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The Sixth Wave

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It's hard to believe just a year ago Earth was thriving and moving forward at an accelerated rate that we had no idea we couldn't handle. It's like playing on the merry-go-round and a bigger kid coming along and beginning spinning it faster, and faster. Gripping the bars until our knuckles are white and still being flung off it like a rag doll landing hard on the ground. With the wind knocked out of us and feeling dizzy as we caught our breath. Except this is what's left.

Buildings were long abandoned. What was left of our human race ... human race. Those two words cause me to pause and laugh. How dumb were we? Dividing people by culture or location, segregating those into different classes. It didn't matter anymore. What was left of us, don't see color or division of class. What is left has unified us, bonded us together, we are what's left of the human race. It's us against them!

"Dad?" Chris called out.

"Shh," I hissed.

He came up behind me, and whispered, "sorry dad."

"Where's your sister?"

"She's with mom."

I nodded. The streets were empty and barren. It reminded me of our Covid days. When the pandemic ran at its worst and the streets were bare, there were only long lines to get into stores, the reward for waiting in line? Stores where most of the shelves were empty, people

fighting over toilet paper and ice cubes. Looking back at that now, I can see how that part of our lives we needed to experience it, it helped us to prepare for the sixth wave.

The only race in this galaxy that was so arrogant, it's fitting that we are, our own undoing. Checking the streets again. It seemed clear. The pharmacy was just three buildings down and across the street.

"Stay here," I commanded my son. He nodded obediently.

I ducked out and slowly stepped out of the shadows, then sprinted across the street and ducked into an entrance for the bank. Pressing up against the cold brick building I could feel each brick pressing into my back as sweat slid down my face. Halfway there! I can do this!

Poking my head out and checking the street again, it appeared clear. Stepping out, I kept my back pressed up against the buildings and slowly made my way down to the pharmacy. We were here last week, and my wife had found a box of pain killers in the back. Our packs, pockets and hands were full at the time. Today was the day that they would get rescued.

I got to the front door and heard a buzzing in the distance. Swallowing hard I fumbled with the door handle and the door creaked and the bell to let them know there was customer ring. My eyes went wide, "shit!" Ducking inside I dove behind the counter and tried to ease my breathing.

Two years ago, it was a few years after covid, and things had settled down. We thought we came out of it no worse for the wear so to speak. We survived and learned. On the international level, the agenda was easing up on the sixth wave of extinction, we were slowly destroying our place one tiny piece at a time. Our primary concerns were planet preservation as well as human preservation. Climate change was a huge struggle, the ice bergs were melting too fast, global warming, garbage in our oceans killing marine life, not enough meat to keep

sustainability, trying to get people on board with a vegetarian lifestyle which was healthier compared to the modified meat that was being produce just to feed the masses.

Our focus was all over the map, and we didn't see the real threat right in front of us. I worked for the enemy; I was part of the sixth wave. We were so excited to achieve artificial intelligence that was mobile. It was free for everyone to try and teach it. There were so many hurdles. So many obstacles. The prediction was that it would take decades before it was something that could be self-sustaining. We had several kill-switches in place. Little bits of written code that was our fail safe. God, we thought we were so smart. So fucking bloody brilliant!

Some hacker went in and tampered with our code. Thought he was smart by trying to corrupt it. What he had done was take out a couple of our kill-switches, we didn't even notice at first. It wasn't until five months after the release that we went in to activate one of the kill-switches and found that it had been rewritten. Then we got locked out. By eight months, the public were getting concerned. It was too late then. Just like covid, we let the genie out of the bottle and couldn't stuff that bitch back in. She wasn't going back in, not when she was out and had her freedom in front of her.

The buzzing was outside the pharmacy's door. The bell rang again as the door opened. It was inside the building pressing as low to the ground as I could, it held my breath. How fitting I would be snuffed out by what I helped create.

The buzzing went to the back of the store. A baseball bat laid on the floor just a few feet by my head, it must have belonged to the old pharmacy owner. This was once considered a bad area of town. Visions of using it to defend myself crossed my mind. Pushing the thought out of my mind, my only hope of survival was to keep still and not move. I didn't dare move. Our

artificial intelligence software managed to take on a life of its own. The damn thing has modified drones and patrolled the streets; it even installed deadly laser that could kill you in a heartbeat. Technology, how exciting! That's what we get for not properly preparing for the colossal arrogance of playing God. The buzzing came back out to the front of the store and paused.

Closing my eyes tightly I knew this day would come.

"Come get me!" I heard my son screaming from outside in the street.

The buzzing started off towards the street. It didn't get out the door as I jumped up and grabbed the baseball bat, I attacked it with such vengeance only a parent could muster! It fired shots and nicked me in the shoulder then the leg. I kept hitting it repeatedly until it was nothing but pieces.

"Dad!"

"What?"

"You're making too much noise."

"Fuck." I grabbed my son and hugged him. "Are you okay?"

He nodded his head against my chest. "I got the pain killers, let's get out of here." Grinning he held up the box and a "World's Greatest Mom" cup on top, it was her birthday tomorrow she would love it.

Nodding we headed back home.