

Friday, August 2, 2019

Call it the Day of Hell. Call it Judgment Day. Or, as it became known much later, the Crash. Call it whatever you like. The truth is, we all coped in our own way and, for many people, it was not our finest hour.

It was August 2, 2019. Not any special day, as far as anyone knew.

At the precise moment the sun rose over Greenwich in London, bright lights began to appear along the purely-subjective line that is sunrise. They were spaced evenly along the curve of the earth, and more appeared as the Earth revolved and sunlight struck the planet in its inevitable progression.

There are a lot of different stories of how many lights there were. Close observation was impossible, as they were too bright to look at directly and they were positioned more than 100,000 feet above the ground. But people claimed the lights were actually angels, and claimed they could see their wings flapping gently. I had to wonder how many wings they saw, since the descriptions published in the Middle Ages depicted most of them as having multiple pairs of wings, all the way up to one hundred pairs.

I heard one man refer to them as “sky-buoys” once. As good a



term as any. As each new line of them appeared, lines of energy appeared to connect them to the “sky buoys” which had already appeared. I’m told that the interconnecting lines made perfect hexagons in the sky.

It was a long 24 hours. There were raptures, there was looting and violence, and there were violent murders committed in the name of this or that deity or anti-deity.

Sunset went by without notice. The night was lit as brightly as day.

When the sun rose again on Greenwich, however, the dawn brought something few people had expected. As dawn crept along, the unidentified lights went out and machines stopped working. Kaput, nada. If it used electricity, it was definitely down for the count. It was only a matter of time before somebody found out that gunpowder and most explosives were no longer viable, either (although gasoline and natural gas, unfortunately, continued to burn as usual).

And then the riots *really* began. It was a government plot, it was aliens, it was God’s Wrath. And of course the looting worsened by several magnitudes (because it’s not really a disaster unless someone is making a quick profit at someone else’s expense), until finally somebody noticed that not even those appliances still in the box were immune to the cancellation of electricity.

Whatever entity was responsible, they, she, he, or it must have been feeling merciful. Patients on life-support or with terminal illnesses suddenly were able to walk, talk, eat, and whatever as if nothing had ever laid them low, even to the point where some spontaneously grew new organs. Airplanes and helicopters floated gently to the ground at the nearest place that they could be accommodated safely. Cars decelerated to a complete stop within a few hundred yards, or the nearest stop sign or stoplight, whichever was closer. Trains came to a stop a hundred yards or so before the next crossing or switch. Elevators went to the next floor, they stopped, their doors opened, and they never did a damned thing again. Boats, however, were on their own; they coasted to a stop, because their engines stopped working.

But that was only the beginning. Only a few of us were able to

comprehend how drastically life was about to change, and even that small spark of foresight was woefully inadequate.

Sample file



Saturday, August 3, 2019

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Sunrise that fine Saturday morning on the third of August, should have been about 6 a.m. I'd been up all night, abusing my computer keyboard and tablet stylus (I'd never gotten used to using my finger on a tablet, especially for finer manipulation of images). I'd managed to get done most of the work that I had been asked to do by the developers of a new computer game: background information, costume and architecture suggestions, quest lines to complement the main story line, information on the pantheon, legends, etc. All told, there was more than 70 pages of information, plus a bunch of graphics files. I had been working straight through since I'd gotten off work from my "day job" Thursday night. Fridays and Saturdays were my days off, supposedly; the truth was that I tended to work on my other work those days.

I'd pretty much ignored the news reports and hysteria. As far as I knew, there was an explanation which would be discovered, or not, whether I was flipping out or not. And I had no time for others who decided the best solution to any problem was to panic. I'd locked my doors, pulled the shades, and went back to work.

As my stereo speakers gave a quick squeal of protest, my monitor went completely blank, the harsh white glare dwindling down to the size of the head of a pin. My first reaction was, "That's a neat trick. This is an LED monitor, they don't do that."

Then my temper exploded in all its glorious fury. I had no idea how much of my work was missing (at that point every single thing I'd ever done, as far as that goes), and I wasn't looking forward to redoing any of it. I wasn't looking forward to explaining the delay to the other people on the design team, or the developers waiting for our input, either.

All this flashed through my mind in the moment before I got hit by the mother of all headaches, enough that I was on my hands and knees on the floor of the garage, where I'd set up my "office" (cooler in the summer, and I could smoke at the computer without violating my lease).

No, it wasn't as if "a billion tiny voices cried out and were silenced;" it was more like they had all decided to hit me with tasers. Every nerve in my body had suddenly caught fire, and it was spreading to my mind. Every thought hurt, like a hot poker stabbing into my brain from every direction at once.

But I'd dealt with pain my entire life, in one form or another. By the time I'd reached my teens I was bored with it. As an adult I had started getting annoyed when pain got in my way. At my age, I had progressed to the point where it just pissed me off.

I was swearing up a storm (no, I can get pretty creative when I swear), and suddenly there was a series of sharp explosions, with showers of plaster, splinters, and dust. A little voice told was screaming at me, and I decided that I'd better get control of myself fast.

I managed, through force of will, to grasp onto my own thoughts, and pushed the rest away. I started breathing slowly, counting down for every inhale and exhale, an old trick I'd learned in my twenties. The explosions stopped, although it was still hard to breathe through all the dust and ozone.

The world was strangely tinted, and not by the dust. Underlying everything was a web of energy, each pattern unique but familiar to a part of me. So I did the rational thing, and closed my eyes again.

That didn't work. I could see all that energy through my eyelids. Including the energy that made up my eyelids.

