the street and tackled her just in time. Both of us went tumbling to the side of the road. I’m not kidding, Dak, that car whizzed right by my nose.”

“See?” Dak said, excitedly pointing at her. “It’s not so easy to give up being a hero, is it? It’s in our blood now, Sera. It’s who we are.”

“*You* seem to be doing just fine,” Sera fired back at him. “Unless your lying around in a hammock somehow benefits humanity.”

“Just waiting for my next call to action, Sera.”

Sera gave him a little smirk as she pried the stick out of the dog’s mouth and gave it another toss, toward

Dak's parents' barn this time, where she had been spending the majority of her free time these days. Dak still wondered why she wasn't spending more time at her place now that she had her parents—even if they *were* sort of weird. Wasn't that all she ever wanted?

Or maybe it was just human nature to take family for granted. Even Dak's own parents, who had seemed so thrilled to have the family back together at first, now spent all their free time campaigning for Dak's mom to become mayor. All he heard around the house was political jargon like *bipartisanship* and *unemployment rate* and *approval ratings*.

"Anyway," Sera said, "now she follows me everywhere I go. Don't you, Fido? Harriet? Stella?"

"I take it she didn't have a tag?" Dak said.

Sera shook her head. "I keep trying out different names, but she doesn't seem to spark to any of them."

"You've just got to find something that reflects her personality. How about Weirido?" Dak said, realizing this was the most excitement he'd had in weeks. A lost, nameless dog. Possible flea infestation. *Yee-haw!*

"She is pretty strange," Sera said. The dog was now sitting near the barn with the stick in her mouth, staring up at the sky.

"What the heck is she looking at?" Dak asked.

"No idea." Sera put her hands on her hips, still watching the dog. "Every once in a while, she just stops

everything and stares into space. Literally. I wonder what's going through her head?"

"Hate to break it to you," Dak said, "but it's not a whole lot. Dogs have brains the size of Hacky Sacks."

When Sera didn't answer, Dak looked into the sky, too, recalling his dream. It had seemed so real. The fire. The asteroid. The slippery seat belt buckle. Even the adult-size diaper. Why would he have a dream about being in space? Did it mean he'd reached a whole new level of adventure withdrawal?

Dak turned back to Sera, deciding now was as good a time as any to roll out his brand-new time-warp argument.

"So," he said, "I've been thinking a lot about Riq."