

How were we supposed to have known? We simply did what everyone else did. We listened to what everyone else listened to. We went along with what we thought everyone else was thinking. In the end, we were all deceived.

Hi there. My name is James, and I live with what is left of—what was once—American society. As of right now, the question is not about how we live, but rather, where we live. Where is that exactly? The answer is not that easy to accept. However, the story is simple enough. It all began when we started to value the life of nature more than the life of the human race. Back then, many would have said, “To value the life of nature is the only true way to value human life.” Now we know that never in the history of mankind have more absurd words ever been spoken.

From the walls of these underground tunnels, we, the descendants of the survivors, finally understand that the earth was created to support mankind and not the other way around. Too bad we discovered this reality much too late. How were we supposed to have known the earth would take care of itself? How were we supposed to have known “the Great Scare” was nothing more than a way for some to make a profit and others to take control? Finally, how were we to know our dependency on the government to completely provide for us would later require us to completely fend for ourselves? Like I said, we simply did what everyone else did. We listened to what everyone else listened to. We went along with what we thought everyone else was thinking.

Well, back to introductions. As I said, my name is James, and the funny little man standing behind me is Lee. He is of some relation to me. My parents always insisted that he was my brother, but I have my serious doubts.

Lee, please say “hi” to our readers.

Hi!

Lee, I told you to say hi, you don’t have to wave. This is a book; they cannot see you.

Oh, on the contrary, James, through the use of vivid, visual word pictures, I’m quite certain they can all see my friendly, courteous, yet fully appropriate hand gesture. In fact, I’m even sure that a few of them are waving back.

You're insane.

Oh, am I? Am I really? I'm not the one who built a time machine...

Shhh! Quiet, Lee! I had yet to reveal that information to the readers. It was supposed to be a surprise.

Well, it's not now. Besides, it wasn't a good surprise, if I may say so, which I just did. It is kind of...how shall I say—cliché-ish.

"Cliché-ish?" That's not even a word!

Of course it's a word! I just used it, didn't I?

You really are a tiny little man. And it's time for you to be quiet. I must get the audience up to speed with our current predicament.

Yes, sorry, James... Please proceed with the story, O Great All-Powerful Narrator... And for the audience, I am now waving good-bye.

Lovely. Now, where was I? Oh yes... You all probably would like to know about the time machine, am I right? Well, there really isn't much to speak of. It's like any other typical time machine one might find laying around after a global catastrophe. I crafted it out of the finest scrap material and salvaged technology that money could buy. It looks much like—

A big pile of junk!

Err... I was going to say a Toyota Prius.

Yes, that's what I said...a big pile of junk.

Anyhow, Lee does have a point. It's definitely not the prettiest thing to look at. But what it lacks in eye appeal, it makes up for in ingenuity. It took three years to build this masterpiece, and now here we are on the verge of greatness, ready to shake our fists in the face of time and laugh in the visage of space! In a few short minutes, my brother and I will embark on a journey back in time to correct the mistakes of the past—

Yes, yes, that's good and all, but can we leave now? The natives are getting restless. They haven't stopped pounding on that door since we barricaded ourselves in here.

Well, Lee, what do you expect? After all, we did steal their "Sacred Napkin."

More reason for us to stop this chatting and leave this place...err...time...space... whatever!

Okay, okay, but all in good time. Before we leave, we seriously need to get the readers fully caught up with the events that led up to this glorious occasion.

Are you serious? We stole the Sacred Napkin! If that mob gets in here, they're going to eat us and use the Sacred Napkin to wipe our blood from their chins!

Please, Lee, they're not cannibals. Besides, that door will hold them off for a while. You must forgive my brother. Lee can be a little dramatic at times. Everything to him is a crisis: "Oh me, oh my, I stubbed my toe! Oh no, I can't find my razor! Oh, woe is me, I think people are trying to eat me!" Seriously, Lee, you really need to learn to relax a little.

Yeah, sure...I'll relax. But when those deranged lunatics break down that door, I'm making sure they see you as the appetizer.

Whatever skittles your skidattle. Now, where was I? Oh yes, you probably want to know about this business with the Sacred Napkin and the bloodthirsty mob that we stole it from. To get the big picture of our present situation, we need to go back to the events of yesterday morning.

A flashback?! We don't have time for a flashback!

Sure we do. Besides, if we didn't have a flashback, then this book would have ended by now. So, without trying to sound too evolutionary, it all started with a big bang...