

# Red Glow

Fading against the azure sky of our dying planet, the burning ball ignited more remnants of the living. Night was no longer dark but a glowing red. Dust swirled in eddies on the crisp, tortured landscape. Fire, our ever-present demon, was wasting all that is now brown - natural green had been erased from humankind's memory.

Air is now a thin, stale reminder of sealed smoke-filled rooms. With no trees alive to replenish our atmosphere with fresh oxygen, we're left to struggle for each breath.

Most of our species waits in quiet solitude; we've lost all hope in a future that would include us. Precious tears flow down cracked, wind-burnt faces - the faces of the condemned.

Water rations have been cut again. Great oceans once lapped against lush continents teeming with life. They've evaporated. Some of our more accurate records, not tainted by multi-national corporate/government propaganda, indicate we lost these treasures thirty years ago. No water remains anywhere on the planet. We've been recycling our wastewater, but over time, it also vanishes before our eyes.

Long past the point of desperation, we watch the burning ball rise in the morning and fall in the evening. We're numb, no emotion remains, our lips are fixed with pain; we know our fate.

No child has been born for over eighty years - too much suffering, why expose those with bright, promising eyes to a world doomed to liquidation? Rusty reminders of their hopeful play litter the cracked ground.

With no progeny, our scraggly race of degenerates is down to a few hundred who are chronicling our destruction. Ours is a story of complacency; we sanctioned our planet's destruction, the murder of life perpetrated by a few greedy sociopaths - we accepted the death of our beautiful home.

How can words express our combined sorrow? We let it happen. Now we will soon leave this treasure that we call Earth, realizing that its clear air, pleasant cool evenings, brilliantly white winters, crystal-clear aqua-colored waters, towering snowcapped mountains, lush green forests, and abundant beasts, fish, & fowl have been blown to dust by our thoughtless pillage. We were all to blame; there was no blamelessness.

Those who sat idly by while large business combines corrupted the moral fabric of our society in the interests of their own self-centered interests are to blame. Those who ignored every factual report that predicted ecological disaster are to blame. Those who ignited misinformation to assist the ill-gotten, excessive profits of a few powerful world controllers so they could continue to rape the planet for that additional private plane, yacht, castle, or hip-bound lobbyist are to blame.

Those who burned gasoline in rolling planet killers spewing carbon out of massive tailpipes are to blame. Those who supported a "free market global economy" that relied on cheap labor are to blame for flooding the marketplace with low-cost, inferior products that had to be replaced annually. No, we're all to blame, my parents and grandparents especially.

My tears drip in my quiet solitude down my ashen, death-painted face.

We are the hundred or so who've decided to leave this warning to any passersby who happen to land on this planet of sorrows. A terrible wrong was committed in the name of money that can never be rectified - it's now too late.

Dumping toxins in our waters, clear-cutting thousands of old-growth forests, the destruction of entire ecosystems, the pumping of tons of carbon into the once clean air by coal-fired power plants, and all the other destructive practices of a species devoid of a conscious, let alone practical, sense, doomed us to an executioner's final gasp.

Those who walked before us only to drop hard on the lifeless rocky ground were emaciated skeletons with bore-holed eyes of hopelessness.

This was the early years when the last children were carrying clubs that they used to beat their weaker parentless peers over the head with in a degenerate fit of survival - they'd resorted to cannibalism earlier than the adults.

Those who'd lost their morality committed savage acts of rape, killing, and torture. Hopelessness bred a rootless society of granite callousness that accepted any act of degenerate poison. Therefore, cannibalism was the least of the despicable tragedies committed by our contaminated souls.

Forests once covered large expanses of the land, but they were wiped out and turned into muddy, lifeless bogs. Rainforests that supported the most profound diversity of life found in any region were left exposed to the beating tropical heat.

Unsheltered, the moisture-rich soil evaporated, leaving clumps of broken, worthless topsoil - that is, the topsoil that hadn't blown away or run off into the ocean. Hypocrisy ruled the day with multitudes of the most adept spin experts praising all the virtueless, contaminated souls whose efforts resulted in the land rape.

No effort was too disgusting for those special doctors of capital fiction who buttered the pole that was used expertly to force the average citizen into a tough position. Power held with every punishing thrust left a grimace of pain on those of us who attempted to stop the trashing of our planet. These contaminated souls, some lawyers, most lobbyists, and others just lower-level bile sucking leeches, would beg to be on the frontlines of the fight against their fellow citizens.

Most of the citizens of this time had but a single desire: to enjoy a modest standard of living in harmony with their environment. This simplicity was at odds with the mega businesses that came to pillage. No clean, clear, and uncorrupt thought had ever graced the princes of the ivory towers.

Only a few out of a burgeoning population that had reached into the billions spoke up or took action against those who came to raze. The criminal gang that orchestrated the global business/government razing of income and natural resources from our fragile planet used every means at their disposal to silence those who fought their tyranny.

For it was a tyranny, a tyranny of forced acceptance - accept you're apportioned thrust of the buttered pole in silence. Just let the pirates pillage your neighborhood, town, village, jobs in the name of cheaper labor, natural resources, and whatever they fervently deem reasonable per their book of ultra-capitalist dogma.

How dare you question the selectively appointed intelligentsia that these business pirates carried in their back pockets like spare change? No one challenged what they knew deep down to be wrong because they'd been brainwashed into believing that their thoughts were meaningless drivel compared to the anointed professors of multinational business thought.

Even when the swarms of bugs descended upon our cities after an especially oppressive summer, these legions of expert opinion took their payoffs as they fitfully swatted bugs from their satisfied lips that worked furiously to spill concocted lies; all is well, they told us, this was just a natural circadian rhythm, even though no record existed of this 'normal' infestation. Before long, these 'normal' in-flight infestations were transformed into a new normal that we tolerated. Toleration over time was a slippery slope that led us to the intolerable.

If we could only be granted the wisdom that we now possess, the knowledge, and the certainty of our convictions that we now have, the intolerance of injustice that we wasted, just maybe we could have averted the extinction of our species.

What we failed to realize was that every frittered second was a lost opportunity, bringing us closer to a blazing, fiery torch —a pitiless baking of humankind in a deep fryer innocuously called "Global Warming."

Suppose we'd only realized the depth of our loss. In that case, the loss of all living creatures, the loss of all the promise that could have been humankind, the loss of our majestically beautiful world - so tragic is our realized loss that no words can adequately describe the pain we feel now.

This document is our attempt to convey this loss; it is our testimony to the single most profound tragedy that could warp any society of sentient beings. Please continue to read our warning, don't let your future slip through your hands. Those seeking profit in the short term should never trash the environment for future generations.

At this very moment, outside our dirty hovel, which is powered by the last working generator, as I attempt to write this document, the wind is howling at 200 kilometers per hour.

Our rathole is constructed of two-meter-thick solid concrete with an airtight seal, specifically designed for "burning dust storms" and other features of our new hell pit. A mere breath of this dust would fry our lungs to a crisp in a few seconds; we're all acutely aware that this chamber will eventually become our tomb.

It's hard to convey just how inhospitable our environment is. During our writing of this document, we'll relate to you a few daily events over these last remaining days of our lives that should 'bring home' how the end would come for those who don't heed our warning.

We all agree that complacency is the ultimate enemy. If left to spread through independent-minded individuals, it will, over time, intellectually incapacitate an entire society, turning it into an amorphous mass of Jell-O. You never see it coming, for it sneaks up behind you, promising to rid society of discord, when all it does is eliminate thoughtful discourse.

Beware of this peaceful state of accepted 'mind mush' because it is analogous to turning on the gas jets of your range in a closed room without lighting them. Sure, you'll fall into a peaceful sleep, but it will also be your last.

When people begin to block out reality because it is too harsh to contemplate, they have crossed the fine line from stable logic-based reasoning into an unstable unreality that guarantees societal stasis. The societal sub-system then falls into a state of stasis that cannot exist within a dynamic, ever-changing universe; it is doomed to extinction. It is

therefore imperative that reality remains the touchstone upon which all members of a community base their actions - any other measure is illusory.

We had many within our community that adhered to their alternate universe of pleasant outcomes right up to their last blue-faced gasp of oxygen-depleted air. They refused to acknowledge that humankind could ever become extinct; it was just not even possible.

Somehow, these ultra-optimists believed that humanity was allotted a special place among all known species, and we could warp all our information away from straight-line reality and still escape the consequences.

These believers in the impossible couldn't comprehend that humankind had to play by the same rules of survival as other species and that we weren't ordained special or exempt from the consequences of our actions.

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My name is John, and the others have elected me to tell my story because it is equally tragic - it is representative of all our lives, of our loss. I was born to an upper-middle-class family in Iowa City, Iowa, during the "Great Floods" that left most of the city submerged.

Father was a professor of Climatology at the University of Iowa. My mother kept the home clean, tutored both my sister & me, cooked, and read constantly so that she could be my father's intellectual sparring partner.

It was a testament to my mother's mental capabilities that she was able to meet father head-on, regardless of the subject he'd chosen to immerse himself in for the month. This was no easy task for mom since dad was the unrecognized preeminent mind of what was to be our last century.

For better or worse, we ended up in Iowa, not out of any first choice on the part of Mom or Dad; it just happened, circumstances aligning to deposit us smack in the heart of the United States.

In a fairer, more equitable world that valued competence over fluffy box thinkers, Dad would have been the acknowledged leader in any field he'd set out to make his domain, but you have to understand this wasn't a world that was fair or rooted in reality.

This was a world run by a pack of smooth-talking incompetent takers, so here we were in a place that rained too much, had far too many bugs, dusty back roads, arctic winters, and no spectacular scenery. However, what it had in abundance was competent, mostly quiet, and relatively friendly people who didn't have any difficulty recognizing reality; this was very unusual in a world that lived in illusion.

Iowa became our home like a good, well-made coat, not marketed by some well-known designer, but warmer on bitterly cold days than its flashier cousins.

My days were pretty much filled from morning to evening with study, either at school or at home. Not a moment passed that my parents didn't emphasize the importance of a good education. They weren't so hung up on an education for the sake of accruing a collection of diplomas, but believed that learning took many forms. Most of all, they instilled in me a continuing quest for knowledge.

This quest tied into Dad's unquenchable desire to understand even the most obtuse topics. He couldn't satiate his need to know - not just on a fundamental level but in-depth, to the core. I can still see him crouched over his notebook computer researching, writing, and analyzing the latest intractable problem beseeching the world. Oh, yes, Dad really believed he could change the world if only enough people would see the benefits of his remedies.

Dad's optimism was unquenchable, and so was mine. Over time, Dad would deteriorate into an old man who was no longer consulted, despite having a treasure trove of revolutionary creations.

Remember, the world was run by fools intent upon using it and the citizens who lived on it up to fill their personal kingdoms with many more material possessions than they could ever use. The fact that dad was acutely aware of this never dampened his enthusiasm for passing on to an intellectually comatose population an endless supply of out-of-the-box solutions. He truly believed that, over time, enough people would be reading his blog and books to make a difference eventually.

The problem was that he was running out of time, and the world had already run out of time. He was unaware that his body was being eaten up by terminal cancer and would put him in the ground within two years.

During that time, Dad worked like a fiend, sometimes getting only four hours of sleep. This wouldn't have been so bad, but Dad was the sole breadwinner. It is my firm belief that if it weren't for this grueling schedule that he imposed upon himself, he probably would have lived an additional year or two.

But the loss to humankind's last remaining archive of knowledge, our species' legacy, would have been a drop in the bucket if it hadn't been for Dad's contribution.

This electronic library spanning the creations of minds from Plato to Helen Robards, along with our message, is a proud testament to the intellectual potential of humankind. It is a reflection of what we could have become if we had been able to rid ourselves of that top

layer of incompetent leeches that kept dragging our societies, governments, and businesses into the gutter.

But when we, the last human inhabitants of this once stunningly beautiful world, die, at least it will not have been in vain. This is because our gift to other sentient beings visiting this planet—a vast store of knowledge—will remain secure, regardless of their arrival time, within a vault five hundred feet below this greeting dome.

It is brutal outside today with the temperature reaching 260°F. The dust and sand whipped up from a barren, global landscape have obscured the image coming through our video feed to a single, dark, tan picture.

The thermosolar collectors, moored in solid concrete deep into the crust, are unable to function during dust storms like this, forcing us to rely on battery power and our single generator. Maintaining a comfortable temperature of around 75°F requires a substantial amount of power, especially since the average outside temperature on a good day is around 175°F.

To make matters worse, our water and food supplies are seriously depleted, but we know we will die - we have no future - no hope. Writing this warning and our library preparation tasks are the only reasons we don't just meet our maker sooner.

My family wouldn't reach a similar point of desperation for five years, but once the environment started to disintegrate - literally disintegrate; ozone was gone, and greenhouse gases had made cool breezes a distant memory.

In Iowa, capable citizens resolved that this or any other natural disaster wouldn't stop them from bringing in a harvest. So, the state, farmers, and the new federal government in Denver pooled their limited resources to cover most of the farmland under massive air-conditioned domes.

Of course, this meant that everyone not farming under any number of these domes had no choice but to wear protective suits when stepping outside. Just driving your car down the road became a life-or-death excursion. There wasn't any room for error when the temperature outside hovered around 145°F, even at the poles.

In the early years, this warning of imminent ecological catastrophe that my dad tried to convey to his complacent citizens was ignored. They were either too busy making money for retirements that they'd never get to enjoy or just too busy making money to hoard in their castles to pay any attention to a warning coming from a few activists and scientists. Their view was that if they didn't feel, see, or hear any discernible change in their environment, then it wasn't changing for the worse.

It's hard to explain human beings, especially if you're a species that dwells in the rarefied region of logic untainted by illogic. But without straying too far from the document's purpose, let's say that people were generally good. Unfortunately, we had a central flaw that ultimately led to our downfall - we couldn't bring ourselves to believe that anything terrible could happen to us personally.

Granted, if you asked all these individuals to gather in a group and collectively provide their insights on the possibility of environmental destruction, they would almost always agree that, based on the facts, we were headed towards extinction.

Get these same people outside the group and ask them individually whether they believed that their actions could negatively impact the environment, and they'd look at you in disbelief; 'Hell no, my driving that 'land yacht' can't be contributing to global warming.'

This was the impossible task that my dad, the "man of dreams," confronted without wavering, even when his last labored breath came years later. It was his mission to save the planet and humankind, even though he was a single man facing an immovable force: ignorance - most people didn't want to hear bad news.

People hated receiving bad news, especially the messengers who brought it. Hopefully, your species doesn't have these deadly character flaws, but given that you're reading this document, you've at least conquered the scientific barriers to space flight. You've accomplished what some of us dreamed possible – if only we could have lived in reality.

It must be wonderful to travel to other planetary systems and visit the planets. It makes me sick to think that no human being was able to reach the stars. Sorry, I'm crying over this wasted chance; we had such a promising future. What did we do? We blew it away like it was just a trivial vision; damn it, blast all; everything.

Right this minute, our internal environmental computer is voicing a blaring warning that our "environment is destabilizing; the system is unable to maintain a humanly survivable temperature." According to its calculations, we have at best forty-eight hours left before our home, this dungeon from the outside hell also becomes uninhabitable. Time is short, so I must press on with my story.

The death of my sister came unexpectedly on the thirtieth day of a steady pounding rain. She'd contracted the latest deadly virus that had been mutating in the tumultuous environment.

All these viruses' ancestors had found a pleasant home in the greenhouse that had become our death chamber. Incubating in this fertile planetary capsule, these microbes flourished. Many species, including many of the lower life forms that covered our planet, died within



the first year of this onslaught of microbial infections. They lacked immunity to viruses and bacteria that could evolve daily into new strains.

If it weren't for humankind's relatively advanced state of genetic research and genome mapping capabilities, we would have followed those lower life forms to an early extinction. As it was, we just prolonged our demise.

Once again, we failed to believe that the mass extinction of many of the planet's life forms would ever impact us. We would soon realize how wrong our assumptions were, but for now, we just tried to make it past our first crisis - many more would follow.

All of these technological breakthroughs in isolating the new microorganisms and quickly treating them with effective antibiotics and anti-viral medications came too late for my sister. She died in her bed in a puddle of blood that had erupted from her lungs in a final gurgling sound.

When the biohazard teams arrived, they sealed her in an airtight bag and transported Mom, Dad, and me in little transparent bio 'coffins' to a special wing of our local hospital. That was the last I saw of my house and my mother.

The hospitals were overwhelmed; they were swamped with terminal patients who'd contracted any number of these new infections. They did their best to deal with the unbearable. Our military brought in these gigantic tents on camouflaged transports that rumbled down our highway day and night. But typical of our worthless federal government, they didn't authorize the use of military medical teams, exceptionally skilled in dealing with emergencies.

This left us with plenty of tents outside our local hospitals but no doctors or nurses to staff them. They were useless reminders of a global society that had degenerated under a dictatorship of self-serving elites. They were left to flap empty in the winds that would eventually tear them to shreds.

Dad and I were now alone. We have no idea why we were chosen to survive by a supreme being who'd allowed our kind to lay waste to the majority of the planet, but somehow there was an unfathomable reason. We just carried on, leaning on each other during the most violent of our planet's spasms.

The loss of my sister and mother carried with it the undeniable realization of just how tenuous our existence was - we were truly on our own, my family had been decimated, and I now knew that humanity itself was in jeopardy of becoming a footnote in history.

Grief permeated all the spaces previously reserved for joy. So many families like mine had lost moms, dads, and children to these early plagues. Large truckloads of corpses were now dumped into huge, lye-coated pits.

But we had little time to expend in mourning over the billions that had died in this initial spasm of a planet on the verge of ecological extinction. We were just too preoccupied with living in our progressively less friendly surroundings to take the necessary time to mourn those whom we'd lost - we now walked down a shorter path towards the final loss.

Dad died a short time thereafter from the cancer that had bred undetected for years. After Dad's passing, it seemed the floodgate to hell had been opened wide, and the environment cascaded out of control into a free fall towards total planetary destruction.

The scientific community was now compelled to read Dad's writings, as all other avenues had been exhausted. What they found was a vast body of research that predicted the outcome some feared but most ignored. Unfortunately, it was too late; the damage had already been done.

So here we sit, awaiting our last cogent thought, our demise. The computer has been squawking furiously every hour about failures and other outcomes that it insists will finish us off. We all had told ourselves we'd be ready for this moment, but...

# Silence on the Plains



Ray Pairan