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Warnings We Do Not Heed

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1313 Words

## **Before the Apocalypse**

Dear Mother and Father, Brother and Sister,

Before the apocalypse, we sat around making elaborate plans on how to survive the zombie apocalypse - debating who could come up with the better survival guide. You know, what to hoard, where to go, what gear was needed, who you would take with you. All the myriad of little options to consider should a global pandemic turn the world into brain-hungry, zombies of the living dead. We thought it was harmless – just an intellectual exercise. Sure, we took it too seriously sometimes, arguing deep into the night playing D&D, Zombie Dice, and other such campaigns. Often we'd cite statistics detailing how many humans would die initially and what kind of conditions were needed to make them less easy targets. But we meant no disrespect by any of it. It was all just a distraction. A game.

Until the real zombie apocalypse hit. Then all our theories and games felt sophomoric in the face of so many truly horrible moments happening across the globe. All the deaths, all the fighting over resources and shelter, all the gruesome examples of

inhumanity. Nothing like what we imagined. More desperate, more violent, and far less romantic than a game.

I thought we needed to help in some way. So did a few others on my crew. But most disagreed and voted we shouldn't. Extinction, or survival, for the humans had already been prescribed and mapped out in countless movies across past decades of cinema. Over the last one hundred years, this entire planet raised themselves on genres of films specializing in the sociology of world extinction events. Post-apocalyptic dystopias, zombie nightmares, and everything that goes bump in the night. Night of the Living Dead, Dead Alive, Night of the Comet, The Road, Zombieland, and so many more, created to entertain an entire generation. Only it desensitized everyone to the real thing when that moment came.

And it did come. An actual apocalypse hit in the year 2020, reaching around the world, that was no joke. I find it hard to explain in detail, especially the trivial politics behind what set off the event, without sounding incredulous. But let it be known a *delets-osvoenie* event occurred here in the mid-22<sup>nd</sup> Century. Everything turned to salt. The Americans, along with numerous European countries, went to war trying to unfold the darkness enveloping the land. And in the process, inflicted greater damage. An entire ecosystem scorched brown and black, setting off a new Ice Age, with the only human survivors, about four percent of the population, left to regenerate from the ash.

Now here's my worry. The unforeseeable side effects if you will. My friends and I survived the apocalypse barely touched – all fifteen of us – thanks to our residency deep within the bunkers of Colorado's Cheyenne Mountain Complex. A place meant for the human elite, but re-purposed as a prison after our space craft crashed in a place called Roswell and we were taken hostage.

But we weren't unscathed. In an unexpected turn, blessedly so, we discovered our bodies could absorb the nuclear fallout without fatality. I don't know exactly why, but Remmi (you remember Remmi from the Iso Valley?), he believes it had something to do with our other world mitochondria being able to convert the nuclear fallout into a viable energy source within our cells. Lucky us. There were side effects. We don't resemble the men and women who landed at Roswell in '47. There was some unexpected conversion to the new energy source. Or, as the human scientist, Charles Darwin, explicated – all species adapt to their new environmental paradigms or die in the process. So we are alive.

I don't want to trouble you since none of the side effects are horrific. And I am still your son and brother. Just four feet taller now, with more androgenic qualities along the surface facia, along with a reduced bone density below  $1,010\text{kg/m}^3$ , and two new extended appendages emanating from the scapula of my upper back. The appendages haven't fully developed yet, but Remmi thinks they might be prehensile wings suitable to achieving flight under gravity forces of greater than  $9.81\text{ m/s}^2$ . As, you well know, earth is.

There were other side effects. Infighting among our crews. After the apocalypse, Remmi, Platius, Elenia, and "Lincoln Ford Mercury" – who you'll remember as Sentius though he changed he changed his name – fell on one side of a huge disagreement we survivors were having. I and my crew, including Bentillius and Foreameer, wanted to return home now that we were no longer being held captive. But Remmi and his sect wanted to stay – theorizing how we were the apex predator of this world now and could effectively take over and rule the land. Set our flag and conquer in the name of Helices. Not scout and report as our original mission parameters were.

"Who exactly are we going to rule?" I asked Remmi during a particular bitter argument we were all having. "The few humans who survived hiding out in those Costco

warehouses won't last too much longer. And the millions turned into zombies will eventually starve and degrade back to organic waste. All we'll be left with are the ruined dregs of this world's self-implosion. What would we be staying for?"

"Well," Elena surmised, "It's not like we'd be accepted back home in our present condition. Have you considered that? We are no longer pure. Our DNA has been compromised. Which, I imagine they won't know what to do with. Especially if these changes don't revert back. For all we know, they're permanent and not just a localized adaption to this planet's current condition."

"Right," Platius added. "We have the unique opportunity to re-build this world into our image. Create something we all dreamed about – a perfect culture on a new world. How exciting is that? I mean, isn't that the reason we threw ourselves into space to begin with? To explore other planets and galaxies and spread our culture?"

Well, you can imagine, Mom and Dad, our Friday night board games have morphed from enjoyable gatherings into heated debates arguing the merits of staying versus leaving. Should we stay or should we go? Like this old famous earth song I once heard, "If I stay there could be trouble. But if I go there could be double."

For now, we are working toward a consensus. But I fear the divide between us has grown far too polarized and our little group will descend into a civil war any moment. I am writing this communique hoping against hope it will, somehow, reach you. The equipment in our space craft has been damaged for a long time after decades of human efforts to de-construct and reverse engineer our technology. Which goes double for the craft itself. My crew and I are working to repair what we can, but its doubtful the ship will ever fly again with the resources we have at our disposal. I have somewhat repaired the tele-wave communication systems sufficient enough to send this outgoing

message – though crude and in rough Morris code bursts of data. But I have hope you will receive the communique and send us a wave back. Or send a rescue team.

In the meantime, I trust all is well at home. It must be early orbit there with the blue meront migration beginning. How I would love to be there to see it and join in the festivities. I dream one day I will again.

For now, I only sit and wait. For years, my crew sat around arguing over silly games and apocalyptic scenarios every Friday night. Now, with a dose of real world, we find ourselves involved in a real life apocalypse with our past plans inconsequential to our future being. But I have hope.

I hope you receive this transmission soon.

Yours in Perpetuity,

“Lizzie”

The End.