

# The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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## A Prologue

Starfall

Saturday, September 23, 2034

2035 Nuuk Time

Godthab, Greenland

It began about 2035 Nuuk Time (US 1835 EDT) in the evening somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean. All along the eastern seaboard of two continents and the islands on that side of the world were witness to it. The larger population turning their eyes to the East to marvel at the hundreds of trails streaking through the sky. Along with those blazing trails through the skies came tremendous flashes as the meteoroids vaporized in the atmosphere. Several morphed into meteorites as they struck the Earth and ocean.

It started around mid-Greenland with some the few souls that lived there looking to the East while some of them and their friends in Iceland looking West. A very few Greenlanders had to lay back their heads and look straight up. The few inhabitants of the globe that were above 70 degrees North were looking South to see it while the few inhabitants living south of 70 degrees South were looking North. The barrage of falling rocks seemed much thicker near the equator and tapering to a thin stream at either extreme with the extreme ends sort of lagging behind the center mass in a shallow “U” shape lying on its side.

New Yorkers on the Eastern Seaboard of the USA and others from the top of the Arctic Circle to Tierra Del Fuego and the penguins of Antarctica saw the same spectacular display that lit the dark and darkening skies at a distance. The display lasted for exactly ten minutes and then stopped as abruptly as it had started.

Scientists from around the world sprang into action as the word of the phenomena spread as fast as modern communications and social media allowed. Many on the wrong side of the world decried the fact that that they did not witness the event and called for additional information. Many wondered how in the world could such a thing happen, in what appeared to be equal measure, over both hemispheres of the globe at the same time. And how without any warning?

The scientists who missed it needn't have worried. It started again in exactly thirty minutes from apparently the same spot in the sky and five hundred miles closer to the Eastern Seaboards of North and South America. The deluge of rocks from the sky lasted for exactly ten minutes and then stopped.

Scientists, and now the militaries of the world were frantically searching the heavens for answers and finding none. Thirty minutes later the bombardment began again. And continued for 10 minutes and stopped. The pattern repeated itself for 41.2 hours and abruptly stopped. The entire surface of the globe had received, in more or less equal measure the rocks falling from the sky.

# The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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No country or region, race or religion, political leaning or division was spared. Many of the streaks in the sky made by the hypersonic space debris came apart relatively low in the atmosphere and were accompanied by tremendous concussive waves as the pieces detonated like bombs in the sky. The strength of those explosions in the air ripped and rippled through the atmosphere breaking glass and bringing down homes and buildings around the world. Several planes, large and small, were holed or experienced the massive shockwaves and were struck from the air as the unrelenting bombardment continued.

Many, an unknown number, of the rocks came on much more slowly and became meteorites as they made contact with the earth. Most of these rocks arrived late in each cycle, at less than the hypersonic speeds of the first waves, many striking the earth with tremendous, but never world ending, force. Many struck the population centers around the globe with devastating results cratering the face of the world.

To say the least, the world's emergency response and capabilities was overwhelmed early on.

Chaos reigned in the larger cities as a cycle of looting and anarchy rippled around the world along with the destruction. Government finger pointing and accusations started as soon as it all began and tapered off as it became clear that no one was to be spared and eyes then cast outward with suspicion and worry. The populations of countries around the world began to panic and demand answers.

Government, News and Social Media estimates of the destruction and death were impossibly varied and at odds. A week later after the event with no further occurrence or resumption of the onslaught the world settled into an uneasy peace and most governments began to regain and exert control again in most areas of the globe.

Six days after the event the casualty count was estimated by most to be in excess of 2.5 million dead and as many as 14 million injured with thousands upon thousands still missing or unaccounted for.

Even though it had lasted for 43 hours it became known as The Day the Stars Fell.

# The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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## Chapter One A Beginning and an End

Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2034 – 1400 CST  
Detroit, Michigan, USA  
Site of the largest known, still intact, fallen meteorite

Only nine days after Starfall the news had been grim in the aftermath. The body count had risen in the first week, as governments around the world just barely began to get their shit together, to well over twelve million and change dead, with thirty-two million injured and even more missing and now presumed dead. The world was still in chaos but in general was nervously waiting for the other shoe to drop.

While waiting the world turned and looked to Detroit, Michigan which had the dubious pleasure to receive one of the largest of the space rocks to land in what appeared to be intact condition.

The world watched with rapt attention as the government of the United States released (but still filtered as they well knew) footage and information on the more or less intact meteorite that had plowed a furrow through downtown Detroit before coming to rest. It seemed to be both much bigger than the estimated SUV sized rock that had torn through downtown Dallas knocking down the Reunion Tower and destroying the Convention Center before breaking apart and much smaller than the rock that had totally destroyed Brussels, Belgium.

Since it seemed intact, they got a good estimate of the size of this particular, partially buried rock. It was a tapered and flattened obelisk about the size of a large house covered in what appeared to be a rough, fused rocky looking exterior and estimated to weigh thousands of tons. Conjecture said it must have been slower than many of the other space objects falling to earth or it would have caused much more damage. It was almost a soft landing in comparison to many of the others. Even at that, the trough it carved through Detroit was over a mile long.

Once it cooled enough to be approached the military and scientists descended on the thing like a plague of locusts. As they approached the unknown, they quickly measured, poked and prodded to determine the level of danger from a distance. As it rapidly cooled, robots, some equipped with High Level AI, initially went in, both walkers and rollers, to perform those first measurements. Ultrasonic probes, ground penetrating radar, LIDAR... radiation detectors, spectrographic analysis, chemical sniffers, bio sniffers... you name it, they tried it. Nothing harmful was detected but little was actually learned.

Despite the lack of safety issues detected when the actual humans got within touching distance they were dressed initially in full radiation suits with rebreathers, then HAZMAT Level A suits with SCBA, then Level C Suits with hooded PAPRs, and then coveralls with N95 masks finally became the uniform of approach and contact.

# The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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After nearly three days of trying to penetrate the object with non-destructive measurement and imaging methods and with minimal information gathered, they tried other avenues. They tried boring a hole in the thing with a demolition drill that just kept breaking to bits. Someone then got the bright idea to try a heavy Military Modulated Weapons Laser (MMWL) system to bore a hole. It was working, but not all that well, and when it would go no further, they had a hole about twelve inches deep and three inches in diameter.

A second “bright idea” was formulated and a powerful seismic charge was stuffed into the hole and several seismic imaging systems were mounted to the rock. When the charge detonated it scarred and shook the rock and the scientists and military received their first image of the interior. Instead of being solid it appeared to be hollow with some sort of liquid sloshing around the interior. Seeing that everyone beat a strategic retreat, put on their isolation gear again and hunkered down.

The robots were sent in again to look the scene over. As the first wave of bots closed in an eerie shrieking sound, akin to massive fingernails scratching across a monumental chalkboard, traveled for well over three miles through the morning air. The rock appeared to shimmy and blur and then split seemingly dead center around the girth. The end of the object that was tilted slightly into the air fell back crushing the platforms that had been built up under it. With the object split open like an egg large chunks of the rocky exterior began to fracture and slough away from the split. The rocky exterior fell away revealing to the dozens of telescopic lens trained on the object, a smooth skinned cylinder-looking, shell-like interior. No liquid spilled from the split but the hyper-speed cameras did see, when slowed down and replayed, a brief view, more of a feeling, of something rising and spreading into the air only to dissipate and disappear rapidly.

It was marked as the beginning of the end although many argued the end had started the day the sky had fallen, and this was just another event that followed the millions of fallen space objects that had already broken apart and released their payloads.

Less than seven days later it began in earnest. Governments, scientists and the media dubbed it ***The Decimation***. Before, they too were consumed by the oncoming plague.

# The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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## Chapter Two Just Another Day

Friday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2034 - 0800

Lewisville, Texas, USA

Lars MacArthur (Mac) Johnson – Retired - 72 years of age

He had been battling a cold, maybe the flu, most of the previous week but woke up about 0430 as usual. Taking a quick inventory, he found he felt much better. His fever had broken, and he felt wonderful. In fact, he had seldom, or perhaps never, felt as good as this morning. It somehow felt wrong in a way as the world itself was falling apart around them.

As was his custom he got up quietly from his bed, dressed and went for a brisk six-mile walk around the neighborhood. He was feeling so good he made extra good time and completed the six miles in a personal record time of one hour and fifteen minutes. It was eerily quiet. He didn't see another soul walking or driving but shrugged it off as people hiding out in their homes trying to ignore the troubles. The urban equivalent of hiding their heads in the sand.

Returning home, he took his shower and pulled on a tee shirt, undies and sweats and went to sit in his office. Closing the office doors so as not to disturb his wife still sleeping in her room, he began his morning routine of hitting the internet and the news feeds for the latest bad news, doom, and gloom. He pulled up CNN and put the feed up into the top left corner of the computer monitor. Keeping the volume low but loud enough to hear anything key it looked to be a rehash of the last few days.

Looking for more local news he quickly scanned the local feeds. The local Fox channel was showing a news desk with no one behind it and he quickly tuned through the rest of the local feeds. Finding nothing that looked like it was live he went back to the channel 4 feed and pushed it up to the upper right corner of the display.

He started surfing the internet and became absorbed in the endless flow of bad news that rolled by his eyes delivered by the few websites that were still operating... there were many, most in fact, that weren't. Some were just gone; some were continuously rolling the same crap from the last few days in endless circles. A few of the whack feeds had a single person staring into the camera saying either very little or spouting nonsense in an incessant drivel and he had no idea if it was live or a loop.

Something changed and caught his ear on the CNN feed and he pulled it full screen and turned up the volume.

*“Today may be the last day of broadcast for this news channel. I am reporting from an empty studio. I am Robert Bentley, producer. No other staff are, as far as I can determine, alive or present in this building. Bodies lie everywhere having died in every imaginable position. I am reporting from a gruesome, high tech graveyard.*

# The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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*The last report we received from Homeland Security just minutes ago on the direct feed was extremely disjointed and almost unintelligible. The Homeland Security spokesman claimed to be the last in his department alive. His final mission was to pass on the last report from a scientist residing in a massive government think tank in what was supposed to be a “safe” installation that included both underground bunker and small city-like complex above ground. This secret location had gathered over 20,000 military, scientists, engineers and technicians to determine what was happening to the world’s population in the aftermath of Starfall.*

*I’m going to read this report verbatim and then put a bullet through my brain. I have lost everything and everyone and can go no further.”*

Mac paused, blinked and stared at the screen and the unfamiliar, haggard figure on the screen. The lone producer continued after a short pause and obvious struggle.

*“The report begins;”*

*Although this location was thought to be isolated and safe, I must report that it was not. The data gathered from locations from around the world has been collated and the figures are startling. The data is now showing an acceleration of what the news media has been calling “The Decimation”. As I sit here writing this report to you I must say that I find this appellation entirely appropriate.*

*According to our models and projections, based on the information and data gathered, it is estimated that as many as 9,500 out 10,000 will perish and the remaining will be unaffected, or will be altered. This, for a better word, plague that we now believe was deliberately visited upon us has blanketed the entire world. If the models play out as expected the roughly eight billion inhabitants of planet earth will be reduced to a little more than 400,000,000 beings on the entire planet. These numbers may or may not be accurate and only time will tell if these projections are correct.*

*Whether the intent was to kill all of us, or to change us for some reason, is unclear.*

*One thing to note is that the animals, lower life forms and plant life of the world seem to be either unaffected or affected in ways as yet undetermined. In any event no changes have been reported or observed as yet.*

*The mechanism of delivery for this plague is also unknown but is now thought to have been delivered by the “rocks” that fell to earth on “The Night the Stars Fell” or “Starfall” as many have dubbed those two days. Our few samples of these rocks now indicate they were manufactured containers designed to deliver something... most likely whatever has afflicted us.*

# The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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*Regardless, we... I, believe that whoever, whatever, did this had wished the desired effect to have been to kill all of us. But for whatever reason, there have been either side effects or unforeseen and unexpected results. Certainly, we have had some interesting results noted and reported. The plague, for a better word, has divided us into four broad groups;*

1. *Deceased*
2. *Positives – 1 out of 100 survivors*
3. *Negatives – 2 out 100 survivors*
4. *Normals – 97 out of 100 survivors*

*To clarify;*

**Deceased** – *Dead is dead*

**Positives** *appear to have been recreated, or rendered, stronger, faster, healthier and possibly more intelligent than a normal unaltered survivor.*

*If a Positive starts out as a happy, loving, caring, intelligent, and ethical person then they tend to remain in that mind frame... but possibly amplified somewhat. Sickening really.*

**Negatives** *appear much the same as Positives but appear to be at first driven by an all-consuming need to eat as a result of a vastly sped up metabolism.*

*Any negative aspects of the personality seem to be amplified to an extreme in the Negative. Hate, rage, lax morals and lack of ethics, and possibly, a lost sense of right or wrong, are all reinforced and seem to control the responses of the Negative until their hunger has been satisfied.*

**Normals** *appear to be unchanged or unaffected... at least for now.*

*Whether or not these numbers will be accurate remain to be seen of course. These models and projections, however, have been supported by both outside reports and the limited microcosm of the isolated environment that we have been living in over the last few days. I have been witness to this very same model. As I watched, my colleagues either died or were changed... or remained unchanged. There are very few, if any, of us besides myself left living in this facility at this point. I had identified at least one individual I had tagged as a Positive, now deceased, and possibly a few Normals as well down here with possibly a few more wandering about upstairs. I really suppose I should see about going up to find out. I would truly like to return to civilization, if any remains, or*

## The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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*better hunting grounds anyway... I am so hoping that one of the survivors happens to be a helicopter pilot.*

*Regardless, I must sadly end this narrative as I am once again hungry.”*

With the abrupt close of the “report” the producer looked up and tears glistened in his eyes.

*“Thank you, a final goodbye and may your God be with you. If I can figure out how to loop this report I will do so.”*

As Mac watched the lone producer stood and walked out of the frame. As he sat staring at the monitor it went dead only to start over at the beginning of the man’s first and final message.

Swiping at the monitor he paused the feed. Mac sat and thought about what he had seen. He looked up blinking with a sudden realization. He had thought he had heard his wife rising to begin breakfast but now realized he had not heard the inevitable banging of pots and pans, cursing and muttering that usually accompanied his wife doing anything in the kitchen.

She usually arose sometime after his return to prepare breakfast, and eventually, call him out of the study. He would never usually bother his wife of close to fifty years... it just wasn’t prudent. They had not slept together, or done much of anything together, over the last fifteen years or so. It just seemed easier that way. She had quite a quick temper and found fault with, honestly, just not him, but just about everyone and everything around her. As he tried to avoid confrontation with her, they more or less lived together, but apart, with their paths crossing, by plan, only infrequently. If they were thrown together for whatever reason she ragged him endlessly so he had just opted out. As the old song went *“It’s hard to kiss the lips at night that chew your ass out all day long”*.

But, now worried, he rose and made his way to the kitchen only to find her on the floor staring sightlessly at the ceiling. He knew what death looked like and this was it. As he approached to check for the pulse he knew he would not find he looked at her body. Something was off with her appearance in death. It was probably sudden as she looked to have just keeled over backward and struck her head on the polished concrete floor. Wondering if it was the fall that had killed her he was suddenly struck by the deeply sunken eyes and her starkly hollow cheeks. Flaccid skin hung sagging from her bones.

After checking for a pulse and finding none he picked up his cell phone and called 911. No answer. He instructed the home’s DigitalAssistant to direct call Fire and Rescue. No answer. Call the police department.... No answer. “WTF!” he thought. He started the DA calling all local Fire and Rescue that was listed for all cities within thirty miles of his location. If the response was no answer the DA was instructed to move to all local police departments. If still no answer the DA was to call everyone in his contact lists.

# The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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While the DA was doing that, he pulled out a kitchen chair and stared at his dead wife with the background noise of the DA reporting each no answer and mechanically and methodically moving to the next. Almost unblinking, tears stinging his eyes, he thought to himself how he just might miss her now that she was gone.

## Chapter 3 Life Goes On

Saturday, 10/21/2034 – 1630

Lewisville, Texas, USA

Mac Johnson

Mac wasn't sure if he had slept, dozed or just "zoned out" but slowly realized he had been sitting in that same chair for hours. Gathering himself he drew a deep breath and stood. He looked at his wife's body one last time and moved to her bedroom and retrieved her favorite comforter. The same one she had had for years and had commented endlessly how comfortable it was. He moved back to the kitchen and covered her with it.

Decisions, choices and paths started to click in his mind as he went to the garage and retrieved a shovel and gloves and went to the backyard and began to dig. The ground was compliant with recent rains and the digging seemed easy. It seemed very little time before he had a hole approximately six feet by three and a half feet and almost four feet deep. Pausing he pulled the gloves from his hands to see that he had created, and then ruptured, blisters on the palms and between the thumbs and pointers. Both hands were slowly weeping blood and fluid. Looking at the wounds he wondered why there was no pain, no discomfort other than an odd itching feeling accompanied by a heat pulsing from the wounded area. He shrugged and pulled the gloves back on and returned to the garage for a plastic tarp he used when painting around the house. Returning to the grave he lined it with the plastic hoping it would serve to keep the animals out.

Moving back to the house he slowly wrapped his wife in the blanket he had covered her with. Picking her up he reflected that she felt so light, like a feather in his arms. As he carried the mummy-like bundle to the grave he choked up a bit and was panting, not from the effort, but from the emotions now pouring through him. He gently laid her body on the ground next to the hole and jumped into the grave. He reached out to pull her to him and turning her to the side, lowered the body as gently as possible to the floor of the grave. He once more turned her flat and began folding the tarp over the body until only the side he was standing on remained. Stepping over the body and turning he folded the remaining flap of the tarp on top of her. Reaching back and up he pushed himself backward up and out of the hole and sat on the edge. Legs dangling in the grave he thought to himself "what should I say... I should say something...". Not getting a good answer he stood and paused for a moment and thought only of the good moments they had shared over those many years. "I hope you go to a better place" he whispered and turned to the shovel sticking out of the dirt pile. Working without thinking he

## The Day the Stars Fell – Preview

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filled the grave and tamped and compacted the dirt as much as possible with the shovel. With a sudden thought he turned and stepped to his garbage bins and pushed them out of the way and bent to pick up the 18" x 18" concrete pavers he had laid. Moving them two at a time he placed them softly on the freshly dug grave until all six pavers rested there.

After burying his wife's remains in the backyard he went back inside and went to the bar area opening a bottle of Bourbon. He went back to the kitchen to sit and start a to do list and plan.

Not seeming tired or sleepy he worked until about 0200 and laid down on the couch.