

## A Brief History

In days like these, you don't hear much talk of history. There's not a lot of time to think about some ancient war, when there's a constant war for survival raging outside your front gate. Dusty trivia tends to be pushed aside and forgotten. Lingering bits may survive the march of years, but only in dim recollections, and half-rotted pages in some centuries-old textbook.

There is however, one story that remains, a tale that every youth hears a hundred times before he is even old enough to hold a gun.

It tells of an age very different from our own, and the one event that has shaped humanity's destiny more than any other. When the single greatest challenge in all of human history arrived, and humanity failed utterly.

### The Twilight Age

By the mid 21<sup>st</sup> century, mankind had simply lost it's ability to adapt. Reeling from a century of change, human civilization suddenly decided it had had enough of progress.

Technological development reached a standstill. The massive corporations that controlled the industries crushed any attempt at innovation, fearful that new developments might render them obsolete.

Social development seemed to slip backwards, as more and more people seemed to choose the path of mindless superstition and fanaticism. Even the most ardent reformers soon became little more than wailing, incoherent dogmatists.

The world scene had become more fractious and violent than ever. Even as some nations sought to consolidate, many more soon began to fall apart. Soon, there was not one region in the world not in the midst of some pointless war or another. Even the mightiest nations were starting to crack under the strain, many teetering on the brink of civil war.

Much of humanity had simply grown weak of mind. Rather than adapt and learn to cope with the onrush of the information age, they instead chose to just drop out. Entertainment became the sole focus of the average man. Drug use soared, as more and more discovered it was so much easier to turn the brain off, than actually bother with reason and thought. Academia began to crumble, kept around only for the few elite souls who could still afford the ever more ridiculous cost of education. Public education became little more than preparation for life as a serf to the corporations.

Physically, the Twilight Age man was often just as weak as his mind. To maximize profits, and ostensibly make things 'easier' for the worker, more and more labor was given to machines and computers. The average working man spent his day sitting in a chair pushing buttons, then sitting in his car on the way home, where he would spend the remainder of his day sitting in front of a video screen. The thought of physical exercise came to be regarded with almost universal disdain. Combine that attitude with a horrendous diet, and it's unsurprising that obesity was one of the age's most prevalent diseases.

His immune system was often horrifyingly sickly. An obsession with stamping out disease had ironically resulted in generations of humans with bodies that simply could not fight the ever more powerful illnesses being discovered almost constantly. Society shook under the massive strain of vast numbers of sick and dying, even as laws forced them to continue their struggle with death, no matter how long or costly the battle.

Overpopulation was rampant, and any attempts at population control were crushed, either by insane radicals, or mankind's complete refusal to keep his libido in check long enough to use a little forethought. Infant death and abandonment were rampant. In some regions, famine was simply the order of the day, though it certainly didn't stop them from producing children at heretofore untold rates.

The human race has grown weak, stupid, and stubborn. Civilization as a whole was threatening collapse, it just needed one final push.

And then one day, the sky went dark.



### Nightfall

In a matter of minutes, a blanket of darkness fell over the Earth. Even the moon and stars were stricken from the sky.

No one knows what caused it. Some kind of atmospheric reaction maybe, an unknown astronomical event, or some sinister force field, even suggestions that it was more supernatural in origin.

Whatever it was, this strange curtain seemed to be designed to cut off Earth from the universe. In addition to blocking out the light, it cut off signals to orbiting spacecraft and satellites. Global communications were crippled, but that was just one small part of the absolute chaos that was about to ensue.

### Frenzy

The resulting panic was incredible. Power grids across the world collapsed, as every human on the planet reached for the light switch. With satellite networks down, land lines jammed within minutes of the disaster. Without electricity or communications, and facing an unfathomable cataclysm, almost the entire human race went collectively insane.

Riots broke out in every corner of the globe. Entire cities were razed to the ground. Stores, warehouses, farms, anywhere with food or supplies was raided and ransacked.

Some fled to the wilderness. Others froze, and barricaded themselves in their homes. Many, convinced that the world had finally come to an end, took their own lives, or went on rampages and crime sprees. Never, in the whole of human history, had a single day seen so many unspeakable acts committed at once, all across the globe. Murder, rape, torture, arson, all committed by panicked humans with nothing left to lose. Countless millions were killed.

### The Aftermath

Within the span of a single day, civilization as it had been, was utterly decimated. A once massive population in the billions, was now counted in millions. Human society had effectively collapsed, and a new Dark Age was now in full swing.

Governments simply crumbled. With the destruction of much of the global communication system, the larger nations simply fell to chaos. No one knew how to run a country without the technology they'd grown so reliant on.

In this strange new world of anarchy, a new face of power arose. Suddenly, the crazed backwoods militias of the world found themselves with all the guns, all the training, all the supplies, and legions of scared, confused refugees, desperate for someone, anyone, to lead them.

New nations arose, disorganized despotic states, run by lunatic dictators, each with their own bizarre crusade. Warfare was constant. Mini-empires rose and fell with the tides. Those few who rose to any greatness soon fell victim to the insanity of their own rulers.

Life had become very dangerous. Raiders destroyed most of the smaller settlements. Those that survived were usually absorbed by the local warlord, whether they liked it or not.

Food was becoming scarcer by the day. Stores had mostly been picked bare by rioters or fire. Finding a meal often meant foraging through the burned out cities, facing danger of raiders or worse.

The destruction of the ecosystem was total. Without the sunlight to fuel photosynthesis, plants perished. Whole species of animals would soon follow. With all the death and rot, fungus and bacteria populations exploded. What creatures did survive, had become twisted and strange, forced to adapt to the bizarre changes brought on by the darkness that had blanketed the Earth.

## A Song in the Dark

Agriculture had become fundamentally impossible. Humanity would starve to death before long. And without the plants to process the air, the Earth would simply suffocate.

### The Conquest of Mankind

In the midst of this chaos, humanity was surprised to meet the face of a new foe. Pouring from the bowels of the earth, clad in silver armor, and wielding technology far in advance of anything the dismantled ruins of humanity could muster. Their campaign was swift, and met with little resistance. Many surrendered, promised much needed food and water in exchange for a life of servitude to these new conquerors.

They are the Annunaki. They have declared themselves Earth's new rulers, and they enforce this mandate with great prejudice. They have the technological edge, the manpower, and the tempting carrot. They built machines that can reprocess the air to make it breathable. They have lived beneath the Earth for thousands of years, building their technology and their society with the singular purpose of one day conquering the surface world. Their experience living in the dark places of the Earth has enabled them to adapt remarkably well to this new darkness, some suspect maybe too well, as if perhaps they are the ones responsible for the curtain of blackness that fell across the sky.

### The Resistance

But even as most of humanity was giving in to their new overlords, there are some, like those of us in this very village, who would not give up their freedoms so lightly. Who hold out against all odds, struggling to survive amongst the wastes.

It is not an easy life. The world is a terrifying place, filled with many who would kill you just for food, be they man or beast. Food is scarce, consisting of old canned goods from before the darkness fell, hunted beasts, and what meager agriculture one can manage to grow by the light of old salvaged bulbs.

And the Annunaki do not take kindly to our resistance. Their patrols are ever vigilant, seeking out those of us who hide from their armies, to enslave or destroy us. We have thus far been lucky, but we must keep watch, and be always prepared to flee back into the darkness, lest we fall victim to their steel-clad soldiers.

Some of the scattered rebels even make efforts to strike back at our oppressors. Engaging in terroristic raids on Annakan stations or breaking out those within their cities who wish to escape their life of slavery. There are even some who talk with great hope of a coming war, to finally free humanity from the grip of its new masters.

I am growing old now, and I do not hold out much hope that I will live to see our liberation, but perhaps you, my young charges, will someday fight, and win, independence.

I pray, for the sake of the human race, that you will.

*Richard Stockton, Mayor of New Redmond  
P.D. 571*