

The Prelude

The sky is grey and thick with dirty clouds. The air is heavy with pollution from this newly formed concrete jungle we are all trapped in. I remember the days when the lands were flourishing with plant matter as well as insects and animals that helped the ecosystem thrive. Those memories of the old world have been erased since the government took full control of our lives. I have not grown up my whole life in this new earth; I was one of the lucky ones that got to experience the green world before it wilted away. I'm old and grey, wrinkled and forgotten. They killed my unbroken family in order to cut down the population. Our high demand for natural resources has exceeded what we have been so nicely gifted to us by our planet, they needed to take action somehow. As I sit here in Denny's, and sip on my cheap, artificial coffee that some robotic teenager with a bad attitude made for me, I see the factories spouting carbon and methane emissions faster than the way water would pour from a powerful waterfall. What happened to this planet? Oxygen has become artificially produced and it's not cheap. The simple most necessary thing for human life has been taken away from us as a right and has become a privilege, and if you can't afford it, you'll suffocate and expire. This is the government's way of killing off the useless bums that are wasting space and resources. We never thought we'd see the day, we never listened. This is year 2100.

It all started when I was 12 years old. An asteroid, the size of a small lake had hurtled through our atmosphere and onto the valuable land of Vancouver, Coal Harbor specifically. I remember the terror and confusion that arose from the people. We had no idea about what had just hit us and what was soon to come. I was sitting in my living room watching the news with my family on the night that the collision ensued. I thought it was exciting because I had always been super passionate about astronomy. My parents though, did not share that same emotion. Confused, I decided not to ask my parents about it because if they would rarely answer my questions in the first place, why would they now? Several years went by before things started have a dramatic impact on human and animal kind. Native species started dying off due to the lack of habitats that began to naturally disappear off of our planet. The sky appeared to be at a constant hue of muted orange, but nobody knew why.

I was a curious kid, and with my family's lack of explanation it was up to me to uncover what was going on. The odd turn of our planet became a rather taboo subject. Nobody wanted to talk about it. Weird. Maybe they were too scared of finding out the answers. I took it upon myself to do some research on the asteroid that had fallen years ago. I found disturbing photographs of what looked like a war zone with bodies and blood as well as other intergalactic fluids running through our streets all mixed into a stream of salty ocean water. The ground was red-hot and the concrete was beginning to

melt away under the heat and pressure of this large space rock. No further information online. Well, nothing useful at least. The paragraphs written about the asteroid seemed as if it was scripted like a bad TV drama you'd see on the Bravo channel at 11pm on a weeknight. Sub par and un-educational.

My mother always told me "don't ask questions if you'll regret hearing the answer". I would never defy my mother on any given day however, my mind and body were itching and aching for some answers about these peculiar train of events that were somehow related.

Sorry mom, I still love you though.

My father was a chef for the Prime Minister at the time. After some begging and whining I finally had him allow me to come help him with a catering job they had to do for a big meeting at the Minister's office related to the asteroid crash. Approximately one month later, I got up early, brushed my teeth twice because I did not want to risk looking any form of dirty in front of these people, packed my bag and left with my dad to begin cooking for the meeting.

"Did you ever hear anything more about that asteroid that fell a few years ago, dad?" I asked my father nervously, knowing his staccato personality. "No son! Why? Didn't your mother tell you not to ask questions?"

My father was a rather serious man. His job as a chef was absolutely everything to him and in all honesty, I felt as though he put his job before his family, his kids especially were thrown on the back burner and left to get cold. Pun intended. We began to plate and serve the appetizer of steak tartare to the important people sitting in the important room whose jobs were to make important decisions. It felt important. I could not help but to scan the table for any documents labeled "confidential." No luck. After the meeting, my father ordered me to go sweep the important floors of the important office and the floors of the washroom that was connected by a singular door. I dragged myself into the office. My eyes widened, my heart rate sped up. Somebody forgot their briefcase.

"Could this really be happening?!" I yelled quietly to myself. I instantly dropped my broom as if it were homework I did not care about, bent down and had a closer look at this navy blue leather briefcase that some important governmental human had left behind. My eyes locked on that navy blue case stronger than the cables that hold up the Capilano suspension bridge. Terrified, I reach my hand out and grab the briefcase. All I could hear was the sound of my own breath. I set it down in front of me and began to open the gold clasps.

I heard my father began to call for me since I was taking too long. I quickly opened the case, took a handful of papers, folded them in half and hid them in the inside pocket of my jacket. When we returned home, I dropped my bag, thanked my dad for bringing me with him once again and sprinted up to my room to examine these documents I had stolen.

I could feel the excitement pumping through my veins as if it was Christmas morning when I was six years old. I sat down at my desk, nothing but a single stream of light pooled onto the scratched up surface. I slowly pull the uneven folded paper out of my pocket and looked around to make sure no one would see the crime I was about to commit. I took a deep breath and started to slowly unfold the papers. The crinkling of the paper sounded extraordinarily loud and the house was unusually quiet that night almost as though everyone was listening to what I was doing planning to catch me in the act. I took one more deep breath before fully opening the mysterious papers.

The first words I saw were the ones I had been hoping for, “CONFIDENTIAL.” I knew my life was about to change drastically considering I would be the only person who was not part of our political party to have the exclusive knowledge about this phenomenon. All the anxiety and paranoia dissipated, and my veins filled with adrenaline and anticipation. I opened the first letter which seemed to be in some alien like language with a short English translation at the bottom of the page that read “destructive species”. I couldn’t help but to think of every possible idea of what that could mean before I dug further into the documents. I saw photos of Earth taken from space from years and years ago before I was even born. The planet looked so lush and green, no sign of human industrialization at all. “What could this all mean?” I thought to myself.

As I dug deeper into the files, I started to regret it more and more with every page. When I was on the final page after reading for what felt like hours, I saw the heading labeled “Summary.” “Summary?” I thought to myself. “Summary of what?” The words were written with such bad grammar it was difficult to read. “We species, other planet. Humans must to change its ways or else us species take Earth back.” I kept reading, my eyes were locked onto this page, following these words as if my eyes were a train on a train track with nowhere else to go but the track. Finally, I came to the bottom of the page. My heart sank. I did not know whether to feel at peace with the idea that I had gotten all my questions answered in one split second or panicked by the information on the page.

The government had been in contact with alien species. And not just any alien species, an alien species that owned and created Earth as an experiment to fabricate

other life forms. “Wait a minute! You’re telling me that I’m nothing but a science experiment?” I said to myself under my breath. “That’s anticlimactic.” I kept reading and discovered why our resources had been disappearing so randomly. The aliens saw that we were destructive creatures and that we have taken an exponential amount of resources from our planet in order to produce material items for us to use and then throw away when we get bored with them so, they decided to stop the planets self-reproductive system. Once you cut a tree, it will not grow back, even if you plant a new one right way. This was the alien's way of destroying destructive creatures. I just never thought it would be humans. The asteroid was a warning sign.

I refolded the papers and stored them in a box under my bed. I sat back in my chair, my mind felt numb. I reminisced on the information i had just absorbed. I felt sad that we could not be a successful species to the more powerful alien species out there. I wanted to make a change, but I knew it would just get me in trouble. I had no idea what step to take.

I decided to sleep on it. I could not process properly and so, I went to bed. Sleeping was very difficult that night, all I could think about were the aliens who were monitoring our every move, and to know now that our planet was going to slowly dry out and die, was a concept I couldn’t accept. I was only 17 at the time, I had an entire life to live still. Would I ever get married? A job? A career? The continuation of unanswered questions filled my brain like a water balloon until I felt like my head was going to explode. I eventually fell asleep. I woke up the next morning, exhausted and disconsolate. I decided I was going to keep this information to myself because if I told anyone, even my family, it would result in a mess that would be too difficult to clean up.

Years went by before things took a turn for the worst. Half of the ocean had dried up by the time I reached my late twenties, by my thirties all fresh water has been evaporated. The population numbers rose tremendously causing nothing but more issues for our dying spherical rock we used to call Earth. The government decided to get rid of the older population which was taking up space and resources. Those people were my parents. The only family I had left. The world was falling apart.

I am now in my late forties and I look like I’m eighty. I sit here in this Denny’s and reminisce on the idea that I could have made a difference, and that not even the aliens, our creators stuck around, they left us to die. I have no family, no wife but I do have a job packaging artificially made beef in a building that most likely would not pass any health inspection test.

The crazy thing is, I am the only one that knows what's truly happened to our

world. Everyone thinks this has been the result of overproduction and global warming, which was in fact true however, Earth would have lasted much longer had it been able to continue to provide naturally occurring life for us.

BEEP* *BEEP* *BEEP

All of a sudden, my alarm went off in a scream, I frantically woke up out of this nightmare I had just encountered. I thought to myself “that was a weird dream. Good thing it was just dream.” I packed my bag for school, ate some peanut butter toast and left for school. I went and lived my day just as any other 17-year-old boy would. Little did I know, that dream was a prelude for what was about to come.