

A World Apart

Synopsis

Spike Peplow lives on a farm, just outside the town of Bitten-on-Sea.

He has grown up knowing that a meteor is heading for Earth. It will be an extinction event. The date is fixed, and happens to fall on his 12th Birthday.

The Governments of the world have combined to invent a new technology to transport the people to Mars: a spaceship called A Steamer. There are hundreds of thousands of Steamers built, but no-one has seen one yet.

The build up to departure day is intense.

Suddenly, the Steamers appear. One lands in Spike's back yard. Spike's Dad warns the family that this means crowds of people will undoubtedly flock onto their land.

Spike and his sister, Alice, check out the Steamer alone, before the crowds arrive. It is such a strange ship. It floats a few inches above ground but is silent and doesn't have an obvious power source. It is transparent in many places and its hull is made of some kind of crystal, interspersed with a strange metal that shines in different colours, like oil in water.

Spike and his younger sister play around the craft. Spike accidentally pulls a crystal from the bottom of the ship. Spike wants to keep it but is persuaded to split it with Alice.

They take it to their Dad's workshop and place it in a vice. Spike grabs the crystal with some pliers and it snaps neatly in two. The children are surprised when a gas escapes the crystal as it breaks. The cloud envelopes them and they panic momentarily, but they calm down as it dissipates with no ill-effects.

Spike gives half of the crystal to Alice and pockets the other half.

People begin to arrive at the farm, lots of people, all scared and desperate for a Steamer seat. Suddenly, the farm is cosmopolitan.

Dad wants to go into town and get some supplies, but he is worried that their farmhouse will be taken over if he leaves. Dad sends Spike and Grandad (Spike's Nan and Grandad - his Dad's parents - live with them) into Bitten-on-Sea.

Alice makes new friends with some of the new arrivals. Her Mum is very worried about these new associates.

Individually, Spike and Alice find out that the crystals in their pockets allow them to fly, or at least float in some manner. They also feel strangely connected when they grip their half of the crystal.

Spike and Grandad get stuck in town.

Alice, Mum, Dad and Nan get stuck in the farmhouse.

The madness of Steamer Day, Lift Off Day!, grips the town.

Dad tells Alice, Mum and Nan to get on that Steamer come-what-may. He's going into town to bring back Spike and Grandad.

Spike and Grandad try to leave town. Spike tries to use the crystal to his advantage and he is spotted by three men. Three identical, clone-like men. The men take Spike and his Grandad hostage and reveal themselves to be aliens. There is no meteor, they reveal. They are fugitives from the regime which is about to take the human race to their planet as slaves.

Dad rescues Spike and Grandad. They are all desperate to get back and stop Alice, Mum and Nan getting on that Steamer.

They arrive back, but not in time. The girls are already on board.

Grandad pulls rank on his distraught son and tells him to stay and look after Spike. Grandad tries to get on board the spaceship in order to look after the girls but the immense confusion and swell of bodies in panic sweeps him away from the Steamer and Dad has to take his chance and get on board, abandoning Spike.

The Steamers take off. All over the world. All humans are, indeed, to become slaves.

On a quiet Earth, Spike is left with his Grandad. He clutches the Steamer crystal in his pocket and is instantly connected to his sister and she to him, a world apart.

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