

We never expect tragedy to strike in the middle of a bright sunny day, despite the evidence of history. To be certain not all disasters happen on pleasant days. It could be said that most calamities bring their own sense of impending doom before them spreading pre-knowledge before them, cyclones and tornados are easy examples.

It was not to be the normal expected or planned for catastrophe the end of the world as it was known, but come it did, and it also came as a surprise to everyone. Perhaps the most unexpected aspect was the nature of its arrival. In this instance the cause might always be a bit of a mystery as the very event came like a thief, a pickpocket who knowing his craft barely brushes up against their victim in the process of taking the prize. Only for this example to hold up our pickpocket would have to magically be omnipresent, stealing from all and in some cases adding insult to injury.

Our victims, instead of reaching for the place they would or could have felt a slight physical shift or something leaving their grasp were caught too unaware to even know anything had happened. They may not have noticed their own loss but they did notice the symptom of armageddon. Too late to look to see who or what had brushed up against them everyone reacted much the same, looking to what had changed around them. The most obvious indication came with the obvious indication of lights failing, monitors going dark, calls dropping off, cars stalling and fans slowing.

It had been the beginning of another work day for Robert Cotten. He too looked up to the ceiling of the spacious and suddenly dark office just as everyone else was doing at that moment. Swiveling his head to scan the wide space all he saw was darkness. The lack of emergency lighting he put up to a malfunction. He had been in the middle of preparing office spaces that had recently been vacated. It was not unusual for tenants to alter some of the safety equipment of systems. This space was situated in the center of the building. With no windows the entire space was lightless effectively blinding him.

Pulling his phone from his pocket he attempted to bring it to life but got nothing for his efforts. Giving up on the phone he stuffed it back in a pocket and beginning to wonder at the cause of the multiple failures. Robert half consciously spread his feet apart. He'd never suffered claustrophobia and yet his head was spinning just a bit. Crouching he delved in his tool bag for the small flashlight he knew was in there. He thought maybe it was the sudden unexpected darkness that was causing the sensation of his balance failing.

Finding the light and adjusting his grip on the thin tube he clicked to button on the end. Nothing. He'd used the light just half an hour ago and now it was dead. As dead as the lights all through the office space he was in. As dead as his phone. It didn't take a genius to put two and two together and come up with a guess close to an EMP going off and killing everything electronic.

As unhindered as his mind was his sense of balance was beginning to spin out of control. He put a knee to the floor to keep from tumbling over. Focusing on getting himself under control he placed a hand on the floor to help steady himself, feeling his flashlight under his palm he shifted his hand lower until it was under the first joints of his fingers. Fighting against the sensation of the building tipping like a ship at sea in a storm he tried to dismiss the affect it was having on him.

He'd been seasick before, once, and knew the symptoms. What he felt bore some similarities to that event but it was also strangely and uniquely different. The sweat breaking out all over his body and the nausea he thought to be brought about by the world reeling about him lent some credibility to his self diagnosis. It was the crawling sensation of his skin shifting and the itch deep within several muscle groups caused a great deal of doubt about his slight medical competency.

Through his effort to maintain control of his reeling senses he knew he was needed elsewhere. As a member of the facilities crew he should have been acting, making the checks and initiating the procedures he'd been trained to do in situations like this. Instead, whatever was afflicting him forced him

to bring his other hand and knee to the floor. He wondered if there could be a gas leak that was taking him down. His memory of the services within the building allowed him to dismiss that possibility and yet his symptoms worsened at a rapid pace.

Hunched over in the darkened space he soon didn't have the confidence in his ability to do more than whimper. Soon his thought process was also dragged down to sputtering on a few cylinders leaving him with no other option but to ride out whatever was causing his senses to run rampant and completely out of control. It felt as if the the room had suddenly become a carnival ride. Seeming to be tipping almost on its side Robert clutched at the thin office carpeting in a last ditch effort to stabilize himself.

With the sensation of the outer world tipping spinning and reeling on every axis Robert could only think of how much he was failing at that moment. Whatever it was that had struck him was even then yawning wide within the darkness and swallowing him whole. Mixing in with all the other strange disorienting sensory input was the feeling of his body coming to rest on his side, the stiff nap of the carpet on the side of his face, his leg resting on his tool bag. Senses swimming in disorder and out of control Robert was finally granted the relief of unconsciousness.