

Shelby Rostcourt had a similar but vastly different reaction to the end of the world. A floor or two above and one building over from where the hapless facilities worker was shrouded in darkness she sat at her desk and looked up at the ceiling. The light panels in the drop down ceiling were dark but the light coming in from the windowed offices shed enough light to see throughout the room.

Almost at once she felt a slight buzzing in her ears and the start of a headache right behind her eyes. Her discomfort only rose to a halfhearted distraction as she went through the same checklist as nearly everyone else. She wasn't left helpless in darkness thanks to being in an office space that had windows to the outside world. A coworker walked by her cubicle without speaking to her and continued on their way in the direction of the exit. She had made the same assumptions as Robert and with just a moment of thought stood and followed her coworker.

As she passed another's workspace they stood and looking as she passed unnecessarily advised "We should evacuate the building."

Muttering under her breath "No shit Sherlock." Shelby continued on her way to the stairs. She was forced to wait with dozens of other evacuees from her floor. It took several minutes before she was next to wait for a gap in the parade of stairway challengers opened letting her begin her journey down. The door at her floor had been propped open as was the door on every floor they passed. Shelby had the thought that normally it was a bad idea to leave fire doors propped open but the power out the alternative was climbing down the stair in the dark. No one suggested complying to the fire codes.

By the time she reached the ground floor her calves and ankles ached almost as much as her head. The pain behind her eyes had increased to the point of being a full blown honest to goodness real deal headache. Even following the line of people into the lobby Shelby felt her irritation grow. Everyone started milling about as if uncertain of what to do next.

Making her way through the milling sheeple she reached the revolving doors and finally stepping out into the freedom of the outdoors. The air felt much cooler, smelled cleaner and even started easing her headache. Down the steps to the street level she saw confirmation that things were indeed dire. Every car on the street now sat lifeless where it had been in traffic. She saw no sign of any electrical appliance or gadget in working order. She looked with contempt at a few people still trying to get their phones working.

Turning south she determined to head to the apartment she shared with her boyfriend. He had the car but if he were forced to walk he too would head for the apartment. It was slow going with everyone from every nearby building flooding the sidewalk and even the spaces between stalled cars and busses. Thanks to the lack of all the phones being out of order the task of walking the downtown sidewalk was proving to be less hazardous than she had expected.

She made her way to an empty spot on a bench and sat with the intention of resting her legs. Arching her back she rested her arms in her lap. Looking at the barely noticeable swell of her unborn child she frowned. Her headache was making a resurgence. She had walked seven blocks and still had nine or ten to go to reach the apartment. Her legs were feeling the extra exercise and her back ached. Worse was the constant distraction of stray thoughts running through her head.

She normally felt able to focus on a goal or task at hand but now odd ideas and bits of random trivia kept rising to the surface of her thoughts. Some were things she had no idea she had even known or retained after being exposed to them. As she sat and rested she looked around watching the mass of people swarm by. She began to wonder if the headache was going to develop into a migraine.

Shelby had never suffered one before but the things she was seeing caused the speculation.

The people that walked by trailed faint swirls of what looked like vapor in the air behind themselves. The trees too were exhibiting the same discharge only to a much lesser extent. Watching closer she saw that her own breath appeared as if her exhalations fogged the air as if it were a much colder day. It was short sleeve weather and yet she could watch her breath fog the air. Looking curiously at a passerby she apprehensively watched for the same and was disappointed.

Rather than seeing the breath of the man that passed her bench his breath was clear, clearer than the air around him. Shaking her head and rolling her eyes in exasperation she looked up. In the reactive gesture she had noticed the air above her had looked strange. It was a clear day but she saw very faint curtains rippling in the air above her. It was fairly reminiscent of sweeps of rainfall seen during a heavy downpour yet barely detectable against the brightness of the day. She watched the display for a few long seconds, amazed.

The longer she watched the streams and ripples in the air the more her headache faded. Shelby waited until her headache eased to nothing and stood. Resuming her journey to her apartment she glanced up at the sky often. The display was still faint but it was neither appearing fainter or stronger. As good as she felt Shelby could not stop the nagging doubt from surfacing. In the back of her mind she wondered, just a little, if an EMP pulse caused brain cancer to bloom like mushrooms in the lightless fertile cavern of her skull and if they could also produce symptoms like the ones she was experiencing. Even in her distracted state she was able to push back the thought and if not lock it away completely, cordon it off from the normal thought traffic in her head.