

The University of Montana Department of Mathematics Post-Apocalyptic Working Seminar

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The University of Montana Department of Mathematics Post-Apocalyptic Working Seminar

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The mathematicians started meeting on the last days of the States. Their spouses decried their focus on “trivial things”, threw themselves into orgies, revivals, riots. Dr. Thomas’s wife left him for a highwayman with big muscles and a light machine gun. Every evening after, the mathematicians slinked past the patrols toward the basement of the math building, where blackboards lined all four walls. The bookcases, somehow still untouched, overflowed with lecture notes on catastrophe theory and mathematical epidemiology. Near the door, they found coffee machines still dirty from the last days of electricity. There, they set up sleeping bags and their last twelve cartons of Hagoromo Fulltouch® chalk. In the first week alone, the mathematicians had proven the Riemann hypothesis, the Hodge Conjecture, and several lemmas in knot theory. After weeks together, they were finishing each other’s proofs before they were spoken. One day, in the midst of starvation, one of their number found the coffee cup he had been gnawing on transformed into a cappuccino-flavored donut. It was then that they realized they had not slept for weeks. Soon the squirrels, sensing a strange energy, started to avoid the basement, which glowed brighter than the thorium background radiation which submersed the Rockies. If only they had proven that $P = NP$, they could have swept the old nation clean of the brushfires and rape gangs, restarted with different initial conditions. As it was, they were on the verge of transcending physicality when the last nukes wiped Missoula off the map, only days before the subduction of the North American Cordillera. For decades afterward, if you managed to row from Hawai’i to the American Rift, you could hear whispers of long-forgotten conjectures and fragments of proofs before the residual radiation boiled you alive. *QED*, the voices would say as you passed from the world. *QED*.