
The Gavin Hesterdale Journal

The Origin of the Dark
Dreamers

Post-Fall Notice:

If you're reading this, the events I and the Dark Dreamers have foreseen have come to pass. While this log has been copied to the safehouse in Sweden, you can only be reading this copy with this message if you've managed to evade my booby traps and enter my secret cloister in West Virginia. As neither Pete nor Ryan know the codes or the traps, even if they were still alive, the only person who could be reading this is Jenna.

And, if that is true, then you deciphered my riddles and understand that there is still much you have to do. Hopefully you have learned the secrets I wished you to discover and have found those you can trust! If you have missed any of them, hopefully my journal here will illuminate those you have bypassed! I have left with Denver and we are currently seeking to uncover the rise of the leader of the N.I.R. in the south of France. That's the only place I know for sure will be visited by his army of black-swathed soldiers and there is someone I must try to help. The plague may have cut Pete down too quickly for him to have asked me himself, but I know he would've wanted me to do everything I could to protect his daughter...if she still survives. Look for me there! May God protect you, child, and may you forgive yourself so that you may help those you were chosen to aid! –Gavin

The End is Near...

01 Jun

I can't explain the clarity which consumes me. People say I've found religion and that I've gone off the deep end. Maybe I have, but that doesn't mean I'm not right. No one may be able to believe that now, but I will publish my research here and pray that it survives the lawless apocalypse. One day, someone will find it. One day, someone will read it. If you're that person, you'd probably be hard pressed to believe that I was once one of the most prestigious investigative journalists in the world. There was a time I could craft a sentence flawlessly without thinking about it, but, after the visions started, I'm not even sure whether I'm living in the here and now or the future. For the first time in my life, I'll simply say: pardon my grammar.

I am so lost at this point that I can't even get this ruggedized computer to show the correct date. For some reason, it's recording my journal entries starting in the year 2008 and I can't reset it. Forgive the glitchiness of this attempt but I must do what I can to keep the information preserved. I just hope I'm able to come up with a better way to protect it in the future.

I've tried emailing my prize pupil, Jenna. I thought she might believe me, but, like everyone else, she's ignoring me. Oh, Jenna, Jenna, Jenna... I would have hoped more for you.

Things to survive...

02 Jun

Whatever this time of unrest and destruction will be called by the survivors, I shall call it the "Cataclysm." In case someone finds this data terminal with it's shielding, I will program in the information I discover that may help them survive. I think this house will be secure. It's far from the cities which will be badly ravaged, close enough to the coast to be able to get wind for its small turbines and there's enough sunlight for the solar panels to slowly gain power. When the grid goes down, it should be able to retain power through these means, although I've stashed an alcohol generator just in case. Further, I've got it set up on a combinant passalong so that these entries may be seeded to other computers in other secure locations in the world. When the grid goes down, these terminals will have the greatest chance of staying operational.

I've been talking with men in the military and the police forces about what firearms to use to survive. 9mm caliber seem to be the best for handguns, as the most ammo is available for it. I can only believe that there will still be some of these bullets left after the Cataclysm. The military favors the Beretta M9 and it seems to be pretty rugged, but it has external safeties. As such, for most civilians, I think the Glock 17 and 19s that law enforcement officers use is better. When you need to defend your life, not having to remember to flip a safety is a good thing.

As such, I've acquired one and am slowly teaching myself how to shoot. I'm not much of a shot, but I think I'm getting the hang of it. I've found some videos online to help with my accuracy. Hopefully there's enough time before man goes mad for me to become proficient enough to stay alive.

Must remember to go to the store and get some more supplies. They look at me strangely because I buy so many dried and pre-packaged foods. I'm glad I saved so much from my wages as a war correspondent or I should never be able to afford these necessary things.

The leadings to disaster...

10 Jun

I remember in 2010, when I heard the official rumblings of what was called the Internet Kill Switch bill. It was designed to allow the president to shut down the internet and all the internet services in the United States of America. When I read it then, it sent shivers down my spine. It was specially designed for either a massive cyber attack or a concerted terrorist attack that included multiple U.S. cities. I don't yet know how many cities will be attacked, but I know that this is going to be one of the steps. I know that eventually the U.S. will enact this legislation as well as even more restrictive ones over cell phones and televisions. The outcry will be massive, the response on both sides will be catastrophic, and the bloodshed will wash our Nation like a tsunami.

No one believes me. I'm just a crazy person living in an isolated house. They point at me like I'm one of the Y2K crazies. But I'm not. I know that.

Fortunately, as I've been continuing to work on my rangemanship (if that's even a word!), I've gotten better at shooting. I can now hit the target fairly consistently at 20 yards with my Glock. Obviously, the adrenaline of being in combat is not something I'm yet prepared for.

The wild boars...

18 Jun

I've had my first chance to try out my marksmanship. The wild boars have continued to encroach on my land. I know that since 2009 they've been growing in record numbers. Wild and dangerous, they breed faster than they can be hunted and there are still men to hunt them. I can't even imagine what will happen to their population when this cataclysm I foresee occurs.

Two boars came upon my land late tonight, sharp tusks gleaming in the moonlight. The moon was so full that I didn't even need to use a flashlight, although the laser site I got for my handgun helped me be confident before I pulled the trigger. I've learned to fire multiple shots in rapid succession and was able to get three fired at the first boar. He fell to the ground as his companion ran away, my rounds piercing it in the chest.

In case one of the other boars should rush upon me, I unslung my shotgun and holstered my pistol. In an up close charge, a 12 gauge shotgun seems best. Fortunately for me and my still meager skill in survival, none of the other razorbacks attempted to attack while I made my way to their fallen brother.

I brought with me a line of rope and tied up the hog's legs. I then rigged a harness around myself and slowly pulled the beast back. Although this wasn't the largest of the boars, it must easily have weighed 150 lb. In the past, I was never one to develop my body as much as I had my mind, so I could no more have lifted it with my arms than flown to the moon. I shall get some more sleep and, in the morning, I'll search the internet to find out how to dress the beast. I must make use of the knowledge that's still available before the Grid goes down. Perhaps I can hire one of the local hunters to teach me how to do this personally.

Cleaning the beast...

19 Jun

Before working to get the boar cleaned, I decided I would try to draw the hog before I left. The following is my limited iteration of the beast's head.

As I knew I would prefer getting help from a real person and not the internet (and because I'm training myself to do things the old way), I drove into the town nearby to see if I could enlist one of the hunters that might be here for the plentiful game. There's a breakfast place called Morty's that both the truckers and the hunters seem to



congregate at, so I decided that I would see who might help me with my kill. Apparently, my current naiveté about guns and hunting is clear to the locals. One of the waitresses, an older woman with yellowing teeth named Agnus, explained that there are no official hunting seasons in June. (Of course, with the exceptions of year round animals, like coyotes, skunks, groundhogs, and the like.) The last hunting season, which was for bearded turkeys, concluded over a month ago. Agnus did point me in the direction of an old time

woodsman named Pine Pete who had a cabin down the road, as he had lots of experience and might have the time.

Well, Agnus' directions were a bit on the sparse side, so it took me the better part of an hour to find the man's cabin. As with so many houses out here, the house was in good shape and sported a nearly new Ford truck, but there was a barn behind it that looked like it was a hundred years old. Pine Pete was in the back practicing archery, landing arrows in the side of a huge tree that had been painted with targeting circles. He was probably in his sixties, although it was kind of hard to tell. A life of chewing tobacco had yellowed his teeth and the scars that criss-crossed his face spoke of accidents that would have aged anyone. He stopped his pursuits to chat with me and, with minimal compensation, decided he'd be willing to come to my house and help me dress the hog. Before we left, he did caution me that, for an animal defense weapon, I would be wiser to get slugs for my 12 gauge shotgun, rather than trying to be precise with my Glock. Had the other pig tried to charge me while I was shooting his companion, I would have found it much harder to kill him with my handgun. I had no idea that you could get slugs, rather than buckshot, for a 12 gauge, but will make sure to pick some up the next time I'm buying ammo.

The next three hours were some of the bloodiest I've ever spent as we hung up the hog, skinned it, removed the organs, and then cut up the meat. I had thought I had good sharp knives, but Pete showed me that mine were certainly not up to the task of butchering this hog. Fortunately, he'd brought along a set of hand crafted blades he'd forged himself. As we worked,

he explained that he'd be very willing to make me a set for a little over the cost of materials. As he's a lifelong bachelor, he doesn't have anyone to occupy his time, so it's clear that he likes to have things to do to stay busy. (*He has a daughter, but he doesn't like to talk much about her. In that, I can understand.*) I told him I'd be happy to have him do so.

Once we got it butchered out, we were able to get about 70 pounds of meat out of it, which we then wrapped in butcher paper and stored in the massive freezers I have. Pete was full of fascinating tales about why there are so many feral pigs these days and how they have soft fat, rather than hard fat, which basically means they yield leaner meat. He even went on to say that the lean meat on wild animals like boars and venison is so lean that it's actually possible to starve if you get nothing but that meat. I'd never heard of such a thing and the reporter in me felt like I should have been taking notes, but I forced myself to just experience it as it happened. While we ended up disposing of the unused skeleton and hooves, I did keep the hide, which Pete explains he'll teach me how to tan, and the tusks. I'm not sure how old this hog is, but it had fairly long tusks so it was probably older than normal.

I've included a drawing of one of the tusks. This one I did with some chalks to see if I could make a more realistic image.



The Gold Standard...

26 Jun

Today I decided to begin cooking some of the wild boar meet Pete and I cleaned. I decided to do a rather traditional boar stew with bacon, potatoes, carrots, onions, tomatoes, and a few secret spices I picked up from an Indonesian friend a few years ago. Because Pete helped me clean it, I felt it was only appropriate to invite him over. He brought a case of stout lager and we had a very flavorful meal. He proclaimed it to be the best hog stew he'd had, which I take as quite a compliment due to the commonness of the dish. The fat from the bacon really helped the lean boar meat, and I had to agree that it was quite good, as well.

As we reminisced about life and the state of the world, I decided to do something foolish and reveal some of my visions of the end. Whether because he distrusts people or because he was a bit enebriated, he didn't seem to think I was crazy, but rather that my insights were likely right on the money. He mentioned the fact that, if what I was saying was true, we'd be wise to get our money out of the banks and converted into gold, as that's more likely to hold its value after a cataclysm of this scale. It may sound foolish, but I had completely overlooked such a simple way to retain some of my money. Tomorrow I'll begin to research where I can buy amounts of gold in quantity and make sure no new legislation has been brought up to make gold acquisition illegal.

Golden rules...

30 Jun

I wish that purchasing gold bullion was easier than it is! Goodness, you'd be surprised to know that there ever was a gold standard in the U.S. with how hard it is to find from reputable locations. In the end, I was forced to deal with the problem using the internet. There are some reputable gold brokers online that were willing to sell me kilo goldbullion bars. Of course, I'm not crazy about having tied up all of my assets in an online transaction, because, besides trying to wean myself off the internet before the cataclysm occurs, the fact that I don't know exactly when the events which will launch the end will take place fills me with dread. By the time it gets shipped, the world might be completely eclipsed in the uprisings. Still, I've got to try to do it now, and hope for the best. If it arrives properly, I'll have to liquidate my IRA that remains from CNN and Tribune days, take the early withdrawal penalties and taxes, and switch it out for more gold.

The City Burns...

01 Jul

The dreams are back and I'm once again terrified. If my earlier visions weren't horrific enough, now I'm getting ones that are more vivid and fear-inducing. And it's made so much worse because I have no idea when they will come through! What I wouldn't give to have a real timeline, not just a sequence of events that I'll recognize when they occur!

In my dream, I'm in a city, standing on a building and I hear the shouts and screams below. The people below are rioting, screaming, yelling. Cops are doing their best to stave the people off, but the city is being ripped apart with fear, hate, and rage! Someone throws a fire bomb which engulfs a car. Someone else fires a gun and then a stampede ensues! I hear the shrieks of children and the moans of those trampled beneath the throng. My God, I scream, but no one hears.

I see angry men and women with banners painted with red which say, "Knights of Xeno." People carry signs with them that remind one another to tear down the oppression of technology and destroy power and internet relays! I realize too late that they've come armed with grenades and pipe bombs. Screaming obscenities, they fling their weapons at police, military, and civilians alike. So tiny that, from my position, the bombs look like seeds, until they

explode in fountains of fire, debris, and death. In the midst of it all, I hear ground-rending explosion and one of the skyscrapers' sides blows out from some hidden explosive. This is no terrorist attack, it's part of the chaos of the unrest. On the street below, showers of glass shred people like a hail of razorblades. As the smoke and fire belches from the buildings, I wake in a cold sweat. This will one day occur, but, for now, that day is not yet.

To try to exorcise myself from these visions, I'm going to start trying to draw them.



Troubling thoughts...

03 Jul

After my troubling dream the other night, I've tried to research more and more information about anything that might give me a clue as to what city was in my dream or when this may occur. The technology and architecture seemed identical, or at least very close, to what technology and architecture we have today. As such, I assume that it's safe to say that these things will happen in the immediate future. However, as always, how immediate is highly questionable.

The only thing that stuck out that I could do research on was a group called, "The Knights of Xenon." I have not found any websites associated with this group, although I think it may be a misspelled translation of the philosopher "Zeno" who created paradoxes by which reality was seen as impossible. (For example, he believed that movement was impossible because, in order to move, any object must pass through an infinite number of midpoints to do so. As nothing can move through an infinite amount of anything, movement must be an illusion.) It terrifies me if there are a group of people who are following a philosopher like Zeno. If they believe reality is an illusion, then they could be capable of unspeakable acts of violence. At times like this, I'm reminded of that old Chris Nolan film called *Inception*, in which one woman is so convinced that the world is a dream that she kills herself to wake up.

I haven't research the numerous social networking sites to see if I can find any of the precursors to this order. Perhaps some have already given it its name. If so, I might find where they are geographically most connected. Or, they may only form after the government starts shutting down the internet. It seems in keeping with the human condition that they might be so infuriated with the government taking something that they've come to depend on away, that they destroy all elements of technology so that they won't be in danger of it happening in the future. Perhaps they're in love with the ideas spoken of Chuck Palahniuk's book, *Fight Club*, which glamorize the idea of destroying technology and the debt record associated with it.

My gold came today. By many people's minds, I had quite a nest egg in my savings accounts, but when it all comes down to 9 1 kilo bars and 32 1 oz bars, it feels quite meager indeed. As the gold has arrived safely, I've called my accountant to liquidate my IRA, pay the penalties and taxes, and purchase gold with the remaining elements, all of which is to be sent to me here. He says it should take three weeks to liquidate and another week for the gold to arrive. I hope we have another month.

As I try to figure out what is to come, I can think only of a brilliant quote from a philosopher I respect:

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

~ Soren Kierkegaard

4th of July nightmares...

04 Jul

It's the fourth of July and I should be celebrating this nation's birthday, and, instead, I weep over what's to come.

As though my visions can't leave me alone on a national holiday, I was wrenched from my sleep this morning in a cold sweat. Before, I was atop a building during the riots. Now I'm in another city and I'm right amidst the riots. People shove and scream, pushing past me and crushing me into the throngs. Police are nearby, holding riot gear and trying to hold back the people. Sweat drips into their faces and across their eyelids, like tears of exhaustion. Some have cuts from where shards of glass have been thrown. A scream occurs behind me and I see an angry woman in a torn trench coat throw a glass bottle through the air. Only as it bursts on the ground do I realize that it had a burning rag stuck into it! As the molotov cocktail shatters, hurling flame and glass all around, a nearby pile of trash catches on fire and the crowd goes from hostile to stampeding.

In the rush, I'm knocked to the ground and feet stomp my back. My breath bursts from my lungs and I can't breathe. In front of me, the silhouettes of the rioters freeze in slow motion and I know that I'm going to die. My God, we all like to think that we are rational creatures, but, when we are denied the things we've become accustomed to, we are ravenous to spill blood.



Unlike my last dream, there are no clues as to when this may occur or what special groups may be a part of it. When tonight's fireworks are visible in the distance, I will be thinking of the horrifying flames of my vision, rather than the celebration around me.

The search continues...

08 Jul

I've continued my internet searches for the Knights of Xeno, but nothing has come up so far. It's, of course, possible that they don't exist yet, but I don't think that's likely. I think that somewhere, they wait until the shift in events will bring them to the forefront. If I can figure where they are and what they're waiting for, I might get a better idea of when the lawless apocalypse will occur. For now, I've programmed a series of spider crawlers to look through the Web, especially on social media sites, for the outcroppings that will lead me to the leaders of the Knights of Xeno.

I find myself wondering where their name originated from in the first place. Earlier, I believed that it was because of the idea of Xeno's paradoxes, but maybe that's not right. Maybe they're looking at it from the idea of "Xenophobia" which literally translates into the fear of foreigners or strangers. However, more fundamentally, it can refer to a fear of that which is different than oneself. If that's the case, then this group is making a stance that man is a natural creature, while technology is an unnatural one. While that's logically true, it's clear that they believe technology gives the government the ability to control them. If that's the case, maybe the strangers they're afraid of are their own government.

I've found out that my gold from my IRAs should be arriving in two more weeks, so that's a good thing. Distressing that it's such a small amount, but I'll be glad to have it physical by then. I've never trusted the market in the best of times and this close to the cataclysm, I trust it all the less.

New Skills...

22 Jul

The 10 bars of gold that represents what was left of my IRA after all the taxes and early withdrawal penalties arrived today. I've put this in the safe with the rest. While I still keep some money in the bank to use for the immediate future, I will begin using Gold as soon as I run out. Hopefully, I'll have developed some skills that will help with that.

Pine Pete came by today and brought with him his handmade hatchets. He called them "tomahawks" but, aside from being a bit lighter and having a thinner, more curved blade, they looked more like hatchets to me. They certainly didn't have any feathers attached to them or Native American carvings on them. He had a large, heavy duty target in the bed of his truck and he tied it to one of my trees behind my house. He proceeded to explain that I should learn how to use different weapons if the end really was near. Tomahawks were strong and deadly, so he felt I should learn these first. He gently lobbed his three hatchets through the air and slammed them blade first into the target. I tried to replicate what he had done, but my first throw fell short, landed on its handle, and bounced away. The second one was harder, but it hit the target with the back of the blade and bounced off. The third one, however, somehow embedded into the target, however it had somehow managed to turn sideways by the time it did so.

Pete pronounced that I was a quick study and spent the rest of the day teaching me. By the end of the day, I could hit the target with nearly every shot. No chance of hitting the bull's-eye yet, but I will work on it. He left me his target and hatchets so that I could practice with them.

Unkempt nightmares...

28 Jul

I awoke from my sleep most recently by a horrendous night terror. The visions are now becoming more violent and more pronounced.

I found myself overlooking a mass grave that stretched across a plowed field. There was no one around me and all the bodies below me were uncovered, rotting in the sun. The stench nearly caused me to vomit, but I forced myself to look at them. Their faces were distorted and twisted, clearly victims of some sort of plague. Someone cared enough to drop them into the grave, but not enough to cover them. For all I know, the mysterious person who had brought them here had died by the same plague and fallen in with them.



In the distance, I could hear the faint tinny sound of music being played through an old radio or boombox. That was the only sound of life or technology. Other than that, there was only the sounds of the birds in the nearby woods. It looked almost as though it could have been any area of the Apalachians that I'd been seeing.

As I look at these distended bodies, I can only raise my fist at the invisible spectre and make my own vow for myself that I will not be left in a mass grave like this. If you are reading this, do not forget the Dylan Thomas' creed:

“Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

Doubling My House...

18 Aug

I've been so busy trying to stockpile my house and do searches on the Knights of Xeno that I haven't updated my journal for nearly three weeks. As I'm finally learning more helpful things on preparing for the cataclysm, I should start writing again.

I've been able to get help from from Pete on further preparations for my house. After the riots come, people will be displaced from the cities and will wander through the wilderness. As such, it's a good idea to make it appear as though my house has been looted. To enable us to do this, we've created a false front to the house. The main part of the house is protected and reinforced, but the front will show a looted kitchen area and collapsed building materials will make it seem as though the house is too badly damaged to proceed into. Today we spent all day covering the outer kitchen with empty cans and trash and breaking out the windows of the front. Whenever the riots and chaso come, there should be nothing to attract looters who come across this property.

With that said, I shall have to think of some sort of sign I may employ should I need to make the secrets of this house known to someone after the cataclysm. If I have to leave this

house, I may need to hide things here for someone. Hopefully my dreams will help me understand the likelihood of both so I can appropriately prepare.

The burning of the Card...

26 Aug

After nearly a month, I'd wondered why my dreams were abandoning me. Now they're



back and this time with even greater confusion attached to them.

A Burning House In Africa

I dreamt that I was in a rural town in the jungle. Buildings were burning and there was angry rioters around me. While there were some whites, most of those around me seemed to be black. There were a number languages being screamed, one of which was definitely French. As

French is one of the few things I know passingly enough to pick out words, I was able to make out the phrase, “*détruire l’internet*,” or “destroy the internet.” At this point, another house was set ablaze. After it had been burning awhile, a man ran out of the building holding a silver card in a plastic bag. As he appeared, still coughing from the smoke inside, the crowd seemed to grow to a frenzied pitch. A chant emerged. The french speakers were saying, “*brûler la carte*”—
burn the card!

The card was seized and tossed into a nearby bonfire. I tried to get close enough to see what the card said, but it was too far away and burned too quickly in the blaze! As they turned on the man who had brought the card out and beat him to death, I noticed that a flag was hanging from one of the town’s flagpoles. It was the following:



It looked familiar so, when I awoke, I looked it up. It is the flag of Burkina Faso. Why anyone would try to destroy the internet in Burkina Faso is beyond anything I can imagine. I will have to research this in greater detail.

Further, I am left wondering why my visions come as they do? What purpose is there in them? I believe that I receive them for a reason. That if I can collect enough of the pieces, I can figure out the timeline of the cataclysm. While I doubt I can prevent it, I may be able to help those who need it. I might even be able to shelter some of the world from the violence. Only time will tell!

Keepers of the Internet...

31 Aug

After my confusing dream the other night, I've begun vigorously researching, trying to figure out what the Internet has to do with the African nation of Burkina Faso. As I searched, I discovered that, in 2010, a joint venture between the DoD (Department of Defense) and ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) created a way to reboot the internet in the face of a terrorist or hacking attack. A master DNS (domain name system) phone book could be activated with one of two master cards in one of three main facilities in the United States. In case those two cards were destroyed, however, they would hide part of the master code to unlock this master phone book in 7 special key cards. Working somewhat like Raided hard drives, each card contained one fifth of the total code, so that only five of the seven would be required to reboot the internet.

The cards were distributed to volunteers around the world, one of whom resides in the African nation of Burkina Faso. Since the recipients of these cards were so highly publicized, the anti-technology movement that seems to arise in the riots of the cataclysm must have quickly been aimed at the possessors of these cards. The destruction of the card in Burkina Faso and the killing of the owner must have been what I observed in my vision.

In light of this, I'm reminded of a graphic novel I once read called, *Y: The Last Man*, which looked at a cataclysm in which all the men died in a single epidemic. Despite the fact that it doomed the species, angry feminists destroyed all the sperm banks so the "oppressive hand of man" could never re-emerge. Mankind's tendency to find new ways to destroy or damage itself knows no limits.

However, this has brought to light a fascinating possibility. While the riots of the cataclysm seem to destroy most densely populated countries, especially in the West, it seems possible that portions of the physical Internet structure might remain intact after the rest of the 'Net goes down. Without the information provided by the controllers in the U.S., the system would be inert, even if it was in a country that retained electrical energy. However, if someone were to find a way to copy these keycards before they are destroyed, a portion of the internet might be able to be resurrected in the future. The possessor of such information when everyone else has lost it could easily rule the world. However, for someone with more noble pursuits, it could represent a way for mankind to rebuild...if rebuilding is even a possibility.

More research on these cards and their keepers are necessary.

Norman.

09 Sep

After spending over a week researching these Internet Illuminati (as one group calls the Keepers of the Keys) as well as the Knights of Xeno, I found that I was getting no closer to an answer. The problem with prophetic insight is that it's like tracking a fast moving object that's heading at you from an unknown location. In order to change things, you have to find out how things are going to unfold in time to effect a change but, too often, things only reveal themselves at the last moment. As such, the regular ways to find out about groups or individuals might be ineffective because the publicity machine that brings their causes and groups into the international spotlight might not have yet aligned.

Of course, even if you're successful in changing the future, the danger in doing so based on prophetic insight arises from the fact that you essentially get only one chance to change things, and, like Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, effecting this one thing means that you can't predict where that one thing will go after that. You may save the world or you may completely destroy it. As such, it seems that the most important element in effecting the future is not to stop a disaster you know is coming, but to provide some sort of redundancy that in turn creates a backdoor after the fact. Harsh as it may seem, it comes down to: "Better the devil you know, than the one you don't!"

In priority, I realized that it's imperative that I figure out more about the Knights of Xeno, for their existence and effective timeline can give me insight into what I might be able to accomplish before we run out of time. As such, yesterday, I tried to get ahold of Jenna once more, but, to my complete lack of surprise, her cell phone went straight to voicemail. However, attempting to contact her reminded me of Ernest Cromwell, an old contact I had from S.I.S. whom I had introduced to Jenna years ago. As he still owed me some favors for helping him track down a British heiress in the U.S. before she could spark a scandal some years ago, I decided to give him a call. Although he has since retired, he still keeps his ear to the ground in the intelligence community and their network of spooks so I figured he might be able to give me some insight.

I was able to get through to him surprisingly quickly with only a few phone calls that led me to his home on the edge of Sheffield. While I was at first reluctant to reveal my visions to him, I realized that the gravity of the situation couldn't be conveyed with anything other than truth. Apparently retirement had left him extremely bored because rather than questioning my sanity, he seemed genuinely glad to help me try to get to the bottom of the situation. He hadn't heard anything about the Knights of Xeno or a backlash against the Internet Illuminati, but he promised to look into it and get back to me.

This morning he called me to say that none of his contacts had yielded any more information, but that he had a resource who might be able to ferret it out. Apparently, someone's

black bag operations needed the services of combination hacker/money launderer who stayed completely below the radar. No one knew what he looked like and he simply went by the name, "Norman." I was given a secret email by which to contact him. Beyond that, there was nothing more Ernie could do for me, but he said he would definitely keep his eyes and ears open and would let me know as soon as he heard anything new. I could tell as we concluded the conversations that he was truly hoping I was sane because this would doubtless be some "great adventure." I envied my friend his romanticized view of the bloodshed that is to come and wished to God that this wouldn't come to pass.

I emailed Norman, explaining who I was looking for and keeping my visions decidedly out of the communiqué. However, barely had I sent it but I received an error email stating that the email could not be delivered. I decided that I would try it again tomorrow, in case there were an internet error.

A hour later, I got a video conference call request from an unknown sender. While I never accept video calls from unknown people, I instinctively knew that this was one I needed to take.

Answering the video call was like stepping back into a Dick Tracy novel. The caller was shrouded in shadow, but you could make out the fact that he was wrapped in a gray trench

coat. Through a voice under heavy electronic distortion, he identified himself as “Norman” and demanded to know who had given me a contact email. I answered all of his questions tersely, choosing to keep the reasons of my research to myself by pretending to be doing an article on the groups. When I was done, I felt strangely nervous as though I had asked out a pretty girl and was waiting to see if she would say *yes*.

At that point, Norman explained that I was full of crap and that if I didn't tell him why I was really looking for these people, he would end the call and I would never get ahold of him again. Seeing no reason to keep the secret from him at this point, I explained the supernatural source of my intel. As soon as I gave him the truth, his demeanor changed completely, as though I was verifying something he had long suspected. He never came out of the shadows nor removed his audio distortion, but his willingness to help me find the answers I sought was extremely apparent. In addition to asking about the information I was looking for, he was quick to pump me for any information I might have about the lawless apocalypse of my visions. When I mentioned that there seemed to be plague victims after the uprisings, he questioned me closely to see if any of the people turned into zombies. Darkly, I explained that they just turned into corpses. He seemed disappointed by this, but muttered something about talking with Gabriel about it. Whether this was an angel or a person, I couldn't tell. When he concluded our conversation, it was to say that he would contact me when he had news. Before I could ask when that might be, he killed the connection.

I hope this Norman can help me figure out this information. Until then, perhaps new visions will give me additional information that can aid him in the process.

Are the Japanese behind the Cataclysm??

11 Sep

I haven't heard back from Norman yet. However, he said it might be at least week, so it's well within that range. Still, I couldn't resist trying to do some research myself.

With the lack of concrete luck on the Internet, I decided to start doing some old-school journalistic snooping. Even though I'm not going to travel far from home with the certainty of the riots upon me, I decided to go through my journalist Rolodex to see who might still owe me some favors. As I was flipping through the names, I came across "Michael Li"—a Seattle Times' journalist, who was always into the sort of substantiated rumors and inside information that made politicians blanch. Despite his journalistic chops, he fell out of favor and lost his job when he started to become immensely distrustful of the government in the extremely liberal state of Washington. The last I heard he was writing sporadically for the Arts newspaper in Seattle called *The Stranger*, which permitted him a few rants a year in addition to his more regular music beat reporting. With my own exile from proper journalistic society, I decided to give his cell phone a call and see if he might be able to help me sort out this mess. To my surprise, the cell phone still worked and rang through to his messaging exchange. His service tracked him down and a few minutes later, I was talking to Michael.

Finding no way to mention what information I was interested in without getting the NSA to show up on my door step, I decided to just start with the truth. The government minders who would check this flagged conversation would write me off as crazy and I figured Michael was far enough out there to see my statement as a possible sign of kinship. Certainly he'd heard of my dismissal from the Tribune and was likely aware that I was no longer doing any corresponding for CNN. My instincts seem to be getting better, because my straightforward tale elicited the sort of trust from Michael that I hoped it would. While he didn't know anything about the Knights of Xeno or any more about the Internet Illuminati, he did present me with a whole new potential way that the apocalypse might kick off. Or, at the very least, one of the reasons America might've been targeted for some of the initial attacks I've seen in my dreams. While his information at first sound unbelievable, I was able to find enough corroboration online to know he was correct.

Apparently, in 2010, the extremely anti-Hawk administration of the United States decided to train Japanese soldiers to fight in the Middle East so they could pull U.S. troops out of Afghanistan. This choice is absolutely staggering, because the extremely war-like nation of Japan was forbidden to have an active army after the U.S. occupation of Japan ended in 1952. While they were permitted to have a defense army, the extremely empire-building Japan was not permitted to let their warriors set foot outside current Japanese territory. With their military might effectively curtailed, Japan spent the next half century taking over the technology and automotive markets of the world until they were the most powerful world economy to not have an *actual* army. When popular public sentiment for Project: Iraqi Freedom and other Middle

East military ventures turned sour during the Bush years, Japan apparently made their willingness to “help out” known. Due to the fact that this would essentially breaking international treaty and law, their offer was ignored, although Japan was permitted to help out with humanitarian efforts during global catastrophes. It wasn’t until midway through the Obama presidency that this administration granted Japan the right to assemble troops and send them to America where they were trained at the Yakima Training Center in Yakima, WA—the same U.S. Army training grounds that trained the U.S. troops for all of their Iraqi missions! They were eventually deployed to the Middle East with all the best training the U.S. had to offer. (I’m reminded that the U.S. did the same for *Al-Qaeda* in the ’70’s. A fact that came back to haunt them this very day in 2001.)

The possibilities for disaster with this shortsighted plan defies all explanation. I think the appropriate comparison of this would be a nuclear hand grenade—it’s definitely powerful enough to destroy anything you throw it at, but there’s absolutely no way for you to escape being killed in the blast! If Japan is successful in whatever military missions we send them on in the Middle East, what makes us think we can put the genie back in the bottle when we’re done? We’re giving one of the most vicious conquering countries in the world the ability to rebuild their army and then sending them somewhere where we are not directly overseeing their actions. Best case scenario, they’re able to destroy everyone we send them against and they comply with their agreements to disarm at the end of that. However, seeing Japan as our cat’s paw, a number of Mid-Eastern terrorists groups decide to rain fire down upon us. Perhaps that’s how it all starts!

However, that's the BEST case scenario. What prevents an uncontrolled Japanese army from seizing Iran once they're done eradicating whomever they're sent against in the middle east? In so doing, they would suddenly be a nuclear power, in addition to having the brains and the economy necessary to establish dominance with a speed that defies explanation. North Korea would likely choose this time to strike at an empowered Japan, but they would likely be unable to attack both the Japanese strongholds in Afghanistan and Iran, as well as the Island of Japan, before Japan is able to destroy North Korea. If Japan decides to seize control of the oil fields in Iraq, they would be able to parlay that sort of wealth in a number of mind shocking ways. Either behavior could cause China's armies to march forward to try to quell the Japanese threat.

Visions of the inevitability of our destruction are terrifying, but trying to figure out the path by which the destruction may roll out is somehow more horrifying! Especially since my dreams haven't yet revealed who the main players in all of these things are. Of course, at the end of the day, mankind's disaster will be at the feet of each of us...but I still hope I can figure out the course of world events in time to provide some useful ways out for those of us who survive. (How egocentric of me! I *assume* that I survive. For all I know, I'm one of the first to get my throat slit for a can of food or a blanket.)

Beer Bread

13 Sep

I have been working on new survival tools to pass on to the generation who may discover this. As such, I've been talking with Pete about what some useful information might be to leave behind. One thing that he brought up, which I hadn't considered, was Beer Bread. In a world in which consistent heat for rising breads will be difficult but there will likely be an abundance of unused beer and alcohol, beer bread is an important thing to become familiar with.

The most basic beer bread simply combines 3 cups of self-rising flour, 3 Tablespoons of sugar, and one 12 oz bottle of beer. The somewhat batter-like dough is dumped in a bread pan and baked for 50-60 minutes at 350 degrees. (Of course, if self rising flour isn't as available after the cataclysm as beer, then it can be made by adding 1 1/2 T of Baking Powder and 1 1/2 tsp of salt to three cups of regular milled flour.) While those of us who've created alternate power sources will be able to bake this bread in ovens, most survivors will likely bake it in dutch ovens over coals. The bread is sweeter and, I believe, more flavorful than Irish Soda Bread, another bread that doesn't require yeast. (Plus, unlike Irish Soda Bread, the different types of beer yield different flavor profiles.)

Today, I made my first batch of the bread and was pleased with how simple it was to mix up and how high it rose in the oven. The bread was tender, but dense and more elastic than you would expect. As such, I found that it was more difficult to cut than normal bread. I used some cheap PBR that I had lying around and found that the flavor was quite good. I wonder what will happen if I use a good stout or even a chocolate beer? (The sweetness of the bread makes me think it might make interesting muffins with a bit of chocolate or raisins in it.) As I continue with my tests, I intend to start preparing future batches of beer in a dutch oven over the coals, that way, whenever I must move along, I am acquainted with the process!

Soda Cake...and Dutch Oven tests...

14 Sep

As I continue to put my brain to thoughts of recipes that may be useful after the collapse, I realized that the simple element of Soda Cake should be mentioned. Originally created to help dieting people lose weight, it was discovered that a 12 oz. can of diet soda could replace the oil and eggs when making cake. With the number of people greatly decreased, it may conceivably be easier to get ahold of a can of soda and a cake mix than to get ahold of something like eggs or oil. Sugared soda, of course, can be used for added calories. If a cake is desired and no mixes are to be found, then adding flavored soda to the previous beer bread recipe and 1/3 cup sugar will make a surprisingly cake-like bread.

I decided that today would be the day to test out my new cast iron dutch oven. (After you buy them, you have to “season” them before you use them. I did this last week by rinsing the oven off with water and sterilizing it over low heat. I then coated it with peanut oil and heated it in the oven to 250 degrees for four hours. I repeated this process three times, and, annoying thought it was, it yielded a beautiful finish to the dutch oven.) Since the dutch oven was now ready to go, I built a small campfire in my back yard and then dumped a bunch of charcoal briquettes on it. I know that I’ll eventually have to do all of the coal creation with hard woods and other self-cut elements but, for right now, I’m okay using the pre-created versions.

Rather than initially oiling the dutch oven, I had heard that it's a good idea to instead apply a coating of flour in the oven when you make bread. The flour would usually burn, but the actual bread would be good and easy to get out. As such, I coated the dutch oven with flour, poured in a batch of my beer bread, and, once the coals were hot and the fire was down, I flattened out the coals, placed the dutch oven on them, and heaped some coals on top.

Unfortunately, the fact that I hadn't paid attention to how many coals I was using meant that the oven got hotter than intended and I burned my first batch of bread. Fortunately, it was pretty easy to get out because of the pre-coating of flour, but the amount of burn on the flour made me question using it in the future.

After my initial faux pas, I discovered that there's a mathematical formula for determining the number of coals with a dutch oven: 2 coals per inch of oven diameter, 2 coals more than the oven diameter on the lid, and 2 coals less than the oven diameter under the oven. So my 14 inch oven required 16 coals on top and 12 coals on the bottom, evenly spaced. I then learned there were a couple more reliable tricks to getting good bread. The first was that I should actually use oil and that I should put it on the pan while it was cool. (As the flour didn't seem as efficient to me, I liked this idea, anyway.) Then you cook it for 25 minutes and take it off the coals. Once that's done, you remove the lid, brush on some butter, and then replace the lid. After that you put ALL of the coals on the lid and let it finish cooking for another 5-7 minutes.

I did this and the bread was golden brown and about the height of a dutch oven corn bread, although it still had the gnarled top that beer bread always has. I then tipped it out on a bread board, cut a wedge out of it, and added butter. It was far easier to cut in a shallower corn bread-style form and it was delicious with sweet melted butter.

I must say that there's something about cooking over a campfire that really is delightful! I think that, tomorrow, I'll invite Pete over and cook an entire meal over the coals. He's especially fond of campfire potatoes, with their wedges of potato, onion, and bacon!

Rome is Burning...

18 Sep

I had been working on new plans for upgrading the house's defenses at my writing desk last night, when I fell asleep and had the most vivid dream. This one left me shaking as I feel as though I finally got an image of the attacks that begin the cataclysm.

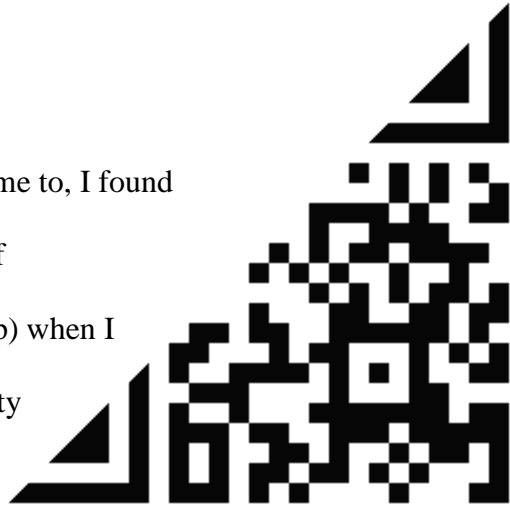
In my dream I found myself in front a massive Roman cathedral. People were running and screaming all around me as an explosion tore the building apart in front of me. The blast seared my vision and I had to viciously blink my eyes to clear them afterwards. I saw before me a Turkish plane in wreckage and, a few feet from where I stood, I saw the mangled body of a black man in a pilot's uniform. I assumed that he had been flung from the plane as it crashed into the building before me. For the first time in a vision, I was actually able to interact with elements of it, as I was close enough to the action to do something.

I made my way to the husky pilot's body, bent on determining whether he was alive or dead. As I touched his swarthy neck, I realized he had been killed in the blast. I began to search through his pockets to see if I could find some identification, but I could find nothing. However, right before I was about to give up, I found an inner pocket hidden in his jacket. Inside the pocket, I pulled out a triangular piece of paper.

Despite the fact that the sheet of paper had been cut in half from its mate, I immediately recognized what it was: a QR code! Undercover journalists (and spies, for that matter) around the world use a variety of codes and cyphers to pass out information to one another in ways that people won't notice, from stenography, to morse code, to book codes. However, QR codes were developed by the Japanese to be a super-advanced bar code and they've been a perfect way to pass messages to people if you wanted to prevent passersby from easily figuring out what you're talking about. Although smart phones have downloadable QR scanners, most people still don't know what the codes are when they see them or know how to decrypt them. As such, I've used them to speak with my student Jenna for years. She's adopted the habit and now her contacts use all sorts of codes, a number of which even I don't know. (Leave it to the student to usurp her master, Jenna's gotten so good with coding and codebreaking that I'm certain she could get a job in tradecraft if she ever had a notion to have someone tell her what to do.)

As the codes are completely unreadable if incomplete, this man was clearly meant to share his half of the code with someone else to break the code. As QR codes don't have separate encryption, splitting them up for people to recombine is an amazingly effective way of making them hard to intercept and decode. (Of course, some stenographers will actually hide the QR code inside specially encrypted pictures, permitting them to add password protection without having to physically break up the codes.) Whoever this man's partner was (who must certainly have had the other half of the code), he was either still in the burning plane or had been thrown somewhere that I couldn't see him.

Upon this realization, I awoke. When I came to, I found something amazing. While I used to have bouts of *somnambulance* (moving or walking in one's sleep) when I was in grad school, I haven't done so in nearly forty years. Now my visions are beginning to effect me more profoundly, for I found that I had engaged in *somniscruption*, the act of writing or drawing during sleep. Although uncommon, some people will be able to draw photographically detailed pictures in their sleep. For whatever reason, I had perfectly recreated the half of the QR code I had seen in my vision!



If another dream could help me figure out what the other half of this QR code might be, I might finally be able to figure out more about the events that will start the cataclysm! If this pilot was one of the men involved in the inciting incidents, I might even find a date!

Norman is already late in getting back with me about the Knights of Xeno. This vivid dream makes me all the more anxious to hear back from him, so I shall attempt to contact him in the morning!

A Chink in the Armor of the Knights of Xeno...

20 Sep

I finally heard from Norman.

Clearly timeliness is not always one of Norman's gifts, as he told me a week and it's been nearly two since I talked with him. However, he was able to do a lot of research to get me information in that time. Apparently the Knights of Xeno aren't doing a lot of recruiting at this point, so they've been keeping a fairly low-profile. At their heart, they seem to be extremely anti-technology, so while it seems like they have some social networking connections, they don't seem to be updating much information through the internet. According to Norman, what is available is highly coded in old school text cyphers the like of which were used in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. He hasn't been able to crack any of these codes yet, as they most often utilize a common book as the key. However, he has been able to tell us that the Knights of Xeno currently seem to be headquartered in Dallas, TX. The leader appears to be a man named William T. McKnight. A former military officer with a chip on his shoulder for the Russians, he's currently a Security Contractor for Viking Strategic Solutions, a paramilitary contracting group. If their core leadership is still made up of disenfranchised PMC after the collapse, that could explain why the Knights of Xeno mobs in my vision seemed to be as well armed as they were.

I thanked Norman for his work and he committed to trying to decipher some of the codes he'd intercepted from McKnight's people. I then explained about my most recent vision. He was extremely curious about the QR code and asked me to send him the scanned copy. After looking at it, he suggested that I make my journal easily accessed by people on the internet. He agreed to run my IP trail through a slew of overseas servers so that I can't be tracked down digitally and, as I've never revealed my location, there should be no way for the government or terrorists to come after me. With that being the case, other code breakers might stumble across my journal and be able to help me figure it out. That or one of the terrorists from my vision may have a crisis of conscience when they see the worldwide destruction they'll help create and come forth to tell me what the code means! (I know, this is an optimistic viewpoint if there ever was one.)

Since I'm going to be trying to enlist help from people elsewhere, my next step will be to make a list of some of the coding programs I've been using for my codebreaking. Maybe that will help those who wish to help me!

The Return of 'The Jews and their Lies'???

26 Sep

After finding out about William McKnight from Norman, I've been trying to locate facebook pages or other social media sites devoted to him and the Knights of Xeno. Unfortunately, his anti-tech leanings haven't yet been overwhelmed by his need to embrace these "necessary" technological evils in order to recruit new members. Again, I wish I knew with greater certainty when the attacks will come. I also wish that I would have another vision that would reveal the other half of that QR code (or that someone involved with the eventual attacks would contact me through the site)!

However, when I did a search on "anti-technology movements" I came across an anarchist website run by an MIT Grad Student named Zig Matheson. While there was a lot the anarchist propaganda that always seems so popular with each new batch of college grads, mixed in with a dash of "erase the debt record"-*Fight-Club*-style concepts, there was a fair mix of anti-technology leanings in general.

More disturbing than the actual content of the site were some of the links on the site. Perhaps the most troublesome was an article that purported to explore the Martin Luther piece, *The Jews & Their Lies*, from a historical perspective by an adjunct history professor at Yale.

However, the author (a Spaniard with the name Juan Pablo) seemed to be subtly arguing for the fact that Martin Luther's latter-life anti-Semitism was founded in actual historical trends around the Jews and should be heeded.

As someone who now believes in God, the use of Martin Luther's latter work has become something that offends me terribly. The man who was responsible for igniting the Reformation was a man who loved people, especially the Jews. He spent countless hours trying to reach out to them and even chose the books of the Old Testament to include in his Bible based on the ones that had been accepted by the Jewish people. Unfortunately, he was unable to understand the prophecies of the very scripture he helped translate and failed to realize that Jews wouldn't begin to believe in a risen savior *en masse* until the end of days.

When his outreaches failed, he became an embittered old man who began to spew venom about the Jews. *The Jews and Their Lies*, unfortunately, became a treatise that Adolph Hitler was enthralled with. That book, combined with Darwin's concepts of Eugenics and a liberal interpretation of Nietzsche's Uber-Mensch ("Supermen"), would eventually lead to Hitler's concept of a superior non-Semitic race that was "destined" to destroy the Jews in concentration camps. Since then, the original work has continued to resurface in association with groups like the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Nations, and the Neo-Nazis.

It's bad enough to read radicals spewing affirmation of the piece, but to read a modern scholar writing about this introductory work as though it should be heeded intellectually and logically makes me ill.

With that said, I shall have to remember to keep track of this group and see if they may have some ties to the Knights of Xeno in the future. I must remember to have Normon research this for me.

Who are the Neo-Palidins?

03 Oct

The visions are coming back again, just as obscure as they've been in the past, but now I feel like I'm actually in the midst of these events more and more. Last night's vision opened up a door to a world that seems much farther past the apocalypse than I've seen so far. In the past, I've seen the initial riots, but this vision seems to be after that.

At first, I thought I was in a fortress, because there was solid concrete slab walls around me and I was hemmed in by people quickly running around. The stench of fear and unwashed flesh was so thick in the air that it made my eyes water. I pushed past the crush of people in the hallway I found myself in and turned into an open room. It was at this point that I realized that I was not in a fortress, but some sort of football arena. The room I had wandered into was the broadcast announcer's booth, with a glass view of the entire night-shrouded field below. Tents and small shacks had been constructed across the entirety of the green and torches and campfires were burning.

After I cleared my head a bit, I noticed that everyone who was currently in this room was taking every piece of equipment they could lay their hands on, both things that would have been common in a broadcast booth, like radios and microphones, but also things that had been clearly

been added after the devastation, like crates of solar cells and boxes of laptop computers and smartphones. At first I thought they were looting the building, but the care they took with the equipment showed that they were not. They were moving it somewhere and seemed extremely nervous as they did so!

I tried to ask one of them a question about what they were afraid of, but, as so often happens in my visions, I found that I couldn't communicate with them. I then decided to wait until a few younger men had loaded up a battered shopping cart with equipment and followed them down toward the bowels of the arena. While I walked behind them, I tried to listen to what they said, but the ruckus around us and their hushed voices made it very difficult. This is all I could make out:

"...How did they find us? We keep... ...we don't mention it to outsiders..."

"Yeah, but they're Neo-Palidins... ...I heard... ...psychic."

"They're not psychic. They've got to have some tech... ...to hunt down offenders."

“That, or they just keep... ...victims for their witch hunt.”

“Do you think that hiding... ...keep them from killing us?”

“No clue. They’re so unstable. They seem to embrace some people with open arms...”

“But I hea... ...flayed a man alive in Memphis for having a... ...ttery.”

“Then let’s make damn sure we don’t have any of them... ...get here!”

I hurried along to try to get closer and hear more but, before I could see where they were going or find out what these Neo-Palidins actually were, my vision ended and I was awake in my bed, covered in sweat.

Since I got no direct answer in my dream, I must try to figure out who these Neo-Paladins are on my own! *I just wish that I could have seen some of them for myself!*

From a historical perspective, paladins were the elite warriors of Charlemagne's court. They were said to have represented Christian valor in the crusades against the Saracens. However, they also have a basis on the concept of religious clerics, as their name also relates to high ranking scholarly officials from Roman times. They were accorded special privilege because of their religious association.

Because of this religious warrior association, the group paladins are most often associated with in modern times are the Knights Templar, an elite cabal of holy warriors that were commissioned by the Catholic Church after the first Crusades to protect the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem from bandits. Unfortunately, they were given so much power and leeway that it eventually led to massive corruption. Many of their soldiers were said to have been more brutal than the bandits they were supposed to have protected people from. In fact, according to legend, when the Knights of Templar were disbanded in 1312 by Pope Clement, a great number of them took to the seas to exact revenge on anyone who happened to get in their way. At first, they flew the flag of the Templars (a great red cross on white) as they would attack and pillage ships. The flag had, at one time, been known as the "jolie rouge", which literally meant the "beautiful red" in French. However, as the barbarous tendencies of these men increased, they replaced the red cross on white with a much more sinister skull and crossbones on black and the grisly flag came to be known as the Jolly Roger!

So, with all that to say, are these Neo-Palidins some sort of religious warrior sect that has declared war on other parts of the country? If so, then why are they doing so? What is their crusade? The fact that these men referred to a witch hunt and a man being flayed alive brings up awful visual images.

The only geographical inference I can get from this vision comes from the fact that they were aware of something happening in Memphis. If this is the case, then that might mean this was somewhere in the State of Tennessee, perhaps Nashville? I will do research on this group in the morning, but something tells me that I'm not going to find anything. This seems like a group that will rise in the aftermath of the lawless apocalypse, feeding off the fear and paranoia therein.

The more my visions unfold, the more I remember the chilling passage from Judges that dealt with a lawless time in Israel's history:

"In those days, Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit."

In the chaotic vacuum of a world without law, what will men like these Neo-Palidins see fit to do? If what I overheard is to be trusted, they seem to be following the Templar pirates more closely than Charlemagne's Twelve Peers!

What's in a name...?

04 Oct

Am I losing it? Has the journalist that I was so lost it that I can't spell a word correctly? After I typed my last entire journal entry, I realized that I had misspelled "paladin" throughout the entire thing. And yet, as I look back on it, I don't think I did. The historical world was "paladin," which was pronounced *pal-ah-den*. Still no reason for my misspelling of the historical word, but the phrase from my vision that I overheard sounded like: *pal-ih-deen*. As such, I think that I spelled it correctly for whatever these warriors are. (Or is it: Paliden? Palideen?) I have to assume that my subconscious mind is guiding me as I write these things and, if so, my instinctive spelling is most likely to be correct. I must, therefore, believe that this group is known as: Neo-Palidins.

As I anticipated, I can't find anything that specifically details what these soldiers might be in current reality. In online culture, Neo-Paladins seem to have become a part of modern fantasy paper and card role playing games, some sort of magic religious warrior that can heal people. These appear far removed from the abject terror I observed in my visions. Whatever those things are, they seem much more in-tune with the darkness of humanity, not something that will heal it.

I'll put this on the list of things for Norman to look into for me. So far, he hasn't made any more headway with Texas and the current incarnation of these Knights of Xeno. What I wouldn't give to just have some sort of timeline of when these things were going to occur! I keep going back to that half QR code from my vision. Somehow I know that if I can find the other half I will be able to decode some of the mystery of when this will occur! How is it that I can see so clearly some of this mystery and be so perfectly blinded to the entirety of it! Is this how our normal perceptions are in comparison to God's?

I think I will stop my research for the day and go practice my throwing blades and target shooting. I'm getting better at that. Pete might have some local news for me, so I'll see if he wants to come along! Plus, I shall have to make him some of my newest survival delicacies, [Black Bean Brownies](#)! (Brownie mix and cans of black beans will likely survive long after this crash.)

The War of the Ark

30 Oct

After nearly a month spent trying to dig up information about these Neo-Palidins, I was at a complete dead end. I managed to, at long last, get ahold of Norman, but he hasn't found a single scrap of information about them. I even tried to getting ahold of some of my other friends from my undercover days. Of the ones that aren't dead or completely off the grid, no one had heard anything. The absence of information seems to confirm my suspicion that this group won't form until well after everything goes down.

Then, when I thought that the mystery would remain unsolved until the events actually occurred, my visions finally gave me an insight! I was working at my desk, looking through information I had collected and I found that I became mesmerized by a spot on the blank wall. As I looked at the wall, it was as though a picture of an abandoned street had been projected on the wall. While it was dim at first, the longer I looked at it, the more clear it became and the more it enfolded my vision.

A moment later, I found myself on that empty street, the chill afternoon wind blowing through my air. As I looked around, I saw that I was on the inner edge of a blockaded city. Although edged with broken and junked cars to form makeshift walls, the buildings were largely

undamaged. Moreover, as I looked closer, I realized this was one of the first post-collapse cities that I had found myself in that looked as though they had managed to keep going with most of the “modern world” about them. It almost seemed as though this was a sanctuary for the things that had been lost in the destruction.

I noticed a few well-maintained cars that were parked in the street and that had mostly Kentucky license plates on them. I also noticed solar panels that adorned roofs of buildings and I heard the sound of a few generators running, perhaps burning alcohol. With the pre-collapse alcohol industry in Kentucky, it would make sense that some of their cities would have been able to move the stills in and provide fuel for themselves.

As I looked around, I suddenly heard sirens begin to blare and yellow lights that I hadn't noticed on the eaves of buildings started to whirl angrily.

From loud speakers I heard a pre-recorded voice shout:

“Ark Citizens, this is Arch-Chancellor Newbill. We are currently experiencing a Level 2 intrusion. Please take shelter now, while we deal with the intruders. We will alert you when you may leave your residence.”

As the recording repeated itself, I saw two men—a tall blonde man and a short, stocky bald man—in makeshift battle fatigues and flack jackets, burst from a three story white washed house near me. The bald man was clutching a pump shotgun, while the blonde one seemed unarmed.

“When the hell is Rednesfeld going to change that damn message?! What’s the point of a damn coup if you leave all the trappings of the old regime?” The short man shouted as they hurried toward me.

“If we survive the Neos attack, I’m sure he’ll make it a high priority,” the tall man screamed back.

“Yeah, if he can figure out the damn tech,” the bald man returned acerbically as they passed me by. “After Smythe left, I told Mackelby that we shouldn’t have killed those Society fops until AFTER they’d shown us how to work things. But would he listen? No...”

As they moved past, I hurried to make sure I didn’t lose them so I could hear more.

“Damn technology is what brought the Palidins here!” The blonde man returned. “I’d be willing to let them destroy it if they’d leave us. The Society cared about preserving it. I don’t give a damn!”

“You know they’re not like the other ones. Tech’s a sin to them...anyone who has it is the infidel,” the short man picked up his pace as they got close to another building, this one a six story apartment building. “Only way to cleanse it in their bloody crusade is to destroy the tech and the people along with it.”

“Yeah, irony is they still keep the weapons they want,” the blonde man returned, grabbing the door to the apartment complex as we drew up on it. “Someone ought to bitching tell them weapons aren’t organic! They’re as tech as a computer or a com!”

I rushed in after them, caught suddenly in a bustle of men who all seemed to be dressed assorted pieces of battle armor, none of which was complete. Apparently this was the place for whatever militia protected this city to meet during a crisis. As I looked from the gaps in each man’s armor to the mix of hand guns, police shotguns, and hunting rifles, I realized that they were woefully under prepared for any but the most ill-armed foes.

At the end of one hall, I saw a series of stairs that seemed to lead up to the upper floors. Since I knew I was in a vision, I knew I had to hurry if I wanted to get any more information about these Palidins before I lost my chance.

Rushing past the men in the hall, I ran up the stairs. As I struggled up the stairs, I cursed that my vision-body was the same as my real world body, older and slower than I would have wished. At times like these, I wish Mark had encouraged me to exercise more, not just muck about with fake papers! Of course, what would I expect? Brothers who are pursuing a life of crime are rarely the most well-balanced parental figures! After the third flight, I was certain that my chest would explode. Somehow, I, eventually, got to the top.

I made my way down the upstairs hall until I came to the last two rooms on either side, both of which had their doors removed. Inside, there were a number of men with walkie-talkies looking through spotting scopes past the edges of the city and commenting on troop movements. Now that I could see over the makeshift walls, I could see the army of dark warriors approaching. Above them a great white flag with a strange black symbol flew.

While I couldn't pass through a person in this vision like a phantom, I was still unnoticed and unfelt by those around me. As such, when one of the men moved away from his spotting scope, I was able to peer through it and look at the army of attackers. While they seemed to be wearing a combination of traditional battle armors, it provided a high level of coverage, and their assorted armor had been painted black to give them a uniform look. On the breast of each chest piece was the spray painted logo that was on the flag, this time in white. They were well armed, with most of their guns apparently from the early 20th century: 1911 pistols, M1 Garrand rifles, sniper rifles of various manufactures, and, in the hands of a few select warriors, Thompson Sub-machine guns. (The civil uprisings around the cataclysm must have made ammo extremely scarce, so the presence of even a few sub-machine guns spoke either to this groups' actual power or, if they were ammo-less decoy weapons, their craftiness in psychological warfare.)

At that moment, the vision vanished and I found myself back in my room, in front of my desk. In a situation that may get more common as my visions occur, I discovered that I had drawn a picture of the symbol that was on the flag. It was this:



Now I will have to see if I can learn anything about this. I'll see if I can find some picture searching software that might be able to match it to something on the internet. Perhaps someone out there knows something about it. Perhaps someone else has had visions of this and can give me more information? Or maybe the symbol is currently tied to some other group who have not yet taken on the name of Neo-Palidins? It certainly doesn't look like an N or P in the symbol. (Of course, after my own recent thoughts about the Knights Templar, the skewed cross has me thinking of the red cross in their symbol.)

As I am exhausted, I really will have to go to bed. However, after writing this down, my head is still swirling. This doesn't seem like the anti-tech elements of the riots in my earlier visions. This is a fully developed group that has formed a religion in which technology and technology wielders are evil. *Where in Kentucky is this Ark they refer to? Who is the Society they talk about? How were they able to maintain so much technology in the collapse, yet not have decent weapons for defense? And who are "the other ones" that the Neo-Palidins aren't like?* So many questions and so much research left to do!

While part of me wonders if any of these visions really will help me save lives or prevent some of the devastation, I have to believe that they are coming to me for a reason, which, in turn, must mean that, if I stay alert, I will be able to do something. I may not be able to stay the hand

of prophecy, but I can at least do something to stand in the gap!

Reader Callout: Contact Me

02 Nov



If you are a [Dark Dreamer](#), please contact me with the visions you've had about the end. I'm trying to get a more full picture of what is to come and, to do that, I must have as many pieces as possible.

If you email me, you are doing so to help me with the work I am doing. I may repost your information specifically, but I will likely use your information in combination with others

to get a more complete vision of what is to come. I will then post the information as soon as I have it!

If you are trying to get in touch with other Dark Dreamers, I will try to facilitate it in any way that I can, because, only by realizing that you're not alone and that these visions are useful, will you not go mad!

Because of the fact that certain factions do not use QR code or know how to read it, I will most likely respond to any emails with a QR code. Make sure that you have the technology to read it, as I may need your aid when I contact you! (While smartphones make it easy to download this technology, if you do not have one, I have found ones that work directly with computers which I've [listed in my research](#).)

Dark Dreamers...

02 Nov

After three days of searching, I haven't found anything definitive out about these Neo-Palidins (*Palideens?*). However, I'm beginning to wonder if my prophetic visions actually are limited to myself in regards to the impending disaster. As I searched the internet with the new graphic search engine Norman permitted me to test, I found a blog by a woman who had part of these Neo-Palidin's logo painted in red. (I assume she painted it herself after a vision.) She seemed to have only been able to observe a part of the symbol in her vision, so she was exploring the idea that it might be related to the Anarchy symbol, or perhaps one of the Templar symbols.

Because of her own queries, I did decide to send her a coded question about the Neo-Palidins. Her own research must be tied into my own, for she was able to decode and respond to my message. Unfortunately, she's run into a dead end as I have. Still the fact that she's on the same track as I am means that I'll need to contact her more in the future to see if she's willing to help me try to find these answers. If she's as haunted by these visions as I am, she must be frantic to figure out these mysteries as I am. As such, perhaps she'd welcome helping me solve them!

The fact that I've found someone else who seems to be having these visions makes me wonder if there might be other dark prophets out there? Are there other visionaries who see the impending cataclysm and, like Cassandra from Greek Mythology, can't get anyone to listen to them? Or sadly, are there those who have chosen to write off their visions as delusion, or, on the other side, become so obsessed by them that they've been institutionalized?

The prophecies of most world religions agree that, at the end of ages, people will start to develop strange abilities, most notably those related to prophesy and clairvoyance. Three thousand years ago, the prophet Joel foresaw that:

"In the last days...your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will see dreams."

He goes on to say that these prophetic gifts will reveal what is to come: a time of "blood and fire and billows of smoke" that will blot out the sun. That certainly sounds like the lawless apocalypse that I've seen in my visions! If this is correct, then there must be others out there that are having these dark visions, receiving glimpses of what leads up to this. Hopefully I can help them realize that they are not alone, because, if we could all pool the secrets of our dark dreams together, we might be able to construct a more complete timeline of what is to come...and, with a more complete picture, know what best to do!

If you are one of these who is troubled by your dark visions, dreams that seems more real than you're used to and show the chaos which is to come, you may well have been entrusted with a crucial clue. Now that this journal is online, if you have searched and come upon this, then hopefully you already understand that there's no way to shut these dreams off. The only way to work through them is to help unravel the mysteries. To do that, you'll need the help of all of us. We are the Dark Dreamers who see what is to come. Let us bring what we have together, to shine the light into the darkness!

If you've been having visions about the riots, the Neo-Palidins, strange codes, or anything that seems too real to be a dream, please [contact me directly](#). I now have a secured way of getting email out to me. If you know of someone who has been having more and more vivid nightmares that sound like what I've discussed, please have them get in touch with me, as well.

The more data we can get, the more likely we are to save lives—*some of those lives might easily be people who are important to you!*

Remember...you are *not* insane and your are *not* alone!

A Darker Horror Still To Come

06 Nov

After putting out my invitation, I'm starting to hear from a few Dark Dreamers. The information they've provided so far gives more looks at a series of riots during the initial chaos. While most of the visions I've heard of haven't given us additional names or dates to work with, one thing seems clear: these visions are from the very near future. While we do not have a timeline, if another year, two at the most, occurs before this cataclysm, I will be surprised.

Adding to my own apprehension, I had another dream last night, this one was perhaps the most disturbing, because it was with none of the chaos I associate with the initial uprisings and civil unrest. Instead, it was with merciless efficiency, like the gas chambers at Auschwitz..

When I entered my dream, it began with blackness and the sound of screams, hoarse French prayers, and banging so loud that I could barely hear myself think.

A moment later, my vision resolved itself and I found myself standing by a cobbled road in front of two men, an older one and a younger one, in black and gray battle armor. Behind them, blocking my view of anything else, was an armored battle vehicle of some sort I didn't

recognize. Both the logo on the vehicle and their uniforms had the initials “N.I.R.” (I have no idea what it stands for, but it’s something I had better learn.) At first, I was anxious to leave these men and find out what the screams were about, but I found that, unlike some visions where I could move about, in this one, I might as well have been a tripod-mounted camera, rooted in one spot. While I was anxious to see what was happening, I had to accept that my vision would determine the pace I gained information in. With my experience working in war torn countries, I was able to tune out the screams and hear the words they spoke.

They were speaking Spanish, which I learned at a young age, as many of my brothers non-connected clients were native Spanish speakers.

“...Think that makes them understand our resolve.” The elder commented wryly.

“Why do the French even think to stand against us?” The younger scoffed, shaking his head. “They’ve never stood up to anyone before and no one has been as strong as we are.”

“It’s just one town. The rest will think differently when they see what we do to rebels.” The elder man concluded. “What we offer is the future. Those who do not understand this, will not have a future.”

The conversation ended, the younger man got into the front seat of the vehicle and started the engine. The elder man got into the back of the vehicle and they drove away, finally permitting me to see the scene that the vehicle had obstructed.

In the distance, atop a hillside, there was a small town burning, smoke wafting into the afternoon sun. The road that led to it was lined with hundreds and hundreds of crosses, bearing the still struggling victims of this barbaric method of killing. (I tried to paint it with my meager painting skills, but I could do the horror justice. Still, it is better than nothing!)



The Atrocities of the Group Known Only as the N.I.R.

In the middle distance, there were more soldiers and more vehicles, many of which loaded with lumber. The soldiers systematically were constructing a cross, then would hold down another flailing human, and nail their wrists and ankles with some sort of machine to the cross.

As I looked down the road, I realized that there were some smaller crosses in which children had been hung to die. I wished I could look away, but my head wouldn't turn from the sight as I realized that there were small bloody piles of clothing that lying in front of some of the crosses which bore women. I didn't need a closer look to know that these would be the corpses of these women's babies.

Most scholars are aware that Titus crucified thousands and thousands of Jews in his conquest of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but you don't realize the horror of it until you see people struggling, unable even to die until they've finally suffocated from the strain the nails put upon them. (In the days of the original crucifixions, "merciful" centurions were those who would break the legs of the person being crucified, so they'd suffocate faster.) To see it being so "efficiently" brought back into service is far more terrifying than all the riots and visions I've had so far.

Fortunately, I awoke shortly thereafter, covered in sweat. At first I tried everything to not think of the vision, but, I realized soon enough, if any of those people may be saved, I must try to unravel who they are and why they were attacked so brutally.

What does the N.I.R. signify and why have they brought back the brutal custom of crucifixion, especially *en masse*? The fact that they seemed to have access to working technology makes me believe that this is some time after the uprisings and riots. A military government of some sort led by some sort of brutal warlord, I must imagine, who somehow managed to preserve the technology he needed. I've seen plenty of this sort of thing in Africa, but not for many years in Europe. Nonetheless, Europe has boasted some of the most ruthless and vicious governments, from Hitler to Mussolini to Nero, so why should this be surprising? Of course, the fact that they seemed to believe that their group was more powerful than anyone before is very troubling. While all young soldiers for all doomed warlords believe that their reign will last forever, there seemed a reality to his words that was stronger than just the *braggadocio* of the young.

In the mean time, if any Dark Dreamers out there have had visions related to this, please contact me immediately.

The Madness...

07 Nov

I awoke this morning realizing where the victims of the French Crucifixion were. They're from Southern Edge of France. I didn't make the connection before, despite the language of the N.I.R. soldiers! Now I'm horrified!

Have I lost my mind completely? Why have I envisioned a disaster coming to the southern edge of France, other than to try to atone for my sins! My God, am I really even here in this house...or am I still under observation? They said most people wouldn't have kept their sanity through this. I always thought they were wrong, but, now, I'm not sure.

If I'm sane, then why did the visions come to me only after I did it? Was it so that I could see a darker future and believe that what happened was Divinely appointed—a better alternative? Why did I move here, so close to a man who hates me, if not to act out my own penance? And now, the South of France? Has my maddened mind given me another windmill to joust at—some new futile way for me to do something productive, since I can't undo what I did nor can I even warn my pupil, who I cared so much for!

Maybe that's all I am...a mad man in a cell, babbling about the end of the world!

Repeating over and over his worn mantra, "I hate myself, I hate myself, I hate myself."

I can barely focus on the things before me as I try to figure out whether any of it is real.

Doubt...

08 Nov

If you're reading this because reality is the way I perceive it, then I must not be mad. If you're not reading this because it doesn't exist, then this is likely nothing more than the internal monologue of a severely disturbed and detached man whose mind snapped under duress.

The interesting thing, as I fretted and prayed throughout the night is the realization that it doesn't matter. If I believe what I say is accurate, then I must try to warn people. If this is all in my head, then this is my mind's way of allowing me to atone. Perhaps, if I behave as the man I want to be, at the end of it all, I'll retrieve my sanity.

I knew a young man once who said that, of the heart of Doubt, it is "praying for what you do not want." Faith is surrendering your doubts as an act of free will and allowing God to rework your desires to match His. If this is the case, then I freely give my doubts to Him. The truth is, regardless of whether I'm right or wrong, my doubts will do nothing but prevent me from acting. If this is a Divine quest, then I must do as He would have me do. If it's madness, I still must do as I should, so that I might eventually get to the heart of the madness.

With that said, I must assume that I am sane and make my decisions based on that. Regardless of the locations, I must assume that they are accurate and that they are revealed to me so that I may make the future a better place than it would otherwise be.

As the prophet said, "*I looked for a man to stand in the gap...*"

The Fall

08 Nov

Later.

After my breakdown yesterday, I've gotten back to my research and looked for those who are behind the atrocities that I've seen. I checked the coded emails and found that a few of our Dark Dreamers have heard a name for the cataclysm in their dreams: The Fall. Astounding in its simplicity, I wonder that I never stumbled upon it for a description!

While none seem to have discovered the other part of the QR code that may link us to information about the initial attacks, it is strangely settling to have a name that seems official to go with this lawless apocalypse.

Unfortunately, my attempts to contact Dark Dreamers have worked against us after the initial email I put up was methodically hacked by some mysterious programmers after my post about the crucifixions. We shut down the individual elements of it and now we are rebuilding it separately. (Fortunately, in the process, I was able to intercept the fact that one of our Dark Dreamers attempted to contact me about some of the research she's been doing. While whatever data was lost, hopefully I can reconnect!)

Norman says that a special runthrough via a separate site will allow him to patch the content through safely. A targeted legal checkbox will permit those who are unaffiliated with foreign powers to pass things along, but will lock out those who would try to hack it. I don't understand it all, but I trust him.

In the mean time, Norman says he's found a special site that seems to be passing random messages between intelligence and subversive communities. If so, then I will have to see if those who've been following the clues can track down these elements!

Old Wounds

15 Nov

The last few days, I've been working on the most important elements of outfitting the house for the Fall. Unfortunately, we ran into the one of the things I was afraid of: metalwork. According to Pete, the number of types of bullets that can pierce regular walls is staggering. Full metal plating on the inner house is what we need. Further, some of the traps absolutely require custom smithing and welding.

I so prayed that there was some sort of workaround...that there was a way we could avoid this, but there's not. I know who I need, but I know that he hates me. Hell, I hate me! How could he not?

Why, why, why did I move here? Why so close? Am I such a masochist? Of course, he'd likely brand me a sadist because he can't see that the only thing that exceeds his loathing of me is my own self-loathing.

At the end of the day, my why's and self-hate aren't important. He's the only one in the area and, despite his opinion, he's the only one I would trust to see the inner secrets of my

house. I've got to talk to him...I've got to pray that he's willing to take my money and do what I need, even if he thinks me mad. Perhaps it will suit him to take the money of a man driven mad by the damage he caused.

Although I know Pete is right, that I must face my own demons, I'm not quite there yet. (I haven't even had the nerve to tell him where my last vision was located.) As such, I will spend the rest of the night trying to contact Jenna. Perhaps if I can get through to her, if I can make her listen, I will have the courage to face Ryan.

A Gift Wrapped in Shards of Glass

16 Nov

As I couldn't find anything other than Jenna's blog (which is full of cryptic cyphers and codes, most of which I don't even know the key for) and I'm honestly not sure how often she checks it, I decided to call my friend Pierre, who works for the Swiss government.

I was the one who first introduced Jenna to him and I knew she'd worked with him many times since then, so I thought he might have an actual contact for whatever new disposable cell phone or message service she uses. In the end, she took to heart what a her mentor, a former criminal, had taught her on stealth and became a far more talented shadow than I ever was!

When I finally got ahold of him, Pierre said that he hadn't heard from Jenna in over a month and, even then, she only gave him the number for her disposable. However, he did have something that she had left for me. Since she knew that I would eventually contact Pierre, she had set up a special digital lockbox in one of the servers. He was instructed to give me the account number and password when I came to ground, explaining that it would only open at a precise time of day. She had said that I would know what time to access it.

As soon as I heard him say it, I *knew* what time it *must* be. The moment in time I will never forget, no matter what happens.

My God, Jenna, is the wound not bad enough? You were always a daughter me. Must you rub my face in my physical betrayal...my shame?

As it's too late to access it today, I will have to check it tomorrow.

I said I would wait for only a day until I talked to Ryan, but, with this on my heart, I could no more talk to him today than fly to the moon. I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I pray that it will give me enough courage to survive.

Mad Men Know No Shame

17 Nov

I slept hardly at all last night, keyed up. I did my best to release my fear and worry, but it tore at me like a canker. Ripping through me in a way that I can't help.

"4:08 PM, Central." The moment my life was destroyed and I was rebuilt, turned into something I didn't even recognize and couldn't stand. And as I waited, as every minute crawled past, I checked that damn Rolex, praying the time had arrived so I could stop reinforcing the agony by looking at the memento. Sometimes I wonder why I don't get rid of it...it won't be worth nearly its present value after the Fall. But I can't bear to give it up. Somehow I hope that it will connect me to her...that perhaps, at the last, it will make the difference.

When the time finally arrived, my password permitted me access to the account, at which point a note popped into my screen:

The message hadn't even been converted into QR code, which doubtless means she thinks I really have lost most of my mind. As I sat staring at the message, I was at first overcome by the shame and humiliation. Not only did I have to revisit my sins, but my own student had felt

so guilty for what had happened to the man she'd learned from that she'd sent him a vast sum of money rather than contact him directly.

Dear Gavin,

You must think me heartless for choosing this Time of Day. I wish I didn't have to compound your hurt, but this was the only time I knew you'd remember. Even through the confusion, I knew that this time would stay with you. You must think me doubly callous for not returning your messages or emails, after all you've done for me. But I just can't. If I truly care for you, then you need help processing what's happened, not someone to encourage this fantasy. I don't know how to do that for you. However, hopefully this account can help you get the best help available. I didn't want you to spend it on more of your delusions, so it'll be locked until a confirmed psychiatric institute accesses it for you. While it's in U.S. Dollars currently, it'll convert to whatever money you need based on what treatment you choose. As you doubtless know, some of the best facilities are in Germany and Switzerland. Please get help! I'm begging you.

Regardless of what you choose, I will never forget what you've done for me!

-Jenna

At first, I just sat there, stunned.

However, after awhile, the shame began to recede as I began to think about the money and realized that I had no more time for the past. When I looked at the now accessible account, I realized that she'd managed to use the skills I taught her very effectively, as the gift she had given was **\$500,000 USD**.

As I looked with disbelief at the number, a plan began to form in my mind.

Jenna may have thought to lock it away, but she locked it away from Gavin. Just as she was now a different woman than the girl I trained, my questionable sanity was not the only thing that's changed about me, either. I may not be able to thwart her optimistic ideals myself, but I knew one man who could help me move it where it needed to go.

Ironically, as my mind began to chew on it, I realized that Jenna's suggestion would in fact be taken to heart. Germany was a good place to consider. Just not for sanitariums!

Facing the past...

19 Nov

I'd pushed it off long enough. Norman helped me with my idea and was busy finding the right German official for our needs. One for whom the price was right and who had an attractive enough pile of dirt to use as bait.

Since there was no possibility of directly tracking down my charge, at least not now, I had to move on with what I'd been putting off: *Ryan*.

Pete said he'd come with me, but I told him I needed to do it myself. As I walked toward his home, barely a half mile away, I didn't know really how to approach him. I vaguely had two ideas floating about: either talk with Ryan as a man interested in hiring him to work on his home or as a relative interested in sharing Thanksgiving. I hoped I'd get an idea for which when I actually saw him. We'd barely spoken in the six months since I'd moved here, even if he is the closest thing to blood I have left.

With a prayer on my heart, I left this evening. The red-tinged lamps in his forge and welding workshop were out, but the yellow lights in his house beside them were on. As I drew

closer, I smelled cinnamon and thought of *her*. Timidly, I peeked through the kitchen window and noticed him decorating a cake. Cakes had always been something she'd loved and Ryan continued to make them in remembrance of her. I smiled despite the pain, watching the man who must hate me frost the cake atop a welded display case. I read the words he was piping, and, as I read them, I realized the date. The tears sprang to my eyes as I made out the word: "*Happy 3rd Birthday, Junebug.*"

The memories came back so quickly then and I couldn't stop them as they flooded over me.

My granddaughter was born June Elizabeth Franklin three years ago today. *If not for me, she might still be alive.*

I hadn't been much of a father to my daughter, Susan. Her mother and I split up after only a couple of years, citing mutual differences, which really meant I was too career driven to figure out how to stay connected. I tried to stay connected with Sue, but I just couldn't seem to interact with her any more than I could her mother. In the end, it was easier for me to hide as a journalist in the far reaches of the world, then it was to stay at home in Chicago and be the man I should've been. I'd send her postcards and knickknacks when I could, but until she was grown,

we'd never had a conversation. It wasn't until after I'd been back in Chicago for awhile that it'd finally changed—and then only because of another “daughter.”

I regretted being so close to my daughter and not having the courage to talk to her, but I didn't seem to know how to change it. I'd go over the ways I might make it work, but it never fit...I could never get past pale excuses that sounded hollow in my own ears. In the midst of my isolation, I met Jenna, a young reporter who had more experience in her young life than many journalists twice her age. With her blonde hair, vivacious attitude, and health problems, she had reminded me of what I thought my daughter must be like. With Jenna's own abandonment issues from her own father, I had an opportunity to try to behave like the father she needed. I showed her what care I could, trying to do for her what I had never been able to do for my daughter. As she decided that she wanted to leave the U.S. and go out into the world, my training and connections would give Jenna the inroads into the undercover world she hungered for. However, before she left, she turned her investigative skills into my own life.

Although I hadn't spoken of her in-depth, Jenna ended up finding out about my daughter Susan and, uncovering that that she was in her masters program at the U of I, arranged a meeting with her. Going as a Chicago Tribune reporter doing a piece on graduate student life, she revealed her ulterior motives only after she had a chance to get to know Susan a bit. Susan hadn't realized that I was back in the States and, with a kindness of heart that I can't imagine, she chose to meet me. Susan and I spent the next two years slowly getting to know one

another. While we had some misunderstandings, she gave me the chance to get to know her and I gave her a chance to actually share the woundedness my abandonment had caused her. Our relationship slowly grew and I began to believe that we would not be separated again.

During the second to last year in her masters program, she had taken a YMCA-sponsored wilderness survival course and was extremely excited to try it out in the real world. Remembering that I had told her that we had some family land out here, she asked for permission to come out here “into the wilderness” during her break. I had been hesitant, especially due to the asthma she’d always had, but she promised to take along some of her girlfriends and stay near the house, so I had relented. I had thought the danger here would be to her physical well-being, but it turned out to be to her heart. During her stay, she met a local welder who was a few years older than she was and they stayed in touch when she returned to school. During the last year of her post-graduate work, she and Ryan had grown closer and their relationship had flourished. By the time she graduated with a masters in English Education, she had decided she would come out here and see if she could make it work with him.

She found a job as an English teacher in the local high school and, a year later, they were married. Despite my belief that I didn’t deserve it, she had me walk her down the aisle. It was, perhaps, the proudest moment of my life. Ryan may have been a bit standoffish with me at first, but I liked the burly, shaved headed man. He loved my daughter and I could tell that he would protect her. Moreover, I knew that he wouldn’t be like me, seduced by wanderlust. The next

year, June was born and I took every opportunity to come out and see her. For the first time in my life, I was well and truly happy.

When Susan and June wanted to come out and visit granddad over Susan's spring break earlier this year, I had been nearly as excited as they were. I planned on showing my granddaughter all the places in Chicago that I'd never gotten to show Susan as a child. When they arrived the first night, we put June to bed, and Susan and I stayed up long into the night talking. The next day, we were off to Wrigley Field to a Cubs home game. It might've been a bit optimistic to take a two and a half year old, but her mother and I thought it would be fun, nonetheless.

Unfortunately, we never got to the ballpark, because, four blocks from our destination, an SUV ran a stoplight and smashed into the passenger side of my sedan. They tell me my daughter and granddaughter were killed instantly. I was in a coma for a week. When I came out of it, I was greeted with the loss of my rediscovered family and the cold stares of my ex-wife and son-in-law. Ryan said he understood and that I wasn't to blame, but the hollow look in his eyes said that he could never forget that I was behind the wheel when his life was snuffed out. My ex-wife's eyes just said the words that I was repeating in my heart like a mantra, "*everything you touch, you break!*"

Unable to cope with the grief, I very nearly went mad under the strain. Eventually, I surrendered myself to the God I had known as a child and begged Him to trade my life for my daughter and granddaughter. While he never gave me the desire of my heart, after that day, the visions started. I saw the darkness of what was to come, of what the Fall would mean. I couldn't bring back Susan or June, but I could try to save others.

My devotion to this new cause made my devotion to my careers seem pale in comparison. As far as the world was concerned, I'd gone mad in my grief. The visions even alienated me from the closest thing I had to another daughter in Jenna. Her part in reuniting me with Susan must've made her feel even more responsible for my mental "collapse." It's no wonder she wouldn't talk to me anymore. *(Of course, when all the men you've known have abandoned you or used you, you learn to distance yourself as soon as you think you might get hurt.)*

When I lost my jobs at the Tribune and CNN, I decided to move to the plot of land where my daughter had once stayed. It was the only place that was still open to me. Perhaps part of me had wanted to be close to the one other person who had truly known my daughter well...the man who was still family. We'd tried to talk when I first moved out, but everything had died on our lips. It was all too fresh, too new, and too hard.

Now, as I stood outside his door, weeping on my granddaughter's birthday, I felt ashamed that I had no gift to bring. I nearly turned around at that moment, nearly fled back to my house.

However, I realized that I had one gift with me that he would treasure. I had the last day with his wife and daughter. I might not be able to bring them back or trade my life for them, but I could share those memories with the one man who would cherish them as much as I did.

With a soft prayer, I knocked on his door, the tears still wet on my face. Perhaps because of the day, or because I was crying, or because he'd already had a bit to drink, he didn't throw me out. Instead, he invited me in and asked me to have cake...and bourbon. The cinnamon cake reminded us both of Susan and the sprinkled frosting reminded us of June. The liqueur eased our tongues and hearts enough to share our memories, but not so much as to let loose the rage. Ryan eventually imbibed enough that he began to pass out and, after tucking him in, I made my way back here.

I can't go to sleep yet. The power of these memories and the catharsis of the night has left me strangely wired, despite the alcohol. I have no idea if this has mended things with me and Ryan or if he'll even remember our conversation in the morning. I hope he does, but I have no idea.

Thanksgiving pall...

22 Nov

We decided to celebrate Thanksgiving on the 22nd, because Pete had a group of hunters coming in on the actual Thanksgiving day. After our conversation earlier this month, Ryan had invited us to have it at his place. However, when I reconfirmed the next day, much of the kinship we had shared in our grief seemed to have evaporated. I was afraid that this would be the case, that too much alcohol loosened his tongue, but also blotted out his memories.

I hoped if we all got together for Thanksgiving, however, it would make it better. Unfortunately, the day was more somber than joyful, almost as awkward as if we'd been at the funeral together (rather than me in a coma throughout it). Pete had recently hunted one of the wild boars nearby and had roasted it in the earth in the manner of the Hawaiians, as I've never been partial to turkey. And we had raisin spiced stuffing, mashed potatoes with country gravy, beer bread, and a pumpkin cake that Ryan made. It was all very delicious and Pete did everything to try to keep the conversation going, but, too often, things grew somber.

Eventually, after we had all spent a few hours together, we helped clean up the meal and departed. I know Ryan likely returned to the bottle when we left but, God help me, I couldn't think of a thing to say to ease his pain. I pray that his suffering ends one day. Hell, I pray that

my suffering ends one day.

Another violent dream...

30 Nov

I awoke this morning from another feverish nightmare. Another vision of a mob on rampage. Unlike some of my other visions, this one happened in daylight in a city square, so violent that cars had been turned over in the streets. I saw people rushing past the cars, trying to stay alive and unharmed as smaller roving bands sought to molest and abduct the unprotected.



In the midst of the confusion, a man in tan pants and a light blue shirt was marched out into the street, shaking and fearful. Words were uttered in the harsh dialect that I recognized from my years overseas as being Czech, although I don't know what was said. The man was

suddenly released before the crowd, who threw bricks and rocks the size of softballs at his unprotected body and head. He tried to stumble away, but a brick to his temple dropped him to the ground where the rest of their missiles finished the job. The hatred in their eyes was palpable and I wondered what this man had done to deserve such rage.

To my horror, I realized his crime, for one of the people who had brought him lofted a keycard in a plastic bag in the air. The cards of the Internet Illuminati, just as in Burkina Faso! A fire was quickly kindled in the street as people brought broken furniture, scrap lumber, and alcohol to form a massive inferno. The card was fed to the blaze like a virgin to an angry volcano!

As I awoke from the violence and gathered my wits, I realized that we now knew of of two cards that would not survive the conflagration of the Fall. I realized that Norman would need to be appraised as soon as possible and lost no time emailing him the information.

New Information...

04 Dec

Norman contacted me today. He says that he's found a German official of questionable loyalties...a man by the name of Golen. Additionally, he's found a programmer from Israel who claims to be responsible for Stuxnet, the virus designed to infiltrate the Iranian nuclear complex. Both men seem to be right men for the job. In the end, I pray Jenna forgives me, but I believe it is one of the best things we might do.

God help us all.

The secrets to finding the attackers...

10 Dec

In the midst of our other preparations, Norman tells me that he's heard from one of his contacts that claims that there is a company who provides their services to terror and espionage groups by selling space through strange looking T-shirts in their online store. He believes that, if there is a chance of our intercepting the QR codes associated with the attacks from my visions, it may well come through this store. He's still trying to figure out what this site is and what it's name is, but the rumors he's heard so far are very promising. Apparently even finding out the name of the store requires a certain level of credibility with certain organizations, while the actual link is even more difficult to obtain!

Even if we get all this information, we won't know when they will post the information we seek. Once we do have the starting spot, however, I believe I will contact one of the researchers I trust with my secrets to see if she can find this code for us! Prayerfully she will, because, when the time comes, our ability to minimize the losses of the Fall may well hang in the balance of her vigilance!

The watchers...

17 Dec

I find myself more terrified today than I know. After Norman and I's conversation was cut short by the cyber attack yesterday, I wonder if my location has been compromised. I'm fearful that the work I'm striving to accomplish will be unfinished if I am killed by whatever mysterious agency watches what I do and proclaim! I have no idea where the data has gone, because it hasn't arrived in the FTP server I set up. Norman can't seem to get a handle on who the hacker was who intercepted our conversation, a situation that should've been impossible. If this person can do the impossible, could he have intercepted the FTP feed? If so, then he or she must suspect that I am right, which would make them terribly dangerous!

Only one thing sets my mind more at ease than it was yesterday. I am told that the CDs she gave the German did not have the files on them, but had the wipe signature that proved that she had wiped her computer after she FTP'd the files. So long as his information is corrected, that's one less group that has the codes and I pray her cleverness gave her some way of protecting the information from other prying eyes. Only time will tell if my gambit was successful, or if it will fail as far too many other things in my life have failed!

Christmas...

25 Dec

Well, it was as nice a Christmas as it perhaps could have been, under the circumstances.

Ryan's buried himself in a bottle once more, and when I went by to find out if he wanted to spend Christmas with me and Pete a few days ago, he actually threatened to shoot me. While I know he doesn't truly wish to kill me, when you're staring at a drunken, hurting man with a Beretta shakily pointed at you, you don't feel inclined to press your luck. It grieves me to see the part I've played in this tragedy, but I pray that he'll get out of the bottle before he drinks himself to death. It occurs to me that I don't even know if he survives the Fall! *Dark visions of future prophecy, you curse my life more than I can bear!*

Speaking of which, I've had no dreams for awhile and, despite the damage they do to me, I find that I can't help but wonder what omen the lack of them represent.

Last night, Pete came over and we attempted to make a fondue in one of my big cast iron pots, out on the snowy front yard over a blazing fire. (Because, of course, I'm trying to prepare as much as possible for what we'll have to rely on after the Fall.) However, I had chosen the

wrong mix of cheeses for the fondue and it ended up becoming a strangely stringy mess. We still dipped some crusty bread and biscuits into it, and it tasted alright. Not like the fondues I used to put on in Chicago, but not too bad, all told.

As a special treat, I mixed up some truffle cream with my special recipe of two cups of whipped cream cheese, two cups of sour cream, a handful of chives, a handful of chopped bacon, a handful of chopped red onion, salt and pepper to taste, and a teaspoon of white truffle oil. All mixed together, it's a delicious treat when spread on boiled potatoes or crackers. As such, since I had boiled some potatoes on the stove in case things went awry with our outdoor fondue, we banked the fire and went inside.

As we lathered the potatoes with truffle cream and feasted on them with some white wine I had purchased earlier in the week, we talked about our past. I reminisced about my daughter (the few years I had had with her) and about Jenna. Pete reminisced about his daughter, who he'd never met but whom the private eye he hired told him lived in the South of France. I listened to him talk about how he planned to save up some more money and go out there to meet her. I'd heard him say this before and wondered if he would have the courage to do it any more than I had had the courage to approach my own daughter without Jenna's help. Yet again, I chose not to tell him about my darkest vision. There was no telling when it would occur or if it would be anywhere near where his daughter was (or even if she would survive the Fall in the first place).

After we finished our meal and our reminiscences, we fell fast asleep inside, slumped on the floor beside the tiny Christmas tree I had insisted on. When we awoke this morning, we gave each other gifts. He gave me a hand forged set of throwing knives, which I thanked him profusely for, and I gave him a 20x scope for his favorite hunting rifle that I had gotten from a Swiss optics company. He pronounced it the finest gift he'd ever received.

We had some eggs, roasted potatoes, and wild boar bacon—which, because of the lower fat content, reminds me more of ham—along with some of the remaining truffle cream. After that, Pete decided to head off for home. All in all, it was as nice a Christmas as could be underneath the shadow of what's to come. The special pastry set I got for Ryan will have to wait until I can take it over to his house when he's less likely to shoot me.

Meanwhile, I still haven't found out which site Norman has located in regards to this group that's planning the attacks. I wish we could get moving with things a bit more readily. Oh well, nothing to do for it now, but to wait. I think I'll go out and practice with my new throwing knives!

Trying to unravel the mysteries of Deep Thoughts...

16 Jan

My stupid computer continues to act up. Somehow the stability built into making it “secure” means it in fact acts bizarre in other areas! On a positive note, the calendar did set forward a year, rather than resetting again back to 2008! At least now there will be some way for people to read these journals without having them a jumbled mess. Of course, if enough time remains before the Fall, I’ll have to see about printing these out in a way that people can readily read them!

Our investigation continues. The name of the company Norman has found is called Deep Thoughts, a splinter front for all sorts of nasty groups. After last month’s hacking attack I can’t publish the link to this site lest unwanted attention start being focused on us here. (A few special researchers have been given access, but direct access here is too dangerous.) As such, I will simply post the image for public consumption of their rather banal logo:



Deep Thoughts Logo

According to the research Norman's been able to uncover, it seems that this company sells T-shirts for private "investors." These investors send money and a message to this company, who then sell a T-shirt with the message on their website. Priced with ridiculous prices and bearing all strange forms of writing, glow and the dark information, and secrets, each shirt seems to carry a bizarre message for some rogue or shadow group. Norman assures me that a group that's known to use QR codes as their primary instruction set are rumored to be setting up a buy. Unfortunately, we still don't know when this is going down, so we've had private investigators watching the site to see if anything shows up.

Of course, the truth is, technically, any group could use QR codes. However, I'm betting that my visions are revealed to me in a way that I need to know. As such, the fact that I found half a QR code in a vision makes me believe that I will be led to discover the other half somewhere else. Hopefully I'm correct in that, or I'm wasting a lot of people's time!

Watching the signs...

23 Jan

There are many that believe the Fall of mankind will be presaged by signs in the heavens. While many people know the Bible famously talks about these things, most are unaware of how many tribal peoples have these things as part of their oral history. (The one exception to Western Cultural awareness, of course, is the famous Mayan 2012 prophecy—but it could be easily argued that had Hollywood not made so many films about it, it would have passed with few people even realizing! Of course, with the fervor that was raised with the media, I remember how scared people were when the date came. It was like the 2000 panic all over again!) Many people don't realize that certain religious and cultural elements are supported in multiple cultures. For example, the story of Noah and the Flood, found in the Torah (and the Christian Old Testament), is repeated in many cultures all over the world. Some use this to doubt the validity of Judeo-Christian teachings (believing they borrowed their teachings from others), but this actually reinforces these books' tenants that there was once a single culture that experienced a devastating flood and that a select few were permitted to survive. So many people refute religious texts without having read them or actually done adequate research! (The Bible, for example, has an amazing amount of secular support surrounding it from the time it was written. Many doubt the existence of the Christian Messiah, Jesus Christ—or has he would have been known in that day “Yeshua”—yet not only was his existence supported in secular texts, but the Roman historian, Josephus, even claimed he was “born of a virgin.”)

Of course, why should the lack of appropriate follow through in our culture distress me? Much of our education is formulated by scientists that have long since discarded the scientific method in exchange for expedience and personal preference. Children are now raised to believe that mankind was never alive during the time of dinosaurs, yet every world culture, from Native American to Greek to Chinese have ancient carvings and writings about “dragons.” Such scientists would have us believe that primitive man found fossil bones and created a full representation of a dinosaur (or dragon, as the term may be) with no technology with which to do it!

At the end, with our lack of awareness of the past and our unwillingness to truly explore what is before us, we will be responsible for our own downfall. And, of course, our lack of training to survive outside our sheltered modern lives will kill off far more of us than the attacks or the riots! When the infrastructure breaks down for good, people who have relied too much on society, government ,and technology to take care of them won't begin to know how to survive in nature or fend for themselves at all! Rather than try to hunt or forage, they will turn to violence against their fellow survivors to try to feed themselves, but, when all those they prey on have been killed, they too will perish, unable to survive!

History foreshadows in smaller tableaus what will come eventually. I remember years ago when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and people stayed in their homes to die in the water, when, because of a week's advanced warning, they could have easily walked to safety.

Instead, rather than leave to move to safer ground, they relied on government agencies to rescue them and died for their choices.

Now I try to learn more of the ancient teachings and the prophecies that exist, to watch the signs that arise. Pine Pete has taught me many of the things to be aware of in nature...the movements of animals...the shifting hues of the skies...the changing of the weather. I believe the world around will reflect the danger shortly before it comes upon us. If we can't figure out a more concrete date of the attacks, it might well be the only warning we get!

The Iron Clockwork Eagle...

01 Feb

After almost forgetting of this dark chapter, they re-appear on the radar. So concerned were we with these watchers and the codes hidden, that we had let down our guard about one of the players in the Fall: The Knights of Xeno.

Now it becomes apparent that they continue to grow and infiltrate further. One of our researchers found a website that has been created by them and it reveals their logo: the Iron Clockwork Eagle. The tenants of their founder seem to want to roll back time, spouting a mantra that makes those who follow them seem as the only true patriots left. The knowledge I have of their involvement in the destruction of the Fall leaves these words ringing hollow! So far, little information is on the site, but it may be that it is a “front stoop”—a specialized site that offers a secret entrance only for those who’ve been previously authorized. Norman searches to find where the access might be, but, so far, without any more success than our researchers who watch Deep Thoughts.

I find that it unnerves me to no end that they are becoming more blatant! Again, I will not publish the link to their site here, lest increased traffic reveal our nature, but perhaps other Dark Dreamers will pass it along! With that said, here is the logo they use from their site:



I wish we knew more about the other players in the darkness of the Fall! My visions have abandoned me for the time being, and I feel so lost.

Valentine's Remembrance Day...

15 Feb

The winter is getting to all of us. We're caught in a world that is cutting off our breathing like a noose! When the hell will this damned thing occur, after all?? The visions haven't come to me again and I'm growing more terrified of the absence. It's like you get so used to these dark messengers that, no matter how horrifying they are, you feel strangely safe because you can depend on them! (Goodness! I sound like half the people I've ever interviewed who've suffered from battered woman's syndrome!)

I've got a number of my Dark Dreamer researchers hunting for the secrets hidden in that Deep Thoughts website, but, so far, nothing has turned up. Personally, I'm betting that my two hardest grinders, Julie or Fred, will succeed where the others may fail, but only time will tell. Meanwhile, Norman tells me that he hasn't been able to find any more information about the shadowy "Pythagoras" who runs the site. The only two pieces of new information he's been able to glean recently have been that the Israeli finally has the new virus ready—which, it's about time, although, apparently, you can't rush retro-engineering the most clever infiltrator virus in recent history—and he's finally recovered a call name on the hacker who was following us when we were watching Jenna last month. Apparently, the hacker goes by "The Glass Samurai" and is considered a legend in the hacking community. Norman tells me that he's the first person to have successfully detected a Glass Samurai hack—although, he fully admits even that was late! The

guy appears to be a ghost, although there is a rumor that he's White Hat, which could mean that this is corporate and not government. (Although, some of the Middle Eastern governments might be able to afford him.) However, I can't even imagine what a corporation would want with tracking me. Unless someone there is a Dark Dreamer.... Hmmmm....

Later...

Yes, those are the sort of thoughts that have been bothering me and made me realize that I needed to come up with something to get all of us out of the dumps! With the snow recently, everyone's been staying in their homes, trying to do whatever comes to mind to not think about their loved ones. Pete's daughter, who he never even got to meet, is in the South of France and, if my visions are correct, in a region of the world that's going to get insanely dangerous. Ryan is holed up in his workshop working on some new invention. (I don't think this is one of those special government contracts he's not allowed to talk about, rather I think he realized that he had to do something productive, rather than hiding in a bottle of whiskey.) Both he and I grieve for my daughter and granddaughter. I'm not sure if he's forgiven me, but I am slowly being given the grace to forgive myself. Each day, I pray for my "other" daughter, Jenna, and ask for God's protection on her! I can't help but believe that the role she has in all of this is far greater than anything I've ever expected! (Wouldn't that just be like my Master? To allow perhaps one of the most fragile humans on this planet to change the world in the midst of the most violent apocalypse to ever occur! As I recall her haunted gaze, I can't help but wonder if she, too, is beset by dark dreams! Perhaps, that's even more why she doesn't return my calls.)

Later...

It took me awhile, but I came up with a good plan.

First, I dressed up a bit in a rather beat up suit and button up shirt, although I chose to forego a tie. I then drove down to the store and got some cheap steaks, some potatoes, and the makings for my patented truffle cream. I found a discount Red Velvet cake that looked tasty (although I knew Ryan would likely scoff at because he could make one so much better.) However, it would taste just fine, so I decided to remove it from the container and re-ice it a bit, so that it looked like I had personally botched the making of it! At that point, he wouldn't be able to say a thing.

I then borrowed the old cheat I learned from my con artist brother on turning \$10 steaks into \$100 master cuts. Since the three sirloin steaks I'd procured were about an inch and a half thick, I poured a teaspoon of kosher salt on each side, then added some garlic and rosemary to the salt rub. Since salt aging these steaks would take an hour and a half, I scrubbed and oiled the big baking potatoes, then I put them in foil with a compressed rub of parmesan cheese and a little bit of kosher salt and threw them into my 500 degree oven. I then whipped up the sour cream, cream cheese, bacon, chives, onions, salt, hand-cracked pepper, and truffle oil into perhaps the most delicious truffle cream I'd made so far and left it to cure in the fridge.

With that done, I walked over to Pete's house, where, after I banged on his door, I was allowed in. Pete was still dressed in his long johns, which had been patched in various places with various types of cloth over the years. When I asked what he was doing, he showed me some cane heads he was carving into wild animal shapes. I complimented his handiwork then told him to get dressed, that he now had an appointment—and needed to dress up a bit. He was confused, because he knew he had no such appointment before that moment, but, seeing I wouldn't tell him anything more, shrugged and went along with it. (That's the advantage of being a stubborn old goat. Your friends stop arguing with you when you put your mind to something.) While he changed, I helped myself to his wine cabinet, where, despite his backwoods demeanor, I knew he had some rather excellent vintages. I selected a well-aged Merlot. When he came out, he was dressed in a black turtleneck, some rather faded black jeans, and some black boots that seemed to be on the verge of cracking from age. He'd decided to wear a black cowboy hat to go with the ensemble. While I was at first tempted to ask if he was doing his Johnny Cash impersonation, I fortunately thought it through enough to realize that these were his funeral "clothes"—the closest he had to nice clothes. I realized it was rather appropriate. I then complimented him on how nice he looked and then thanked him for contributing the bottle of wine, which I held up. He glared at me for a moment, before proclaiming that it had better be going to a good cause or he'd take the cost of it out of my hide.

I smiled, always the showman, and then led him to Ryan's house. I banged on my son-in-law's door. It took five minutes, but eventually he answered the door. Considering he had his welding mask on, was bearing a lit torch in his right hand, and was shaking, I suppose it's human nature that my first fear was that he had lost his temper and decided to finally end me. However, when he nearly ignited his own face with the torch trying to remove the mask, I realized that his excitement had nothing to do with anger. Reaching out with my free left hand, I extracted the torch from his hand and handed it to Pete to extinguish. Unencumbered, Ryan got his facemask off and I saw something that I hadn't seen on my son's face in too long: joy.

It was the sort of joy that only occurs in small amounts, but, when it does, it pushes away all the pain and strife a person has felt for a few moments. With an eagerness that dropped his age by a good ten years, he announced that he'd figured out how to finally work out the problem! Not waiting for us to ask what problem this might be, he took us in to show a massive rifle-like weapon with a curious sighting scope. He announced that he'd finally worked out how to fix the problems with the rocket pistol from the '50s. As a rifle, it made so much more sense. Then he showed me a multi-canister rocket and explained that it was based on the A-PAM missile system. That immediately sent shivers down my back, as I recalled the vicious military system that the Israeli military had created. (Rumors had it that the Israelis had Americans design the system, but this was never substantiated.) It was a rocket-based missile that could deploy additional payloads at various stages along its flight path, before unleashing its impact charge on whatever it was aimed at. A single missile could sow a line of destruction across a battle field before slamming into an armored bunker and blowing it to shreds. While the Israelis are one of

the few countries out there I would trust with this technology, the concept is still kind of terrifying.

After I let him talk about the innovations he's been able to make in this Rocket Rifle system, I explained that he's running late for an event that required him to dress up a bit. A look of shock came over his face and he rushed back into his house to get dressed before I could clarify things. Distractible inventors are always finding out that they're running late, so they don't even ask questions if you announce they need to be somewhere and dressed up. A few minutes later, he showed up in a battered tuxedo, his tux shoes scuffed, and a crimson bow tie hanging undone around his neck like a floppy tongue. It's clear that Susan used to put the tie on for him and made sure his shoes were polished. I motion to him to let me tie the tie for him, unable to speak, lest I begin to weep in front of him. By this time, he's starting to realize that he doesn't have any memory of any event today and he delivered his last package to the DoD in December. I blinked away my tears as I turned from him, his tie now tied, and headed toward my house with Pete's Merlot under my arm. Both of them hastily followed me, and when I arrived, I set them both in my comfy easy chairs in my living room and explained that dinner would be served shortly. As I walked into the kitchen, I heard Ryan and Pete talking about my behavior but neither could think of what it might be about.

I placed my massive iron skillet into the oven to heat up, while, at the same time, I took out the potatoes to cool, finding them to be cooked through and crusted with parmesan. For my

guests, I brought out half the truffle cream, crackers, and a cheaper bottle of red wine to go with the truffle cream. Encouraging them to help themselves, I headed back into the kitchen, washed off the salt-aged steaks (which were now the gray of actual aged steaks), dried them, covered them with fresh ground pepper, and coated them with oil. I pulled out the skillet, quickly seared both sides of the steaks on a the stove, before finishing the steaks in the blisteringly hot oven. After that, I pulled out the steaks and set one on each plate to rest. To the steaks, I added a metal container of truffle cream and an unwrapped parmesan-cruste baked potato.

As I took the plates to the pre-set table with the bottle of wine, I called everyone to dinner. Once everyone was seated, I announced that tonight was a Valentine's remembrance dinner for our loved ones, who were either no longer in this world or otherwise separated from us. I poured everyone a glass of the good Merlot and asked that each of us toast our loved ones, reliving some favorite memories or the current hopes we have for them. Pete hoped his daughter was safe and had met someone who was better than he was. Ryan took a gulp of the Merlot, before recounting a day that he and Susan had taken June to the Zoo. She had been barely a year, but she had looked at all the animals, before becoming mesmerized by a wolf. Susan had tried to explain that this was a wolf, but June had proclaimed that it was a "cow." No amount of correction would get her to recant, and eventually Ryan and Susan been overcome with laughter. It's a lovely story and one I'd never heard before!

I recounted some of the early days with Susan, when I would play with her as a child, and some of the fun I had getting to play with June when she visited. As Jenna is another part of my family (at least in my heart, if not my genetics), I go on to talk about some of the fun I had playing code breaking games with Jenna, passing hidden messages back and forth. I pray that she is safe and that she will be shown her purpose.

In the end, I suggest that we also remember not just our loved ones, but the world. This might be the last holiday before the Fall. Who knows what anyone will be able to take time for after that? As such, I took a moment to pray for the world and thank God for the food.

With that, we sank into the meal. Ryan, who's eaten at far fancier restaurants than I have, despite my world travels, proclaimed it the best steak he'd ever eaten and was shocked when I told him that the "salt aging" trick transformed the steak the way it did. Pete exclaimed that the truffle cream and baked potato combo was amazing. and that the pairing of all three components with the Merlot was "awesome." While I won't blow my own horn, I have to admit, it was perhaps the best meal I've prepared!

At the end of the meal, we had the red velvet cake. Ryan told me not to feel bad, because it would be virtually impossible for the dessert to live up to the main course I served. Even

though what he meant was that there's no way I could make a cake that could live up to his ability (even if I had made this one), I take it as a compliment!

When the night finally ended, I could tell that there was a peace on all of us that hadn't been there before. While I had no doubt that Ryan's manic joy would come upon him later when he was in his workshop, I was glad to know that, for awhile, when that receded, he'd find the depression had been pushed farther away. As I conclude the night, I'm again reminded that there is something comforting about sharing griefs with others that transcends rational understanding. Is there any wonder that the Teacher said the second most important truth in the world was to, "love one another as yourself?"

Codename: Megaton

22 Feb

We may have found a resource that can help us figure out the reality of what is to come at long last. While we continue to wait for whatever attackers may show themselves at Deep Thoughts, Norman and I have been trying to find others who might be able to help us connect the pieces.

Who should come through to help us, however, but one of our own Dark Dreamers!

To give a little history, I've been frequenting a forum called [The Post Apocalyptic Forum](#) for months now, packed with people who have been researching the end. (*Because I've become a name in the post-apocalyptic community and it generates "chaff" for people searching for me, Norman doesn't mind me using my actual name in the forum.*) I've spent a lot of time talking with people to find out if they know any of the clues of what I need. Well, I finally met the man who runs it, a visionary out of Hawaii who goes by the codename "Megaton." He's been personally collecting information about the end of man for years now. His visions have been more obscure than mine were, so he ended up collecting knowledge about every popular end of man tale, legend, and myth, from the Mayans to the Zombie rise. As such, if anyone is likely to have collected some of the data we need, he'll be the one! I can't wait to talk to him more in-

depth!

Apocalyptic Research

24 Feb

It has been so refreshing to meet with Bill (Megaton's real name) via video chat. To talk with someone who automatically doesn't think I might be a bit off my rocker is invigorating! He's been extremely helpful in trying to find information about the elements I've described from the Fall. He's heard rumors about groups who are using QR codes for secret purposes related to a number of conspiracies. Unfortunately, the people who are involved have done a wonderful job covering their tracks, so he's had difficulty getting direct information on who might be involved. However, he has heard rumors that there might be some connections to some of the tech and ivy league schools in the New England area. As Bill looks for more information, I continue to research the his boards for other Dark Dreamers who may be able to help us.

Additionally I still hold hope that my other Dark Dreamers can get the information we need about the upcoming attacks and the completion of the code. I nearly started to call it the "Doomsday Code", but that's really not correct. The attacks are nothing but a catalyst...our doom will come at our own hands. "Catalyst Code?"...or "Catacode?" Yeah, the Catacode seems correct to me.

A Dark Face Rises

28 Feb

The visions have come back once more and this most recent one is perhaps more disturbing, because it wasn't so much a single occurrence as a montage of events that are to come. It was as though I could see everything in 3 dimensions, yet was incorporeal as a spirit.

I saw a dark suited man in a board room, talking with nine other men around a circular table. Handsome of features and dark of hair, the man had brilliant green eyes that magnetized those who looked at him. The other men, also suited and tied, looked disheveled and nervous, but they were captivated by the man speaking. While I knew that he was not speaking my native language, I heard his voice as flawless, unaccented English in my mind, such that I had no idea what country he might hail from. He spoke of coming together and the fact that they needed a central leader to restore order...to return to the greatness of the past...

As he spoke, the scene shifted and suddenly I was looking over a crowd of people in a massive square. The buildings were damaged, clearly after the Fall, and the people looked exhausted, bedraggled, and hungry. The man I had seen earlier now spoke on a podium and encouraged the people to take heart, his words once more translated in my mind. That these men and women were to be part of a new world...the ultimate empire...one that would restore them

to their dominance once more... I felt chills run through my spine, for I had seen films of Adolph Hitler and this man made Hitler seem positively uncharismatic in comparison. Further, it was as though he fed off the crowds, such that it augmented his energy and self-confidence until it was almost palpable. As he spoke, his words seemed to transform the crowds themselves, as they began to stand straighter and look with a new purpose. Without question, I knew that this was a man for whom people would gladly die. As I thought this, I drew my eyes from the leader and saw that, behind his head, hung a black banner that had the letters "N.I.R." emblazoned in crimson, like fresh blood.

Suddenly, time flashed more quickly, and I saw tanks and war machines rolling through distant lands and armies of black garbed youths armed with battle rifles. Then, these scenes were replaced by images of those who opposed this man. I saw battle fields with bloody corpses, lines of crosses hanging with dissidents, and men and women being herded toward guillotines. Through it all, the leader's face flashed, growing larger in my vision through the atrocities.

When I awoke once more, sweat drenched me. I was overwhelmed by this vision and terrified by my lack of knowledge of when it would begin to occur. All I could tell was that it would be after the Fall, but where exactly I had no idea.

At first, I was so distraught that I couldn't think straight. Then I returned to a recent method I've learned from an old book I read from St. Francis of Assisi, who had visions that he said came from God. If my visions come from God himself, then they are too great for me to understand. As such, I am learning to give them to Him, admitting that I have no idea of what to do with them, and asking His counsel. It sounds so strange to admit, coming from someone who has always been so independent, but the very element of admitting my weakness and surrendering it to Him caused the terror to evaporate.

In its place, was a calm assurance that I would find this man from my vision. And that I would be permitted to help destroy him!

With this sudden knowledge, I found that I could fall back asleep once more, with a notion flashing in my mind that, after the Fall, I would be heading to Europe.

Visionary Exploration...

02 Mar

I've heard rumors through the grapevine (alright, through Norman!), that there may be some new movement with the people we're tracking. I've tried posting information on the [Post-Apocalyptic Forums](#) with mixed results. Most of the folks, including Megaton, there are genuinely trying to help, but don't seem to have heard anything specifically about these codes. Of course, as with all communities, there are a few that suspect me of ulterior motives. (Perhaps the strangest was one fellow who thought I was involved in an online fantasy game called World of Warcraft. Although I enjoy a good game as much as the next person, an immersive fantasy that doesn't train us for the Fall seems dangerous at best. Certainly no amount of make believe will help us the Neo-Palidins or the man I've seen in my visions!)

Hopefully my Dark Dreamers can unveil what it is before it's too late. (And of course, the fact that more and more advertisers continue to use QR codes to hide things, the uniqueness of these attackers codes become more and more difficult to pinpoint! Ultimate needle in a haystack. Hopefully we are scouting the right haystack.)

Meanwhile, Norman tells me the Israeli has succeeded in his transfer. Sweden is a long ways away, but it seems a safe precaution, especially with new rumors I've been hearing from my Dark Dreamers.

One of the rumors I've heard is that there is something happening in Barcelona. It hasn't happened yet, but I'm getting enough collaboration from the dreamers that this seems to be a place to concern myself with. I've done what research I can, but so far, nothing is coming to the fore.

Designed by Dark Dreamer Craig McDaniel, this is a work in progress for a logo!



Barcelona...

08 Mar

Norman told me he might have a lead on some of the darker elements I've seen in my visions. He said a man named Fred contacted him about visions of Barcelona, that something dark was rising there. As soon as I heard the name, I felt a tingling.

When I researched it more fully, I discovered that there is an ominous building there, which reeks of all the resonance of the dreams I've had of the darker latter days. It's a cathedral that's taken nearly two hundred years to construct. My description can do it no justice, so I must simply put a drawing of the place here for my readers.



Barcelona Cathedral

Dark Refugee...

09 Mar

After all the work in the world to stay hidden and somehow eluding those who would look to destroy me, I awoke today to find that I'd been tracked down.

At six o'clock this morning, I was wakened to sounds of scrabbling at my front door. At first I thought it was one of the raccoons that we'll sometimes deal with, but when it became more insistent I got up and went to the door. I couldn't see much through the peephole, so I resorted to my video surveillance. At first I thought someone had left a pile of clothes on my front porch, but it soon became apparent that something was moving inside. As a shock of bright red hair fluttered out from within the clothing cocoon, I realized that it was human.

Uncertain if this was an elaborate trap, as I'd seen too many human bombs set in other countries, I prayed for preternatural insight. Feeling strangely at peace, I opened the door and bent down to help the person into my home. The girl—for her frame could be no other gender—was shivering so badly that she refused to take off the cloaks and blankets which hung upon her like the visage of death. With the cold snap we've had of late, I worried that she might've been out there all night and might even now be on the verge of death.

I closed the door after us and helped her into the living room. She curled up on the rug in front of the fireplace, whatever reserve of strength which allowed her to come in with my help suddenly deserting her as she collapsed. I stoked the fire until it was roaringly warm and then asked her if I could get her something to eat or drink. However, with the oncoming warmth, she'd already collapsed into an exhausted sleep without requesting anything. As she did, part of her face was revealed and I could see that she was no more than 20 years of age, her mane of hair an exotic red that seemed a blend of red wine and orange peels and her skin pale, lacking many of the freckles that most redhead's sported.

For some reason, even though she didn't look like either girl, I couldn't help being reminded of Jenna...and, a bit, of my daughter.

Unable to go back to sleep with the girl sleeping there, I went to my room to change from my robe to my day wear outfit of jeans and heavy button up shirt. My outfit these days isn't so different than it was when I was an undercover reporter. Similar needs, I suppose.

She slept for twelve hours before her ravenous hunger and thirst forced her awake, her eyes sunken and haunted. In those eyes I saw a kinship that I knew all too well: this was a Dark Dreamer sitting on my floor.

Having had my experiences with those starving in some of the most dangerous parts of the world, I knew better than to open my larder to her. In starvation circumstances, parts of the body shuts down and must be brought back online before proper absorption can begin. Much like machines in a factory, they need to be turned back on in the correct order if the factory is to be restored and not damaged in the process. As such, I gave her a half a cup of water, which she gulped down, her eyes flicking everywhere to find where more water might be hidden.

To distract her and to remind her that she was human, and not a beast, I asked her about herself. She wouldn't tell me much of anything, not even a name. However, I was able to figure out that the last time she had anything to eat was over a week past. While virtually all Americans can survive over forty days of fasting or starvation without perishing, it was clear that she'd started out with far less expendable body mass than most Americans. As to drinking, she hadn't had anything to drink for two days, although she'd tried to consume snow from passing snow drifts on her way to my door.

After I'd waited a little while, I parceled out some more water for her. I was reminded of an early time with my daughter when she'd had the stomach flu and, after a hellish night, I'd woken up the next morning I'd doled out fluids and gatorade slowly, making sure the bug had passed and allowing her system to reacclimate to new sustenance.

In much the same way, I first doled out water to this strange girl, then an enzyme solution that would help restore saline and electrolytes, and, then finally, a beef soup. By the end of the day, she'd restored enough of her missing fluids and nutrients that she could fall back to sleep without being awakened by her own body. Even though she'd been awake for barely six hours, I found that caring for her had exhausted me, so that I fell asleep at my couch barely a half hour after she did. I awoke at eleven with the sound of a raging storm outside, the wind whipping against my reinforced home.

Despite the tumult, the girl remains asleep. As I'm now awake, I thought I would write about the day before I went back to sleep. I know it's foolish to type on a computer in the midst of a thunder storm, but, rather it's because of my confidence in the surge protection we've installed or because I'm struggling with my own death wish, I just don't care.

I wonder if the rain will melt away the snow?

Denver...

10 Mar

When I awoke this morning, I found two luminescent blue eyes watching me like a sapphire version of the Cheshire Cat. As I blinked to get my bearings, I realized that the girl was in my room, crouched on one of the chairs near my bed, watching me with preternatural interest.

Of course, at that moment, I was grateful for my years in the field, which had taught me not to wake to unsettling sights with a scream or any visible sign of fear. *(And of course, I was grateful that it had taught me to sleep in some sort of clothing, so that I might not inadvertently expose myself to the young girl.)*

Clearly, her body had warmed enough in the night that she no longer required all the blankets or cloaks she'd acquired, as she was now cloaked only in a pair of dark jeans and tattered black blouse. The dark cloth made her skin gleam almost as white as bone in contrast and made her hair even more startlingly bright.

As I took all the details in, it became evident that she was sizing me up. Trying to figure out if I was who she thought I was.

After a few minutes of this, I asked her what her name was.

“Denver,” was the reply.

Obviously an alias, I didn't try to push it, as I figure she'll tell me her real name when she's ready. She was more receptive to questions now that the madness of exhaustion, starvation, and hypothermia was passed. *(Considering how small she is, I am shocked she has no areas of frostbite. Despite all odds, I see none of the tell-tale signs of it and her movement doesn't seem impaired.)*

As I suspected from her ravened gaze, she is indeed a Dark Dreamer. She's been having visions for over a year now, meaning that hers started very close to mine. Unlike me, however, she had so little life experience before the dreams that she didn't know who to tell about them. And, because she still lived at home with her parents, her power of self-preservation was limited. *(I have no idea what her age is, anything from 15 to 20 would be believable at this stage.)* As such, when the perpetual ravings about the end of the world at the hand of a lawless apocalypse unsettled her socialist parents too greatly, she was committed to a sanitarium that specialized in young women with paranoid delusions. Once there, a cocktail of drugs designed to

keep her passive blurred the lines between reality and delusion such that the girl didn't know where either began or ended. In the end, the very institution designed to restore her sanity came within a hairsbreadth of destroying it forever. (*Only time will tell what lasting repercussions may come from her incarceration.*)

A few months ago, a friend of hers from school came to visit and had brought printouts of my journals smuggled into a self-help book. After reading the journals covertly over a number of days, Denver became convinced that she had to find me. However, when she could think of no way to correct her condition, she became overcome with despair, and, with the aid of the deadening drugs they fed her, she slumped into a hopeless sleep.

In her dreams, she claims that she had a shadowy visitor come to her who said that there was much for her to do and that, indeed, she was to journey to me. As the visitor spoke of my location, she recalled a finger flame searing it into her mind so that she might never forget. A moment later, as though burned away by the fire, the fog of drugs fell away and the visitor led her to her door, which she now found unlocked. She followed him through the maze of the psychiatric prison, uncertain why there weren't more death and destruction like in her other dreams. In the still of her dream, no one wandered the halls, so that she surmised that the Fall had already occurred and the hospital become a morgue. The visitor led her into the basement and through a series of tunnels until she finally felt the night air on her cheeks as she plunged out into the unforgiving reality of the present. As she blinked her eyes against the chill air, she

realized in fact that she was awake...that whatever had happened was no dream. Looking about, she found the visitor was gone. As the cold night air quickened her senses, she didn't even debate about trying to return to her parents but, instead, began to walk doggedly toward my location. The only physical remnant of her mysterious rescuer was a few hundred dollars that she discovered in her pocket as she trudged into the night.

The money allowed her to outfit herself with clothes she would need and buy a one way bus ticket that could get her most of the way. When she ran out of cash, she had no other option but to hitchhike and walk the rest of the way to where I lived. I don't know how long it took her, but, somehow, she finally got here. While I don't have the courage to ask her what things she endured, I recognize the edge to her gaze that betrays that she hasn't only been victimized by dark visions. My heart breaks for her, yet I know that there is nothing I can do. Perhaps I can teach her some of the ways to survive that I've learned, things I wish I had known when I was teaching Jenna.

It's funny. When I was younger, I would've told others I knew how to survive, since I was an undercover journalist. The truth was, I knew how to exploit the weaknesses in the system and worm my way in. I always had money to hire protectors and hunters when I needed them. I thought that made me a survivalist. In fact, it just made me fortunate that the mercenaries I employed never slit my throat in the night.

Scarlett...

10 Mar

Later That Day...

I finally found out that she goes by the last name Scarlett. She's still not terribly talkative, but the dark fear is slowly fading—the haunted one that cloaked her, whispering of fears that I would throw her out or do something far worse. To see people so blatantly damaged by their gifts and by those around them tears my soul to shreds. It reminds me so much of Jenna. Her rejection at home feeding into her issue with her condition and making her want to prove herself, if only to defy the paternal disconnect and maternal meddling in her family. A hunger to do something that was important, but with a feeding horror that anyone she grew to know would turn on her. Everything was seen through the lens of her familial rejection, even more than her physical rejection.

Now, I see someone who suffers similarly, although her ability to own up to her visions is quite different. I believe that Jenna had visions, although she never admitted it to me, least of all when she thought I'd gone mad. Little does she realize that the visions may well keep her alive if she'll only heed them! Perhaps there is a way that I can help Denver...a way to help her understand how to stay alive while she comes to terms with her visions.

Self-Defense

11 Mar

Denver was going a bit stir crazy earlier so I took her out into the snow to teach her a few of the things I learned before coming out here. Self-defense moves mostly...what to do if someone tries to strangle you, what to do if someone grabs a limb, what to do if someone tries to punch you. I recognized that hunger in her eyes during the training. We haven't even reached the dark moments from my visions, but the glimmer in her eyes showed that she's survived far more than any woman ever should. It was as though she was a sponge, trying to absorb it as quickly as she possibly could, her eyes sparkling with vicious delight at the thought of ever being put in a place to use this training. When we started at the beginning of the day, I had to encourage her to use a more assertive posture and enough force, by the end of it, I was having to get her to lower her intensity lest I get my head knocked off.

When we came inside, her energy soon flagged. So little time to recuperate hadn't been able to cure the toll that untold days on the road had taken on her body. She barely made it through a meal of my venison chili and my Irish Soda bread with truffle cream before collapsing on her impromptu bed and falling fast asleep.

I don't know what I shall do with her, because I am not at a place where I can properly take care of a young girl, especially one who has survived so much, yet I certainly can't turn her away. I just wish there were a woman here who might be able to lend a helping hand and perhaps reach out this child in a way I cannot.

Cloistered Warriors

12 Mar

As I think of the news of the morning, my eye is drawn to the new symbol of the Dark Dreamers. Refined by Craig, the same Dark Dreamer who created the earlier one, this speaks to the dark world we see and explores what must come.



I've heard back from my friend, [MEGATON](#), who's trying to help us find information about the Catacode. Apparently he has been contacted by a monk of some sort who has been having dark visions for over a year about the brutal times in the Fall. According to MEGATON, this mystic sees men with ornate tattoos who enforce the iron will and a citadel that looks like giant jutting teeth. At first he thought he was going mad, but he's discovered that throughout the cloistered orders visions are being reported more and more. MEGATON was so intrigued that he began to have his followers research the cloistered orders of many religions and found that the trend is occurring throughout. This is proof that something is definitely building that will effect all of mankind, regardless of creed, race, or nation.

For these monks, however, it's an especially significant sign. Apparently, within the cloistered orders, there are specially designated groups that are even now being trained for this dark time of prophecy. They will be entrusted to protect the innocent during this period. MEGATON's people couldn't find out any specifics about where they are, but they've heard rumors that each of them is a specialized unit: some trained with a variety of firearms, some trained for stealth combat, while others are trained assassins. While little is known, MEGATON's spies have been hearing some whispering about a group called the Order of the Steel Rood.

Clearly whatever they are designed to do, it's not quite as simple as protecting innocents. For some reason, as with the Knights of Xeno, I'm reminded of the *Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon* (or the *Knights Templar*) who were formed under similar auspices, and I shiver for such a notion, but perhaps, when times are darkest, these cloistered warriors may indeed fight on the side of those who need them, rather than for their own advantage like the Templars. Perhaps such as these could adequately face off against the Neo-Palidins, the Knights of Xeno, or the mysterious N.I.R.

I find this information more compelling than ever that we must be prepared for the attacks. I just wish I'd heard something on the Catacode, which MEGAToN and Norman both

assure me that they'll do everything they can to find it. Still, I believe my Dark Dreamer Jojo is closest to cracking the code, as she has been spying on the infiltrated website I told her about.

But I have not yet heard about the code! (*Strange, I heard a non-related question about Denver from her, but nothing about the code. I hope that there is nothing delaying or obstructing our messages, like the mysterious hacker we dealt with before!*)

This notion of warrior monks has reminded me of the clerics from that old Christian Bale film, *Equilibrium*. And with that, it's reminded me of something I might teach Denver.

Gun Kata

12 Mar

LATER THAT DAY...

The training with Denver went far better than I had imagined. I decided to teach her how to actively combine martial arts (at least that which I'm familiar with) along with gunplay. Of course, first we had to find out if she had any training with firearms. Fortunately, when she was younger, her father did take her down to the range and she had a rather natural proclivity for the gun itself, so long as she keeps herself calm. After we did some live fire exercises and worked on aim, we moved on to using my training pistols. They're just specially modified Airsoft guns, but they're full metal and identical in weight to the real guns. While they may be quieter and not have much kick, they blow back like the real firearms, so they're very helpful to train her on when another person is in the line of fire!

At first she was a little confused as I showed her the judo hip throw that twists an opponent off balance, rips off the ground, and slams them flat on their back, but she quickly figured it out. When I had her conclude by firing three "rounds" into my chest, her eyes started glowing once more as she hungrily absorbed the data. It sent a chill through me. Soon her movements were almost cat-like in their grace.

I decided I would finish off our day by showing her some the training dances called “kata” which I learned in my karate training. I explained that all the moves in the dance were ways to defend yourself. That they were first used by the Okinawans to disguise their training from the occupying Japanese, who prevented the Okinawans from possessing traditional weapons or having any martial training. The dances were done at night and they were ignored as some unusual religious ritual. As such, their training was hidden in full view, making it all the more immensely effective. When the time was right, the Okinawans won a mighty battle against the Japanese, using their adapted hip techniques to throw blows so powerful that it was said that they could shatter the wooden and metal armor that the samurai possessed.

The tales mesmerized her almost as much as the notion that the dance was a deadly disguise for a brutal form of protection. She picked up the first kata I taught her relatively quickly and when I finally came in for the evening, insisted on continuing to practice. She’s already asking if these kata can be adapted to weapon use, to which I explained that most of the basics found in Karate were already adapted for both open hand as well as knife, but that they also had a number of “stealth” weapons that the Japanese hadn’t identified as weapons: walking staffs (called the “bo”), Rice Grinder Handles (called “Tonfa”), Harvesting Sickles (called “Kama”), short walking sticks that were wielded like swords (called “Jo” staffs), and, for the strongest of warriors, the mighty Fishing Oar became a deadly wooden battleaxe.

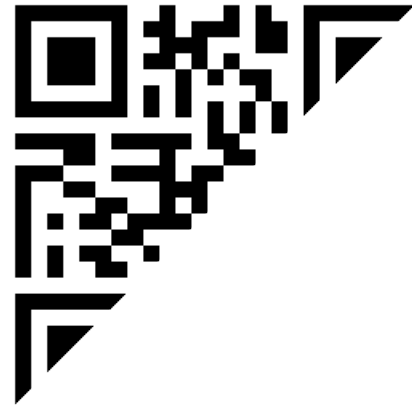
The more I talk about martial history, the more enthralled she becomes. Of course, before I left, she was already asking if she could combine firearms with the kata. Clearly my judo training had impacted her ability to think outside the box on this one! Too bad we don't have a different nation's martial arts to add to her battle tactic's: Israel's *Kra Magaw*. No country understands defense better than Israel, and no people have had to perfect martial skill more than its ancestral people, the Jews. It's so crucial that every Israeli must spend at least two years in the military, regardless of gender or creed. If there is a group to join up with in the dark days after the Fall, the Israelis would be the one to throw your lot in with.

The Second Half of the Catacode...

13 Mar

Pete is working with Denver while I sit in here trying to figure out my most difficult code yet.

The second half of the catacode.



Jojo came through for me, finding the other half of the catacode and sending it to me! She had to stalk that Deeper Reality shop for weeks before she was able to find the clue that led her through the dark underbelly of the web. I hope she didn't put herself in danger doing it!

When the two halves are combined, the code becomes readable:

M.A.

Vindobona.

180.

Now I sit here and try to figure out what the strange riddle means. I've got to believe that it gives specific information about the attacks, but I haven't figured it out yet. I think I'll email Megaton and see what he has to say about it.

As I mull it over, I listen to the sound of tomahawks being thrown into wooden targets outside and think about how strange it is to have a young girl in my life once more. It makes me miss my daughter terribly in one way, but, in another way, it makes me happy to be able to pass on new information that I never could've passed on to her or my surrogate daughter, Jenna. Perhaps this training will help keep her safe.

Meanwhile, I'm not the only one who's found something worth living for in this little whisp of a girl. Pete lights up when he teaches her those backwoods survival techniques of his, relishing an eager learner. Even Ryan has started coming over here to see what's going on. After a conversation with her (in which she ended up getting him to confide about far more than he intended as far as his background with weapons), she managed to cajole him into agreeing to teach her how to shoot a sniper rifle. He tried to look chagrined as he acquiesced, but I could see that there was a spark in his eye that told me he was happy to have a reason to stay sober for just one night, even if it was just to show a strange girl how to shoot the next day. I suspect that he'll likely take along that rocket rifle he's been tinkering with, of course!

Reaching out to a lost student...

14 Mar

8:37 AM

How could I have been so foolish? I can't believe I couldn't see the code for myself!

Fortunately, [Megaton](#) emailed me today to let me know what I was missing. M.A. refers to Marcus Aurelius who died in Vindobona in 180 AD on Saint Patrick's Day!

They're cueing up the attacks to occur on the anniversary of his death! What a Roman general has to do with all this, I have no idea, but I've got to warn Jenna, as this is only three days!

10:12 AM

I've tried everyone I know to contact and every phone number I've found for Jenna has been disconnected. Damn me for teaching her to stay untraceable! I'm going to have Norman see if he can break through the back end of her firewall at her info site and get to her phone that way!

1:42 PM

Norman says it was the hardest hack he's ever faced, but he finally came through with an email that seems to function. He hasn't been able to get to the phone number, so I decided to go ahead and send her an email. However, with hackers in the mix and us never recovering the data Jenna tried inadvertently to send to us, I had to think of something she might respond to. I decided to go with two picture codes, one which would be simple and refer to my home, but a second which would be much tougher and far less likely for anyone to think of other than my first protégé.

3:12 PM

I had just sent the email, when Norman finally cracked the phone number.

I called it as soon as I had it, but, for whatever reason, I was getting all sorts of static when I tried to leave a message. I started to ramble as the static distracted me, while my tongue got away from me as I warned her that she had to check her email and that I knew when it happened—that it was all going down in three days. After the beginning of my tirade, I began to get a sick feeling that I wasn't going to hear back from her—at least not for a long time. With harsh clarity, I realized that if I was going to leave any words to help her through the Fall, this was going to be my only opportunity. So, after I spoke about what was coming, I said a silent

prayer for preternatural awareness of what she would need. Then I reminded her about her place in all of this...that she must own up to who she is and to her visions.

I hope that she will understand that if she can't learn to trust anyone, she'll never survive the dark days after the Fall. It was important for me to try to emphasize that she has a crucial part to play after Fall. Although I have no idea what that part will be, somehow I know it's true...that I wasn't just giving someone who might want to suicide when the medical facilities go away a lifeline.

Eventually, the static was too bad and the call dropped.

I tried back, but I couldn't even make another connection. I guess my gut feeling was right. Hopefully, something I said made sense to her!

The Day The Fall Began

17 Mar

Is this what Cassandra felt like when the Achaean warriors gutted her Trojan bretheren? Or Jeremiah at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians? To see the future and get no one to believe what is coming bone crushing to the heart. So much so that, I have been unable to write another journal entry, waiting for this day to come...waiting for this time to come. I couldn't bear to write down that I just wanted it to be over because I was just so sick of the waiting, like a child whose parent will die any day and they just want it to be over, but feel horribly guilty because of it! Now the wait is over.

I have no idea how many attacks occurred today, although it seems evident that three happened on American soil. The President is dead and I've heard rumors that the Pope is, as well. I have no way to verify things because the new President invoked the Presidential Internet Kill Bill and a moratorium on non-governmental communications and entertainment. The signals we can pick up are a blue screen with a cross reminder from EAS and PLAN letting us know that we need to comply with government officials...that marshall law has been temporarily instated for our protection...and that an 8 PM curfew is in effect. The looping reminder is insidious because you leave it on to see if something new will come on, but it never does, and the loop seems to drive into your brain that you're all alone.

As I sit here in my home, Pete, Ryan, and Denver huddled up around the droning TV, I finally begin to really understand why what will happen *does* happen.

The new president isn't a bad man. He's just a bureaucrat that was never meant to be a leader. Doubtlessly, he saw the panic and just wanted a few days to sort things out, to push back the responsibilities that got dumped into his lap three years before he would've retired. Pulled into the mess so suddenly, he grasped at any straw he could think of. He'd undoubtedly heard that they did something similar in World War II when Pearl Harbor was attacked, banning short wave radio, and of course remembers when Egypt did it during the uprisings. Unfortunately, neither society were addicted to mass communication the way we are. What might've slid by for shortwave operators in the '40's or for a more agrarian culture on the edge of Africa, will light a powder keg in the technologically addicted United States.

The more I sift through it, the more it makes sense in ways that it never did before.

The riots will be about terror, anger and isolation at first, but, eventually, it'll be about hunger and exhausted unreason. Into that mix the Knights of Xeno will be able to speak against technology. People will be so horrified and enraged by what's been done to them by their newfound ignorance that they'll look to anyone who can give them an alternative to sitting and waiting. It makes sense. After all, Adam couldn't regurgitate the apple.

The Knights of Xeno will help them to see that they don't have to be afraid of a faceless enemy who attacks around the world. They can direct their rage and fear at the governmental "big brother" that took away what they felt made them powerful...that made them feel impotent in a way no amount of external attacks. In the midst of the chaos, the notion that technology is what did this to us will seem more attractive. Destroy the tech and you destroy the ability for anyone to take it away from you! Don't ever let anyone make you feel powerless again!

With the official channels cut, this will likely be my last post...at least until I can pirate some private network. Norman was able to hack this governmental portion of the web, but, based on my own predictions, we know that this will be down in a matter of days. However, it's being beamed out to a number of safe houses along with all of my archives before that occurs.

If you're reading this and it's after the attacks, then our exports got out safely! If so, then you must remember to take heart. This will be the darkest time that any culture has ever foreseen and it will effect us all. However, we are not without hope! So long as any of us remain to fight against the darkness, light can still be seen in the night!

I will not go willingly into that “good” night and I pray that you will not either!

God bless,

Gavin

A Comfort and A Caution In The Days To Come.

19 Mar

Norman tells me that I can get in one last post before his conduits are completely shut down. As such, I do so now to let all the Dark Dreamers know that the time we have envisioned begins now! We must never forget March 17th!

Although this conduit will be shut down, I have had visions that I will continue my journals in another alcove of technology that will survive. In the mean time, if I can get messages to you, I will. Look for QR codes (as I did with Jenna and Denver), the Morse code that the Knights of Xeno prefer, and, from the early world wars, the zipper code! (If this last is too far beyond your ken, look to Mr. Wizard. He will show you the way.)

As a comfort I leave you with this secret:

When you have lost your way and hope is far removed from you, seek the sword in the shadows. You will find that there are those who are entrusted to protect you in the battleground of the future.

I also leave a word of caution for those who did not heed our warnings ahead of time:

This will be a new world in which you can no longer be a nice person, even by your own estimation.

Nice is passive and based on the rewards of a society that cared to make you docile and weak. In the past, niceness was rewarded with banality and approval that was as fleeting as the weather. Niceness could never be more than you allowed it to be on your terms. And for the time times where you needed someone to minimize the risk of your charity, the State was empowered to reduce the inconvenience of your civil duty. As such, you could open your home up to a battered girl, knowing the State would take her off your hands soon enough—usually by sending her back where she'd run from, because her past was more important than her bruises, although, sometimes she was indeed taken to a safer place where time and lack of training would help her go back to the abuse on her own.

In this new world, your actions and your strength of character are all that matter. You'd better be determined if you choose to make a stand, as your life may well be the cost you'll pay for doing it. Better be discerning and committed enough to defend any person you reach out to with your guns, your heart, and your blood.

There are no half measures here. Those who do not fully choose good and defend it will surely become the pawns of darkness. Those who are foolish enough to think there is another option are destined to become the first casualties of this war...or, worse, to become leaders of its greatest evil.

Gavin Hesterdale, out.

Research Appendix

An Overview

If you're reading this, you've found my separate research section of this computer. Before the internet goes down in the upcoming cataclysm, I've have collected links to websites that chronicle what I presume must be the foreshadowings of my prophecy. While my visions don't tell me everything, they give me clues and those clues I've scoured the web for. Whoever may read this will doubtless do so after my vision has come to pass and there's no internet any longer. As such, I've installed an active cache system on this machine which should keep these links readable...I hope. If not, my notes about the links may still be of use to you, whomever you are.

Good luck.

Nature & Animals

[Overpopulation of Wild Boars](#) - Dubbed the "Pig Bomb" this early article on the outgrowing of pigs in wild environments show the problems I've had with them encroaching on

my land. I can only assume they will have far greater impact after the cataclysm and most of mankind dies away.

Philosophy & Religion

[Zeno's Paradoxes](#) – My visions show a group called the Knights of Xeno, which are an anti-technology group that will rise up in the cataclysm. My guess is that this is a reinterpretation of “Zeno” and his paradoxes. I’m not sure, though.

Politics & Society

[Internet Kill Switch](#) – An old article about the Internet Kill Switch bill which I believe will presage the eventual shutdown of the communications grid in the U.S. during the cataclysm.

[Seven Cards To Rule Them All](#) - As though in a Tolkien-like fit of whimsy, the world enabled some of my prophetic visions to occur, both through an internet kill switch and later with a way to reboot the internet which required five of seven cards in order to do so, something that will be very difficult in a true disaster. Mark my words, after the cataclysm, there will be those who will sell all they own to seek these cards to control even the smallest portion of the knowledge we once held.

[Initial Location of Card #1: Bath](#) – This was the location of one of the first of the cards to reconnect the internet, the one hidden in Britain. It’s likely no longer here, but this could provide a potential starting place for my research.

Initial Location of Card #2: Ottawa – This was the location of another of the first seven cards to reconnect the internet, the one hidden in Canada.

Initial Location of Cards #3 – #7: U.S., Trinidad, China, Czech Republic, & Burkina Faso – The list of starting places is complete and I find that I’m starting to come up with a plan to intercede. Perhaps something might be preserved through the Fall.

“The Year America Dissolved” - I discovered this in my searching of what will come. One man who saw how close to collapse America was in 2010. While the dates are off, it’s amazing how accurate he was on certain things. Of course, he couldn’t foresee the igniting attacks or the unwise American decisions my visions reveal, but his lucidity is impressive, nonetheless.

Psychology & Anthropology

Xenophobia – While I had originally thought that the Knights of Xeno might be basing their name on this philosopher, I think it’s more likely that they are using the original concept of “other” to show a fear of technology and the strange government they no longer feel a part of that wields it.

Recipes, Foods, & Aid

Now that my journal can be accessed by more people before the cataclysm, I feel that it is my duty to provide whatever recipes or information about natural plants that may help them survive the Fall. Hopefully this will prove to be a valuable source for people! (Those who are

wise enough to download these to a smart phone and use a solar charger could have access to this data for years. Of course, a simpler method would simply be to print it out and bring the papers with one!)

[Beer Bread](#) – Although Pine Pete shared this recipe with me, I found a version of it online here.

[Black Bean Brownies](#) – Created for healthy living before the apocalypse, this is a recipe that can provide fiber and protein to people afterward. Adaptable to cooking in a Dutch Oven.

[Canned Butter](#) – In case your solar cells are shattered in the riots or your still for your alcohol generator gets smashed, having non-refrigerated butter is a must have in the collapse!

[Disaster Survival Pantry Basics](#) - A good list of reminders on what to stock up on before the Collapse!

[Dutch Oven Dude](#) – This is a guy who really has a huge amount of information about caring for Dutch Ovens and cooking with them. When electricity isn't readily available, Dutch Ovens will quickly become one of the most valuable things a person might own!

[Post-Apocalyptic Hot Pack](#) – While the Rice Pack was often used in modern times with a microwave, it can be adapted to heat the rice in a Dutch Oven. Just remember to stir over the fire continuously (to not cause burning) before dumping heated rice in a sock and applying to whatever sprain or soreness is there!

[Soda Cake](#) – Another recipe created by the fitness community that translates perfectly into a world in which a lot of fresh ingredients are not available. Obviously, when food is less available, folks will likely want to use sugared soda with the cake mix to increase calorie count. Can definitely be cooked in a Dutch Oven.

Steganography & Code Breaking Tools

In case you were one of the people who's stumbled across my blog before the imminent collapse that I refer to as the lawless apocalypse, this is where I keep a list of some of the programs and information I've used when it came to encoding and deciphering messages with my contacts in my job as a journalist. There are countless other ones out there to utilize, as well!

[Steganography: How to Send A Secret Message](#) - An overview of the art of steganography for people who are new to its principles.

[BarCapture](#) - Developed by Jaxo Systems, this is an older free system that I like to use to capture QR codes (or numerous other types of bar-style codes) if I don't have my smartphone with me, as it's available for PC, Mac, & Linux.

[Invisible Secrets 2.1](#) – A simple steganography program that's one of my favorites for encoding files and complex data into pictures.

[Morse Code Alphabet](#) – Morse code is still a cypher used by many people. Its antiquity makes it an excellent choice for many applications.