

*And now I'm here. The final 1,000-word short story. For this one, I wanted to write a sci-fi story about something ending. What better to end than the world? Thanks to everyone for reading and as always, please enjoy!*

### **At Last**

**Word Count: 1032**

**Writing: 57 minutes**

**Editing: 17 minutes**

**Total Time: 1 hour 14 minutes**

It feels like a dream to me now, even then, it never felt real. The way a distant memory plays on the outskirts of your mind. Leaving that feeling like a smell you know but can't quite distinguish. Or a word that teeters at the place just beyond the tip of your tongue, and if you don't grab it fast enough, *poof*, it's gone forever.

That's how the past feels, but I hold on every time, it hasn't fallen into that place of long forgotten love just yet. The closer I get to the end, though, the harder it is to hold on to. And I'm close now, close enough that I can smell it on the breeze.

I'm certain I'm not the last one left, that would be sheer narcissism, and I just can't believe I'm *that* special. But, I am one of the last. I haven't seen another human in what feels like ages, couldn't even tell you who the last person I talked to was. I know they're out there, though, looking for the end of the world just like me.

The apocalypse wasn't anything like what most people expected. At first, when the world believed the rapture was to blame for all the disappearances, war broke out. It seemed mankind had decided instead of banning together and figuring out just what in the hell was going on, it would be more beneficial to destroy what was left of ourselves and Earth as we knew it. It went on for almost a decade, most of my childhood, people killed each other, while others just up and disappeared from the planet. Safety became an illusion, a fantasy to pass the time between death.

Finally, they'd had enough. I was eighteen when they came to us, the sky around the entire world filled with ships of all shapes and sizes. They sat coolly in the upper atmosphere as every electronic billboard, television, computer, cell phone, tablet, anything and everything that had a screen, was hijacked by a purple humanoid creature, with a bald head and short yellow antennae hovering over his eyes where the brows should have been.

*"We've awakened all of the qualified souls from program, EARTH, shutdown will be commencing immediately. Thank you for your participation."*

The words were understood in every language, but no one can remember really hearing the actual words. It was like the alien moved his lips but spoke to every human on Earth's mind. After the announcement, as suddenly as they'd appeared in the sky, they vanished.

War continued for as long as the Earth remained sustainable. The shutdown began to affect large patches of the planet. Where there had once been solid dirt, and rock, there were *holes*. At least, that's what we started to call them. As it normally is with holes in disguise, if you didn't know what to look for certain doom was unavoidable.

Nobody still walking the patchy surface of the Earth could say what lay beyond the flimsy wall of reality that hid each hole. You might be walking by a bush and catch a little shimmer out of the corner of your eye, they want to attract you, want to draw you in. You walk over to inspect, and that's it, nighty night.

Since the announcement and the beginning of the shutdown, rumors of the end have grown. A place where this program *EARTH*, is more rapidly shutting down. Like a giant white nothing devouring the planet a few of us still call home. And I aim to find it.

I never did have much in my life, another child of a war-torn world that's meaning is now shrouded in possibly more mystery than ever it had been in its long history. Nobody knew what program *EARTH* was, from what it sounded like this planet was nothing more than a computer game for aliens. That's what I've come to accept at least. But, I also know there's a way out.

When the purple alien-man told the world all of the rapture people, the *qualified souls*, had been awakened; it was then that I decided I would look for the way out until the day I died. I didn't really have much else to do anyway, and survival seemed like the most natural thing to try and accomplish.

Now here I am. So close to the end, and am I afraid? Of course, being afraid is a major driving factor behind the will to survive. Without my fear, I would've given up the fight a long time ago and jumped into one of the holes like so many other people.

It's not the possible death that frightens me, though, not even a little, it's the *life*. The one behind me, that chases me like a malicious shadow in the night; and the one that may lie ahead. The one buried in the unknown white nothing that I know waits hungrily only steps before me. It seems there will be only two options when I get there.

The first will be to say goodnight to this program *EARTH*, say goodnight to the sweet delicacy that is being human. No matter how bad it ever got on the way to this point, it was a delicacy, there was good among the bad. There was love in the war, and not just for myself, but for others. Without love, there could be no war. I remain happy I got to be part of this experiment we called humanity in an alien program named, *EARTH*.

The second option is to dive headfirst into the unknown, the adventure of the white nothing. A blank page to fill with memories that one day will only dance on the tip of my tongue. I've searched far and wide for my answers, for the hatch that would allow me to escape the world I knew, and join the others in the world of the *awakened*. And here I stand, at the cusp.

I'm afraid of what's to come, but I'm a survivor, I've never been one to say no to an adventure, and it seems more frequently than not; there is no end, only more beginnings.