

# **What Happened?**

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# Chapter 1

I sure hope things get better now that Biden is President. I don't expect that to happen overnight of course. The last year has been especially awful because of the pandemic. I lost my job right away after the virus started killing people. I worked as a waiter and the government had to close all the bars and restaurants and many other places to try and keep people safe. I could understand that but it sure was a bad deal for me or at least it sure started out that way.

I signed up for unemployment of course but a million other people were doing the same thing at the same time which made it almost impossible for all of us. I was unable to pay my rent of course. And after I started getting the unemployment I didn't see the point in paying rent because nobody could get evicted anyway. I did get both my regular unemployment and extra unemployment money that I guess was from the federal government too. It was a lot of money plus I got a separate check for twelve hundred dollars besides. I had a bunch of money even though I was not working at all. Actually more money than I ever had before.

You weren't supposed to go anywhere, even just to go for a walk. So other than going to the grocery store I just stayed inside my apartment all the time. I was able to buy a couple more new video games and I also got a bigger package deal for my cable TV so I had way more channels to choose from everyday to pass the time. It wasn't too bad. But by November I realized I had gotten pretty fat. I had been wearing just sweats at home and when I tried to put on my regular jeans to go to the store I

could not even get them on at all. So then I started exercising at home.

My girl friend never really said anything about me getting fat, probably because she was too. So we were both watching and doing exercise videos every day. After a month we were both looking a little better but we kept at it so we wouldn't fall back. Oh, we each got another six hundred dollar check from the government around that time too.

Now since Biden was sworn in as President we have both got another government check and this time it was for fourteen hundred dollars each! We both have a bunch of money now and things are starting to get better with more stores opening up. We still haven't paid any rent yet and it has been a whole year now. At this point we never could pay all that back-rent so why bother paying anything on that huge bill? With paying no rent we have plenty of spending money but many things are still shutdown and there is still the worry of getting the virus. Be a long time before my girlfriend and I can get the vaccine because we are so young.

We are both getting the federal unemployment checks yet so things are fine here without either of us working. We didn't even know what to buy with that last big government check though we are getting take-out food now pretty regular as long as we have that extra money.

Things seem to be getting done in Washington now since Biden is in charge. Congress is getting a lot more done. They passed several gun control laws finally and none too soon because every where there seems to be way more violence now. I know most of that is likely from the domestic terrorists that we seem to have plenty of in this country lately. People do not need to own guns any more. The police protect us and no one needs to hunt for food.

We never watch the news but one night we turned on one of my girlfriend's favorite shows and instead they some kind of stupid special report on instead. And they were talking about us maybe going to war. It sounded like a big deal but of course the news always makes everything sound like a big deal. And of all things they were talking about us going to war with China, like that would ever happen. It was so bizarre that we actually watched a couple minutes of the special show. Supposedly China was going to invade Taiwan and it was going to start a war between China and us. That is when we changed channels because we knew it was just stupid talk.

And life was same the next day so we forgot all about the war talk and just lived our lives.

Then one day when we got up the power was off and that made us both pretty mad.

## Chapter 2

The stupid power is off! The water is working fine but we have nothing to do because of no electricity. The sun is shining and it is warmer out now so we are going to go for a walk. Maybe buy something for lunch as long as the microwave won't work.

What a strange situation. Neither of our phones are working even though both were on the charger last night. So we are leaving our apartment and neither of us are carrying our phone with us, something that we have never done before. Once outside we both see that many cars and trucks seem not to be working even though about an equal number are driving around normally. The stop lights are not working but I suppose that is because of the power being off. We walk over and try my car and it starts and seems to run fine but we shut it off because we planned on just walking today.

Many people seem mad at their phones so apparently ours are not the only ones not working. At least we were smart enough to just leave ours in the apartment instead of carrying them around pointlessly. We have walked past many stores and businesses but every one of them was closed. I guess because of no electric power. When we see the regular hotdog stand we get in line to get something there at least to eat. He seems to be doing a very good amount of business today.

After we eat we just keep walking around because things are so strange today. A couple people have said that there were some jets that crashed and we do see some smoke off in one direction. We don't know what the smoke is from though it could have been from plane crashes. No one knows what really happened or happening. It is a pretty nice day for a walk and there will

be nothing to do in our apartment until the power comes back on so we just keep walking. We decide this will be our exercise for today.

While some cars and trucks are driving around, we can plainly see that traffic is very light. Walking past a gas station we see that no one is getting gas and only then do we realize that without electric power they cannot pump any gas. Maybe that is why traffic is light though by now we have seen countless cars with the hoods open so they must not run at all for some reason. Neither of us can think of any reason the cell phones and cars would not all work even if the power was out.

We have started walking slowly past groups of people to try and hear if anyone knows the reason why the power is down. So far all the people either know nothing or just seem to be guessing. A couple people said the power is out because we are at war. People say the stupidest things. Like the power would be out because we are at war, what does one have to do with the other? Nothing, that's what.

We just walk around most of the afternoon. On the way back to our apartment we come across a food truck setup and we stop and eat our supper there. Never once did we find any store open even with all our walking. At the food truck we had to wait in a long line but we had nothing else to do so it was no big deal. When we got home there was absolutely nothing to do and both of us were very surprised the power had not come on yet. Really a strange day. We both went to bed way early just because we were bored. We knew the power would be on in the morning and things would be back to normal again.

Not only is the power still off but now there is no water! The water just barely was working last night but this morning there is nothing at all coming out of the faucets. We grab some bottles water and use a couple bottles to wash up a little and brush our teeth. We think it is pretty

early morning yet (we have nothing that will tell time anymore) we decide to see if we can go out to get something to eat.

We walk quite a ways and finally do find a food truck. There is a line and signs up saying all prices listed are now double the amount. We get in line anyway and finally get our food. We each ordered more than we would normally eat. When done eating we make an effort to find a grocery store or any business open where we can buy some food. We have very little in the apartment.

While standing in the line at the food truck many people were talking about this power outage maybe lasting for a month or more. Some people even said maybe a year. That has to be crazy talk; at least we sure hope so. Making a big loop we do find a convenience store that is open but it has little for any food left. We do buy a few things, mostly some canned goods and leave there to head directly home.

On the way home a guy tries to steal the bag of food from us! He doesn't have a gun and it was easy to out run him and get away safely. The incident did scare both of us. We realized there was no way for us or anyone else to call the police. And thinking about it, neither of us remembered seeing a single police car either today or yesterday. But we got home safe and only after getting there did we think about getting more water or drinks. After a quick discussion we leave again to look for drinks of any kind.

It is different this time because we are both scared. Or maybe wary is a better description. We actively watch for any police cars just to see if we see any. We more so watch for anyone who we think might be a bad guy. We are moving a little faster now too. We do have some cash, which is all that any place will take now. I had changed that last fourteen hundred dollar stimulus into all cash for no real reason and now I am very thankful I did that on just a whim.

After a very long walk we were able to buy some more water bottles and some sodas. Rather than carry everything home we each drank a soda before even heading back to the apartment. We walked directly back home and both of us kept a wary eye out for any bad guys now that we each were carrying shopping bags. But we made it home safely.

We talked a lot today about the situation. We asked in a couple stores that had been open to see if anyone knew when the power would be back on. Most knew nothing but every one of them did say that they had heard that it might be a long time before the power was back on again. Just hearing that did not make it true and many people like to spread wild rumors. But we both were very worried.

The next day we never left the apartment. For entertainment we sat by a window and just looked out. It was pretty boring. Neither of us ever saw a police car since the power had gone off. And we now have heard many gun shots. Even after hearing gun shots we never heard a police siren afterward. Though on our last walk we had heard a siren once that we thought was police though it could have been a fire truck or maybe an ambulance. That made us wonder how the fireman would fight a fire if there was no water. We decided they couldn't do anything about any fire.

Two days later we needed to leave to hopefully find more food and drinks. But we had heard more gun shots each day along with some occasional screams. Neither of us wanted to leave the apartment because we knew it was not safe but we had little choice. But this time we would not be totally unarmed. I would have a wood baseball bat and my girlfriend would carry our only paring knife. The bat was not even ours but belonged to a friend who had left it in our apartment some time back and never remembered to take it home when he visited since then.

From our apartment windows we had been seeing fewer and fewer people out and about because it was unsafe we were sure. Hence our weapons for this trip. We did even doubt that we would be able find any food but we went out to search anyway because we had little choice.

We hoped we didn't need to use our weapons.

## Chapter 3

Once we were outside and started walking our hopes dropped. Every store and even offices and such had been broken into and looted for anything they contained. But we kept going because of desperation, I guess. Even cars and trucks along the street had been broken into we could now see. No cars were driving anyplace anymore that we had seen from our apartment windows. We had walked quite a distance but everything looked the same. Every place had been broken into and looted. We had even gone into one grocery store but it had long since been cleaned out of any food or drink.

Neither of us saw the man.

When we walked past the van with its rear doors standing open, the man jumped out. He grabbed my girlfriend's arm and faced me. I started to bring up the bat to strike him but never got the chance before he hit me. He hit me twice more before I must have passed out. When I woke up, I was all alone. The man and my girlfriend were nowhere to be seen. Even the bat was now gone.

I didn't know what to do. I felt like crap both physically and emotionally. I just started to walk or at least stumble away. I soon started going inside every business no matter what that business was as long as the door was open. And I searched. I searched for anything I could use. I wanted a weapon and I wanted food and water. I found almost nothing.

In a desk drawer in an office I found a candy bar which I immediately ate. In a grocery store I climbed up on top of a shelving unit and standing on the top shelf I looked at all the surrounding shelves. That feat netted me a half gallon of juice laying flat on a top shelf in the next aisle. In

the back room of a business I did not recognize I found a cheap box opener knife. It was plastic with a thin metal blade. The blade could be extended out about three inches or so but it was really flimsy. I took it for my only weapon.

That night I slept on a couch in an office. In the morning I drank some of my remaining juice for breakfast. Then I spent the day searching again. Today I found a few things to eat and two more drinks. Again that night I found an office with a comfortable couch for the night.

It was four days after I lost my girlfriend when I found or was found by the National Guard. They asked if I wanted a ride to the relief center. Naturally I said yes and I was allowed to get in the back of their truck. When we stopped it was at some school. I was in the back of the truck so I saw no signs and it really did not matter what the name of the school was anyway. I just wanted food, water, and a place to sleep.

I was processed I guess you could say. I was asked for my name, address, and age. They took the mesh grocery bag that I had a few things in that I had scavenged and asked if I had any weapons. I said no and they never searched me. That flimsy box knife was still in my back pocket. Next I was led inside.

The place did not smell very good at all. People were standing or lying down all over. There were no troopers inside the building that I ever saw and I did not blame them because of the smell. The back door of the gym was open and there was a row of the blue Porta Potties out there. Inside near the front entrance were several tables. On the tables were many big water containers with spigots on them. There were also many stacks of plastic cups.

I asked one of the people there about food. He said they brought in something to eat late every afternoon. The food varied and everyone went through a line to be fed. It was one meal per day and not very much to eat. He said

most people just filled their bellies with water to ease the pain. I asked if you were allowed to leave and he said he thought so but did not know for sure.

It was afternoon and I decided to at least stay the night and get the one meal. The meal came maybe an hour later. It was a hot meal and everyone got one paper bowl of something that could be called soup. I ate my bowl up quickly. Everyone ate quickly because some of the bigger guys would just walk up and take the bowls of food away from whoever was close to them. Nobody tried to fight them.

The building was lit with many skylights. That was obviously one of the reasons this building was picked for people to stay. Maybe that was the only reason. It was still plenty light inside when close to me one of the bigger guys grabbed a very young woman. She screamed but very few people even bothered to look in her direction. Apparently this was a common occurrence. The man just ripped the woman's clothes off her. He pushed her down and was about to get on top after he dropped his pants.

As soon as his pants were at his ankles I attacked. I couldn't save my girlfriend but maybe I could save this woman. The man expected no interference and was likely surprised when I plunged the full three inch or more length of the extended blade of my knife into his back. I tried to pick out where his heart might be and stuck that knife in to its full depth. When he felt the knife he twisted around and the blade immediately snapped off inside him.

There was less than inch of blade still on my knife and now I faced this big guy. I knew nothing about fighting but I was determined to kill him if I possibly could. He still had a shirt on and I was afraid the blade would be stopped by the shirt so I slashed his bare leg. The now small blade was sharp and now with the much shorter length it was stronger than before. The blade slid down his leg and opened it up until I lifted it for another slash. I was able to

slash again a long slash on the other leg this time as he moved to try and get at me.

He tried to stand but between the pants around his ankles and the floor now covered with blood he fell. When he fell I was again slashing with my cheap knife. I got in two slashes to his neck and then one more long slash to one of his legs. He tried to kick me but with his pants down it did not work well for him. I slashed again to his face. He was moving much slower now and I reached in and very deliberately slashed once more to his neck. Then I just stepped way back and watched as he died. The woman was long gone by this time. Some people had watched the short fight but no one said anything and turned away if I looked in their direction. I retracted the now very short blade and put the now almost worthless knife in my back pocket again.

A larger piece of the woman's shirt was nearby and I used that to wipe some of the blood from my face and then my arms. There was blood everywhere and I left bloody footprints as I walked away. Next I walked to the front and got two glasses of water. I drank one down and refilled it before walking out the back door. Once outside I used the water to wash off the blood better. Then looking around I just walked away and back into the city.

## Chapter 4

I wandered the city for many days. I searched everywhere and even returned to my apartment once though I left quickly. The apartment just reminded me of my girlfriend. I now had some supplies and even a couple weapons. When I went into a hardware store I had little thought of finding anything useful but I was wrong.

In the tool section I found a tool that had a regular hammer head but opposite that was what looked like a skinny hatchet. It was called a shingle hammer the tag said. Nearby was a leather hammer holder that went onto my belt that was made to hold a hammer but it worked perfectly for my hatchet. It even allowed me to quickly draw the hatchet for use.

Also in the tool area was an odd looking tool that somewhat resembled a crowbar or pry bar. It was called a Fubar and I took that with me. It was way lighter than it looked and could be used as a formidable weapon and used to pry open doors and such I thought.

I also got a very nice flashlight there and some junk food. In the backroom of the store was what might have been an employee lunch room, no food but inside a cabinet was almost two whole cases of water bottles. Way too much water for me to carry so I used some to wash up well in the bathroom there.

At another store that had outdoor equipment I got many useful things. A very nice pair of heavy duty hiking shoes or maybe boots which I immediately put on and toss my old shoes. Next was a sharp hunting knife in a sheath that went immediately unto my strong leather belt that had come from the hardware store. Next was a good backpack in what I thought was a medium size. Next was a water filter, a couple of small fire starters (with instructions), a

pack of cigarette lighters, a backpacker's mess kit with utensils, some good socks, and several other small items including a hat. From the outdoor store I went back to the hardware where I added more of the water bottles to the backpack.

I now used that Fubar to pry open all the car trunks I came to in my travels. I found many things but took little because of weight and space limitations. I always took any viable food but often ate most of what I found on the spot. I tried to avoid any people I saw around me. With my wicked looking pry bar many were quick to avoid me too.

Once I was attacked. The man was bigger than me (most guys are because I am small) and came right for me when he spotted me. I should have tried to run away but I did not. I shifted my pry bar to a good grip and raised it to strike. I figured I would only have one chance and if I missed or screwed up I would be killed. As the man approached I waited to what I thought was the last second and stepped to the side and swung the bar.

It struck the man in the head and stuck there. The jaw or whatever you want to call it on the Fubar had jammed solidly into the man's right eye socket. I released the bar and drew my hatchet and struck again to the head of the man even though he was already starting to fall. I am sure the man was dead before he even hit the ground. I wiped my hatchet off on his pants and then wiped the pry bar off once I wrenched it from his eye socket. It was gross and before this event I likely would have thrown up just seeing this let alone doing it myself. Now things were way different and for me it was just another day.

I gave the man a quick search but found nothing I wanted. I knew he had to have supplies so searched back where he had come from and eventually found his backpack. I searched that pack thoroughly looking in every pocket and took what I wanted (mostly food) then I just continued on my way. Killing my second man meant

nothing to me; I had successfully acclimated to the new world I found myself living in now.

I am surviving now but I know that cannot last. I am scavenging for food and finding enough to survive but obviously there will be less and less food to find every single day. I have to be on the move constantly to new areas of the city. Gradually I will surely find less but enough to just keep me alive while my body shrinks and loses all its strength. Then at some point I will be too weak to continue and at that point I will lie down and soon die. I need a permanent plan for my continued survival. But I have none.

Then I remember that I do still have a car. I can drive away. To where I just don't know but as only death awaits me here, I see no harm in leaving. So I scavenge my way back to my car. Surprisingly I still have my keys and my car even starts. There is just over a half tank of gas so I can likely drive quite some distance.

I drive and leave the city behind on this major highway. There are many cars and trucks stopped on the road and I assume at least some of those were from refugees like me who tried to flee the city and had little gas to do so. I know you can supposedly siphon gas from cars but I have no idea of how to do that and what tools would be required. So I just drive.

After maybe a couple hours or likely less I decide I should look in a few cars and trucks for more food or drinks. I stop and immediately shut the car off to save fuel. I have stopped approximately in the middle of several vehicles of all kinds. I take my pry bar which I use effectively to open car trunks. I do find a few things with maybe the best being a full case of water bottles. When I open the back of a semi I find that it is a grocery delivery truck. Most of the food has little value to me because it requires cooking. I have neither the tools nor knowledge to use the bulk of the food. But I still take a lot. I take two

cases of granola bars, a case of dry cereal, a case of grape juice, and several other things before I quit. There were cases of different canned goods but I have no can opener so I leave those behind. I still leave with way more food than I ever expected to find and the backseat in my car is now full of food

Then I am back to driving again. I wish I had a plan of some kind but I have nothing. I wish I was smarter about many things. But wishing does not do much for a person. When it starts to get dark I just pull off to the side of highway and sleep in my car. It is uncomfortable but I have had much worse sleeping arrangements since the power has gone off.

I wake up to the roaring of a vehicle. When I look it is several military vehicles. I get out to watch them pass. The last vehicle stops and an armed trooper gets out. I can see two other troopers with rifles ready watching me from the safety of their vehicle. I raise my hands into the air.

“Are you armed?”

“I have a hatchet.”

“You can put your hands down but make no fast movements.”

I do so but his rifle is still pointed directly at me.

“We are transporting work crews. You can stay here if you wish or come with us. We will be stopping in the next city about forty miles away. You can work there and you will be fed two good meals each day and receive credit for your work. Safe sleeping quarters will be provided. You can follow us if your vehicle works. Your choice.”

“I’ll follow you. I still have enough gas to get there with no trouble. Thank you.”

With no additional talk he returned to the vehicle and they left. I got in and followed with my car. The drive was neither slow nor fast but we soon were in the next city and shortly they stopped. I stopped, removed my hatchet from its holder and locked my car as I left it.

I stayed and worked along the military guys and many other civilians for many days. We all had cots to sleep on and were fed two hot meals every day. The meals were not bad and the portions were certainly large enough though they had to be because we all worked hard each day. At least the strong ones worked hard and the weak ones did what they could. After a couple weeks I could feel my added strength from the hard work. We eventually moved to another location and later moved to another city. I was provided fuel for my car each time. Some of the other workers also had their own vehicles they drove to the other work sites.

After maybe a couple months things were getting better and some jobs with private companies were available. I took a job with a construction company and worked mainly boarding up first businesses and later damaged houses. Not many houses though. I was living in an apartment and paid no rent.

Then banks finally opened and I got the credit from the government in my new account for time I worked for them. One of the other guys I work with has taught me some about guns and I have purchased a used one of my own. I am a totally changed person. I have even found I enjoy shooting. I guess everyone still alive has changed a lot.

I have met a girl. She works as a cashier at the grocery store I normally go to for supplies. We are not dating, though she has shown interest in me. But I will not date any girl until I am capable of protecting her and right now I cannot even protect myself. I workout every evening to make myself stronger. And I now go shooting about once a week to get better. I am on the lookout to buy another gun. Yes, now I know every person needs a gun and I need more than one.

Soon I might be able to ask her out on a date. Maybe we can go shooting together.

**The End**