

The Journal of
James Halldon

Diary of the displaced

Episode 1

Glynn James

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Note that this work contains scenes of violence and graphic descriptions not appropriate for reading by children. You have been warned.

**Please pass this on to anyone you
know who may enjoy it.**

Day 3

I have no idea where I am and not a clue what day it is. I know roughly how much time has passed since I arrived here, but other than that I'm fumbling.

It was January, I think, the 8th sounds right to me, but I'm not sure. I've always been one of those people that are too busy with the here and now to worry about what the date was. I'll write this thing in days. It's the best I can do for now.

I'll go back and get down everything that has happened so far, otherwise this thing isn't going to make any sense to anyone but myself. Not that I'm expecting anyone else to read this, but, well, you never know.

Couldn't make my mind up whether to fill in the previous days with notes, or put it all in today's, but settled on the latter, thought it would seem disjointed if I did otherwise.

2 days pre Journal (Day 1)

I remember coming round. It was dark, very dark; I could vaguely make out some shapes on the floor around me, but not much else. I was lying on something uncomfortable, or several things, it all seemed to shift under my weight. My head hurt and I knew that I had bruises all over me. How I got them, I have no idea.

It took a while to get over the initial panic, scrambling around blindly, trying to find something solid, other than this mass of crap that I was crawling over. I cracked my knee on something hard, metal. It was large, I think about the size of a microwave, or a television, but it was difficult to tell what it was.

I couldn't find my cigarette lighter. The only damn source of light available to me and it had gone. I checked all my pockets and found that I still had the cigarettes, wallet, car keys, a packet of mints, but no lighter and no mobile phone. Tried to search the ground around me, fumbling over whatever all this stuff is, but that turned up nothing.

My hands were cold. The place didn't feel that cold, though there was air coming from somewhere, a breeze that smelt musty, mouldy, rank, something like that.

Negotiating my way through the debris was slow going, but after what I thought was about an hour I reached some kind of solid barrier. I think it's a wall but It's hard to tell in nearly complete darkness. I think I crawled about a hundred yards in that time.

My head felt heavy and I was so exhausted, but it was a relief to find something solid as a reference. After that hour of stumbling, I fell asleep leaning against the wall. How I managed I don't know; I guess my body just switched off, total shut down.

1 day pre Journal (Day 2)

On waking, I found out that what I thought were a few bruises were more extensive than I imagined. My whole body was screaming out with aches and pains and it was difficult to stand up.

There was good news, though. My eyes had adjusted to the level of light a little. Not much, but it was enough to make things out nearby, to see shapes and shadows. Details weren't clear.

It was a wall, made of solid stone blocks and it was old, very old. The blocks were a good three feet long and about a foot tall, the material like slate and the rough edges felt sharp. There wasn't any cement between them, just a very thin groove.

I looked along the wall in both directions and could see that it just went on and on. Upwards, I couldn't see the top of the wall, or a ceiling of any kind.

I called out a few times, but there wasn't much of an echo, just a dull hollow sound. I was convinced the place had to be a building of some kind.

Only a packet of mints to eat, so I was getting hungry.

Felt like crap, so slept a lot of the day again, but the tiredness still didn't go away.

Woke up and finally felt a bit more alive, managed to retrace my crawl through the rubbish, approximately, until I found what I thought was a

microwave again.

Found my lighter! It was about a foot away from the microwave, fallen underneath a pile of cardboard boxes, it took a while of searching for it and I had nearly given up, but then I put my hand straight on it.

It didn't work, must have run out of fuel, though it was wet, so that may have stopped the flint. I don't know. I never considered how they work.

Back to Day 3

So this is where I am so far, after two days of mostly sleeping in the dark and feeling ill, lethargic and hungry. I'm nearly ready to just keel over. The mints didn't last very long, and left me feeling even hungrier. I know I slept a lot, so there is a possibility that I'm actually on day four. All of this doesn't seem to matter, though.

Lack of food is going to become a problem very soon.

I gathered up the pile of cardboard this morning. I know, I've no idea what time it really is, but I'm referring to the early part of my waking hours as morning, just to keep me sane.

With the cardboard under one arm I headed back over to the wall, taking it slowly and only using the lighter – which was working after it dried out - for occasional flicks of light to get my bearings.

Even with the light from the clipper, the top of the wall isn't visible and neither are the ends of the wall in either direction.

There was a decent-sized area cleared now, where I had slept for the last two nights, the ground in here is mud and stones, so this place hasn't been used in a while.

The cardboard on the top of the pile was reasonably dry and caught fire pretty quickly and when it did I was given a glimpse of something that I wasn't expecting. I stood there for about five minutes just trying to take it all in.

To start with, I wasn't inside a building, this place was much bigger than that, stretching out for the whole of the two hundred feet or so that my makeshift fire cast light. There was endless junk strewn across the mud floor. The wall wasn't a part of a building of any kind; it was just a free-standing thing about a hundred feet long and easily forty feet high, crumbling into ruin in different places, finally collapsing into rubble at both ends. The light from the cardboard seems to reach a lot further than I expected. This is good. It gives me space. I'm pretty sure the light travels further than it should.

I had only just begun to get a grasp of where I was when the fire started to die out. The cardboard had burned through pretty quickly and as it started to fade I scrambled around trying to find some more fuel to keep it going, but found only more cardboard. At least it gave me enough light to clamber around the junkyard whilst I searched for

better fuel.

An hour later and about ten more piles of cardboard, I found it. A pile of logs, big ones with the branches still on. Someone must have cut up and dumped the majority of an entire tree there. I cleared a bigger space around my bonfire, stacking up the logs at the edge of the clearing.

It took another hour to move the logs to my makeshift camp, between keeping the fire going and lugging the heavy bits of trunk. Some of it was far too heavy for me to drag.

I called out into the darkness again, but I still got no answer. I've tried this a few times now, but nothing comes back, not even my own cries. I'm starting to think that I am a long way from other people. Where could this place be? Underground? Surely this isn't under the city. You can't hide a place like this, can you?

Found this journal. It was stuffed in a box not far from the cardboard pile. I was so close to throwing it on the fire along with anything else I've found that is flammable, but hesitated, which I'm glad of. I decided that I would write in it instead. I used to keep a diary at home and I wrote in that every day, well, nearly every day, so it's nice to be able to record stuff again. My pen still works.

There appear to be pages torn out of the front of the diary, so it starts in February. But since I don't know the exact date for sure, that doesn't seem to matter.

Feeling very hungry. This is a big concern now.

Day 4

Woke up ravenously hungry. Fourth day without food or water. I'm losing weight rapidly now; thank God for that extra Christmas holiday weight.

The campfire had gone out, but there was still a big pile of logs.

Lit the fire again and then made a torch to carry with me. I needed to find food, so headed out into the junkyard, torch in hand.

The microwave isn't a microwave at all; it's just this strange, seemingly solid block of metal. Well, it appears to be metal.

Have spent most of the day clearing the area where I am camping and trying to find something edible, with no luck.

Day 5

Found something to drink! There was a stack of fizzy drink cans underneath the wreckage of an old wardrobe, about sixty cans of it. It's nasty, cheap cola, but at least it's wet and gives me some energy. I think the cans are very out of date. Even though the taste is a bit odd, it still feels good. Stopped myself on the third can. I need to make them last.

The wardrobe drawer proved useful to carry them back in.

There is so much junk here. It makes me wonder where the hell it all came from.

Now that I've got some energy, I have started to make a kind of temporary shelter. I need to have a base to work out of; this place is pitch black and if I end up stuck in the middle of nowhere, in the dark with no way to find my way back to my supplies, I'm dead.

Made a rough sack out of some old curtains I found.

Still haven't found my phone.

The fizzy drink is four years out of date, I just read the "consume by" date.

Day 6

Lots to write today. But where to start?

The day began with a stint collecting more wood and breaking bits of furniture that I have found and carrying it back. I'm taking it slowly, well aware that cans of fizzy drink are not bad for energy but without any food I'm not running on full batteries.

I found a stack of chairs, dozens of them. Bizarre what you find in this place. I used them with the curtain material to make a load of lightweight torches that I can easily carry with me. Kept one of the chairs to sit on.

The first sounds came whilst I was hauling a broken sofa back to the camp, at task that is not easy whilst holding a torch.

It scared the shit out of me. A howl, a good

distance away, though it is hard to tell in this place where nothing echoes properly. It didn't sound like any dog I have come across and I've never heard anything else howl. The sound was too deep, throatier than a dog's. It was answered by another, much further away. I can't be sure of the direction the noise is coming from.

With the sofa back at the camp I leaned it against the wall until I could clear an area. My torch was nearly dead at this point, its last flickers nearly dying as I stuffed some cardboard onto the fire.

The howling had stopped.

Panicking, not wanting to lose the fire, I scrambled around with the torch and managed to just get the fire going again. There was a lot of smoke at first, but finally the fire took up in one big whoosh.

There it was, just five yards away, teeth bared at me, growling. I know by its reaction that I was saved only by the campfire. The minute the area was flooded with light again the creature screeched, a high, piercing sound like a siren, like it had been hurt. It belted away, yelping, through the junkyard, to disappear into the darkness. It only took a couple of seconds; the creature moved at a speed I could only imagine. It must have been going forty miles an hour through the piles of junk. I hate to think what it could move like on the flat, without any obstruction.

Okay, I'll describe it as best I can, but it's not like anything I have ever seen and I only got a brief look at it, whilst having what felt like a coronary. I

panicked and nearly fell on my arse into the fire whilst trying to back away from it.

Take a large dog, such as a rottweiler, and mix it about half and half with a tiger or a panther. Give that a mouth of teeth twice as big as it should be, cover it with grey-brown spiky hair and lots of scars and you have approximately what just bared its teeth at me. I would swear that there were bits of flesh hanging off of it, or its fur is all ripped or something.

The eyes, they were big, they didn't look natural. At least to me they didn't. Maybe the thing is accustomed to being in the dark? I presume this from the way it reacted to the light.

How something like that has developed is unfathomable; there is nothing that I am aware of that is like it. It must be indigenous to this place, wherever this is. That reinforces my belief that I'm somewhere a long way from any place I know. Shit, I don't even know if I'm even on earth anymore. You read stories about people vanishing and folk tales of travel to other places, but they are just stories, aren't they?

I'm going to keep the fire burning continuously now, if I can.

I think I'm going to need a weapon.

Day 7

A car wreck has appeared about twenty feet from my camp, smashed up against the side of the wall. It's a complete write-off and there is blood all over the torn, twisted upholstery. There are also, well, bits.

Jammed into the driver's foot well, which is completely crushed, is a leg. To make it worse, the bone sticking out of the leg is perfectly flat at the end, like saw marks, like it was cut off.

Yeah, no shit, this thing arrived without making a sound, just pop and it was there when I woke up. I can't even tell what make or model the vehicle is, it's in such a mess.

Looking at the damage at the front of the vehicle, I would say it didn't crash into the wall here. It's not the right shape. How the hell a wrecked car got here, I don't know.

I noticed a smell of petrol wafting in the air, which would be good news if I could get my hands on it somehow. That is if the tank is still intact. Petrol would be very handy right now.

Managed to force the boot of the car open; it took about four hours, but was worth it. Inside was a large suitcase, very heavy and ticketed to go to Namibia, Africa, Mr. Adam Samuels.

Hauled the suitcase back to the camp, struggled but couldn't open it.

I wonder if that is Mr Samuel's leg in the foot well.

Genius.

Went back to the car and very carefully pulled off some of the damaged metal panelling. Lots of split sharp bits that break off easily to make cutting implements. A large piece of the frame came away, twisted and jagged at one end.

It didn't take much effort to wrap more pieces of the door panelling around the thing and some of the curtain material around the handle, tied together with cloth strips cut from the sofa.

Now I've got myself a nasty weapon if Dogthing comes back.

It only occurred to me afterwards that I could have cut myself badly whilst pulling at all that sharp metal. There aren't exactly an abundance of ambulances around here.

As well as the mace – I think that's what they are called – I've managed to put together two half-decent knives with the help of one of the braces between a chair leg and a large piece of glass from the wreck.

Last thing before going to sleep, I used a big piece of furniture wood to pry open the side of the car so I can access the petrol tank. I've nothing to put it in at the moment, but maybe I can work the tank itself out. Really I just wanted to make sure it wasn't leaking out anywhere. It's not. The petrol

smell must be from the engine.

Very last thing, it occurred to me that Dogthing was probably hungry and a raw leg from the knee down sitting in this vehicle might bring it here again. I think I heard movement in the distance once or twice, but whilst I've got the torches and the campfire burning, they - I'm presuming there is more than one from the answered howls that I heard - seem to be leaving me alone.

Decided I couldn't risk it and took half an hour to pry open the foot well with the big bit of wood, wrapped another piece of curtain around my hand and pulled out the leg.

Damn thing, it squeaked as it came free. I nearly threw up and probably would have done if I had anything but fizzy drink in my belly. Chucked it over the wall, just. I was so glad I didn't need a second try at it. There's not a lot I can do about the blood, without wasting fizzy drink. Most of it seems to have dried anyway.

As a last thought before I sleep again, I must venture out, soon, but I need to make sure I can survive it first.

Day 8

The suitcase, when cut open, contained some men's clothing. It's all a bit too big for me but at least I've got some clean pants on now. The trousers don't fit too well but they are ok. There are towels. All I need

now is some water! Sun tan lotion and sunglasses, you're having a laugh. A roll-on deodorant, so now I don't smell too bad. Can Dogthing smell it though? I never thought of that before I used it. More pens, Namibia travel guide, mouthwash.

Stomach is burning with indigestion from only cola cans to live on. I need to find something solid soon, otherwise I'm going to have some really bad stomach problems. I think I must have already lost two stone. Oh well, doctor said I needed to loose weight.

Preparation for travel (Inventory).

Shoulder sack - slightly better fashioned with bits of leather now that I have something to cut with.

2 knives.

Wicked, nasty, Dogthing-killing mace.

15 torches.

Bundle of curtain material to make more torches.

10 cans of fizzy drink.

Cigarette lighter – still half full.

Journal and pens.

Small chunk of sofa foam for pillow.

Small towel and deodorant.

Mouthwash. Too much to carry.

Okay, the torches last about half an hour, roughly, the longer ones three-quarters if I am lucky.

So I reckon I have maybe seven hours travel time, three and half hours each way. I'll have to judge it by the torches.

My stomach is giving me real problems now, so although I should probably leave after I've slept, I'm going to head out today.

Day 9

A breakthrough! I've discovered what might constitute food. I know that sounds odd, but I've never seen a three-foot tall mushroom before. I stood there, wasting torch time, for about ten minutes, wondering whether it was edible or not. Eventually I decided that the risk was worth it. It's a very pale white colour, which made me think of the mushrooms that you buy in the supermarket. I hope I'm right. I chopped it up and stashed it into the sack, it's not heavy stuff and there is quite a lot of it.

I'm getting too far ahead, so here we go.

Right, I've slept again, so it's pseudo-morning once more. I need to catch up on yesterday's excursion. Again, quite a bit to write. But first thing, is I'm back at the camp.

The Day 8 Expedition

Hour 1

For the first hour I walked about a quarter of a mile through the debris, marking my journey by re-arranging junk, mainly by pulling away a pile of wood or rubble and laying out a marker pointing back to the previous one, it was slow going but if I get lost in here I'll be in serious trouble, even with my supplies.

There's so much mashed-up stuff here it could be the rubbish dump for a whole town. A lot of it is either scrap yard junk or piles of broken furniture. That's good though; at least I'm not going to run out of firewood. There's no rotting filth that I can see, so this isn't landfill refuse.

Found what I can only believe is Dogthing's droppings dotted about all over the place, but no signs of Dogthing, yet.

As I travelled further away from the wall the rubbish started to thin out a bit. But there were still quite big piles of it all over the place. I spotted a damaged shopping trolley that I noted to take back with me; the wheels didn't quite work but I thought they could be fixed with a bit of force.

Hour 2

At about half a mile out, I was on the edge of the rubbish. It thinned out into only infrequent larger piles and odd scattered bits. I think I saw at least five washing machines.

It was at this point that I found the mushrooms. They were dotted around a good distance from where the ground was covered by scrap. So they seemed to favour open areas. The biggest one that I found was about three feet tall and probably the same diameter across the hat. I spent a while examining it before deciding to cook it back at the camp.

Hour 3

As I was wandering along trying to figure out what the hell all this stuff was doing here and hoping that I would see some glimmer of inhabitancy in the distance, I came across the most bizarre thing yet.

It was just sitting there, in a clearing, rubbish and junk of all kinds stacked up around it.

The first glimmer I got of it was the shape and the eyes. Or what I thought were eyes. They reflected off of the torchlight and I nearly turned to run, but it didn't move.

It was about six yards high, four wide and as long as a truck. After meeting Dogthing I was sure

that this was some gargantuan mutant rhino, or something similar. I thought that I was about to die. But then I noticed something up on top of its head and it looked like writing. I took one step closer. Stupid, I know, but I nearly fell over laughing at myself in amazement at what was sat there.

Number 12, "Not in service."

A London bus.

I was about to walk over to it and investigate when I heard the scream. Crazy. I have been on edge ever since I arrived in this place and the one moment I relaxed, something caught me ill-prepared.

I've never heard anything that made my spine tingle as much as that scream. It was stomach wrenching, long, and turned into a gargling wail seconds later. For the second time in as many minutes I nearly fled the area. But my instinct something - call it instinct if you will - compelled me to try and help. That scream was coming from something or someone in extreme distress and I knew what I was going to do, even though every part of me said it was stupid.

I ran. Not quite blindly, but barely able to see ten yards in the darkness. My torch - newly lit only a few minutes before - in one hand and my mace in the other.

The scene unfolded far too quickly for me - the fight was going on much closer than I thought. I had

barely run twenty yards and they were there. Dogthing was cowering backwards, blood streaming from a wound in its side. Looming over it - clubs in their hands - were two people.

I had hoped it would be possible and for a few brief seconds I felt relief. There were other people here. I wasn't completely alone. But that relief was short-lived as I ran towards the scene to help them.

The stench hit my senses as I got within about ten feet and then one of them span round at me. What I saw looking out of that hooded cloak was disgusting.

It may have once been human, but what was left was unrecognisable enough to not know whether it was male or female. Most of what was visible of the creature was either rotting or falling off. It began lumbering forward. Its face was half-missing and I could see its jawbone shining in the torchlight, hanging on by one or two putrid strips of muscle. The cloak opened a little as it reached back with its club and underneath I could see maggots falling out of holes in its flesh and scattering on the ground.

I've seen a lot of living dead films and I know a zombie when I see one, or at least what a zombie really looks like. Lets face it, you watch the films, but it never occurs to you that you might meet one, let alone two.

I was surprised enough that the slow, shuffling thing nearly got to me before I reacted. It tried to hit me with the broken stick that it was carrying, an improvised club, but I took a couple of steps back,

waited for it to get in range, bit back the fear and tried my new mace, ironically made to defend against the creature I now fought a common enemy with.

I lunged at it, missed and stumbled forward, nearly dropping the torch and the mace. This stuff always looks easier in the films.

Fortunately I wasn't the only one with little control over my faculties. The zombie was having a hard job turning around, so I had time to wind up and aim the second attempt.

Impact. Its head erupted into pieces, splattering the ground behind it. My arm jarred and pain shot up to my shoulder. I stumbled backwards. The creature still staggered in my direction for a moment, but then collapsed sideways, tumbling to the ground with a wet thud.

Behind me the, furious growling from Dogthing had stopped and silence came once more. I span round to look, swinging my torch in front of me, realising that I still had Dogthing and another zombie to deal with, but Dogthing was just watching me warily and nudging the remains of the other cadaver that it had torn to pieces. That was both zombies down and just a demon dog to deal with. We both stood there, just ten feet between us, breathing heavily and watching each other.

I backed away slowly, leaving it to poke around the bodies. I needed to be away from the scene. I staggered back to where the bus was and leaned against the side.

It took me a while to stop throwing my guts up and get my breath back. I remember nearly calling out in frustration, into the darkness, I'm a salesman for fuck sake! But only a half-dog thing and two smashed-up zombies were there to listen to me.

Realising that I was over my expedition outward time, I rushed some of the way back and decided to leave investigating the bus for another time.

Dogthing followed me back to camp.

Today (Day 9) I spent the most of the day shifting some of the junk around in an attempt to build some kind of wall defence around my camp.

It occurred to me as I sat back at the camp that I was wrong about Dogthing being hurt by the light. I suspect it just frightened him.

Yes, I decided to presume that Dogthing is a male. He sat just on the edge of the light of the campfire for most of the evening, licking his wound - which looked a bit nasty - and watching me warily.

Facts I've learned about Dogthing

1. Dogthing likes roasted mushroom. So do I.
2. Dogthing isn't a living dead thing. The bits hanging off of him are just very dirty bits of crusty fur. I am beginning to wonder if I have found an ally in him. I hope so; I certainly don't want him as an enemy and sleeping might be

easier with him around. Knowing there are zombies and things wandering around in here doesn't set you up for a good night.

3. He doesn't smell anywhere near as bad as I thought he would.
4. He doesn't like the campfire light.

Back to the mushrooms. They don't taste that much different to supermarket mushrooms and they come in bigger bits. I guess I will find out soon if they are edible or not, but for now it just feels good to have something solid in my stomach.

I can't believe I have been here over a week.