

America's New Genome

In the summer of 1999 began a research project for a drug that, if made correctly, was intended to fix some of the most debilitating genetic conditions in people that have syndromes such as autism or sickle cell anemia. What it really was essentially was a complex stew of enzymes meant to break down the DNA helix at the point of mutation and rebuild a genetic code that was ideal for that point in the DNA of any normal human being. This exiting medicine was supposed to be possibly a cure for cancer and many other problems that have been rooted in human history by nature itself. What scientists came to learn was that this miracle drug was, in fact, quite useless. The genotype of an individual could be very easily corrected by the drug but for some odd reason this change would not result in a changed phenotype. At the end of their research the scientists working on the drug unanimously decided that they had indeed failed and that there was no way to cheat Mother Nature and they released a group of about 300 genetically modified animals into the wild and thus concluded their research.

On New Year's Eve of 2014 a whole population is now hanging in the balance. The festivities and joy for the New Year have been replaced by anxiety and worry for the future of the United States. Scientists scatter the world from head to toe looking for a way to solve the problem that has now become so deeply rooted in the genome of America. One scientist named Gene Phillips had been working in the field of genetics for his whole life up to this point and as the population of the U.S began to deteriorate he made it his mission to fix the problem that started this all. This is his story.

Gene Phillips had always been a very curt and straight forward man. He was very smart and stood at 6'3" with green eyes and black hair and genetics was his field of study. Leading up to this point Gene was beginning to lose his faith in the science he was once so fond of. It had seemed as though he had almost hit a block in his research and he fell into somewhat of a depression for quite a long period of time but when a team of elite scientists from all over the United States grouped together in hopes to solve this problem he would turn out to be the main engine behind the project.

Mutation rates were on the rise by exponential proportion by the end of January 2014. These jumps were at first completely unexplained and what was even more bizarre was that most people weren't showing mutations at birth, but later on in life closer to the age of puberty. Adults were even more likely to form mutations than teenagers; however, there had not been one occurrence of spontaneous mutations in children under the age of 10. Gene wondered what it could be in the environment that would cause such things to happen and decided his first bet would be to collect animals and test them. Upon blood samples from birds, land animals and domestic animals Gene was able to isolate a specific live bacterium that turned up in the blood stream of each animal that had been synthesized in a laboratory but discontinued with the start of a new decade. Upon human samples of blood this chemical seemed to be present in close to every person above 5. It was at this point in late February that Gene found the problem that was killing the population.

By this time more than two of the scientists that were previously in Gene's group had died from lymphatic cancer and the rest were rendered un- capable to work by horrible painful deformities. The rest of the world seemed to be in even worse shape. News broadcasting stations had for the most part been canceled as all of the healthy people in the world began to rot slowly from the information that malfunctioned in their cells. Mothers scrambled desperately to find healthy people that would be capable of raising children after their genetic code finally breaks down to the point of no return. People began hoarding large caches of food for their children and future generations and children no older than 14 began producing children. Desperate times called for these measures because it seemed that soon the human species would disappear as we know it.

As the average age of pregnancy dropped and a new generation of babies hurried along it seemed that there was a large increase in infantile mutations. Because at age 14 it was speculated that all of the population had some sort of contact with the DNA destroying bacterium even the youngest of the youngest humans could not put forth un-harmed DNA to make healthy children.

It was as though Gene was on a clock against nature. He had to figure out some way to neutralize the bacterium before it was too late! But the problem was that Gene himself was starting to become a mutant. One morning Gene woke up in fright to find that he had grown a 6th toe overnight. He worked diligently to find a cure for what had been a simple experiment earlier, but now was killing people by the thousands.

Meanwhile the genetic structure of the human genome was beginning to change rapidly. For those babies that were fortunate enough to have been born without a mutation they still lost large segments of DNA that were not important for coding alleles, however they contained genes that have long since not been expressed because of natural selection. What began to happen is the chromosomes of each baby produced began to look just the tiniest bit smaller.

This alarmed Gene because not only did it mean that he would have to find a cure but it meant that he would have to find it quickly or all of the genetic code that humans have adapted over millions of years of life would dissipate. There was another problem as well. Gene had stopped producing oils in his skin and he had now become riddled with painful sores that made it hard to work.

The Year pushed on and every day became harder for Gene. Most of his skin became scabs that he made sure to dress and clean every day. He could no longer be exposed to sun because of a lack of sunlight and the only way he was able to get food was from his next door neighbor who was a young girl of only 15 and had not yet been affected by the bacterium. Below his basement was a line of 12 antibiotic serums with a combination of enzymes in each that Gene hoped would prove effective against the gene eating bacterium. The only problem was that his neighbor had mysteriously disappeared; it seemed that she traveled to China in hopes of finding a cure for this horrible problem. Gene was now without food and was essentially unable to leave his house as well.

Gene sat down over his last bowl of ramen noodles and let them sit bitterly in the back of his throat as he thought about the future for mankind. He slurped his broth down and let the bowl fall and drops onto the floor as if he had spared himself the trouble of washing another dish. He sat down at the

table and took a large golden bottle of scotch to pour himself a drink. It was his nice bottle that he had been saving for a special occasion and he drank it out of his crystal glass which he also dropped to the floor. It was at this point that gene pulled a nine millimeter from his desk and without hesitation he took his life.