

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Rathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss.

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When Your Computer Dies

I like to think that I'm a pretty resourceful guy. I've built houses, I can cook my own food at home or in the wilderness, I design computer systems for a living, and I publish books.

I'm writing some stories to pad out a few light chapters in my novel, *The Rise and Fall of Man*. One of the chapters has to do with people learning to live without all the high tech devices we are becoming dependent on. To do this I have to imagine what it would be like.

Well, this week I had the opportunity to stop imagining when my computer died. It was a pretty dramatic death. I was typing away on my newsletter, which I'll send out next month, listening to some music. The screen suddenly turned into a random set of dots, then the dots turned into vertical lines. About three seconds later the screen turned grey. Five seconds after that the music stopped. Then nothing.

I forced the computer to shut down. I turned it back on and was presented with a white

screen with five wide pink vertical stripes.

I tried unplugging it – booting from a backup – forcing it into test mode (which it would not enter). I tried things several times because I wanted to make sure it wasn't going to start working again – or not wanting to believe it was really dead. I had work to do, a newsletter to finish – now was not the time to have a dead computer.

Long story short, I called Apple support. The woman I talked to had me try a couple things and then set up an appointment for me to bring the computer to the Apple Store in 3 days. When I did, the tech verified it was dead using some test software that did work. The video card was dead and will be replaced in 7 to 10 days.

Two weeks without my computer – how's that working for me?

I've got my iPad so I'm not trying to live with a pen and paper. Adobe has a application

call Comp, which is sort of like InDesign. That's what I'm writing this newsletter with.

Besides having a much smaller screen, the thing the iPad is missing is a mouse. Pointing and making gestures to do things I usually do by clicking and dragging is tough. Not so much in that doing the gestures is harder, it's just different.

I checked on my editing status just before my computer died and found that I'm 15 pages ahead of schedule, which is good because I can't do any editing until I get my computer back, and that I'm one story behind and will be two stories behind by the time I get my computer back. The good thing is that I can write the stories on my iPad.

Following is a story for *The Rise and Fall of Man*.

Douglas G, Clarke

Everything is dead

I heard some people say that everything died that morning and that people just hadn't gotten the news yet.

I didn't want to believe them and so I tested everything to make sure. It was true enough that there was no power. I found someone who told me that there had been a magnetic pulse that coupled into all the long transmissions lines and burned them out.

That same person told me that the pulse also affected very small electronics, like computers. What may not have died were things made of heavy short wires.

Since I didn't want to admit to myself that there was no hope, I started looking for things that might work while I was looking for food.

My first prize was a solar panel designed for camping trips. Besides the panel, it had a battery, a socket for plugging other things into, and an LED light. I flipped on the Light and my hope shone like the LED.

Everything wasn't dead!

It was a while before I found my second prize. I must have plugged a hundred things into my solar battery. It was a hot pad. It drained the battery in ten minutes, but it did boil a pot of water. I recharged the battery and then had my first cup of coffee in six weeks. Boy was it good!

Encouraged by my success and the limitations of my solar cell, I started looking for something more powerful. In less than a week I had built myself a portable cook station. I found a bicycle and bicycle trailer. I found a full size solar panel on the roof of a house, a power converter at the hardware store, some batteries, three more hot pads, and some LED lights.

I felt so advanced and sophisticated eating hot canned chili. I was satisfied for a while and focused on surviving through the winter.

In the spring I started traveling and looking for treasures to add to my collection. One afternoon I found an electronic hobby shop. I felt like I had found heaven.

I didn't find anything that worked except a soldering iron. What I did find were hobby kits.

I built some flashing LEDs, a buzzer that made noise when something broke an invisible beam, and a musical instrument that made twelve different notes when twelve keys were pressed.

The real prize was a radio kit. I built it and listened to the static for several hours as I slowly tuned the dial up and down.

Then I heard it. I pulled my hands back as if the radio had tuned into a huge spider.

"This is Broad River, Georgia. Can anyone hear us?"

That's all it said, but that was enough. I found a map and started the journey. It took me 47 days, but on the evening of the 47th day I peddled into Broad River.

A hundred people came out to greet me. They all marveled at my hot pads. They took me in. I helped them fix the solar panels they had. I've found a new home and proven them wrong. Everything didn't die.