



Death from the Skies!: The Science Behind the End of the World

By Philip Plait Ph.D.

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With wit, humor, and an infectious love of astronomy that could win over even the science-phobic, this fun and fascinating book reminds us that outer space is anything but remote. The scientist behind the popular website badastronomy.com, Philip Plait presents some of the most fearsome end-of-the-world calamities (for instance, incoming asteroids and planet-swallowing black holes), demystifies the scientific principles at work behind them, and gives us the odds that any of them will step out of the realm of sci-fi to disrupt our quiet corner of the cosmos. The result is a book that is both terrifying and entertaining?a tour of the violent universe we live in, written with an enthusiasm that every stargazer will appreciate.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Plait, an astronomer and author of the popular Web site badastronomy.com, presents in loving detail the many, many ways the human race could die, from temperature extremes and poisonous atmosphere to asteroid impacts and supernovae explosions. Such a state of destruction existed some 65 million years ago, when a giant meteoroid struck Earth, sending up so much flaming debris that the whole planet caught fire and the dinosaurs were wiped out. Solar flare activity could bring on another Ice Age. Worse yet would be a gamma ray burster, a collapsed star whose radiation would be comparable to detonating a one-megaton nuclear bomb over every square mile of the planet. Plait discusses insatiable black holes, the death of the Sun and cannibal galaxies—including our own. Balancing his doomsday scenarios with enthusiastic and clear explanations of the science behind each, Plait offers a surprisingly educational and enjoyable astronomical horror show, including a table listing the extremely low odds of each event occurring. He gives readers a good scare, and then puts it in context. Illus. (Oct. 20)

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From [Booklist](#)

Fans of disaster-from-space movies such as *Deep Impact* or *Armageddon*, or of science-fiction novels like Lucifer's Hammer, will definitely want to check out this lively yet also rather scary book by a noted astronomer and creator of the clever Web site badastronomy.com. The book is basically a catalogue of astronomical catastrophes that could wipe out life on earth: asteroids, comets, supernovae, black holes, aliens, even our friendly sun. According to Plait, it is virtually inevitable that something will happen, perhaps not in the not-so-distant future, to kill us all—don't forget, it's already happened once, 65 million years ago (remember the dinosaurs?), and there have been several recent near misses. The thing to do is stop worrying about inevitabilities and start planning for them: find ways, for example, to turn asteroids off course before they hit us. The book is extremely informative: Plait explains not only what can destroy the planet but also how it would happen. It's a crash course in astronomy as well as a cautionary tale about the (possibly brief) future of our world. --David Pitt

Review

"[Plait] describes each doomsday scenario with glee. . . . Yet for all that, his book is strangely comforting."
-*The Washington Post Book World*

"A surprisingly upbeat look at all the ways the universe can destroy us . . . Eminently readable."
-*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"The enthusiasm Plait has for his subject is not any morbid fascination with the upcoming bang or whimper, but with how much we know now about the universe around us, and he conveys this enthusiasm with pages full of wonder."

-*The Commercial Dispatch*

Users Review

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