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An Era of Mayhem

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Chapter One:

“Take time to gather up the past so that you
will be able to draw from your experience
and invest them in the future.”

-Jim Rohn

The sun rose over the horizon and brought on a new era, an era of mayhem. Unbeknown to the staff at the center for astronomy of the federal government, the very core of the sun was changing. They were in for the ride of their lifetime in a matter of hours.

The sun rose on what seemed like a deathly hot day, strange thought Michael McAllister for the dead of winter. The astronomer thought perhaps somewhere in the far distance of space something interesting had happened. As he prepared for what seemed as though it would be a long day at the office, he realized that it was getting increasingly heated, and his movements slowed. He approached his car only to be burned by the mutilated, warping leather interior of his Mustang. He inserted the key turned over the ignition and let the air conditioner run for a few minutes before he hopped in.

He drove to work in a hurry, fearing the worst, ready for someone to say that the hole in our Ozone was growing larger and that they were directly underneath the gaping wound. He picked up his cellular phone, no battery. He turned on the radio, and tried to relax, but his mind raced with the possibilities. As he illegally sped through a red light and a stop sign or two he began to estimate the temperature, 110? Maybe even hotter? No. Definitely hotter, they had to be pushing at least 130 Fahrenheit. He drove slower, fearing his car would overheat, leaving him forced to walk the rest of the way to work.

As he pulled into the parking lot, he rushed in, only to be confronted by panicking co-workers who had obviously been awaiting the expert's arrival.

"Oh no. I'm right." he thought. "What'll I do? What if it's worse? What can I say? This is bad." He insisted that his co-workers calmly explain to him what was happening, but the words that left their mouths came out jumbled and almost incoherent.

"A super duper!" Shouted one.

"A... Uh... OH MY GOD!" Cried another.

"A type two supernova." Someone said in a very rational voice. The stern voice came from the back of the crowd and heads craned to find it's owner. Jim. He'd retired two or three years ago, an expert that Michael idolized.

It was obvious to the rest of the crowd that the words Jim had said hadn't really registered or computed in Michael's head.

"Haha, very funny. The chances of that happening or too slim. So really what's wrong? Why is it so damn hot?" Michael asked playfully.

"A type two supernova." Jim retorted, this time a little more firm.

"There are no games here. There is no time for games. Every great astronomer and scientist stands here, in this room, before your very eyes. Waiting for direction. Mayhem is bound to ensue shortly."

Michael's body had stopped, every function, his heart, his brain, it didn't make sense at all. After all his studies of the sun, for all these years. Why hadn't he seen it coming? Where had it been hiding?

He hurried to the telescope to examine what was happening, and there it was. The sun glowed with an intensity that it never had before. The implosion had begun. But before another thought could be thought, the press had arrived.

“Damn it all.” Michael thought. “Seven o’clock in the morning and here they are. What should I tell them? The truth I guess.” Michael trotted serenely to the anxious press, all of whom were drenching in sweat. He took a deep breath and began.

“What is ensuing now, is something to fear. But be not alarmed. (“What a stupid comment” he thought.) It is a type two supernova. This occurs when the core of a normal star’s hydrogen is converted into helium by nuclear fission, or nuclear separation. The resulting energy released is what empowers the star and makes it glow. But as more and more helium forms, the star loses some of its glow and collapses a little. Eventually it will collapse to a point where the helium is forced into carbon and oxygen. Of course this can’t last forever either, or the star will eventually collapse again, and the carbon and oxygen will fuse to form heavier elements such as neon and magnesium. Ultimately when the core is making iron, no more fusion can occur. Iron is a stable atom in the universe and will not release energy when it fuses with itself, so the star shrinks and no nuclear process is available to stop it. As the core collapses the rest of the star flows toward the center to fill the hole. But the iron core actually rebounds a bit when the rebounding core collides with the inflowing stellar matter a gigantic explosion occurs.”

He had left the press dumbfounded, but also with an endless amount of questions. He answered none, he had to go to work or the sun would die, and the world would see it’s final day, soon, or possibly today.

He scrambled around the laboratory drenched in sweat in a hustle that signified his worry. The press was demanded leave, and the crew of over a hundred ran knowingly where to go and what to do.

Through the telescope Michael saw it, the implosion was climaxing, and he let the others see in turn. He quickly calculated the approximate heat.

“No.” He thought. “The heat is dropping. The temperature is falling. This can’t happen now. It’s too soon.” Everyone had noticed the abrupt fall of temperature, the knowledgeable panicked, and the ignorant praised it thinking it was nothing but a false alarm.

“How wrong they are, celebrating this cooling of our earth. If only they knew what to come. That the sun was going to explode. That we’re all going to die. That there is literally no hope left for any of their survival. Maybe they should know? No. There’d be mass self-destruction, and there’d be no reason to try.” He thought of his wife, Monica, of his beautiful baby girl Chelsea, but most of all, he thought of the people that were now dancing gleefully outside his window. The poor pathetic souls that were now doomed to an eternity alone in the ground. He saw his little girl run up and hug him. He swung her around and pulled her off her feet and into his arms. He saw his wife smiling sweetly as he returned from work, he smelled her cooking, steak and potatoes with a side of boiled corn. He could hear his daughter laughing in the background.

“Michael” His wife called from the kitchen.
“Yes dear?” He replied.

“Michael” His wife called again. “Michael! Michael!! Michael!!!”

Michael had been pulled from his dream, apparently the heat had knocked him unconscious. After he had fully awoken he was back on his feet, raptly watching the sun and noted its' progress every step of the way. Suddenly the heat rose with a fury that felt as though all hell had broken loose. It had been so hot that it had filled all the hospitals with the elderly having heat strokes, and the young dying of fever. The heat had been so life overpowering that the baby nursery in the hospital had turned into a morgue. People had become so frightened that they jumped from buildings and bridges. The road had long since warped and all the glass had been fogged over with inane amounts of perspiration mixed with heat. The musty smell had become overpowering and many passed out from the scent alone, let alone the trauma that everyone's natural homeostasis was enduring.

The sun grew brighter and brighter with an intensity that blinded all, the weak and sick had been dying and dropping off like flies. All that were left, were the strong. Dr. McAllister was one of those people. He survived, and trudged on. He warned everyone within hindsight that there was no hope left. He screamed out to the world,

“DON'T FIGHT IT. JUST SAY YOUR PRAYERS AND HOPE FOR THE BEST!!!” He was thankful for those with religion. For those who believed in a next life, for he, wasn't one of those people, and the grim realization of what was to come had damaged him inside and out.

His job obliged him to stay at work, but he wasn't about to spent his last few days at work. He walked home with the speed of a salted snail. As he trudged the miles of hot, twisted pavement in the street, he felt dizzy but was determined to get home to his family. He walked and he walked, and when he saw his front door his expression changed. He raced toward it with an excitement he'd never experienced before.

“Baby! I'm home” He called. But there was no answer. No note left to say they'd gone out (then again, he was never home around these hours anyway), and no sign of them ever having even lived there.

He searched around for his things, and all he found was a suitcase and a few shirts. He feared his wife had left ...

Michael awoke with a start, his head pounded. “Not again.” He thought. “Damn heat.” He continued on his journey home, which had become quite the chore. As he arrived at his house, for what seemed like the second time. The green door wasn't as welcoming as it always had been. The heat had twisted it's figure, and it no longer fit properly in the door jam and the paint had begun to flake. His wife and son greeted him at the door, obviously they had been worried about his life. He told them that there was something he had to do, and he might not be home to see it through. Ever again.

His wife cried, and his son was too young to understand what daddy meant by “Having to say goodbye for a long long time.” How long would he be gone? A day? Maybe two?

He rode his bike back to work, the breeze from his momentum was cooling, and it was faster then walking, even if it was twice as exhausting. He sped in through the door and took to his telescope to monitor the supernova's progress. It was having it's dormancy period. This whole process was going so fast. His mind strained, how could they live without the sun?

Then it hit him. Nuclear energy. Nuclear heat. Fire the missiles, it was time for a worldwide peace treaty. War would have to be put on hold to save the earth from destruction.

Every important person was called, the president, the secretary of state, every governor, everyone. They all gathered in the room and talked business.

“It can happen. The missiles could theoretically generate enough heat to replace the sun, if only for a week, maybe two. But it would take all of the resources we have. It would require an agreement from every country with the necessary equipment.”

“Is it guaranteed to work?” Someone asked from the background.

“Is anything, ever guaranteed? No. But it’s our best bet, and it’s better than sitting around here slowly rotting and melting away to nothing.”

“But what’s the use if it won’t work. And what about radiation? What about cancer to the populous?” The unidentified person argued.

“Would you rather have one more week to do everything you wanted to do, or know you were going to die in a matter of days, maybe not even days! Hours!”

“But how would it be if all you could feel was the pain of cancer eating away at your insides?! How much glee could you possibly have? How much love could you feel, if it was nothing but agony aching from deep within?”

“I don’t know.” Dr. McAllister said sounding defeated. “But it’s something we have got to try. We can’t just let these poor innocent souls die.”

“I understand. I’ll call every nation, and try to make them understand. But I’ll need your help. Come with me.” The voice came with a face Jim. It wasn’t just anyone. It was Jim, how could he of all people not instantly understand!?

Michael followed obediently and thought what he could say to all the other nations that would let them understand that giving everyone in the world cancer would justify one more week of life. How do you tell someone that you want to give all of their people cancer? So that they can save their lives?

But that wasn’t his concern. His concern was to make them understand. The thoughts raced through his head. When he realized Jim had been speaking to him for quite a while. Apparently the words had been going in one ear and out the other. It seemed as though Jim was fully aware, and just using Michael as a listening vessel, just something that he could think was listening while he put a voice to his thoughts and problems.

When Michael heard his name mentioned he refocused his thoughts to Jim’s words. He understood that he had been rambling about what he should be saying. Too bad Michael hadn’t been listening. He quickly ran over some things he thought would be appropriate to mention, and formulated a makeshift speech in his head.

“I’m sorry to disturb you, but as you may have noticed. It has become increasingly hotter by the moment. As I’m sure your scientists have noted, a type II supernova is currently taking place. The implosion is already nearing completion, and the explosion is soon to come. How much longer would I say? A day maybe two. 40 hours. I believe that there is a way to save your people, and mine. But it will involve complete peace and a temporary pause in our current disagreements. We need to put all nuclear weapons into use. They need to reign out the sun, in which they will create a great amount of heat before our sun dies out, providing us with a good week of heat.”

“But what about radiation you imbecile?” Said the voice in his head.

“Yes what about it? It will indeed cause cancer, but isn’t it worth the one last week your people will get to see, all the things that they could do, are going to do because they have that last seven days. Doesn’t that mean something? Have a heart, understand where they come from. They come from the need to live, not from the need to die as soon as possible.”

He walked faster knowing that his time was lessening with every second he took. Even when the heat became unbearable he knew what had to be done. They reached the office, many electric fans had been turned on, and the air conditioner was full blast. He walked importantly to the phone, completely unaware of the president’s presence at all. When he was acknowledged by the President with a loud suggestive clearing of the throat he turned to look, and bowed his head, partly in shame, and partly in respect. He asked for forgiveness, and continued straight toward the phones.

He dialed number after number, repeating the same speech over and over again, and always met with the comment that he was utterly mad, but in the end he got his way. Three hours later, it was complete. The plan was go. Every nuclear warhead on the face of the planet would be fired toward the sun in exactly 18 hours and 27 minutes. A timer had been put on to count down to the minute.

The time seemed to be speeding by. And there was much to be done. He demanded the military generals come together for a meeting discussing the arrangements, and how they were to go about firing off all this and how it would happen, and which space shuttle to use, which one was the most likely to succeed?

The conversation though brief, was very productive and everything was set. 16 Hours and 12 minutes the clock read. He walked slowly back to his office.

His wife called to him, from behind their house. He could see her as she came into view, hanging the wash, his son clinging to her leg so happily. He ran to her all smiles, and took her into his arms, then his son. They went inside and drank cool lemonade. Then... Arghh! Another pounding headache. He awoke to assistants helping him to his feet, and taking him to the nearest chair. How many times had he passed out now? It had to have been at least 9, or was it less? Oh bloody hell, he’d lost count and he just hated doing it. Everything seemed so serene when he was out, but then when he came to, the chaos resumed and this time he had a pulsating between his temples.

All he could understand was the yelling and mumbling going on behind him, and though he found none of it important everything seemed to intrigue him. The colors on the wall, the patterns in the carpet, and the way everyone seemed to walk. It was all entrancing. Had he gone mad!? He had no time for this.

He continued to talk his staff through the process and what would need to happen in order for everything to go off smoothly. His sudden change in attitude and composure had startled some, but left most unaffected. He was barking orders left and right, ignoring questions, and averting his attention to any one person. He just seemed changed, as if the loss of consciousness had really gotten to his head. Or maybe it was just the heat. Whatever it was, it was hurting him because the pulsating had grown to a drumbeat marching behind his eyes.

“Fire the missiles. Lock and load. Ready the ship. The shuttle, pack it with fuel. Did you check all the gauges? Twice? Three times? Good.”

Though he retained a fixed gaze, and a solid composure, he was trembling inside, if this work he'd be a hero, if not he'd die hated by everyone. He realized suddenly that this wasn't where he needed to be right now. He didn't need to be here barking orders to people that already knew exactly what they were doing. He needed to be with his family, and for the second time he made the journey back home.

He passed out twice on the way home, always the same, a beautiful rest period, where consciousness was unimportant, and then awaking in a dreadful pain. He saw his own door and found his wife crying loudly as she flung the door open haphazardly. Then he saw it. His son in her arms, as lifeless as the newborns in the hospital nursery. He grieved with her, holding her and telling her it would all be okay as soon as they all got cancer. No that wasn't right, as soon as the sun exploded. Yes that was it. When the sun exploded, and the explosion had begun without his awareness, because of his damned attachment to his family.