## Prologue: The Plague of Man

Many books and movies muck about with the idea that human beings are actually a form of disease on planet earth. Usually it is some villain or other that proclaims that human beings are nothing more than viruses that have infected an otherwise balanced ecosystem and are systematically destroying it. Said villain would then declare that the solution would be the extermination of all human beings before proceeding with an overly elaborate plan to kill everyone after which he would ultimately be stopped by the hero of the story.

Unfortunately, reality is often times stranger and much crueler than fiction could ever be. The ‘deranged’ ramblings of many fictitious villains turned out to be the cold hard truth.

The year was 2030. The world was ushering in a new decade in the same old fashion: with ever escalating war between nations based on everything from ideological and religious differences to economic greed. To make matters worse, the news that North Korea had finally managed to develop a fully functional ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear payload all the way to New York was broadcast all around the world and people were understandably freaking out that 2030 would be the year that the first nuclear war would break out. Everybody felt that the sword of Damocles was right before them, ready to be thrust into their hearts at any moment, but they never expected that they were looking in the wrong direction. The sword they anticipated never came, but the one they were ignoring did.

Man, in an ultimate act of arrogance and ignorance, had always plundered everything around him to his heart’s content with nary a thought to the consequences. Words like the environment and conservation were treated with scorn and ridicule. In the pursuit of prosperity and wealth, man abandoned his conscience. Even when he saw the world dying around him, he chose to close his eyes to its suffering. He poisoned the air and the waters. He destroyed the forests and the seas. Everything was sacrificed on an altar of greed. Man happily destroyed everything with value in exchange for worthless pieces of paper that he had come to worship as his god, money. He gleefully rolled around in it like a pig cavorts in its own filth. Finally, the earth couldn’t handle the strain that man put on it. It simply died.

The end of the world wasn’t gradual like most scientists predicted; it was actually quite sudden. The first thing to go was the ozone layer that protected the earth from harmful radiation. Scientists thought that the ozone layer would keep getting thinner and thinner but it popped like a bubble. With nothing to stand in their way, the harmful cosmic radiations from the sun and elsewhere from space bombarded the now defenseless earth. The year 2030 became known as the year of the great cataclysm. More than two thirds of the people in Europe, Australia, South Africa, and North America were instantly wiped out by solar storms. More died from the adverse effects caused by the radiation left behind by these storms. Although the casualties weren’t as bad, the rest of the world was also devastated. As if that wasn’t bad enough, the particles from the solar storms supercharged the earth’s ionosphere causing lightning storms that were only slightly less destructive than their progenitors.

The once bountiful earth turned into hell. The majority of all plants and animals perished under the furious onslaught of golden flames and multicolored lightning. In some places, the ground was scorched so badly that it turned into molten slag. On the rare nights that the sky was clear, the sky would be covered in colorful lights. The Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australis, which were once a localized event that only happened near the North and South Pole, became a global phenomenon thanks to the supercharged ionosphere. The beautiful lights in the sky painted a stark contrast as they hung over the infernal landscape below. The heavens seemed to be gloating at the hell beneath, finding joy in man’s suffering.

But even in these dire times, man still showed his true nature. The American military dug deep into their substantial arsenal and produced something out of a science fiction writer’s nightmare. They dropped a never before seen bomb in the middle of Africa. It was the first time that the world beheld the horrifying effects of the Neural Impulse Disruption Bomb. This insidious weapon had very little visible physical effect unlike its nuclear counterpart. Instead of a large explosion, this bomb causes a specialized electromagnetic wave that specifically targeted the nervous system. On January 28, 2031, this bomb was detonated smack dab in the middle of central Africa. Every person in central, east, and west Africa all died. The little children playing their innocent games, men and women going about their daily lives, they all suddenly started to convulse violently as their nervous systems failed causing them to lose control over their bodies. Nearly half a billion people simultaneously lost their lives.

Why did all these people have to die? Because most of North America had been destroyed by the storms and was deemed uninhabitable. The Americans had decided that the relatively safe area created by a stubborn wisp of ozone hovering over Africa was rightfully theirs. “Manifest destiny” they called it, and since the locals where getting in the way of their “destiny”, they had to be removed.

In this manner, morality was once again discarded in the face of overwhelming greed. Although people were quite fond of talking about man’s superiority over animals in terms of having standards and decency, when it came down to it, it was shown exactly how vicious they could be. Man was indeed different from other animals for he is much too malicious in comparison. Ironically, man is too inhuman to be categorized as animal.

Which brings us back to the thoughts raised by the fictitious villains; human beings might not fit into the category of animals, but their behavior is typical of parasites. When a virus infects a cell, it hijacks all of its resources in order to make more of itself. In the end, the cell dies. The way that human beings strip the resources of their environment until the ecosystem around them collapses shares a chilling similarity with the virus. Bacteria, on the other hand, usually produce toxins as they reproduce. Because they reproduce so rapidly, they poison everything around them, and just like the bacteria, human beings also reproduce quickly and poison their environment. Man embodies all of the most harmful traits of the most dangerous pathogens. Man truly wes a disease that infected earth, and since its host was dying, man was working on developing the final trait of any dangerous disease: contagion.

Once it became clear that earth had become a dead planet, man began developing space travel at a frightening rate. There were new planets to find, new resources to plunder, new worlds to consume.