

One Second After

“For the last 15 hours they’d been waiting for someone else to tell them what to do. The reality was beginning to hit: that there just might no longer be someone else.”

“Remember Katrina and that god-awful Superdome? Is that what we got?”

“Worse. Screwed up as their administration was, ultimately help was on the way. Even though a lot of people started to panic with insane reports of murder and rape...we don’t have that here at all, but on the other side, the Calvary is not going to come rushing in with helicopters loaded with supplies. We are on our own. We need to get some clean vats for sterile water. We can mix up an electrolyte batch, like what is used in emergency relief and Third World countries.

“We are a frickin third world country now.”

“We don’t realize just how dependent we are.”

A movie about us 50 years from now, if there are movies, what will it show?

Water

How does our water get to our house? Is it pumped? If so we’re screwed. If it’s gravity, gotta be below the source.

“What is coming out, gravity-fed from the reservoir is still clean, at least as of the last time our water department people tested it yesterday.”

Doc: “I worry about that. All you need are some folks camping around the reservoir, one of them has a bug and relieves himself by the lake, and all of us are sick.”

“We better get a few men up there patrolling the lake. No campers.”

Food

Food - no refrigeration

- Cooked all the meat. Then wrapped it in plastic sprinkled all salt on it
- Looting of the grocery store
- Spoiled meat, hundreds of flies
- Brick salt at grocery store. Went home and added it to the meat and repacked it

2 months in: Food. Bulk food. Just a 50 pound bag of rice. Or flour. Shoes, batteries. An additional test kit for Jennifer. Even birth control for Elizabeth. Dog food. A water filter, so they didn’t have to boil what they pulled out of the now swamp green pool. I should’ve had those on hand.

America, the breadbasket of the world, which could feed a billion people without even breaking a sweat, was dying now of starvation. The food was there... But it would never get here. Not to this place. Not now. That meant that over 20% of the town was dead, and upwards of half would die in the next 30 days. While

food by the millions of tons rotted, because they had no means of moving it in bulk to where it was needed most.

Heat

Extra Propane tanks

Gathered wood for when propane ran out.

Sanitation

- Dug a hole and made a privacy screen with a tent
- Old clothes cut into strips for tp
- No working toilets
- Feminine hygiene

Transportation

“Everything was measured in walking distance now.”

Getting old cars running

Auto junk yards 👍

Gasoline stays better in the cars' sealed tanks than if they rounded it up now

Medication/Public Health

- Meds - no refrigeration
- No refills
- Pharmacy relies on daily shipments - don't keep stock
- Out of towners didn't have proof of prescription....
- Insulin - refrigeration needed; keep ice in freezer, but don't let the meds freeze. Keep it on ice outside of the freezer in a cooler. Every 10 degrees it halves its shelf life.
- People are having heart attacks because they are walking everywhere, hauling water, people pushing shopping carts full of looting stuff.

“You forget how fragile we really are...The most pampered generation in the history of humanity.”

- All the ones who should have who should/would have died years ago, now they're dying
- Beta blockers, stents, angioplasties, pacemakers, exotic medications....
- Some pacemakers are still working. But once the batteries run out....
- Pancreatic enzyme disorder - the day they run out of pills is the day they start dying
- “Those on chemo or radiation therapy for cancer. They're prognosis... well ...we've forgotten what a nightmare the final months of cancer can be like without readily available morphine.”

Morphine:

We have a limited supply of pain meds. Do we impound it, and use it only for emergency situations, or do we continue to let those who are terminal anyhow, use up what's left?

But suppose I get a kid in here that needs major surgery. Shock and trauma kill. And managing the pain might mean the difference between his living and dying. We've got to think about that."

Accidents:

Cars aren't working, but ... chainsaws, shovels, and axes.

Accidental gunshot wounds. "Idiots are now walking around armed."

Using meat that a health inspector two weeks ago would have condemned.

Salmonella

Outbreak of salmonella at the refugee center in the elementary school.

"People are used to running water! Hundreds of gallons a day. Foods with dates stamped on it. One day over the limit and we used to throw it out. There's 600 people camped there. At least we still have enough water pressure for the toilets to flush, but no hot water. And to be blunt, no toilet paper or paper towels as well. It's getting nasty. Come on people, think about it. Most of us haven't bathed in 10 days. Toilet paper is getting scarce, soup line meals, twice a day at the refugee center...food, now of real questionable safety, I bet that damn near every person in there will be crappin' their guts out and puking by the end of the day."

"Seven dead this morning. Two of them infants, the rest elderly. Dehydrated out and couldn't get electrolytes into them fast enough."

- They have 20 hazmat suits - they'll use those for those making contact at the border

Volunteers: get extra rations

No Labs, No Blood Tests

Maybe staff but I don't have a lab to test it.

If you have a staff infection you're a spreader now, so just go home.

Rationing Out Medicine / THIS IS WAR

For an old man in the advanced stages of cancer, there would be no medicine. That had to be rationed now to someone who stood a chance, or in a colder sense, someone who could be of use.

In a starving community, he would be one less mouth to feed.

Tyler was dead. And there was a war. Though it did not in any sense, seem like a war that any had even conceptualized this way. And he was dead as surely as millions of others were now dead or dying after but 10 days.

As dead as someone lying in the surf of Omaha beach, the death camp of Auschwitz, as dead as any casualty of war.

Insulin / Refrigeration

The last of the ice had given out two days ago. The bottles of insulin now immersed in the tank of the basement toilet to keep them cool. And there was. A flood of panic and John. He knew almost to the day how much insulin was left.

The Morrison family buried their seven-year-old son who had had an asthma attack.

The water where they had the insulin was up to 50°. They wouldn't know what it did to the shelf life until a regular dose stopped working the way it should.

She's a diabetic. And even at 12, that makes anyone very conscious of their mortality. They know their life is dependent on that needle and the vile. But for 70 years now, those vials just came across the pharmacy counter with no questions asked. She knows that's finished.

Mentally III

Alzheimer's patients that were still mobile just disappeared. Wandered off into the woods. No security alarms. We have them restrained. Tied to their beds. Sounds horrible, but it will be best when they're gone.

Addiction!

Maybe one of the few blessings to come out of this. An entire nation going cold turkey on tobacco, alcohol, drugs, no cars... we have to walk or ride bikes... Might do us some good.

After 2 months: The medicines. Yes, they were out there someplace. Some stockpiles overseas, perhaps. But the factories that made them were in cities. And the cities had no power. And the people who worked in the factories were hunkered down, or scattered refugees.

Cemetery

The public health guy will brief them on their own safety before they go over there.

There's no cemetery within town limits. The nearest cemetery is too far. Suggested the golf course "I'm starting to think long-term here, people. Not just this case with the salmonella, but across the next several months."

Easy walk from the center of town, there was a lot of grading done when it was built, all of its soil. Easy to dig, the approach. up to the sixth green... That's all graded soil. Half a dozen feet deep or more. remember, there's no more back hose to dig Graves. It's back to shovels. And I want those graves dug deep. And quick.

Freaking out about the golf course. But then quickly realized most of them won't even play golf without an electric cart. And they need a cemetery close by.

Doc: "keep it at least a couple hundred feet back from the creek that leads into the park, on the slope draining away from the creek.

It was interesting how different things, different changes, shocked in different ways. Tom was a golf addict. Regardless of what was now happening, to turn his favorite piece of real estate into a cemetery, it was too much for him to absorb at this moment.

We should get some of the ministers in, to consecrate the ground. Folks will want that."

They didn't have coffins. After digging, digging a grave at the golf course, how do you get the body down there? No winches.

Nursing Home

- Nursing home: wandering patients outside - Ankle bracelets were deactivated. They were escaping.
- Feces, urine, vomit smell!
- Out of water!!!!
- Dead - no one comes to get them

- Robbed for meds: pain killers, liquid morphine, etc.

Emergency Medical

- Sign at the Fire Station
- “Everyone in ICU or under surgery is most likely dead.”

Law Enforcement

Marshall law? When do they declare it? What is it?

Trying to confiscate a car from a local

“Possession is always 9/10ths of the law.”

All cops on foot. No cars, no radios

“A week ago we didn’t kill screwed up punks for stealing drugs. That Bruce kid, right guidance, he might’ve straightened out.”

John shook his head.

“Look Charlie. ***Might have beens are finished***. Charlie, we got 6,000, maybe 7,000 people in this town now. How much food? How much medicine? Water still works for downtown as long as the pipe to the reservoir holds, but up on the sides of the hills we’re out. Charlie, we don’t keep order, in a month, people will be killing each other for a bag of chips, or a pack of smokes.”

“Tom, you will not do the execution. You are the police authority in this town. If someone must do the execution, it cannot be you or any other officer or official of this town. That terrible task has always been kept separate from the hands of those out in the field who directly enforce the law. If not, well,” he thought of Stalin, of the gestapo, “it has to be someone else.”

Charlie: “I’m not going out there to ask for volunteers. I will not let this turn into a circus with some sick bastards mobbing in to take a shot.”

The town park. Public gathering place.

Maybe in private?

Nope. We have to do it publicly.

Kate: “Maybe in private. I don’t like the thought of public execution.”

John:

“I don’t either, but we have to do it. There’s fear in this town. I’m hearing people say that the refugees from the highway are outsiders. We’re already beginning to divide ourselves off from each other. We do private executions, and I guarantee you, within a day there will be rumors flying from those who don’t live here, that we are doing Stalinist courts, and executing people in the basement of the police station. If we are forced to do this, we do it in public.”

“Besides,” Tom interjected, “it’s a statement to anyone else who might be thinking about stealing.”

“Wait a minute, Tom. I pray that we aren’t down to killing people for stealing a piece of bread.”

Tom shook his head angrily. “John, don’t misread me. You might not believe this, but I don’t like this anymore than you.”

“Adults only, I don’t want kids there.”

Speech at the firing squad:

"This is not a police state and it never will be. The condemned were found guilty at an fair hearing, and the sentence will now be carried out, not by those who are temporarily in charge of law and order, but by 2 dually appointed citizens who were volunteered for this task. I do not want this task. I did not seek it. I loathe doing it. But, it must be done.

We are ALL Americans here. There are hundreds of you, perhaps thousands, who did not live here but 5 days ago. But you do now. All of us are equal under the eyes of the law here. All of us. We must work together as neighbors if we wish to survive. The tragic justice to be dealt out here is the same for all of us, whether born here, moved here as I did some years ago, or arrived just yesterday. It just be the same for all of us."

Half a dozen houses with generators that still run. They were unplugged and survived. And they know that they have a bunch of meat in their freezer in the basement. They're just waiting for us to come up and try. To take their stuff.

"Let it go for now," John said.

If we start turning into Stalinist commissars,...

Besides, even if we looted the Franklin's clean, that would be enough food to maybe give 600 people one meal. It isn't worth the blowback. And in my opinion, it's a dangerous political and legal precedent. We don't want to be turning on each other at a time like this. Hell, if anything, we want people like that Franklin clan working alongside of us. If their survivalists like you say, and we don't threaten them, maybe they got skills they'll teach to us.

Even farmers are dependent on supermarkets at least until harvest time.

Make a deal with a few farmers. We protect their food, they get more than fair cut. We protect their herd and crops.

They need to keep some stock alive. Think about next year.

Outside Threats / Sealing off the Town

A fight at the gap resulted in over 200 dead on both sides. Several hundred injured. they were letting people through 100 at a time.

It's positively medieval down on that road. Squatters camps, people fighting for a scrap of food, disease, breaking out, mostly salmonella, pneumonia, a nasty variant of the flu,

Aa group was being escorted through and they broke. Started running to get off the interstate and into the woods. Two of them had concealed pistols. Shot the two policemen escorting them. Shot them dead on the spot. And then they just started scattering. Tom ordered them rounded up. Doc Keller was having a fit as well, thinking they might be carrying something. Most were too weak to get far.

But some of them did put up a fight. About 20 of them are unaccounted for. Disappeared up into the hills. Most are harmless, but a few are the ring leaders, they're out there. And Tom is hunting them down. That triggered the riot at the barrier. Charlie ordered it shut down until the mess was straightened out and then thousands of them rioted. Just pushing against the barrier of cars and trucks. Tom had some teargas to push them back.

Kids at the College Formed an Army

I want to think that across America today, there's 1000 such groups drilling, in order to keep civilization intact. So we don't become a mob. Where one eats only because he's stronger than others, or we kill each other in an insane frenzy of crazed beliefs. That's why those kids out there are drilling.

Charlie is in the moment, focused on survival.

We need someone with vision. Who can see beyond.

We want America to come to us. But I think it never will.

The America we knew died when those warheads burst . If so, then it is up to us to not wait, but instead to rebuild America as we want it to be.

Society

- Panic. Guy ran out, saying we'd been nuked. Totally set off a panic. Talk about fallout (which isn't a thing with EMP)
- It's a vacuum. No tv for pres to come on and promote unity.
- Mad panic.
- Looting: People from church. Kids Friends parents. Just crazy
- It's like all city folk: they somehow think there's more food out in the country.
- The larger the group, the more likely it was that it would fragment under stress, with the few in power looking out for themselves first. 5,000 might be convinced to share and cooperate. 100,000: self interests; them and us, would begin to take over.
- College kid: "I thought we were all in this together. We're neighbors. We're Americans."
- Especially with the breakdown in **communications**.
- That had always been the power of media in the hands of a good leader: To get individuals to feel as if the leader was speaking directly to them. Churchill in 1940, Jack Kennedy in 1962, and Reagan in the 1980s. A single voice like that now, could break the paradigm. But there would be no such voice. And a few cronies of an old political machine in a county government hall, might start thinking of themselves and their friends first. And to hell with the rest. John could barely imagine what it might be like at this very minute in a city of a million...of 5 or 10 million.
- There's word of cults. Some claiming that this is a holy war. A guy is claiming to have been visited by Jesus just before the power went out, and he is the new John the Baptist. And anyone who doesn't believe it will be killed.

Skills

The practices of 100 years ago did work and we have to step back to them.

Get a steam engine and you have power where you want it.

Propel through the antique stores and you'll find crank phones. Find someone who knows how to hook them up, and you've

I'd trade 100 computer techheads right now for 1 guy who understood steam engines.

I'd trade 100 lawyers for someone who could show us how to make gun powder from what we can find here in this valley or of which roots we can dig right now and safely eat. Or an old chemist who can make ether or chloroform.

An old dentist who can get an old-fashioned foot-powered drill running.

Money

- Run on banks but all banks use electronic for accounts. They were mobbed.
- Banks ran out of money
- Money: it's nothing but paper now.

- It's gonna be bartering now.
- Impound anything that can be used.
- Rations become bartering

Act Fast

We had a plan for anything but this.

I was waiting for someone to call. To do something.

Precious first few days when so much could have been done, were lost.

He just wished that Charlie had acted faster, and wished that he had thought of it and pushed Charlie to seize control of all food in the town on day one. If they had done so, and it was rationed out correctly, it might have been enough to stretch at half rations for two months or more.

Innovative Substitutes

Day 18

The toothpaste was almost out. They had a cup of ground up, wood charcoal next to it.

The grill had run out of propane.

Hot dog soup with potatoes mixed in.

Had rigged up an outdoor stove from an old woodstove Cinderblocks under the legs to raise it up, so the cook could stand up while cooking.

Shower - Kiddie pool and then a ladder with a bucket of water with holes in the bottom to pour on the person showering

Out of dog food - stashed the canned dog food for emergency food

Using horses and old cars

Try to retrofit a couple of the old oil boilers to burn wood and have steam heat.

Rigging up a water turbine in the dam by the lake. Figures we can have it out by autumn and electricity.

The school library has back issues of *Scientific American* all the way back to the 1850s. Also, *Popular Mechanics*. In those golden pages, our plans from 80 years, 100 years ago to build radios, telegraphs, steam engines, batteries, internal combustion engines. Formulas for nearly every advance in chemistry. In our library, we've got darn near every issue of *Mother Earth News*, and the *Foxfire* books. How to find food, how to preserve it, how to store it up. Hard to believe, but rattlesnake shish kebab isn't all that bad.

Old crank phone worked! Salvaged from an antique store.

A dozen linemen, older employees of the power company, found old-fashioned copper wire. Bits and pieces were salvaged from a variety of sources. An old abandoned telephone or telegraph line of several miles along the railroad tracks. The wire had to be carefully spliced. together, then strung on glass or ceramic insulators, most made out of soda bottles.

An old style switchboard had been found in the basement of the granddaughter of a phone operator from the 20s.

A couple of the elderly phone company workers were now trying to remember how to rig it up.

There were other accomplishments. One of the junkyards in Swannanoa had successfully gotten a tractor-trailer diesel from the early 60s running. The Fire Department got it.

And on a flatbed were now Attached hoses, ladders, and gear They had even figure out how to use the Used the engine as a power takeoff to run a water pump. Fire had become a frightful hazard. Those who still had food were cooking with wood. And home fires and brushfires were commonplace. The potential of housefires turning into forest fires had everyone worried.

Several mechanics had learned to bypass and yank out the electronics, especially on cars that only had minimal dependence on them. Slop on some old replacement parts, and get the engines to turn over again.

A salvage generator has been hooked up at the gas station.

The gas station guy was selling one cigarette for a squirrel.

2-Month Snapshot

All were showing signs of the effects after 35 days. Faces were thinner, pinched on some. Clothing in general was dirty, sweat stained. Hair greasy, many of the men beginning to sport beards, and all of them stank. He wondered if this was indeed how people really smelled. 100 years ago. The scent of a crowd of unwashed bodies.

Before every meeting, they would recite the pledge of allegiance and salute the flag. Then Kate led them in a brief prayer. And then the meeting was in order.

The conference center was now the nursing home and the isolation ward for incoming refugees who were allowed to stay.

There's a station on the radio now: Voice of America. The radio in his car worked, and he was fiddling with it and heard the broadcast. They were broadcasting off the aircraft carrier, Abraham Lincoln Part of our fleet stationed in the Persian Gulf when things started. The carrier was now the command post for relief and recovery operations. Said the nation is still under martial law. Said relief supplies are coming from Britain, Australia, India, and China.

The President died in Air Force One because it wasn't sufficiently hardened against EMP. Secretary of State is in charge. Vice president and speaker of the house are gone.

A month and a half ago a C1 30 Loaded with medical supplies, could've flown here in an hour from Charleston. Now. It's like they're on the far side of the moon.

Everyone who was on dialysis is now dead.

The calm between storms.

The initial die off has happened with those needing immediate medical attention. First round of food poisoning, those woefully out of shape...

The next 15 days will be quiet. But then the deaths will start hitting again.

Nearly all of our type 1 diabetics will die. The pharmacy allocated one vile per person, and they will run out this month

Severe asthmatics running on their rescue inhalers.

Severe heart arrhythmia patients running out of Beta blockers.

There is another issue that not many of us have thought of, but Tom, you better start gearing up for it and we might have to start thinking about taking over another building as an isolation ward.

Severe psychosis. About a quarter of the population was on antidepressants. Or anti-anxiety agents.

They're running out now. For some, withdrawals won't be too bad. For others, severe hallucinations, compounded with the stress they are under already.

Roughly 5% of the population DO have severe disorders. And one to 2% have dangerous disorders that include severe paranoia, and highly aggressive behavior.

Several living with criminal pasts, but that were declared insane, cured, and released back into the community.

Need to authorize the town doc to declare people legally mentally unstable, and to incarcerate them. Alcoholics might try to steal corn to make booze. Distill it from hydraulic fluid.

Food is down to 1200 cal per person

John had killed a Tom Turkey, a few possums, and squirrels

If we cut to 900 cal, strength will be diminished significantly.

Immunological systems are weakened

They are serving soup of boiled grass and dandelions.

The first vegetables are starting to come up. They called on every last seed in town and then turned peoples lawns into gardens. "Once beautiful lawns, yet another luxury of a pampered society, had been spaded over for lettuce, squash, beans, anything that could be eaten."

One cow a day for this many people isn't gonna do much good. At best it's 2 ounces a day. Not worth it. You've got to plan until next spring.

They're going to move some food to the college and give extra rations to militia, police force, gravediggers, etc. In reality, it has to be done if any survive. We can't keep social order, defend ourselves, and at the same time, give out some kind of equal food to everyone else. If we try that, everyone will die. If they follow this plan, 1/3 to 1/2 will die within the next three months. If they don't do it, everyone will be dead by winter.

Southern California would be sitting on rotting fruits and vegetables. Towns in the Midwest would have miles of unpicked corn. Even farms with animals weren't safe... Because they depended on hundreds of tons of feed being shipped in each week.

A lot of dogs are starting to run loose now, they're starving, and they're going wild.

2 kids got cornered by a pack of wild dogs.

They decided to leave pets alone, but loose animals will be shot and contributed to the communal food supply. Pet owners must keep pets indoors or leashed.

Doc Keller said, "and every day they will lose weight that could have been food for people. And every day be taking food from the humans that they will give to their pets. Today's meal was horse.

Refugees are admitted if their skills were on the checklist that John and Charlie had created.

Anyone who worked with steam, electricians. doctors, farmers, precision tool and eye makers, oil and gas chemists....

If admitted, they were sprayed down with something that Doc Keller came up with. It would kill lice and fleas, but also had a psychological impact.

Families pushing kids in shopping carts.

Upper businessmen type had no skills to trade for a bowl of soup. Many people walking didn't even have shoes.

Shoes!!!! Shoes wore out fast!

A woman who but six weeks back most likely had a corner office, a parking slot with her name on it, a liberal expense account, and a damn good stock option had just tried to sell her body for a place to rest for a night and a bowl of soup.

No place in this world for her now.

Robbers came in the night

Murdered an entire family last week.

By law, you were the only family who could eat your own own pet, but they gave it to the neighbors. If someone found out, they would get their ration cards taken away.

Over half the diabetics in the town were dead. The others were dropping off fast. It had been a little over two months.

How Did We Get Here?

Suppose the old America, so wonderful, The country we so loved, suppose, at 4:50 pm 18 days ago, it died. it died from complacency. From blindness - not being willing to face the harsh realities of the world. Died from complacent self-centeredness.

Suppose America died that day.

Our enemies caught us with total surprise. We should've seen it. I'm willing to bet there were 100 reports floating around Congress warning about this. Experts who truly did know their stuff, screaming that we were wide open.

And at the moment it happens, no one believes it actually is happening. They can't comprehend how their own greatness can be humbled by another whom they view as being so beneath them.

9/11, Pearl Harbor, were like fleabites in comparison to this.

Anyone with even the remotest understanding of EMP and the threat to the nation, should have been going insane before it hit.

There was a threat... And though remote, it was at least acted on at that time (during World War II.)

But this time, the threat was 100 times worse, and they did nothing. Absolutely nothing. If everyone had been educated to it the same way that civil defense had once been in the curriculum of every school back in the 1940s and 1950s, if people knew the simple things to do on day one... Charlie already trained to react to an EMP. Mobilize his forces and act quickly. If they had but a few provisions stocked away... the same that anyone who lives in hurricane or tornado country does... would they be in this mess?

The crime... The real crime...was those who truly knew the level of threat doing nothing to prepare or prevent it. Bitterly, he wondered if they were suffering as the rest of the nation suffered, or were they safely hidden away? The special bunkers for Congress, the administration, where food, water, and medicine for years were waiting for them and their families. The thought of it filled him with rage.

He could see his own avoidance of it all since that first day, even as he did scramble to at least get insulin.

It was over two months later, and people in his small North Carolina town were dying of starvation. I pretty well understood it on day one, and yet I avoided the worst of it ever since.