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Breakups and Boiling Points: Which is the Real Doomsday?

Alexandria Barath

“All 3-wick candles are \$9.95 today only!” I stared up at this sign with red, puffy eyes as I burst into tears at my local Bath and Body Works. My ex-boyfriend and I had just broken up a couple days prior, and their “midnight blue citrus” candle reminded me too much of the body wash he used to use. There was a whole week where I couldn’t help but break down in public places. However, this emotion was temporary. While my feelings were so intense they would emerge (to my chagrin) in the most public of places, they eventually faded. Yes, walking by the brand of his shampoo and conditioner in a public Target still reminds me of him, but it no longer brings me to tears. The anger and the sadness have faded; I am grateful for that. But some issues bring about these intense emotions—and they don’t fade. Hayes Brown, an MSNBC opinion writer, felt a similar way in a Target, only this issue wasn’t about a breakup. It was the feeling of impending doom over climate change, but the article does more than just bring eco-anxiety; It shows the importance of relatable media.

In his article, “The end times are here, and I am at Target” Brown recalls a similar experience to mine: an overwhelming sense of doom while in a public place. During the first heatwave of the year in New York, all he could think about in target was that “[e]very minute spent inside that artificial oasis is another ticked away before our contract with the Earth runs out” (Brown). The whole piece relays an anxious energy as it explains our predicted doomsday, but how this time is different—there’s science to back it up: “Come 2050, civilization as we know it will start to tap out thanks to climate change, if a report from earlier this year is to be believed” (Brown). Unlike my breakup, this is an issue where I can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Brown’s article caused a deep internal anxiety to run through my body. Since he provides no solutions within the piece to inform us of sustainability efforts we can make, our planet is on the verge of collapse and there is nothing we can do to stop it. This is why we “are somehow not stockpiling non-perishables and fleeing

the coasts in search of high ground ahead of the looming end like you'd expect in a proper End Times" (Brown). Climate change and the state of our world has left us feeling completely and utterly hopeless. So, what's the point of writing an article just to instill our eventual doomsday? Surely it isn't just meant to induce anxiety into the younger generations it's directed towards. The intense statement of the problem combined with the lack of solutions wasn't meant to make us feel hopeless—but rather, not alone.

The day my ex-boyfriend and I broke up, my college roommate and I marathoned sad movies while eating ice cream. This is a common stereotype for breakups—because we yearn to connect. We want to know that we are not the first one to feel this sad, that others have felt like this and survived. It's even been proven that “consuming depressing content can actually make you feel good [because] of [increased] endorphins” (Zhou). Brown's article was written for the exact same reason. While it brings a sense of impending doom and a nihilistic viewpoint, it scientifically produces endorphins. This article shows that we are not alone, that we are far from it. Often, reading relatable media is the only way to prove that our feelings are real and valid: “Trying to mask it with fun activities or pretending like I'm ok hasn't worked in the past. But consuming content that mimics the way I feel lets me just feel the pain and avoids me trying to bottle [it] up” (Zhou). It is human nature to long for relation, to know that others understand you. Whether it's the outcome of a breakup, or the world's eventual collapse, we want to know that we are never as alone as we think.

Works Cited

- Brown, Hayes. “The End Times Are Here, and I Am at Target.” *The Outline*, The Outline, 7 Aug. 2019.
- Zhou, Maggie. “Sad Girl TV: Why Consuming Depressing Content Hurts so Good.” *Why Does Watching Sad Shows & Movies Feel So Good?*, 5 May 2022.