



Introduction MK II

It is Man's nature to destroy, whether it is eradicating an animal species, cutting down the rainforest, or killing his fellow man, one thing remains clear: War never changes. On December 21, 2012, the end came to Man as the War on Terror escalated to nuclear proportions and left the planet in ash. This date was foreseen in doomsday prophecies ranging from the Mayans to Revelations of the *New Testament*.

Taking a look back to what led up to the Exodus of man from the technical age of the 21st century, it is apparent that it all began in 1938. In the year 1938, the Nazis were rumored to be developing an atomic bomb. The United States initiated its own program under the Army Corps of Engineers in June 1942. America needed to build the atomic weapon before Germany or Japan did—thus sparked the Manhattan Project.

The Beginning of the End

The path toward humankind's destruction began on August 6, 1945; the day that an American warplane called Enola Gay dropped the atomic bomb on an army depot in Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later a similar weapon was dropped on the Japanese port city of Nagasaki. Both bombs utterly destroyed their target cities and caused unimaginable suffering amongst the civilian population. Hundreds of thousands of innocent people were killed. Many more were injured or subjected to cancer and radiation sickness.

Though Japan had been subjected to brutal firebombing for months, the scale of the destruction that could be wrought by a single bomb shocked the world. It was clear to everyone that a new and horrific age of warfare had begun. After witnessing the most destructive conflict in human history, the world would soon discovered that the worst was yet to come. Pandora's Box had been opened and there was no way to close it again. As more and more countries began stockpiling nuclear weapons of their own, a very real fear emerged that any international incident might snowball toward all out war and nuclear holocaust. Generations of people would grow up under the shadow of atomic annihilation. For nearly seven decades the world slowly edged closer to the precipice of total destruction.

The atomic nightmare finally came on December 21, 2012. Four days before Christmas, a salvo of nuclear missiles was launched into space. This provocative act triggered a worldwide crisis as war after war broke

out across the globe. Many people became convinced that the world was going to end. For most of the seven billion people living on planet Earth, it did.

The Manhattan Project

The development of the atomic bomb took place under a top secret international project dubbed the "Manhattan Engineer District." The Manhattan Project, as it was later called, was started in response to the news that Nazi Germany was close to developing their own atomic weapon. This monumental scientific effort represented the pinnacle of contemporary technological achievement. The scientists and engineers of the Manhattan Project succeeded in their task, delivering the weapon that would bludgeon Imperial Japan into surrender.

The race to obtain the bomb led to a multitude of spinoff projects, including the so-called "super soldier" experiments. The Nazis had also delved into this ethically perverse line of research and both the American's and Soviets had followed suit. While the Soviet line of research focused on the development of anabolic steroids and artificial hormones, the American project was based on the ability of radiation to alter genes. Research conducted after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki explosions alerted scientists to the terrifying medical affects that come after exposure to radiation. American nuclear labs that had been associated with the Manhattan Project were secretly tasked with studying the properties of radiation and the ways it affects human biology. In the 1950's breakthroughs in the understanding of radiation and the burgeoning field of genetic research allowed scientists to use radiation to directly manipulate DNA for the first time.

What would become known as the Trans-Genetic Warrior Project was an attempt by the United States to breed soldiers with phenomenal strength and endurance; walking tanks that could survive a battlefield that was contaminated by radiation. While many scientists had serious concerns about the moral implications of this research, it was deemed a necessary evil by those who were frightened by prospect of the Soviet Union obtaining this technology first. It was clear that the Soviets had no moral qualms about using their soldiers as test subjects and a nightmare scenario soon emerged; Soviet military might combined with a new breed of chemically enhanced warriors that could keep fighting even after being subjected to an American nuclear attack. Deterrence would be lost if the Soviets thought that their army could roll into Western Europe without fear of an atomic counterstrike. To balance against this threat, vast sums of money were directed toward the development of American super soldiers.

Trans-Genetics and the Dregs

The Trans-Genetics project was initially deemed a colossal failure and a waste of Defense Department resources. With the end of the cold war, this secret project was one of the first programs to be cut from the military's "shadow budget." The super soldier program languished in storage for more than a decade before being unexpectedly resurrected in the year 2002. Two years earlier, an international team of scientists had released a draft version of the decoded human genome. The stalwart defenders of the Trans-Genetic Warrior Project recognized the benefits of having a completely decoded human genome and worked to get the program reinstated. The Soviet threat was gone but military commanders envisioned using the Trans-Gens as a top secret commando force. They were looking to create fearless, unthinking weapons that would obey any order and keep fighting even when faced with vastly superior forces. The tactical and psychological advantages that could be gained from using these weapons outweighed any outdated "ethical" qualms about human experimentation.

The primary phase of the Trans-Genetic Warrior Project began when orphaned children were relocated to a secret base beneath the Los Alamos nuclear research facility. The children were then placed into stasis chambers and succumbed to an artificially induced coma. Over the next ten years, the slumbering children were exposed to radiation and other DNA manipulation techniques. When they emerged from stasis, the teenaged Trans-Gens were drafted into a strict military training program that was designed to move them quickly into the combat theatre. The war ended before any of the mutant super soldiers were shipped to the front lines. After the Exodus, the scientists at Los Alamos decided to keep their super soldiers around as a private security force and continued their military training. However these people began to slowly die out as their bodies were ravaged by radioactive fallout. Left to their own devices, the Trans-Genetic experiments formed the foundation of what would become known as the Mutant Army.

While the Trans-Gens were in stasis at Los Alamos, the military began a secondary phase of the Trans-Gen experiments aimed at creating adult super soldiers. This line of research was headquartered at the Berkley Nuclear Laboratory. The adult Trans-gen project is what lead to the creation of those unfortunate people known as Dregs. In the year 2012, shortly before the start of the Great War, a group of military volunteers underwent experimental manipulation that was designed to dramatically boost their physical performance. At first the experiments seemed successful; the volunteers began to grow younger and healthier with predictable gains to their strength and durability. However, it was soon obvious that the anti-radiation drugs given to the Dregs only slowed their torturous transformation into humans that resembled the walking dead. With the onset of the war and the chaotic times that followed, the scientists at the Berkeley Nuclear Labs nuclear labs transferred their failed experiments to the Oakland Army base where they were used as forced laborers. Three years later, a revolt among the Dregs overthrew the military leadership at the base and established their own colony in this new era of man.

The Symbiotic Strain

A failed side experiment of the Trans-Genetic Warrior Project was the attempt to use the new science of genetics to combine human DNA with that of animals. This project hit its peak in the 1960's when a scientist was able to successfully combine the genes from a human and chimp. Using crude methods, these experiments were conducted on a trial and error basis. The vast majority of embryos that were created by the symbiotic strain was not viable and had to be discarded. Of the few that matured into fetuses, most were deformed physically or afflicted by serious medical problems. These early failures allowed the scientists to refine their crossbreeding techniques but the process was never perfected.

The creature known as "Bigfoot" was an escaped subject who was photographed in the Pacific Northwest. This half-man, half-ape was able to remain elusive in the wild until his recapture in 1986. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies initiated a program to cover up the mistakes made by the super soldier experiments. Test subjects that escaped from their handlers were labeled as "aliens," "vampires," or other creatures from modern myth. From the 1940's on, countless experiments were accidentally brought under public scrutiny but the legends that grew out of these incidents quickly took on a life of their own. The "UFO crash" at Roswell, NM was the most famous of these security breaches.

The Cold War

By 1945, WWII had ended but a new threat was emerging. One time allies, the United States and the Soviet Union were headed toward conflict. The two great super powers had defeated the Nazis but were now poised on the brink of an even greater war. The relationship between the communist giant and the US had always been one of suspicion and contempt. The "red scares" of the 1920's and 1930's were testimony to the hysterical fear held by those would not accept the idea of Marxist political thinking in America. Likewise, the Soviet system was built on deriding all capitalist countries and preaching a doctrine of "liberating" the oppressed workers of the world. After forcefully seizing a large swath of territory that had been under the control of Nazi Germany, the Soviets were quick to force the creation of Stalinist puppet governments in Eastern Europe. They later instituted a practice of supporting violent communist revolution around the world.

On August 29, 1949 the Soviet Union test detonated its first atomic bomb. The already tense relationship between the totalitarian giant and the US began a terrifying new phase. Many people already believed that the two countries were on a path to war, it was now feared that this war would be fought with nuclear arms. For the next

The Freehold Project

In the 1950, one year after the Soviets tested their first nuclear weapon, the US government began construction on a series of secret bunkers that were designed to shelter the military, political, and scientific elite in case of a nuclear exchange. The massive Freehold Project dwarfed the civil defense initiatives that were designed to protect the civilian population. Wealthy and well connected people were allowed access to these shelters in exchange for partially funding the construction of the enormous vaults, essentially buying security for themselves and their families. The official "vaults" put together by the Army Corps of engineers were accompanied by a host of privately built fallout shelters, built by concerned citizens, wealthy eccentrics and doomsday cults.

Each Freehold was designed to shelter over one thousand people for a matter of several decades. The mammoth structures included living quarters, support services, entertainment complexes, and even mini arboretums. Every possible measure was taken to ensure that the shelter dwellers would remain healthy, productive, and sane. These shelters were not just designed to harbor the lives of individuals; they were time capsules built to harbor a tiny fragment of man's civilization. The goal of the Freehold project was to failsafe the American ideal. Even if the United States fell to the nuclear fire, a new American would be born from its ashes.

fifty years, both countries continued to build and ready their nuclear arsenals in preparation for a catastrophic war.

The Cold War was a psychological standoff between the nuclear armed superpowers. The term “cold” referred to the fact that the Americans and Soviets were on a perpetual war footing despite the fact that no shots had been fired. The conflict between east and west would never involve direct confrontation between the American and Russian militaries. There were a number of particularly tense standoffs, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962). However, the “hot” episodes of the Cold War were fought by means of proxy conflicts. The first such proxy war was the Korean Conflict of 1950-1953, a war that matched the US and its United Nations allies against the forces of North Korea, which were heavily supported by the Russians and Chinese. These same foes fought another proxy war against the US by supporting the communist regime in North Vietnam. The United States used similar tactics by arming and funding rebel warlords and mujahedeen in Afghanistan (1978-1989).

Across the globe the American and Soviet intelligence agencies played a constant game of one-upsmanship. Both sides provided support and funding for revolutionaries operating in the territories of their allies. Vast spy networks were developed so that the two superpowers could keep tabs on each other. Manipulating third world governments and interfering with internal politics was the standard operating procedure as the major powers sought to find proxies to turn against their foes and gain leverage with independent governments.

The United States would quickly have to get used to the idea that it did not have a monopoly on atomic weapons. After the Soviet Union entered the nuclear arms race, they were quickly followed by Britain, France, and the People’s Republic of China. Eventually India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea would develop nuclear arsenals of their own. The theocratic nation of Iran would be the last world power to enter into the atomic weapons race.

The New Century

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, many people hoped that the threat of atomic holocaust would fade from the world and an era of peace would begin. However, people were still alert to the danger that regional conflicts could quickly grow out of hand, especially if one or more sides was equipped with nuclear devices and the means to deliver them. Perpetual enemies India and Pakistan eventually acquired both of these prerequisites for disaster. China and North Korea were other unpredictable elements in a supposedly peaceful world.

Another frightening, but unlikely, possibility was the chance that a rogue military faction or non-state group would acquire an atomic bomb and use it in a terrorist strike. This fear drove a movement toward securing nuclear materials from former Soviet states and deterring the development of nuclear weapons by third world countries. Still, all in all, people assumed that the world was headed for a new era of peace and prosperity. Few could predict the turmoil that was to come.

The period of time between the collapse of the Soviet empire and the dawn of the 21st century was a politically uncertain time that saw the complete transformation of the old networks of power. The globe went from domination by two opposing superpowers to a state of hegemony with Washington, DC as its power center. Eventually the world’s only superpower would find its power threatened by the emergence of regional powers that tilted the international landscape toward a system of fractured, constantly competing factions. These would be empires, combined with the reemergence of Russia, challenged the legitimacy of the over confident American leadership.

The War on Terror

On the day of September 11, 2001 a group of religious fanatics hijacked four airliners in an attempt to crash them into targets in U.S. cities. Three of these aircraft struck their targets, destroying the World Trade Center and severely damaging the Pentagon. Nearly 3,000 people were killed, from more than ninety nations. The military response against the terrorists and their allies was the launching pad for a broader War on Terror that included attacks on a wide range of nations. Over the next decade, the US and its western allies became embroiled in a series of conflicts throughout the Middle East and Central Asia.

On Oct. 7, 2001 the United States and a long list of allies entered into a prolonged invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, the headquarters for the terrorist network responsible for the 9/11 attacks. On March 20, 2003 the US launched a second invasion aimed at violently exporting democracy to the autocratic nation of Iraq. This occupation proved to be even more difficult and bloody and the conflict helped stroke anti-American passions around the world. Military operations of a smaller scale were conducted all over the globe in an effort to disable the vast multitude of Islamic terrorist networks that were springing up faster than the intelligence community could track them.

The American war was waged on a number of fronts, against a host of nations, including some that had secretly developed plans to strike back against the United States in the advent of a full out invasion. The fighting spread quickly and before long the world was on the edge of another world war. Long standing national disputes boiled over into a series of violent conflicts that seemed to ignite from nowhere. By the year 2012 much of the world lived in fear of American military power and a number of close U.S. allies were becoming increasingly hostile. A newly belligerent Russia flexed its muscle at neighbors like Europe and China. The threat of invasion by the world's military powers hung over the heads of the weaker nations.

In the year 2012, the outgoing president of the United States issued a unilateral ban on all nuclear weapons. All non-NATO countries were ordered to dismantle their stockpiles, leaving the US and its allies in complete control of the world's most dangerous weapons. This edict was ignored by world leaders, who believed that the depleted US military had neither the resources nor the resolve to enforce such an order.

On December 12 of that same year, the People's Republic of China and their ally, North Korea, launched a series of tactical nuclear strikes that were designed to disable American communication and military satellites in space. Both countries then proceeded to launch an unprovoked invasion of South Korea and Japan respectively. This provocative act nearly triggered an American nuclear strike against military facilities in both countries. Instead Russia saw an opportunity and launched a surprise ground invasion against parts of China. The United States decided to take advantage of the Russian distraction and gathered up its forces for a conventional war with China. Iran took this perceived American inaction for weakness. Taking advantage of the fact that all eyes were on China, Iran launched a surprised nuclear attack on Israel, destroying Tel Aviv. On January 5, 2012 Israel launched a massive counter attack, littering the Islamic Republic with nuclear warheads. Iran, facing imminent destruction, launched a response salvo that also targeted England, France, Turkey, and the Eastern United States.

Faced with war against Russia and a gathering host of new foes, China launched a full out tactical barrage against Russia, Australia, Europe, and the Western United States. Both Russia and the United States responded with a fearsome barrage of ballistic missiles that sought to devastate the massive Asian country. As the nuclear exchanges continued, the US military decided to expand their use of nuclear weapons to cities throughout the Middle East. Jihadists and newly sympathetic governments were massing legions of troops from Algeria to Pakistan. After suffering two nuclear barrages of its own, the United States could not win a conventional war against the swelling ranks of Islamic Jihadists. Faulty targeting systems, lack of satellite targeting, and other effects of atomic warfare caused the last wave of nukes to fall short and detonate randomly over the European continent.

Prophecy and Signs

An ancient Mayan prophecy had predicted that the end of time would come in the year 2012. Many other doomsday prophets also adopted this date, basing their assumptions on a specific reading of the New Testament or the prophecies of Nostradamus. With conflict breaking out across the globe and the great multitudes of problems faced by the civilian population, a type of end-times hysteria broke out among the populace at large. Mass religious movement broke out across the world. Firebrand preachers shouted, "Death to the Unbeliever!" from churches and mosques across the world. Many world leaders feared that the doomsday prophet would revolt and overthrow their secular governments. In many nations these fatalistic sects found sympathizers from within their national institutions as well. One cannot help but wonder if these signs of the last days did not become a self fulfilling prophecy. World leaders had no incentive to strive for peace if they had already become convinced that war was inevitable.

The Last War

Albert Einstein was once asked what kind of weapons would be used in the third world war. He responded by saying, "I do not know how the Third World War will be fought, but I can tell you what they will use in the Fourth—rocks!" The esteemed scientist was nearly correct. Indeed, in the years after the Exodus, many of the survivors "up top" experienced a harsh and swift return to a more primitive time. Those people who had their modern technology taken away from them (or abandoned it) became hunters and farms, living deep within the remaining wilderness. These living anachronisms became the ancestors of the people known as Tribals.

The Great War and the Exodus that followed was a trying time for the human race. It was a war with no winners and few survivors. None of the governments involved in the fighting survived the first nuclear exchanges. Once the bombs began falling the common people were too involved with personal survival to care what Washington or Moscow wanted. Sequestered in fallout shelters, the politicians and generals were in no position to issue orders to anyone.

The world's conventional armies, cut off and confused, continued fighting each other under the last set of orders they were given. It was not immediately clear to these soldiers that they no longer had homes to defend. The first few months of 2013 saw great armies swarming across the globe like maggots on a rotted corpse. Desperate for supplies and dealing with impossibly low morale, many of these armed forces dissolved or split into rival factions. Most took to "scrounging" for supplies in civilian areas, forming the first raider gangs. Facing radiation poisoning, starvation, and hopelessness, some military units turned on each other as their officers squabbled endlessly over the right course of action. Still others continued the fight to the end, annihilating each other in wave after wave of pointless and brutal combat.

The Exodus

There were a lucky few who had a spot waiting for them down in the shelters. The Exodus, as it came to be known, was a massive migration from the surface to the shelters below. The cavernous government bunkers provided shelter and sustenance to more than thirteen thousand people. The survivors were moved below ground in order of priority. First to evacuate were the serving politicians, career bureaucrats, and their family members. Next came the nation's top military officers and their immediate kin. Then the caretakers of the Exodus evacuated every Noble Prize winner living in the United States. After these priority personnel were safely underground the caretakers sent for the wealthy investors and political insiders who had managed to get a spot in the shelters as payment for a donation or a favor from Washington. The rest of the slots were filled by people who possessed talents that were deemed to be useful, especially as the shelters would someday open to reclaim the world. A random cross section of enlisted military personnel, police officers, farmers and college students.

There was no pattern to it all. The evacuation was an emergency procedure conduct with the utmost urgency. Evacuees were sent to the shelter that was closest to their current location. Families were split apart; strangers were thrown randomly together into enclosed locations. Once the shelter doors were sealed, you were in for good. The evacuees were left to spend the rest of their lives underground. A sizeable percentage of the people in the shelter were aged forty or older. They were past the normal age for bearing children and only a few would live long enough to see the surface again. Twenty years in a shelter, no matter how big or lavish, is like a prison sentence.

The first few years saw an optimistically high number of pregnancies; so many that many shelters had to start putting birth control drugs in the water supply. But as life in the shelters ground into its yearly grind, fewer people became interested in starting families. Most of the births occurred among the people who had been in their teens and twenties when the Exodus had whisked them away from the world above. As these shelter dwellers reached their thirties and forties, it was clear that they did not wish to have any more children. Most were eager to return to the world above and when the twenty year mark approached many people, including whole families, simply packed up their gear and headed up. The "surface fever" spread like wildfire and the shelters had plenty of people who were volunteering for recognizance missions. The most affected were the sixteen to twenty year old kids who were born in the vaults and had never seen the wider world. A few shelters emptied out entirely in massive migrations to fertile lands nearby. Others became locked in paranoia and fear of the surface after making contact with slavers, raiders, or curious Tribals. A few

shelters have yet to even open their doors, stalling for time as their leaders scheme for a plan to reclaim America.

Hell on Earth

While the sons and daughters of privilege were safely ensconced in their subterranean cocoons, the world above became a living hell to horrible to imagine. More than a billion people died from the bomb blasts or the hideous burns caused by atomic explosions. Billions more would perish in the following years from the twin plagues of cancer and radiation sickness. The breakdown of society led to an environment of kill or be killed and violence took even more lives. The next generation born after the Great War was small in number for sterility had become a major problem for those who were trying to have children. Many people refused to breed in the first place, considering it cruel to bring a child into this world of misery and pain.

Starvation and disease ran rampant through the Third World as the global economic collapse paralyzed their local governments and international aid became a distant memory. After global communications broke down, the western world had no way to keep track of events occurring elsewhere in the world. Sub-Saharan African was spared the horrors of the Great War but one can only speculate about how these countries have fared in isolation. South America remains likewise untouched by the atomic horror but again, with the exception of Mexico, there is little known about how the people of these regions have fared for the past years.

Europe and the Middle East are entirely gone, uninhabited death zones populated by nothing except a scattered handful of *Ghūls*. The cradle of western civilization has been turned into a barren dust bowl that stretches for a more than a thousand miles. From Tehran to London there is nothing but desolation and death. The great cities of the ancient world don't even have ruins to be remembered by.

Rural China was spared the onslaught of incoming nukes and the regions of Nepal and Mongolia have likely been unscathed. The heavily populated urban corner of China has been reduced to ruin. The American counterstrike rained fire upon the Chinese heartland and blasted through the biggest cities in a clumsy attempt to forever cripple the Chinese giant. Nothing is known about the fate of those that Chinese survived the war or whether or not they had a failsafe project of their own. The Korean Peninsula is part of the lifeless zone and much of Asia has been most likely been depopulated by the radioactive fallout.

Australia's three largest cities were hit by Chinese warheads. An optimistic person might conclude that the country's isolation pared with the relatively low damage would mean the Australia has fared better than most people in terms of retaining a civilized society and coherent government. In any case, there is no way to know for sure. In the course of day to day survival, few people care about these things anyway, because, war never changes.

