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Sommario/riassunto	Animals and plants rule the world - or do they? A cup of seawater contains 100 million cells which are preyed upon by billions of viruses; a pinch of soil swarms with cryptic microbes whose activities are a mystery; 50 million tons of fungal spores are released into the atmosphere every year and affect the weather; and, human beings are mobile ecosystems that farm, and are farmed by, vast populations of bacteria and viruses involved with almost every aspect of our wellbeing. These are the vast, unnoticed, unmentioned 'elephants in the room' of planet earth. The more we learn about microbial biod