On July 4, NASA spacecraft Deep Impact rendezvoused with 10 km wide Comet Tempel 1.83 million miles from Earth. At 1:52 a.m., an 820-pound impactor hit the comet with a speed of 23,000 mph. This spectacular image of Comet Tempel 1 was taken 67 seconds after impact. The image was taken by the high-resolution camera on the mission’s flyby craft. Scattered light from the collision saturated the camera’s detector, creating the bright splash seen here.

Linear spokes of light radiate away from the impact site, while reflected sunlight illuminates most of the comet surface. The image reveals topographic features, including ridges, scalloped edges, and possibly impact craters. Check the progress of NASA’s Deep Impact mission at www.nasa.gov/deepimpact.