

The Sandwich War (And Its Aftermath)

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CHAPTER ONE: The “Argument” That Started an Apocalyptic War

The year was 2047, and the world didn’t end over oil, religion, or ancient borders. It ended because of a sandwich.

The Republic of Orizon and the Federation of Kalm had been allies for centuries. However, tensions spiked during a state banquet when the Orizon President insisted that a "Zesty Wrap" was technically a sandwich. The Kalm Premier, a culinary purist, laughed and called the claim "the height of intellectual bankruptcy."

What started as a joke in the dining hall turned into a digital firestorm. Both leaders, fueled by fragile egos and the need to look "strong" on social media, began moving troops to the border. "Relinquish your ridiculous definition," the Kalm Premier tweeted, "or we will reconsider our trade agreements."

The Orizon President, sitting in a bunker with his thumb hovering over a high-tech console, sent a final, private encrypted message to the Premier’s direct line. It contained no diplomatic nuance, just eight words: "Don't argue with me, or you will get nuked!"

The Premier, thinking it was a bluff from a "stupid, silly" man, replied with a laughing emoji. Minutes later, the early-warning sensors in Kalm began to scream. Orizon’s automated defense system—programmed to interpret "disrespectful communications" as a sign of imminent hostility—had interpreted the emoji as a digital strike. It launched.

By the time both leaders realized the absurdity of the escalation, the automated "Dead Hand" systems of every other nuclear-armed nation had triggered. As the sky turned white, the President’s last thought wasn’t about his family or his legacy; it was a nagging realization that a wrap really is more of a taco.

CHAPTER TWO: The Remnant

The old man stirred the embers with a charred stick, the orange light dancing in the cataracts of his eyes. Around him, the children huddled in furs, their world a quiet expanse of dunes and rusted skeletons of metal trees.

"In the Time of the High Heavens," he rasped, his voice like grinding stones, "there was no hunger. Men ate the sun and drank the clouds. But they were a People of Pride, and their Pride lived in a relic called the Sand-wich."

The children whispered the word. It sounded like a prayer, or a curse.

"The Sand-wich was the Source," the storyteller continued, gesturing to the vast, barren wastes. "It was a talisman of such power that to speak its name incorrectly was to summon the Great

Fire. Two Kings, masters of the East and West, sat upon thrones of glass. One King held the Sand-wich and said, 'This is a circle.' The other King, his heart blackened by the Shadow, cried, 'It is a fold!'"

He leaned in, his shadow looming large against the cave wall.

"The King of the West sent a message through the air—for in those days, thoughts could fly. He told the King of the East: 'Don't argue with me, or you will get nuked!'"

"What is 'nuked', Grandfather?" a small girl whispered.

"It is the word for the Sun coming down to walk upon the Earth," he said solemnly. "The King of the East did not bow. He sent back a sign of mockery—a yellow face that laughed. And so, the Sand-wich was offended. It called to the metal birds in the belly of the earth, and they flew up to bite the sky."

He picked up a handful of grit, letting it pour through his withered fingers.

"The cities turned to this. The water turned to salt. All because the Kings forgot that a thing's shape matters less than the hands that hold it. Now, we walk the dust of their pride, searching for the crumbs they left behind."

CHAPTER THREE: The “Holies”

After the story finished, the children didn't go to sleep. Instead, they reached into a frayed leather pouch and pulled out their "Holies"—twisted treasures scavenged from the Metal Ribs (the buried ruins of an old shopping mall).

The eldest boy, Kael, held up a jagged piece of Ceramic-White. It was flat, curved at the edges, and bore a faint, faded blue rim.

"The Great Disc," Kael whispered. "The storyteller says the Kings placed the Sand-wich upon these circles to keep its power from burning the table." He handled the broken dinner plate shard as if it were made of thin ice.

The little girl, Elara, produced a more mysterious relic: a rusted, rectangular Metal Box with two narrow slits on top.

"The Altar of Toasting," she declared. "Grandfather says the Sand-wich was once placed inside

this iron mouth. If the Kings were righteous, it would pop up golden. But on the day of the Great Fire, the Altar stayed dark, and the world burned instead."

She didn't know it was a four-slice toaster, long dead and choked with silt. Finally, they looked at the most sacred object of all, found deep within a glass-walled tomb. It was a Yellow Plastic Triangle with a hinged lid. On its side, barely visible through the grime, were the ghostly remains of a sticker: "Tuna & Sweetcorn - Use By 14/05/47."

"The Reliquary," the children breathed in unison. They believed that if they ever found the "Tuna" and the "Sweetcorn" mentioned in the ancient runes, the world might turn green again. They treated the empty sandwich wedge container as a vessel of lost divinity.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Relics

The storyteller watched as the children meticulously arranged their "relics" in the dirt. He felt a sudden, sharp ache in his chest—not from age, but from a memory that flickered like a dying lightbulb.

"Kael," the old man murmured, reaching out a trembling hand toward the yellow plastic wedge. "The Reliquary... let me see it."

The boy handed it over with wide, reverent eyes. As the storyteller's fingers brushed the grimy plastic, the scent of the world today—salt, dust, and dried sage—vanished. For a split second, he smelled chemical mayo and soggy bread. He saw a brightly lit room with a humming refrigerator and a window that looked out onto a street filled with cars, not dunes.

"This was not a vessel of the gods," the old man whispered, his voice cracking. "It was... lunch. Three coins and fifty breaths of work."

The children fell silent, sensing the shift from myth to reality.

"I remember the day I bought one," he continued, a tear carving a path through the dust on his cheek. "I was arguing with a man about a game. We were so angry. I looked at the date on the box—that same 'four-zero-five-four-seven'—and thought I had all the time in the world to be right."

He looked at the rusted Altar of Toasting and the shard of the Great Disc.

"We had everything," he said, his voice dropping to a hollow ghost of itself. "And we traded it all

for the chance to say someone else was wrong. We built machines that could see across the world just so we could scream at people we had never met."

He handed the Reliquary back to Kael. The boy looked at it, then at the vast, empty horizon. The "holy" object suddenly looked very small—a piece of yellow trash in an infinite desert.

"Grandfather," Elara asked softly, "if the Kings knew what would happen, would they still have argued?"

The old man looked at the embers. "The Kings didn't think they were starting the end. They thought they were winning an argument. That is the most dangerous thing in any world—the need to win."

CHAPTER FIVE: The Shocking Discovery

The explorer, a woman named Elara-Suna, led her team deep into the Great Hollows—a region where the desert sand was known to "swallow" travelers. After weeks of careful excavation, they breached a titanium-reinforced airlock that had been sealed for five millennia.

Inside, they didn't find dust or bones. They found light.

The Discovery: The Perpetual Archive

Beneath the crust of the Earth lay a self-sustaining city powered by geothermal micro-reactors. The society was small—descendants of the original "bunker elites"—and they had preserved one specific, shocking piece of technology: The Live-Stream Archive.

This was a massive, holographic server farm that held the "Digital Echoes" of the world before the Great Fire. Unlike the surface-dwellers who had only oral myths, these subterranean humans could see the past in perfect, high-definition clarity.

The Shocking Artifact: The "Original Argument"

Elara-Suna stood before a flickering holographic display. It wasn't a religious vision or a god; it was a recording of a social media thread from the year 2047.

The Artifact: A preserved Personal Data Slate (a tablet) that was still functional.

The Content: The screen was frozen on the very conversation that sparked the war. It showed the Orizon President's final message: *"Don't argue with me, or you will get nuked!"*

The Perspective: For Elara-Suna, who grew up hearing the "Myth of the Sandwich," seeing the

literal, petty words typed out by a man in a business suit was devastating. It stripped the "Great Fire" of its divine tragedy and revealed it as a pathetic, avoidable tantrum.

What it Portends for the Surface Remnant:

The discovery of this subterranean society and their "perfect memory" technology carries a dark omen for the surface-dwelling tribes:

The End of Myth:

The surface tribes' culture is built on the "Sacred Sand-wich" and the "Altar of Toasting." The truth—that their gods were just angry people fighting over lunch—threatens to collapse their entire social and religious structure.

A Superior Class:

The subterranean humans view the surface-dwellers not as brothers, but as "mutated primitives". They possess the technology to rebuild the world, but they have no intention of sharing it.

The Return of History:

The underground Archive reveals that the nations of the past had hundreds of "arguments" just like the one that ended the world. The portended future is one of repetition; as the surface tribes begin to organize and gain power, they are already starting to argue over the "true" interpretation of the new relics, proving that humanity may have learned nothing in 5,000 years.

CHAPTER SIX: A New War

The Second Sandwich War did not begin with a bang, but with a correction.

The Spark: The "Heretical" Data

When Elara-Suna returned to the surface, she brought more than just stories; she brought a Digital Projector from the Bunker. She gathered the tribes at the sacred Altar of Toasting (the rusted four-slice toaster) to show them the truth.

The hologram flickered to life, showing the 2047 President's face. The tribes gasped—they expected a god of thunder. Instead, they saw a tired man in a suit eating a "Zesty Wrap" from a plastic container.

The Conflict:

The High Priests of the Crust (the surface elders) were horrified. Their entire religion was based on the "Sand-wich" being a divine, singular object of power.

The Provocation:

A Bunker Elite diplomat, standing safely behind an energy shield, laughed at the surface-dwellers' shock. "It's just bread and meat, you primitives," he sneered. "We have thousands of these 'relics' in our recycling bins. You've been worshipping our trash."

The Outbreak of Violence:

The surface tribes, feeling their entire history had been mocked, didn't bow to the "Knowledge-Bringers." They saw the Bunker Elite as Demons of the Void who had stolen the "True Sandwich" and left only the plastic shells for the worthy.

The Siege of the Airflow:

The surface-dwellers, using their knowledge of the "Wind-Blown Sands," began clogging the Bunker's external air intake valves with wet clay and debris—a tactic they called "The Great Smothering."

The Bunker Retaliation:

The Bunker Elite, masters of Automated Defense, deployed "Kitchen Drones"—high-speed cleaning bots modified with laser cutters. They didn't see it as a war; they saw it as "clearing an infestation."

The "Nuke" Returns:

History, as it often does, began to rhyme. Trapped in a stalemate, the Bunker's Chief Archivist sent a message to Elara-Suna's tablet. It wasn't a peace treaty. It was a digital echo of the same pride that ended the world 5,000 years prior:

"Don't argue with us, or we will vent the geothermal core!" (The modern version of getting "nuked").

The surface-dwellers, who now viewed the geothermal vents as the "Breath of the Sandwich God," took this as a challenge to their faith. They didn't retreat; they began to dance, believing the "Great Toasty Pop" was finally coming to take them to the Green World.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Armageddon!

The "Final Clash" began when the High Priests of the Crust threw the rusted Altar of Toasting into the Bunker's primary ventilation shaft. The mechanical scream that followed was the sound of 5,000 years of precision engineering grinding to a halt.

Inside the Bunker, the Chief Archivist, blinded by the same hubris as his ancestors, activated the Great Venting. He intended to boil the surface with steam. Instead, the pressure backflow hit the geothermal micro-reactors. The ground didn't just shake; it groaned with a planetary tectonic

death-rattle. The venting triggered a chain reaction deep in the magmatic chambers, awakening a Supervolcano that had been dormant since the dawn of time.

The Earth didn't just burn; it cracked.

From the window of the Orion-7—a relic spacecraft the Bunker Elite had kept in a vacuum-sealed hangar for a "rainy day"—Elara-Suna and Korbin watched the impossible. The shockwaves ripped through the lithosphere. The planet shattered like an eggshell, glowing white and orange as the core's fire spilled into the cold void. Every dune, every Bunker, and every living creature was erased in a silent, cosmic blink.

The Earth was formless and void.

But the Orion-7 wasn't a standard ship. It was equipped with an experimental Chronos-Drive, a theoretical engine built to outrun the light of the first war. As the Earth disintegrated behind them, the ship pierced the fabric of space-time.

The Arrival: 2029

The ship splashed down in the Atlantic Ocean with a thundering roar. When the hatch hissed open, the air didn't taste of ash or salt. It tasted of ozone and exhaust.

Elara-Suna stepped onto the beach, her hand resting on her pregnant belly. She looked up at a skyline that shouldn't exist—glittering towers of glass and metal. Above her, a giant digital billboard flickered to life. It showed a vibrant, colorful advertisement for a "Zesty Wrap: The Sandwich that Defies Categories!"

Beside her, Korbin found a discarded, glossy paper lying in the sand. It was a newspaper. The headline read: **"TENSIONS RISE AS NATIONS DEBATE TRADE BORDERS."**

They were 18 years away from the first strike. They were the only two people in the world who knew that the end of everything started with a simple disagreement.

CHAPTER EIGHT: The Man Who Prevented Doomsday

The child was named Aletheo, meaning "Truth." He grew up in a world of terrifying luxury, haunted by his mother's nightmares of a shattered Earth. By the time he was eighteen, the year was 2047. The geopolitical landscape was identical to Elara-Suna's history: the Republic of Orizon and the Federation of Kalm were locked in a venomous debate over the "Zesty Wrap."

Aletheo knew the clock was ticking. He didn't use speeches; he used *sabotage*.

The Great Prevention

Aletheo's followers, known as the "Order of the Fold," didn't target people—they targeted the mechanism of the argument.

They hacked the "Dead Hand" automated systems.

They destroyed the communication satellites used for the leaders' social media rants. On the night the "Nuke" message was scheduled to be sent, Aletheo led a daring raid on the Orizon President's private bunker, physically severing the line to the launch console.

In the final, tense moment, Aletheo stood in the war room, facing the President. The leader's thumb was hovering over the screen, ready to type the fatal threat: *"Don't argue with me, or you will get nuked!"*

Aletheo grabbed the President's wrist. "Look at the stars," he whispered. "Don't break the egg."

The Vanishing

Outside, the global tensions peaked—and then, suddenly, they broke. The communication servers crashed. The "Zesty Wrap" debate was buried under a massive, global cyber-blackout. The war was prevented. The timeline had officially diverged.

But the laws of the universe were absolute. Because the "Great Fire" never happened, Elara-Suna and Korbin never had a reason to flee to the past. The loop was broken.

In the middle of the Orizon War Room, under the glare of a hundred security cameras, Aletheo began to glow with a soft, translucent light. He looked at his followers, smiled a sad, knowing smile, and flickered out of existence. He didn't fall, he didn't die—he simply was *never born*.

The Birth of the Sandwich Faith

The impact was more powerful than any bomb. The world had witnessed a man stop a nuclear apocalypse and then vanish into thin air.

The Legend:

Aletheo was dubbed the "Ghost of the Grain."

The "Zesty Wrap" was no longer a joke or a sandwich—it became the Holiness of the Circle, a symbol of the fragile Earth that Aletheo had saved.

CHAPTER NINE: The Irony Of Time

5,000 years later, the world was green and lush, but humanity had still built a religion. They worshipped the "Saint of the Vanishing," and their primary commandment was inscribed on every temple door:

"Yield the Argument, for the Egg is Fragile."

The "Sandwich War" was forgotten, replaced by the Eternal Peace of the Wrap.

The Architecture:

Cities were no longer built with walls or borders. They were designed in concentric circles—symbolizing the "Wrap"—to remind citizens that everything is connected.

The Ritual of De-Escalation:

In schools, children were taught the "Three Breaths." Before any disagreement could turn into an argument, both parties had to stop and recite: "The word is not the thing; the peace is the only thing."

The Sacred Silence:

Once a year, the entire planet would go dark and silent for one hour after sunset—the "Hour of the Vanishing"—to honor the man who disappeared so they could live. There was no hunger, and war was viewed as a mental illness from a "dark, prehistoric age."

CHAPTER TEN: Project "Zero-Sum"

While the public worshipped a ghost, a clandestine group of scientists known as The Chronos-Watch worked in a laboratory hidden beneath the lunar surface. They had recovered a single, glowing eyelash from the Orizon War Room floor—the only physical trace of Aletheo's non-existent DNA.

The Goal:

They didn't just want to "bring him back." They wanted to understand how he existed in a timeline he had erased. They called him the "Temporal Anomaly."

The Experiment:

Using high-dimensional printers, they began to reconstruct his cellular structure. But every time they neared completion, the body would begin to flicker and "blur," vibrating at a frequency that didn't belong to their reality.

The Revelation:

During the final attempt, the cloned Aletheo opened his eyes. He didn't speak with a voice; he spoke through a telepathic surge that nearly fried the laboratory's servers. He revealed that he wasn't just a man—he had become the Will of the Planet.

"If I return," the clone whispered through the monitors, "the argument returns. My absence is the only thing keeping your world from cracking again."

The Final Paradox

The scientists realized the terrifying truth: Humanity's peace was dependent on a lie. If they revealed that Aletheo was just a man they could "manufacture," the mystery and the religion would collapse. The "Kings" would stop fearing the divine vanishing and start arguing again.

The lead scientist looked at the flickering clone of the Savior and then at the peaceful, glowing Earth through the lunar telescope.

With a heavy heart, she deleted the DNA sequences and purged the servers. She chose to let the god remain a ghost, ensuring that no one would ever again say: *"Don't argue with me, or you will get nuked!"*

The Earth remained whole.

EPILOGUE

The scientists of The Chronos-Watch knew their laboratory would eventually be reclaimed by the lunar dust. Before they sealed the airlocks and deactivated the last of the lunar power cells, they carved a single tablet of indestructible black glass.

It was not a technical manual, but an Epilogue for the Species.

The Final Text: The Gospel of the Gap

"We have touched the ghost of the man who never was. We have seen the face of Aletheo, and we have learned the most bitter truth: Humanity does not require a Savior; it requires a Mirror. Aletheo did not disappear because of a paradox of physics. He disappeared because his work was finished. He was the answer to a question we should never have asked. He was the silence that followed the scream.

To those who come after:

The world was once broken because two men wanted to be 'Right.' They traded the air, the soil, and the lives of billions for the satisfaction of a final word. They forgot that the Earth is not a prize to be won, but an egg to be held.

We have deleted the DNA. We have buried the machines. We leave you with the Great Mystery.

Let the people worship the Vanishing, for as long as they wonder where he went, they will remain humble. As long as they fear his return, they will remain kind.

The Sandwich is not a circle or a fold. It is whatever you share with your neighbor in peace.

The argument is over. Let the silence remain."

The tablet was buried in the Sea of Tranquility, where no wind could ever blow it away. On the Earth below, five thousand years of green forests and blue oceans thrived. People lived, loved, and disagreed—but they always stopped before the fire could start.

The "Zesty Wrap" became a forgotten footnote in history, replaced by a simple, universal gesture: when two people reached an impasse, they would simply bow, turn their backs, and walk away.

The Earth was whole, and for the first time in its long, violent history, it was quiet.

And so, the story ends where it began—with the power of a few simple words.

In a world that once burned over the need to be right, the greatest wisdom became the ability to walk away. The black glass tablet remains buried in the lunar dust, a silent guardian of a peace bought with a paradox. The children of the "Green Earth" grow up never knowing the word "nuke," their only conflict being which song to sing as the sun sets over a world that stayed whole.

As the music fades and the stars keep watch: Let it be.

“May we all have peace. Have peace...FOREVER.”

~ G. Maurice Cohen, the author of this story.