

DIARY OF A ZOMBIE SURVIVOR

by S. Michael Choi

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For the imprisoned

Project AURORA was a retrovirus research program that had gone horribly wrong. The attempt to splice poorly-understood stem cell science under STAP with brain neurotransmitter (serotonin/dopamine) chemistry had resulted in an 80 nanometer airborne virus that caused nothing more than simply... happiness... in all those afflicted. In the deepest level V biological research facility on Plum Island, NY laboratory mice deliberately injected with AURORA developed increased feelings of well-worth, eudaemonia, hyper-sexuality, and hyperactivity congruent only with a state of permanent and irreversible mania. The mice could never suffer another blue day, another sad afternoon. But the biofilm plastics containing the laboratory were rated for 40nm—and a micro-tear had appeared. AURORA escaped the lab.

Much of the history of the spread of AURORA or “the happy flu,” as the media termed it, or at least back then, when there was a media, is of course lost to history. The flu entered a bird's lungs, the bird flew to Massachusetts, and then stealthily, subversively, it spread across the human race. It's unclear where the jump from avian-variant to human-variant began, but then, nature was always a mix of unknown viruses and mixing and matching of RNA and DNA strains. Humanity itself was slow to understand or even react to the spread. What government investigated a 95% drop off in crime? What emergency program was in place to deal with a massive jump increase in productivity? Who would install curfews or quarantines when the sick rate at corporations across the world dropped to zero? In the end, 87.7% of humanity was infected before research institutions began to realize that the outbreak was real. The zombie apocalypse had arrived: but it had arrived in the most ironic form whatever.

The date is currently 2 December 2024. More than four years have passed since the AURORA outbreak, and as any philosopher could have explained from the start, the outcome was not, ultimately, positive. Yes, for two years in overwhelming glee, fits of laughter would break out in Manhattan; the streets of Manchester were filled with love-ins and free hugs. Crime had plummeted to zero, and the dissatisfaction and ennui that characterized modern life suddenly lifted as euphoria spread across the globe. But how long can the human brain maintain such a structure? Irises began to disappear as the virus recombined in unpredicted and unknown ways. From stadiums filled with orgiastic crowds the joy itself become unbearable, untenable. Suddenly glee-filled individuals were deliberately crashing vehicles into each other as the final joy of a joy-filled death. But yet, watching all this happen, I couldn't feel myself caring much in any case. It was my fate to be born to watch things with jaded eyes from the start. I remembered all those strange crowds; the weird tonals; I cared little as the final atrocities began. But even so, even when the white-eyed Happies overran the world and

then began to detect the presence of us remaining normals, even then I felt myself overwhelmed only with a colossal of boredom. Yes, I met Miss I, sure, the plague had overwhelmed 87.7% of humanity, and yes, we had surrounded the day to the still normal glee's, but, although I should have cared, I didn't really. I had known something like this was going to happen after all, after all in the end. 12.3% of humanity was immune, immune to AURORA and immune to becoming a zombie, but then our numbers began to dwindle.

Even before the plague, literature and cinema had become increasingly interested in the “zombie genre” as a self-contained and self-sustained zone of literature and entertainment. Many of these stories could have had multiple readings—weren't these the Islamics or a thinly-veiled coded reference to those ethnics? Couldn't we see “I am Legend” as a story about a lonely white man in a colored ghetto? From the 1960s on, the fear of Communism and the legacy of people's liberation had left its mark on Western literature only in this micro-genre of being attacked by swarms of faceless individuals. But, in that central irony, what if we, those still with colored irises and lacking the Eternal Joy, the Rapture that had long been promised, were now confined to compounds and single apartments, recognizing each other only furtively in our furtive daytime excursions and seeing in the night our mother, our coverage and blanket, our peace and our refuge from the nerve-stapled Eruptions of Joy? Time had found me in Unity City, and I had assembled out of the wreckage of humanity only a dozen odd individuals who recognized me as leader. Yet I, for all my Socialist leanings and affiliations with the Rouge Armies, found it hilarious for it to be my fate to be stuck in decadent capitalism, observing as all the wheels of history wound their way, and suddenly all the books were read in mirror fashion, for suddenly, certain philosophers and historians now in retrospect became hilarious. Out of infinite, endless, unceasing boredom, I sat, watched and followed by the suspicious Joyers, and I cared not that our revolution that we had planned deep in Upwater City had failed against the ruthless machinations of the machine itself. I visited the last, decaying remnants of the amusement parks that had once been needed and was complimented by hidden and sarcastic forces. Still, this was my default and my heedless lack of care for the waves of sorrow and joy and depression and commitment to work that would entail our scavenging survival amidst a city of ghosts and nameless lost souls. I built a radio. I scavenged metal and cloth and wood. My compound mates carried out their tasks in their strange, unarmed way, and without resort to analogy or metaphor or metonymy, I sought out that remnant of humanity which had survived first the viral flu, and then the crowds of mass destruction, and then finally the weirdness of our weird coexistence amidst the Happies. Is this a sequel? Do I deconstruct other and arcane works? The time for caring even for that had passed, for winter had arrived, and it had gone deathly and absolutely cold.

Fifty says I should be grateful for all that I have received. Yet, the radio buzzed with offers to join another clan. But I tuned that all out? Everyone was free to enter or leave my compound, my place with as much or as little license as permitted. Complete security was complete imprisonment. The necessary illusion of freedom was pursuing an unfindable network amidst an ostensibly peace-loving society. The traitor was making broadcasts across the wires that couldn't be breached, and paranoid Englishmen proclaimed to me that something deeper was going on. But what after all, was I, but THE AMERICAN. What could I do but exercise my Second Amendment rites amidst the sea of Happies. Nobody had anything else close to but the 3.5% unemployment rate and Voice of Counsel declared, "actually things were better long ago."

It had been my error.

The Easterners, with their German laws and mask-like faces, never were really more than a 6/10 out of happiness. The idea sunk in, finally, after statistical research, and now finally I had solved the problem of the questions of national destiny and suppressed freedoms. But, this truth being achieved, I had gotten my compound all the way in order and then been harassed by the denpa issuing forth from long-forgotten crystal radio sets and all the weird conspiracy theories floating around the network. Each compound, everywhere, was broadcasting the paranoia and theoretics of each of its founders. And though all of us, each in our own turn, were sane: we remembered history, we knew were the normals, still realized that amidst such a sea of zombies that nobody could ever restore order again and the time would arrive yet again to arm, and be weaponized. So this was my stockpile:

4 AK-47s

5 AK-74S

2 FN FAL

6 M-27 IAR

1 M240

4 M-16

3 M249

4 M4 carbine

1 Saiga-12

5 FN SCAR

1 unknown type hunting rifle

3 Steyr TMP

1 SVD "Dragunov"

1 UMP-45

41 guns in all. The Arsenal of Democracy.

Of these weapons, organized only by list of alphabet, one will note the heavy and unusual presence of Russian weaponry. For some reason these survived in salvageable condition whereas many a precision Western made weapon decayed or rusted away without care. One will note, moreover, that although we have plenty of assault rifles, our compound is defended with utmost care by a number of light machine guns. The advantage of the LMG is the heavy rate of fire, through which wave after wave of happy zombies can be mowed down, as they go through their periodic waves of sudden attacks. The Saiga and the Dragunov are useful for point defense, long-range on the latter, heavy and broad defense on the other. All in all such tools are the necessary tools for the defense of what remains of humanity, although in another sense of course we will all die out and the happies will eventually settle down and breed and be, "humanity." Their only flaw is that since they have become nerve stapled into such perpetual happiness, all of previous culture seems utterly incomprehensible to them. They retain a limited intelligence. They have culture and go about their lives. What they simply don't understand is that a change had occurred, and that we are the sole carriers of the flame.

[some hours later]

This is "hurried text" or "scribbled notebook" because the mechanics of salvaging and weapons searching and ammo conservation and life amidst the happies is time-consuming, and so I write in disjointed fashion, leaving behind some record that one day, some day, the retrovirus will be eliminated, and humankind will regain the earth. Possibly I have to repeat myself; the story isn't clear; I'm babbling. What can I say about these end times? Well: I'm possibly not doing any reader a disfavor just to repeat the history. What had happened? There had been an Idealist. We know not absolute details about her life, only that she had been brilliant, over-looked, not found by the usual talent search programs and never recognized to be this weird Da Vinci that had popped

up and not fitted into the usual categories of “maths specialist” or “biological whiz.” The Idealist despite a 2400 SAT and straight A's at high school had been rejected by the Ivies and then found her backup liberal arts college missing her paperwork. Panicked, her parents had landed her in a Foundation Year in Essex, UK hardly qualifying her for the middle-management career that awaited her. But then the fates rolled their dice again, and she ended up in Plum Island disease research center while a bureaucratic war waged between the CDC and DOJ and other government branches that wanted first research into Ebola and then science into AIDS and then genetics research after all. Nobody noticed that she had acquired the equivalent of a PhD level understanding of Physics all by herself in her lonesome years, and no categorization allowed anyone to understand that she was able to combine computing and biological research and neuroscience in a completely unexpected way. Left alone, once again, to scrub laboratory vials and test-tubes while the “real” scientists were off on their assigned task, she created AURORA because she felt all of humanity's sorrow. She had found the golden key. She had discovered the way to make people Happy, Happy forever. But that was the tragedy.

We've lost her name. We don't know absolute details. The chaos surrounding the first wave of degeneration after Happy left us with conflicting reports and few information about how exactly the virus was created or if indeed, as some claim, the Idealist deliberately released the thing. The only thing that became clear was that depression, the blues, the black dogs, the nightlings whatever term sufferers had long termed it, were banished forever from the experiment called humanity, the condition called being a human. For months afterwards the wars all over the world ended. The chaos and terrorists and crime plummeted. AURORA spread across almost 88% of humanity and nobody reacted, nobody thought anything strange was going on, because it was infecting everyone at once. Only slowly, imperceptibly, indiscernibly, certain hidden military bases and security cities, laboratory complexes and cut-off defense cities realised what had occurred. Then what began was the waiting game.

The problem was everything was unpredictable. Sides blamed other sides. Nuclear forces were put on alert. Hazmat suited individuals tried to contain the important strategic stuff, but soon it became clear, 13% were immune. How was this to be? Africans, were their genetic diversity, actually did quite well. North Korea, which was supposed to be in all the pre-zombie literature completely capable of dealing with zombie infestation, suffered a 99% infection rate due to their genetic homogeneity. The end result was just the breakdown of national groups, as rifle-armed compounds became the last outposts of society...and we are dwindling. Our numbers are clearly decreasing, because the Happies are mindlessly reproducing. They have no sense of tomorrow, or of declining crop yields, or of the chaos ensuing as repetitive tasks lead to less and less results and nuclear reactors designed to fail-safe, have on the whole failed-safe, sparing us at least that catastrophe. But although every once in a while the Happies

surge, although there are outbreaks of overwhelming joy in which entire skyscrapers are ripped apart, still, us, the normals, remain locked behind multiple layers of closed and barricaded doors. I had been always the worst of strategists and the best of tacticians. And so with rapid-fire machine guns covering the approaches to my 838 complex, I've assembled a group of a dozen of us who remember the pre-outbreak world. Yet now today, even immediately, there's a crisis, as Ian Murphy, my first and most important ally, took a severe beating on a supply raid and is claiming he will soon leave for another group. I can't keep him from going, if he really desires, it is just that his history has been inextricably entwined with mine. I don't know what his decision will be. But the day draws to a close, and I must print out the letters:

3 December 2024

The midnight hour has passed, and although I'm still writing not long after the previous entry, I am on "night-time" so to speak, as are most survivors, for it is nothing so banal as to watch the happies go about their day, completely incognizant of our presence, until the moment when one suddenly looks up, detects one, and then paranoia sweeps over your presence. Did that zombie sniff me out? Was it purely instinctual? Or am I just imagining things amidst a sweep of broad sensory data, meaningless information, television static. You know, way before, there used to be black and white scattering noise on television screens if there was no signal. Then things went digital. And so the blue-screen of signallessness was invented. How many things like this are unrecorded. Moreover, how many political theories, philosophies, and untoward factoids are lost, will be lost, and these words will be lost, sucked by the Great Attractor at the end of the Great Crunch and either the universal divergence into complete quantum nothingness or the retraction into the meltdown singularity the final predictions of 21st century physics.

It's time for a confession. Ian Murphy, my first and closest compound mate, has threatened departure. This threat, you know, it tears at my heart. For the fact of the matter: I've been lying. I know far more about Aurora than I've let on. In the very early days, after I had learned I was immune, I led a squad deep into Massachusetts to find out the identity of Ms. I, the Idealist, and ascertain what her genetic plague was going to evolve into. I'm ready to steal here from theories of the "Umbrella Corporation" and other such brilliant works of millennium cinema, but the fact of the matter is that I've scarce begun to piece together the true history of my own history, my own compound, and my own comrades. Wasn't I, once, just some US Socialist holding meetings in my RV, expounding on theory, the weird "academic?" Yes, I feel vague recollections of such. But even if your brain is resistant to the AURORA virus, memory loss is pretty standard

with the package. I can't even account for all my memories of the past seven years, only bits and pieces, data flottage, and I thought I knew it all until I realized I knew nothing at all. But Ian. Ian, man, he was there from the beginning.

The thing is that Ian is Black. What that means by US American terms is that he was a member of a discriminated skin color and minority whose history usually came from slavery. I was moved when he confessed to me that he had briefly managed to visit the Ghana slave docks from where his long-ago ancestors had departed. This was the crime that we Americans struggled with, from the 1960s onward, but with no end in sight and the liberals always pointing out that there was further progress to be made and the conservatives insisting that property rights and equality before the law had to be maintained. Actually, weirdly, this time period is an anniversary. 10 years ago today, Ferguson, Missouri erupted in riots that lasted almost a month as a young black youth of 18 years age was shot dead by a white police officer. Like every Rashomon story, there were no fewer than a dozen points of disagreement from a dozen supposed eyewitnesses. But the state triumphed in the end, even as the National Guard had to be deployed. There was talk of curfews. Briefly, people thought it would be race riots across the country, but come on, that wasn't going to happen. The police had been militarized; tear gas was too strong; and a source within the NG even indicated that chemical weapons were being prepared if it had come to that. The state was powerful. The state had tools at its disposal. Every revolutionary organization was doomed from the start, and the ironies of a group entirely composed of police organizations sending in their investigators had already occurred: the joke had become reality. Ferguson was put down. Hong Kong was put down. The real struggle on that date (I am relying on microfiches of the old newspapers) was still the geopolitical and push-pulling of great powers. Maybe I had been cursed by my love affair with some godless prostitute. Maybe I had achieved spiritual strength by only writing about prostitutes. Maybe people criticized me because, -ugh- I had slept with Happies convinced with my academic theory on the whole thing that Normal girls were pointless. But Ian, nevertheless, was still there from the start.

Ian and I had made our friendship because of our difference. He was a weird, strange man, with an Aztec face and an obsession with chocolate and a desire to point out the inconsistencies in people's positions. But in that first raid I made, when I was young and had to know the truth and led, through risks that now seem foolhardy, an expedition into Massachusetts to recover whatever data I could on AURORA and Ms. I, was just a reflection of my data-centered, information-centered, need-to-know warped personality. What a girl she was, right? Ignored, ignored, and ignored. And then, suddenly, one day, boom, she invented the new category: Quantum Retroviral Stem-cell Pluripotential re-jacking. A girl, not more than 28, had invented the way to rewrite the very code of the human condition. And nobody had ever noticed her. Nobody had ever assigned her anything except the duties of cleaning out test tubes, rebooting the Plum Island supercomputer, and ignoring everything that she saw within the genetics laboratories.

Suddenly, like a lightning bolt across a mountainous landscape, the truth crept in: SHE WOULD END HUMAN UNHAPPINESS FOREVER. SHE WOULD SAVE THE HUMAN RACE FROM ITS SUFFERING, AND THE HAPPY VIRUS WAS HER GIFT TO MANKIND. If only there had been some intervention.

But I get back to things.

Ian and I, you know, our bond was forged in a Ford pick-up racing down Route 95, racing down from Lexington (birthplace of liberty!) to the ground zero site. I can't forget that darkness, the crazies in our illuminated headlights, the knowledge that our world had changed irrevocably and the answers lay only at Woods Hole or at Plum Island. Why did it happen? I mean, what's necessary a confession? I knew more than I let on? I had done the original research on locating these "hidden talents," these people whose skills don't fall into categories of Physics, Chemistry, or Biology as if these are discrete subjects? This was me. The folder of boundaries. Part of interdisciplinary studies, cultural studies was understanding that cultures derived their own ways to generate knowledge. What was chemistry but the off-shoot of alchemy? What was physics but a Newtonian game. How had WWI been fought except between German zeppelins and UK dogfighters? Every culture had its own view of knowledge and of technology, and the US helium embargo was the direct cause of Lakehurst. Yet, simultaneously, as somebody who was always going to exist on the boundaries of things, I surrendered myself simply to the flow and to the knowledge that my tears, collected as they were into liter jars or gallon cans, existed simply to be stolen. Maybe I sought her out because I thought she was a kindred spirit. Maybe I knew she existed because I knew of so many other liminal souls. But where umber folded into shadow and darkness grayed darker into black, finally I saw as we drove and drove and drove and calluses developed on my hands, that yes, this was how friendships were forged. He rode shotgun, literally. We were terrified at that point, in those chaos years, as the eyes of the infected grew white, that it would become, as indeed it eventually did, a game of us vs. them. They were out to get us. I was a killer in my heart.

I can't plumb Ian's soul. I don't know why he rejected women although not being homosexual. I knew he was ugly. But I think he wanted, on some level, this to have happened all along. We talked about America, because much of life in the aftermath is just so much waiting and then there's the question of preparation and then there's the idea that survival is really all that life offers after all. I wanted to bring up, one last time, Pei, whose tears flowed and flowed, but I knew she was gone; she too succumbed. But no matter what lamentations reached the heavens, on the physical face of the earth itself, the disease spread, and then the final era of humanity had begun. Religion had no more answers and no more solace. There would be no more green fairy to grant me my wishes or whisper promises in my ear. We argued, heavily, over the meaning or allegory of Sucker Punch, but he was on his own wavelength, and he wanted me to know, absolutely,

completely, I WAS BORN TO BE BLACK AND UGLY. I WAS BORN TO BE SPIT UPON. MY SELF-HATRED IS ONLY THE DAM THAT KEEPS ME FROM HATING ALL THE REST OF YOU MORE SO. Aztec face, Negro black skin, a working class education and background, but as disaster reports spun across AM news radio, the zombies were multiplying and reproducing and they were spreading like a plague across the earth. The population might very well be 12 billion now. They have no checks on their behavior. They think nothing of producing even more zombie children. And we are the Legends. We are the Ancients that will one day be their fairy tales.

You are expecting further confession of course. Shocking reveal: I invented Aurora. No, of course not. What I was was an interdisciplinary person. I knew and had sought out everyone whose academic specialty lay between the defined fields. Had things gone differently, Ms. I would have been the Newton of our age, the first quantum physics-viral folding-neuroscience founder of an entire field that would have its new name, Retro-Dopanomics or Silico-serology. We'd had universities dedicated to this new science and new area of research. But she had been ignored, according to the dominant and masculine and warlike atmosphere of the time, and in her martyr-like, jesus-complex desire to save humanity, she had destroyed it. No more answers in science. No more political theories of Marxism or Kant. We are just the few, the last, the remaining, the rememberers. Outside, with whitened eyes, the zombies go back their high-tech society, but completely unaware of where they stand in history or their fate in the maelstrom we once called background studies.

So confession: I am a theorist. I am an academic. I live in books or at least used to, and held socialist meetings in my RV. I found Geronimo's rifle atop the air-conditioning duct, but it held no bullets and he had put up no defense whatsoever, the dervish or household god finally whirling away, and the trend that had been called for, was called for, through ways nobody will ever be able to decipher. All knowledge is husbanded or guarded carefully, except aboard the crystal-radio nets which is the net of a million lies. Deliberately confused explosive formulas are actually recipes for the self-destruction of compounds, and gasoline, the fuel that once powered pre-outbreak economies, is now husbanded drop by drop for those expenditures that truly matter. Maybe the environmentalists won after all: nobody really can expand any more because the virus also prevents pure research. The happies are content in their applied, mechanistic ways, but they have lost all sense of time in terms of the past and the future. They have become zombies in the worst possible way: unaware zombies, white-eyed zombies, joy turning into bloodlust of the kill and they smell us out, and we are barricaded behind barbed wire, metal posts, woodwork, everything that we can to secure our existence, and in singles or in pairs or in groups struggling to survive in our last chapter of history, we read books and tell each other stories, and sometimes the ionosphere cooperates and contact is made with India or Africa, where huge populations of normals remain. The

final irony had been that the whites and Koreans and Japanese and Russians had been the most vulnerable to AURORA. The world has gone black.

[After sleep time, later that day.]

Later on some “literary theorists” or whatever will pronounce this the genius of this “work,” that I'm simulating the weirdness of being able to half scribble down what are disjointed and disconnected thoughts. But that is AURORA which has an effect even on those genetically immune and that is the nicoalyamines that Nicotine Nicolas, our house chemist and mad scientist cooks up, or something along the line I just have to report that I used to—just two years ago—be able to spin through great authors from pre-outbreak like lines of coke, or eating cheerios if you don't care for drug metaphors. But all I have to say is that last night was horrible, wretched, disgusting, stomach-turning. Ian held one of his famous chili dinner night outs and assembled the entire team around him, hinting at but not directly stating the conflict and just letting the chorus of voices show who is the more popular. But of course I'm not popular. I'm the leader of this compound. Everyone's still alive, aren't they? I had to make command decisions and I had to give orders. I had to assign people to do two hundred hours of stitching to make bandages if that is what we needed because that is what we anticipated we needed, and nobody remembers that do they, nobody remembers that was the right call. With his big beefy muscular arms and Aztec face, Ian just hints at controversies and issues that have existed in our four years of survival and nodding faces all around (with a few exceptions; girls always understand these subtleties), makes a laundry list of all my faults. But everyone's bandwagoning with him, because they can only see my flaws and have no understanding of why I chose to do the things I did.

I mean, back when the raids first started, I razed a lot of the nearby buildings so we'd have a clear line of sight and even before we started finding sniper rifles and being able to use them to establish a free-clear zone around our compound, others were angry because it attracted attention, a lone building standing around so much rubble, but, as things have clearly shown out, now there's now heaps of these “lone buildings” and much of the city has been lost or blasted or burned to the ground as the Happies hold their raves and forget about old things such as not setting off fireworks where you're next to a wall of polyurethane. I don't know. I wake up; it's past noon; snow has fallen on Unity City, which is supposed to be a sign of closure or cleanliness or purity, and maybe in a sense this is all Ian's little mind game, but nonetheless he established his point in three hours of candle-lit barbecuing and of so superior “allusive speaking,” whilst suddenly he's surrounded by crowds of people begging him not to go, while our unstated conversation remains. I remained silent.

[After lunch, I had crept off to eat beans out of a can by myself, enjoying the look of the snow. Purifying, symbol of death and purification.]

My feelings about Ian are complicated. The first thing that I would have to say is that I'm calling the bluff. He ain't going nowhere. But if he does, I will be sad. I will be grief-ridden. The thing about friendship is not just that it is forged in experience or even in danger, but also that sometimes it's about the intense differences. I am a Karl Marx-reading black-jacket wearing looks-like-shit academic, he is big beefy black man with thick arms and can swing a baseball bat or fire a M249 with one hand. He was the first; we had gone to Plum Island vicinities ourselves to solve the issue of the AURORA plague or "the Umbrella Corporation" as all the fanboys on the Internets were terming it, right before it became all very real, and it then it became realer than real. He talks a lot about social disadvantage, about never having been giving the chances in life even though a prep school gave him a football scholarship, and he had that chance to have entered college ball had he not decided that his family was more for him. I guess he was blue? He was a heavy marijuana smoker back in the day? But all that talk about blackness and race and discrimination isn't really so annoying if that's just his baseline topic, and he had other things to talk about. And I've noticed I've switched to the past tense as if steeling myself so my mind is reeling and I'm not so absolutely sure he won't leave after all. This is adult life. Do we stay here or do we ally with her? Do we find common ground with Sally or do we join the fight again Doug? No matter how much time has passed, in a sense we are envious of the zombies, we wished we had the "wrong" genes after all and were now walking around with whitened irises and a beautiful dream of the future and families and children and balloons and clowns and birthday parties. But that went whatever way it went.

"Why do you talk about race so much, Ian?"

But he has response already ready.

"The issue is that since you're white, you're unaware of how it operates. You and I walk into a bar: I'm six feet, I'm muscular, I'm a prime specimen of the human race, my skin color is superior in dealing with cancer and in combat situations. I can hide in the night or in jungles. But, the way society works, you still have a slightly better chance than me to take home a girl that night."

"But Ian, human society is over. Look outside. The world is overrun with zombies. It's just us and our dwindling number of normals as the zombies start to degenerate and Happy Plague starts driving them schizophrenic. What do you care about the United

States of America or the legacy of slavery or your meaningful visit to Ghana? The system has collapsed.”

“That is the reality that I have to deal with. I am forced into certain kinds of behavior in order to survive in a hostile world, and then that reaction elicits fear and paranoia out of other people.”

And so the argument goes around over and over and over again, but I've known this guy too well. I know there's an element of choice.

“Don't you shy away from girls? Didn't I see you reject Vivian's advances and when Nancy wanted to be alone with you you said no?”

And all meets me is that Aztec face.

This is adult life. That sere, featureless landscape called being both turning middle-aged whilst the remnants of society collapse around you, and you, if you're clever, sleep with Happies even if it disgusts people who find out, or if you marry one or you hear rumors about normals being born to Happies and the zombies just kill the child immediately, 'Up Syndrome.' I could delve deeper and deeper into Ian's psychology, but I think he won't leave. You know, we built this thing up when it was just bare and weathered concrete and a handful of sniper posts, handguns, and where will he go? Start another band of survivors? Break out for the allegedly virus-free Africa or India? I tend to think not. It's long ways out. We're in Unity City, the science city or constructed city and there are developments both positive and negative and the world is still awash with EM radiation, but who to know or care in any case.

I call the bluff. Although barely hours have passed, Ian won't leave. I'm going to leave the topic and the only interesting temporal matter is how many hours will pass before I finish up this Mead notebook, such a piece of Americana and I guess the disintegration time of paper, and then the idea that one day the human race will rid itself of the Aurora virus (unlikely) and some future society will discover what happened and realize the dangers of meddling with its own neurochemical structures. The science will rise, after all, and Idealist, for all her meddling, will be the founding scientist for a new science. But aside from this issue, there's also simply what I discovered about the woman herself. She was a character. Yet... then again, maybe this topic too I should delay...

4 December 2014

Two or three raids yesterday, which is normal, easily held off except the shutters went bang in the early morning and the zombies are ever so slowly degenerating. Scientist I, the Idealist, had released an engineered retrovirus into the human population to give it the happiness that so eluded it, yet likely not lived to see the results of her wild-field experiment, sluggishly developing schizophrenia amidst a population who, after all, never really should have coded to be joyous beings to begin with. Man's lot was to suffer; his time on earth was supposed to be spent in only moderate if even that content, and the rest of the time, we were to occupy ourselves with work and days.

The weird thing about life, though, after the apocalypse, is that in some ways we have actually recovered some of the sense of struggle and accomplishment that was lacking before Outbreak. Actually, studying closer the activities and patterns of modern life, there was to be sure happiness in the developed countries but at the same time, much of time was spent in cubicles or in discount supply stores as stock clerks with an abundance of repetitive and meaningless tasks and a careful hoarding out of actual cash and profit. One of the scraps of newspapers that has survived from so long ago records the story of a high school graduate who opened a chain of sandwich shops and then eventually donated a million dollars to his school. Yet, we wonder in our way, had we had that much equivalent wealth in gasoline (the currency of the post-zombie world), why we would ever do such a thing as support a completely humanitarian project. Ironically although I was a socialist agitator in my pre-fall days, I have grown to understand in these sere years of middle life that actually it was the pure idealists who caused the most damage of all. Marx truly believed he was heralding the final evolution of man. Stalin wanted a Russian defense that could stand up to the emerging forces on Europe, the historical threat to Russia. Even Hitler, still agreed after the zombie plague to be the worst criminal in history, in his own writings believed that what he was doing was for the best of mankind in the end. It was only that his racial theories were deconstructed and we evolved the multiculturalism at the end that was the best and worst of societies. Ten years ago today, Ferguson and then the Eric Garner chokehold: what were these issues we were arguing about in the last years, right before the retrovirus plague spread like wildfire across the world? Only, possibly, greater control of resources, the struggle to get a bigger piece of the pie, access to thin and desirable women, and data and information. By the very end, people were life-casting their life using wearable body-cams and "checking-in" to popular restaurants to share reviews and pictures of their own compositions. We had become an electronic society, and the elders among us shook their heads.

It isn't really so much useful or productive for me in this tattered notebook to record thoughts about the pre-Fall society. This future archeologists can do, or more likely the Happies will reconstruct society after their own degeneration and the new species Homo feliciens will achieve only that which had long eluded the masses of humanity. From Africa and India issue radio broadcasts that human civilization has survived there; but

many are wary. The footprints enter the cave, so to speak, but none leave. Rumors of cannibalism and slavery, the retributive African answer to what other continents had done to it, cross the crystal-radio and amateur-band spectrums. There are techniques and technologies available even to chat across the whole of the entire planet, but everyone in their compounds has their own ideas and ideologies and interpretations, and there is not much point in spending hours listening to the scan all day. Much of chatter consists of the same: rice or wood for ammo or gasoline; mutual assured safe-passage that hides an actual evacuation attempt as a compound falls to a rival clan; deliberate creation of crackpot theories which have proliferated endlessly since the Fall in order to confuse and demoralize other groups of survivors. The enemy, it had come to seem, was mostly actually us.

All in all a normal human being walking around the zombies is typically not molested, and some have reported living even years without anyone noticing anything unusual. But the patterns are various and there are urban legends of a normal even taking up residence in a zombie household and everything completely normal until one day without any warning at all they tore him to pieces and ate him. Urban legend? Factual history? Nobody knows for sure. The techno-geeks have assembled burst-zip compressed videofiles that anyone with even a basic 21st century smartphone and solar charger can view, but anything that can be transmitted can also be faked. The actual histories are obscured.

Since, however, the trend does appear to eventual stabilization (the zombies will slowly turn schizophrenic, and then finally the ones who are most stable will live while the least stable ones will die off), I suppose in a sense an answer has appeared: I am writing for the eventual crowd of Happy-infected homo feliciens, who will eventually re-generate their society and wonder, “where did this weird, industrial society filled with strange artifacts and incomprehensible script arrive from? Where did we get this oral tradition of a strange nocturnal species called vampires who lived in caves and crept out only in the darkness to kill us in our sleep?” Like the famous zombie novel of all, the legendary one, we remaining few dwindling compounds of normal human beings, those who remember the past and know that there was a virus free humanity, will become the stuff of mothers' fairy tales and bogey monsters in the night. We are the eventual source legend of what will be encoded in mankind's racial memory as the terrors of the night, those who drifted apart and then assembled in terrifying teams. Happy zombies can detect any pair or trio or more of us together, that is almost certain. So in carefully rehearsed ladder steps, we send teams out to far reaches of the city to scavenge, and in contact with the mostly friendly other survivors, we exchange information or trade goods and develop a better sense of the landscape.

Because a concentration of more than a dozen human beings immediately invites relentless zombie attack, most survivor bands are only about ten people, although there

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