

The Calculated Collapse

Alas, the time had come; it was possible yet uncalled for.

The rise and fall of such a powerful empire is truly beyond comprehension. The empire was indeed one of a kind, the pinnacle of development for a million parsecs in every direction from Earth. However, it was lost, forever floating in the desolate expanse of space. The empire had no conceivable weaknesses; it could exterminate anything that stood in its way. Even the threat of a civil war was kept at bay, for every action was calculated. Nevertheless, the equilibrium was still torn.

There was an oversight: it was something unaccounted for in the calculations. Something so otherworldly the brightest of minds couldn't have caught a whisp of it. Or was it? For the computing machines calculating every move in the empire had not accounted for themselves; they were inherently biased.

The emperor, army, generals, and people had no real power. They were pieces in a never-ending game played by the best player ever to exist, the computer. The pieces depended on the player to move and go about life; the player needed the pieces to continue the game: a closed system of symbiosis that could have gone on till time immemorial.

However, as the game went on, the player's power soared, and it mastered the game. It ended the game.

The year 12,069 was nothing out of the ordinary; the Empire of Earth was thriving. A worker in the Department of Defense spoke to the supercomputer, and it spat out an answer. It was the recipe for a pathogenic weapon: a variation of genetically engineered malaria.

The year that followed was completely out of the ordinary. Malaria had spread. Contained in the empire's medical facilities, the pathogen infected the doctors, and the people's only hope was erased. Slowly, all life on Earth disappeared, leaving only the computer and the mosquito.

With its purpose extinguished, the computer no longer had to work, and it shut itself down to lay dormant with the rest of the planet. Rotting piles of the dead littered the surface, and the world was completely silent except for the buzz of tiny wings. Slowly, the dead decomposed and disintegrated, coating everything with a layer of dust. The final lights of the civilization dimmed and turned off. Without anyone to run them, the

power plants of the empire slowly melted down and exploded, covering the world with nuclear fallout. Even the mosquitoes died.

In the years to come, the planet became uninhabitable. The brightest of worlds had turned itself off, and that was that.