

Event Zero

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This document was found on Jan 15 2022. Although its veracity has has yet to be definitively proven, it is considered authentic. It it the only known document of its kind. The dates line up with the beginning of Event Zero.

Some text was reconstructed from context or further investigation. Some text could not be deciphered.

According to the calendar, the date is June 22. I suppose I should specify, 2016, in case someone actually finds this notepad.

My name is Michael Van Dorn. I am a research scientist at USAMRIID.

And I think I may be patient zero.

At first I couldn't believe anyone here could be working on something so insane. Despite what the conspiracy theorists might suggest, we're the good guys. Sure, we have bacteria and viruses here that would give your unborn grandchildren nightmares— Ebola Zaire, Smallpox, Bas-Congo, Uri's Plague, but they were here for research. We don't weaponize anything.

That's why I think it must be an accident. The closest thing I can think of that might cause something like this would be [REDACTED]. The combination of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] could, in theory, account for the symptoms I'm observing. Observing, I might add, from the apparent safety of the isolation chamber.

Dr. [REDACTED] would be the only one who would be capable of this kind of thing. If I can find him, I'll try to get some answers.

Two weeks ago I fell ill. My body failed me. I collapsed. They thought I was comatose. I wasn't. I was "locked in." I was aware of everything around me, yet unable to move.

They put me in here as a precaution, but I'm sure they knew that whatever had caused my condition was already out, already in the wild.

For a week, while on an IV and massive doses of anti-biotics and anti-virals, nothing happened. But they worried. I could see it through the reflections of their level 3 hazmat visors when they came to check my levels. No— not worried— terrified. They knew

something, or had learned something in the interim, that scared the everloving shit out of them.

They stopped coming after a week. I heard the screams through the glass, but couldn't move my neck to see. It was horrible. I recognized the voices of my co-workers before they turned into agonized cries of torture. Some of them begged before being silenced.

The IV ran out. I began to starve. My guts clenched and turned, twisting like a tornado.

I tried to chew my own tongue off to have something to eat. It was then I realized I could move again.

I got up and looked around. I was quite gaunt, but alive, and thankful for that.

I seem to be only one who could be so thankful. The glass walls of the isolation chamber are splattered with blood. There are body parts in the halls. I had seen that sort of thing before, back in the 'Stan. Mines, IED's, cluster bombs... but there had been no explosions here.

I feel no fear. This in of itself should be deeply disturbing, but it isn't. Emotion seems trivial now. Hunger drives me. I must find something to eat, or I will continue to feast on my own mashed-up tongue.

June 23

The doors of the isolation chamber are the gates to hell.

I have found no body that has not been torn into shreds. Flesh has been ripped from muscle, muscle torn from bone, bones broken and marrow drained.

I had seen all the movies. I knew what had happened. I knew what I had to do.

I picked up a bone, an ulna if I remember my bio, and brought it to my lips. I stuck my bruised tongue into it, sucking out what marrow I could. It was dry and left me unsatisfied. I took a mouthful of bone shards and crunched them into a paste in my mouth. It took the edge off my hunger, but it was like the IV— barely sustaining.

There is no question in my mind that the bite marks are from human teeth. It seems natural to me to understand this. It is as clear as if the burning bush had told me itself.

When I heard the moan, I almost laughed. It was right out of Romero. But it was oddly compelling, and I had to find out its source.

Calling them ‘zombies’ just seems far too trite. I will instead refer to them as ‘the afflicted.’ And one of them was standing outside a secure lab, pounding at the metal door, moaning with all its might.

I tried to call out to it, to tell it to go away, but I had damaged my tongue more than I thought in my initial hunger, and could only manage a pathetic moan myself.

It was then that I thought that maybe he and I were not so unlike.

Maybe he was 'locked in' to his body too, and was desperate to understand what was going on.

He turned to me and stared. He had a lab coat, and was coated in drying goo. Chunks of what appeared to be intestines were glued to the fabric by the fluids. His face was dead pale and lacerated, with black blood clotted around the wounds. His eyes were like rotten orange peels.

Those eyes had no intelligence behind them. Whatever had gotten into this man had robbed him of his soul. This was a shell, a husk, driven by mindless hunger.

Nevertheless I tried to communicate. I waved my hands. I even flipped him off. Nothing. He just stared. It was like he was trying to figure out if I was good to eat or not.

I lost my patience with this poor being and smashed his skull with a convenient fire extinguisher. I paid it no more heed.

There was a voice in the room. It let out a tentative "hello?" and knocked on the door.

I didn't want to speak, since I would certainly be mistaken for the afflicted, so I knocked back, in a "shave and a haircut" pattern.

The voice inside was still hesitant. I keyed in my code and unlocked the door from my side.

Her name was Shirly Kant, an intern and med student. She was attractive to me once. I remember I would think of her various body parts as aesthetically pleasing.

I must have looked a complete wreck, but her relief was palpable. I pointed to my mouth and mumbled, trying to communicate my tongue wasn't working. She nodded in understanding and began to tell me what she had seen. She was in tears, her clothes were ripped, and she had blood on her shoes.

I grabbed the top of her hair and pulled her toward me with such force her neck snapped. My teeth did not stop ripping into her flesh until they crunched spine.

My hunger stilled, I went to see what else the office had— perhaps hoping there might be another survivor. I had no such luck.

Instead I was confronted with something completely unexpected.

A mirror.

I had never quite realized how bright red blood was. I had seen it in combat, but usually it was so covered with dust and debris that it was brown and tacky by the time I got to it. This was from the source. Freshly oxygenated, freshly drawn.

What was most fascinating was the fact that I did not look like the afflicted at all.

I was human.

And I had just torn apart another human being with my teeth.

Fascinating.

June 26

If there was a doubt that I was among the afflicted, it has been put to rest.

First of all, please forgive me my terrible handwriting. I am doing the best I can with my left hand.

My right hand was recently severed by a survivor's axe.

After I had dispatched my assailant and [exanguinated] him, I took a moment to observe the now severed limb actually crawling across the floor, like "Thing" from the Addam's Family. It was most amusing.

I am however, rather put out by my lack of symmetry. I look a bit more like my fellow afflicted than I find tasteful.

I have given a bit more thought to my condition. I can breathe, if I force myself to, but I have no pulse or other vital signs. The blood that escaped my body from my wound was black and tarry.

I do find it curious that any thought of a cure had never crossed my mind until just now. Truth be told, I would refuse such a treatment

if offered. I am a remorseless killing machine, what use would I have in having my humanity restored? Why would I want to have guilt re-added to the lexicon of my soul?

Soul. Do I have one? I am Afflicted. I shall allow whoever may read this to ponder that question. It is of no relevance to me now.

July 2

Am I the only man left alive? There is nobody to talk to. Not that I could talk anyway. But to hear another human voice... that would be... divine. In the purest sense. The word of man is divine. Given to us by our creator. His was the first Word, and it created the oceans and the sky.

I will speak again. And when I do, it will be with a tongue of fire. I can smell smoke already.

July 3

My skin feels like it is coated with rough cotton, like the kind in a pill bottle— the feel of sticking a finger deep inside to get the pill, and being met with the scratching resistance of fibers being pulled apart— you can feel it. My muscles can feel it.

Weariness or decay? I cannot tell. My mind doesn't seem as sharp. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] I thought. But no matter. Hunger drives me.

I figured that my fellow Afflicted would have picked the nearest big cities apart, so I headed out into the country. I found an automatic with the keys still in it, and drove past the suburbs.

Left handed driving is [challenging].

It was curious— so many abandoned cars, so few people. Well, people in an academic sense. Afflicted. Standing around like statues, swaying gently in the breeze. They are too distant from food, too far away to smell their prey. So they stand there. Starving. How long can they hold out? Eternally? Or will decay destroy their ability to ambulate before winter? I almost feel sorry for them.

I made it out of the suburbs, despite the challenges of unmoving traffic. Going into town would have been a mistake, if the amount of abandoned cars here was any indication.

Found a survivor on the road. He frantically waved at me. I saw the look of hope switch to horror as I ran him down. He was still alive as I ripped the flesh from his face.

July 7

Had to walk. Gas gone. Our reliance on one-way fuel finally came home to roost. Burning long dead flesh to keep going on...

Something ironic there.

The hunger is getting worse. But with each step through the dry

grass I start to understand. Mine is the mind of the hunter. No.
Not the hunter. The rapist.

I see a target. Lone. Scared. And I need it. I don't want it. I don't
care about want. [UNINTELLIGIBLE], then take. So simple. So
pure. Their fear is almost as pleasurable as their death.

Need.

Found a farm. Whole family. House surrounded by Afflicted, most
prone. Shot. Shotgun if I had to guess. Yet there were five still
standing, still milling about the house, hoping to find a way past the
boarded up windows. They moan and pound and grunt.

I find a shed. I get an axe.

I take the axe to my brothers. They are unworthy. I live. I am a
god. They [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. Weak.

Farmer townie opens the door and peeks out. He waves me over.
He thinks I must be one of them.

I got close enough for him to see his mistake.

I rushed the door. Split the skull.

The rest of the family was no threat.

Consumed.

Infant surprisingly tender.

July 15, approx.

I have no timepiece. No calendar. Doesn't matter. Time is not important. Time is eternal. I am eternal.

I understand now. I felt the hand of destiny in my heart. God has spoken to me. All is clear. All is clear. All is clear.

Praise be to the One.

He has chosen [me] to be his Christ. I think. I know. I am the first and the last, the [Alpha] and Omega, he who is [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

Clever man with arrows tried to hunt me. I'm smarter. He had a wallet. Picture of a family. He was a feast.

July 20 ?

Nobody will find my [notebook]. Why do I [write]? I know. I [UNINTELLIGIBLE] the kind word. Of God. Must be told. I am the [burning] bush.

I need no pain. Pain needs me. Pain loves. Pain gives. I need no

pain.

Things are starting to fall into place. The Word is on my lips.

What is my name?

It is on the wind. I can smell the [decay] of civilization, the wonderful [stench] of death.

[UNINTELLIGIBLE] will come.

What is my name?

I crested the hill. I saw below me the [multitudes]. So many. I was wrong. Not Afflicted. I now call them what they are.

The Blessed.

My name is Legion.

I am alone.

I can still read. But writing is slower than before.

It is getting darker, even in the day. Tunnel vision. My mind is seeing [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. Dreaming in the day. [Losing] memory. Hungry.

What is my name?

Michael. I know because I [read] it.

The moon is an eye. It watches me feed. It hates me. No matter.
It grows dimmer.

Fire is everywhere. The sky is always red with smoke. The moon is
red. The [rivers] are blood.

[SECTION LOST]

I SEE NOW.

I was wrong. Oh god... I was wrong...

What have [I done]?

Finally, I understand.

I am not alone.

God has [forgiven] me.

I follow the [trail] of the Pale [Horse].

God has forgiven me.

This journal was found buried with the remains of a human body. DNA analysis of the remains match Michael Van Dorn, researcher at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases.

The corpse was discovered outside Baltimore MD, buried under a hill in a mass grave that contained the remains of at least 100 unidentified individuals. Van Dorn's was the only body intact.

The body remains at the Institute for Military Medicine and Event Research in Columbus MD under category 5 quarantine.

No specific pathogen has yet been discovered that would account for the events in this document.

Research is ongoing.

— Gen. Albert Rodriguez, Event Zero Commission