

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of *Unremembered Loss*

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The Rise and Fall of the Human Race

As promised last month, this month's newsletter is going to focus on my novel, *The Rise and Fall of the Human Race*.

As part of the National Novel Writing Month, NaNoWriMo, I started the novel on November 1st, 2010. By November 30th, I had 50,000 words

written. Five years later and I've just finished my second round of edits. In a week or two I'll send it back to my editor and then wait for round three.

In the mean time, I wanted to take a few minutes and reflect on the process of writing this novel. It's hard to believe that it has taken five years

to get to where I am today and a little scary about what that means about the future of this novel and my other one.

I'm going to write the rest of this newsletter in an interview format like a blogger might ask me to do.

Doug

What Is *The Rise and Fall of the Human Race* about?

It's the story of our future as told through a history book. It chronicles our advancements, our struggles and our eventual downfall. At its core it's about the human heart. Its about the best in us, despite the wrong we often do individually and as a community.

Tell us about the main characters.

There aren't any main characters. The novel is a collection of short stories, each with their own characters and story. In the terms of a history book, it is a collection of source articles – each written by a person living through the situation being explored. When taken as a whole, the main character is the “collective self,” since 90% of the stories are written in the first person.

Early on I thought of having a narrator who would tie all of the stories together, much as I did in my first novel; but I remembered that in writing the first novel I ran into problems having a main character narrator and ended up having to rewrite it. I quickly decided that there would be no concrete main character. In some ways I think it makes the story easier

to relate to. In my other story, you would probably connect with one of the main character and feel like all the others are outside.

With this novel, each new story starts off with an “I” that is new and to be discovered. It is easy to drop into the “I” as self and experience the story through your own eyes. I really like the feel this gives to the book.

How many years does the story cover?

That's hard to say. In definitive terms, it runs from 2055 through 2971; which are the dates of the earliest and latest articles. In terms of the time explored, it would be from the beginning of the information age through the early 3000s.

Sounds like quite a range. How do you handle covering that much time?

The book is broken up into chapters covering different topics. Because of their nature, the different topics occur during different times.

Since I'm covering so much time and since the story is not about time, I put a lot of effort into making sure that time wasn't an issue. I did this in two ways.

First, nowhere in the book does it talk about time. Most of the stories are about now (whenever now is) and a few are reflective about how we got to now.

Second, every article has a date so there is no doubt when the source material was written. Since the date is right there, the question of time disappears from the readers thoughts.

Did anything surprise you as you wrote the story?

Since I wrote the story so quickly, there were actually a lot of things that surprised me. Starting out, I had three or four topics I wanted to cover and I knew what I planned as the “big event” two-thirds of the way through the book. Aside from that, I just started writing.

Also, since I was trying to get it done so quickly, when I got stuck somewhere I jumped to another section and starting writing there.

The biggest thing that surprised me was who the hero of the story turned out to be. Without giving too much away, let me just say that in a high-tech future when things fall apart, a low-tech solution is sometimes what is called for.

Can you give us a little more detail on this hero?

I just finished one of the last stories for the book. It involves the hero and since the story is set during Christmas; I'd like to share it with you as my 2015 Christmas story.

A young woman named Margaret, who grew up in an underground city, found herself homeless. In her wanderings she finds and is then accepted into an Amish community.

In this community she discovers what it means to be part of a family and to be loved.

I hope you enjoy this simple story and find a little Christmas joy of your own this year.

Merry Christmas to all,

Douglas G Clarke

Once a Stranger

Hannah's Journal
January 6th, 2733

I walked into their world six months ago. I was hungry, afraid and without hope. They fed me, protected me and taught me what it means to have faith. Last month we celebrated Thanksgiving. Five months earlier I would have said there would never be anything to be thankful for again, but this year I am more thankful than I have ever been. I decided that I wanted to change my name – to stop being an “English” and start being Amish. I said goodbye to Margaret and my new family welcomed Hannah.

Three weeks ago Miriam came to me and said she wanted to teach me something. Miriam is ten years old and the daughter of Atlee and Sadie Graber. I was finished with my chores since the first snow had already come so I agreed. She took me to the fireplace in the main room and had me sit with her. She handed me a needle, some colored threads and a piece of cloth. We stretched our cloths on wooden rings and then she showed me how to make a picture with the thread.

She told me that she was making a picture as a gift for her father. It was going to be of him plowing the field. I told her I didn't know what to make. She told me to make what was in my heart. We met every afternoon

for two hours. I felt guilty for spending the time – for not working – but Miriam said that we were working because we were making things for other people. I didn't know what to make so I started by making the blue of the sky.

The sky is what I've noticed most since I've come here. Living out under the beautiful sky instead of inside a hole in the ground. I can't imagine now living anywhere else. As the days when on, Miriam and I talked. I asked her why we were making gifts. She laughed at me in that good humored way children do and told me that we always make gifts for Christmas. When I asked her what Christmas was, she gave me a sad look.

“Christmas is when we remember God's gift to us, when he sent his son.” She told me the stories: of Mary and Joseph and their son Jesus, of the shepherds and of the angel singing. She told me how God's gift to us is the reason that we live our lives giving to each other. That because God accepted her family back when they were lost, her family had accepted me when I was lost.

Miriam's words touched me in a way I can't explain. I had experienced the generosity of the Graber's.

I had felt the acceptance of the community when I decided to join them. But it was the time that this ten year old girl spent with me; not because she thought she should, but because it was what came naturally to her, that touched my soul. Somewhere along this journey, I decided to make my picture a word. I started to write hope – because that is what I have now, but as I felt Miriam's love washing over me – her patient, caring, non-judging love – I realized that I had found more than hope, I had found a home.

This morning we celebrated Old Christmas – we fasted in the morning and then had a huge meal. We exchanged gifts. Atlee loved Mariam's picture and gave her a huge hug. Sadie gave me a new dress. When it was my turn I gave all three of them my not-very-pretty picture of the word home. I cried when I told them that I was home now – that I had been looking all my life, but never knew what it was I was looking for. They all gave me hugs and told me how special I was. I asked them if they would teach me about their God so he could be my God, too. Then they all cried, too.