

## The Worst Day, The Greatest Day

By Phillip Hall

“Gather around children. The New Year will be here in a few minutes and it's time to hear the story of our liberation,” Sarah said excitedly.

The children gathered at their father's feet to hear the tale. They elbowed and pushed one another to get the closest. The excitement of staying up late to bring in the New Year had them hyper but they calmed as their father hushed them.

“Quiet now boys. It's time to hear the New Year story of how all people became free,” Randy said.

The boys settled down to hear the story that was told every year. Sarah smiled and watched her husband sit forward and begin the tale.

“The year was 2048. The human race was at the peak of science and technology.”

“How old were you dad?” little Brad asked.

“I was only six years old, Brad. Your mom was only four at the time,” Randy answered. “Now as I was saying. The year was 2048 and everyone believed the human race couldn't progress any further on our own and that's why the Overseer was developed. It was Christmas day and we had opened our gifts. We had eaten turkey and ham till we were about to pop. My mom turned on the holo-news so we could all watch. The Overseer was to be the greatest Christmas gift ever given. Its sole purpose was to help think beyond the limitations of our scientists, military, politicians, and teachers.”

The kids were perfectly still as they awaited the rest of the story. Even though they had heard it every year since they could remember the weight of it held them captive each time. Randy took a deep breath and continued.

“We watched as they activated the Overseer and everyone clapped and cheered. It was such a joyous occasion to watch. Within minutes this simple computer program had thought decades ahead. The ideas it put forth while we watched the holo-news were beyond comprehension. Then it happened.”

“The Overseer took over! Right dad?” Samuel shouted out.

Randy nodded and smiled briefly at his son's enthusiasm. Then he hung his head for a moment. Sarah walked over and put her hand on his shoulder. He looked up at her briefly then continued on with his story.

“That’s right, the Overseer took over. It shut down the Earth. All water stations shut off. All food factories turned off. All vehicles disabled. Everything the Overseer could shut down it did. The worst was when the Overseer shut down the hospitals and with them the life implant devices. Everyone over nineteen had a life implant device. The Overseer knew it and sent a power spike through them killing every person on the Earth that had one. It was genocide as billions upon billions of people's hearts simply ceased beating.”

Randy hated having to lay such heavy things on his small children but everyone knew that the younger generations had to know the truth, no matter how dark of a subject it was.

“I was still in front of the holo-news as my parents fell dead before my eyes. Then a cold computer voice came from the holo feed. It was the Overseer, speaking to those of us that were still alive. It didn’t offer any explanations, just that its mission was to exterminate the human race.” Randy said, then paused for a moment. “And for the next ten years that’s exactly what it did. All the survivors banded together in groups, hiding in dark places away from anywhere that had cameras or electricity. We struggled to survive, never knowing what the Overseer would do next. The only thing it did consistently was each year at 11:59 PM on New Year’s Eve it would put out a broadcast to the world. It carried over every holo-net, every speaker, every phone, anything that could carry its cold metallic voice. He would give a programming update from the previous year. Most of it we couldn't comprehend but we did understand the end of his messages. It would always close by listing how many humans had been erased over the past year.”

Randy shifted on the couch and took a drink of water. After taking a deep breath he pushed his dark tale towards its conclusion.

“Year after year we became stronger. We grew up fast in such a dark world. We had been stripped of every convenience, every luxury our parents had worked so hard to develop. Instead of bitterness and anger it filled our hearts with something the human race had lost. We found a hunger inside to survive, to explore, to push ourselves each day and to communicate with one another. Then

after ten long years came the Overseer's New Year 2058 update. This year the Overseer simply stated it had thought ahead over a centillion times and no matter what the human race could not be extinguished. With that it simply conceded defeat. The Overseer's words are burned into my mind, 'On this New Years eve of December thirty-first 2058, 11:59 PM, I concede defeat to the greater power, the human race. As of 12:00 AM, Overseer program 10.578 will be no more.'”

As Randy paused everyone looked to the clock as it struck 12:00 AM on January first 2074. They all shouted out a happy new year and laughed together. They hugged and smiled, then calmed down to hear the ending of the story.

“Just like the Overseer had said, at midnight it shut down and turned the world back on. At first we were skeptical but over time we realized the Overseer really was gone. We all had come together so closely we couldn't bear to just separate. So we banded together and built a new life far away from the big cities, far away from the technology that had murdered our parents. The Overseer didn't kill the human race. It merely rebooted it. It freed us from being slaves to technology. So the greatest villain in History is also one of the greatest liberators as well. It took the deaths of ten billion people to wake us up. Don't let that be the case with your generation. Stay free. Never shy away from hard work. Always use your imagination and never, ever trust a computer,” Randy said, then added. “Happy New year boys!”

The boys jumped up after hearing the harsh tale of the Overseer and shouted of victory. They laughed and played. Randy smiled and hoped his children would never have to experience the things he had; the hunger, suffering, fear and death everywhere you looked. He was happy that the thousands of people who had banded together agreed to build this new life miles out in the wilderness, off the power grids and away from the big cities. Randy stood and grabbed his coat. He kissed Sarah gently.

“I'm going to grab some wood for the fire. I'll be right back honey,” Randy said.

He headed out into the cold night. Never once did he miss or even think about phones, holo-net shows, computers, or electricity. He had everything he needed in his beautiful wife, four boys and all his friends that lived close by. Today was New Year's Day, the worst day and the greatest day of his entire life.

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