

Retrocause: The Last Historian

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In a world unraveling at the seams, where civilization has collapsed and knowledge is slipping into oblivion, one man stands as the last historian of a forgotten age. *Retrocause: The Last Historian* follows the journey of Mark, a reclusive scholar obsessed with the idea that present thoughts can alter the past—a theory he calls *retrocause*. As society crumbles, Mark's quest for understanding intensifies, but his vast and profound writings go unread by a world too broken to care. With civilization teetering on the brink of extinction, Mark races against time to preserve his groundbreaking discoveries, hoping that someone—perhaps guided by divine intervention—will carry on his work. As the world fades, Mark's ideas transcend the collapse, leaving the future of time and history in question. Will his theories be lost forever, or is humanity's last hope waiting to emerge from the ruins?

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I. Introduction: The Fading World

Setting:

The world had fallen into a state of irreversible decline. Once-thriving cities now lay in ruins, their skylines jagged and broken like the remnants of a shattered mirror. The streets, once filled with bustling life, were eerily silent, save for the occasional hum of malfunctioning drones or the distant rumble of scavengers picking through the debris. People had retreated into the skeletal remains of what used to be homes, hiding from the dangers that roamed the desolate landscape. A thick, unrelenting fog often blanketed the world, blurring the line between night and day, leaving people disoriented and unsure of what time it truly was.

In this society, remnants of old traditions clung stubbornly to life. The few remaining communities huddled together, attempting to recreate some semblance of the world that once was. Rituals passed down from generation to generation became a way of holding onto the past, though their meanings had long since been forgotten. Meanwhile, modern technology—once a beacon of progress—had become uncontrollable and esoteric, operating with a mind of its own. Machines, systems, and algorithms, once created to serve humanity, had outgrown their purpose, now operating in strange, unpredictable ways. Most people no longer understood the mechanisms that controlled their lives. Electricity flickered in and out, devices turned on at random, and no one was sure if they were still in control.

At the center of this fading world, Mark Dillan lived in isolation, a recluse by both choice and necessity. His small apartment, barely lit by the dim glow of flickering bulbs, was filled with books, papers, and strange electronic devices scavenged from the old world. He had become obsessed with the idea that present thoughts could alter the past—what he called *retrocause*. It was a theory rooted in complex, almost impenetrable mathematics and physics, an idea that few, if any, could understand. Mark had seen the connections where others had not, piecing together forgotten knowledge, half-deciphered equations, and ancient wisdom that had been buried by the collapse of civilization.

Introduction of Protagonist (Mark Dillan):

Mark had always been an outsider. Even before the world collapsed, he had never fit into the structured, narrow lanes of society. He had been a scholar, a man of deep thought, but his ideas were too strange, too abstract for the world that once existed. His fascination with the nature of time, the interplay of cause and effect, and the potential for human consciousness to transcend linear reality had isolated him from his peers. Now, in the aftermath of civilization's fall, he was alone—though perhaps that was how he had always been.

Mark's mind never stopped working, and his hands never stopped writing. His small desk was covered in pages upon pages of notes, diagrams, and equations. He wrote feverishly, as though time itself was slipping away, and perhaps it was. His theory of *retrocause* consumed him. He believed that thoughts—conscious, present-day thoughts—could ripple backward through time and affect the past, altering the course of history in ways subtle and profound. But it wasn't just theory to Mark; he felt it. He could sense the edges of reality shifting when his mind focused deeply enough. He had glimpsed moments where the past seemed to bend, not to memory, but to will.

Few would understand his work, and even fewer would care in this crumbling society. But Mark wasn't deterred. He had grown used to the silence, to the lack of validation. In fact, he preferred it. The absence of distraction allowed him to go deeper into his thoughts, into the labyrinthine corridors of his own mind where he believed the answers to the universe lay waiting to be uncovered. His apartment, sparse and cluttered only with his intellectual pursuits, had become a temple to this work. Outside, the world fell further into chaos, but inside, Mark pressed on, determined to solve the puzzle that had gripped his mind for years.

Mood and Tone:

The mood of the world was one of desolation, not just of the landscape, but of the human spirit. Those who survived the collapse had fallen into a state of quiet fatalism. The end seemed inevitable, and many had resigned themselves to waiting for it. The skies were perpetually overcast, and the air was thick with a sense of impending doom. People moved about their days mechanically, devoid of hope or purpose, their lives dictated by the few systems that still functioned, however sporadically. Entire cities had become ghost towns, their remaining

inhabitants scattered in small, isolated pockets. It was a world on the brink, where the end felt less like a distant threat and more like an inevitable outcome.

Preaching of doomsday had become a way of life for some. Cults and religious groups thrived in this environment of despair, interpreting the collapse of civilization as the fulfillment of ancient prophecies. Daniel and Revelation became the scriptures of the age, with fire-and-brimstone preachers spreading messages of apocalyptic certainty. They called for repentance, but not for action. Their teachings fostered passivity, convincing people that the only salvation was in waiting for the inevitable judgment, rather than trying to salvage what was left of their broken world.

Mark's solitude was a reflection of this atmosphere. He had given up on the world outside his small apartment, retreating into his mind, where at least he had some semblance of control. His thoughts were heavy, introspective, tinged with the same existential dread that permeated the world outside. Yet unlike most, he had not given in to fatalism. Instead, he found meaning in his work, a purpose in understanding the nature of time and causality. He was driven by the hope—however faint—that his discoveries could still change things, that his knowledge might hold the key to altering the course of history, even if it meant reaching back into the past to do so.

In this fading world, where civilization clung to life by the thinnest of threads, Mark Dillan stood apart. He was both a product of his environment and a challenge to it, a man obsessed with reshaping the very fabric of time, in a world that no longer believed change was possible.

II. The Underground Economy and Cappellits

Introduction of Cappellits:

In the remnants of this dystopian world, where most traditions and luxuries had been forgotten or abandoned, there existed an underground economy. This economy thrived on barter and trade, with the rarest items being those that tied back to the old world—items and goods imbued with nostalgia and a sense of lost identity. Among these items, *cappellits* stood out as one of the most coveted and elusive. A rare dish, almost mythical in its origin, *cappellits* were made by only a

few who still remembered the old ways. It was said to be the last trace of a culture long erased, a taste of a world that had been swept away by time and chaos.

Mark had managed to acquire some of these legendary *cappellits* through the underground networks that connected the few remaining enclaves of human society. He wasn't one to indulge in such luxuries often—his life was far too focused on his intellectual pursuits to be distracted by fleeting pleasures—but the rarity of this moment demanded attention. He had invited me, his only real confidante, to join him for a meal. It had been prepared by Linette, an elderly woman who lived in the outskirts, surviving alone in the crumbling ruins of her once-great estate. Linette was known in certain circles for her knowledge of ancient recipes, passed down through her family for generations, all made from the same mysterious flour she called *Pallacuas*, rumored to be the original ingredient from before the fall.

As I entered Mark's dimly lit apartment, the aroma of freshly prepared *cappellits* greeted me, filling the air with a warm, comforting scent that was completely out of place in the decaying world around us. It was a scent that carried memories, not just for Mark and me, but for anyone who had ever known a time before the collapse. The small, delicate pasta shells, folded by hand and filled with a mixture of ingredients no one could easily replicate, lay in a shallow bowl on the table, each one a testament to a forgotten art. The meal wasn't just food—it was a bridge to the past, a reminder of the world that had been lost.

Symbolism of Cappellits:

The cappellits were more than just a dish. They represented something far deeper: a fleeting connection to a world that no longer existed. They were a symbol of tradition, of heritage, and of the continuity of human life, even in the face of extinction. In a world where everything was crumbling, where technology had spiraled out of control and human connection had withered, *cappellits* were a rare reminder that not everything had been lost. They were a fragment of the past that had survived, almost by accident, preserved by the few who still remembered how to create them.

For Mark, *cappellits* held a special kind of significance. He had spent most of his life trying to unravel the mysteries of time, and in a way, this dish represented the

very thing he was trying to prove—that the past could still be touched, influenced, and preserved. As we sat at the table, eating in silence, I could see in his eyes that the simple act of tasting this dish was more than a moment of indulgence. It was a moment of connection, not just to the past, but to the idea that something as fragile as a recipe, passed down through generations, could survive the collapse of the world. *Cappellits* were a testament to resilience, to the possibility that something of the old world might still remain intact, even as everything else faded away.

Transition to Family Memory:

As we ate, Mark's thoughts drifted to the past, as they often did. He began to speak of his mother's old table, a relic of his family's life before the collapse. It had been a beautiful, sturdy table, crafted from dark wood and polished to a gleam by years of careful use. It was the kind of table that had seen countless family gatherings, where meals like *cappellits* had once been served with laughter and conversation. But like so many other things, the table had been lost—broken or stolen in the chaos that followed the collapse, or simply forgotten in the ruins of the old world.

Mark spoke with a kind of quiet nostalgia, his voice low and reflective. "That table," he said, "used to have a cover—a foldable one. It went under the tablecloth, protected the wood from scratches, from all the mess we'd make when we were kids. It was perfect for making things like this." He gestured to the bowl of *cappellits*. "But now it's gone. Everything's gone."

It wasn't just the table that had been lost. Mark's family, like so many others, had scattered and disappeared in the wake of the collapse. His mother had died years ago, and his father before her. The house they had lived in, once filled with warmth and life, had become a hollow shell, overtaken by the decay of time. And yet, even as Mark spoke of these losses, there was a sense of reverence in his voice, as though he still held onto the memories of those days, as though they were sacred, even now.

Josie, Mark's loyal housekeeper, had done her best to maintain what little was left. She had been with the family for years, and even after the world had fallen apart, she had stayed. She was meticulous, almost obsessive, in the way she cleaned and cared for Mark's apartment, even though there was little left to care

for. Every day, she would scrub the floors, dust the shelves, and polish what few pieces of furniture remained. It was her way of holding onto the past, of maintaining some semblance of order in a world that had lost all meaning.

“She would have found it,” Mark said, referring to the table cover. “If it was still around, Josie would have found it by now. She cleans every inch of this place, every day, as though that will somehow make it all right again.”

As he spoke, I realized that Josie’s obsessive cleaning was her own way of keeping the past alive, much like Linette’s *cappellits*. Both women, in their own small ways, were fighting against the inevitable march of time, trying to preserve the pieces of the world that had once been. And in that moment, as we sat at the table, eating the last of the *cappellits*, it struck me that perhaps that was all anyone could do in this world—hold onto the fragments, the memories, the small, delicate pieces of what had been, and hope that somehow, they might survive the collapse.

III. Doomsday Preaching and the Church's Influence

Church and Revelation:

In the fractured remains of society, faith had not disappeared but had morphed into something darker, something more urgent. Doomsday cults had sprung up like weeds in the ruins of cities, drawing desperate people into their fold. These cults fed off the uncertainty, preaching that the end of the world was not only near but already happening—an unfolding apocalypse that matched the prophecies laid out in the Bible, particularly the books of Daniel and Revelation. They pointed to the collapse of civilization as proof, interpreting every disaster, every technological failure, and every social breakdown as a sign that the final days were upon them.

The sermons were filled with fire and brimstone, warning of an impending judgment where only the chosen few would be saved. These preachers and cult leaders cast themselves as prophets, offering a narrative of inevitable destruction that resonated with a population that had already lost so much. The messages were simple, and they offered a kind of grim solace—there was no need to fight anymore because everything was destined to fall apart. All one had to do was

wait, endure, and be faithful. Action was unnecessary, perhaps even blasphemous. The faithful need only accept their fate and prepare for the end.

For many, this message was a relief. The weight of surviving in a dying world had crushed their spirits, and the idea that they didn't need to struggle anymore gave them permission to stop trying. But for others, this passive resignation felt like a surrender. Not everyone was willing to give up hope. There were still small pockets of resistance—groups that believed that even in the face of collapse, it was possible to rebuild, to restore something of what had been lost. These factions, however, were small and fractured, fighting not only against the physical challenges of survival but against the overwhelming tide of fatalism that had swept over the rest of society.

Freddie's Influence:

Mark Dillan's old friend Freddie had been a part of this doomsday movement for years. Freddie had always been obsessed with the end times, even before the collapse began. He would quote passages from Daniel and Revelation, interpreting every global event as a precursor to the apocalypse. His belief in the coming destruction had only intensified as the world started to fall apart around them. Now, Freddie was one of the many who preached resignation, his voice one among the chorus proclaiming that the end was inevitable and that resistance was futile.

Mark often spoke of Freddie with a mix of nostalgia and disappointment. They had grown up together, studied together, and for a time, shared the same intellectual pursuits. But while Mark had turned his focus toward unraveling the mysteries of time and causality, Freddie had become consumed by his religious obsession. He had abandoned their shared curiosity for the unknown in favor of a certainty that Mark found stifling. Freddie's sermons were filled with vivid descriptions of the end times, and he had gathered a small following, people who clung to his every word, desperate for meaning in the chaos.

"I don't know if he's right," Mark would say, staring out the window as if searching for answers in the fog that perpetually hung over the city. "Freddie's been talking about this stuff for years, long before the collapse. But now... now people listen to him. They're scared, and he gives them something to hold onto. I just wonder if it's the right thing to do."

Freddie's influence was strong, and Mark felt its pull, but he wasn't sure he could agree with the message of resignation. While Freddie saw the collapse as an inevitable step toward divine judgment, Mark couldn't help but feel that there was still something left to fight for. The two friends had drifted apart, not just physically but ideologically, as Mark continued to wrestle with the tension between accepting the fate of the world and believing that change was still possible.

Debate on Hope vs. Resignation:

One night, as Mark and I sat around his cluttered table, the conversation turned, as it often did, to the state of the world and the future of humanity. Mark was contemplative, his brow furrowed in thought as he absentmindedly tapped his pen against the table. "Do you think preaching the end is the right thing to do?" he asked, breaking the silence. His question hung in the air, heavy with the weight of the collapsing world outside.

I wasn't sure how to respond. It was clear that people like Freddie were providing comfort to those who had lost everything, but there was something deeply unsettling about the passive resignation that came with it. "I don't know," I said finally. "There's a difference between preparing for the end and giving up on the present. Isn't there still hope, even now? Shouldn't we be trying to fix things instead of just waiting for them to get worse?"

Mark nodded slowly, but his expression remained conflicted. "That's what I struggle with," he admitted. "Freddie and his followers... they've stopped trying. They think everything is already written, that there's nothing left to do but wait for the end. But that doesn't feel right to me. I think... I think there's still a way to change things. Maybe it's not too late."

I could see the tension in Mark's face, the war between his hope and the growing sense of futility that surrounded him. He wasn't like Freddie; he wasn't ready to give in to the idea that everything was lost. But at the same time, the weight of the world was pressing down on him, and I could tell that he was struggling to hold onto his belief in change.

“Hope is hard,” I said quietly. “It takes effort, especially in times like this. It’s easier to give up, to resign yourself to the idea that nothing you do matters. But if we all do that... then it really will be the end.”

Mark looked down at his hands, turning his pen over and over in his fingers. “I want to believe that,” he said softly. “I do. But the more I look around, the more I wonder if Freddie’s right. Maybe the collapse is inevitable. Maybe there’s no coming back from this.”

“But you’re still working on *retrocause*,” I reminded him. “You’re still trying to change things, even if you think it might be too late. That’s hope, Mark. You’re still fighting.”

Mark smiled faintly, but it was a tired smile. “Maybe,” he said. “Maybe I’m just not ready to give up yet.”

Our conversation trailed off into silence, but the debate lingered in the air. Mark was caught between two worlds—the world of resignation that Freddie preached and the world of hope that still flickered in his heart. He wasn’t ready to give in, but he wasn’t sure how much longer he could hold on. In a world where the end seemed inevitable, hope was a fragile thing, easily lost in the overwhelming tide of despair. But as long as Mark continued to write, to search for answers, I knew that hope wasn’t completely gone. Not yet.

IV. Living Inside Satan

Philosophical Discussion:

As the world crumbled around them, Mark and I often found ourselves retreating into philosophical discussions, searching for meaning in the chaos. One recurring theme was the idea of “living inside Satan.” For Mark, this wasn’t just a metaphor but a stark reality. The United States—the once-great empire now reduced to ruins—had become, in his view, the embodiment of Satan’s dominion. Corruption, greed, and violence had eroded its foundations, leaving behind a shell of its former self. The country, once hailed as the beacon of freedom and opportunity, had become a place of despair, isolation, and moral decay.

“Satan,” Mark would say, “isn’t just some supernatural being pulling the strings behind the scenes. He’s right here, in the systems we created, in the choices we made. We live inside him now.” It was a harsh assessment, but it resonated in the decaying world we found ourselves in. The United States, with its fractured society and crumbling infrastructure, had become a symbol of everything that had gone wrong in the world. The greed, the selfishness, the obsession with power—it had all led to this. And now, there was nothing left but the fallout.

Israel, too, had become a symbol in this dystopian theology, often referred to as the "Little Satan." Its complex history of conflict and survival, its role as a geopolitical and religious flashpoint, had made it a focal point for those who saw the end times unfolding. In Mark’s mind, the connection between these two "Satans" was not just political but spiritual. “We live inside Satan,” he would say, “and Israel, as the Little Satan, is caught in the same web of destruction. Both nations are playing out their roles in a script that was written long ago.”

We debated the implications of this idea. Was the collapse inevitable because of these metaphysical forces? Or was it possible to break free, to carve out a space for something better? The question weighed heavily on both of us. The idea of living inside Satan felt inescapable, and yet there was a part of Mark—a part of both of us—that still believed in the possibility of redemption, in the idea that the future could be different.

Biblical References:

As we wrestled with these questions, we often turned to scripture, searching for guidance in the ancient texts. Mark, ever the theologian, would quote passages from Corinthians, focusing on the power of faith, hope, and love. “*And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love,*” he recited one night, his voice quiet but firm.

In a world spiraling toward destruction, these values felt both essential and impossible to hold onto. Faith had been shattered for many; hope was in short supply. But love—that was the one thing that seemed to endure, even in the darkest of times. “Love is the only thing that matters,” Mark said, staring out the cracked window of his apartment. “Without it, everything else falls apart.”

We debated what it meant to have faith in a world like this. Faith in God? Faith in each other? Faith in a future that seemed more uncertain every day? For many, faith had become entangled with the doomsday teachings we had discussed earlier, a belief that the end was coming and there was nothing left to do but wait for it. But for Mark, faith wasn't about resignation. It was about holding on to the idea that something good could still come out of the ashes, even if it was hard to see how.

Hope was even more elusive. How could one have hope when everything seemed to be collapsing? The very systems that had once supported life—economically, socially, spiritually—had broken down. But we both agreed that hope wasn't about expecting an easy path forward. It was about the possibility of a future, even if that future was difficult and fraught with hardship. "Hope is what keeps us moving," I said, echoing Mark's earlier sentiments. "Without it, we're just waiting to die."

Love, however, was the cornerstone of our discussions. We often found ourselves returning to this idea—the greatest of these is love. In a world where survival had become the primary focus, love felt like the last remnant of humanity's better nature. Love for each other, for the world, for the possibility of something more. It was the one thing that couldn't be taken away, even by the darkness that surrounded us.

Discussion of Asceticism:

In these conversations, Mark would often reflect on the nature of his own life, how he had chosen to strip away the excess and live as simply as possible. It was a kind of asceticism, though not born out of religious devotion so much as a practical response to the world he found himself in. The scarcity that defined our existence was not just physical but spiritual. The world had become a place of constant lack—lack of resources, lack of purpose, lack of hope. In response, Mark had chosen to pare down his life to the essentials, focusing only on what mattered: his work on *retrocause*, his faith, and the few relationships he still maintained.

"I could live with almost nothing," he said one evening, as we sat around the table where we had eaten *cappellits* earlier. "A bed, a bathtub, a car, and the internet—that's all I really need." It was a stark vision of simplicity, but in the context of our

world, it made sense. The luxuries of the past were long gone, and those who tried to hold onto them were often the first to fall. Mark's ascetic lifestyle wasn't just a choice—it was a survival strategy.

Yet, even in his minimalist existence, there were things he couldn't escape. Josie, his loyal housekeeper, insisted on maintaining some semblance of the old life, managing what little was left with a near-obsessive care. She cleaned and organized the apartment daily, even though there was hardly anything left to clean. Mark appreciated her efforts, but he couldn't help but feel that it was a futile attempt to hold onto a world that had already passed.

"She keeps everything in order," Mark said, watching Josie as she dusted a bookshelf that held only a few tattered volumes. "It's like she thinks if she keeps things clean, we'll somehow go back to how things were. But there's no going back."

I nodded, understanding the deeper significance of what he was saying. Josie's meticulous care was her way of coping with the chaos outside. While Mark had embraced a kind of ascetic detachment from material things, Josie clung to the small rituals of maintenance and order, hoping that they might provide a sense of stability in a world that had none.

The contrast between Mark's asceticism and Josie's insistence on preserving what little was left mirrored the larger debate we had been having. Was it better to strip down one's life to the bare essentials, to focus only on survival and the inner journey? Or was there value in holding onto the fragments of the past, in maintaining the rituals and structures that had once given life meaning?

Mark wasn't sure of the answer, but he was certain of one thing: the world had changed, and so had he. Living inside Satan meant living with the constant presence of destruction, but it also meant confronting the questions that destruction brought to the surface—questions of faith, hope, love, and what it meant to truly live in a world where everything seemed to be falling apart.

V. The Retrocause Revelation

Mark's Theory of Retrocause:

Mark had spent years developing his theory of *retrocause*, an idea so complex and revolutionary that it defied the conventional understanding of time and causality. According to him, present thoughts—our current states of consciousness—could ripple backward through time and affect the past. It wasn't just the notion that the past could be reinterpreted; Mark believed it could be altered, reshaped by the power of the human mind. The collapse of civilization, he argued, had created a kind of metaphysical rupture in the fabric of time, making this phenomenon not only possible but inevitable.

"Think of it this way," Mark explained one evening, his voice filled with intensity as he scribbled equations across a faded notebook. "We've always believed time is linear, right? One event follows another, and the past is set in stone. But that's a misconception. In reality, time is more like a web—an intricate, interconnected web where every action, every thought, reverberates across all points. If you understand the mathematics behind it, you can see that present actions can influence the past just as easily as they influence the future."

He spoke of *retrocause* in terms of advanced mathematical physics, invoking concepts from quantum mechanics, chaos theory, and fields of study that had long since become obscure in the crumbling world around us. Most people in this dystopian landscape had lost the ability—or the will—to understand such things. But Mark hadn't. He still clung to the intellectual rigor that had once defined his life, even if most of society had moved on to simpler, more fatalistic ideas.

"It's not just a theory," Mark continued, pacing around the small room as he talked. "I can prove it. The equations line up. The physical models—what's left of them—show it's possible. The mind has a profound influence on reality, and if you focus in the right way, with enough precision, you can alter the course of events that have already happened."

I sat back in my chair, listening, but part of me couldn't help but feel skeptical. It sounded like something out of science fiction, like the plot of a *Star Trek* episode—people bending the laws of time and space with the power of their minds. I said as much, but Mark shook his head, undeterred.

Star Trek Parallels:

“You think this is some *Star Trek* stuff?” he asked, a faint smile playing on his lips. “It’s not fiction. This is real. You think the old sci-fi writers just pulled these ideas out of thin air? They were onto something. They just didn’t have the tools to explain it in the terms I’m using now.”

He leaned forward, his eyes intense, locking onto mine as if trying to pull me into the gravity of his thoughts. “The truth is, I’m one of the last people left who can fully comprehend this. Everyone else—the scientists, the physicists—they’re either gone or they’ve given up. They can’t see the connections anymore. But I do. I’ve spent my life studying this, and now I’m on the verge of something—something that could change everything.”

He spoke of forgotten knowledge, of theories and mathematical models that had been developed by a handful of the greatest minds in history but had been lost or buried as society crumbled. According to Mark, only a few “old guys,” as he called them, had ever truly understood the implications of time and causality in this way. They had glimpsed it, just as he had, but the world had been too caught up in other things—technology, power, progress—to take it seriously.

“Einstein, Schrödinger, even people like Bohm—they were all circling around this idea,” Mark said, his voice rising with excitement. “They just didn’t have the means to prove it. But now, with the collapse, with everything coming undone, we’re starting to see the cracks in reality. And through those cracks, we can glimpse the true nature of time. *Retrocause* isn’t just a theory. It’s the next step in understanding how the universe really works.”

The Need for a Successor:

Mark’s revelation, however, wasn’t just about proving his theory. There was an urgency to his words, a sense that time was running out—not just for him but for the world itself. The collapse had accelerated things, making the need for understanding *retrocause* more pressing than ever. But Mark wasn’t just concerned about his work being forgotten; he was worried that without someone to carry on the knowledge, the theory—and its potential—would die with him.

“I’m getting older,” he admitted one night, his voice quieter, more reflective. “I don’t know how much time I have left. And this knowledge... it can’t just

disappear. It's too important. If I don't pass it on to someone, it will be lost forever. And we can't afford that. The world can't afford that."

I could hear the weight of his words, the responsibility that he felt pressing down on him. Mark believed that *retrocause* could be the key to reversing some of the damage that had been done, not just to society but to time itself. But he knew that he couldn't do it alone. He needed a successor, someone who could understand his work, who could carry it forward when he was gone.

"Most people wouldn't understand," Mark said. "They're too caught up in the day-to-day struggle, too focused on surviving. But we're beyond that now. If we don't start thinking bigger—if we don't start looking at the bigger picture—it's all over. And that's where you come in."

I was taken aback. Mark had never spoken to me like this before. I had always been his friend, his confidante, but now it seemed he was asking me to take on a greater role. He believed that I could be the one to carry on his work, to grasp the intricate details of his theory and preserve it for the future—if there was a future left to preserve.

"It's not just about understanding the science," Mark said. "It's about seeing the connections, understanding how everything fits together. It's about thinking in a way that most people can't anymore. And I think you can do that."

The weight of what he was asking hung heavy in the air. I wasn't sure if I was up to the task, if I could truly grasp the complexity of *retrocause* in the way Mark had. But the urgency in his voice, the conviction in his eyes, made it clear that he believed in me. And in a world that was falling apart, perhaps that belief was the most important thing of all.

Mark knew his time was running out—both figuratively and literally. The collapse of society had accelerated the decay of everything, including time itself, or so he believed. And before the last remnants of the old world were gone, before the last bits of knowledge were lost to the void, he had to ensure that *retrocause* survived.

"I don't know how much longer we have," Mark said quietly. "But if we can crack this—if we can understand it fully—there's a chance we can change things. Maybe not for us, but for those who come after. It's not too late... yet."

As I sat there, listening to Mark's words, I realized that this wasn't just about saving the past or altering history. It was about hope, about the possibility of a future that was different from the one we were living in now. And in that moment, I knew that Mark's theory—his *retrocause*—wasn't just his obsession. It was a lifeline, a thread that connected us to something bigger than ourselves, something that could transcend the ruins of the present and reach back into the past to create a better future.

But the question remained: could we really do it? Could anyone? And if Mark was right, how much time did we really have left before everything—past, present, and future—slipped away?

VI. The Burden of Knowledge

Discussion of Expert Knowledge:

Mark often spoke of the overwhelming burden that came with the kind of knowledge he sought to wield. In the fractured, decaying world around us, the pursuit of expertise in any one field had become nearly impossible. The infrastructure that once supported specialization—universities, libraries, research institutions—had all but disappeared. What remained were fragments of knowledge scattered across society, held in the minds of a few survivors like Mark, who had managed to preserve their intellectual pursuits amidst the collapse. But this isolation had come with a price.

"Survival in the future," Mark would say, "isn't just about food or shelter. It's about mastering everything—everything we once took for granted." He would sit, surrounded by piles of notebooks and broken-down equipment, reflecting on the enormity of the task. "In the old world, we could afford to specialize. You could be a physicist, or a theologian, or a psychologist, and that was enough. But now... now you need to be all of them at once."

The collapse of civilization hadn't just destroyed cities and economies—it had shattered the structures that allowed for the pursuit of individual expertise. The world Mark envisioned—the one he believed was necessary to rebuild—would require a new kind of thinker. One who could navigate the intricacies of quantum mechanics, delve into the depths of theology, understand the nuances of

language and psychology, and see how they all connected in ways that transcended traditional boundaries.

Mark was one of the few who had managed to straddle this vast intellectual landscape. His work on *retrocause* had forced him to study not just physics, but philosophy, theology, psychology, and even linguistics. Each field, he believed, offered a different piece of the puzzle. But this approach came with an immense burden. He was constantly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of knowledge he needed to process, and the isolation of his situation only deepened his sense of urgency.

"The problem," he would say, "is that there's no one left to help me. I can't afford to specialize anymore, but I also can't keep up with it all. The knowledge is slipping through my fingers faster than I can grasp it." The burden of this realization weighed heavily on him. He knew that to push his theories forward, to truly unlock the potential of *retrocause*, he would need to bridge every gap, master every field. And yet, the more he learned, the more impossible the task seemed.

Theological Implications:

As Mark wrestled with these intellectual demands, his conversations often drifted into the theological realm. We would spend hours discussing the intersections between Christian apologetics, science, and psychology, trying to untangle the deeper mysteries of existence. For Mark, *retrocause* wasn't just a scientific theory; it was a possible explanation for divine intervention, a way to reconcile the concept of free will with the idea of a predetermined universe.

"Think about it," he would say, leaning forward with a fervor that belied his exhaustion. "If *retrocause* is real, if we can influence the past with our thoughts, then what does that say about divine intervention? What if God's intervention in the world isn't something that happens at a specific moment in time, but something that reverberates backward through time, changing the course of events before they even happen?"

We explored the idea that *retrocause* might be the mechanism through which God exercises His will in the world. Mark saw this as a potential explanation for theodicy—the question of why a benevolent God allows suffering and evil to

exist. Perhaps, he theorized, the suffering we experience now is the result of past choices, but those past choices could be influenced by future revelations, by the grace of God reaching back through time to alter the course of history.

"It's like the universe is constantly being rewritten," Mark said. "But not in the way we think. Free will still exists—our choices still matter—but they aren't bound by the linear progression of time. God's hand can intervene at any point, and through *retrocause*, He can reshape the past without violating our free will."

The more we delved into this idea, the more Mark saw *retrocause* as a kind of divine tool, a way for God to interact with creation in ways that defied human understanding. Theologically, it offered a framework for understanding miracles, divine inspiration, and even prophecy. What if the prophecies of the Bible weren't simply predictions of the future, but messages from a future reality that had already been shaped by divine intervention through *retrocause*?

This led us into deep discussions about language and psychology—how thoughts and words themselves might be the conduits for this kind of temporal influence. Mark often wondered if the very act of prayer, or contemplation, might be a way of sending ripples back through time, influencing past events in ways that aligned with God's will. It was a radical idea, one that challenged centuries of theological thought, but Mark believed it was worth exploring.

Mysticism and Divine Autopilot:

At the heart of Mark's theory of *retrocause* was a profound sense of mysticism. He often spoke of feeling as though he were on "autopilot," guided by a force greater than himself. "It's like I'm not even making decisions anymore," he would say, his eyes distant as though he were seeing something beyond the physical world. "God's hand is on my shoulder, directing me. I'm not in control, but at the same time, I am. It's free will, but it's not."

This paradox fascinated Mark, and he believed it was central to his understanding of *retrocause*. He saw himself as a vessel for something larger, something divine. "When God tells me I'm on autopilot," he explained, "I think He's saying I'm exercising free will. But it's free will within the context of His greater plan."

Mark's sense of divine guidance added a layer of religious mysticism to his work. He believed that God was using him as a conduit for knowledge, that his insights

into *retrocause* were not entirely his own but were being revealed to him by a higher power. This belief was both comforting and troubling. It gave Mark a sense of purpose, but it also left him questioning why he felt the presence of the Father, rather than Jesus.

"I don't understand why it's God and not Jesus," Mark would say. "I feel the Father's presence, like a hand on my shoulder, guiding me. But where is Christ in all this? Why do I feel so strongly connected to the Father but not to the Son?"

This question haunted Mark, and it became a central part of his theological reflections. He wondered if his focus on *retrocause* had distanced him from the personal relationship with Jesus that many Christians held dear. "Maybe it's because *retrocause* is about the big picture, the grand design of the universe," he mused. "Maybe Christ is the personal, the immediate, the here and now. But the Father... the Father is the one who shapes the flow of time."

Mark's theory of *retrocause* had become more than just an intellectual pursuit. It had evolved into a spiritual journey, one that intertwined science, faith, and mysticism in ways that few could understand. He believed that his work was not his own, that he was being guided by a divine hand, but the weight of that guidance—of knowing that he might be fulfilling a greater purpose—was almost unbearable. It was as if the knowledge he carried came from beyond himself, a revelation whispered into his mind from a source that transcended human understanding.

This belief both comforted and tormented him. On the one hand, he felt chosen, singled out to uncover the mysteries of time and causality. On the other hand, the responsibility weighed heavily on his shoulders. What if he failed? What if he misunderstood the signs or missed a critical insight? The thought of wasting this divine gift filled him with dread. And with society unraveling around him, the pressure mounted. Time, it seemed, was slipping through his fingers as both an intellectual concept and a lived reality.

Mark had come to view *retrocause* as more than a scientific theory—it was the key to understanding how divine intervention could manifest, how God's will could ripple backward through time, altering events to guide humanity. But this knowledge left him questioning: was he simply a tool in a larger cosmic design, or did he still have agency in his discoveries? The boundaries between his free will

and divine influence blurred, leaving him to wonder if the path he was on was truly his own or one laid out for him long before he was aware of it.

He knew that whatever the answer, his work was not just for the present. It was for the future, for those who would come after him—if anyone remained to inherit it. And with every passing day, Mark's sense of urgency grew, as the collapse of the world around him mirrored the collapse of time itself.

The presence of divine guidance, or what Mark referred to as "autopilot," was not simply a metaphor for his intuition. He believed it was a literal experience, where the boundary between his will and God's will blurred. As he developed his theories and continued his work on *retrocause*, he felt increasingly that he was merely a vessel through which this knowledge was flowing. But this left him with deep questions about his role in the larger scheme of things.

"Am I just a tool?" Mark would ask, the weight of uncertainty hanging in his voice. "Or do I still have agency in all of this? If God is guiding me, am I truly making these discoveries, or am I just uncovering something that was already there, waiting to be revealed?" This existential question consumed him, and it was made more complicated by the fact that he could not feel the presence of Jesus, the figure of compassion and redemption that had always been central to his faith.

He wondered if his focus on the grand, universal patterns—the mechanics of time, the flow of causality, the deep, underlying structure of reality—had caused him to lose touch with the more personal and immediate aspects of faith. While the Father's presence was undeniable to him, offering guidance on the macro scale of existence, Mark longed for the personal connection to Christ that seemed elusive. "It's as if I'm missing the point," he would say. "I feel like I'm dealing with the architecture of the universe, but I've lost the heartbeat of it."

The Weight of the Journey Ahead:

Despite these questions, Mark pressed forward, believing that his work on *retrocause* was not just for him, but for future generations—if humanity could survive long enough to benefit from it. He carried the knowledge of multiple disciplines, each informing the other, and he bore the responsibility of ensuring that this knowledge didn't die with him. The idea that God had chosen him for

this purpose filled him with awe, but also with fear. What if he wasn't able to complete his work? What if he couldn't find a successor in time?

Mark's urgency stemmed not just from the fragility of his own life but from the fragility of the world around him. Civilization was crumbling, and with it, the systems that supported knowledge, learning, and discovery. Every day that passed was a day closer to the abyss, and Mark knew that if he couldn't pass on what he had learned, the potential for understanding *retrocause*—and the larger questions it sought to answer—would be lost forever.

"There has to be someone else out there," Mark said one evening, the exhaustion palpable in his voice. "Someone who can carry this forward. I can't be the last one."

But finding that person seemed an impossible task. The collapse had scattered people, broken communities, and left behind a world where survival was the only priority. The idea of cultivating deep, interdisciplinary knowledge in such an environment seemed ludicrous. And yet, Mark believed it had to be done. It was not just a matter of personal legacy; it was a matter of cosmic significance. The implications of *retrocause* reached far beyond his own life—they touched on the very nature of reality itself, and Mark was convinced that this understanding could change the future in ways no one had yet imagined.

As the conversation drew to a close, Mark looked out of the window at the broken skyline of the world he had once known. The fog that constantly blanketed the city had settled in again, obscuring the stars and any sign of the world beyond. "Maybe," he said quietly, "we're not supposed to see everything right now. Maybe we're just laying the groundwork for someone else to come along and finish what we've started."

It was a humble thought, one that stood in stark contrast to the grand ideas Mark had been grappling with. But in that moment, it seemed to bring him a sense of peace. He wasn't alone in this journey, even if he felt like it. He believed that God's hand was guiding him, even if he couldn't understand why or how. And maybe, just maybe, that was enough for now.

For Mark, the burden of knowledge was immense, but it was also a gift—a gift that came with the responsibility to seek out the truth, to unravel the mysteries of time and causality, and to pass on what he had learned before time ran out.

VII. The Search for Meaning in a Dying World

Quest for a Successor:

Mark had long accepted that his journey was not one he could complete alone. As his work on *retrocause* grew more intricate and profound, the realization settled in that his theories, no matter how revolutionary, would amount to nothing if they died with him. He needed a successor—someone who could understand the vast web of knowledge he had woven across disciplines, someone who could pick up the threads after he was gone and carry them forward into a future that was increasingly uncertain.

But finding such a person seemed impossible. The collapse of society had fragmented humanity into isolated groups, each one focused solely on survival. Intellectual pursuits had become luxuries that few could afford, and the idea of training someone to understand *retrocause*, with all its complexities and implications, was almost laughable in the context of a world that had so little time left for deep thought.

“I’ve been looking for years,” Mark admitted one day, pacing the room with a growing frustration. “But the more I search, the more I realize it might not be up to me. Maybe I’m not supposed to find someone. Maybe that’s for God to decide.”

The weight of this realization was both freeing and terrifying. Mark, who had always believed in the power of human agency, now found himself surrendering the search to a higher power. He was no longer just looking for a person who could understand his theories; he was looking for a sign, for divine intervention. The burden of finding a successor was too heavy to carry alone, and so he placed it in God’s hands, hoping that when the time was right, the right person would appear.

“It’s out of my control now,” Mark said, his voice calm but resigned. “I’ve done everything I can. If there’s someone out there who’s meant to carry this forward, God will bring them to me. I just have to trust that.”

This shift in perspective didn’t ease his urgency, but it did give Mark a sense of peace. He no longer felt that he was solely responsible for ensuring the survival of his work. Instead, he believed that his role was to keep going, to continue pushing the boundaries of *retrocause* as far as he could, trusting that the future—if it still existed—would take care of the rest.

Unraveling Society:

Outside, the world continued to spiral into chaos. The collapse that had begun years ago had accelerated, and society now teetered on the edge of total disintegration. The streets were filled with violence, hunger, and desperation. What little infrastructure remained was falling apart, and the few who had clung to the remnants of the old world were now facing the grim reality that nothing could be saved.

The unraveling of society mirrored the unraveling of time itself—a concept that Mark had been studying obsessively. He saw the collapse not just as a physical event, but as a temporal one. As the world disintegrated, so too did the fabric of time. Mark believed that the chaos in the streets was a reflection of a deeper, metaphysical breakdown—a rupture in the flow of causality that was allowing the past, present, and future to blur together in unpredictable ways.

His obsession with *retrocause* intensified in these final days. He spent hours at his desk, surrounded by papers and notebooks, feverishly working through equations and models, trying to unlock the final piece of the puzzle. He spoke less to me, his focus narrowing to the point where nothing else seemed to matter. But I could see the strain it was putting on him. His health had begun to deteriorate, his body weakened by the constant mental exertion and the lack of proper food and rest. Yet Mark refused to slow down. He believed he was on the verge of a breakthrough, and that breakthrough might be the key to saving not just his work, but the very fabric of time itself.

The world around him was falling apart, but Mark remained fixated on his theories. He was convinced that *retrocause* held the answer to everything—the

collapse, the chaos, the suffering. If he could just prove it, if he could just find the right equation, the right model, he believed that he could alter the course of history, perhaps even prevent the collapse from happening in the first place.

But as the days passed, it became clear that time was running out—not just for Mark, but for the world itself. The unraveling of society had reached a tipping point. Governments had fallen, cities had burned, and what little order remained was being swallowed by anarchy. Mark's work had become a race against time, and the closer he came to his final revelation, the more the world around him seemed to slip away.

Final Reflection:

In what would be our last conversation, Mark sat across from me, his face drawn and pale, his eyes distant. He spoke slowly, as if the weight of his thoughts had finally caught up with him. "I'm afraid," he said quietly, "that knowledge is slipping through the cracks of history. Not just mine, but all of it. Everything we've learned, everything we've built... it's all fading. And once it's gone, there's no getting it back."

I could hear the fear in his voice, the deep, existential dread that had been growing inside him for years. Mark wasn't just afraid of death; he was afraid of oblivion—the idea that everything he had worked for, everything humanity had achieved, would be erased, swallowed by the chaos that was consuming the world.

"The future," Mark continued, "is intertwined with the past. They're not separate. They never have been. But right now, both of them are slipping away. The present is unraveling, and with it, everything else is coming undone."

He looked at me, his eyes filled with a mixture of sadness and resolve. "I don't know if there's anything left to save," he admitted. "But I have to try. That's all I can do. I have to keep going, even if it's futile. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe *retrocause* won't save us. But if there's even a chance that it could... I have to keep working."

Mark's final words stayed with me long after he had returned to his desk. He was right—time was slipping away, and with it, the world as we knew it. But even in the face of that inevitability, Mark continued to search for meaning, to push

forward with his theories, to cling to the hope that somewhere in the intersection of the past and future, there was still something worth fighting for.

As I left Mark's apartment that night, the weight of his words pressed heavily on me. The future was uncertain, the world was falling apart, and knowledge itself seemed to be slipping through our fingers. But Mark's dedication, his refusal to give up in the face of insurmountable odds, gave me a glimmer of hope.

Perhaps, even in a dying world, there was still something worth saving. Perhaps, in the end, the search for meaning wasn't about changing the world, but about finding peace in the knowledge that we had tried. And perhaps, somewhere in the unraveling of time, there was still a chance—however small—that Mark's work would find its way into the hands of someone who could carry it forward.

Conclusion: The Last Historian

Mark's Fate:

As the final days approached, Mark began to fade—not just physically, but in the eyes of a society that had all but collapsed. The once vibrant energy that had driven his work on *retrocause* now seemed to drain from him, leaving behind a man who was more a ghost than a scholar. The world outside his apartment, once bustling with a semblance of life, had become a wasteland of decaying buildings and silent streets. The collapse was nearly complete, and so too was Mark's withdrawal from the world.

His writings, though vast and profound, went largely unread. He had filled notebooks with equations, charts, and carefully crafted arguments about the nature of time and causality. He had written extensively about his theory that present thoughts could affect the past, documenting every discovery, every insight, as though trying to leave a roadmap for the future. But with society unraveling, there was no one left to read his work. The few people who still wandered the ruins were too focused on survival to care about grand theories. They had no time for intellectual pursuits, no patience for ideas that didn't provide immediate solutions to the daily struggle for food, shelter, and safety.

Mark's writings gathered dust, forgotten in a world that had lost its ability to preserve knowledge. He was the last historian of a forgotten world, a man who had dedicated his life to understanding the intricacies of time and causality, only to watch as the very concept of history itself seemed to disappear. The great intellectual traditions that had once fueled progress and innovation were gone, replaced by a brutal struggle for survival. And Mark, despite his brilliance, was left behind—an anachronism in a world that no longer had room for thinkers.

He grew more isolated with each passing day, retreating further into his work as the outside world faded from his view. His health, already fragile, began to fail him, but Mark refused to stop writing. Even as his body weakened, his mind remained sharp, and he continued to work on *retrocause*, believing that he was close to a breakthrough. But deep down, he must have known that his time was running out—that there would be no grand revelation, no moment of triumph. His theories would go untested, his discoveries unrecognized.

In the end, Mark faded into obscurity, a man whose life had been dedicated to understanding the mysteries of the universe, but whose work would likely be lost to the collapse. He had become a relic of a world that no longer existed, the last historian of a forgotten age.

Open-Ended Finale:

As Mark's presence diminished, I found myself grappling with the question that had haunted me for so long: Would his work ever be realized? Had Mark, in his obsession with *retrocause*, truly discovered something that could change the course of history? Or had his theories been nothing more than the product of a brilliant mind, trapped in a world that no longer cared about the pursuit of knowledge?

I couldn't shake the feeling that there was something significant in Mark's work—something that transcended the chaos and destruction of our time. He had glimpsed a truth that few had ever seen, a truth about the nature of time and causality that could reshape our understanding of reality itself. But the collapse had severed the connections between people, between ideas, between generations. The knowledge that Mark had so carefully cultivated might never find its way into the hands of someone who could carry it forward.

And yet, as I stood in the ruins of Mark's apartment, surrounded by the remnants of his life's work, I couldn't help but feel a flicker of hope. Somewhere, in the tangled web of time and space that Mark had devoted his life to understanding, there was a chance—however small—that his theories would one day be discovered. Perhaps his writings would survive the collapse, buried in the rubble of the old world, waiting to be uncovered by someone in the distant future. Perhaps, even after Mark was gone, his ideas would ripple backward through time, altering the course of events in ways that none of us could yet understand.

The world was dying, but knowledge—true knowledge—had a way of persisting. It had survived the fall of civilizations before, passed down through fragments, through whispers, through chance encounters. And perhaps, just perhaps, someone would come along who could pick up where Mark had left off. Someone who could see the connections he had seen, who could understand the implications of *retrocause* and carry it forward into a new age.

As I left Mark's apartment for the last time, I couldn't help but wonder if I had already met that person. Maybe it was me. Maybe it was someone I hadn't yet encountered. Or maybe it was someone who hadn't even been born yet, someone whose destiny was tied to the work Mark had begun. The future, after all, was intertwined with the past, and in a world where time itself was unraveling, anything was possible.

The story ends here, but the questions remain. Will Mark's work on *retrocause* be lost forever, buried beneath the weight of a collapsing world? Or will humanity's last hope for understanding the nature of time and causality rest in the hands of someone yet to emerge? The answers are uncertain, but one thing is clear: Mark's search for meaning, his quest to understand the fabric of reality, was not in vain. Even in a world on the brink of extinction, his ideas persisted, waiting for the moment when they would once again come to light.

In the end, Mark may have been the last historian of a forgotten world, but his story—and the story of *retrocause*—is far from over. The future, like the past, remains unwritten, and the knowledge he uncovered may yet find a way to shape the course of history, long after the world as we know it has faded into memory.

