

Things we didn't see coming essay



The 20th century was an event anticipated by many to be the turning point of civilization. As monotonous as it turned out to be Steven Amsterdam has depicted his interpretation of the turn of events that would have unraveled post-millennium if man-kind were not to change their interdependent ways. Through numerous apocalyptic events, both naturalistic and man-made Amsterdam attempts to persuade the reader with a warning of a bleak prospect.

The episodic narrative *Things We Didn't See Coming* shadows the fragmented Journey of an unnamed protagonist as he progresses from innocence to experience. The non-designation of a name enables the reader to attribute their own interpretations and values through the adoption of an 'everyman' persona. As the disjointed stories begin to come together, it becomes apparent that the narrator (or every common man) although burdened by emotional, physical & spiritual discomfort can triumph against the odds with a pure will & effort to survive in a disappoint environment.

The new world portrayed within the text is broken, however this is only complimented by the structural mayhem in which the novel has been compiled, and the future differs greatly from what we know now... Despite the possibility that the apocalypse may bring out the worst in people, through the eyes of the main protagonist the reader is given a sense of hope that the morality and common decency of most men can survive the worst, although become distorted in order to adapt to the netherworld in which they are present.

Amsterdam exerts the opinion that despite the circumstance of an environmental dyspepsia human nature essentially stays the same. Although it may be assumed that depending on the nature of the individual prior to the apocalypse, that the devastation has enhanced their characteristics for better or for worse. After all there is good and bad in all of humanity. Margo a companion of the narrator, once a thief who even when caught 'didn't mind pocketing a few items with her other hand', now thrives in a world that has come to accept such acts as stealing, lying and betraying others all in meaner for personal maintenance.

Her negligence towards the narrator who clearly longs for mutual love however is no hindrance to him as he continues to accompany her despite being constantly abandoned and even deserted for a period of time. He seems to grow off her and become more independent to the point where e discover he has had the strength to have departed sometime after 'Forrest for the trees' where after witnessing Juliet and Margo commit a treacherous act intended to be fun before unwillingly also participating thinks to himself "I no longer want anything at all".

Otis however is an individual to look upon for inspiration, his pure heart and utter determination to protect his family in the dawn of the chaos of which he predicted cannot be labeled as anything other than selfless. Even after all the catastrophe when the world is beginning to re-construct, Otis still remains admirable s the 'shaman' as his son refers to him.

Swearing an oath that he's 'not taking anyone's money unless he can help them' and by welcoming the tourists into his own little utopia, Otis unlike

Margo shows that the common decency of man although maybe scarce, is still present in the new world. Can there be equilibrium between morality and immorality in times of hardship and desperation when the desire to survive is prominent? The narrator struggles to find right and wrong amongst the calamity which is the world, questioning his own way of life and morals after being interrogated by an infected stranger in 'Cake Walk.

Just listening to him tell me what I was going to steal felt like a deal with Satan'. At this point the narrator experiences an epiphany leading to him succumb to a life of goodness, a desire to clear his plate of any regret. Although now committing to respectable behavior, he does recognize that "even if it meant being a did what I had to do". The in-depth understanding that immoral acts were necessary in order to endure during times of duress cleared them of committing a sin due to circumstances therefore enabling them to be entitled as righteous and moral.

The now deeds associated with morality today have clearly altered in the presence of an anti-climactic environment appearing to be more lenient as to what is considered right. What is considered decent and moralistic in the future has been McCollum and distorted only to fit the distorted world that they have been exposed to. Yes some views and values have become dormant to the naked eye, but this is only due to the individuals who share these views and values feeling uncomfortable with their ability to express their inner emotions.

In 'Cake Walk it is obvious to the reader that the orator is experiencing desires for commitment when he day dreams 'Silently, I ask her to marry

me, I want it the way people used to do it' despite commitment being rare amidst the drama. It is apparent that the narrator is still clinging to past ideals, but although he remains yearning for past desirables, it seems that his character is better suited to anomie, due to his seclusion from pre-apocalyptic society. 'The theft that got me here' highlights the views of the narrator's grandparent's, those who represent the views of man-kind before what is inferred to be the YAK bug.

Their IEEE of their grandson is clear to him, and he understands he is just the disappointment they're stuck with' however this is the evidence required to prove a change in morals from the beginning of the text as they label and judge him based on current views which labeled thievery as negative.

Amsterdam symbolizes the death of the expression of the old world's outlooks, through the death of the grandparent's as they take their own lives with 'a restful cocktail' of prescription medications and makes way for the societal changes in all of morals, views and values.

The ruins of which are now recognized as society are as unpredictable as ever, in a world where nothing is certain and even the most honorable of people can be swayed from their morals nothing can be relied on. The warning within the text that Amsterdam is trying to direct to the reader is that society cannot remain reliant on things such as technology, when it may not be around forever. If an event like the apocalypse were to occur tomorrow then half the population would probably die of shock that they no longer could use the internet and all of these wonderful appliances that do just about everything would be gone.

Some thought or preparation must be put into place for the unknown future, for things we can't see coming. The narrator encounters a situation that catches him off-side when his thought to be ' absolutely bombproof rain horse bucks without warning, leaving him only with the clothes on his back. This scene in ' Dry Land' was included just to concrete that even those thought to be the most reliable of all, can shock and defer one from their belief.

The dependency on other individuals also became sour, with people shooting each other in order to maintain their own safety, but those who maintained basic morals in the times of crisis were and as they should have been, admired by the government and therefore rewarded for their dominance of decent unman nature. The authorities in charge also understood that the individuals had done what they needed to do to survive, so they set out ' a call for all individuals who hadn't been convicted of thefts or goods, or anything worth more than \$KICK'.

But it was those who attempted to remain reasonably civil who reaped the rewards through proving themselves to more (but still not entirely) reliable than the rest. The cataclysmic world explored in Things We Didn't See Coming is one of uncertainty, and much variation to what we know now, and the reader finishes the text with a ensue of hope that the goodness in humanity may have a chance to make it through where some may have thought it to disappear.

Through the eyes of the narrator the reader has been given an experience to learn from and should feel confident that if the world were to fall into a

devastating hole, some morality and common decency of most men would survive. But despite the fact that the novel may have provided insight to how this all would unravel, society as a whole must sway from their dependencies and prepare for the unknown, because you never know just what might be coming.