



**DIARY OF
THE
ONE**

PERCENT

*BY
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Diary of the One Percent

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Hi. I'm Russ.

I'm part of the one percent.

Before you start thinking of that Occupy thing, I'm not and never was part of that one percent. Back then... heh... back then... who would have thought we'd be referring to 6 months ago as 'back then'. But I digress. Back during the Occupy movement in 2011 and 12 I was firmly in the 99% group. I had a job and made a modest, a very modest, living. Answering phones in a call center didn't pay all that well. All we ever did was read off the screen and do everything we could to sell the caller more add ons. If you were really good, or really pushy, and got a lot of add on sales you could earn a decent bonus but my heart wasn't in it so I mostly got just base.

It was enough to pay the rent, put a bit of food on the table for the family and keep my piece of crap car running, at least most of the time. A 1989 Ford Taurus with 197,000 miles and more rust than metal just wasn't something you could really rely on any more. Almost every other month I had to fix or replace something else that had failed. Half the lights on the dash no longer worked and.... There I go getting off topic again.

Not that it really matters if I stay on topic or not. Hell, I doubt it even matters if I write this diary. Ain't enough people left and probably no one will ever read it. Maybe I just need to write it to help cope with the situation. Maybe just to feel like I'm still communicating with someone. I don't know.

June 28th, 2013

After a rambling start yesterday I decided to keep writing in here. If you are reading this then you probably know what happened but in case some future generation is wondering what it was like, well, it sucked. It sucked the big one.

The Avian flu. H5N1. It finally did it. The mutation happened and it became airborne, bird to human and human to human transmittable. Birds were the original carriers so they quickly spread it around the globe and the airborne vector got it the last few feet from the birds to the humans. Highly contagious to humans. Not only contagious, but deadly too. 99% lethality. One out of every one hundred people

survived. Just one percent of the population. So, I'm now a one percenter. Funny, I don't feel rich. Oh yeah, that was a different one percent. (ha ha ha)

You'd think 99% of the population dying would leave an empty planet. You'd be wrong. We had about 300 million people here in the good ole US of A. 10 percent is 30 million and 1 percent is 3 million. Worldwide we were around 7 billion people. That leaves 70 million left.

I'm sure a few very isolated areas may not have even been affected but with 70 million people what's a few hundred thousand one way or the other.

The last numbers I found said New York City had a little over 8 million people. That's 80 thousand still alive, just in the city. Figure about 40 thousand in LA, 25,000 in Chicago. Even Dallas should have at least ten thousand survivors. Of course we're just doing the math and playing the averages here. Oh, and this is just the cities. I haven't even thought about the suburbs and rural areas. This is hopeful while being so depressing at the same time. I can't write anymore today.

June 29th, 2013

I guess it depends on your perspective. A forty story apartment building with 16 apartments per floor yields 640 apartments. Figure a few are vacant so let's just say 600. Average of 3 people each. That's 1800 people or 18 survivors in that building alone. In the suburbs if we assume 30 houses on each block and 4 people on average per house that's 120 people or about 1 survivor per block on average.

You can't think in averages however. Mom and Dad get married. They have 3 kids. Mom has the 1% gene or immunity or whatever it is that prevents her from dying. Dad doesn't. The kids get some genes from Mom and some from Dad. Chances are at least 1 and maybe 2 of them will get the "survivor" gene from Mom. What you find is one house with 3 survivors and then 2 or 3 blocks of homes with no survivors.

How do I know all of this? Some was put out by the CDC and the government before everything collapsed. Some involved looking it up on the internet or in books at the library. Some involved just simple assumptions and math. A lot was based on the few survivors I've stumbled across and the information we've shared with each other.

Ah, the internet. What I wouldn't give to have that again. Surprisingly it kept working well into the collapse. As long as power was on the Internet was still there. Some of us tried to download everything we could find. It didn't take long to find

survival and prepper forums, many with links to vast repositories of documents on how to survive anything. Unfortunately for me I found these too late. It seems I wasn't the only one with this idea. The hundreds of thousands of new overnight preppers and survivalists all tried to get to these sites and repositories all at the same time. The servers ground to a halt.

I tried to download a small file on how to filter water. Something that would have once taken a few seconds took nearly 35 minutes to download. It felt like I was back on dial up AOL from the 80s!

Not to be callous, but the internet was a much better place once a lot of people had died. It got much faster, of course it only stayed up a few more days at that point but I was able to get some more documents and save them to my laptop and some memory sticks. Now that's power's gone and I can't access those documents. I'm back to square one.

The advice was good. The recommendations were to get CBRNE suits. Basically a suit and mask that would let you survive almost any type of contaminant in the air or environment. Yeah, as long as UPS is still delivering... which of course they weren't anymore.

They said to stock up on food. Stock up on water. Stock up on toilet paper. Stock up on bandaids. Stock up on guns. Anything you'd need to survive for a few decades you should have stored away. Great advice but not after society and the planet has already collapsed. Of course on my salary I would have never been able to afford to do most of this anyway. Maybe if I had started a decade ago before I was married and had the.... Oh Stacey... how I miss you....

July 1st, 2013

I couldn't write yesterday. It was too risky for a light. The hunters were in the area. No, not some deer or turkey hunters, the human hunters. You see, 1 in 100 people lived. It was mostly a lottery with your life on the line. Social status didn't matter. Money didn't matter. Morality didn't matter. You could have been a druggie sleeping in a box in an alley or a corporate raider making an eight figure salary. You each had the same chance at living or dying. Our over populated jails had thousands of individuals. Again, look at the average. Four thousand in one jail, the averages say 40 should survive. Was it the 40 who stole a few bucks from the office petty cash box? Or was it the 40 murdering rapists who survived?

You'd think with all the open space people would have plenty of room to grow a garden and raise livestock. All the empty houses and buildings and businesses would be a treasure trove of food and supplies. You'd be wrong.

The people have been so conditioned to having things done for them and being handed to them that a large number are just sitting in their houses literally starving to death. Another group was more than willing to go scavenging but they grabbed flat screen TVs and Xbox systems. Smart move. Especially with no power anymore. Bunch of morons.

Another segment of the remaining population was smart enough to start scavenging but they are aggressive. They see you and they shoot... and they don't ask questions later. They either want what you got or to eliminate competition for the remaining stuff.

A few people managed to survive and meet up with other liked minded individuals and have formed little enclaves and fortresses.

Finally there are the loners. Like me. After losing Stacey and the kids I just don't want to be around anyone else as I'll probably lose them too. It's just so difficult.

July 3rd, 2013

Even though this is a new diary I still had to take a break. It seems every time I write I start thinking of what I had and of Stacey and....

July 4th, 2013

Happy fourth of July. Just a little earlier I heard the bangs and flashes of the fireworks celebration. No, not really. More like gun shots and muzzle flashes off in the distance. At least they weren't shooting at me this time. These marauders are really getting bad. I might have to do something about it.

Heh. Listen to me. 'Do something about it.' Six months ago I would have been calling the police and hiding in my house. Guns are something that should be highly controlled if not outright banned. The authorities were there to take care of us. They know what is good for us.

At least that's how I used to think. About one month after everyone started getting sick and dying I was ambushed. The group beat me nearly to death and I had no way to defend myself. As they were breaking in I even tried calling 911 on my cell which, amazingly, was still up and working. You know you're in trouble when

911 goes to voicemail after a dozen rings. Anyway, they eventually stormed the house, beat me and took everything I had. All my food and water. Not that it was a lot but all I had saved up they took.

The punches and kicks were painful. Finally they dragged me over to the table, tore my clothes off and tied me to it face down. I couldn't imagine why until I heard one of the guys undoing his pants. I've never been with anyone other than my wife, let alone having a consensual homosexual experience. Now it looked like these guys were going to have their way with me, didn't have my consent and I was helpless to resist other than to start screaming.

Say what you want but for the first time in my life I was more than willing to kiss another man. Just as one of the thugs was climbing up on the table to get on top of me Mark from across the alley burst in and started shooting the gang. The guy climbing on top of me was the second to go down and he collapsed on me quite dead. I don't know how long I laid there feeling his life blood at first pouring onto my neck and then slowing down to a sticky gentle flow as the last of it drained from him. I later found out the shotgun blast took out half his face and tore open the artery in his neck.

Finally Mark returned from where ever he had chased them off to. He asked me if I was OK as he was dragging the body off of me. A quick flick of his wrist and a knife seemed to materialize from thin air. He cut me loose and asked again if I was OK. I looked at Mark and said that if he wasn't a dude I'd give him a big kiss right then and there for saving me. He blushed a bit and told me to go clean up and put some clothes on as the situation was already awkward enough.

I painfully went upstairs, washed the blood off me and did a thorough check of my body. Everything seemed to be intact with nothing broken. I did have some cuts and would shortly have a big shiner but seemed none the worse off. I took the antibiotic ointment from the cabinet and cleaned up my wounds making sure to treat them and applied various sized bandages. A fresh set of dockers and a button up shirt and I felt better. I slipped on some socks and a pair of loafers and went back downstairs.

My first question to Mark was where he got the gun from and that when the police got here he'd probably get in trouble for shooting someone. It took over an hour but by the end of the conversation, and no police arriving, I finally realized he was right. Society was gone. It was law of the jungle. Every man for himself. The physical and nearly sexual attack by that gang along with what I had read on the forums convinced me I had to grow up. I had to stop being a sheep and become a wolf, or at least a sheep dog as I wasn't looking to prey on others.

I went back to Mark's place that night as there was nothing left in mine. He gave me one of the spare bedrooms and some food. The next morning we had another long talk about getting my act together. I agreed and after thinking it over told him I'd be heading out to see if any of my relatives scattered around the country were still alive.

Had I known what that decision really meant I may have very well just asked Mark to shoot me right then and there. After all just a few weeks earlier I had buried Stacey, Jimmy and Suzy. At that time, overloaded as they were, services were still working and the coroner picked up the bodies and left them at the cemetery for me. Now the bodies just remained where they had collapsed.

July 5th, 2013

Mark insisted I at least start off with some decent equipment and he drove me to the local sporting goods store. The streets were nearly completely deserted. I warned him I didn't have much cash on me and my credit cards were maxed. He looked at me kind of funny but didn't say anything. We pulled up in front and the lot was nearly empty. I thought the store looked closed and as we got near the doors I saw no lights in there and sure enough the doors were locked. I turned to tell Mark who had lingered briefly by his truck. He ignored me, walked past, raised his arm which now had a large crow bar in it and smashed out the glass.

I yelled at him about what he was doing and that's when he had to remind me, yet again, that society was gone. The law was gone. It was everyone for themselves and the only limitation was your beliefs and morals.

Questioning him on this he explained that he did not believe in murder or intentionally harming another but he believed in defending himself and others to the point that he would, if necessary, take a life. He also did not believe in stealing but had no problem with taking abandoned supplies to help him survive. He equated it to an apple tree in the forest. If you're hungry, you'd pick an apple and no one would complain as no one owned it. Well, the way the world is now, no one owns this equipment, these supplies, and I will need it to survive. Now if I encountered someone who had something I wanted I'd barter or trade for it but if they weren't willing to part with it I certainly would not take it by force.

A simple philosophy, yet following these two simple beliefs meant you were following the "spirit" of most religious teachings. I had to admit my view of the world and society was shaken pretty heavily during those early weeks.

We went into the store and Mark set me up with a decent backpack with strap on tent and bed roll. He filled the pack with medical gear, food, water filter devices a few books and then took me to the gun department. I tried to say no but when he held up some cord and asked if there was a nearby table I quickly changed my thinking. I had no idea what he was giving me or how to use it but thankfully this place had a shooting range in the basement of the store. He brought a number of flashlights with and set them up so we could see the targets on the range that he also hung up.

The first gun he handed me, a hand gun, he had me fire it over and over with nothing in. I didn't see the point until he set a bullet on top of it and said to pull the trigger and do so without letting the bullet fall over. Once I had this down he then had me shoot it for real. Let's just say that by the end of the day I went from 'clips and bullets' to 'magazines and cartridges'. From 'machine guns' to 'semi auto rifle'. He taught me the correct terminology, how to work them, how to disassemble and clean them and how to shoot fairly accurately.

By the time we were done he told me my skills were now good enough to at least hit the MZB. I had to ask what the heck a MZB was. He explained slang term for Mutant Zombie Biker. Basically any bad guy that wasn't an authority figure. The authorities were called JBTs or Jack Booted Thugs. Whatever, it seemed confusing to me. Either the person meant you harm or they didn't. I couldn't understand the point of having multiple acronyms that all meant 'bad guy' but since Mark had saved my 'virginity' if not my very life I wasn't going to argue with him.

I did ask how I could repay him. He was pushing a shopping cart loaded with guns and ammo out to his truck and said this was all the payment he was interested in however if I happened to pass his sister's place he had a letter for her. I got the general location and said it was in the same county as one of my brothers so I'd be happy to take it for him but it might be months or more before I could deliver it. He was fine and understood that circumstances might even prevent it from ever being delivered. I think he meant I might get killed, not something I wanted to happen.

July 6th, 2013

Ow! I don't know if it's the recovery from the beating or sleeping on the ground last night but I was really sore this morning.

After relieving myself in the bushes I set about looking over everything that Mark had put in my pack. Besides the medical, food and water filter, there were a half dozen different knives and multi-tools, a machete, matches, flint and steel, a compass, a handful of maps, a set of eating utensils along with a plate and cup, a mini stove with some fuel bottles and couple of books on survival and eating in the

wild. I had the tent and sleeping roll still setup and a Savage 110 in .308 with a scope along with a Ruger SR40 semi auto handgun. There were 200 rounds for the rifle and 100 for the handgun. Mark had said that by the time I made it through these rounds I'd either have scavenged a lot more or I'd be dead so hauling tens of pounds of ammo around wasn't worth the weight. I had to agree as the bag already weighed way too much to me.

Over the next months I discovered just how right he was. Many times I had to defend myself and to the victor went the spoils. It got to the point I had too many guns to carry around so I started making caches storing a gun and the corresponding ammo together in some out of the way place that would require an extensive search to find. My day to day arsenal that I took with me contained the two original firearms along with a Ruger 10/22 rifle which has supplied me with many rabbits and a Mossberg 590 12ga shotgun that I ended up turning into a 'sawed off' shotgun. Yeah, at one time that was illegal but now, the close in devastating defense it can provide more than made up for it. I don't doubt for a minute that a gunsmith would cringe over my hacksaw job but it has served me well.

Many encounters are like a battle royal. Many may enter but only one will walk away... and sometimes none do. The Mossberg is the fourth shotgun I've had as whenever I come across something better, or one with more ammo I don't hesitate to swap it out. To me these aren't some family heirloom, just tools to help me survive.

July 7th, 2013

Being a loner just wandering from place to place slowly making my way towards some loose goals has advantages and disadvantages. Sure a nice secure location with others around might be better but it also presents a fixed target for the marauders. On my own I can melt away or hide as necessary fighting only when I have no other choice. The down side is I have only myself to rely on. I've met a few friendlies out there and we have done a bit of trading, but mostly I think we just enjoyed the brief company of another human to talk to as all too soon we'd each continue on our separate ways. Only once was the topic of banding together brought up but we had differing destinations in mind so the idea was quickly discarded.

In the early days of the pandemic, people did many absurd things. A lot thought they could drive away from the virus just to end up in accidents and massive traffic jams. The result was that most long distance travel by vehicle was pretty much impossible now. The cities emptied, or at least tried to, on to the

highways which are now long ribbons of gleaming cars, Maybe in a few dozen years they'd be long ribbons of rust but that future was far off.

July 8th, 2013

I guess I've recorded as much of the history as I know it so I'm going to start writing my day to day activities now. Hopefully if someone reads everything up to here they'll have a background and perhaps a greater understanding of why I do what I now do to survive. The future is murky but surviving is crystal clear. Those left know this. They don't know what the future holds but they do know how to survive. If you didn't know how or learn fast, as I did, you really wouldn't be around anymore.

July 9th, 2013

My journey has taken me from Little Rock, AR north east towards Indiana. My goal is to cross most of the state and then swing east to get to Ohio, where my brother lives. I could probably angle across the states and get there quicker however I have never seen the great lakes and figured this was as good a time as any so I planned on heading north to Lake Michigan before turning east and running along Lake Erie in Ohio before dropping back south for a bit. It's not like I have a job to hurry back to. Living out of a pack on the road is hard but I wouldn't give it up for my old desk job. I feel so much better these days. The extra weight has melted away and my muscles have hardened up.

So far the scavenging has kept me in canned goods and some staples and the books Mike put in my pack explained how to find and prepare almost anything that I can harvest from nature or shoot.

July 10th, 2013

Good score today. Found a country store that has not been hit yet. Picked up some canned meat, some soups and even a few candy bars. A big score was the TP. I'm always running low on this. Of course all I carry is what fits on me and in my pack. Anything else would just be cumbersome or require a vehicle. The canned meat will help me to conserve my ammo.

I thought about acquiring a vehicle but most are pretty low on gas and have been sitting for months and months already. The batteries have probably lost their charge already and while normally you make better time you also miss a lot. With the clogged roads a vehicle would spend much of the time creeping along not much

faster than a person could walk. Sure there are some open stretches where you could zoom along. However zooming down the road at even a modest 30 would prevent you from noticing sounds, or the silence in the forest, silence that tells you something is wrong, something is stalking you. Oh crap.

July 11th, 2013

I realized why I was writing about silence yesterday. The forest around me had indeed gone silent. Months ago my highly impractical clothes and shoes had long been switched for camouflage which I quickly 'dirtied' up. A good pair of hiking boots and some brush strapped to various points on my body helps to break up my outline. Before you think I'm some sniper commando running around in a ghillie suite, I'm not. Think weekend warrior at the paint ball arena with a bit of plant material stuck on their clothes and you'd be a lot closer. Even with my amateur attempt it worked surprisingly well. I've had a few others, probably hunters, pass within a few dozen feet and not realize I was there.

Ever so slowly and quietly I chambered a round on my Savage rifle. It never was further than arms reach. Never. I learned this, the hard way, months back. I slipped out of my pack and adjusted my hat slightly. Slowly I did a full 360 scanning for threats. None immediately presented themselves however the forest was still silent.

There, I heard it, off to the left, just a slight rustling in the bushes and a snap of a small twig. I still couldn't see to locate the intruder so I took up a better defensive position, basically I crawled behind a tree and pointed my sights in that direction and waited. The wait wasn't long when a young doe came around a distant tree. I was about to get up when I realized the forest was still quiet. This wouldn't happen for a deer. Something, or someone, else had to still be out there.

I stayed prone smelling the damp earth just inches below by nose. An insect was slowly working its way up my leg under my pants. The sweat was dripping from my brow yet I remained motionless as I could somehow feel the threat out there. The deer had an almost panicked look and kept twisting her head around, constantly sniffing the air.

Without warning the forest exploded when a cougar jumped from a nearby tree right onto the doe's back easily knocking it over. The struggle was brief once the cougar clamped its jaws on the young deer's throat. The deer was easily suffocated and dragged off by the cougar.

I slowly put my rifle back on safe, retrieved my pack and headed off in the opposite direction. Ever since the collapse, wildlife had been working on

repopulating the planet. Of course there were rumors that some zoos had turned out their animals too but I haven't seen anything exotic. Yet...

July 12th, 2013

Another uneventful day. More walking.

July 13th, 2013

Yet again more walking, but I was able to shoot a fat rabbit today. Can't wait for it to finish cooking. I'm really hungry today.

July 14th, 2013

Fool me once I almost die. But you won't fool me again.

Passing by a farm house a woman sauntered out onto the porch and called to me. Keeping my distance, she wanted to know if I had any food to share, if I did she'd make it worth my while. Of course while saying this she was gently tugging at the strings holding the front of her dress together.

After last time I wanted no part of this and told her I was looking for food myself asking if she had any. Her demeanor changed quickly and a shotgun gun, out of sight behind a column holding up the dilapidated roof, was suddenly grabbed and brought to bear on me while she told me to just keep walking.

I guess I should explain about last time. About a month ago I passed a similar situation except this time there were a couple of women. College age women. They propositioned me and being a guy I fell for their lines. It didn't take long until they had me inside, sitting in a chair while the two of them did a slow strip tease on their bed. As they were down to the last few garments, one of them asked about protection. When I admitted I had none she said she'd get some from the bathroom and disappeared behind me.

Moments later I heard her foot steps as she returned. She came up behind me and, while I was expecting something completely different, thrust a hard cold barrel into the back of my head. Her partner immediately started getting dressed and then went and got a gun of her own. By now I figured I was dead.

Instead she covered me while the first one dressed. They took my pack and weapons and had me strip. Finally they tied my wrists to the bed. Why do I keep

ending up naked tied to something? They laughed about how easy it was to survive with all of these stupid testosterone charged men about. With that I could hear them gathering up their stuff in the other room and leaving.

With only my wrists tied I was able to contort around until I got my leg near the spindle they tied me to. Thankfully they hadn't tied both wrists to the main thick headboard posts, only one of them. It took a half dozen hits with my heel until the thinner spindle finally snapped. With one hand free I was able to easily undo the other restraint. I did a hurried search of the house but found nothing useful. Heading out side I saw some of my clothes discarded alongside the road. Gathering them up I put on what was there and then headed in the opposite direction in a quick trot. An hour later I made it to a cache I had left the day before in another empty house. Pulling up the floor boards I uncovered the old double barrel shotgun, a dozen rounds, a few packets of food and a couple of water bottles along with a kids cartoon character back pack. Something with princesses in a shocking pink color. Not good for keeping a low profile but better than an armful of stuff.

I quickly packed the food and most of the water and slung it over one shoulder. Two shells went in the gun and the remainder in my pocket. Starting back the way I came I downed the last unpacked water bottle as I jogged. It didn't take long to pick up their trail. Apparently they were going through my pack while walking and every so often I found something of mine discarded on the road that I guess they didn't feel they had a use for. Each item got added to my pink backpack. By dusk I still had not caught up with them and decided to stop for fear of losing the trail.

Perhaps luck was finally turning around as I had stopped near a small patch of wild asparagus. My dinner was a cold packet of tuna with asparagus and another bottle of water. Sometime after sunset when it was nearly completely dark out I noticed an occasional flickering off in the distance. I stood up and decided that it was probably a small campfire. Maybe the women were there. Grabbing my pink pack and gun I headed off towards it slowly and quietly.

Sure enough, when I got close enough to observe I saw both of them sitting by the fire eating my food. From the amount of empty cans and packets they'd eaten quite a bit already. While I had the advantage of being in the dark I didn't want to just go in shooting as they had my weapons and superior fire power that would be turned against me if I missed.

For the time being I just settled in and watched. It took an hour or so for them to finally put out the fire and go to sleep. I really can't believe they have survived this long. No guard or watch. An open fire. Plus the trail of stuff they had discarded while walking. About the only thing they could do worse is to run around screaming

'Here I am, come and get me.' Maybe I shouldn't be so critical as they did manage to disarm me and take my stuff. Maybe there is more than one way to survive.

Once I was sure they were asleep I very slowly picked my way into their camp watching and feeling with each foot step to make sure I didn't make a sound. I approached the first one, a blond from a bottle, and lowered the shotgun down to her neck and slowly pushed the end of the barrel down. The pressure increased until she finally woke up nearly choking by now. It did not take long for her to realize what was going on. Unfortunately she yelled out before I could tell her not to. I backed up keeping the gun trained on her as her friend scrambled up and out of the sleeping bag.

They realized who I was and immediately went into seductive mode thinking to fool me twice. Wasn't going to happen. I told them to both strip and gestured with the gun to emphasize my command. One of them stated to slowly move towards the 12 gauge while removing clothing but I called that bluff quite quickly. Once they were down to their underwear I told them they could stop and instructed the first one to use her clothes to gag and tie up the second one. I got some real venomous looks for this command but thankfully they complied. Once I was sure the other one, the brunette, was secure I told blondie to lay down on her stomach facing away from me. She did and I gathered up her pants intending to tie her up too. I had to set my gun down to use both hands to tie her up. Straddling her I knelt down and went to grab an arm.

It swung around way too easily which is when I realized she was turning underneath me and around came the other arm connecting with my jaw. My daddy raised me to never hit a girl. To hell with that advice. She was swinging, scratching and trying to knee me in the groin. Finally I just got fed up with this crap and with one hard swing knocked her out. Pushing her limp form out of the way I checked and she had a strong pulse and was breathing. She'd wake up with a hell of a headache and a real nice black eye but didn't appear to be hurt in any other way.

As pissed as I was I still couldn't bring myself to shoot them although you can't know how bad I wanted to. Finally I wiped off the sweat and went to work gathering up my stuff. I did leave them their pack, the empty pink pack and limited equipment. Even their meager supplies. Once I had all of my stuff secured and all my weapons back in hand I went over to the brunette and said 'If you'd have just asked nicely I would have shared. Now you should count your blessings that I'm still a gentleman, and that I'm not just going to shoot you either.'

Her narrowed eyes spoke volumes but hopefully the words would eventually sink in. I said I was going to be leaving now and if I caught them following me or ever saw them again I'd change my mind and shoot them.

I made an obvious show of stomping through the bushes back to the road and then shuffled down the road making enough noise that she could hear which way I was going. Once I was a good half mile down I slipped off into a grove of trees, hid my pack and took my rifle and a handgun and climbed up into one of the trees. About an hour later I could faintly hear yelling back at their camp. Blondie must have finally woke up and wasn't happy.

When morning came the two of them were walking briskly down the road. As they got close I could hear them egging each other on in regards to what they were going to do to my genitalia when they caught up to me. They never saw me and continued down the road. I was tempted to trail them for a few days but really didn't want the distraction so after an hour had passed I climbed down, retrieved my equipment and headed in the opposite direction. I headed west a few days before swinging north again.

Lessons learned. Don't let your weapon out of your reach. Stop thinking with my other head. Never let an unknown person get behind you. Anything else? Oh yea, even some pretty stupid people are somehow surviving and they're unpredictable.

July 15th, 2013

Today is a big day. I plan on crossing the Mississippi. From road signs and my maps it looks like I'm just south of Scott City, MO and I should be able to cross on a train bridge. I've been careful to avoid any road crossing as that has the potential to be an ambush location if not worse. I think the train crossing more or less in the middle of nowhere is my best bet.

July 15th, 2013, continued

Well I made it. Of course nothing went as planned. No idea how but they managed to derail a train and smash up the cars on top of the bridge. Some had fallen into the river below. I debated climbing over them but the pile didn't look stable. For lack of a better idea I headed west into Scott City and with some quiet observation, found the town nearly deserted. I liberated an old canoe. OK, I stole it but the owners didn't appear to be needing it anymore. The smell coming from the open windows of the house along with the flies on the inside told me they were no more.

I carried the canoe upside down on my shoulders, just like in those early explorer pictures, down to the river. I was able to find an easy launch point and got in. The current was faster than I expected. It swept me downstream nearly to Cairo,

IL before I was able to get it to the far shore. I beached by a forested stretch and pulled the canoe up into the woods out of sight of the river.

Barely 5 minutes later I heard a motor and observed a motor boat coming up the river. Guys were scanning the shore line with binoculars while other armed men in the boat scanned up and down stream. I'm sure they were looking for me but I wasn't about to hang around and find out why. I came out of the woods, crossed a road and ended up by the regional airport.

A small assortment of 'prop job' planes were parked outside of the hangers. If I knew how to fly it would have been a perfect opportunity. Unfortunately I don't so I just continued on until dusk putting distance between me and the river.

July 16th, 2013

I got an early start heading mostly north and a bit north east. According to my map I'm more or less paralleling highway 57 in Illinois although several miles to the east of it.

July 17th, 2013

It rained today. Felt good after the warm days we've had lately, I took a small bar of soap I had and gave myself a thorough cleaning in the rain.

July 18th, 2013

Rained again. It's been cloudy all day.

July 19th, 2013

OK, enough with the rain already.

July 20th, 2013

No rain but the heat is back and lots of humidity to go with it. I've been trying to stick to back roads and forested areas but haven't seen a single soul since the guys in the boat.

July 25th, 2013

Nothing to really write about lately. Just walking and walking. Heat and more heat. I am getting low on food so I'm going to have to head for some houses and try a bit of scavenging.

July 27th, 2013

Found a pretty good haul today in an old farm house. It looked to be empty but I still watched it for a few hours before approaching. Finally I approached. There were a couple of newer grave sites but the grass had started to grow over them. Obviously someone survived long enough to bury a few other people but there were no signs that they were still around. Cautiously I approached the house. Finally I called out but only silence answered me. It looked like every other farm house. Old, peeling white paint, wood construction with a brick chimney.

The front door was open with a few leaves blown in. I entered and did a careful search from top to bottom but found nothing useful. I headed out the back door and noticed the doors on the ground. Perhaps a tornado shelter. I opened them and descended the stone steps. It looked like it was indeed used as a tornado shelter but also was being used as a root cellar with rows and rows of canned goods. I decided to stay a few days and enjoy the bounty since I certainly can't carry it all with me.

July 29th, 2013

I killed a child today.

July 30th, 2013

Yesterday has to be the worst day ever. All morning long I had the feeling of being watched but couldn't see anyone. By noon I was jumping at every sound. Later afternoon came around and I couldn't take it any longer. I went to a second floor bedroom and setup with the .308 and took out my binoculars. As long as I could spot the intruder I could get off the first shot. It wouldn't be the first time I've had to play this life and death waiting game. As dusk approached I finally caught movement in the tree line off a ways. I got behind my rifle, adjusted the scope and waited. I finally saw the rifle barrel come out from behind a tree but the intruder still was staying under cover. Another twenty minutes passed until they made a mistake. They leaned backwards just a few inches, enough to expose an ear and the back of the skull behind the tree.

I lined up and controlled my breathing. Finally I was 'in the zone' and fired a round. Even at the distance I could see the spray of red and then the body fall forward to the ground. I waited until it was almost completely dark before heading out to see what I could scavenge off the body. It took a bit longer to find it but once I did I realized it was a child. Maybe 9 or 10 years old.

What was he doing out here? Was he trying to survive? Just looking for some food? Was he really a threat to me? Or did my mind just make me think he was? Why didn't I notice he was only a kid? Sure the tree hid most of him but was it really that dark and hard to make out that he wasn't an adult? I collapsed to the ground and sat there in the faint moonlight staring at the body for hours.

When dawn broke I checked the small body for any sign of identification or something to tell me who he was. I found none. Other than the clothes, there was a small pack with a dozen dead squirrels in it and the Winchester lever action .22lr that he carried.

I couldn't just leave the body so I dug a grave near the other two and buried him. I'm not religious and don't know any prayers so I just wished him well on whatever journey his beliefs dictated.

In a somber mood I knew it was time to leave so I went to the root cellar and packed as many jars into my pack as I could. I entered the house once more and did a final search just in case I had missed anything useful. When I got to the mantle over the fireplace I realized I was the intruder.

The raider.

The bad guy.

There on the mantle was a picture of a smiling middle aged couple and their son. The boy I had shot. He was probably out hunting when I arrived. At some point he must have had to bury both of his parents. He saw me as the squatter. Someone stealing his supplies. The food that would allow him to live another day. He must have been watching the house to see if I was going to leave or if I was someone he could approach.

And for that I killed him.

With a heavy heart I picked up my pack to leave. As the contents settled I heard the clink of two of the jars in the pack. I almost dropped the pack and took the jars out to smash but what would that have accomplished. I needed the food and I didn't know I was shooting an innocent boy. I don't know what else to say. I

stood over the graves and told them all how sorry I was before turning and walking away.

August 2nd, 2013

Since killing the boy I've been wandering aimlessly and simply could not bring myself to eat any of the food I got from there. I really have had no appetite. I found a family today. The kids were emaciated and their mother stood behind the two of them with her hands held protectively over their bodies. The father stood in front of them with an ancient single shot rifle. I was walking down the road and stopped in front of a dirt driveway leading up to their farm house.

The father took his gun and gestured with it that I should keep going.

I very carefully set my weapons down keeping them pointed away from him at all times. I slowly removed my pack and set it on the ground. I reached in, slowly extracted a jar of canned goods and set it on the ground. I continued to remove jar after jar placing them in the dirt. When I emptied all of the unintentionally ill gotten gains I hefted my pack, picked up each my weapons and turned back to the road continuing on my way. I never looked back. Hopefully they would make use of the food.

August 3rd, 2013

My appetite has returned. Maybe it was psychosomatic, maybe just a bit of easing of my conscience. This time I didn't raid a house but instead turned to nature's bounty. Being the rural Midwest it isn't hard this time of year to find all sorts of food. Today I pigged out on corn. Right from the cob and straight from the plant. You can't get fresher than that. A bit of butter and salt would have made it perfect but I'm not complaining.

August 4th, 2013

I've got some wheels today. This part of rural Illinois seems to have avoided the massive traffic issues I found earlier on so I took a chance at trying to get a ride. Most vehicles I tried did not work, probably dead batteries, but one finally did turn over and start. It was an older 80's Pontiac with the keys still in it but it ran, that's all that mattered. The gas gauge indicated a quarter tank. I figured even if I just got 100 miles it would save 5-6 days of walking. Hitting a couple of garages I was able to get enough gas cans to fill the tank almost all the way. The gas must have been old as the car started to run a bit rough but as long as it ran I didn't care.

August 5th, 2013

The car ran out of gas and I'm walking again. I made it as far as town called Sauk Village when things got scary really fast. For the last few miles I had noticed more and more people about. Still very small numbers, but when you've gone days without seeing another living being, a handful in one day seems like a crowd. Traffic, or I guess I should say abandoned cars on the road were heavy and forced me to slow down almost to a walking pace to get around them. I was about to go on foot when a shot rang out.

I couldn't tell from where it came from but the second round hit the car which told me all I needed to know. I took a quick right and floored it. Curbs, bushes, fences, signs, none of them mattered. Within a few blocks I knew I was in even more trouble when I could see a pickup following me. I kept working my way to the south and to the east trying to get back to a more rural area. The urban environment was too constricting. Too many places for people to hide. Too many sniper opportunities.

The sign said Crown Point ahead. I had finally made it to Indiana although I don't even remember crossing the border. The people in the truck decided to start shooting at me again as I slowed down to maneuver around all the cars in the city. A lucky shot, or perhaps the abuse I doing to the car took out one of my rear tires. I just kept driving on the flat and eventually the rim. The car started sputtering as I approached the center of the city. A quick glance at the gauge told me I was out of gas. I slid to a halt in front of an older building and hastily exited the car grabbing my pack and weapons on the way out.

It was a nice building. Older, brick and probably served a civic purpose. I didn't care. Running up the steps I was relieved to find the doors were not locked. The door was still closing behind me when the truck came to a halt and four guys piled out. I had moved to a window and saw them approaching, all armed with rifles. I knelt down on the old wooden floors, held up my .308 rifle and pointed it at the first guy. A few precious seconds were spent trying to control my breathing before I finally pulled the trigger. It should have been a heart shot but caught him in the gut instead. I thought my aim was true but maybe the glass I had to shoot through had deflected the bullet subtly.

Regardless of why, it bought me time as the other three stopped their approach and spread out seeking cover. I knew my position was compromised so I crawled away from the window and to another room and a new window. From this angle I had a nearly side profile presented to me. I attempted to open the window first but it was stuck closed, probably painted shut. If I had stood up I'm sure I could

have broken it free but the noise and the presentation of my abdomen to the gunmen wasn't something I thought of as a wise move.

Again taking a knee I lined up on the profile and this time aimed for a lung/heart shot but immediately after the shot I worked the action and fired a second shot just to make sure at least one flew true.

One dead, one injured, two more to go. Since my shots revealed my position the other two quickly shifted and started firing in my direction. Of course I had already dropped down and was crawling out of the room as the first shots came through the window.

I headed back to the other side of the building but also worked my way up to the second story. From this vantage point I was about 20 feet above the ground and had a slightly better angle for my shots. Once more I tried the window and surprisingly it did open easily. I slowly eased it up a few inches and then lined up for a head shot. It never ceases to amaze me that a small piece of metal traveling thousands of feet per second could do so much damage. The head on the third guy pretty much just ceased to exist, completely blown apart by my shot.

The fourth guy must have had enough as he got in the truck and took off back the way he had come. I didn't know if the building I was in was truly vacant or not and didn't wait around to check. Once the truck was out of sight I beat a hasty retreat outside, grabbed the guns and did a quick check of the bodies. A few knives and a couple of extra loaded magazine is all I got. I was checking over the gut shot guy, who I thought had bled out, when suddenly his eyes opened and he grabbed my arm. There wasn't much strength there but he clung to it none the less.

'End it' he said. I looked at him kind of funny and he again begged me to put him out of his misery. He had been armed with a 20 gauge shot gun. I unloaded it and put one round back in it, set it on the ground within his reach and then backed away keeping my rifle trained on him the entire time. Once I got around the corner of the building I turned and took off at a moderate jog. Moments later I heard the sound of a shotgun blast followed by cawing of some crows.

I kept heading east until dark.

August 7th, 2013

That's a lot of water. There isn't any other way to describe Lake Michigan. It's the first time I've ever seen so much water in one place. I can only imagine what the ocean must look like. I came in through the Indiana Dunes state park and am really overwhelmed at such a large body of water. The informational signs describe

dune succession and how the lake forms the dunes but then the plants stabilize them. Not really information that will do me any good during these times but as the place was deserted I took the time for a bit of self education.

August 8th, 2013

I lied yesterday. I said the Dunes were deserted. Turns out they weren't. This morning I woke up and while foraging for some game I stumbled across a family camping out in the woods. Dad, mom and a 14 year old daughter. Once we all decided to stop and talk instead of shooting each other I told mine and got their story. They're refugees from Chicago. When people started dropping it got bad fast. Within days bodies were being dumped at the curb like bags of trash. Almost immediately all services ceased as those who had not yet been infected went home to self quarantine. It didn't help.

By the end of the third month most of the people who were going to die were dead. Many of the survivors were gang members and with no police presence it became open warfare on the streets. This didn't actually last that long as they staked out territories and shot any rival gang banger invading their territory.

It was at this point that things got nasty. The gangs spread out in their territory looting, raping and murdering at will. Chicago was supposed to be a gun free city, or at lately only very limited access to them. Illinois was the only state with no concealed carry laws. Yet the gangs were heavily armed and most of the citizens had a piece or two themselves. Once the gangs started going after the remaining citizens the people either fought back or fled.

The Roger's family chose to flee. Matt knew that if he failed to protect his family it would be his wife, Debbie and their daughter Hanna that would pay the price. Instead they packed up what they could to survive in their forest green colored SUV and left very early in the morning. So early it was still dark out with just the faintest hint of light in the east. Most gangs were still asleep and Matt drove slow to keep the noise to a minimum.

They had no destination in mind, just to get out of the city. For whatever reason they headed east and ended up at the dunes. The SUV was running on fumes and until they could find more gas they were stuck here. I noticed that all three were armed. Hanna had a 22lr Marlin, Debbie had a handgun of some type tucked in her waistband and covered with her blouse and Matt had a rifle, 30-06, readily at hand. He had on rare occasion gone deer hunting with it over the years. Unfortunately they didn't have enough ammo to hold off a determined flock of geese let alone a handful of bad guys.

I asked how they've been doing at scavenging and received confused looks. I guess I need to teach them starting with the lessons that Mark taught me months ago. I don't owe them anything but something, I can't say what, is prompting me to stick with them for now.

August 9th, 2013

It took quite a bit to get through to them but I think they are finally realizing that they need to scavenge to survive with a goal of eventually putting down roots somewhere. Matt agreed to go with me and learn a bit of scavenging.

I took him east to a series of houses. If he could handle scavenging a house then the rest should be easy by comparison. I explained that anyone still alive and still in their house had food and weapons and would not hesitate to use the latter so be sure the house really is vacant and abandoned.

We setup in the woods observing a small group of houses with rifle scope and binoculars. After about 5 minutes he was all set to rush in proclaiming it to be clear. I had to almost physically restrain him before he would listen. I asked what he saw.

He said no people and long grass. The houses must be empty. It took a lot of coaxing and leading him on but still making him observe before he finally mentioned the garden that we could raid. He never saw the firewood. Patiently I explained to Matt, that firewood is fresh. I pointed out the cut ends that were still fresh wood and not dried or weathered from sitting out. I forced him to describe the garden to me in detail. After listing all the veggies he could see he finally stated that it was pretty much weed free.

Why, I asked him, would it be weed free after all this time unless someone was alive and tending it. The realization that he had missed these obvious signs of recent habitation finally sunk home. Matt asked what our options were.

Easy, either approach the house openly or leave. Call out to alert the people there as you approach. If they answer, talk and see if they're willing to trade, if not walk away. Or just move on and look for a truly abandoned place. Matt agreed and said that it was a good approach as he didn't feel right taking from someone who was still alive.

A voice from behind us caused us both to jump. A deep voice stated that he was happy to hear we weren't a couple of thieves trying to steal from his place. I quickly assured the well armed man, who had managed to sneak to within 20 feet of us, that we weren't and went so far as to give a very brief background on myself and that I was helping Matt to learn to scavenge so he could provide for himself

and his family. The stranger did not introduce himself but said he considered this entire area his in terms of scavenging "rights". We agreed to acknowledge that and politely moved on.

Matt was freaked out but I finally talked him into at least scouting around a bit more. We headed inland a bit from the lake and came across a scattering of homes and businesses including a Tavern. Observing that it did indeed appear to be abandoned we cautiously approached and went inside. It had been heavily raided and all the alcohol was missing. This wasn't my goal, the peanuts and pretzels were. We found a few cases filled with a dozen bags each. Big score!

I told Matt this was enough for one day, let's get these back to camp. As we approached I noticed it deserted but Matt did not seem concerned. Sure enough once we got into camp Debbie and Hanna came out of the woods holstering and setting the safeties on their weapons. Matt explained that they would hide in the woods when he was away and only come out when they were certain he was safe and it wasn't a trap.

These people definitely held some promise.

August 14th, 2013

It's been a number of days since I wrote. I've been doing more training with Matt and then once he felt comfortable we took Debbie and Hanna with too. They seem to pick up on detail better than Matt and more than once noticed something that both Matt and I had missed.

Tomorrow we're going to try to find an auto parts store or at least a repair shop in Michigan City. Matt really wants to get his SUV going again and we figured some gas cans and a siphon would be a good start. I'm a bit apprehensive about entering an urban environment again but perhaps with both of us we can watch each other's backs.

August 15th, 2013

We got the siphon and the gas cans and a lot more than we bargained for. A small group of national guard troops are patrolling the city. We witnessed them swarm in on another scavenger and demand he turn over all his weapons. He barely got out the word 'no' when the troops opened fire on him and then turned towards us. Matt and I ran the other way as fast as we could. We did manage to lose them while they turned the Hummers around to pursue but knew this was only temporary. We had to get out of the city.

I dragged Matt into a pizza joint and kept going towards the back of the dining area. Not seeing any troops I got up on a table and popped the ceiling panel. I could see some truss supports within reach. Matt handed up the guns, cans and siphon which we stashed on the tiles and then I boosted him up to the truss. He got into a semi sitting position on the narrow metal bar and then leaned over to help pull me up. Once I was positioned we slid the ceiling tile back in place just in time. Only seconds later we could hear troops rushing into the restaurant. They ransacked it pretty hard but finally called clear and left. We could faintly hear them doing the same in the space next door.

We waited nearly an hour after they left before we tried to climb down. The thin metal pressing into the back of our thighs had put our legs to sleep causing us to mostly fall from the ceiling as opposed to climbing down. At least our injuries were just bumps and bruises.

After darkness we finally left the restaurant taking our time to quietly observe every 50 to 100 yards. Twice we did have to duck down when one of their vehicles came past but they never saw us. It was well after midnight when we returned to camp and a very worried Debbie and Hanna.

August 16th, 2013

Today we made a quick trip to siphon gas from some abandoned cars. Matt's SUV started right up and ran a bit rough on the older gas but it did run. We left it running for a half hour to charge up the battery.

August 17th, 2013

For lack of any other options we've agreed to stay together and they're going to head east with me to Ohio to see if we can find my brother and Mark's sister.

August 18th, 2013

We drove across the rest of Indiana today. Yeah, I know this would normally be about a two hour drive however when you're stopping to siphon gas and scavenging here and there it takes a lot longer. It still beats a week or two of walking.

August 19th, 2013

Again we made good time. We're almost half way across Ohio and picked up some more supplies, mostly food, along the way. My brother is in Minerva which is southeast of Canton. I've told Matt about the letter that I need to deliver to Mark's sister if she's still alive. I mentioned that since Mark survived I'd guess she had a 50/50 chance of having survived too since she had some of the same genes. Tomorrow we're going to chance a run straight through Canton.

August 20th, 2013

Matt's driving, as usual, and I'm taking this chance to write a bit more as I'll probably forget to do so when I see my brother hopefully later today. I told Matt which exit to take and that I'd guide him in from there. It's slow going as there are abandoned cars and wrecks everywhere. So much for a quick run right through the city. At least it's quiet. We've seen almost no one.

A sharp rapping was heard on the door.

Knock, Knock, Knock.

“Miss, are you home?”

They persisted and Melissa didn't think they'd just go away on their own, besides those who mean you harm don't usually knock first and bring their kid with. She picked up her AR-15, made sure there was a round in the chamber and quietly unlocked the door. Taking a few steps back and partially around the corner she called out, “It's open.”

The ornate handle slowly turned and the door swung inwards. A man was standing there with a rifle slung over his back. Behind him was a woman and a girl.

“I'm armed. What do you want?”

“I would expect you to be armed. I just have a letter here for you.”

“A letter? I hope you don't mind if I'm a bit skeptical on that. I haven't received mail in about 8 months now.”

“No, really. It's from Mark, I think he's your brother.”

“Who are you?”

“Matt.” Gesturing towards the door, “My wife Debbie and our daughter Hanna.”

“Set it on the coffee table and back away.”

The man set a small box on the table and backed up to the doorway where the woman and the girl were waiting.

“That's all, Ma'am. If you don't mind we'll be on our way now,” he said and with a nod from her pulled the door shut behind him.

Melissa went to the door, locked it and hurried upstairs to keep a watch. Sure enough the three of them went out to a silver colored SUV, got in and drove off.

After an hour of observation just in case they tried to sneak back, Melissa finally went back downstairs and looked at the box wondering if Mark really was alive and what he had sent her.

She very cautiously opened the box only to find an envelope, a credit card and a book. Her name and address on the envelope were written in Mark's handwriting so she opened it and proceeded to read.

Dear Mel,

It's been awhile. Too long in fact. I wanted to take the opportunity to apologize for the last time we were together at Mom's place. You are an adult and I shouldn't have been trying to tell you how to live your life.

I'm sorry to say but mom and dad didn't make it. I was with them when they passed on and they did not suffer long. For whatever reason I didn't get infected and I hope you too are safe and healthy. I'm still near Little Rock, AR and in a year or two when everything settles down I'm going to try to make it there myself and see how you're getting along.

Please help out Russ however you can without compromising your own supplies and safety. He's a bit of a sheeple but he's pretty quickly getting with the program. I guess if he made it as far as you then he's learned how to take care of himself.

*Love,
Mark*

Melissa was confused. The delivery boy was supposed to be Russ but the guy said his name was Matt.

Looking at the credit card she saw the name "Russ Jackson". Even more confused now she picked up the book and opened to the first page.

Hi. I'm Russ.

I'm part of the one percent.

Before you start thinking of that Occupy thing, I'm not and never was part of that one percent. Back then... heh... back then... who would have thought we'd be referring to 6 months ago as 'back then'. But I digress. Back during the Occupy movement in 2011 and 12 I was firmly in the 99% group. I had a job...

Hours later she read the final entry written in different penmanship.

August 23rd, 2013

This entry is being written by Debbie. Russ is no more. He died to save us.

We were driving through Canton, and in fact had just gone from the 77 to 30 east and could see the 'end' of the city in the distance. He said he never liked the urban settings preferring to travel in rural environments. It was Matt's vehicle and Matt thought a quick drive through the city would be a quicker approach.

Gun shots were heard and we were still trying to locate the source when our front tire blew, or perhaps was shot out. We never did find out. It caused Matt to lose control and we skidded into a light pole. No one was seriously hurt and Russ jumped out, immediately crouched down, and started scanning for the shooter or shooters. He finally spotted the three guys, on foot, slowly approaching. He shot one before taking a real bad shot in the stomach himself. We tried to stop the bleeding but he just looked at us and said to run. Take his pack, the guns and go. He knew he was going to die and would try to take out the bad guys in the process.

We tried to change his mind but he shouted at us with bloody frothy spittle flying from his mouth as he did. I tried to thank him but he just said to go before anyone else got hurt. We took off running with his backpack and the guns. A minute or so later we heard multiple shots and then silence.

That night Matt went back, against my advice, and found Russ dead along with the other two bad guys. Both had been shot only once while Russ had nearly a dozen bullet wounds. He found a nearby SUV, swapped the dead battery with the one from our, former, now smashed, SUV, transferred the supplies and then took Russ' gun along with the ones from the bad guys. Finally he ran back, took out Russ' wallet and found it mostly empty except for a few pictures and a single credit card.

His full name is Russ Jackson, which we got from his credit card, and his brother lives in Minerva, OH. We never found his brothers address on him so we don't know exactly where he lives or his name but we assume it's something Jackson. If you are reading this diary please try to move it along to his brother.

Thank you, Debbie, Matt and Hanna.

Melissa sat back and cried. Whether for Russ or Debbie, Hanna and Matt or herself or just in general she cried and cried.

Once she got that out of her system she realized that Russ' brother, in Minerva, was about 10 minutes away. She pulled out a phone book and found only two Jacksons living in Minerva. Hopefully one of them would be the right one.

Late the next morning Melissa checked her Glock and then holstered it behind her back. She took her AR and swung her leg up onto Oreo her black and white colored horse. A leisurely 10 minute ride had her at the first house. She called out but got no answer. The grass was quite tall, but more obvious there was no trampling of the grass and a layer of dirt with no footprints outside the door indicating no one had been in or out of the house in months.

Melissa rode on to the next house. Again she called out.

"What do you want?" came the reply.

"Do you have a brother named Russ?"

"Maybe"

"If so I have his diary here and some bad news."

"How did you get it?"

"Matt and Debbie dropped it off."

"Who's Matt and Debbie?"

"You'll have to read it. It's too long to explain."

The door opened and a handsome man in his mid 30's came out of the house holding a shotgun. He scanned all around before finally looking Melissa over.

"You alone?"

"Yes. You?"

"Yep. Let's see what you got."

She approached keeping her rifle slung over her shoulder and held out the book to the man.

He opened it and started reading. After a few minutes of checking him out she cleared her throat.

The man looked up, "Oh sorry. Ya know... I was just about to make some lunch. Would you like to come in for a bite to eat?"

"That would be nice," said Melissa hoping that perhaps there could be many more meals together in their future.



Culex Papiens (pen name) is an amateur fiction writer focusing on PAW (Post Apocalyptic World) themed stories. Culex's work can be found on www.culexpapiens.com where many of the stories are available as free downloads. A number of Culex's stories are also available in the Kindle format on Amazon.com (search Kindle books for 'Culex Papiens'). In addition, select stories are only available in Kindle format. If you like the stories and want to support Culex's work, consider buying one or more in the Kindle format which is readable on Kindle devices along with the free Kindle app for PC, Mac and many different tablets.

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