



# JOURNAL 2033



23rd July, 2033

I woke up two days ago on a small cot. My brain screamed through the haze of painkillers as light hit my eyes. The doctor said something, but it barely registered on my mind and I blanked out. I woke up again that night, a dull ache the only sign that I still had a body. The painkillers had been dialled down and I began to think more clearly. I still couldn't move much but my mind was active, and I tried to piece together what I had been through. An image of the Earth against a backdrop of darkness came to me, and I remembered. Space! I had been aboard the ISS delivering the Tesla communications module and then something went wrong.

We lost contact with the ground station within a week of our arrival. The systems were working perfectly on our side, something must have gone wrong on Earth. We tried every communications channel in the hope of picking something up but Earth was radio dead, all we got was static. There were three of us for a two week mission, and we waited as long as we dared. Nothing came up for us, no one called out to us, we were alone in space. As our rations dwindled we made the only possible choice, returning to Earth. With no help from the ground we'd need to plan our trajectories ourselves, and that's when things went wrong a second time. We had sealed ourselves in the capsule, timing our release to make a splashdown near Cape Canaveral. I remember the beginnings of re-entry and the inevitable crash. After that, my first memory is of the cot.

Yesterday, I was finally able to move my body. With painkillers dulled to a minimum my body ached with every move, but the ache was more a result of the muscle atrophy you get in space than anything I picked up in the crash. The doctor told me I was the only survivor. We had landed in a forest in Georgia, not too far from our intended destination, just far enough inland to have killed my crew. I can't dwell on it though, I have questions that need to be answered. The doctor helped me out with the basics, and the situation couldn't have been worse.

People thought the world would end in a thermonuclear war, but that's ancient technology. Why would you destroy the land you want to control? Biological warfare was the modern way. Within a week of our departure nuclear missiles were fired into space, disabling the world's communication networks. After that, people started getting sick. The doctor has seen thousands die with no hope or reason. Her words are better suited for this.

"Human kind has always been stupid. I've seen too many people dead from knife wounds and gunshots to believe otherwise, but it takes a special kind of nutcase to come up with a bio-weapon of this capability. Every religion and ideology preaches the sanctity of life. The ones who did this don't deserve to be called human anymore.

It happened without warning. The sky lit up with the glow of explosions, and everything went dead. No television, no telephone, no Internet and no radio. It was the EMP shockwave that killed all the electronics. Our lives are filled with so much sound and information. Everything with a battery died, and then people started to get sick. We live in a small town of three or four thousand people, and nine in every ten died. There were no rules to the disease, everyone was susceptible. Young, old, rich, poor, male, female, whatever you were, you could die. Nothing natural starts off so suddenly and kills so mercilessly. The disease didn't last long, there was no time to fret and worry over your loved ones. One day you were at a restaurant celebrating your son's birthday. The next day you were the only person alive in your block.

Now there are three hundred people in this town. Everything should have gone to hell, but it didn't. A decade of wars means a decade of preparing for the worst, especially when you live next to a military base. We came together at the community hall, thankfully the mayor had survived. He got us organized, collected food and necessities and set up mass funeral pyres to prevent the outbreak of another disease. Then finally, when we were done taking care of our families the soldiers came. A man with a gun and without a leader to answer to is a danger to everyone. The military bases depended on convoys to deliver rations. No vehicles, no people, no convoys. They came to us for food, but that wasn't all they wanted. They wanted to vent their frustration from a war they couldn't fight. We had our guns as well. They stay holed up in their own part of town. They keep the wild animals away and we share some of our resources, but we don't interact beyond that.

We don't know anything about the rest of the world. For all we know we were the only ones hit, but no one has come here in the past week and those who left to find out never returned. Even the soldiers have no information. We just live through each day, hoping for someone to come to us with some news. Two days ago we heard a crash in the forest. No explosion followed so we organized a search team and went to look. That's when we found your capsule."



1st August, 2033

It's been around a week since I started this log, my friends have been buried and I am as healthy as I can possibly get. I found out what happened but I don't know how or why, the picture is incomplete. Considering the chances of survival, I can safely assume that someone high up in the military chain will be alive. I ripped through the remains of the capsule, hoping to salvage equipment and rations. I found three not-too-damaged emergency packs and one working proximity sensor. It was intended to help us guide the capsule to a safe location in case the main landing sites had been compromised. I turned it on, and it began beeping steadily, pointing north. I now knew where to go. I would say my goodbyes tomorrow and find my way to the beacon.

Before leaving the camp, I went to the cemetery to pay my last respects to my fellow astronauts. I spent many a silent moment in front of their graves, thanking and cursing fate for leaving me alive and killing them. As I left, a particularly large gravestone caught my eye. On it was an elaborate elegy, presumably from a father to his son:

'My father!' You called, 'my son!' I came.  
Amongst the many a men in life  
It is the father who influences fortune and line of work  
But I, dear son have brought your decline and line of death!

You were a diadem in my hand, the cornerstone of my house  
I had thought you will do in the nation's crown - Oh, my penance aside!  
I have not come to plead - For my wrongs, there isn't atonement,  
I have come, dear son, to lay thee to rest!

Many-a-nights, I have slipped in to yours,  
When your eyes were but shut, a sweet kiss on your forehead,  
It is always that with the father - he loves, loves lot but, secretly!  
Oh how now? What valance of exalted words?

If there is but one that I fear, it is that whom the sun and stars awe at,  
The one that all nature serves - trees o' the earth, creatures all,  
With respect and fear all utmost I call him father, My father!  
But thou hath o'ershot all, My son, you were but my father!

4th August, 2033

The beacon has been beeping steadily, and from the change in frequency, it appears that I am only two days away from the source. The load on my shoulders was alarmingly light; I had to find water. I found the tallest tree around and decided to climb it, hoping for a glimpse of a high albedo surface. I found the sturdiest-looking branch within reach and pulled myself over it. I held on to it with both hands, and swung up my right leg around it. Bright green and yellow spots filled my field of vision, and darkness came early.

I found myself on the ground a few seconds later with a throbbing thigh. There was a stinging pain on my shoulder, and I felt wetness spreading, soaking through my shirt. I got up and shifted my backpack to examine my wound. The situation was much worse than I thought. What I had lost was not blood, but water. The fall had spared my veins, but one of my water-bottles had not been so fortunate. The only spare that I had was empty.

I heard the cawing of crows in the distance; perhaps they were around a watering hole. At first, I was apprehensive, for it is not for nothing that a flock of crows is called a murder. Ultimately, I pressed on, for such was my desperation that I was considering the possibility of stealing water from a dead or dying man.

By the time I arrived at the clearing of the crows, the shadows were at their shortest. There was a small pond. It was too irregularly-shaped to be man-made, but was at the same time appeared devoid of any kind of aquatic life. The pond practically screamed, 'CONTAMINATED'. But there are none more optimistic than thirsty men who have successfully found oases. I withdrew some pond water in a plastic tube and immersed the white contamination paper in it. Splotches of green appeared; it was as if the paper was bleeding. After the stipulated three minutes, the paper had turned a brilliant green. I had always considered the stocking of spaceships with forest survival gear to be as frivolous as asking airline passengers to switch off their cell phones during takeoff, but today I was grateful. I breathed a sigh of relief and set about filling the bottle with water. Some distance away from the pond, I made a small fire and boiled water to clean my wounds. I doused it once the water began to bubble and steam furiously.



5th August, 2033

Things seemed to have taken a turn for the better - the pain in my thigh was now a dull ache, and I could find sufficient food and water in and around the pond to last for a while. I should be happy, I thought. But this world leaves no room for that. The tallest and the most majestic of trees are the first to fall in a storm, and grass is the only thing capable of weathering the worst of them.

It would have been around 4 in the evening when the skies darkened. A storm was coming. I had to get away from the clearing. Moving quickly, I packed up everything I had, and searched for a tree with enough foliage to shelter me. The first drops of water began to fall, as I realised that I was walking around in circles. I smelled smoke, but the forest wasn't burning.

Sandwiched between three trees I found a makeshift shelter with a rain-proof canopy. It was multi-layered, with the bottommost being some kind of strong rope netting, with sheets of plastic and camouflage cloth laid on top. It was obviously a professional construct, and that set me on edge. I seemed to have stumbled upon a soldier's hideout. Suddenly, my chances of survival seemed to have become slim. I examined the remnants of the fire. It had been recently extinguished; its maker was definitely nearby. Bits of charred, ash-covered camouflage cloth lined the edges of the fire.

I began regretting my impulse to explore the shack. A soldier would make for a threatening adversary, but someone capable of overpowering a trained and armed killer was doubly dangerous. I had no reason to expect sympathy from the current resident, and I decided that the best course of action would be to put as much distance as possible between myself and the hut as quickly as possible.

The tripwire brushed my shins before it caught my eye. This realisation dawned on me as I was hanging upside down, an easy target for man and beast alike. I reached for the hunting knife I had around my ankle. The weight of my backpack pulled me downwards, and I hastily put an end to my efforts for fear of tearing a muscle. I hung, awaiting whatever the fates had in store for me. Blood rushed into my head, and I began to feel a puffiness in my face. It was not an unfamiliar feeling for an astronaut. What was unfamiliar was the accompanying high caused by the increased blood flow to my brain. Gradually, my appreciation for my predicament decreased. Everything seemed funny, from the way leaves were shaped to the noises made by the river. I felt a pulling sensation on my feet, and fell.

As my thoughts regained their coherence I found myself on the wrong end of a bayonet, pointed at me by a red-haired, well-muscled man with a piercing on his left ear. I would have found him intimidating even before the war, and in this state of anarchy would have given anything to avoid a confrontation with someone like him. He wore a sleeveless shirt and pants made of a rugged but breathable fabric, perfect for navigating the dry forest. On his right arm was a tattoo of the US Marine Corps, partially deformed by a crisscrossing series of scars which ran over it. Together, the charred uniforms and the tattoo told a silent tale - this was a man who had lost not his family and friends, but his own self in the war. His identity, once a source of great pride, was now a source of shame. I began wondering about what a man has to face before he decides to forget who he is. A sharp prod with his bayonet put an end to my musings. He asked me if I was armed. I shook my head, "No".

The rain intensified, and the water soaked through my clothes and onto my skin. I let out a small shiver. The fearsome, confrontational soldier disappeared and in his place was a concerned human being. He led me into the tent, and started a fire. "Hey, you look a lot like that astronaut chap from the newspapers a few weeks ago", he said, "I wonder what happened to that space mission". "I AM that astronaut chap". In a world without television or internet, it took me about half an hour of convincing until he believed me. After we'd had a fair amount of conversation, my curiosity about the charred uniforms overcame my inhibitions; I asked him for his story.

"Every boy grows up playing first-person shooters. About half of them dream of becoming a soldier. Out of those, perhaps one in a thousand actually enlist in the army. They dream of blood and war and glory, but I am not one of those dreamers. Having spent a good part of my childhood in a dysfunctional orphanage, the only rule of my early childhood was that there were no rules. There was a pecking order, and it was inadvisable to be at the top, or at the bottom. My first encounter with morality came from the works of Bertrand Russell, which I read when I was seventeen. I became a pacifist. However, my morals were still flexible enough to permit the violation of rules if the overall effect was positive. I joined the military, believing in the power of democracy, with a strong faith that by protecting my country I was bringing peace to the world."



"The first time duty called, it was with justification. North Korea and China had armed their nukes. I believed that it was a great threat to the free peoples of the world, and was glad to do my duty. I went to war, and I killed. And when I killed, I did so without passion or regret. It was always bad to take a life, but it had to be done for the greater good. "For the greater good" became the catchphrase of us soldiers, and for a while it even replaced "Hello" and "Good morning". I first saw action on the Battle of Time, in which American and Chinese battleships faced off against each other on either side of the international date line.

After the war was over, conflicting reports began to come in from all sources. Some said that the Chinese government had surrendered, others held that it was the US Army's cyber-security wing which had hacked into the Chinese weapons systems and armed the nukes. My own government still stuck to its old position. Flaws began to appear in the stories; the press releases and combat-related press releases began to be doctored. People on either side of the war lost their trust in their governments. I realised that my cause was not, and had never been, just or true. There had never been any cause for the war; merely an excuse. However, I still fought. For what had been begun had to be ended, and ended conclusively.

After the Battle of Time, my division was sent to fight in the Singaporean war. Chinese and Indian forces were fighting over the island nation, and we were sent to assist the Indians. By the time we got there, the war had spilled into the land from the sea. We learned that a squadron of Chinese were hidden inside the Raffles school building. They had taken the school by storm when it was in session, and finding themselves surrounded decided to use the students as hostages. General Zimmerman, in command of the American forces, gave the order to begin shelling the school. The tanks moved in. "The children are just collateral damage", he said, "we can't lose a war for the sake of a couple of kids!"

That was the straw that broke the camel's back. In that moment, I was spurred into action. I realised that fighting for peace was pointless; no violent confrontation could ever hope to achieve what an hour's peaceful discussion could not. In this age of killing machines, war only means assured mutual destruction. I turned around, grasping my military-issue pistol. I took aim, and fired. General Zimmerman fell, blood oozing from the hole on his forehead. I walked, not looking back. Later, I came to learn that the military officially declared his cause of death as "friendly fire". Hiding as a stowaway in transport ships, I made my way back to the mainland US. I was to be court-martialed on sight, but the army was too busy fighting the war to spend time or resources looking for me.

I have eked out a living ever since. My training has come in handy. I don't see many people around, though. Lone soldiers are loose cannons, and I am a thing to be feared in this new world order."

The soldier finished his tale. He wore his desertion as a cloak of pride. I was the first person in many weeks he'd had the chance to have a proper conversation with, and he seemed all the better for having told me his story. I thought of his story, of the choices he had made and consequences he had faced. I thought of the numerous missions I had performed, the secret repairs on military satellites that I'd carried out with my own hands. I have installed unknown components on military satellites, and placed circuits that could piggyback military data on civilian satellites. I knew the potential for destruction these devices had, and yet I carried them out unquestioningly. I never once thought to ask. The deserter's most important lesson was not that of the futility of war; it was instead that I had had a choice. One always has a choice.

6th August, 2033

The clouds had disappeared and the sun was shining brightly. Filling my stocks of water, I decided to carry on. My mission would not be complete until I reached the beacon. As I walked, I hummed to myself. When it failed to occupy my mind, I turned to contemplation. Since my return, I hadn't seen any signs of the military save a lone deserter. Where had all the soldiers gone? I had come across a couple of military installations along the way, but they had always been empty. They were symbols of this new world, where people feared their next-door neighbours as much as they did people in other countries. When the divide between your fellow countryman and a foreigner ceases to exist, a military is redundant.

I then thought of a game I had played in school. We called it "shipwreck". We were all celebrities on a sinking ship; there was time and room enough to save just one more. Each of us would then justify why we had to be that one person. "Shipwreck" was perhaps the best analogy I could think



of for the human condition now, and none of the celebrities had survived. They had died too, just like everyone else. Death and war are the great levellers. It matters not what you did in life; it is mere chance that one person is spared while another dies. I thought of my own extraordinary survival. But for a few career choices, I would have perhaps been atomised.

7th August, 2033

The beeping of the beacon became louder and almost continuous. A signboard told me that I was in Elbert county, Georgia. I noticed a tall stone sculpture in the distance and walked towards it. As I stood in front of it, the beeping became continuous. I saw four granite slabs, each about 20 feet tall, arranged around a central slab. They were all caked with dust and grit and graffiti. I walked towards one and examined it closely. There appeared to be some inscription on it. I wiped it with my hands. There was text, but in a language that I didn't understand. It appeared to be Chinese. Not knowing what to make of this, I walked around the stones in a spiral. I tripped on something and fell. It was another stone tablet, buried in the ground. I cleared the mud off it and began to read. On it was a schema of the sculpture, with the name of a language inscribed on each side of the four arms. English, Spanish, Swahili, Hindi, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian. Amidst the old and faded text was a piece of plexiglass with a document inside. I broke the seal and found a small note attached to it. The note was handwritten, apparently in a hurry. It bore the official seal of the former President of the United States of America.

"If you are reading this, the Sentinel Missile defense system has met with a catastrophic failure. Large parts of major cities are probably destroyed, and the governmental structure has irreparably collapsed. Attempts at locating any surviving Senators have failed. You, who have opened the seal, are hereby charged with the duty of overseeing the reconstruction of the United States of America, and should the need arise, civilisation."



The full implications of the note sunk in only after I'd read it a few times. I felt my shoulders sag with the weight of the new responsibility that had been placed on me. I cleared away more of the moss and dirt covering the tablet, and read its title:

GEORGIA GUIDESTONES  
CENTER CLUSTER ERECTED MARCH 22, 1980

LET THESE BE GUIDESTONES TO AN AGE OF REASON



# Our Post-Apocalyptic Rally Point

- Tom Ashford

In a barren knoll in northeastern Georgia, five massive slabs of polished granite rise out of the earth in a star pattern. The rocks are each 19 feet tall, with four of them weighing more than 20 tons apiece. Together they support a 25,000-pound capstone. Built in 1980, these pale gray rocks quietly await the end of the world as we know it.

Called the Georgia Guidestones, the monument is a mystery—nobody knows exactly who commissioned it or why. The structure is meant to serve as a compass, calendar, and clock.

The only clues to its origin are on a nearby plaque on the ground which gives the dimensions and explains a series of intricate notches and holes that correspond to the movements of the sun and stars—and the "guides" themselves, directives carved into the rocks. These instructions appear in eight languages ranging from English to Swahili and reflect a peculiar New Age ideology. The Guidestones are meant to instruct the dazed survivors of some impending apocalypse as they attempt to reconstitute civilization.

The monument is a highly engineered structure that flawlessly tracks the sun. It is capable of withstanding the most catastrophic events, so that the shattered remnants of humanity can use those guides to reestablish a better civilization than the one that was about to destroy itself. The four outer stones of the monument are oriented based on the limits of the sun's yearly migration. The center column has two precisely calibrated features: a hole through which the North Star is visible at all times, and a slot that aligns itself with the position of the rising sun during the solstices and equinoxes. The principal component of the capstone is a 7.8-inch aperture through which a beam of sunlight passes at noon each day, shining on the center stone to indicate the day of the year. The main feature of the monument, though, are the 10 dictates carved into both faces of the outer stones, in eight languages: English,

Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi, and Swahili. A mission statement of sorts ("Let These Be Guidestones To An Age Of Reason") is engraved on the sides of the capstone in Egyptian hieroglyphics, classical Greek, Sanskrit, and Babylonian cuneiform.

The Georgia Guidestones are touted as America's equivalent of Stonehenge. A certain air of mystery surrounds them. Who commissioned this structure? Why was it built?

"You may put a hundred questions to these rough-hewn giants as they bend in grim contemplation of their fallen companions, but your curiosity falls dead in the vast sunny stillness that enshrouds them," said Henry James, on the Stonehenge.

This project is reported to have been financed by a mysterious man who identified himself only as "Mr. R. C. Christian." He admitted that was not his real name, but he refused to reveal his true identity to anyone except the president of the local bank in Elberton. He stated that he represented "a small group of loyal Americans who believe in God." He said they lived outside of Georgia and simply wished to "leave a message for future generations."

***"They want to get the population down and this is what they think will do it. The Guidestones are there to instruct the survivors."***

He claimed the group had planned the project for more than 20 years. Despite intensive investigations by many news agencies, the identity of R. C. Christian and his group has remained a secret to this day.

The absence of comprehensive information about the monument has invariably led to many a "researcher" formulating his own theory about the construction of the Guidestones. But apart from arousing interests in conspiracy theorists, the Guidestones have also angered Christian religious fundamentalists. There are sections of the public as well who are apprehensive of the ideas presented in the stones. Vandalism and graffiti mar certain portions of the monument.

"The elite are planning to develop successful life-extension technology in the next few decades that will nearly stop the aging process, and they fear that with the current population of Earth so high, the masses will be using resources that the elite want for themselves," opines Mark Dice, an author.

"They want to get the population down and this is what they think will do it. The Guidestones are there to instruct the survivors," says Jay Weidner, Radio communicator turned conspiracy theorist.

The monument however, has found its own supporters. People who believe that the world as we know it is reeling toward a dystopian future.

Yoko Ono says, "I want people to know about the stones. We're headed toward a world where we might blow ourselves up and maybe the globe will not exist. It's a nice time to reaffirm ourselves, knowing all the beautiful things that are in this country and the Georgia Stones symbolize that."

A visit to the web page of the Georgian monument reveals the words of wisdom which presumably constitute the rationale of Mr. R.C. Christian and his band of brothers. Whether these are really the "Ten Commandments of the Anti-Christ", or the foundational ideas of a "New World Order" is not clear. Whatever their purpose, the Georgia Guidestones certainly remind one of the immense burden humanity presents to Mother Earth.

***"Paper money eventually returns to its intrinsic value — zero." - Voltaire***

***"Whoever controls the volume of money in any country is absolute master of all industry and commerce." - President James Garfield.***

***"Persecution is not an original feature in any religion; but it is always the strongly marked feature of all religions established by law." - Thomas Paine***

***"Be not a cancer on the earth — Leave room for nature — Leave room for nature." - The 10th Commandment.***

TWICKENHAM • ASHFORD • WEYBRIDGE • CROYDON • REIGATE • CHERTSEY • MOLESEY • SUTTON • RICHMOND



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