

## MAKING PEACE

*short story*  
Henry Crowder | 11

It was too late once we found out. The time for running was long gone, and there was nothing we could do. We were asleep when the alarms went off, and living in the suburbs certainly didn't help. I woke up around noon, untangled myself from my wife, and walked to the kitchen to make some breakfast. Dina came in behind me and drank her coffee at the dining room table. We had a light and unimportant conversation about what we were going to do with the day. Then I turned on the TV to look at the news and saw that a terrorist organization had launched seven nuclear missiles at America. I dropped my mug. We were directly in the blast radius, and the edge of said radius was nearly one hundred thirty miles away. The estimated detonation time was around an hour. We couldn't make it. It was over. Shock was the

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only reason my panic did not drop me where I stood. It dulled the danger of the situation. Numbed it. I took my wife by the hand, and we wandered our neighborhood. All the other houses were empty, evacuated. It was calm. Quiet. So very quiet. I cried. I couldn't stop crying. Dina took me by the hand and raised me to my feet. She gave me a small, sad smile. We walked a little longer. After about five minutes, we found Mr. Johnson, our elderly neighbor with no car, no relatives, and no way to evacuate. He had made his peace with God as was shown by the gun loosely gripped in his unmoving hands. I picked up the gun, looked at it for a minute, then set it back down. I couldn't do that to Dina. I couldn't leave her alone. We walked some more. About 40 minutes later, I saw it, bright as a second sun, descending. I sat down to watch it. I kissed my wife one last time as it made contact with the earth. The wave of light and sound approached us. I closed my eyes, and I waited. \* ○