

TARDIGRADE

Written by

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EXT. SPACE

It's silent as pops of starlight brighten the inky darkness of space.

The darkness grows brighter and more red as A HUGE ASTEROID zips by, heading toward a distant planet.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - OBSERVATION ROOM

A SMALL BUNDLE OF MOSS falls onto A STEEL FLOOR.

MANY SMALL BALLS roll out of the moss. For a second, nothing happens, but then, BALL #1 wiggles like a chick hatching.

CRACK.

Like an egg, the ball splits open and TARDIGRADE #1 slides out.

As tardigrade #1 wakes up, more CRACKING is heard as THE OTHER TARDIGRADES break out of their cysts.

Tardigrade #1 stands and, looking up, he notices SEVERAL "SUNS" before jumping back in shock and fear.

He runs as fast as he can, CRYING OUT to his friends, and burrows back into the moss. His friends watch him burrow before turning to see what startled him.

A GIANT EYE inside of A BLACK HOLE stares back at them.

They all CRY OUT and run back to the moss, shaking and hiding in its safety.

Rolled up in a scared ball, tardigrade #1's stomach growls, putting his fear on the back burner for a second.

From the safety of the moss, he lifts his head and stares at the eye before seeing A PILE OF LEAVES on the far side of the room.

His stomach growls again. He glances up at the eye and then the food. Uncurling, he slowly makes his way to the edge of the moss.

The other tardigrades while scared, watch with interest.

Watching the eye, he takes a tentative step out. Letting fear get the best of him though, he immediately retracts his paw.

He looks back at his friends, contemplating, and takes a deep breathe.

Turning back, he jumps out of the moss and onto the floor.

Tardigrade #1 SCREAMS IN FEAR and curls into a ball.

His scream dies out as he realizes he is still alive.
Uncurling, he looks at the eye.

The eye looks at him.

When nothing happens, he takes a step towards the leaves.

Another step and nothing happens. As Tardigrade #1 keeps surviving, the other tardigrades slowly come out of the moss, also hungry and wanting the leaves.

Understanding the eye poses no immediate threat, the tardigrades begin walking towards the leaves.

A FAINT CRY OF JOY reaches the tardigrades, making them pause for a moment before continuing.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - CONTROL ROOM

GEORGE (young scientist) HAPPILY YELPS as he stares into A LONG MICROSCOPE that runs into the observation room where the tardigrades travel.

On the table he sits at, DRAWINGS AND OBSERVATIONS OF TARDIGRADES are haphazardly thrown about. A few of these drawings depict an asteroid, earth and how the tardigrades are the key to survival.

Behind George, SUITS looking similar to a tardigrade cyst hang on the wall. The word PROTOTYPES rests above them.

Still excited, George jumps, almost knocking the microscope down, when a hand places itself on his shoulder.

MARTIN (older scientist) stands disapprovingly behind him. Clutching his chest in shock George looks sheepishly back at him.

Martin points towards A THERMOSTAT and TWO BUTTONS underneath it.

George's shoulders drop and he SIGHS before turning the thermostat to -200 degrees Celsius and pushing one of the buttons.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - OBSERVATION ROOM

Tardigrade #1 shivers and keeps walking with the others.

A HUGE SNOWFLAKE falls down, dousing him with cold.

The other tardigrades jump back and look up. A BED OF SNOW falls towards them.

They scatter, looking for shelter but upon finding none, they begin to run back towards the moss.

Tardigrade #1 follows, shivering and fearing for his life. But while the other tardigrades make it back in time, the snow SLAMS on top of him.

The other tardigrades watch, waiting to see if Tardigrade #1 survived.

After a few seconds, tardigrade #1 pops his head out of the snow.

He pulls himself out and angrily MAKES NOISES at his friends.

As his anger dies down, he turns, glances at the eye, and continues walking towards the leaves.

The other tardigrades do not follow.

As he walks, A LAYER OF CYST forms around him. This outer layer looks almost like jacket and he stops shaking from the cold.

He looks down at himself, a little surprised but happy nonetheless.

He hears a WOO and looks up at the eye. It seems to smile at him.

Another layer begins to form around Tardigrade #1.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR EARTH

The asteroid begins to fly close to earth, barely missing it. It moves on towards the rest of space.

Just before the asteroid clears Earth, SPACE DEBRIS slams into it.

The asteroid's path alters, careening towards Earth.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - OBSERVATION ROOM

The snow melts around Tardigrade #1 as he walks towards the leaves.

He looks behind him when he hears shuffling.

The other tardigrades, covered in layers of cyst, follow him, looking remorseful.

A hatch in the ground opens to their left, startling the tardigrades.

A NEMATODE, a predator of tardigrades, slowly rises from the ground and upon noticing them, it slithers quickly at them.

The tardigrades begin to run, but they aren't fast enough.

Terrified, they all curl up quickly, including Tardigrade #1.

But when tardigrade #1 hears a SQUEAK, he glances up to see TARDIGRADE #2 completely frozen with fear.

Terrified himself, tardigrade #1 doesn't move as he watches the nematode get closer. But another glance at tardigrade #2 pushes him to save his friend.

Just before the nematode sinks its mouth into tardigrade #2, tardigrade #1 throws himself at it, sinking his sharp claws into its skin.

The nematode CRIES OUT, writhing in pain and trying to knock him off.

Succeeding, tardigrade #1 flies off, skidding to a halt. He tries to get up, but struggles to while the nematode prepares to strike.

It pulls back and lunges at him. Tardigrade #1 cringes as it grabs his leg in its mouth.

But just as soon as it latches onto tardigrade #1, it releases him, CRYING OUT in pain.

Tardigrade #1 looks up to see the other tardigrades attacking the writhing nematode, saving him from being eaten.

As the nematode finally collapses in defeat, the tardigrades catch their breath, huddling together in relief.

They all look up at the eye as A FAINT CHEER fills the silence.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - CONTROL ROOM

George jumps up and down excitedly, CHEERING for the tardigrades' survival.

Martin sits next to him wearing a WELDING HELMET as he works on A CHIP in one of the cyst suits.

George begins running around, taking notes, and HAPPILY MUMBLING to himself.

A loud AHM shifts his attention to Martin, who is staring at him behind the helmet.

Martin nods his head towards the thermostat and buttons.

George immediately calms down, looking sheepish, and sits down.

He turns the thermostat to 150 degrees Celsius and goes back to the microscope.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - OBSERVATION ROOM

PUDDLES from the snow lay scattered as the tardigrades walk ever closer to the leaves, with Tardigrade #1 leading them.

As they walk, the puddles dry up and the steel floor begins to smoke.

The heat burns the tardigrades' feet. Tardigrade #1 begins to jump from one foot to the other and the others follow quickly.

Tired, sweaty, and hot, one by one, they fall over and curl up.

Tardigrade #1 resists, taking slow steps towards the leaves, but the heat gets to him too. He lays down and curls into a ball.

A few seconds go by.

A CURIOUS 'HMM' travels into the room.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - CONTROL ROOM

George looks up from the microscope and glances at Martin who is still working on the suit.

With an innocent but sneaky look on his, George slowly reaches his hand out until he reaches A BUTTON.

He quickly presses it and goes back to looking through the microscope.

He tries hard not to look, but he can't help himself.

Martin stares at him.

Nervously laughing, he slowly turns his head back to the microscope.

Martin GRUNTS and goes back to working.

Tension is in the air.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - OBSERVATION ROOM

The tardigrades lay in curled up balls.

A small gush of wind blows over them.

The wind continues, getting stronger.

The wind begins to move the tardigrades, rocking them back and forth.

Confused heads pop up.

The wind picks up tardigrade #2 and throws him closer to the leaves.

A SMALL YELP is lost in the gushing wind.

The CRIES of his friends and the pushing of the wind cause tardigrade #1 to lift his head.

He watches in fear as each one is lifted and thrown by the wind.

Before he can make a move to do anything, the wind snatches him up and throws him towards the others.

Dizzy, he lays on his back and stares up at the eye.

He turns his head when he hears COMMOTION from his friends.

They shed the layer of cyst before walking towards the leaves that are even closer now.

Tardigrade #1 quickly gets up, forgetting his pain, and sheds his own layer of cyst as he moves towards them.

EXT. SPACE - NEAR EARTH

The asteroid hurtles towards earth.

A moment later, it breaks the atmosphere.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - CONTROL ROOM

George shifts happily in his seat while Martin continues to work on the suit.

Martin closes a lid over the top of the chip in the suit.

He tosses the suit at George, who stumbles and reluctantly leaves the microscope for a second to put it on.

An alarm SCREECHES to life and a light on the wall continuously flashes red.

George stops in his tracks with only his lower half in the suit, like a pair of overalls.

Martin quickly gets up, throwing his helmet on the desk, and moving George out of the way.

He looks into the microscope, watching the tardigrades getting closer to the leaves.

He shakes his head and reaches out towards A BLACK BUTTON WITH A GLASS CASE AROUND IT. He lifts the glass case and goes to press the button.

George's eyes widen and he jumps, grabbing Martin's arm, stopping him from reaching any further.

The scientists stare at each other, one shaking his head, pleading and the other angry.

The alarm and light continues.

Martin resists Georges hold on him, but he latches on tighter.

Martin tries to use his other hand to push him off, but George fully leaps onto his arm, wrapping his legs around it like a snake.

Martin holds his arm up, almost completely straight out, and stares, one eyebrow raised, at George.

George nervously giggles before Martin rolls his eyes and presses the button with his other hand.

George GASPS and reaches a hand out to stop him, but instead loses his balance, falling to the floor.

Terror scores his face as he gets up and pushes Martin out of the way.

He looks into the microscope as Martin grabs another suit.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - OBSERVATION ROOM

A FAINT 'RUN' is heard before A WHISTLE LIKE NOISE causes tardigrade #1 and his friends to pause.

They look up to see HUGE BULLETS crashing towards them.

They keep staring, trying to understand what it is.

BAM!

The first bullet slams into the ground. FLOOR SHRAPNEL flies everywhere along with a few SCREAMING tardigrades.

A second bullet hitting, breaks the shock and tardigrades begin fleeing in every direction.

Tardigrade #1 runs around, dodging as much as he can, but every turn he makes seems to be blocked by another bullet.

Terrified he turns around, watching as his friends get blown away.

CRIES and SCREAMS fill the room.

He sees A GROUP OF TARDIGRADES, standing in fear as a bullet flies towards them.

EXT. SPACE - SKY

The asteroid plummets towards the lab.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - OBSERVATION ROOM

Making a split second decision, tardigrade #1 rushes at the group, throwing himself in the way of the bullet.

BOOM!

The science lab blows up.

It's silent as pops of starlight brighten the inky darkness of space.

Bits of earth and debris scatter space.

Tardigrade #1 floats through space.

His eyes slowly open and he looks around.

Tardigrade #2 "swims" over hugging tardigrade #1.

More tardigrades come over, all grabbing each other in a content hug.

A leaf floats by them.

Tardigrade #1 launches himself from the group, snatching onto the leaf.

He turns to his friends and motions for them to join, making A HAPPY NOISE.

The tardigrades cheer as more leaves float by, each landing on one.

In the distance, the torn up and broken cyst suits drift by.

Tardigrade #1 munches happily on the leaf as he and his friends float through space.