



Interrupt

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In the distant past, the leader of a Neanderthal tribe confronts the end of his kind.

Today, a computational biologist, a Navy pilot, and an autistic boy are drawn together by the ancient mystery that gave rise to *Homo sapiens*.

Planes are falling from the sky. Global communications have ceased. America stands on the brink of war with China—but war is the least of humankind’s concerns. As solar storms destroy Earth’s electronics and plunge the world into another Ice Age, our civilization finds itself overrun by a powerful new species of man...

This brilliant thriller takes readers to an all-too-plausible tomorrow that’s as scientifically rigorous as it is wildly imaginative.

Jeff Carlson is the internationally bestselling author of *Plague Year* and *The Frozen Sky*. With *Interrupt*, he brings his forward-thinking fiction to a contemporary setting with this edge-of-your-seat thriller.

Interrupt Details

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Author : Jeff Carlson

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From Reader Review Interrupt for online ebook

Penny says

Interrupt was a good read -- fast-paced, tense, and interesting. As the story starts, each character is dealing with personal conflicts and stress, and then the world changes, but not the issues they were dealing with. Each character has a role to play in the unfolding story, and each has a different take on what is happening (the Interrupts), what it means, and what to do about it. Those different agendas are layered over devastating reversals in everything modern humans have come to rely on -- technology, conveniences, travel, personal and societal relationships, and especially the weather. From this Carlson creates a story that is complex and nerve-wracking. All the "knowns" continue to change throughout the book, showing that homo sapiens may be many things, but most of all, we have the capacity to change the way we see a problem and adapt to new realities.

Ed says

Very exciting story, full of action and interesting characters. My favourite was Marcus for his calculated mind (I feel identify with him ha ha!).

Nick Turner says

Genocidal neanderthals (having taken over the bodies of Asperger's syndrome males - by folk mythology, neanderthals were similar to autistics) are the bad guys in this apocalyptic thriller.

In the prologue, set thousands of years ago, a party of neanderthal hunters led by Nim is destroyed when they meet a party of homo sapiens sapiens. In grim fantasy poetic justice, in the modern day, after strange lights discombobulate most of the population reducing them to primitive unconscious instinctive behaviour, the same neanderthal personalities led by Nim cross thousands of years to possess some autistic individuals and take revenge on homo sapiens sapiens by going on a killing spree.

I didn't find the thinking process of the neanderthals in the prologue plausible - they are hunting for food but don't think like hunters and it was too modern identifying with large cultural units when archaic people (before the rise of cities) would only have experienced small local tribes.

Multiple characters practise racial realist talk e.g. naive stories about ethnic origins, naive ethnic comparisons. I read an advance review copy from the publisher.

Mikki Petersen says

Interesting concept about our sun causing massively destructive solar flares. Sounds technical but I found it quite readable without a great deal of science-speak. Good story line that kept me plugged in to the end.

I've read several reviews that say it's not technically correct. What do I know, I'm an artist not a scientist. When I'm looking for facts, I don't turn to fiction as my reference source. I turn to fiction to be entertained and to give me something to think about. There are plenty of dilemmas in this story to keep a reader engaged, unless you are a techie. I guess if you are a techno-person you would be distracted by the inaccuracies.

Adrianne Montoya says

What a stinker! I am so embarrassed to admit that I finished this book. However, I review it here for the benefit of my friends. While the writing wasn't horrible (not great, but not awful), the required suspension of disbelief was just TOO much. Poorly developed characters. The plot was just inSANE, and a little insulting, both to my intelligence (and anyone else who's had more than one semester of anthropology) and to my sensitivities. I'm not personally close to any autists, but I was still offended. I know that autists are less emotionally connected than we neurotypicals, but how emotionally disconnected do you have to be to not be insulted by the suggestion that you are genetically a Neanderthal? This book was a disaster. I guess that's why I couldn't look away.

Rach says

This is an interesting look at how our ancestors and ancestors' cousins might have evolved throughout thousands of years, and how some primal "inclinations" might reappear under certain circumstances. The characters were really interesting in this book, and the story is pretty fast paced. It's an easy read (beach book), and entertaining at the same time. Nothing hugely notable, and some of the theories and suppositions were a bit of a stretch. Sometimes, I feel like most authors just glance over certain aspects of characters, which always leaves me unsatisfied. I got a little bit of that in this book, but not a bad vacation book.

Alice Paqman says

I love the concept of this book and it may be scientific but easy for anyone to follow. His theory is so convincing you almost believe it is what has and will happen.

The main characters are easily identified with. You can understand why each thinks and believes what they do.

I love the idea that we all retain some form dormant genes, genes that are activated by our sun. When the sun starts to repeat its cycle that all life of the planet is affected. The idea of evolving because of the sun's cycles is unique to me and a logical theory. That humans are affected in a way that activates these genes. He ties today's facts on births etc to show that our bodies know what is coming before our brains do.

Even when the sun actually starts its event, and we do not know what is happening, the results of its flares are felt but mistaken as human interference. I could see that happening including what the humans do in

retaliation.

It is like history is repeating it self but this time with a twist. Instead of 2 main groups of humans (Neanderthals and early humans), more. Also that this time we are advanced enough to see what is coming or happening, gives us a unique chance to survive this current cycle without losing everything we have built and created. It will change human life as we know it.

I could not read fast enough, I wanted to see what would happen and how they figure things out and what they do to protect those who may be able to help man kind. And mankind? What is our future?

I give this book 5 Stars! A must read! Makes you see things in a new way, and think out side the box. I now have to read his other books! I just love how he presents the story and makes you really think that it really could happen. To me, that makes a good author and a good story!

Alice M (Aj)

Nancy S says

This book is amazingly complex. I can't imagine the research the author must have done to write it! I know, of course, that it is science fiction, but in order to make it seem real, it had to be plausible, and it is.

Pulses of solar wind affect the Earth's magnetic field, causing an on-going EMP. But unlike other post-EMP novels, in this case people's brains are affected as well. This makes for some incredibly frightening scenarios.

I was fascinated. I can't honestly say I really grasped all of it, but it sure did get me thinking!

Jacqui says

I am an armchair paleoanthropologist, so any novel that even hints at early man gets my attention. What a rich time in human history, when nature ruled and man--without the ferocious mammalian tools of claws, ripping teeth, and thick skin--survived thanks only to that most ethereal of body parts: the brain. Man's ability to problem solve--create tools, plan ahead, devise an effective hunt--meant the difference between life and death. I so love watching people invent solutions to problems they have never before faced.

When Jeff Carlson's latest book Interrupt (47North 2013) showed up, I grabbed it and wasn't disappointed. It is a perfect mix of science, mystery, and non-stop action, not to mention a fresh plot on a timely topic. In a nutshell: The US is simultaneously zapped with electro-magnetic pulses from the sun and a Chinese attack. With all electrical equipment and defenses knocked out, the country struggles to protect its people from the deadly effects from the Sun as well as defend our shores from a probable Chinese attack. What no one expected was that the Sun's electromagnetic radiation would also short-circuits parts of the brain causing anyone exposed to it to revert either to the mental state of an early Homo sapien--more like Homo habilis in brain functions, lacking creativity and higher-level thinking skills--or for about one in ten, a Neanderthal with fundamental hindbrain instincts that required each individual put life and procreation of the tribe above

all else. Once again, as so often in man's evolutionary history, civilization's survival depended upon the mind's ability to solve unimaginable problems.

Sound far fetched? Yes, but not as 'science fiction' as you might think when you consider that mtDNA (the other DNA every person carries inside their cells, inherited from mothers) links us to ancestors as far back as 100,000 years ago. Neanderthals lived as late as 25,000 years BCE. It stands to reason that, given the right set of circumstances, those traits could be activated.

There are some beautiful scenes in the book, too, of the world as it might be without the noise and clutter of a 'civilized society':

"He felt hunger. He tasted blood and roots. Friends were constantly around him, and danger, and with each step he walked a balance between those two states--sometimes safe, sometimes at risk. Sometimes he increased the risk to himself in order to protect his companions, but never was there a deliberate thought. He did not consider his choices. He acted."

Perfect. This is an original book that you'll need to set an evening aside--or a cross-country plane ride. You won't want to stop reading.

Ray Palen says

One of the cover blurbs about Jeff Carlson's latest novel, INTERRUPT, finds him being compared to James Rollins and Michael Crichton. High praise indeed!

I find that INTERRUPT falls somewhere in between those two authors --- not quite a historical thriller like Rollins or as scientific ala Crichton. I found the premise more Science Fiction in nature and the best comparison to use would be FLASHFORWARD by Robert J. Sawyer. When a series of electromagnetic blasts or interrupts threaten to end all life on the planet the salvation of humanity falls in the hands of a trio of protagonists --- a biologist, a Navy pilot and an autistic boy. The allegation that these interrupts may have happened before in the period between Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon men is especially interesting and Carlson's novel is a fine summer/beach read as a result!

Reviewed by Ray Palen for Amazon Vine

Liz says

This book made me wish there was an MST3K for reading books. It was so bad, but I had a blast reading it and picking it apart. **Spoilers are herein**

Never mind the fact that the premise was so far-fetched that I fully expect to someday find the National Geographic issue with three articles on Neanderthals, solar flares and autism that this author used to base his plot. Done well, I can roll with far-fetched. This was not at all done well.

The characters were poorly written and didn't develop or change. They accepted things way too easily. Really, you want me to believe a hardened military agent falls in love with his partner over one kiss? Then

totally accepts her death and falls easily in love with the civilian that got her killed? Yeeeeahh.

The science was bad, poorly explained and mostly exposition. Then again, so were most of the character's meager backstories.

There were inconsistencies, like how Emily--the geneticist--suddenly knew this strange event was solar flares affecting the magnetic field of the earth without any data or contact with characters who knew this.

Plot events were poorly explained. Were the Chinese involved or not? If so, how? Why did Drew suddenly decide to throw in with this General we'd never previously heard of and orchestrate a mutiny that would betray everything he stood for? Why was Bugle ready to kill his partner and best friend? Over a girl? What was Emily's purpose as a geneticist, at all, ever? She never actually DID anything useful with her work. She just danced through the plot positing half-ass theories.

Other characters were left completely behind. Marcus seemed like he would be a central character, but he got left for a huge chunk of the plot and was basically an enemy when the story returned to him. Whatever happened to Drayer or Ray? We revisit the fate of DNAlied, but no mention of Ray.

I'm sure that people with autistic loved ones, as well as people of color have plenty to say about the indelicacies of this book, too. But since I'm neither, I'll leave that for someone else to pick apart.

Overall, this book was so terrible it became fun to see how much worse it could get.

Paul Hancock says

Spoiler alert: reading this book will spoil your opinion of Carlson's ability to write sci-fi.

I just can't take any more of this book. Solar micro flares causing people to black out and become zombie like. Ok, it's a stretch but I like zombies. Solar flares causing autistic people to revert to Neanderthals complete with the knowledge of the environments that Neanderthals evolved in? This is just stupid beyond the bounds of fiction.

One of the main characters, a biologist, claims to be able to develop a gene therapy that will "cure" the autistic/neanderthal people, whilst the world is being screwed by EMP like storms, a near total collapse of infrastructure, and without even testing the her hypothesis. Again, this is stupid beyond belief.

Another main character, an astronomer, seems to know as much about early man as the biologist who has studied their DNA. These two characters never met or shared ideas, and yet they both come to the same conclusion with a great deal of certainty.

I'm sure the second half of the book has more whoppers in it but I'm not going to waste my time to find out. There are other books to be read, better ideas to be explored, and more believable fictional worlds to imagine.

I get the impression that Carlson is writing a sci-fi for people who believe that people with ASD are somehow superior to "regular humans". He has started with a fiction and made another fiction, where as sci-

fi is supposed to a fiction based on SCIENCE. I'm surprised at the number of good reviews for this book especially from people who are science types (incl. anthropologists) who should know better.

Eero says

Interrup is a well written apocalyptic thriller based on a premise that requires rather a lot from the reader's willing suspension of disbelief. The idea has some similarities to Poul Anderson's Brain Wave, where a change in the cosmic environment suddenly increases the intelligence of Earth species, as well as to Stephen King's Cell, where a mysterious mobile phone signal turns people into rage zombies with a weird flocking behavior. In this book we are supposed to accept that electromagnetic phenomena caused by solar activity can neatly shut down higher brain functions, without impairing people (and animals) in other ways than by reverting them into a more primal state.

Also, the book suggests that Neanderthals have a sort of ancestral memory that can be activated by the selfsame electromagnetic phenomenon in people with certain genes, turning them into super-efficient survivors and killers. Neanderthals have been featured in speculative fiction from time to time, having a bit of a renaissance with David Brin's Existence, which also deals with the supposed link between Neanderthal genes and autism. This book's neo-Neanderthals are certainly different, serving mostly as unstoppable boogymen with almost superhuman strength and endurance. (For a less fantastic ideas about Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons, see Dance of the Tiger: A Novel of the Ice Age by Björn Kurtén.)

Science fiction authors sometimes have a tendency to streamline and simplify things if it serves the story. It is rather difficult to see how "the pulse" could so neatly shut down just the right parts of the brain. And why wouldn't the effect have been discovered before in man-made electromagnetic environments? Larry Niven has done the same thing over and over: he almost convinces us that *Homo habilis* was an alien species, evolutionary evidence notwithstanding. Or that potassium deficiency can make people stupid without killing them first. These things may strain your suspension of disbelief, but better just go with it if the story is good.

Vix says

The main characters were poorly written with rubbish back and ongoing stories and just didn't develop in themselves or add to the overall book/story other than to irritate.

The author would have you believe that devastating solar flares are just going to suddenly happen with no warning, despite all the boringly illogical science that is thrown at you in the early chapters, so much so I felt like I was cramming for my science exams. Oh, and said flares make us revert back to Neanderthals (which is so inaccurate) or if you have ASD you will become "normal". (don't even go there, it got worse)

Marcus, the astronomer, got right on my pip with his constant whining about his son and his random brain farts, and what was all the rampant sex about, it was not even good! It was hinted at with stupid lines like as she put her hand down expecting blood (seriously what sex do you have where there is blood!) and only found her own excitement - shudder.

For someone supposedly so smart he was still trying to start a car after a worldwide EMP, that he knew about

and was trying to predict! Oh and he was also an expert on gene therapy!!?!

The other main character, Emily; a gene therapy labrat, who is also an expert on solar flares (imagine that!), can't decide whether she is in love with her stunningly gorgeous boyfriend or just boinking him to piss her mother off. She bangs on (and on) about being able to develop a gene therapy that will "cure" the autistic & Neanderthal people, whilst the Earth is slowly being cooked and all of nature is being torn asunder, with a mere blood test and microscope - Amazing!

She drove me up the wall with her racist comments and "trial observations". She noted that groups of people divided in to colours (oh yes) because that is what happened at the start of our evolution!, she was able to diagnose autism with a conversation (wow what a skill) and then goes on to happily abuse and lie to those that she finds, and when she spots a group of feral men with weapons covered in blood she invites them into her hiding space as she feels sorry for them, huh. Oh and she thought wearing a computer cover on head would shield her from solar flares.

The over the top bashing at the start re all the technical jargon was really hard going, but only served to highlight the lack of medical information, you can't just jab a needle in someone in the middle of a war zone and get a blood sample.

The military element was provided by a one dimensional jet pilot who was such a hardened military man that he fell for his boss in just one kiss - what! and wanted to "get back out there", in his jet and kill all the Chinese, er EMP? even though he had keratitis from the solar flares and couldn't see a power-point presentation (whoops suspend belief again as THAT pc works!), oh yeah that's so safe!

And then there was this weird Chinese issue? Is it just USA and China on the planet then?

And the shoe issues?

I stopped at 46% as the diatribe regarding autism vs retardeness, the obvious racial comments and stupidity regarding evolution/validity of creationism had me wanting to fling my Kindle at the wall.

So, my first bad review and I do feel, well bad :(

David says

This book is audacious. So much so, that I was a little scared that it just wouldn't work at all. Most readers will have to make a huge suspension of disbelief to go along with the main concept. Once you get over that hurdle, it's a fun premise and makes for some very effective enemies.

The danger is three-fold. Allow me to unfold them in the order I enjoyed them:

First, humans must deal with solar activity so powerful that it incapacitates not only modern infrastructure, but also the workings of the unshielded human mind itself. Carlson is extremely adept at handing the End of the World, as he proved with the *Plague* trilogy. I found the survival aspects of the book to be vivid and gripping. Bleak, of course, but realistic.

Second, not all humans are effected the same way. Some of them become very efficient and deadly survival

machines. I think it would be a huge spoiler to reveal the exact nature of the transformation, so I'll not be more specific. This threat was given the most space in the book and was also the most difficult for me to believe. Despite that, it was probably the most fun aspect of the whole thing. It was described very well and certainly did not fail to be *interesting!*

Third, and most confusingly, the Chinese may or may not be at war with the US. They also may or may not be using disruptive EMP technology - which, confusingly, is very similar to what's being dealt to the whole planet by the Sun. This threat was brought up early, so I won't say it was tacked-on. But it wasn't explored a lot through the bulk of the story. When it became vitally important to the final act, I found it distracting because it wasn't what I *wanted* to read about. I wanted to deal head-on with the first and second threats instead.

I thought the characters were quite good, though I was at times confused by their motives, particularly in the climactic struggles for power. I would have liked for the characters to have been given more chances to explore their relationships between each other so that I could have gotten to know them better. Much of this was handled through exposition which flashes *back* to a part of the narrative that had been *skipped*. It wasn't satisfying the way actually *living through* those moments would have been (the boring parts could have been pushed to the background to make room for character exploration).

I really like Carlson's inventiveness and his fearless handling of big events. *Interrupt* reminded me a lot of the *Plague* trilogy because they're both apocalyptic scenarios and, of course, they have the same author's voice. But I felt that I had a lot more time to get to know the characters in even just the first *Plague* book, let alone the whole trilogy.

Interrupt is one of those stay-up-all-night quick reads. I was actually surprised when it was over. I could easily have read another 100 pages.

Tags: solar radiation, genetics, brains, primitive problems, the end of the world, guns, blunt force trauma, sunburns
