

Back to Basics

By Fleataxi

Chapter 1

Jack Van Buren was the grandson of a Texas Oil tycoon who grew up at the family ranch in Van Buren TX. He inherited a trust fund worth \$10 Million, and a good head for business. His dad suggested he use the trust fund to set himself up in the Real Estate business, since he knew all the right people with money who were looking for out-of-the-way properties. He owned an entire floor of a High-rise luxury condo that he shared with his live-in girlfriend Sharon, who was an ex-model and before they became lovers, she worked for him as his personal assistant. Things were getting complicated, and when a property came on the market in South Carolina, Jack decided to fly to Charleston SC and investigate it by himself. He booked a first-class round trip from Dallas-Ft. Worth International to Charleston International, and rented a Volvo sedan. By the time he reached Charleston, he'd had a change of heart, and was missing Sharon already. He got the rental, and checked into a hotel in Charleston. The next day he drove down to Beaufort SC. Due to the death of the owner, 105 acres of land came on the market for \$1 Million. 100 acres of it were considered prime waterfront real-estate, and 5 acres were in a poorer section of Beaufort County. Once he got a look at the prime real estate, he made an offer, and the next day they settled. 2 weeks later, he sold the 100 acres of waterfront property for \$10 Million. He made \$9 million in a little over a week, but all the money was tied up in his real estate company. All he had on him was a suitcase full of business clothes, a shaving kit, and his attaché case. He didn't have anything useful on him since he flew commercial.

Right after he closed the deal, things were getting hot with North Korea and China rattling sabers at the US over the Spratly Islands and Taiwan. It seems one of our exploration ships had located a huge shallow pool of high-grade crude oil that was 3 times the size of Texas, and it was right under the Spratly Islands which were located in the South China Sea, and had been contested since WWII. North Korea didn't have a claim to the islands, but decided that all that crude oil would make them a world power. The President of the US told both of them to stuff it, diplomatically speaking. China didn't take kindly to the President's blunt refusal since they had a Middle Kingdom Complex, and decided to reply with a secret weapon. Decades ago, the Soviet Union had sold them plans for an EMP bomb. It was disguised as a communications satellite, but in fact it was a 10MT thermonuclear bomb. A coded radio transmission started the de-orbiting process, and the next evening, the 10MT bomb detonated over the central US at midnight local, at an estimated altitude of 100 thousand feet. The electromagnetic pulse from the nuclear blast destroyed all unshielded electrical and electronic devices in the US, crashed the electrical grid, and destroyed the communications networks, leaving the US blind and deaf. Their follow-on strike of 500KT warheads from other satellites destroyed several major cities, including Dallas Ft. Worth.

Realizing that the Chinese had executed a First Strike, the President was forced to retaliate. He sent a coded message to a Seawolf sub off the Chinese coast, and it's full compliment of 18 TLAM-N Tomahawk Nuclear Cruise missiles destroyed every major city in China, wiping out the leadership, and destroying the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army. 2 specialized neutron warheads were targeted at their underground missile silos. Not at the missiles themselves, but the crew manning the launch platform. They didn't take into account our latest Neutron technology, and had buried the control center too shallow. As soon as the warheads detonated, they received a lethal and immediately debilitating dose of Gamma radiation, and the hard radiation also destroyed the sensitive electronics needed to fire the missiles. China's land-based missiles were taken out of action in the blink of an eye. In another part of the South China Sea, a 688-I Attack Submarine was following the one SSBN the Chinese owned. They received orders over their VLF radio to come to periscope depth and copy a message, which when decrypted, ordered the captain to immediately sink the Chinese sub, and make sure it couldn't launch it's missiles. He closed to within 10,000 yards of the Chinese sub, and launched 2 sets of 4 MK-48 ADCAP torpedoes at the now-doomed sub. The first set of 4 would have done the job, but the captain wanted to be sure. 15 minutes later, sonar reported 4 large explosions, then 4 more, and then the noise of the hull imploding as it fell below crush depth over 1,000 feet below in the South China sea.

The day before, Jack had tried to fly home, but was told that no planes were flying, then he heard on the news that Martial Law was in effect, and all major interstates were closed by orders of the President. Jack did the next best thing, and stopped at the nearest Wal-mart and hoped his credit card still worked. The store was full of panic buyers, who cleaned out what little food and water was left. Jack had other ideas. His Grandfather lived through the Great Depression, and had instilled some common sense into the young boy. He didn't remember much of what he said, but knew he needed basic survival gear to get through the next couple of weeks, so he headed to Sporting Goods and started grabbing stuff. He grabbed a pre-made Survival Kit, a tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, gas stove and 2 gallons of Coleman fuel, a good first aid kit, a military-style canteen with a belt, cover, and cup, and a Gerber tool because it looked cool, and the biggest knife they had. He spotted something that said "water purifier" and bought it. Next he headed to the Hunting clothing, and bought several pairs of woodland cammo shirts and pants, and a good warm jacket and boots. He had several pairs of underwear in his luggage so he bought some boot socks. For some reason they weren't selling firearms, and he didn't see the use for a shotgun anyway, so he skipped them. On the way out, he made some impulse buys of a case of quart water bottles, a dozen bags of Beef Jerky, a case of cans of chili with meat and beans and a bunch of packs of gum. He barely made it back to the check-out lines, and got his credit card approved and checked out when the power went out. He quickly bagged his purchases and ran to the front of the store and threw them into his Volvo. He turned on the radio, then started the car. On the seat was a map showing the property in Northeastern Beaufort County. He was about 5 miles away and had no idea where to go, so he drove there.

When he drove in the driveway, he was dismayed by the condition of the property. The only visible building was an old tarpaper shack. It was too dark to see without his headlights when

suddenly his headlights went out, and the engine died. He didn't know anything about cars, and cursed, kicked and cajoled the vehicle until he realized that unless he found a mechanic, the vehicle was stuck for good. He pulled his cell phone out of his pocket, and noticed that the display was dead. Funny he had just charged it. Then he looked at his expensive digital watch, and the display was dead. "What the hell was going on?" Jack thought. He felt around in the back, and found the survival pack he bought. He opened it, installed the batteries in the cheap flashlight using the pale moonlight, and was amazed that it actually worked. He unloaded the Volvo and moved everything into the shack, since it appeared livable. When he got inside, he could see it was a real primitive 1-room shack with a wood stove, a table, and a broken-down bed with no mattress. The frame looked strong enough, so he unrolled his sleeping pad and his sleeping bag onto it, got undressed and went to bed with the Bowie knife next to him.

The next morning he woke at first light, got dressed in his cammo clothing, and went out to explore the rest of the property. Out back were an old-fashioned outhouse, and a large patch of ground that was grown over, but had obviously been recently worked as a garden. He found a stream 50 feet away from the garden, running across his property. The back of his property was heavily wooded, and showed signs that someone had been cutting trees, since there were still several stumps. Off toward the left side was a small run down shed with a broken shovel and pick, and an old rusty axe head minus the shaft. Jack thought he was lucky to have gotten the chili, then realized if he ate it for 3 meals a day, he'd use it up in 8 days, and go through the 2 rolls of toilet paper he saw in the house. He walked back into the house and upon closer inspection, saw an old black well-used Dutch oven, a cast iron skillet, some silverware, and a primitive clay cup and plate. His main problem was he had 8 days worth of food, and no means of getting more.

He had been a realtor all his life, and had no skills that he could call upon. His world had come crashing down around him, and he wasn't too happy about where he was. He remembered his last night in Dallas, sitting out on the balcony sipping margaritas with Sharon. She was a beautiful 30-year old ex-model, with a much younger figure, and a chest by Dupont. Jack didn't care, he didn't pay for them, but some how they felt different when they were in bed. Sharon was an insatiable lover, and sometimes when he had a big meeting, she got mad when he called it quits after 2 hours. He was just about to turn 40, and if it weren't for Viagra, he'd never be able to keep up with her. Their latest spat was over sex. She thought that Jack didn't love her anymore, but he was just tired. The last couple of deals took a lot out of him, and he was drinking more as a result. Even Viagra could only do so much. He snapped out of his reverie when he saw a column of white smoke in the distance. Somehow he realized that smoke meant someone lived there, and he decided to investigate. Jack was out of shape, and by the time he made it to their yard, he was exhausted. By the time he made it to their front door, an older black man stood in his open door pointing a shotgun at him.

"That's far enough, who are you, and what do you want!"

"Hi, my name's Jack Van Buren. I'm a realtor from Dallas. I was stranded when my car went

dead. I came here to close a real estate deal that included the house down the road. I just made it into the driveway last night when my car died. I mean you no harm, and I was hoping you could help me.”

“OK, but keep your hands in plain sight. You’re not armed are you?”

“Nope, that was another thing I forgot at Wal-mart yesterday.”

“OK, come up to the porch and have a seat where we can talk.”

The black man closed his front door, while keeping Jack covered with the shotgun. He motioned for Jack to take a seat, then he sat down.

“Jack, my name’s Leroy. I can see you’re not from around here.”

“How’s that?”

“You’re white as a ghost, and this part of Beaufort is all black.”

“Leroy, I’d appreciate if you’d point that shotgun away from me.”

“In a minute Jack. You said you’re a realtor.”

“That’s right, I just closed a deal on 100 acres of prime waterfront property in Beaufort, and was on my way home when Martial law was declared, the airports shut down, and the borders closed. I had a map on the seat next to me showing this unsold parcel. Since I bought all 105 acres, and only sold the 100 acres along the waterfront, I guess I own it now.”

“Ok Jack, that explains a few things. Old Mr. Johnson’s family used to be shrimpers on the coast, and had a nice spread of land that had been in the family since the Civil war. He used to live here during Hurricane Season, since it was farther inland and safer. I hadn’t heard from him for nearly a year. I heard a rumor that he’d taken ill, and moved to a rest home. His kin probably sold the property when he died, since they were through shrimping.”

“That explains why they took my offer so quick. They were only asking for \$1 million, and I offered \$1 million for the whole shooting match.”

“So you’re stuck here among all us darkies without any usable skills - right!”

“Basically. I managed to buy some stuff at Wal-Mart, but obviously not the right things to survive for any time. Do you have any news from outside?”

“We’ve got this little portable radio, and what I’ve been hearing isn’t good. Seems the Chinese

popped an EMP bomb over the central United States to blind us, then dropped a 500KT warhead on all the major cities. Most of the East and West coast had been hit, and several major cities in the interior.”

“Do you know anything about Dallas Texas?”

“Sorry Jack, from what I heard, they took a direct hit.”

“Oh my God, No - Sharon!”

“You’re wife?”

“No, we were just living together, but I wanted to get married. We lived in a penthouse condominium. If Dallas took one on the chin, I hope she never knew what hit her.”

“The bombs started falling around 12:30 in the morning, so she was probably sleeping, and didn’t feel a thing.”

“Thank god for small favors!”

“Jack, that didn’t sound to sincere, and we’re good god-fearing Baptists around here, so mind your p’s and q’s.”

“Sorry Leroy, I’ve been through a lot in the last 24 hours.”

“I guess so. We’ve been poor so long that we don’t have much to miss. How are you fixed over there? Mr. Johnson had a pretty good garden, but it’s probably been overgrown since he’s been gone 2 years. That creek that runs through his property is a year-round creek, and there’s a fishing lake within walking distance from your place. I hope you like eating Squirrel and rabbit?”

“Why’s that Leroy?”

“The only store around here is the general store about a mile up the road, and they don’t carry steak, since we can’t afford it anyway. Most of us catch squirrels, possums, rabbits, and anything else we can to supplement our diets.”

“Leroy, I’m in kind of a fix, I don’t have any tools, or knowledge of how to plant a garden, catch squirrels or anything else.”

“Jack, you’re awfully lucky you ran into me. Some of the other folks would have just sent you packing, but I’ll do the Christian thing and help you out if you want. Do you have any money on you - the general store doesn’t take credit cards!”

“Yeah I’ve got some. Could you help me out, and I’ll pay you for your time.”

“I can’t accept payment for helping out a lost soul, but we could use another bag of rice. If you’ve got the money that is.”

“I should be able to cover that easily. Why are you carrying that old shotgun?”

“It’s been passed down through my family for generations, it’s a single-shot 12-gauge. Not too many people with any smarts will argue with the business end of a 12-gauge.”

“You’ve got a point there, I was as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs when you were pointing that thing at me.”

“Let me tell the wife we’re going into town, and I’ll be right out.”

Leroy walked out a minute later with 2 glasses of water. “Ophelia reminded me of my manners. Here you go Jack!”

Jack took the glass from the black man’s hand. It was the first time he had touched a black man.

“Don’t worry Jack, it don’t rub off!”

Jack laughed nervously and took the glass. “Thanks Leroy.”

When he finished drinking, he handed the glass back, and Leroy shouldered his shotgun.

“Why are you carrying that?”

“We’ve got a long walk ahead of us, and no telling what we might run into. There’s some White Trash a couple of miles away that cause problems from time to time.”

A mile later, they arrived at the General Store. Leroy opened the action of his shotgun, extracted the round, and set the open shotgun on the counter, as a show of good faith. The owner of the store lowered his shotgun and pointed it at the floor. “Morning Leroy. Who’s the stranger?”

“Bob, this is Jack. He got stranded by the emergency. He bought old Mr. Johnson’s place, and needs some stuff to live there until things get back to normal.”

“I reckon you’ll need to stay here for a while - Normal just went south for the winter.”

“You hear something new Bob?”

“Yeah Leroy, and it don’t look good. Black folks and White folks are rioting in the big cities, killing each other for the scraps that are left. National guard troops are too busy to be everywhere. Mr. if I were you, I’d plan on staying here until things blow over.”

“I’m going to have to, Leroy told me about the EMP strike, and that’s almost exactly when my Volvo stopped running, and my watch is dead.”

“Is it yours or a rental?”

“It’s a rental, but they might charge me for replacement value if we can’t get it back.”

“How much gas do you have in it?”

“I just filled it up before I went to the Wal-mart in town, the tank’s full of 30 gallons or so!”

“Son, if you want to, I’ll trade you the gas for \$60 worth of groceries.”

“You still taking cash?”

“OK, what do you need?”

Leroy spoke up, and rattled off a long list of staples, seeds, tools, and the kicker was when he asked Bob if he had a shotgun for sale.

“I got another old single-shot break open for sale, and I’ve got a couple of boxes of ammo for it.”

“Whoa, wait a minute - what do I want with a shotgun?”

“Son, if you’re going to live here any time, I can guarantee that white trash down the road will be coming here and causing trouble once they run out of stuff. If you don’t arm yourself, they’ll burn you out and kill you for what you have.”

“But I’m white!”

“Don’t matter to them, you’re living with us - to them that’s even worse than being black. They call people like that “Nigger Lovers” if you’ll excuse my language.”

“I thought the Klan was dead!”

“Sorry Jack, it’s just gone underground. With the upcoming disturbances, I’ll expect the Klan will see resurgence as things get scarce.”

“Well in that case, I’ll take it, and whatever ammo you can sell me.”

Bob pulled out an old Sears single shot. It was worn, but well cared for. He reached under the cupboard and removed 4 boxes of 25 rounds of #7 birdshot, and 20 5-round boxes of 00 Buckshot, and 4 5-rd boxes of 12-gauge 1oz rifled slugs. Jack looked at him like he had grown 2 heads. "What do I want all that ammo for?"

"Jack, you'll burn up part of it just learning how to shoot it accurately. Shotguns don't work like they do in the movies. The pattern opens up maybe an inch every 4-5 yards, so if they're real close, you have to aim like a rifle, and if they're farther away, like further than 25 yards, you'll have to use the slugs, which work just like a rifle."

Bob pulled a recoil pad from under the counter "You'll need this until you learn to shoot right. The shotgun kicks pretty good, and you need to really pull it into your shoulder."

Bob totaled the order and said "That comes to \$200 please."

"I don't have that much in cash - wait a minute, you take gold?"

"What you got?"

"A 1-oz Canadian Maple leaf in my money belt I just remembered about. That's worth over \$400 right now."

"I don't have \$200 in change."

"OK, you got a wheelbarrow I could buy, some more TP, and 2 large bags of beans and rice, and some Tabasco."

"I got an old wheelbarrow out back I don't use. I'll pump the tire up, and trade you all the stuff you said plus a bag of potatoes and onions for that gold coin."

One thing Jack had done that his Grandpa told him to, was always carry 5 ounces of gold coins in his money belt, just in case. He reached into his waistband, unzipped his money belt, and extracted a Canadian Maple leaf, and handed it to Bob. He looked at it carefully, and tested it with his fingernail. It seemed real enough to him, so he walked out back, got the wheelbarrow, pumped the tire up, and filled it full of the stuff they had ordered. When they were ready to go, Bob stuck his hand out, and Jack shook it, feeling like a Twilight Zone episode. They picked up the wheelbarrow and started walking back to their houses. They took turns pushing the wheelbarrow and carrying the shotgun, and finally made it back to Leroy's house. Jack unloaded a 25-pound bag of rice, and another of beans. Leroy looked at him kind of funny, then Jack said "Thanks for the help. I might make it through the winter now. Can you come over tomorrow and show me how to garden?"

"Sure neighbor, I'll be right over after sunrise."

Jack shook his hand, then picked the wheelbarrow up for the trip home. When he made it home his hands were blistered and sore. He remembered what Leroy said, and went out back and soaked his hands in the creek until they didn't hurt, put some Neosporin on them and wrapped them. Leroy showed up first thing the next morning, and instead of working in the garden, they got Jack's new home arranged, and got the food put up. Later that afternoon, they put the handles on Jack's tools, so he would be good to go tomorrow when his hands healed. When it started getting toward evening, Leroy said he had to get home for supper. Jack extended his hand to shake without thinking about the blisters. Leroy looked at his bleeding hand, and told Jack "Thanks, but I don't want to hurt your hand. See ya tomorrow." Jack made a can of chili for dinner, and went to bed.

Chapter 2

Jake woke up, and made breakfast, then Leroy showed up. "Hurry up we're burin daylight!"

"I'll be out in a second Leroy, I never got up this early before."

Leroy handed Jack a set of leather gloves and told him that he needed to wear gloves until his hands toughened up. They spent the rest of the day cleaning out the garden, picking anything that was edible, and throwing the weeds in the burn pile. Later that afternoon, Bob showed up with an ancient tractor, and said if he could fill his tank with gasoline, he'd plow and till the garden twice as big as it was, and throw in a couple of rolls of chicken wire to keep the varmints out. Jack agreed in a heartbeat, he wasn't looking forward to turning the garden by hand. When he was finished, Bob asked him if he had a kerosene lamp or anything. Jack said he'd forgotten about that, and Bob suggested trading the remaining 10 gallons of gas in his tank for a kerosene lantern and 5 gallons of kerosene that had been stabilized. He suggested waiting until winter to use it, since he'd be busy enough during the spring and summer that he'd want to get to sleep at dark. Jack thought that was a fair trade, and Bob drained the rest of his tank, and said the kerosene and the lamp would be waiting for him the next time he came to town. Bob told him that he sold that gold coin for \$450, so he owed him another \$50 worth of stuff. Jack asked Leroy if they needed anything, and he said they could always use more rice, beans, and Tabasco sauce. Jack asked Bob if he could put together \$50 worth of rice, beans, and Tabasco sauce, and they'd pick it up tomorrow. Bob said that would be a lot of rice and beans, but he had it in stock, so he better bring the wheelbarrow. They spent the rest of the day planting rows of vegetables, then fencing it in with chicken wire. Leroy said that later when things started sprouting, he should add some wire snares to the sticks holding up the fence to supplement his meat supply since the carrots and stuff attracted rabbits, squirrels and other small game. He'd show him how to use that fancy set of pliers of make a wire snare out of bailing wire. Jack said he'd never killed an animal before. "There's always a first time for everything - you'll be repeating that phrase a lot for a while around here!"

The next day, they pushed the wheelbarrow to the General Store, and Bob loaded them up with 200 pounds of rice and beans, then added 2 large bottles of Tabasco sauce. When Jack asked him what he owed, Bob said that was just about even, and thanks for the gas - he was able to plow 4 other fields with that gas, so now they'd help him later. Jack started to understand their culture. It wasn't all about dollars and cents, but common sense and friendship. They were all equal - equally poor, and if they wanted to get anything done, they had to work together since they couldn't afford to hire anyone. Leroy told Jack that 30 gallons of gas was a luxury around here, since no one had a car, but Bob had been keeping that old tractor in running shape, because he knew that one day someone would have the gas to spare. Jack almost told him that he had 4 more gold coins, but realized he needed to save them for an emergency, or if he had a chance to get home, he might need one to get his car fixed so he could drive. Then he realized that if Leroy was right, he had nothing to go home to, Dallas was either seriously damaged or

destroyed, and Sharon was probably dead. He had a safe deposit with 500 ounces of gold in an underground safety deposit that would have survived the explosion and resulting fire, but it wouldn't help him now. If phone service was ever restored, he might have access to his millions, but for now he was in the same boat as everyone around here, except he had absolutely no survival skills. They took turns pushing the wheelbarrow back home, and this time, Jack's hands didn't hurt so much, then he remembered he was wearing Leroy's gloves. When they got to Leroy's house, Jack helped him carry in 100 pounds of rice and beans. Ophelia was standing there with her hand to her mouth, seeing the huge bags of beans and rice, then the huge bottle of Tabasco. Finally she broke down and cried. "Leroy, what's going on, I've never seen this much food at one time in my life!"

That brought Jack to a full stop. He turned to Ophelia and said "Ma'am, your husband has practically saved my life, and decided to help me out of the goodness of his heart, so now I'm repaying the favor. Bob got more for my gold coin than he thought he could, and offered me the difference. I bought \$50 worth of food, and decided to split it between us, since your husband spent the last couple of days helping me start a garden."

Leroy realized he hadn't introduced his wife. "Jack, I'd like you to meet my wife Ophelia. Ophelia, this is my friend Jack."

Jack tipped his straw hat and said "Ma'am, it's a pleasure to meet you. If you'll excuse me, I need to get back home before it gets dark out."

Leroy walked up to Jack and shook his hand. "Thanks Jack!"

"How you two fixed for wood?"

"We've got enough to get by."

"I've got almost 5 acres worth, if you could figure out a way to get it here, I'll give you all the wood you need if you can help me cut and split it."

"Old Travis down the way has a mule and a trailer he might let us use if he could take some wood home too!"

"Sounds like a plan - Could you ask him for me?"

"We'll be there right after sunup."

"See you then Leroy. Ma'am, nice meeting you!"

Jack walked home feeling much better than he did earlier.

He was up at first light and got dressed, then ate breakfast. As soon as he was finished, he heard a noise coming down the road. He looked out of the old stained muslin curtains, and there was Leroy riding next to an elderly gentleman on what looked like an old buckboard wagon. They drove up, and Jack got the axe, saw, and hatchet out of the shed, and climbed aboard. Travis yelled at the mule, and she pulled the cart up the slight incline, and soon they were at the back of Jack's lot. There was a huge stand of Southern Pine, and some other hardwoods that Jack couldn't identify. Jack told Leroy he didn't know the first thing about felling trees, so Leroy said he'd show him. First of all, he took a file to the axe and sharpened the blade expertly. Next he cleared all the brush and debris away from the base of the tree. He said that once the tree started falling you needed to get out of its way. He explained the best way to fell a small tree was to chop a huge wedge in one side, then a smaller one in the other, and the tree should fall toward the bigger wedge. Leroy picked up the huge axe, and swung with all his might. It bit deeply into the wood, and with a flex of his forearm, the blade popped out a wedge of wood. He hit the tree again a little lower, and popped out another wedge. He turned around to chop the other side of the tree, and 3 swings later, he yelled "Timber" and the tree fell right where he wanted it to. They quickly de-limbed it and the 3 of them picked up 1 end and set it in the buckboard, then they slid it all the way in. He explained to Jack that Mr. Johnson had a huge stump that he used to split wood on right next to the house, and it was safer than splitting it out here, and didn't dull the wood maul. Once they had all the trees down, they could saw it to length with an old 2-man saw that Travis brought, then they could split it and stack the wood that Jack was going to keep next to his house, then stack the rest in the buckboard. It turned out to be a several day project, and at the end of the day Travis and Leroy rode his mule home, and said they'd be back tomorrow. Travis's mule was almost as big as a horse, and twice as heavy, so he knew she could handle the weight.

The next morning, they were there at sunup, and worked all day cutting wood and loading the buckboard. Finally they had enough wood, and between Bessie pulling, and Jack and Leroy pushing, they got it moving and headed toward Jack's house. Leroy guessed that they had felled 30 30-foot tall trees in two days, and now they needed to cut them to length and split them. Leroy and Jack said they would saw them, and Jack could split them, because swinging that big heavy maul was a young man's job. Jack found out what they meant a couple of hours later. His back was killing him! They knocked off early in deference to Jack's aching back, and said they'd be back tomorrow to finish it. As soon as he got inside the house Jack took 4 Advil from his emergency kit with a huge glass of water. He had a pot of rice and beans on the stove, since he had put the Coleman stove on the wood stove, and put everything including a handful of beef jerky in the cast iron Dutch oven on low all day. He ladled a serving onto a plate, added a splash of Tabasco sauce, and called it dinner. The next morning he got up and was feeling better. He stretched out, ate a bowl of oatmeal, and was ready to go when Travis and Leroy arrived. They spent the whole day cutting and splitting wood, then they stacked a little over a third against Jack's house, and loaded the rest into the buckboard. Travis shook Jack's hand and thanked him for the wood, then climbed aboard. Leroy said that the 2 of them could handle unloading the wood, and thanked Jack.

The next day, Jack started chopping the bigger branches into lengths that would fit inside his wood stove, and added them to a separate pile, then picked up the smaller branches for kindling. Finally he had the area cleaned up, and decided to use his wood stove, except he didn't have a clue. He hiked over to Leroy's and asked him. Leroy walked back with him, and showed him how to set the stove and light it, then explained that a wood stove had hot and cold spots, and that he might need to move food around while it was cooking. He asked Jack if he had any fishing gear. He looked through his pack, and smacked himself on the forehead. He could have bought some at Wal-mart. All he had was the fishing line and some hooks that Wal-mart had provided in their kit. Leroy said that would work perfectly, and they could go fishing tomorrow. He'd show him how to fish "poor boy" style. He looked around the cabin, and asked Jack if he had any lard. Jack said he didn't think so. Leroy said they had a spare quart of pig lard he'd give him. He asked Jack if he had some warmer blankets, he'd need something warmer than that sleeping bag in the winter. Jack said he had a tarp, and a Mylar sleeping bag. Leroy explained that those tar paper shacks got cold in the winter, and he might want to pick up a thick wool blanket even with the tarp. Jack asked Leroy if he had heard anything more. Leroy shook his head sadly. "Things are going from bad to worse. The country's coming apart at the seams. All my kids moved up North to get better jobs, now they're caught in the rioting. There's nothing I can do for them."

"Damn!"

"What?"

"Leroy, I'm worth over \$20 million, and if I could get to my money, I could hire a Jet Ranger helicopter and a crew of Mercenaries to go get them."

"I checked with Bob, all the telephone lines are down, none of the ATMs work, the power grid is only working in small areas that have their own generating capacity, and unless you have a ham radio, you can't talk further than across town."

"Man talk about Ironic! Last week I was sipping Margaritas on the penthouse balcony of my condominium, and two days later, I'm stuck here with no money and no skills. If it weren't for you and Ophelia, I might not have made it. If there's anything I can do for you, let me know."

"Jack, it's going to get worse. We've been hearing rumors that the White Trash that live a couple of miles away were thinking about coming over here and stealing what little we have, and stringing some of us up. It seems they blame Blacks for the economic upheaval. I can tell you it wasn't one of my kids. My oldest son's a doctor in New York. He's a Pediatric Ophthalmologist, and he's saved the sight of hundreds of kids, black and white. My other son's an Electrical Engineer who designs computer chips for a game company. My daughter didn't do so well - she's married to a Lawyer!"

They both started laughing despite the circumstances.

“Leroy, could you teach me to shoot this shotgun. If they’re gonna attack, I want to be able to help protect us.”

Leroy stooped down and picked up a piece of chalky material, and grabbed a box of 25 rounds of birdshot, and another 5 of buckshot, and another 5-round box of slugs. He opened the action of Jack’s shotgun, and had him carry it with the action open by the barrel over his shoulder. They walked out to the woods, and Leroy made a big X on a tree, then had Jack walk back 10 paces. He had Jack dry fire the shotgun a couple of times, then had him load it with a birdshot round, and told him how to pull the butt of the shotgun into the pocket of his shoulder, and lean aggressively into it. Since he was right-handed, he told Jack to put his left foot forward about a 45-degree angle off the target, then had him sight down the barrel until the center of the X was right above the barrel, then had him gently squeeze the trigger. The shotgun roared, and Jack was deafened. When the smoke cleared, the tree’s bark had been stripped off where the shot hit it. Jack’s ears were still ringing, and finally he could hear.

“Sorry Jack, but the sooner you get over the noise the better. Now stick these in your ears.”

Leroy handed Jack the butts from 2 filtered cigarettes. Not the best noise suppressor, but it would work. They fired about another half-dozen rounds at different ranges, then 2 rounds of buckshot, and 1 round of slug. Jack could hit the tree between 10 feet and 25 yards with the buckshot, and out to 50 yards with the slug. He learned how to quickly open the action, ejecting the spent round, then quickly reload and close the action.

The next day they went back to the General Store, bought 100 rounds of 00 buckshot, 20 more rounds of slugs, then he found out that Bob had some much better earplugs for sale, and bought those. They came on a leash that went around his neck. Bob went in the back and came back with a shotgun bandoleer that held 25 rounds, and said it was his for \$5.00. he picked up the kerosene lamp, a pack of spare wicks, and the 5 gallons of Kerosene Bob owed him, and 5 additional gallons. He bought a pair of leather gloves to replace the ones he borrowed from Leroy. He asked Bob if there was anything he was forgetting, and Bob couldn’t think of anything. He didn’t have any handguns or rifles for sale since the people around here couldn’t afford them. He suddenly remembered that he got a new AM/FM radio in last week. He pulled it out, and told Jack that it was on sale for \$10.00, and the 9 volt batteries were a buck each, and he had 10 of them in stock. Jack asked Leroy what size batteries his radio took. He said it was just like that one, so Jack bought it, and all 10 batteries, and gave half to Leroy. He wished they had some GMRS or FRS radios, but the nearest town that would was the town he had just evacuated from, and was now a scene of massive riots and looting, and he didn’t want to walk, and didn’t have vehicle to drive. He told Bob about his vehicle, and he said they had a mechanic in town, but the Volvo was a 2000 model, and too new for the mechanic, who said he didn’t mess with them newfangled computer thingies. Now on the other hand, if he had a 1953 Ford, he could fix it. That gave Jack an idea, and asked Bob if anyone had a 1953 Ford truck that was still running. He said that someone did, but they didn’t have any gas. He asked if it would run on Methanol, and Bob said he’d ask the mechanic. Leroy looked at Jack like he was

planning on deserting them. He said “No way, I wanted to see if I could make it back to that town and buy some stuff to help out here. I’ve got nothing back in Dallas I need or want, but if I can get my hands on a couple of things, I might be able to keep the town from going up in flames. I saw some movies where the VC were shooting a machine gun called an AK-47, and if we could get our hands on a few of those and some ammo, we’d be able to hold that redneck trash off indefinitely.”

Bob interrupted and said if they came back tomorrow, he might be able to find a truck they could borrow for a trip into the city.

They showed up first thing the next morning, and Bob had an old rust bucket of a truck, but it was running. Jack and Leroy piled in, and they drove as fast as the old truck could go. It wasn’t 50mph, but it beat walking. On the way there, Bob admitted he had some connections in the black market who could get their hands on a couple of AK-47s, 1,000 rounds of 7.62x39 ammo, and 10 30-round magazines each. They didn’t drive right into town, but a slummy neighborhood just outside of it. Bob said “Jake let me do the talking. I’m hoping you have some more gold on you - that’s who bought the gold you gave me, and they said they’d buy any more I could get for \$500 an ounce, or trade 1 coin for an AK with 10 30-round magazines. I made a deal for 2 AKs, 2,000 rounds of ammo, and 60 mags for 3 ounces of gold.”

Jack looked at Leroy, who was nodding his head. Jack reached into his money belt and extracted 3 Canadian Maple leaf 1 oz coins. Bob sat there mesmerized by the sight of all that gold, then opened the door and walked into the house. 10 minutes later, he came out and waved them in. Evidently he needed help carrying the stuff in. Leroy said “Let me go first in case this is a set-up. If it is, take the leader out first, and we’ll bust Bob later.” Jack and Leroy loaded their shotguns with buckshot rounds, and walked in with their guns at low ready. The leader spoke up. “Hey man, it’s cool, we just wanted some help carrying the stuff out. Bob’s a friend of mine, and I’m glad you’re helping the brothers. I heard that some Kluckers were planning on attacking and burning the town down. I really can’t afford to give them the weapons, so this works out for the best. If you guys need anything else, just let Bob know.”

“You guys got any radios, like an FRS/GMRS?”

Po Dog walked back into the back room, and brought 2 pairs out still in the blister pack, and a box full of blister packs of batteries for them. “Here you go, no charge!”

The gang picked up the ammo boxes, leaving Leroy and Bob to carry the AK’s out to the truck. Once they were safely out in the street, the gang leader, Po Dog, showed them how to load and operate the AK-47. It was a Chi-com full-auto AK, but he recommended firing them from the semi-auto position unless they were getting overrun. He showed them the full auto position was 1 click down, and semi-auto was 2 clicks down, exactly the opposite of the M-16. Bob thanked Po Dog, and they put everything in the truck, and drove back home quickly. Jack programmed 3 of the radios with the same channel and privacy code, and handed Bob 1 of the radios. They

had enough batteries to last several months, since they hardly used any power listening. The rule was if they saw anything to get on the radio and call it in, and the other 2 would get there as fast as they could. They stopped at Jack's house, and he took 1 of the radios, the AK with 10 mags, and a case of ammo. Bob said he'd drop off Leroy on the way home. Jack sat at the table loading magazines, then found a chest pouch in the bottom of the AK case, and a cleaning rod for cleaning the bore. He loaded the 9 magazines in the chest pouch, added the radio, then rocked the 10th magazine into the AK just as Po Dog had done. Having a premonition, Jack slept in his woodland cammo clothing that night. Later that night, he heard dogs barking, and got up and lit his flashlight so he could tie his shoes, grabbed his AK and the ammo pouch, and slid out the door as quietly as he could. Off to the west, there was a line of torches, and he knew that the Klan was on the prowl. Remembering his radio, he broke squelch 3 times then said "The Klan's coming from the west to pay a visit."

"Jack, stay out of sight. I'll call Bob and let him know. If they get too close to you, take them out, otherwise we're counting on you to observe and report."

"OK Leroy."

Jack headed for the nearest treeline and watched the slow procession. Now he could clearly see their hoods, and he wondered if K-mart was having a white sale. He guessed that they knew that Old Mr. Johnson's house was abandoned, because they were going to Leroy's place.

"Leroy, they're headed to your place, ETA 15 minutes."

"We're ready for them."

"I'm going to shadow them from the south, and when you open up, we'll have them in a crossfire."

"Just don't get out of the wood line to the south, or I might accidentally shoot you. I might have to shoot blind, my night vision isn't what it used to be."

"Ok Leroy, change of plans. You get into a good shooting position, put your AK on Full Auto. I'll get behind a tree so you can't hurt me, and when you hear me shoot, pull the trigger, and make 1 quick sweep left to right. I'll shoot anyone who survives."

"Ok Jack, we'll do it your way."

15 minutes later, the Klan was in front of Leroy's place. The leader of the local clan stood in front of the group said "Come on out Nigger, or we'll burn you out!"

Jack heard that, and knew for a fact that they weren't there to sell Girl Scout Cookies, He swept his safety all the way down to semiauto, and lined up on the head of the

Grand Klucker, and squeezed the trigger. An instant later, a white sheet turned into a bright red mist that looked eerie in the moonlight. Suddenly Leroy's AK opened up full-auto from their front. 3 seconds later, the group of 20 sheet-wearing racists was reduced to 3 men running for their lives. Jack knew he couldn't let them get away, so while they were close enough, he put a round into each of them. Once he was finished he got sick, then he called on the radio "Leroy, you OK?"

"Yeah, I'm just puking my guts out!"

"I know - me too. We've got to do something with these bodies, or there's gonna be hell to pay!"

"Already working on it. I called Bob, who said he'd get some people together that he could trust to shovel and shut up."

Jack could finally stand, and knew he had to check to make sure they were all dead. Anyone who wasn't 100% dead got a round to the head. Finally Bob showed up with Travis and his son. They knew what the score was, and quickly and quietly dug 20 graves across the street and buried the bodies then covered them with lime and filled in the holes. They threw debris over the freshly dug graves to hide the evidence. Hopefully the Sheriff was too busy dealing with rioting and looting to worry about 20 dead Kluckers.

When they finished, Bob said "For a rich city kid, you're a pretty good shot!"

"I grew up on a ranch, and we shot coyotes all spring and summer since they would go after the calves. I never imagined I'd have to shoot another human being."

"Jack, just remember it was them or us. You heard them threaten to burn our house down with us in it. They would have done it too. If we would have shown ourselves, I'd be whipped, tortured, and possibly hung, and Ophelia would probably get raped."

"That's sick - they'd rape a 60-year old woman?"

"It's happened before. Just ask any of the old-timers around here what it is like 40 or 50 years ago."

Suddenly Jack didn't feel so bad about shooting the men.

Chapter 3

The next morning, they all swept the grounds, policing up brass and hiding blood spatters. Bob took the AK's over to his place where he could hide them. Thinking they might have to take a paraffin test if worse came to worse, they grabbed a bag of Ammonium Nitrate fertilizer, and started spreading it on the front area, and made sure they got it all over themselves. Leroy then watered it and scattered grass seed and watered some more. Half an hour after "Operation Harmless" a Sheriff's cruiser pulled up. Jack and Leroy were sitting on the porch when a Deputy came walking up. "Evenin Leroy, someone said they heard shots around here last night, you know anything about it?"

"No sir officer, me and Ophelia were asleep in our bed all night."

"Excuse me sir, but have we met - you're not from around here are you?"

Jack got up slowly and withdrew his wallet from his hip pocket with 2 fingers, and flipped it open to his driver's license and handed it to the deputy. "Jack Van Buren - Says here you're from Dallas, aren't you a long way from home?"

"Yes Officer, I just closed a deal when I sold a huge piece of property in Beaufort to Governor Sanford."

"You mean that beautiful piece of beachfront property they were saying was sold for \$10 Million? You're THAT Jack Van Buren?"

"Yes officer, and you could really do me and the Governor a big favor. I found a potential discrepancy in the title that he needs to know about ASAP, but I have no way of getting hold of Mark. Do you think the Sheriff could help me get in touch with the Governor?"

"I could drive you back to the Station, I'm sure Sheriff Tanner could help you since he knows the Governor personally."

"Thanks Deputy - I'd appreciate that. Can I have a moment alone with Leroy?"

"Sure, I'll see you out at the cruiser."

"Leroy, don't sweat it. The Sheriff's politically connected, and I just sold the Governor a \$10 million dollar property. The last thing they need is a potential scandal. I've got a plan to make this all go away. How would you like it if I were your neighbor permanently?"

"I don't understand, what about Dallas?"

“If Sharon’s dead, there’s nothing for me to go back to. I can get some of my money back, then I’m back in business. I still know people. On the other hand, I could retire here and play checkers with you all day long!”

“Jack, that’s a Racist stereotype if I ever heard one - but still funny! I’d appreciate if you could make this go away. Also I’d like to have you for a neighbor, you’re not so bad for a Honky City Slicker.”

“Ok, Leroy, if all goes well, I’ll see you this evening. If not I’ll save a spot for you in my cell!”

“That’s not funny - now get going!”

Jack walked out to the cruiser. The deputy held the front door open. Jack knew that there was a big difference between riding up front and riding in back of a cruiser. Riding in back meant you were a suspect. Riding up front meant you were a trusted citizen. The deputy hit his lights and siren, and 15 minutes later drove up to the Sheriff’s office. Jack got out, and the Deputy said he had to get back to work. Jack thanked him for the lift, and walked into the Sheriff’s office. He walked up to the desk sergeant and asked for Sheriff Turner.

“Sheriff Tanner’s busy.”

“Sergeant, I need to get hold of Governor Mark Sanford.”

“And why is that?”

“I sold him that \$10 Million property, and just yesterday I found a potential problem with the title. I know they wanted to develop the property, and until this problem’s resolved the banks won’t touch it. I’ve got no other means of getting hold of Governor Sanford, and the Deputy told me that Sheriff Tanner is personal friends with the Governor. If I could see him, he might be able to put me in touch with the Governor quickly so we can fix this before it becomes a problem.”

Right as he finished, the Sergeant pressed a button on his intercom.

“Sheriff Tanner, a Mister Jack Van Buren to see you, says it’s urgent, and involves Governor Sanford. Yes sir, I’ll send him right in!”

Mr. Van Buren, the Sheriff can see you - second door on the right.”

“Thank you Sergeant.”

Jack walked down the hall, and knocked on the Sheriff’s door. “Come in!”

“Sheriff Tanner, Jack Van Buren, I’m the realtor that sold him that property, and I have a problem you can help me with.”

“What might that be Mr. Van Buren.”

“Ok, I’m not going to lie to you, there’s nothing wrong with the property, but I was a witness to a major crime, and I’m stranded here without a way to get home without any money. I’ve got over \$10 million in the bank if you could find an open B of A that is communicating with their home office, I can kill 2 problems with 1 stop.”

“Ok, first things first, what were you a witness to?”

“There was a shooting last night out on Mockingbird lane. I was there.”

“Someone reported gunfire, now 20 men from Ten pins lane are missing.”

“They’re not missing Sheriff. They attacked my friends and me, and threatened to commit arson. They’re buried across the street.”

“What the F#@!\$! You killed 20 men in cold blood.”

“Not exactly Sheriff. The way I see it and my lawyer would agree, they were guilty of conspiracy to commit murder, arson, robbery, rape, several hate crimes, etc. Now unless the county has some very deep pockets and wants a major scandal right when the Governor is closing on a major development not 20 miles away, I would consider your options carefully. I never confessed to anything, and if they exhume the bodies they’ll find they were wearing KKK robes and carrying torches. That in itself could start race riots in Charleston. On the other hand, if the bodies were never discovered, no one would know what happened, and the whole event would die from lack of attention. It’s your call Sheriff. Oh and as far as the other thing is concerned, if I can get hold of my bank and withdraw let’s say \$5 Million, I’ll retire in that little town, and fade into the woodwork. I met some very good people there. Until I was stuck in South Carolina, I never knew any black people, and the first black man I met in South Carolina was a good decent Christian man. All I want to do is go back there, and help them out, since they helped me. You have my word I’ll never mention this again, because if I do, I might be prosecuted. Do we have an agreement?”

The Sheriff knew he was neatly trapped. On the one hand, he had a confessed murderer in front of him, but as Jack said, he never confessed to anything, and with his kind of money, he could hire a terrific attorney and wind up bankrupting the county. If what he said was true, the murders were probably justified, and he had been hearing rumors of Klan activity in that area. Maybe it’s just as well. Most of the people that were killed in that attack were trailer trash, and no one would really miss them. Besides, this guy claimed to know the Governor, and he definitely had a set of brass ones. He knew that the B of A that serviced the city of Beaufort

was in communication with their home office because of all the rich people that lived there and needed their money. He called a deputy and told him to drive Mr. Van Buren to the Main Bank of America office in Beaufort, wait for him, and drive him wherever he wanted to go after that. He was to treat Mr. Van Buren as a VIP.

The deputy nodded, and Jack got up. "Thank you Sheriff."

20 minutes later, Jack was in the President of Bank of America's office. They had his account information, and when Jack explained he wanted to buy \$5 Million in gold and have it delivered, he thought Jack was nuts. Jack explained that he wasn't nuts, he wanted the gold, and he wanted it now. The President knew a gold dealer in town, but knew he didn't keep \$5 million lying around, and told Jack so. Jack asked him how much he would have on him, and he said he'd call and ask. 5 minutes later the President said that he had been stocking up in anticipation of an emergency, and he had \$5 million in gold, and \$5 Million in 1 ounce Silver coins, and all legal tender. Jack asked if he could talk to him, and the president handed him the phone. Jack asked if there was a truck dealer in town with diesel trucks for sale. The president told him that his brother owned a Dodge dealership, and he had a Dodge Cummins Turbo Diesel crew cab Laramie 4x4 quad cab in stock for \$45,000 cash. Jack asked if he could call up his brother, wire transfer the funds, and have them prep the vehicle. He said he'd take care of it. Jack asked the precious metals dealer how much all that gold and silver weighed. Jack almost fainted when he said it weighed almost a ton. He asked the President if he could store the metal in his bank. He said it weighed almost a ton, and he couldn't store all that metal anywhere else. He admitted the bank had a special vault for precious metal storage for a couple of other wealthy clients who didn't trust FRN's. He said it would cost \$5,000 per year to store that much metal including all-loss insurance. Jack asked the dealer to deliver all but 200 Canadian Maple leafs, and 200 Silver dollars to the B of A, and ask for the Bank President to sign for the order, and he'd handle the transfer of funds. Jack put the president back on the phone, and he confirmed the details. Jack asked how long it would take for the truck to be ready, and the President said that by the time he got there, everything would be finished. He handed Jack his brother's card, and said that he'd call him now and get everything taken care of. Jack shook his hand, and walked out of the bank a free man, literally. The deputy drove him to the dealership, and once Jack had the brand new Dodge truck, he told the Deputy he could go home, but first he asked him if there was anyplace in town he could buy a gun, because this big shiny new truck might be a target. The deputy hemmed and hawed, then mentioned that he had a spare Witness Protection shotgun for sale, if he had 2 ounces of gold on him. Jack said he'd have plenty in about 5 minutes if he could follow him to the metals dealer in town. They drove to the metals dealership, and the sight of the cruiser either made the dealer more nervous or feeling better. When he saw the familiar deputy getting out of his cruiser, he knew things were OK, and he opened his door via remote control. The dealer had the order all ready to go, and said he'd ship the balance to the bank first thing tomorrow via armored car, and handed Jack a small box with 200 Maple Leafs and 200 pre-1936 Liberty Silver dollars. Jack opened the box, and handed the deputy 2 Maple Leafs, and he asked Jack to follow him home. 5 minutes after he pulled up to his house, the deputy came back out with a Remington 870 Stainless Witness Protection

shotgun with a pistol grip and a 14" barrel. He handed Jack 1 25-round box of Federal Tactical 00 Buck and said "If you need anything else, just ask for me at work."

"Thanks Deputy Wilson." Jack shook his hand and climbed back into the truck. He was familiar with the Remington 870 since he used to use one at the ranch as a kid. He emptied the magazine, cycled the action, then reloaded the chamber and put 3 rounds in the magazine, which was all it would hold, then he engaged the safety. All he needed to do to fire the shotgun now was to press the jumbo safety button and pull the trigger. He dreaded firing it in an enclosed space, but knew that if anyone wanted his truck, this was the best way to convince them that they'd be better off in a Hyundai.

On his way back home, he stopped at a hardware store and bought some ½" wide straps of soft steel, a short length of garden hose, a cordless drill, a riveting kit, and a tool kit to remove the seat. He needed to fashion an under-seat bracket for the shotgun. He came to a full stop - he didn't have electricity. He walked over to the next aisle and bought a small contractor-type 2,000 watt gas generator on a wheeled cart, a 5-gallon gas can, a 50-foot extension cable, and a 6-way surge suppressor. He could live in his old house for a while, but he wanted to see if he could talk Leroy into getting a couple of mobile homes. He bought the Cummins because if things ever got back to normal, he wanted to buy a 5th wheel trailer, and install a 5th wheel hitch, and see the country. Jack realized he had enough money to live the rest of his life in comfort, and he was too old to be chasing money he might not have anyway. He was thankful that he could get access to his \$20 million, and tomorrow he'd have \$10 Million in gold and silver in the bank. He'd have to install a safe in the new house to store more metal at home just in case. He had another idea that was even better, while they were building the double-wide, they could build a full basement, and he's sink the safe into the basement.

He stopped at a gas station, topped off the diesel tanks, filled the gas can, and asked the owner where in town he could get a 500 gallon above ground tank full of diesel. He was hemming and hawing until Jack paid the bill for his fuel using silver coins. They were still in their paper cases, which showed what they were worth, and the owner traded him \$50 worth of silver coins for \$50 worth of gas. He said he had an old tank that he'd let him have for \$100 but it would cost him \$1,000 for the fuel, and \$100 to deliver and set it up. Jack handed him 3 gold Canadian Maple leafs and said that would cover it. He asked Jack if he wanted the diesel treated with Pri-D for storage. Jack asked what that was. He explained that unless the diesel was treated, it would start to go bad in 90 days. He said that since Jack had overpaid him, he'd make sure he shipped treated diesel. When he asked where he wanted the tank delivered, his eyes got big, and almost said something, but decided that Jack would take his business somewhere else if he said it, so he kept his peace.

Leroy was confused by the brand-new truck rumbling down their street until Jack climbed out. "Leroy, our problems are solved. The Sheriff realized that prosecuting us would create more problems than it solved, and I even got access to my money. I need to talk to Ophelia and yourself if you've got a minute."

“Jack, we’ve got problems. The white trash were raising Cain this afternoon, claiming they were going to burn us all down.”

“I think I can solve that problem real quick.” Jack jogged back to his truck, and sure enough there was a 5-watt cell phone installed, he dialed the number on Sheriff Tanner’s card.

“Sheriff Tanner.”

“Sheriff, this is Jack Van Buren, I need your help to stop another attack - Leroy said that he’d heard the trailer trash threatening to burn the entire town down. Thanks, I appreciate that. Talk to you later.”

“The sheriff said he’d send a deputy to talk to them. He’s got the perfect deputy for the job. He’s an ex-Marine Drill Instructor, and could scare the crap out of anyone.”

“I know which Deputy he’s talking about, I wouldn’t want to mess with him.”

They sat down at the table, and Jack told them what he wanted to say.

“Leroy, Ophelia. I’m a millionaire who’s had a change of heart thanks to you. Instead of re-joining the rat race, I wanted to settle down here and live a much more quiet life. I was going to buy a double wide trailer and have it installed on my property, and I wanted to give you one too since you’ve been so helpful.”

“Jack, I’d love it, but I don’t think we could stand living in such a fancy house. If you’d rather, we could use some modern appliances and a supply of propane for the stove so we don’t have to chop and haul wood. We’re both getting too old for that.”

“Ok, Leroy, I can check into getting new appliances and a 500 gallon propane tank for you. What do you think Travis and Bob would like.”

“Probably something similar, since they both have fairly well-built houses.”

“Ok, I’ll get 4 propane tanks delivered, and get the 3 of you some propane appliances. Would you want running hot and cold water?”

“What for, we’ve used the old tub ever since we were married. Wouldn’t feel right with running hot water like them rich folk. Besides, there’s no indoor plumbing in the house.”

“Leroy, if you take the wood stove out, how you gonna heat the house in the winter?”

Leroy sat and scratched his head for a few minutes. “That’s a real puzzler Jack. What do you suggest - We can’t have a furnace because we don’t have electricity.”

“I wonder if anyone makes a dual-fuel stove, you know, one that burns wood or propane. That way if you ran out of propane, you could still use wood.”

Leroy thought about that, and remembered an article in Mother Earth News his son had shown him a couple of years ago. He wanted to buy them a propane conversion for their old cast iron stove, and even located a local dealer who could install it for \$300. Leroy remembered the guy's name. Jack was pretty good with names and remembered his name, and went out into his truck, picked up the phone book he had gotten in town, and made a phone call. The dealer said he had the parts in stock, and would do 3 installs for \$350 each, and he had 4 500-gallon propane tanks in stock. Jack asked Leroy what his address was, and the dealer said he'd be over tomorrow to install it.

That taken care of, Jack called a Mobile Home dealer, and asked if he had any trailers in stock that he could deliver. He said he was fresh out, and couldn't get any more from the factory. Jack said OK, and called the RV dealer. He had a huge self-contained 5th wheel that had been sitting on the lot. Jack asked him if he could add some solar panels, a battery and an inverter to it. The dealer said that it already had a huge battery bank and a 5KW inverter. He could sell him a large solar panel and a tracking mount for \$2,000 including installation and that controller. Jack asked if it could be connected to a remote propane tank and a septic system, then Jack smacked his head - he needed a water supply. If he could pump the water from the creek into a 500 gallon cistern, then pressurize it as needed, it would work. He told the dealer what he wanted to do, and he said he had most of what he needed, and knew a sheet metal worker that could fabricate up a penstock with plastic pipes to collect the creek water. He had tons of 12vdc pumps, and could hook several up to a battery bank and a smaller solar panel. Instead of a 500 gallon cistern, he'd get a 1,000 gallon cistern because it was cheaper to store water than electricity. Jack asked if he could install a 5th wheel hitch in his truck, and he said they had several in stock, and could take care of all of it at once. Jack asked him the million-dollar question “What's all this gonna cost?”

The dealer paused for a moment, and Jack could hear a calculator running in the background. Finally he said “\$60 thousand give or take a few.”

“Would you take a cashier's check from B of A in Beaufort?”

“Sure, that's where I bank. If you come over tomorrow, we can get you set up.”

“Do you know anyone who could install a septic system for me quick?”

The dealer said he knew a plumbing company that owned a backhoe and did septic systems all the time. Jack told him he'd have to wait for the septic system before he could pick up the 5th wheel, since the opening to the septic field would have to be right under it. Jack smacked his forehead, and remembered he wanted a basement for storage. He asked the dealer for the plumber's number, and said he'd take care of it, and he'd be over there to pick everything up in

a couple of days, as soon as they were done with the septic system. The dealer gave Jack the number, and he called the plumbing company. They had everything in stock, and could install it tomorrow. Jack knew tomorrow would be a busy day. He walked back into the house, and told Leroy that he needed to stay somewhere a couple of days. Leroy said they had an extra bedroom, and he could stay with them. Jack shook Leroy's hand and thanked him. Leroy showed Jack where the spare bedroom was, and then Ophelia said Dinner was ready. Leroy helped his wife to her chair, not because she needed it, but because he was a gentleman. Jack waited until Leroy was seated to take his seat. In front of them was a delicious-smelling pot of rice, beans, and what Jack would call "Mystery Meat" or "catch of the day". Leroy bowed his head and spoke a blessing over the food, and Jack bowed his head to be polite. Until now, Jack was convinced that everything he had was due to his hard work. Leroy's grace made him realize that Providence might have a hand in things - what if he hadn't chose to stay here for the emergency, and what if Leroy wasn't a kindly Christian man, and had spared his life instead of shooting him out of hand. Jack realized what he had been calling Luck might be attributed to something higher than himself. He wasn't ready to become one of those "Bible Thumping Fundamentalist Christians" that he heard about, but he was starting to wonder what else he had wrong. When Grace was through, Jack didn't say Amen, and Leroy didn't comment. Ophelia passed him the first bowl of stew since he was a guest, and he waited until everyone was served before digging in. The stew was excellent, and obviously Ophelia was an excellent cook, because he didn't have a clue what kind of animal was in the stew, but it sure tasted good. After dinner, Jack helped them clear the table, and offered to help with the dishes. By the time they were finished with the dishes it was full dark, and Leroy said goodnight to Jack, and they went to bed.

The next morning, Ophelia had warm cornbread and coffee ready when he got up. He thanked her for her hospitality, and minutes later, the propane guy showed up. He walked inside their house, and was marveling at the condition of their antique wood stove. He suggested a piezo-electric ignition for the stove/oven with a safety interface, so the gas wouldn't keep coming out for more than 3 seconds after they tried to light it, and it failed to light. He cautioned Ophelia that they had to leave the firebox door open when they lit the propane for safety's sake, and to leave the vents wide open. It took him an hour to install the conversion kit, and another half hour to off-load the propane tank. He only loaded it with 50 gallons for safety, and he'd be back in a few days to top it off with the propane delivery truck. He told Jack it would cost \$400 per stove for a conversion and a 500 gallon tank, plus \$1.50 per gallon for the propane. He gave them the first 50 gallons, because he needed to have propane in the tank for testing purposes, and to insure it was safely installed. Jack asked him if he'd accept payment in Gold at a rate of \$500 an ounce. The propane dealer's eyes glittered, if he gave him gold for the job, he wouldn't have to pay taxes on any of it. He told Jack the 4th tank at his house was gratis if he bought 500 gallons of propane to fill it. He whipped out his calculator, and said that the bill came to \$4200, or 8.4 ounces of gold. Jack handed him 9 1-ounce Canadian Maple Leafs, and said to call it even. Jack knew how to motivate people, and this dealer was motivated by love of money. Instead of taking a week to get the conversions done and the tanks filled, he had it done in 3-4 days.

Next the plumber crew showed up, and Jack asked them how much they'd charge to demolish the shack with their tractor first. He wanted them to help him remove the wood stove and pipes, then he'd remove his personal belongings, and they could level it, and keep any usable materials. The boss said that they could demolish it for \$100 as long as it didn't take over an hour. Jack told them to add it to his bill, and took all his personal belongings out and put them in his truck. They disconnected the stove from the stove pipe, and hauled it out the front door, then knocked the house down in 5 minutes. Jack asked if they could dig another hole while they were at it. He wanted a storm shelter next to where the 5th wheel was going. The owner asked how big he wanted it, and Jack said 20 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 10 feet deep. He told Jack that clearing 2,000 cubic feet with a tractor would take all day, but if he could use dynamite, it would take 2 hours. Jack told him to blast away, there was nothing on the property that he could hurt. Instead of blasting 1 hole for the septic tank, he blasted 2, dug trenches for the piping, and installed a locking connection so Jack could connect the 5th wheel to the septic system with the included flexible hose. He filled the perk field with large gravel, and stuffed a perforated pipe in the middle of it, then buried everything including the tank. He asked Jack how he was going to build the storm shelter. Jack said he didn't know, but figured his neighbor Leroy did. The plumber suggested they hire a couple of strong backs, and an experienced mason, and build it out of Concrete blocks reinforced with concrete and rebar, and a reinforced concrete floor. He handed Jack the card of a good equipment rental company, and told him where to buy the concrete mix. When they finished Jack called the dealership and said the septic field was in. He told Jack that he located the sheet metal worker, who said he had a pre-built piece that he could use, and told Jack where the guy was located. Jack picked up the penstock that had a series of screens and filters to keep debris out of the pump. The design was ingeniously self-cleaning, since the screens were set at an angle so the water flowing over it would keep the screens clean. Inside the penstock was a removable carrier for a 3" thick aquarium fiberglass media filter. With the filters in place, no debris could make it into the pump or the tank, and he gave him 3 replacement filters just in case. Next he drove over to the RV dealer and looked at the 5th wheel he wanted to sell him. The reason it was still sitting on the lot was it was huge and unwieldy, but it would be perfect for what Jack wanted. He doubted if he would ever move it. When he told the dealer that - he told Jack they had a purpose-built vehicle for delivering and setting up park models, and they wouldn't charge him delivery and installation. This way he could bring all the other stuff home with him, and be in his own home tonight. Jack drove home the poly tank, which barely fit in the truck along with all the parts necessary to install it. The installation truck had a small hydraulic crane to help with installation, and the owner said they'd help him set the tank up too. The dealer was willing to work with Jack, because he bought their lot queen for cash. The delivery truck followed Jack home, and by that evening, Jack had a livable house. The installers put it up on jack stands, and leveled the trailer, then bolted the feet to the base of the tank, and used the crane to set it on its feet. Jack connected the pumps like the dealer told him, connected them to the battery bank, and the tank started filling. He ran some schedule 40 PVC from the tank to the trailer, and installed a booster pump close to the trailer, and connected his water hose to the hose connection he attached to the end of the pipe with a 1-way gate valve. The next day, the propane dealer hooked Jack's trailer up to the 500 gallon propane tank and filled them up. With

the pop-outs extended Jack had a small but very nice house, with a large bathroom, a large bedroom with a king-size bed, a good sized kitchen, and a nice living room. Everything that could be 12vdc was, and the TV and microwave ran off the inverter, which left room for some other appliances like a stereo and a computer. He'd have to wait for the infrastructure to rebuild itself for at least another 6 months before they would have reliable internet or TV service.

Chapter 4

Jack was busy the next couple of days, first the fuel distributor showed up with the 500-gallon above ground tank, then later that afternoon, a fuel delivery truck showed up, and filled it full of diesel. He handed Jack an invoice stamped "Paid in full" and drove off. Jack drove to Leroy's house, and asked him if he knew anyone who knew how to build a basement using concrete and rebar reinforced cement blocks. Leroy laughed and said that was how he put 3 kids through school and college. He was a Mason, and could supervise, but he was way too old to be lifting that many CMU bricks. Jack asked him if he could line up some strong backs to build a 10 x 20x 8 foot storm shelter. Leroy shook his head. "Jack, what you're building would stand up to a tornado or a bomb - why not just call it a bomb shelter instead of trying to kid everyone."

"When's the last time you guys had a major hurricane out here?"

"Most of them don't come this far North with any energy. Best I can reckon was 20-30 years ago we had a few doozies, but they caused more flooding than anything else, and the last place you want to be during flooding is underground."

"Ok Leroy just humor me, I'm really trying to build a defensive shelter in case the Klan or someone else comes back."

"Now you're talking sense, which also explains why you're making it so big."

"Ok, can you figure out how much block, concrete, and rebar we'd need? I wanted a blast-resistant door, and 2 feet of dirt on top. What would you make the roof out of?"

"I'd do a cast-in place reinforced concrete roof. Since it's only spanning 10 feet, the rebar and some lightweight girders should hold it together."

"Ok, how about I make you the foreman, and pay you in gold or silver for the work. You can hire anyone you want to, but I need it done quick, and I need it strong. We're betting our lives on how well built this shelter is. I've got a bad feeling the Klan will be back, with superior firepower this time."

"I know, the rumor mill is full of rumors of a Klan Militia with some serious firepower. They might be taking advantage of the unrest to clean out "white enclaves" of niggers, mixed-race people, and "Nigger Lovers" so if you're here when they get here, you're a target too."

"Maybe we should get some more AK-47's?"

"I'll talk to Bob."

"I've got time, how about I drive over to the general store and talk to him, and maybe pick up

some stuff.”

Leroy didn't say anything, but his body language said “Whatever” so Jack drove over to Bob's general store. He was met at the door by a 30-year old black woman. “Evening Ma'am, is Bob here? I'm a friend of his, Jack Van Buren.”

“I don't recall him saying he had any white friends.”

“Jack, is that you - Tanya where's your manners, let the gentleman in.”

“Yes Dad.”

Jack walked in the door, and shook Ben's hand, then Ben said “I see you've met my Daughter Tanya.”

“Ma'am, nice meeting you. If you'll excuse us, I need to talk to your dad for a minute.”

Tanya stomped out of the store into their house.

“You'll have to excuse her, she just divorced her husband, He's in the Penitentiary for Rape and Murder, and they sentenced him to life without parole. She's got a 4-month old son, and it's rough being a single parent, so when the stuff started happening, I told her to move back in with me. I could use the help anyway. So what brings you here?”

“I was hoping your brothers in the Black Market could come up with a couple more AK-47's. Leroy's heard some rumors of a Klan Militia with military weapons that's fixing to clean up all the “white enclaves” as they call them, and that means they're going to burn us out and kill us. I'd love to get my hands on some heavy weapons, but I wouldn't know how to use them.”

“That reminds me, I'm still storing the 2 AK-47's you used last time. I'm assuming the coast is clear, or you wouldn't be asking for more. Come on in the house and help me carry it out, those ammo cases weigh a ton!”

Jack followed Bob into his house, and Tanya was playing with her son. “Excuse me Tanya, I'm sorry if I was rude to you. Nice boy you have there.”

“I pray to God that he doesn't take after his Daddy.”

“Between you and your Dad, I'm sure you'll raise him right.”

Bob and Tanya said “Amen Brother” and Jack laughed his socks off.

“Tanya, could you help us carry something up from the basement?”

When they got down to the basement, Bob handed Jack an AK-47. Even with her limited gun knowledge she recognized the distinctive shape from TV. “What do you want with those Machine Guns. They’re just for killing!”

Bob said in a very stern voice “Tanya, Jack helped Leroy stop the Klan from burning down Leroy’s house with Leroy and Ophelia inside. If they didn’t have these Machine Guns, as you call them, Leroy and Ophelia would be dead, and a bunch of us with them.”

“Sorry Jack, it’s just that I moved up north after I got married, and in the inner city, the gang bangers use them to kill each other.”

“Where do you think I got these two from - the Girl Scouts?”

“Dad, I told you not to deal with Po Dog, he can’t be trusted.”

“We didn’t have a lot of choice in the matter, the Klan was fixing to burn down our houses, and a couple of single-shot .22 rifles and single-shot shotguns weren’t going to be much good against 20 armed men with torches.”

“Ok, let’s get this stuff into Jack’s truck before Tyrone sees it.”

With Tanya’s help, they got the 2 AK’s and 2 cases of ammo into the bed of Jack’s truck. Jack thanked Bob, and asked him if he could use anything since he was going into town. He asked Jack if he could make a shopping trip, if it were safe. Jack said he’d try, and Bob came back 2 minutes later with a list of staples that would fill the back of his pickup. Bob was going to hand him some money. Jack was in a quandary, if he used Gold and Silver to buy stuff in Beaufort, he might attract the wrong kind of attention. Then he remembered that the bank was open, and decided to take a small withdrawal of FRN’s and go shopping while he could. He took Bob’s money, and gave him a receipt for it, then drove home to drop off 1 AK and a case of ammo at Leroy’s place, and 1 at his place. Then he drove to town, stopped at the bank, and asked the teller if he could make a cash withdrawal, and asked if there were any limits. She started saying something when the Bank President walked up behind her. “Gina, Mr. Van Buren has a substantial deposit at this bank, and if he wants cash, give it to him.”

“Thanks Steve, I’ll be back later this afternoon to withdraw some metal, since I’ve got a secure place to store it. I’ll still leave the bulk of the metal with your bank, I just want some more handy in case the worst isn’t over. Do you have a Costco or something in town?”

“There’s a Sam’s right down the street, if you give them this, they’ll let you buy whatever you want, I’d appreciate if you could return it to me.”

Jack looked at the card, and saw that it was a Corporate card for B of A, and thanked Steve. He jumped in his truck with the card and the list, and a wad of cash, and drove to Sam’s. He loaded

up several flatbed carts with staples and canned goods, then drove back to the bank. He gave Steve back his card, and withdrew a half-million in gold and silver. That was just about a box each, so Steve gave him the whole box. The boxes weighed a little over 60 pounds, so Steve got a guard with a dolly to help him load it into the truck. Jack stopped at the gas station on the way home, and filled his tanks full of diesel. Since he had the trailer in place, he asked the owner if he knew of someone who could sell and install an auxiliary 50 gallon diesel tank in his truck. The Station owner said the dealership could install one for a couple of hundred bucks, and he could fill it for him. Between his 2 internal tanks, and the 50 gallon auxiliary tank, he'd have over 100 gallons of diesel on tap, and only use up a foot of his 8-foot bed. He drove to Bob's and unloaded everything on Bob's list, and gave him his change. It took him the rest of the day to unload his truck, since he didn't have the storage/shelter built yet, he stored it in his house. The next day, he drove back to Beaufort, and the dealer was more than happy to install a 50-gallon auxiliary tank in his truck. He drove over to the gas station and filled it up. The truck barely noticed the extra weight, and if anything handled better with the extra weight in the bed. When he got home, Leroy and a bunch of younger black men were busy building his shelter. A huge cement mixer was pouring cement into a concrete pump, which was pumping concrete into the voids in the concrete blocks. The walls looked just like the concrete block retaining walls Jack remembered, so he left Leroy to his work. He called Deputy Wilson, and asked where he could get 2 pistols, either 9mm or 45acp, and 1,000 rounds of ammo for them, and 3-4 mags each. Deputy Wilson had run Jack Van Buren through the NCIC computer, and knew he was legit, so he told him to go to a certain gun shop in Beaufort, and the shopkeeper could help him. Jack thanked him, and hung up.

The next morning, he drove into Beaufort and found the dealer. He was wearing a t-shirt with the name of his company and his name embroidered over the pockets, and Jack noticed that it said his name was John, so Jack introduced himself. He had a whole case full of guns, and Jack told him he wanted 2 9mm or 45acp pistols for self-defense. Since he had absolutely no gun handling skills, he recommended the Glock line of pistols, since they had no external safety to worry about. Jack said "Isn't that dangerous?"

"Not if you absolutely obey the first rule of gun safety, and keep your finger off the trigger until you're ready to shoot someone, and your barrel is pointing where you want to shoot. I've got 3 Glocks for you to try out at our range."

John handed Jack a pair of earmuffs and a pair of Gargoyle shooting glasses and told him to put them on. When he was wearing the earmuffs, he said he could still hear. John explained that he was wearing a pair of electronic earmuffs, which would pass normal sounds, and totally block loud noises. He used them in all his training classes. Jack had a brilliant idea, and asked John if he had some time to teach him that afternoon. John said he was free, but he charged \$100 per hour plus ammo. Jack reached into his money belt, and extracted a Canadian Maple leaf, which got John's immediate attention.

"By any chance are you the same Jack van Buren that sold that property to Governor Sanford?"

“Yeah, small world isn’t it.”

John knew that Jack could afford to buy his entire store, and his attitude changed rapidly.

Jack shot the Model 36 first, but wasn’t impressed with the 7-shot magazine, and he thought the grip was too small, so John handed him the Glock Model 21, and Jack could hold it just fine, and it felt good in his hands. What amazed him was after some coaching, John ran a b-27 out to the 15-yard line on his indoor range, and Jack put all 13 rounds in the black. John explained that wasn’t too bad shooting, but if he wanted to be able to protect himself, he needed to take a closer look at the target. There were 2 regions on the target scored 5x, and John explained those were the kill zones for the target, which corresponded to the most vulnerable parts of the human body, the heart-lung region, and the brain. He said that if you put a round right above someone’s nose, it was lights-out, and Hasta La Vista, they were deader than a doornail. Rounds through the heart/lung region were usually fatal, but not immediately so, and they might be able to shoot back before they died and take you with them. He said there were 3 ways to prevent that. 1 was to always wear a bullet-resistant vest, and the other 2 involved either not getting into a gunfight, or being able to kill the other guy quicker than he could kill you. Jack asked him about vests, and John said he sold a Second Chance level IIa that would fit under his shirt. It would stop most handgun rounds, but a round from an AR-15 or an AK-47 would go right through. He had vests that would stop those rounds, but they were heavy and expensive, and it was about as obvious and a painted whore in church that you were wearing a vest, so a smart attacker would go for your unprotected head. John did tell him that if he wanted to wear Level IIa vests full time, he sold a “Chicken plate” made out of ceramic that would stop 7.62 and .223 rounds if it hit the plate. The plates fit into carriers in the vest for front and back protection.

Jack asked if he could buy 2 of the Model 21 Glocks, and a bunch of magazines, and the vests.

John said that he could sell him a package including 2 Glock 21 with Trijicon tritium night sights, 8 13-rd magazines, 1,000 rounds of Corbon JHP ammo, and 1,000 rounds of Winchester 230gr FMJ practice ammo, 2 Insight Technologies M -3 Illuminators with spare batteries, Kydex holsters, and mag carriers, and 2 Second Chance Level IIa vests with plates for 6 ounces of gold coins, and he wouldn’t fill out any paperwork on him. For another 1oz gold coin, he’d train Jack the rest of the afternoon, and John would buy the ammo. Jack took out 6 more gold coins, and handed them to John, who took another G-27 out of stock, installed the Trijicon sights and lights on both of them, and showed Jack how to mount and dismount the light, then fitted the pistols with concealable holsters and 6 single-mag carriers. John spent the rest of the afternoon teaching Jack everything he could in 1 afternoon. He decided to concentrate on drawing from concealment and the Failure to Stop drill. He told Jack that if he always shot that way, he could pretty much guarantee that he’d put a bad guy down, and with 1,000 rounds of JHP ammo, he could afford to use the extra 2 rounds to make sure. He made Jack shoot wearing his vest, which took a while to get used to, but John impressed on him that a bullet-resistant vest was useless in his closet, but at the same time wouldn’t turn him into Superman,

because the MZB could still get lucky and get a round around his vest if he were shot under the arm, it could hit his heart or lungs and kill him, Actually in the current situation, any hit could be fatal if not treated properly.

He asked Jack if he would bug out if the situation warranted, and Jack asked what he meant by bugging out. John knew he was dealing with a Rookie, and suggested going to a nearby sporting goods shop, and buying everything on the list unless he already had it, and he gave him a short list of books to buy and the bookstore next door to the sporting good store. "SAS Essential Survival" and "US Army Special Forces Medical Manual". He said that there were other good books on the shelf, but if he had to carry everything he owned on his back, he needed to keep the weight down. He showed Jack on a road map and a topo map where the Great Smokey Mountain National Park was on the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. If he could make it there, there were millions of square miles of forest he could disappear into until things calmed down again. The main advantage was there were thousands of unexplored caves you could live in fairly comfortably, which would save him the time and trouble of building a shelter that might be found later, and he'd have to start all over again.

Once they were finished, John showed him where the sporting goods store was, and wished him luck. 2 hours later, and several ounces lighter, Jack had a very complete survival kit in a large heavy duty backpack. He looked like another hiker on the Appalachian Trail, but he was loaded for bear. The two books would provide reading material if nothing else. He saw a copy of "Good News for Modern Man" and bought it on an impulse. He had a large backpacking tent, 2 mummy bags and 2 sleeping pads. He had no idea why he bought two, except there was 2 of everything on John's list, so he bought them, besides it was only money. John knew that a lone survivalist stood almost zero chance of surviving, because you had to sleep sometime, and if you were by yourself, you were vulnerable when you were asleep. He drove home right before dark, and stopped at Bob's place. Bob invited him to dinner, so Jack accepted. Tanya looked totally different from last time, and was acting a lot nicer to Jack. Jack picked up on it, but didn't say anything. Dinner was delicious, and Bob told Jack that Tanya made dinner. He turned and thanked Tanya for a lovely dinner, and Tanya's smile could have lit a stadium. After dinner, Bob said that he needed 3 more pieces of gold to buy some more AK-47's from Po Dog. Jack said he had enough to do it easily, so he'd meet him tomorrow morning and drive him over there. Bob didn't think bringing that huge shiny new truck into the ghetto was a good idea, but Jack did have a good running vehicle, which was more than he could say for his old pickup. Jack told him not to worry, he'd been to a gun dealer, and he was loaded for bear. Bob said "Ok Jack, it's your funeral!"

The next morning, they drove over to Po Dog's pad, and they were greeted by several AK's pointing out the windows until Bob climbed out carefully. He could hear Po Dog yelling "Grandpa, what are you doing riding in that Honkey-mobile!"

"It's Jack's - you remember Jack - we need a couple more toys, and have some gold to trade for them."

Bob walked in the house, and 10 minutes later, Po dog came out carrying a case of ammo, and Bob had 3 AK-47's slung over his shoulder. Bob explained that they were getting low on ammo, but they had 3 AK's that they could sell. Po Boy walked around to the driver's side of Jack's truck, and when he saw the muzzle of the Witness Protection shotgun pointing right at him, he decided that he better cut the visit short, and gave his Grandpa a hug. Once Bob was back in the truck, Jack threw the transmission into drive and floored it.

"What the hell were you doing Jack?"

"Your grandson was scoping us out. He wanted to find out if I had any more gold on me, and maybe steal the truck. I had this pointed out the window at him, and he looked like he saw a ghost. Tanya was right, Po Dog shouldn't be trusted. He ran back into the house like a scared rabbit, So I floored it, thinking they might be setting up an ambush."

Right then Jack heard gunfire behind him, and a lowered Cadillac was following them.

"Son of a Bitch! You were right! OK, take the next right and stand on it - it's a long straight, and you should be able to open up the distance. I'll take care of our pursuit as soon as you crest that rise there."

As they crested the hill, Bob said "Take the next right" and as soon as he started turning, Bob dumped something out the window. 30 seconds later, Jack heard a squealing sound, and the sound of crunching metal.

"What the heck did you do Bob?"

"Old Moonshiner's trick, I dumped a load of roofing nails in the road as you made a right turn. It usually gets 1 or more of their front tires, and they wreck. DAMN - Tanya was right! I hope he sold us some working AK's!"

"I doubt he would have sold us junk, if we tested them and they failed, he would have been in serious trouble. No, I think his plan was to give us the guns then jack us up. I hope they don't come after us."

"I doubt it, Po Dog's never been out of his hood in his life. He controls a 6-block radius around his pad, but outside of that is several competing gang's territory. They wouldn't take it too kindly if he were to show his face in their territory."

They drove back to Bob's house, and Tanya asked were they got those bullet holes in the body.

"What Bullet Holes?"

Tanya showed him were the tailgate had absorbed a few bullet holes, and Jack swore a blue

streak. Suddenly he didn't feel so bad about wrecking the gang-banger's caddy.

"Easy Jack, I know a good body man here in town that will take care of those holes. While you're at it, you might want to add some armor to that pickup."

"What do you mean?"

"Things are going from bad to worse, and we might have to bug out. Your truck has a big enough engine and enough room to add some Kevlar armor to the doors, the back of the cab, and under the hood. It's not like you can't afford it. I'll call the body man and see if he can get his hands on any Kevlar panels."

They walked into Bob's house, and 5 minutes later, he told Jack that this body man used to do work for drug-runners and gang-bangers with more money than sense, and he could install Kevlar armor and bullet resistant glass in the truck, but it would cost him \$20 thousand cash.

"Ask him how much he'd take in gold coins."

Bob called him back, and he said since gold was going up, he'd give him \$600 a troy ounce for Canadian Maple leafs or Krugerrands. Jack did the math, and it was about 33 1/3 ounces of gold. Jack said he'd give him 34 Canadian Maple leafs if he could do it in one day. Bob called him back, and said to bring it in tomorrow, and he'd have it done that afternoon. He told Jack, who asked Bob if he could stay at his house tomorrow morning, and if he could give him a lift back to the shop. Bob grinned and said "Sure" then winked at Tanya.

He drove home to his house, and packed everything, then sat down and read his books until he was sleepy. He ate a can of soup for dinner, then went to bed. He drove over to Bob's house the next morning, and Bob said he'd meet Jack over there in half an hour. Jack had a small pouch sitting next to him, and when he got to the body shop, he was surprised at how modern it looked, then figured that he must have made a bundle dealing with dirtbags. The shop owner explained what he was going to do. The front windshield and rear window would be replaced with 30-caliber proof armored glass, and the windows would be replaced with special 30-caliber glass, and the motors would be replaced so the windows would roll up and down. He checked under the hood, and Jack already had a dual battery setup and Dodge's biggest alternator, so he was set. Jack handed him the bag of gold coins, and the shop owner counted it. Jack smacked himself, and asked if he could fabricate a bracket to carry a Remington Witness Protection shotgun under the seat. He said he'd include it in the order since he'd slightly overpaid him anyway. Bob showed up, and the owner said it would be done by noon, so Jack climbed in for the drive back to Bob's house. "You know Jack, Tanya's taken quite a shine to you, and if anything happened to me, I want you to take care of her and her boy."

"Bob, I barely know her - I feel funny talking about her like this."

“Ok, I’ll give you a little background. I met and married a beautiful white woman when I was going to college. We had 4 kids, and Tanya’s the youngest. The two boys are playing professional sports, and my middle daughter is married to a good man with 4 kids. Tanya was a rebellious teenager, and got hooked up with a gang-banger from the wrong side of the tracks. He got her pregnant, so they got married. My wife died shortly thereafter from Cancer, but I think it was a broken heart. I moved back to my hometown after that and opened a general store. Years later, he was convicted of Rape and Murder, and sent away for life. Tanya was working as a RN in Chicago when the stuff hit the rotating blade. I told her to get on a bus and come down here where it was safe. She got out just in the nick of time, and she’s been staying with me since then. I don’t know if she loves you, but I’m afraid the Klan or someone else will attack the town, and I don’t want to see my daughter and grandson die.”

They finally made it to Bob’s place, and they sat down and talked. Tanya was OK with living with Jack, but she’d have to wait on the sex thing until she was sure that Jack was what he appeared to be. Jack said he only had 1 bed. Tanya looked at him frankly and asked him if they could sleep in the same bed without having sex. Jack wasn’t used to this, and turned beet red, then started crying. Tanya walked over to him and held him around the shoulders. He told her why he was crying, his old live-in girlfriend Sharon was a nymphomaniac, and was always complaining she didn’t get it enough, so he was constantly taking Viagra to keep up with her. Tanya turned him around and looked into his eyes.

“Jack, I like sex as much as the next girl, but I’m no nymphomaniac, and most of the time, I’d rather be held than have sex.”

Jack smiled at her and said “I’d like that.”

Tanya turned so she was facing Jack, and gave him a big hug and a kiss. She liked the way he held her, and he was a pretty good kisser. She guessed she’d eventually figure out how good he was in the sack, but that could wait. She called Tyrone, and he came into the room. Jack crouched down to get on his level and said “Hi Tyrone, how old are you?”

Tyrone smiled at held up 4 fingers “I’m four!”

“Good for you Tyrone. You want to play with something?”

Tyrone’s block set was sitting on the floor, so Jack sat across from Tyrone and played with him. Afternoon came sooner than he expected, and Bob said he had to go get his truck. He turned to Tanya, and she said “Make sure you pick us up on your way back. I’ll be all packed up.”

They stood up, and Tanya hugged the stuffing out of Jack and kissed him. “Hurry back!”

They got into Bob’s truck and drove over to the body shop.

“Bob, I don’t know what to say - I don’t want to just shack up with your daughter.”

“If you wanted to get married, Leroy is an Ordained Baptist Minister.”

“That explains a whole bunch of stuff!”

When they got to the auto shop, the owner met him.

“I took the liberty of making a few improvements to your truck. I swapped out the chip for a Banks chip that allows you to use 100% of the horsepower of the turbo, and I added steel plate inside the tailgate and doors over the Kevlar. With the steel plate, there wasn’t enough room to install roll-up windows, so your window are fixed, but the same thickness as your windshield and back window. With the plates, it should stop anything except 50 caliber fire and rockets. Your radiator is protected by 2 pieces of armor plate with half-inch holes offset by 1 inch. It will breath just fine, but a bullet won’t find your radiator unless it can punch through at least 3/8” of armor plate. The sides of the engine compartment are only protected by Kevlar to save weight, so they’re only proof against 30-caliber fire. I replaced those 275 profile pizza-cutter tires with a set of BFG T/A All-terrain 31x10.5x15 inch tires and added Gunk to the tires. They’re not run-flats, but the next best thing. The BFG tires are considerably tougher than what the dealership puts on them, and get much better off-road traction. Also, the bucket seats up front have tear-away back panels to hide weapons or whatever you need. I installed the clamps under the driver’s and passenger’s seats up front.”

Jack got a good look at his truck, and it looked like it belonged in a Mad Max movie. It had a huge front push bumper off a wrecker. He asked the shop owner about it. “Almost forgot, I had one lying around from a wrecker, and it fit pretty good. I added some additional lights up front too in case you need them.”

“So what do I owe you for all this.”

“You’ve got it covered, besides Bob told me what you did to protect the Reverend from those Kluckers. I just wanted to make sure you were prepared in case something happened again like what Bob said happened this morning.”

“Bob’s got a big mouth, but in this case I’m grateful.”

Jack climbed aboard his truck, it was slightly taller than before, and he had to step on the nerf bar step that wasn’t there before. He wondered what else he forgot to mention. The engine fired right up, and he backed it out of the shop. Reaching under his seat, the WP shotgun was right were it should be, and next to it was a piece of plastic that held 6 additional rounds. This guy thought of everything! As soon as he stepped on the throttle, he was glad that he had the full-height buckets, or he might have injured his neck. All he needed now was 5-point restraints. He drove to Bob’s place and shut down. Tanya started loading stuff in his pickup,

and her dad arrived right as they were finishing. She kissed her dad, and buckled Tyrone in the child seat in back, then climbed in. “Let’s go!”

Jack was much more gentle on the throttle, and they made it to his house without further injury.

Chapter 5

When they got home, Jack helped them unload the truck, then checked on the progress of the “storm shelter” which was nearing completion. The walls were at full height, and the roof had been poured next to the shelter, and only needed to cure. The walls had a funny color to them, and smelled like latex. Jack realized that they had been coated with an industrial waterproofer, which was in the process of curing. One of the corners of the floor had a square hole framed out of it, which Jack realized was exactly the size of a large drop-in floor safe. He went back inside, and Tanya was making dinner, and Tyrone was playing in a corner. He saw she was making pot roast and mashed potatoes, and jokingly asked “Shouldn’t that be fried chicken and black-eyed peas?”

Tanya replied in her “blackest” voice, “I can cook white as well as black Massa, just aims to please!”

Jack thought of a reply and decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and walked up behind her and gave her a hug from behind, without grabbing anything. She leaned into him and said “Thanks Jack. I love being held, but not groped unless I’m in the mood. When I’m in the mood, you’ll know it!”

Jack told her “You’re a beautiful woman, you know that?”

“Why do you say that Jack?”

“Because you look like a woman, not an overgrown girl. You really are beautiful, you know!”

Tanya turned around with tears in her eyes “You mean that? I’m not fat or anything?”

“No way, I like a girl with meat on her bones. If I wanted a twig, I’d marry a tree!”

“Tyrone’s Dad never touched me in a loving way after Tyrone was born, he said I was a fat cow, and when we’d have sex, he was always rough and in a hurry.”

“Tanya, I’m sorry. I’m different from Tyrone’s Dad, I’ll never hit you or call you names, unless we’re teasing each other, and you’ll know I’m teasing. If I say anything hurtful, even teasing, please let me know without hitting me over the head with a cast iron skillet or an iron.”

Tanya turned the heat off the stove, and walked over to Jack “I’m starting to love you Jack, you’re the nicest man I have ever met.”

“It will take me a while - I’m still in mourning for Sharon.”

“That’s OK Jack, I’d rather take it slow anyway.” She gave Jack a big hug and a kiss, then went back to making dinner. Jack started playing with Tyrone on the floor. Tanya said “dinner’s ready, go wash your hands.” Jack took Tyrone into the bathroom and helped him wash his hands, and realized something. If they were going to stay there, Jack needed to get Tyrone a step so he could reach the sink. They sat down at the kitchen table with the food in the center, and Tanya said grace. It took longer than Leroy’s, and then Jack realized that Tanya had a lot to be thankful for. She mentioned him by name, and he almost started crying. This time he said “amen” with Tanya and Tyrone.

Later that evening, she put Tyrone to bed on an air mattress and sleeping bag in the living room, and read to him out of the Bible. When he was asleep, she said “Time for bed. I forgot to tell you I sleep in the nude.”

“That’s funny, me too - I don’t even own a set of PJs.”

Jack took a shower first and walked into the bedroom. Tanya was admiring his physique. “Not bad!” then she got undressed for her shower. Jack was right, she had full womanly breasts and a small tummy bulge, but that was to be expected at her age. She stood up and he smiled. “You like?”

All Jack could do is nod.

“OK, I’ll take a shower and be in bed in 5 minutes. Go ahead and turn out the lights, and I’d appreciate if you could stay awake so we can cuddle for a while.”

Tanya walked into the bathroom, and Jack smiled - he was looking forward to this. She was a beautiful woman, and he was under no pressure to perform. 5 minutes later she slid into bed and kissed him. His hand hovered over her body, and she quipped “Don’t worry whitey, it don’t rub off!” then he kissed her and started caressing her. One thing led to another, and later that evening Tanya thought to herself “Damn, he is pretty good in bed!”

Jack was laying on his back with a big grin on his face. She was a much better lover than Sharon. Sharon always demanded and never gave. Tanya took her time and gave as much as she received. Then the thought hit him that they should get married. He turned over to Tanya and said “You awake Tanya?”

“I’m feeling too good to sleep. Will you hold me?”

“Tanya, I’ve got a question to ask you, and I know it might be too soon, but will you marry me?”

“I was thinking the same thing Jack. I’ve never felt more loved in my life, and Tyrone likes you. You’re a very sensitive lover, and I think I’d like to spend the rest of my life with you.”

“OK, I’ll take that as a yes - guess we’ll have to talk to the Reverend tomorrow.”

They held each other and fell asleep in each other’s arms. The next morning they awoke to Tyrone telling Tanya that he needed to go to the bathroom. Tanya told him the bathroom was behind that door, and she’d be there in a second. As soon as Tyrone’s back was turned, she slipped an oversized Kansas City Chief’s shirt on and helped him. Jack heard the sounds of flushing, and Tyrone padded back into the living room. Tanya took the nightshirt off right before crawling into bed, and she was just as beautiful in the morning, and Jack told her so. That kind of compliment demanded a response, and an hour later they finally crawled out of bed and got dressed with silly grins on their faces. Jack appreciated the fact that Tanya didn’t wear a bra around the house when he gave her a big hug.

“Down boy, I’ve got to get breakfast ready.”

He kissed her on the neck, and she almost decided to go back in the bedroom, but Tyrone was standing there waiting to be fed. She whispered in Jack’s ear “Later sweetie, I’ve got to feed Tyrone.” He gave her a hug and a pat on the backside and realized something else. He wondered what she was wearing, and realized the answer was “practically nothing!”

Jack decided to save some hot water and took a cold shower and got dressed. Tanya made oatmeal, then called Jack for breakfast. He helped her clean the dishes, except this time when he gave her a hug from behind his hands drifted up and she moaned and whispered “That feels good, but we have to get dressed and see the reverend. Think you can save it for the honeymoon?”

He gave her a lecherous grin, kissed her on the neck, and when she moaned again, he whispered in her ear “I can if you can!”

“No fair, get me all hot and bothered, then run away!”

“There’s plenty of cold water in the shower.”

“Meanie - I’ll make you pay for this!”

When they were finally fully dressed, Tanya got Tyrone into his child seat, and they drove over to Leroy’s house. He didn’t seem surprised to see them.

“I talked to Bob yesterday, and figured you two would be here today. I guess you couldn’t keep your hands off each other.”

Tanya spoke up, “Sorry Reverend, but we were laying in bed together and one thing led to another. I know I want to spend the rest of my life with Jack and I know he feels the same way too.”

Leroy spoke directly to Jack “Ok, if you two want to get hitched, what about Tyrone?”

Leroy knelt down in front of Tyrone and asked, “Tyrone, do you want Jack to be your Daddy?”

Leroy was amazed at how loudly Tyrone said “YES Reverend!”

“I guess that settles that. Jack, can you run over and get Bob and Travis, and we’ll have the wedding in the back yard in an hour. Do you have a suit you can wear?”

Jack remembered he had saved 1 suit for just in case, and said he did.

“Ok, be here in an hour in a suit.”

Jack ran back to his truck, drove to Bob’s house, and was surprised to see Bob in his Sunday best “I guess you and my daughter hit it off last night?”

“I didn’t plan it that way I swear Bob.”

“Don’t worry, it was all in God’s plan.”

Bob climbed into Jack’s truck and they drove over to Travis’ house. Both him and his son were in their Sunday best. Jack thought “What’s this a conspiracy?”

He dropped them off at Leroy’s house, drove back home and got dressed quickly. He made it back to Leroy’s house with 5 minutes to spare. Bob showed him where the ceremony was going to be. They had a beautiful gazebo out back with enough seats for everyone. Evidently they had been having services here regularly. Leroy came out wearing simple vestments, then Tanya on her father’s arm. She looked even more beautiful in the simple white dress than she did last night. Tyrone was walking behind them when they reached the gazebo, Bob handed Tanya to Jack, and whispered “Take care of her Jack” then turned and accepted a kiss from Tanya. They turned to face Leroy. The ceremony was simple but heartfelt. They sang “Amazing Grace” a capella, and then he read out of Ephesians. Finally he got to the vows. “Do you Tanya promise to take Jack as your husband, to love, honor and obey the rest of your life?”

“I do!”

“Do you Jack take Tanya as your wife, to Love, Honor, and cherish the rest of your life?”

“I do!”

“Do you also take Tyrone as your Son, to raise him in Fear of the Lord?”

“I do.”

“Jack and Tanya, these are serious vows you’ve made before God. Remember that if you don’t feel like being loving that you swore to God to Love and Cherish each other all the days of your life. That said, I now pronounce you husband and wife, what the Lord has ordained let no man put aside. Oh, and you may kiss your bride.”

Tanya leaned over and gave Jack a soulful kiss, then Jack bent down and picked up Tyrone. He gave Jack a hug, and Jack held him for a minute, then sat him down - he was a heavy 4 year old!

Half an hour later, they were in Jack’s truck headed home. Tyrone stayed with Bob that night, and Tanya threw all her pent-up passion into that one night. The next morning Jack was too sore to get up. Finally after Tanya told him breakfast was ready for the 3rd time, he found the strength to crawl out of bed. He groaned when he sat down, and Tanya said “Don’t worry, from now on, I’ll let you sleep after a couple of hours.”

Jack groaned again, wondering “what have I got myself into?”

A couple of days later, once they got it out of their systems, Jack asked Tanya if she’d go to a gun store with him. He bought her a Glock pistol, and if she wanted to defend Tyrone, she needed to learn how to shoot right. When she grudgingly agreed (the obey part comes in handy sometimes!) he called John up, and he said he was free that day. They left Tyrone with Bob, and drove over to the range. She was looking at all the rich white people with unease. They got to the range, and John acted as if he’d swallowed a lemon, but smiled anyway. “Right this way Ma’am.” John asked Jack if he’d go a couple of lanes down to practice while he worked with his wife. When they got to their lanes, Tanya wanted to try something “Hi, I’m Tanya Van Buren” she said as she stuck out her hand. John reached for her hand as if he was handling a snake, but he shook it. Seeing his discomfort, she said “Don’t worry it don’t come off!”

That broke the ice, and John lightened up considerably. He spent the first hour teaching her gun safety, and showing her that the gun wouldn’t go off by itself. Finally she held a pistol in her hands for the first time (without any ammo) and practiced dry firing it at the B-27 target at 15 feet. John explained that they needed to practice at realistic targets, because he’d never seen a bullseye-shaped Mutant Biker Zombie. She laughed because she was just old enough to watch the 50’s B movies on late-night TV. Finally he handed her a loaded magazine, and told her to fire the entire magazine, but only shoot when her sights were lined up, and pointed just below the X. She did pretty good for her first mag. Most of the rounds were in the kill zone, but she was only 15 feet away. He kept repeating that drill until she could put the 13-round magazine all in the kill zone at 15 yards. Then he moved her back in, and taught her the “Failure to Stop” drill. She asked why she had to shoot someone 3 times. John answered both of her questions.

“First of all, you’re only legally allowed to shoot someone who is a direct, immediate, and lethal threat to you or your loved ones. That usually means they must be armed, and if they have a

pistol they must be within about 20 yards. If they have a knife, some states stipulate 15 feet, but I say 20 feet is safer and still defensible in a court of law. Unless everything goes crazy, there will be a reckoning of every life taken. If the rule of law has gone out the window, different rules apply, and Jack would be better at telling you about that than I am. Second of all, if you do shoot someone, you are in immediate fear for your life, so you keep shooting until they stop. If they're dead, they are stopped. The failure to stop drill takes into account the affects of drugs, adrenaline, and bullet resistant vests. There are some ballistic vests on the market that can stop a .45 acp round cold, with nothing more than a serious bruise. If you shoot someone, and they don't go down, you either missed, or they might be wearing a vest, or on drugs. In that case, you need to raise your point of aim, and put a round in their cerebral cortex to stop all activity. Swat riflemen practice a kill shot to the medulla oblongata, which is the crucial structure in the brain for any muscular activity, but other parts of the brain are equally vulnerable. Using a Jacketed Hollow Point increases hydrostatic damage and shock which disrupt cerebral activity until the subject is clinically dead. Mind you, we're talking milliseconds here, but if the subject has his finger on the trigger of a full auto weapon, and his last neural impulse convulses that muscle, he could kill 30 people with that gun, and be legally dead when he does it."

"John, I'm an RN from Chicago, so I know all about that, all I need to know is how to shoot this damn thing well enough to protect myself, Tyrone, or Jack."

"Ok, we can skip the physiology lesson, and work on your shooting skills. The Failure to Stop Drill (FTS) consists of a controlled pair to the center of mass or kill zone, followed by a single round to the kill zone of the forehead."

"Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

She lifted her Glock, and BAM..BAM...BAM! John rolled the target back in, but he knew that Tanya had 2 rounds in the center chest, and 1 in the forehead, all in the kill zone.

"How'd you do that?"

"Just like you said, a controlled pair, and a single to the forehead. I just touched the trigger twice as quick as I could, and when the gun came back down, I fired a 3rd time."

John whistled at Jack, and waved him over there, and showed him Tanya's target. She had re-holstered her Glock, and his was on his shooting table, so he picked her up and gave her a big hug "It took me all day to do that, how'd you do it?"

"Just like he said, I touched the trigger twice as quick as I could, then when the barrel came back down, I triggered it again."

"Jack, women normally do better at shooting pistols to begin with because we have no bad habits to break them of, like you did!"

“Guilty as charged!”

They spent the rest of the afternoon shooting, and then they bought some more Corbon JHP ammo and 4 more magazines, since John said they were relatively cheap and available now, but he didn't know if he could get any more. John sold him a cleaning kit, and Jack asked him if he had any 7.62mm bore brushes. The cleaning kit was a rifle/pistol kit, and he threw in the 7.62mm bore brush and a spare pack of cleaning patches. They stopped at the bank, and added Tanya to his signature cards, including the metals deposit, just in case. While they were there, he took out another half million in Gold and Silver. Tanya looked like she was going to faint. “You really ARE rich?”

“Before the crash, I was worth almost 50 million, all I could get hold of was the 20 Million in my Bank of America account. Maybe later, if things return to normal, I can get access to the rest of my money.”

“I'd be happy as a clam with just 1 million - what are you worrying about the rest of it for?”

“Good question. Before I met Leroy, I was miserable, fighting to make more money, and never happy because it wasn't enough.”

“Sounds like getting stranded was the best thing that ever happened to you?”

“If I wouldn't have been stranded, I'd never have met you - that's for sure.”

He gave her a kiss, and they climbed in the truck for the ride home. Just to be on the safe side, Jack topped off the tanks and paid the station owner in silver. He told Jack that he should be careful flashing gold and silver coins, since the Klan and a couple of other groups were talking trash, and his house was ground zero between the two groups. Jack's eyes got big, and he asked him what he was talking about. The black gang bangers and the KKK had been talking trash to each other, and they were about to go to war. Their homes were almost halfway between the 2 forces, and word was the KKK had old obsolete military hardware like WWII tanks that they had rebuilt with flame-throwers and Ma Deuces. The armor on the old Shermans was good enough to stop anything short of a RPG, so they thought that they could eradicate the “Niggers” as they called them once and for all. He told Jack that it was probably going to happen soon, so he better batten down the hatches, or bug out. Jack handed him an extra piece of silver for his trouble, and ran back to the truck.

“We've got to get home and warn everybody - the gas station owner said that the KKK and the black gangsters were about to go to war, and our neighborhood would be ground zero, and the KKK was supposed to have tanks.”

Jack floored the truck and was soon home. He got Tyrone from Bob, and gave him the bad news. Bob said he couldn't bug out, he had too much invested in the shop, and no where to go.

Besides the gas station owner was always crying wolf, and predicting that the KKK and the bangers were at the brink of war. He thought he was reading too many conspiracy novels. Tanya tried to talk some sense into her dad, and Jack finally gave up, and said that if he wouldn't bug out, at least let him leave an AK-47 with him so he could defend himself. Bob said he knew how to shoot an AK from his time in the Military. Tanya looked at him funny, and said that he did 4 years in the Army to pay for college before he met her mom. He was in the Mechanized Infantry. Luckily Vietnam was a distant thunderstorm when he got out, and once he was in College and married, he was safe from the draft boards.

Jack drove over to Leroy's place, and got the same story. "Besides, we might be able to stop the fighting. Micah chapter 4 verse 3 says "He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war any more."

"I've got another quote for you Leroy "Those who beat their swords into plowshares will plow for those who don't!"

"Son, I'll forgive you your unbelief, but don't try my patience."

"Sorry Leroy, but my feeling is that until Jesus comes back, beating swords into plowshares might be a bit premature."

"You're probably right, in the context of Micah, he's talking about the Final Judgment, and a period where God reigns supreme, and there will be no more wars."

"So you're coming with us?"

"Where will you go? There's no safe place anywhere anymore."

"John showed me an area between Tennessee and North Carolina that was remote wilderness, and full of uncharted caves. If someone lived a low-profile lifestyle, they might successfully evade any problems until things get better."

"Jack, that's too far for us. Ophelia and I are old, and this is our home. We probably wouldn't survive the trip and would only be a burden on you. Before you go, let me give you something." Leroy walked over to his bookshelf, and took down a King James Bible. "If you have to leave, make sure you bring this with you, it's been in our family for over 100 years, and includes our entire family genealogy. Besides, the Good Book is the best resource for when things are going wrong. Remember to have faith, and God will provide."

"Thanks Leroy, I don't know what to say. I'm afraid I'm saying goodbye to you."

“Not Goodbye, just see you later because we’ll be reunited in Heaven.”

“I’m not too sure, I don’t really believe in God.”

“Don’t worry - he believes in you, besides Tanya is a good Christian woman, and you’ll come around to seeing things her way.”

“Leroy, thanks doesn’t seem to cover half of it, you befriended me, took me in, and taught me how to survive. I never would have made it without you.”

“You want to repay me, pass it on. Help someone else out.”

Jack did something he never thought he’d do in his life, he gave Leroy a hug and started crying, he knew he was saying goodbye to the old preacher.

“Just take care of Tyrone and Tanya, they’re the future. Goodbye and God Bless.”

“Thanks Leroy, see you later.”

Jack walked out of Leroy’s parlor before he started crying again. When he got back to the truck, he was carrying Leroy’s family Bible, and gave it to Tanya before he got in on his side. She was holding it like she was holding something precious. “They aren’t coming either, are they?”

“You have your answer in your hands. Why are these old people so stuck in their ways?”

Tanya reached over with her hand, and put it on his “Let’s pray that God takes care of them.” The next thing he knew, Tanya was praying out loud. Jack’s fears for his friends overcame his inhibitions, and was silently praying with her. He knew that somehow they’d be OK. He also knew that he needed to start packing as soon as they got home. When they stopped in the driveway, he told Tanya they needed to start packing now, and she said “I know I feel it too!” They left Tyrone in his car seat, and quickly packed everything that could fit into the truck. He made sure all the weapons and ammo were where he could get at them. All his survival gear and as much food as they could pack, including staples, canned goods, spices and oil, plus his stove, Coleman fuel, and cast iron Dutch oven and skillet were packed, then they packed their clothes, toiletries, Tyrone’s clothes, toys, and books. Jack was wondering what he forgot, and remembered he didn’t pack any water. He packed the remainder of his water, and 2 5-gallon water jugs full of water into the back seat around Tyrone. Tanya suggested she take Tyrone to use the bathroom, then she’d use it, then Jack should make sure his tanks were empty. While he waited for his son and wife, he checked his maps for the best route to the Smokey mountains. There were several routes, and which one he took depended on how dangerous the different routes were. He thanked God, then found it funny that he would do such a thing, that he had been warned and prepared. He might not have the best survival knowledge, but he had time to

read the SAS book, and he had a good GPS and a map/compass to back it up. He remembered 1 thing at the last minute, grabbed a couple of items, and ran into the bedroom “Quick, take off your blouse!”

“You really think we have time for that?”

“You need to put this vest on, and I need to help you fit it. It’s a Level IIa vest, and these are chicken plates which should stop anything less than a 50 caliber rifle.”

Tanya quickly took off her blouse, and Jack helped her fix the vest to her body without groping her too much, then he put his on, and he helped her put on the IWB Kydex holster for her Glock 21, and 4 magazine carriers with loaded 13-round magazines in it. He put everything on and was headed out to the truck when he heard on his FRS radio. “This is BOB - The KKK just showed up and they’ve got tanks. They’re threatening to burn me out. Oh God Help Me!”

Bob’s screams was the last thing that Jack would ever hear from his father-in-law. Leroy’s voice came on next, in his Stern Pastor Voice.

“Jack, I know you can hear me. YOU CAN’T DO ANYTHING FOR BOB - DON’T EVEN TRY. He’s in heaven with his beloved wife.”

“What about you and Ophelia?”

“Don’t worry about us. I’ll lay an ambush that will slow them down, and give you plenty of time to escape. Your job is to take Tanya and Tyrone to a place of safety and protect them with your life. YOU GOT THAT!”

“Yes Reverend. God Bless, and take care.”

“Don’t worry about us, we’ll soon be with Jesus!”

As he started the motor, Jack was crying, but he headed out of town as he had promised Leroy, but he swore he would avenge them some day.

Chapter 6

As Jack drove away from Bob's house, Tanya yelled "Jack, where you going, we've got to save my Dad!"

"Tanya, he's dead. His last transmission said that the Klan was using flamethrower equipped tanks to burn him out. He's with your mother already! Leroy ordered me to get you and Tyrone to safety, and they'd set up an ambush to delay them long enough that we could make a clean get-away. I hate running as much as you, but you don't argue with a Preacher."

Tanya leaned against Jack's shoulder and sobbed. She realized that her Dad had made his decision and had paid the price. Hopefully he didn't suffer, and now he was with her mom in Heaven, what she couldn't understand was Leroy's resistance, they could have grabbed him and Ophelia and made it out in plenty of time. Suddenly she remembered a passage of Scripture. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." She turned to Jack, and told him the verse that came to mind. Jack had a hard time driving through the tears. He knew the safest route out of the area could be the most risky, still he took the freeway because it was the fastest way away from the scene of the crime. He took route 21 to the northwest, and prayed that there were no roadblocks on the road. He told Tanya to reach under her seat and turn on the police scanner, and plug it into the cigarette lighter. He told Tanya that they'd have to risk the freeways, because with the civil unrest, the surface streets might be hopelessly blocked, or ambush sites, so she needed to listen to the radio and try to pick up indications of what was going on ahead. They had to take I-95N and I-26W to Columbia, and that was 200 miles away. He had almost 100 gallons of diesel, so they weren't stopping unless they had to.

"Tanya, there's something I need to tell you. Bob knew an auto body man who did work for some disreputable characters, but he was able to add Kevlar and steel armor to the truck. The windows don't roll down, and will stop a .308 round, The passenger compartment is protected with 3/8" steel armor and Kevlar as are the fuel tanks. The radiator is protected by 2 sheets of 3/8 steel armor with offset holes so it can breathe, but a bullet can't take the radiator out. That bumper out front is off a wrecker, and can move anything we need to out of the way. The truck's 4-wheel drive, and the tires are treated with Gunk, so a nail puncture won't leave us stranded. If we come under fire, the best thing we can do is drive through it, since they can't really hurt us. I'm going to try and avoid it as much as possible, but if you hear bullets strike the truck, remember the truck's armored and you're wearing a vest."

"What about Tyrone?"

"I packed all our water around him, hopefully that will absorb anything that gets through the armor. Frankly I'd be surprised if anything gets through. There are gun ports in the doors, all you have to do is slide the lever to the left, and it opens up a big enough port for you to stick an

AK-47 muzzle out the port and fire.”

“Didn’t I see something like this in Mad Max?”

“Yeah, except we don’t have any MZB’s chasing us, and I don’t look too hot with long hair!”

Tanya laughed her head off and said, “Wasn’t Tina Turner in that movie?”

“I’m not sure, but you’re much prettier than her!”

“That’s BS, but Good BS!”

The next couple of hours passed uneventfully, then as they rounded a corner at 20 mph, 2 pickups were backed up tail to tail blocking the road, and the guys standing behind them didn’t look like Girl Scouts. Jack yelled “Brace yourself” and floored the truck. Whoever set up the road block was a complete idiot, the back end of a pickup is the lightest and easiest to move. With the huge bumper, the truck pushed them out of the way easily. Jack stopped the truck 5 miles down the road, and jumped out to check for damage. The bumper did it’s job, and except for some scratched paint, they came through fine. He jumped back in the truck, and they drove on down the road. While he was checking the truck, she checked Tyrone, who went back to sleep. A couple of hours later, they came across a truck stop, and pulled in. Jack thought it was safe enough to fill-up the tanks, and they all needed to use the bathroom. He filled the truck first, then they all went in together. He paid for the fuel, then he took Tyrone into the men’s room while Tanya used the ladies room. Several rednecks looked like they were going to say something, but the look on Jack’s face, plus his aggressive posture, with his right hand a fraction of an inch from his holstered Glock told them they’d be wise to leave them alone. They got back in the truck, and back on the road without further incident.

Just before they got to Columbia, they came upon another roadblock, this was a tractor/trailer combination blocking the road. When they stopped, a huge lard-gutted redneck walked up to them with a shotgun “This here’s a toll road - \$100 to go through. Jack was about to drop a gold coin through the gun port when he heard “Well looky what we got here. A Nigger-lover and two niggers.”

Jack was pissed, and decided to egg the racist SOB on, and flipped the PA switch on his CB.

“What’s the matter, your white sheets at the Cleaner’s?”

He reached under the seat as he said that, extracted the Witness protection shotgun, and as the puss-gut white trash leveled his shotgun at them Jack fired first, and the point blank burst of 12-gauge almost knocked the SOB over. He fell in a heap - deader than a doornail. Suddenly Jack heard the staccato roar of an AK-47 firing short controlled bursts. He glanced over his right shoulder and Tanya was firing short bursts into the trees around them on her side. She yelled

“Floor it, let’s get the flock out of here!” There was just enough room to get around the 18-wheeler by driving into a ditch, and Jack was glad he had a capable 4x4 truck, because he needed all the traction and clearance of the truck to make it through. A couple of miles down the road, the shakes overtook Jack, and he opened the door to vomit. When he got back in the cab, he looked at the dusky Valkyrie that was seated next to him with an AK-47 on her lap. “I thought you didn’t know how to use guns?”

“I said I didn’t like them, I didn’t say I didn’t know how to use them. Having a nephew who is the leader of a large urban gang has it’s advantages. Po Dog was a good kid, and still had his nice side. He taught me how to shoot pistols, shotguns and the AK-47 when he found out we were moving to Chicago. He said the best way to shoot an AK-47 was to shoot in short bursts, that way you aren’t just wasting ammo.”

“Anything else I need to know?”

“Yeah, I’m pretty good with a knife, so don’t think of stepping out on me, or you might wind up missing something very dear to you!”

“Yes Dear!”

As they drove further, they heard more and more traffic over the police scanner. They were getting closer and closer to Columbia, and from what they heard, a full urban riot was in progress. Jack pulled the truck over, and checked his maps “Tanya, we need to bypass Columbia - I’m not going to take a riot on, even in this tank. Can you help me find a route around Columbia, so we don’t have to get any closer.”

“I went to school in Columbia, if you take the next right, you’ll detour around the worst of it on a frontage road that only services the industrial area. There’s nothing worth stealing there, so the looters should stay clear. After about 30 miles you can re-connect to route 26 to Asheville. It’s a 4-lane road, so it’s too wide to blockade. Still, I’d keep your eyes peeled.

They got on the frontage road, and things didn’t look good, Towards Downtown Columbia they could see smoke, and an occasional flicker of flame. Several buildings along their route looked like they had been looted and burned, but it seemed the rioters had moved on to better looting prospects. Jack drove as fast as he felt safe driving, he wanted to get through Columbia as fast as possible. Half an hour later, they were through, but some of the scenes shocked and horrified Jack. There were several black men and women with nooses around their necks hanging from lampposts, with a sign saying “Nigger” hanging around their necks. Several blocks later, he found the exact opposite. White men and women hung up with the word “Honky” hung around their necks. Jack asked Tanya why these people were stupid enough to kill each other.

”Jack, you don’t understand the South, the hate runs deep, and when law and order breaks down, old grudges real or imagined are settled, and the people pay the price. I wish these

turkeys had just listened to Rodney King.”

“Who’s that, a relative of Martin Luther King?”

“Don’t you remember the LA Riots. They started with the arrest of Rodney King, and the inflammatory and one-sided reporting by the Media. Rodney was a 3-time loser, and a BMF who was flying on PCP, and was resisting arrest. The cameras started rolling after the police used their batons, but missed when Rodney hurt 3 officers pretty badly. The TV stations played the tapes, and then when the jury acquitted the officers, since they had the whole story, rioting started. The dumb niggers were burning their own neighborhoods, and finally Rodney issued a press release in hopes of quelling the riot, and his famous quote was “Can’t we all get along?” Now that’s a rhetorical question if I ever heard one!”

“Tanya, how come you can say the N word, and I can’t?”

“I’m black, or at least half-black. I’ve dealt with racism my whole life. The whites called me Zebra, and the blacks called me Oreo.”

“Oreo - I don’t get it.”

“Black on the outside, but white in the middle.”

“Tanya, I don’t care what color you are, to me you’re a beautiful woman with a year-round tan!”

Tanya leaned over and gave Jack a kiss.

When they got to Asheville, it was like night and day, in this case literally, there wasn’t a dark face in sight. Jack located an out-of-the-way motel, and checked the 3 of them in for the night. There was a hot plate and microwave in the room, so Tanya suggested eating in. Jack walked out to the truck, took the 12 ga Witness Protection out of the cab and carried it under his coat into the room, and stuck a chair under the door after he closed and locked it. He set the shotgun next to his side of the bed, and they made a bed for Tyrone in a corner where he wouldn’t get stepped on at night. Once they ate and showered, they went to bed so they could get up at first light. Jack woke up once or twice during the night, but thought it was just the wind. At first light, he was up and dressed, and checked on the truck, which thankfully hadn’t been disturbed. He walked into the office and asked the proprietor if he knew if there were any problems getting through the Smokey Mountain National Park, since they had relatives in Tennessee. He said that their might be a National Guard roadblock on the border, but since so many people in TN drove to NC to shop and visit relatives, they had stopped manning it. He commented on the race riots in Columbia, and Jack said they were lucky to get through it unscathed. The proprietor said that from here to Knoxville, things were pretty tame, but there was rioting in Nashville. Jack thanked him and asked if they owed anything else, they were checking out. He

checked, and said “Nope, you paid for 1 night, and you didn’t use the phone. Thanks, and have a nice day. When you’re done loading, just leave your room key on the bed.” Jack shook his hand, walked back to their room, and finished packing.

Tanya put Tyrone back in his child seat after making sure he went to the bathroom. She used the bathroom again, just to be sure, and then Jack double checked everything, and they climbed in. Jack felt for the WP shotgun, and it was right where it belonged. Tanya took an AK out of its case, and held it between her knees. Jack looked at her, and she said it wouldn’t do her any good in a case if they got ambushed again. Jack said there might also be a NG roadblock on the TN/NC border. Tanya said they’d just have to pray that they were busy elsewhere, because if they searched the truck too closely, they’d find the AK’s and the shotgun anyway, and either of them could get them shot or sent to prison for the rest of their lives. Tanya held Jack’s hand and started praying out loud again. Jack was too scared to object, and added a silent prayer for protection to hers. When they started the truck and started backing up, 2 pickups pulled up behind them to block their way. Sensing a trap, and realizing he had a huge pipe bumper and a hitch sticking out the back, he kept going, and was pleasantly surprised when the Dodge Ramcharger pushed the smaller truck out of their way. The other guy didn’t get the hint, and drove up on Tanya’s side and tried to force them off the road. Before he could succeed, Tanya slid open the gun port, and stuck the AK-47’s muzzle out the door, and fired a burst into the driver’s side door. The driver of the other truck slumped forward, and crashed into a light pole. Jack floored it, and got out of town as fast as he could. Tanya kept an ear to the scanner, in case there was pursuit, but she didn’t hear anything. Jack was listening to the CB to see if there was any chatter on the CB, but it was quiet too. Maybe the attack was an isolated incident. Either way, he added the proprietor to his list of bad guys, because the attack was too well timed, or maybe the gang just cased the motels, and when someone was going to leave, blocked them and robbed them.

Tanya looked a little pale, but didn’t say anything. They had to get into the Smokey Mountains before they could begin to feel safe. Last night, Jack had checked the maps, and the topo map, and found a logging road that he hoped was wide enough for their truck that lead back into an area that he hoped was full of caves. The geology was right according to his topo map, but it was just an educated guess.

A couple of miles into the National Forrest, Tanya was looking out her window when she said “Jack Stop the truck!”

“What’s wrong?”

“I thought I saw a little blond-haired kid, and I think they’re lost. Stop and back up, then let me out of the truck by myself.”

“This could be a trick - watch yourself.”

I don't think it's a trick, I think I saw a little girl, and her shoulders were shaking like she was crying, and her clothes were a mess."

Jack stopped the truck, and Tanya got out by herself, thinking a single woman would be less threatening to a child. She walked up where the girl could see her, and crouched down, not saying anything for a minute. Finally she said "Hi, my name's Tanya, can I help you?"

"I don't know if anyone can Tanya. My name's Lindsay."

"Why don't you think anyone can help, what's happened."

Lindsay turned to Tanya and yelled at her "Because those SOB's killed my father, raped me both ways, and raped and killed my mother!"

Tanya's heart went out to the girl, who couldn't be more than 12. "Lindsay, you're alive, and if you want to come with me, you'll be safer than you are here, and I can guarantee no one else can hurt you as long as I'm alive."

Lindsay opened her arms and fell into Tanya's arms, sobbing hysterically.

When she calmed down, Tanya told her she was a nurse, and if she was hurt or bleeding anywhere, she might be able to help. Lindsay said that she escaped from them over a week ago, wandering from Asheville west through the Smokey Mountains. She stopped bleeding a couple of days ago, but it still burned sometimes when she went to the bathroom. She asked Tanya if she had any food, she hadn't eaten anything more than berries and anything she could find since she left. Tanya said that she was traveling with her 4-year old son and her husband, and they were going to stay in a cave in the Smokey Mountains until this blew over, and she was welcome to stay with them. They had plenty of food and medicines. Lindsay grabbed onto Tanya like a life preserver, and they walked back to the truck. Tanya opened the back door, and helped Lindsay up into the cab, then handed her several bars of chocolate she kept handy. Lindsay saw the guns for the first time, and almost started screaming. Tanya calmed her down by telling her that they had to use them to protect themselves a couple of times when highway robbers tried to ambush them. Jack turned around in his seat and smiled. Hi Lindsay, I'm Jack, and that's Tyrone. If you need anything, just ask." She saw a bottle of water sitting next to her, so she asked if she could have some water. Jack said "Help yourself, but save the bottle, we might need it for later." Jack was suddenly glad that they had 4 AK-47s and thousands of rounds of ammo for them.

2 hours later, Jack crossed the Tennessee border, and breathed a sigh of relief. 2 miles later, he found the turn-off for the logging road that went into the mountains. The road looked like it was in really bad shape, so he got out, locked the hubs, and engaged 4-wheel drive. He crawled slowly through the rough road, and made slow time. An hour later, he was 5 miles into the road, and shut the engine down to listen for sounds, and get his bearings. All he could hear

were the wild sounds of the forest. He had several miles to go before they were close enough to where he hoped the caves were to get out and explore. He hoped he could find a safe campground for the night, because it got dark quickly in the deep woods. A mile down the road, he found the perfect place to spend the night, a tree had fallen, creating a clearing big enough to hold the truck and still have enough room to pitch the tent.

With the 3 of them pitching in, the tent was up in record time. Lindsay found a stream, and Jack filled all their water containers before he allowed anyone to bathe. He sat in the tent while Lindsay and Tanya bathed, and he watched Tyrone. When Tanya saw what those perverts had done to Lindsay's body, she was ready to push a button that would kill everyone that ever hurt a kid. She wrapped her in a big towel, had her sit down on another one, and fetched the first aid kit. She was crying when she got to the tent. Jack asked her what was wrong, and Tanya told him that Lindsay's injuries were worse than she told her originally, and she would need bandaging, pain meds, and antibiotics to fully recover. Jack was glad that between his kit, and the ones that Tanya had, they had it covered easily. Half an hour later, Lindsay was wearing the upper half of Tanya's hospital smock as a dress. Later when they were alone, Tanya told Jack that Lindsay's panties were full of encrusted blood, and she still showed gross lacerations and infections. Tanya said she was amazed that Lindsay was still alive, and told Jack that they were going to do whatever they had to so she'd get better. She couldn't bring her to a hospital since they were all closed, but they were going to use whatever medical supplies she needed. Jack suggested cleaning and recycling all the bandages they could. Luckily Lindsay wasn't allergic to any meds she knew of, so she started her on a strong course of Penicillin, and since she only weighed 80 pounds, 75 mg of Advil. She could tell Lindsay was in pain as she bathed, but once she was clean, she felt better.

That night, they slept quietly, and were up at first light. 2 hours later, they located a likely location for caves, and they followed game trails back into the woods. ½ mile off the road was a cave with a tiny opening, a huge main cavern, and several huge caverns branching off them. The floor was clean and dry, and it didn't look like anyone had been there before. On the way back to the truck, Jack tied little strips of colored fabric to branches at eye level so they could find the trail easily, and started unloading the truck. Jack was scratching his head, there were 4 of everything, but he only bought 2 sleeping bags and sleeping pads. Then he asked Tanya, and she said that they brought their sleeping bags and pads, and everything else they owned or could use from the General Store. Her Dad gave her 4 folding cots, which would be more comfortable and warmer than sleeping on the floor, and another 5 gallons of Coleman fuel, and 5 gallons of Kerosene for their lamps. She said that they were just taking up space, and since he didn't give them a wedding present, he told her to take all the camping stuff in the store. There were 2 single shot .22 rifles and 1,000 rounds of ammo, and 2 more single shot 12ga shotguns with 5 25-rd boxes of #7 birdshot, and 100 rounds of 00 Buck.

Later that evening, Tanya said that they had to go to town to get stuff for Lindsay, because all she had was the clothes on her back. Jack thought that was a bad idea, he didn't want to go anywhere near a big town, then he remembered he filched the phone book from the hotel room.

He found out that Wal-mart had a superstore in Sevierville, which was only 10-15 miles away. Tanya made a list of stuff they needed, and Jack checked his cash. He had \$2,000 left in cash, plus almost half a million in gold and silver. He highly doubted they would spend \$2,000 at Wal-mart. When Tanya made her list, he asked her about how much it would cost. "Only a couple hundred or so." Jack counted off 10 \$50 bills and handed it to her, then he asked Lindsay if she were OK waiting in the truck with Tyrone while they went shopping. They needed to buy some stuff for her, but it would be dangerous if anyone got too good a look at her with her torn and ripped clothing. She jumped up and gave Jack a big hug, and he held her for a minute. "Lindsay, you have nothing to worry about, your parents are gone, but I swear to God that I'll die defending you, Tyrone and Tanya before I'd let anything happen to you." Lindsay released Jack and started crying. Tyrone came over to her and put his arms around her, and she held him tight. Jack fired up the Coleman stove and made Spaghetti-O's for dinner. That reminded Jack of something he needed to add to his list. The next morning, they erased all signs visible from the outside that they were living in that cave, and hiked back to the truck. Jack input the junction of the trail and the logging road as a waypoint into his GPS, then shut it off. They drove carefully back to the main road, and drove to Sevierville, and found the Wal-mart. It was a huge Superstore, so Jack knew that they would have everything they would need. It was cool out, so Jack didn't worry about the "kiddie police" whining about them being locked in a hot vehicle. He handed Lindsay his copy of Good news for modern man, so she would be doing something. Tyrone would probably sleep, so they'd be ok. Jack and Tanya got out of the truck, locked the doors, and walked into the Wal-mart. There was a sign on the door "Cash Only", so Jack was glad that he had so much cash available. While Tanya raided the kids clothing aisles and the first aid stuff, Jack headed to Sporting goods to buy more camping stuff including Coleman fuel, arrows for his compound bow, a bunch of hunting broadheads and a broadhead sharpener, and .177 caliber pellets for the Crossman Hiker he had bought. He found some pre-made snares and bought some, and a couple of fishing kits, since the stream looked deep enough to hold fish. He bought Lindsay a small backpack and all the stuff she'd need, or at least what Wal-mart had. He knew that if they had to escape and evade, that he wanted her to have a fighting chance, since she was a survivor. He remembered to buy as much .22, 12 ga, .45 acp, and 7.62x39 ammo as they could sell him. The manager rang him up at the back counter, then escorted him through the store. He saw Tanya in line, who waved at him, and he said he'd see her outside and she nodded.

When she came out, he was loading the truck, and she added to the pile. Since she had the money, she got enough clothes for both kids, a ton of first aid supplies, and bought canned food with the rest of the money. Jack was glad he had an 8-foot bed, because they crammed it full of stuff. Tanya helped him tarp it and rope the tarp down. They drove out of town without incident, and Lindsay was happy to see them. Jack checked his rearview mirror constantly, but no one was following him, even after he made 4 right turns to check. He turned his GPS on when they got back in the forest, and it beeped when they got to the turn-off for the logging trail. Jack got out and attached an improvised drag he had thought of while he was in the store which should cover their tracks to anyone but an expert tracker. He drove right back to the junction of the logging road and their trail. He checked things out, but nothing had been

disturbed. They took the rest of the afternoon unpacking the truck, then Lindsay asked if she could sleep in her own room. Jack inspected the cave, and found a smaller cavern that they could close off with a tarp to give Lindsay some privacy. Tanya helped her move her stuff, and changed her bandages. An hour later, she came out looking like a different girl. Gone was the haunted look, and she was wearing nice clothes that fit and looked like a teenage girl would wear. She hugged Jack and said “Thanks, I feel much better now.”

“You can stay with us as long as you want Lindsay. Later if you have some relatives you’d like to find, I’ll try and help you locate them.”

“I don’t know if they survived. We were on vacation, and Dad said that everyone we knew in New York was hopefully a pile of ash.”

“Why’d he say hopefully?”

“He explained that if you were close enough to a nuclear explosion, you never knew what hit you, and if there was anything left of your body, you were a pile of ash.”

“Your dad’s right, I hope everyone I knew in Dallas Texas either was far enough to survive, or died from the blast, and didn’t know what hit them.”

“Sounds like we’ve both been through a lot. My Daddy was a computer programmer, what did you do before the big bang?”

“I was a real estate broker. I was in South Carolina closing a deal when the world blew up. I met some really nice black people who helped me survive, and Tanya was the daughter of one of them. Tyrone was the son of her ex-husband. I’ve adopted Tyrone.”

“Tanya says you’re really rich.”

“I was, but I was miserable. I learned to live more simply when I was living with Tanya’s folks, then I got access to some money, and I tried to use it to make things better when 2 rival gangs decided to turn our neighborhood into a war zone, and we had to leave. I made it out of there with the truck and everything on it. I’ve got some cash, gold, and silver, but not as much as I used to.” Lindsay laid her head on Jack’s chest, and he held her for a while, probably like her daddy used to. Tanya told them that dinner was ready, and to come and get it. They sat Indian style around a propane- fueled lantern. Jack knew once the propane ran out they would be forced to use what Kerosene that they had for light. Jack decided that their first priority would be to gather wood, since a wood fire provided heat and light, and it would get much colder in the winter. He could tell the cavern was well ventilated since the smoke of the lantern went straight up. Once Tyrone and Lindsay were asleep, Tanya said she wanted Jack to make love to her, so they climbed down off the cots, which would never hold their combined weight, and set the sleeping pads on the cave floor. Jack decided shortly thereafter that he’d have to find

something to pad that cave floor better, or they wouldn't be fooling around too much.

Chapter 7

Jack had everyone up and gathering wood the next day right after breakfast. He told everyone to stay in sight of each other, and just gather downed wood. He had them pile it in another small room of the cavern next to their food. Once they had cleared the downed wood, Jack saw that they only had a 3-day supply of wood. He'd need more wood, and that meant risk, since he couldn't cut trees around their cave, or someone would notice and assume that someone was living there. Jack talked to Tanya, who wasn't happy about him leaving her with the kids, but he didn't have a choice. Someone had to defend the kids while he was gone. He'd take a daybag with a camelback and a 72-hour kit, his Glock and 100 rounds of ammo. He'd love to take his AK, but it was heavy and he couldn't work with it. Then he remembered that he needed to bring the truck, so he could leave the AK in the truck, and if he heard anything, he'd head to the truck. An AK-47 in the truck beat an AK-47 in the cave miles away in case he needed it.

He took two of the FRS/GMRS radios he bought, and programmed them the same as his old radio. He bought a solar battery charger that could charge 9v and AA/AAA batteries, and a bunch of rechargeable batteries, so he would leave his radio on while he was gone. The radios came with belt clips, and he wore his pistol belt all the time outside, and told Tanya and Lindsay to do the same. He bought several large hunting style fanny packs at Wal-mart, with military style quart canteens, cups, stoves and covers. He bought enough polar pure, hand warmers, Swiss Army knives, compasses, fox-40 whistles, a box of trioxane fuel, plastic signaling mirrors, Mylar sleeping bags, a box of contractor grade trash bags, Mini-mag flashlights and spare bulbs, LED lights, several AAA-powered mini-headphone radios, Magnesium Firestarters, a 6-pack of butane lighters, several good folding knives (according to the salesperson) that said they were Benchmades, and pretty reliable, 3 Gerber Multitools like his, a 100-yd roll of monofilament, a dozen lead head jigs in assorted sizes ranging from 1/8 to 1/4 oz, a bag of plastic grub tails for the jigs, several packages of #12 treble hooks, some 50lb steel leader material with crimps, Gloves, stocking caps, several decks of "survival cards" that he thought might come in handy. While they didn't have any Paracord, he bought 100-yards of lightweight poly rope. Remembering what the SAS survival book said about firestarters, he raided the photo department, and came away with 2 dozen plastic 35mm film cans for free. He went over to the health and beauty department to pick up a bag of cotton balls, and a tub of petroleum Jelly, and 4 large pump bottles of Purell. Since he was right next to the food aisle, he raided the dry soup mixes, concentrating on the ones with meat and carbs in them like the Chicken Noodle, Beef Noodle, and Chicken with Rice soups. He almost cleaned them out of soup. Then he remembered they needed bleach and laundry soap, so he bought several gallons of each. Since Tanya had the list of first aid stuff, she bought everything for the cave kit, and their fanny pack kits. Jack made sure they had enough TP, and bought some baby wipes just in case.

Once they got back to the cave, they had fun putting the kits together, and Jack explained the use of everything in the kits, except the first aid items, which Tanya explained to everyone.

When she held up the panty shields, she could see her Husband turning red, and she giggled. The main reason they were going over this was to teach Lindsay as much as possible as quickly as possible. She absorbed the information like a sponge, and asked all kinds of questions. Jack put together several fishing kits, and packed 6 film cans full of PJ saturated cotton balls. He had fun getting the petroleum jelly off his hands when he was through. It was much easier filling the film cans full of Purell Jell. It was not only a hand cleaner, but since it was alcohol based, it made a pretty good fire starter. Jack showed Tanya and Lindsay how to build a fire, and they kept the fire lit in the cave, since it made it much lighter in there and warmer too.

Tanya learned to cook over a fire, and until she perfected the techniques, most meals came out of a can. Finally she learned to pull coals out of the fire and cook over the coals. She had rediscovered the keyhole fire lay, with a larger fire producing cooking coals and light, and a smaller keyhole end with flat rocks to rest the pots and pans on, with a pile of glowing coals in the middle.

Jack had bought a bow saw and a bunch of blades when he was at Wal-mart. He was amazed that some of his impulse buys turned out to be the most crucial. Sawing a tree down made less noise than chopping it, and they needed to be as quiet as possible. Jack only had rudimentary archery skills, but between the book he bought, and an archery kit they sold at Wal-mart that included a nice big target with stand, a string protector and instruction book, he figured out how to hit the target. When he wasn't sawing wood, he spent time practicing with the compound bow, and could finally hit the target 5 out of 5 times at 25 yards. As he increased distance, he found it was harder to aim, and light, wind, and how much coffee he had that morning became more significant factors. As the range increased, he understood what they meant about "Archer's Paradox" because when the string was first released, the arrow bent slightly, then sprang forward, sending the arrow on a slightly different path than where he was aiming. Eventually he managed to shoot out to 50 yards, then he started all over again with a broadhead. He saved a set of broadheads just for hunting so they would remain razor sharp, and practiced with a different set.

He told Tanya not to shoot a gun unless it was a life and death emergency, because gunshots carried quite a ways, and they didn't want to advertise that they had guns in a National forest, because he thought it might be illegal, and gunshots were likely to attract attention. He set out snares, and soon they caught rabbits and squirrels. Jack made a mess of the first few, then finally he got the hang of it, and dinner often consisted of rice, beans, and "Mystery Meat" or "catch of the day" as Tanya called it. They needed to conserve their canned goods, since Tanya wasn't sure if or when it would be safe to go back to the Wal-mart in Sevierville. Finally later that summer, Jack shot a deer while he was out chopping wood. It was a nice buck, and just stood there as Jack bent over, picked up his bow and arrows, and shot it from no more than 20 yards away. At least the broadhead did it's job, and the buck bled out quickly. Jack stood where he was and waited until the buck bled out, then followed the blood trail after he recovered the arrow.

Since he had read the SAS survival book, he knew how to treat the deer, and quickly hung it by

it's hind legs, bled it out, skinned it and gutted it. He left the entrails where they fell, knowing that scavengers would clean up after him. He took the heart and liver, since he knew that Tanya and Lindsay would need the iron and vitamins. While the carcass cooled, he packed up all the wood he had cut down, then when he was finished, he butchered the carcass and packed the meat into plastic bags, and drove it home. He didn't know what they were going to do with all that meat, but he hoped Tanya or Lindsay knew. When he got home, he told Tanya that he had killed a deer, and had the meat in a trash bag outside. Tanya thought for a minute, and said they needed to smoke the meat to preserve it. They had venison for dinner, and after dinner, Jack, Tanya, and Lindsay all started slicing meat into thin strips to smoke. Jack was wondering why Lindsay volunteered, and she said she needed to know how to do this if she were going to survive. Jack almost cried when he realized that Lindsay's childhood was gone. Jack built a drying rack out of sticks and twigs and suspended it over the fire high enough so that it wasn't being cooked, but was being dried by the hot air and smoked. Every couple of hours, he turned them over, and the next day they bagged them in Ziploc bags. Jack tried a piece, and thought that dog food probably tasted better, but Tanya said that the meat was edible and safe, and she would be able to work wonders with salt, pepper, Tabasco, and other seasonings when she cooked with it. Jerking the meat was the only reliable way of preserving meat they had.

Several weeks later, Jack shot another deer, and did the same to it. Tanya said that if he shot another deer, they'd have more than enough meat for the winter, but they were way short on wood, so Jack concentrated on cutting wood. Finally, right before winter, Jack spotted another buck and shot it. This shot wasn't a perfect shot, and he had to work to find it. What he found made him forget all about the buck, there was a huge natural pool full of fish. He whipped out his GPS, entered the coordinates into the memory, then located the buck. He dragged it back to a spot that was safely away from the water. He didn't want to contaminate the pool of water, or the fish. He was getting to be an expert in skinning and gutting the buck, and a couple of hours later, he was headed home early. He told Tanya of the pool full of fish, and she was as happy as he was, she was tired of eating nothing but rice, beans, and mystery meat, or venison. She had the flour and the other ingredients for fried fish and hush puppies. First they sliced the venison into jerky, then hung it to dry. Tanya told Lindsay that tomorrow they could go fishing, but she had to be quiet and careful. Lindsay would have promised to become the Pope to get out of that cave by then. The next morning, they drove to the pool, and two hours later, they had taken as many fish as Jack thought it was safe to remove from the pond so the remaining fish could reproduce. They had a dozen big fat bass on their stringers, and what wasn't eaten as fried fish that night was dried for use in fish chowders later that winter. Tanya had bought several cases of evaporated milk, potato flakes, #10 cans of potato soup mix that all she had to do was add water, and corn meal.

By now Lindsay had fully recovered, at least physically from her abuse, and was a gangly teenager again. She spent part of each day being Tyrone's Big Sister while Tanya did chores that she thought were dangerous enough to keep Tyrone safely away. Jack was wondering how Tanya was washing the clothes until one day he spotted a 5 gallon galvanized bucket in the corner and a plunger. He asked her, and she said that she could do all their shirts one at a time

using 1 bucket full of soapy water and the plunger to agitate the water. She was glad Jack had the 5-gallon containers of water, and he filled them every day from the creek, so she'd have fresh water for cooking and laundry. Jack almost broke down and cried remembering what he had left behind. If he could have brought his trailer, they could live in relative comfort instead of this blasted cave, then he remembered why he didn't bring the trailer, and started crying for real. Not realizing what was wrong, Tanya walked over to Jack, and he held on to her like a drowning man, and cried. Finally he told her, and she said "Jack, at least we're alive, and that beats dying by a long shot! Imagine if Tyrone and I had been taken alive!" Jack glanced at Lindsay and shuddered, he knew exactly what would happen to them if they were caught alive.

With the coming of Fall, Tanya asked Jack if they could make another run to the Wal-Mart in Sevierville. Jack wondered what would be worth the risk, and Tanya pointed out that none of them had any winter clothing, and it got cold here during the winter, and even snowed some. That got Jack's attention. With the coming of winter, they would need jackets, warm clothes, boots, and some other items. Tanya said they could use some foodstuffs, and Jack still had almost \$1,000 in cash left, so he agreed. They made arrangements, and left the next morning. With Lindsay looking like a normal teenager, and Tyrone able to walk on his own, it would take less time in the store, and hopefully it was still secure in Sevierville. Things looked normal as they drove into town, and Tanya kept her ear to the scanner, and Jack monitored the CB. The CB was quiet, and Tanya said there was just normal traffic on the scanner, so they took a risk and drove into Sevierville. The fact that it was a tourist town worked to their advantage, and people were used to seeing unfamiliar faces. Jack's blended race family caused more than 1 stare, but nothing threatening. They cruised up to the Wal-mart shopping parking lot, and were greeted by a Security Guard with a shotgun. "State your business."

"We're here to shop, is the store open?"

"Only if you have cash, gold or Silver."

"Got cash - everything OK?"

"For now, but supplies are running low, so don't expect things to be as cheap as last time. Check with me on your way out."

They parked the truck, and Jack slipped 4 extra gold coins into his money belt, and they walked into the store. The guard wasn't kidding, prices had doubled. Since they were taking gold, it wasn't a catastrophe, but if he wasn't rich, they'd be hurting big time. They bought jackets, boots, underwear, socks, gloves, and anything else they saw that they might need. Jack got a second cart to carry everything they'd need. Tanya grabbed their largest bags of staples, cases of canned goods, spices, salt, pepper, TP, laundry soap and bleach. She saw a larger galvanized tub, and unloaded the cart, then reloaded the cart with the tub in the bottom, since it fit. Jack bought some more instant coffee, creamer, sugar, cocoa and large ceramic mugs. Tanya spotted a nice big saucepan for heating water, and Jack bought 5 more 5-gallon water containers, and

several more gallons of kerosene and 2 extra kerosene lamps and wicks. He spotted several heavy-duty tarps and had an idea. He bought a 2-pound sledge hammer and several spikes, and a bunch of bungee cords. He checked the Sporting Goods counter, and they were almost sold out of ammo, and what they had was expensive. He bought 2 more Compound bows, and all the arrows and broadheads they had in stock. He asked the Manager if they had a Glock 21 for sale, and some 45 ammo. He said that he couldn't sell it over the counter, but if they could meet him out the back in about 20 minutes, they could sell him some stuff that "fell off the truck" Jack looked at the guy, who seemed trustworthy, so he said "This had better not be a set-up, I've got enough firepower to take out any attempt at a hijack or robbery."

"No sir, it's just that Wal-mart corporate isn't letting us sell pistols or pistol ammo anymore, so we have a huge inventory in the back that we can't sell. Since we can't sell it, there's no waiting requirement, or any paperwork. We don't take checks or plastic."

I can handle that. I need a Glock 21, 5 high-capacity mags for it, and 1,000 rounds of Corbon JHP ammo, and a good Kydex IWB holster, and 4 Kydex IWB single-mag carriers."

"Mister you know your guns!"

"I just know what I want. Does that Glock come with the Trijicon night sights and the M -3 light?"

"Not usually, but I can put them on, but it will cost you, and it will take about 30 minutes total."

"OK, I'll be in back in 30 minutes. I'm driving a grey 2004 Dodge Ramcharger diesel."

"That's your tank out front, for a minute I thought that Arnold Swartzenegger or Bert Gummer was paying us a visit. You have nothing to fear from us, but I wanted to warn you that several families have been hijacked, robbed and killed about 2 miles from here were the road curves. I think it might be an inside job, and with all the stuff you're buying, you're probably a target."

"Thanks for the warning. Here's something for the information."

Jack handed him a 1933 Liberty Silver Dollar, and the manager acted like he had handed him a million dollars. "Mister, you know what these are worth now?"

"Probably around \$20."

"More like \$50, why do you think that they've doubled the prices. They'd quadruple the prices, but they'd go bankrupt because no one could afford to buy anything. As is, they're losing their shirts, and they just hope they can stay in business long enough for the country to get back on its feet, but it doesn't look good. The rioting's getting worse instead of better."

Jack decided then and there to unload their FRNs on this trip, and asked Tanya if there was anything else she wanted, this would probably be their last trip. Tanya grabbed another cart, bought more paper products, soap, bleach, and canned goods. They had 3 carts by the time they checked out. It took all their cash, and 2 silver dollars to pay the bill. After they had packed, he told Tanya what the Sporting Goods Manager had told him. She said that they needed to give Lindsay an AK-47 in case they got ambushed so she could shoot out her side. Jack hit the ceiling "Damn it, she's just a kid!"

"Jack, no one can still be a child after what she's been through. I've already taught her how to handle and shoot the AK, but she's never fired one before due to your no shooting restriction."

"Ok, Tanya, break out another 2 AK's. Stick mine between the front seats, make sure the chamber's loaded and the safety's on, because if I need it, I'll need it quick."

They drove around back, and were met by the Sporting Goods Manager. Jack jumped down, and Tanya slid the gun port open. He handed Jack the G-27, the mags, holster, light, and ammo. Jack asked him how much in Canadian Maple Leafs.

"They're trading for \$800 an ounce, so we can do the whole deal for 1 Canadian Maple Leaf."

Jack reached into his waistband and extracted a Maple leaf, then carried his loot back into the truck and drove off. He looked in the back, and saw Lindsay lock and load, and open the gun port. Jack thought she had a good idea, and opened his port, and Tanya did too. Right where the Sporting Goods Manager said it would happen, bullets slammed against the truck, and a pickup tried to block their path. Jack was ready, and steered for the rear quarter panel of the truck, while Tanya and Lindsay laid down suppressive full auto fire. The noise in the cab was deafening, but the suppressive fire had it's effect, and all incoming rounds ceased. Still the truck tried to block them, so Jack stood on the throttle, and used 100% boost to push it out of the way. He reached over, grabbed his AK, and when the driver's side of the truck spun facing his door, he stuck his AK through the port and opened fire on the truck, shredding it, and killing the occupants. His last couple of rounds must have hit the gas tank, because as soon as they got clear, the truck caught fire. Jack kept driving until he reached a turnout about 5 miles down the road, and turned right, backed up so he was facing the road, and pulled back into the woods far enough to make sure no one would see them from the road unless they were walking. He shut off the engine, and asked "Everyone OK?"

Lindsay said "I'm fine, but I think I need to change my underwear!"

Tanya started laughing, and soon everyone was laughing. They stayed put for half an hour, but no one was obviously tracking or pursuing them, so he pulled out and drove at a more sedate pace to the turnout for their logging road. Jack thought about blocking the road, but knew it would be almost impossible to do and make it look natural, so he didn't.

They made it home right before dark, and Jack checked the cave, but everything was fine. Lindsay grabbed a fresh pair of underwear and a washcloth - evidently she wasn't kidding. She came out of her room wearing a different pair of pants and an apologetic look on her face. Jack hugged her and said "Thanks for shooting, you two probably saved our lives. Sorry that you had to go through that."

"Actually it felt pretty good being able to shoot back. That was how my Dad bought it, we were ambushed on a country road, and my Dad didn't believe in guns. His beliefs got him killed, me raped, and Mom raped and killed."

"How'd you escape?"

"While they were gang raping mom, she bit one of them, and when their attention was diverted by beating her to death, I grabbed my clothes and ran, then hid in a ditch behind some trees. They looked for about an hour, then gave up. I hid out in the woods, and then started walking west toward Tennessee. My Mom and Dad were dying to see Asheville, and got their wish."

Lindsay, we drove through Asheville, and something similar happened to us. We were backing out of the motel parking lot when two pickups blocked our escape route. If we didn't have this rolling tank and the AK's, I'm pretty sure the results would be the same."

Lindsay held Jack, and said "I never want to go anywhere without a gun again."

"I just happened to get something at Wal-mart you might like then."

Jack handed her the Glock 21, and her eyes danced when she saw how big the bullets were. "If I'd had this when those SOB's attacked us, they'd have been hamburger, and we'd still be alive."

"Lindsay, I hate to bring up painful memories, but there's a famous quotation "You can't rape a .38"

"What's a .38?"

"It's a different kind of gun, a small revolver that a woman could carry in her purse."

"I get it now - and my guess is it would be even harder to rape a .45! I will never let that happen again, I hurt for weeks, and bled for several days after I ran away."

"Lindsay, I'll never let that happen to you as long as I live, now you can protect yourself as well. We need to find some safe place to shoot that pistol and teach you how to shoot."

Jack spent the next couple of days making the cave ready for winter. He took the spikes and

hung several dark-colored tarps over the entrance where they couldn't be seen from outside, then drove another spike into the wall off to 1 side, and attached a bungee cord to it, and attached the other end to a grommet on the lower corner of the tarp. It would work as a primitive door, and the 2 tarps would effectively block the wind from coming in, yet still let the cave ventilate. Just to make sure, he lit a fire, and the smoke went straight up. Tanya had a surprise for Jack, she bought a king sized air mattress, and had a huge grin on her face when she showed it to him. He asked her if she were worried about getting pregnant in these primitive conditions.

"I guess I never told you, I've had my tubes tied, so I can't get pregnant."

"I wish you'd told me that sooner?"

"Why - wouldn't you have married me?"

"No silly, if you would have told me sooner, we could have done it every night!"

Tanya gave Jack a passionate kiss, and suggested he hurry up and blow up the air mattress.

Chapter 8

The next morning, Jack remembered a dream he had last night, and assembled all 3 compound bows. He was watching Dukes of Hazzard, and was it Luke or Bo Duke that shot the dynamite arrow at the bad guys. They didn't have any dynamite, but they had over 60 arrows, 100 broadheads, and 3 shooters. The bows they had could kill at 50 yards easily, and were much quieter than shooting someone. Jack asked Tanya if she'd like to learn to shoot a bow, and she looked at him as if he'd grown a 3rd eye overnight. Jack explained that since guns made too much noise, and they had 3 compound bows, that they should learn how to shoot them for hunting and self-defense uses. She said "Tyrone's a little young, don't you think?"

"That's why I only got 3 bows. You, me, and Lindsay. She's already packing a Glock Model 21."

"Why did you give her a gun?"

"Who else would I have bought 1 for?"

<DUH>

"Ok Tarzan, if you want to play with primitive toys, I guess I should find some suitable rocks for spears."

"Actually if anyone chucks spears around here, it should be you!"

Jack lit out of there just in case she could find something heavy to throw at him. 10 minutes later, she said he could come in; she was laughing so hard her sides hurt.

"You might be a white honky racist SOB, but you're a funny one - that line about Spear Chuckers was pretty good. You remember that SNL skit with Richard Prior and Chevy Chase?"

"You mean the word association test; I laugh my head off every time I think of it!"

"Just remember not to call me the N word."

"You mean Nearsighted?"

"That too!"

Tanya, Jack, and Lindsay carried their bows out to the "range" and Jack explained the basics to the women. He resisted the urge to talk "caveman" because Lindsay wouldn't get the joke. They had 4 arrows each with field points on them, and after a few hours, and some minor

mishaps, they figured out how to hit the target. By the end of the day they were pretty good out to 25 yards. Jack said they needed to practice until they could shoot as well at 50 yards, then switch to Broadheads. Lindsay looked at Jack funny until he explained that a bow made hardly any noise compared to a gun, and they were better for hunting or Self-defense, unless it was a life-or-death emergency. Being a good shot with a bow and arrow was a long-term survival skill, because they would eventually run out of ammo, but they could build their own bows and arrows like the Native Americans did. Jack could see the light bulbs going off, and knew that they got it. Jack wondered if there were any obsidian or flint to make arrowheads and spear heads out of. Jack hoped they wouldn't need Flint lock rifles and black powder, since if society went that far down the tubes; it wasn't going to recover in his lifetime.

Once they were finished with their preliminary archery practice, Jack went to cut some more wood, because you could never have too much, well you could, but you'd die of exhaustion before you'd run out of room to store it. Jack's radio beeped 3 times, the emergency code, and he dropped everything and drove as fast as he could to the cave. Finally Tanya's voice came over "All Clear, Lindsay just shot a puma." Jack slowed down, then carefully hiked up to the cave in case the cat wasn't dead. When he got to the cave, there sat a 100 pound female Puma with an arrow through her chest. Judging from the angle, the cat was on a rock above the cave when Lindsay shot her. Jack ran inside to check on Lindsay. She was shaking, but other than that, she was OK.

"I'm sorry Tanya, I didn't want to kill it, but it was too close to the cave."

Jack walked up to her, and said "Lindsay, why didn't you just shoot it with your Glock?"

"I didn't know how. I was afraid I'd miss. Is it dead?"

"Yes, your arrow went right where it was supposed to. The cat died almost instantly. Don't feel bad about killing anything that is a threat to yourself or us. If you would have let that cat live, it could have killed you or us. You did the right thing!"

"Really Jack, I thought you'd be mad since I killed another animal?"

"Why would you think that?"

"My Dad said that all animals were sacred, and we weren't supposed to kill them unless we ate them."

"You're dad was right and wrong. Animals aren't sacred, at least any more than a human, and as far as killing what you don't eat, did you eat every fly you killed?"

"Gross, of course not?"

“Well, you killed it - right? Did your Dad eat flies?”

“Of course not.”

“OK then, you learned 1 exception to that rule, the other is if they threaten the lives of people. God created order in the Universe, and he told us to take care of the Animals, but also to have Dominion over them, that means we’re in charge, and more important. Do you understand now?”

“Yeah, that bad ole puddy tat was gonna eat us, and I killed it first?”

“Not Bad Tweetie!”

“When you two get done with Saturday Morning cartoons, there’s a puma carcass that needs cleaning and skinning.”

“Tanya, do you really want to eat that mangy old cat? It looks old and tough.”

“Lindsay, what do you want to do?”

“I don’t know, I’ve never eaten a cat, I don’t know if I could, it would be too much like eating Sylvester.”

“Who’s Sylvester?”

“My Black and white cat at home. I named him after the “bad old putty tat” in the cartoon.”

“Ok, I’ll take the carcass away from here, and the scavengers will clean it up.”

Jack walked outside, carefully unscrewed the broadhead, and removed the arrow. He threw the carcass back in the bed of the truck, and drove halfway to his logging site, and tossed the carcass into the bushes downwind of the logging road, so he wouldn’t have to smell it. When Jack got back, they sat down and discussed how they would safely practice using their pistols. Jack suggested they drive down the logging road, back to the main road, and toward the North Carolina border, and find a suitable site down another logging road. That way if anyone heard the shooting, they wouldn’t associate it with the cave or that logging road.

The next day, they loaded up the truck, and carried everything they needed, including 3 loaded AK’s, their bug-out bags, and their pistols. Jack found a suitable logging road on the North Carolina side of the Smokey Mountain National Park. They drove down the road for almost 5 miles when Jack spotted what looked like an abandoned quarry. He parked the truck and set up some empty boxes as targets at 15 feet and 15 yards. He handed them earplugs and eye protection, and then talked Lindsay through the safety rules, and how to operate, and field strip

the Glock. He then had her dry fire the Glock Model 21 10 times before he handed her any ammo. By her 10th dry fire, she said she was aware of where the sights were pointing when the trigger broke. He handed her a loaded mag, watched as she slammed the magazine home with authority, grab the back of the slide, and cycle the action, then point the gun at the target. As soon as she was on target, she fired 13 quick rounds into the box, and the group could be covered with her hand. Jack wondered what demons she was exorcizing with each trigger pull. He had her switch to the 15 yard target, and try the same thing again. He made it clear to her that the object wasn't to empty the magazine into a 2 square foot box, but to shoot a controlled group, so her entire group could be covered by Jack's hand. She succeeded, and it only took a fraction of a second longer than last time. Tanya showed her how to wear the IWB holster, and she practiced drawing and holstering an unloaded gun all day the previous day, and today they had her do it with a loaded gun, put 2 rounds in the target, then put a 3rd round into a target 1 foot higher. She was careful to draw safely the first time, and her time reflected it. Within an hour, she was pretty quick for a 12 year old girl. Jack said that they had stayed as long as he dared, and they needed to get back. They were on the alert all the way home, but never saw anyone. Hopefully the abandoned quarry was so remote that either everyone went there to shoot and no one thought anything of it, or there wasn't anyone around to hear it.

Jack was glad when Tanya bought some games last time they were at Wal-Mart, and Jack picked up as many books as he could, especially if the title looked like something useful. He hit the jackpot when he found Carla Emery's Encyclopedia of Country Living. He couldn't use a lot of the info now, but in a few years when things settled down, they'd find an abandoned farm and settle down. Jack still had almost ¾ of a million in gold and silver (at the prices he bought them at) with them, and that would help them get re-settled. He wasn't worried about the rest of his money, but if he could get any more of it, he might. He wrote in his diary the account number in Beaufort SC, and the safe deposit number for the stored gold and silver. He estimated there was still over 7 million in silver and gold there. He hoped he was still alive when things got back to normal because in their hurry to leave South Carolina, they forgot to get a marriage license. He told Tanya that the first thing they had to do when they got to civilization was to get a marriage license, legally adopt Tyrone and Lindsay if she wanted him to.

Jack's next worry was whether or not the stream would freeze over the winter. He knew that the stream at Old Mr. Johnson's place didn't freeze, so he hoped this one wouldn't either. Their "outhouse" problem was solved when Tanya located a "bottomless" pit off a side branch of the cavern, and had taken a "portable loo" bucket with a seat and cut the bottom of the bucket out, and fixed it in place over the hole. Jack drove a spike into the cave wall to hold a roll of TP, and they covered the opening with a tarp for privacy, it was a lighter colored tarp that covered from ankles to neck high and let in enough light so they didn't need a candle in the "bathroom" except that they should have called it the "in-house" since the bathroom was the same tub they washed clothes in. No showers in a cave during the winter. Tanya was worried that the kids' education would suffer while they were hiding out, and had purchased several educational books, and a case of legal pads and boxes of pencils. Several hours each day, Tanya and Jack

took turns educating the children, and as Tyrone got older, Jack started teaching him basic survival information from the SAS book, and stuff he had learned the hard way, usually in the form of humorous anecdotes. Lindsay supplemented her 3-r's as she called them with reading Carla Emery's book cover to cover, and taking notes.

Jack spent the rest of the fall chopping and splitting wood, and carrying it back to the cave by the truckload, and watching the fuel gauge going down. Thankfully he filled the wood storage room before he dipped dangerously low into his stock of diesel fuel. He had constructed a camouflaged shelter for the truck using poles, green tarps, and tree boughs. Once the snow started flying, he packed it in for the winter, except to check traps and fill his water containers. Tanya said they had more than enough meat between what he'd killed, and the canned meat products she had bought at the store. She was surprised that a Wal-mart would sell #10 cans of powdered eggs, soup mix, and other stuff you used to have to order from Walton foods or some other specialty foods distributor. For breakfast they either had pancakes, Oatmeal (sometimes with raisins and brown sugar with cinnamon as a treat), biscuits and gravy; or as a rare treat, a ham and egg omelet. They usually skipped lunch unless it was cold then Tanya would serve soup. Dinner could be anything from Mystery Meat Stew to Fish chowder. Tanya was a real creative cook, and made the most of their limited supplies, which would have to last at least until spring. Whenever Jack walked outside to get water, he took the Police Scanner to check on the state of the world. From what he could hear, Tennessee had gotten the rioting stopped in Nashville, and things were returning to normal. Hopefully that meant that the Federal Government had gotten its act together.

Several times a day, at 9am, 12 noon and 6pm, they checked the AM frequencies on their pocket radio for any news. While most of it was propaganda, the local broadcasts were more truthful. The Chinese had badly underestimated the strength and resolve of the United States, and China as a nation had ceased to exist, as the remaining provinces split into feudal kingdoms. Russia offered the US assistance, and for once we got smart and took them up on it. Keeping China in check was in Russia's best interest too, so they "protected" the pacific coast of Russia and China, and supertankers bound for Hong Kong and Singapore were escorted by WWII-era destroyers the Soviet's had mothballed decades ago. Still no pirate wanted to mess with even a WWII destroyer's 5-inch gun, plus the 40mm Bofors guns they mounted for AA, but later a pirate found out that the AA mount can shoot like a regular mount as well, when 4 40mm HE rounds crashed into his engine room, sinking the boat with all hands. Europe suffered as well, since the US had no money to give, and no troops to send so some European General could go on a Peacekeeping mission. We recalled all our troops from Europe, and wished them well. Eventually we got untangled from the mess in the Mideast, and Israel soon emerged as the military top dog in the region. Since the UN got nuked with New York City, there was no one to object when the Israelis finally cleared out the Palestinian camps, and threw immigration open to anyone with Jewish ancestry that wanted to work. They soon found work - all the lousy jobs that the Palestinians used to do, but since they were ethnic Jews, they soon learned Hebrew and moved up, just like the Irish and Italians did decades ago in the US. With its enemies subdued and its borders secured, the Israelis were able to cut back on military expenditures and

grow their economy.

France and Germany got into a border war again, but with their superior weapons and officers, the German army steamrolled over the French countryside, and drove into Paris. This time they decided to do things right, and leveled Paris, and told the Parisians to get a real job! Evidently the Germans were tired of the Frenchies superior attitude too. The funniest thing about the war was the images broadcast to the world of French soldiers surrendering to unarmed helicopters. The German Generals that saw that were disgusted, and remembered a scene from DS#1, where the Iraqi Army was surrendering to unarmed observation helicopters, and thought that the French must have taught the Iraqis how to fight. Later, the Germans decided they really didn't want France, and Britain wouldn't take them either. Finally they were given their independence, and no sooner did they gain their independence than they started telling everyone how they beat the Germans, and that French wine was superior to every wine on the globe. President Grassley wanted to drop a MOAB on them, but his Chief of Staff said "why bother?"

President Grassley became the President of the United States when all other senior Senators were killed when the Chinese nuked DC. President George Bush's last act as President of the United States was to launch a retaliatory strike against China, and two days later, he dropped dead of a massive heart attack when he learned that DC was nuked, but the thing that killed him was the Chinese targeted his home compound in Crawford TX. Aides said that he got so mad that he was about to launch an all-out strike against China and "turn it into a glowing parking lot" when he clutched his chest and keeled over dead. The VP was away from DC at a campaign speech, unfortunately right at Ground Zero of a 500KT bomb. With Official Washington destroyed and the President and Vice President dead, there was no one left on the list to succeed President Bush, so the Military assumed control until a suitable Senator could be located. With the military in charge, they recalled all our troops, and quickly got order restored. Finally they located Senator Grassley in his home town of New Hartford Iowa. He was stunned by the news the FBI and Secret Service agents gave him, that he was now the President Pro Tem, until elections could be held. He was glad that at age 61 he still had a strong heart, otherwise the news could have killed him.

Several junior Senators and Congressmen wanted to confiscate all weapons in the hands of citizens, but instead President Grassley decided wisely that the Army couldn't be everywhere, and if they were, it would be a police state, so he revoked all Gun Control acts by executive order, at least for the duration of the emergency. Later when a new Congress was elected, they could deal with the issue. Since DC was toast, and he lived in Iowa, the smart thing to do was to relocate the government, or what was left of it, to Iowa. When President Grassley found out what kind of condition the country was in, he suddenly didn't want the job. Still, he had a duty to do, so he started putting things in motion. He gave state governors authority to do whatever they had to restore order, get the utilities restored, and take care of refugees. The center of the Country was OK, since the Chinese didn't target the mid-west, since they wanted our breadbasket intact. Somehow that attitude permeated People's Liberation Army thinking so deeply that it affected their targeting even during an all-out first-strike scenario. As a result,

both coasts received the brunt of the warheads. Texas got clobbered perversely because President Bush was from Texas, since there was no military advantage to be gained by destroying Dallas and all the other major cities in Texas. Even Crawford got it's very own 500KT nuclear warhead, and it was barely 1/10th the size of Dallas. President Grassley realized something about the Chinese Leadership from their targeting, they were a bunch of mean-spirited greedy old men, and vindictive as well. He thought the world would be better off without them.

President Grassley, a lifelong Baptist, spent more and more time in prayer as he came to realize the extent of the damage, suffering, and destruction wrought by the Chinese first strike. He thought about blowing China off the map like his predecessor did once he learned about the level of death and destruction, then realized the average Chinaman had about as much responsibility for nuking the United States as he did for Southern Slavery. One thing that horrified him was the retaliation against Americans of Asian decent, because when word leaked out about the Chinese responsibility for the attacks, any one with oriental features wound up being a target for retribution. Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, and even Filipino Americans were targeted to the point that they armed and organized to defend themselves. In California, Asian gangs became de-facto city governments in Asian enclaves, and also acted as a Militia to protect residents. Finally the situation in California stabilized as NG units from adjacent states made headway and separated the warring factions. There were hundreds of summary executions and very brief trials when criminals caught in the act of murder, rape, robbery, arson, or looting were either summarily executed by an officer's sidearm, or brought before a Military Tribunal and hung.

Finally with the bulk of the Criminal Element pushing up daisies or turning over a new leaf, the unrest settled down, and they began the long rebuilding process. First local utilities were repaired and reconnected, then as they had been proven reliable, the interconnection began. The costs were astronomical, and the Federal Government opened the money taps. They seized Chinese Government assets to pay for rebuilding the US, so we didn't go much deeper into debt. One nice thing about a National Emergency is the President has practically dictatorial powers. He ordered banks to transfer funds from all Chinese government accounts, and they did so, or risked the wrath of the US government. When the European governments heard of President Grassley's orders, the British and German governments ordered their banks to transfer all Chinese assets to the US Government as well.

The net effect was to almost eliminate the US debt, and provided enough money to rebuild the US.

The following Spring, Jack was listening to the radio when President Grassley addressed the Nation.

"My Fellow Americans, or what's left of us. This is President Pro Tem Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa. Law and Order is being restored as we speak, and I'm declaring amnesty for anyone violating US weapons laws for the duration of the emergency. You can hold onto your weapons

for now, and when Congress reconvenes, they can deal with the issue of armed Americans. If you're hiding, try checking and seeing if it's safe to return to your homes, we need your help in rebuilding the country. In the case of people who are known dead, their property can be transferred to someone willing to homestead their farms, etc. We need people to start planting gardens, raising crops, and raising stock right now to ward off starvation. Our stocks of stored food are almost depleted, and we need to make more as fast as possible. For those who have experience in large-scale farming, I'm authorizing very generous credit terms and favorable prices for your goods to get your land producing its maximum yield. If for some reason overproduction results in price reductions, instead of paying farmers not to produce, the US Government will buy the surplus at market value and store it in case there is another disaster. Your State Governors have all the authority they need to get things started again, so please return to your homes where possible, or at least report in to government officials so we can get things rolling again.

Thank you and God Bless America!"

Jack knew from listening to the scanner that things weren't as rosy as the temporary President had said, but at least they were trying to get things going. The decision he needed to make was where to resettle, North Carolina, South Carolina, or Tennessee. His last state of residence was Texas, and from what he heard on the radio, the entire state was hit by a dozen 500KT warheads aimed at each major city, and 1 inexplicably at Crawford Texas. He sat down and talked with Tanya and Lindsay, who said they'd wait a while and see where the best place to relocate was.

Chapter 9

A few months later, Jack and Tanya decided that they had to risk going out, they were low on supplies, and they couldn't eat gold. They packed up the truck and drove carefully to Sevierville. They were in for a surprise when they spotted a Deputy and 2 cruisers blocking the road. He had his hand on his pistol and his hand up in the universal Stop position. Jack idled up to the officer, shut the engine down, and told Tanya to stay in the truck.

"Good Morning Deputy, how can I help you?"

"What business do you have in Sevierville?"

"We were hoping that the Wal-Mart was open, we needed to do some shopping."

"Are you armed?"

"Of Course - the President's address gave us blanket immunity and amnesty."

"Ok, don't do anything stupid, we're just trying to keep Criminals out. By the looks of your truck, you've been in a few scrapes."

"We've survived at least 2 attempted ambushes, once on the way out from Wal-Mart last fall!"

"Ok, that explains a couple of things. By the way, thanks for taking that bunch of thugs out."

"Deputy, we've been living in a cave since this all started, so we need 2 things really, some supplies and somewhere to farm. I can pay for any supplies, and we'd rather live in a nice comfortable house than a cave."

"We have several abandoned properties, but you'll have to talk to the Sheriff about that, can I see some ID please?"

"Sure, my wallet is in my hip pocket."

"Ok, remove it slowly with 2 fingers."

Jack slowly reached into his hip pocket and withdrew his wallet, and handed him his Texas Driver's license.

"This here says you're from Dallas. You're one lucky guy; there were very few survivors in Texas."

“I was in South Carolina closing a real-estate deal with Governor Sanford.”

“You don’t say. I read about that right before the world came to an end.”

“I drove to a small property that was included in the deal, but didn’t sell. It was in the middle of a poor black community. My next door neighbor helped me out, and I got back on my feet. Just when things were looking good, the Klan attacked with Flame throwing tanks and we were forced to bug out. The woman in the front is my wife Tanya, and the little boy in the back is my adopted son Tyrone. The little girl in the back’s name is Lindsay, she’s from New York, and we picked her up just outside Asheville. She’s the lone survivor of an attack on her family, and they treated her badly. If we can get to a courthouse, I’d like to legally adopt her as well.”

“That’s quite a tale there Mr. Van Buren. Would you mind following me to the Sheriff’s office so we can get this all sorted out?”

“Sure, lead the way!”

Jack climbed back into the cab of the truck and fired up the diesel.

“So what did he say?”

“We need to go to the Sheriff’s office and get this all straightened out. Good news is we aren’t under arrest, and he gave me back my Drivers’ License.”

“Ok, we’ll just have to trust that God will watch out for us.”

When they pulled up to the Sheriff’s office, the deputy asked them to leave their weapons in the truck. He was amazed when all 3 of them pulled out 45-caliber Glock Model 21 automatics, and 4 spare magazines each. Jack locked the truck up, and they went inside. They followed the deputy right into the Sheriff’s office, and they were shown comfortable seats. The deputy filled the Sheriff in, and he made some entries on his computer.

“Jack Van Buren - Ok, I’ve got your records right here, as far as we’re concerned, everything’s copasetic. Seems you did the county a big favor by taking out some major trash. Deputy said you were looking for some place to stay. The old Miller place is available. It’s 50 Acres with water and wood on the property. He used to have a small farm, so there’s probably a tractor and stuff there. There’s 5 years of back taxes owed on the property, and they died during the unrest it says here.”

“How much is the back taxes?”

“Right around \$100.”

“How much are pre-1936 Silver dollars trading for?”

“About \$120 per ounce.”

“How about 1oz Canadian Maple Leafs?”

“About \$2,000 per ounce.”

“Can I pay the back taxes, and say 5 years in advance?”

“If you’ve got 2 silver dollars, I’ll write you a receipt and transfer the funds to the County Treasurer’s office myself.”

Jack stood up, reached into his money belt, and extracted 2 silver dollars, and handed them to the Sheriff. He wrote a receipt for the taxes, and a note that they were now the legal owners of the Miller Ranch.

“Sheriff, we need to see the County Clerk anyway, and register our marriage, and adoptions.”

“Sure, 4 doors down on the right. Here’s my card if you need anything.”

“Thanks Sheriff.”

Jack breathed a huge sigh of relief when they closed the Sheriff’s door.

They walked down to the Clerk’s office, and she didn’t even bat an eye at their requests. When they mentioned that they wanted to adopt Lindsay, the clerk asked Lindsay if she had any living relatives.

“Not that I know of Ma’am. I was from New York City, and I just learned that NYC took a nuke. We were visiting Asheville on vacation when the bombs started falling. My mom and dad are dead, so I can say that there probably aren’t any living relatives.”

“Do you consent to this adoption? It means changing your last name to Van Buren.”

Lindsay looked at Jack, and said “Sure, were do I sign up?”

10 minutes later, and another Silver dollar, everything was legal. They had a State of Tennessee Marriage License and adoption papers for Tyrone and Lindsay. The clerk was even nice enough to give them a map from the Recorder’s Office showing where the Miller place was. They walked back out to the truck, put their guns back in the holsters, and drove over to the Miller place. For being abandoned, it was in pretty good shape. He could see where they had animals, but they were all gone. He had an old John Deere tractor and some farm implements in the

barn, but the fuel tank was empty. Jack wondered what happened to the owners, so he drove to a neighbor's house and introduced himself, and his family. He was glad to see that they were a black family, and the place looked prosperous. Their family of 4 were glad to see Jack and his family, and introduced themselves as Eugene, Gertrude, Rebecca and Tyler Smith. They were keeping an eye on the Miller place while they went to a funeral up north, when they received word that they were killed in a car crash. Jack showed Gene the Sheriff's note, and Gene handed him the front door key and said "Guess we're going to be neighbors. If you need anything, just holler."

"Sure, could you watch the place while we go retrieve our stuff? We should be back in 2 days. If we don't show up, call the Sheriff and file a Missing person report on us. We're going back to our cave and unloading all the stuff so we can start up here." Jack showed him where the cave was on the map, so if they didn't show up, they knew where to look.

Jack shook Gene's hand, and Tanya gave Gertrude a hug. Rebecca was 15, and Tyler was 13, and Jack could tell that Lindsay might have found some new friends, since Tyler was her age, and a nice kid. They drove back out to the roadblock, and told the Deputy where they were going, and how soon they should be back. They arrived at the cave without incident, and packed everything up as quickly as they could. They arrived back at the Miller place shortly before dark, and Tanya lit some kerosene lamps, and got everything organized. Tanya was pleased to find out they had a propane stove, and it seemed they had plenty of propane, because the stove lit on the first try. She made Spaghetti-O's for dinner, since they had canned food left, and she was too tired to cook. She called everyone for dinner, and they sat around the big ranch table and said grace. After they started eating, they all started talking. Lindsay had a bedroom all to herself that must have belonged to a girl her age, with a nice comfortable bed. She took a shower for the first time in over a year and got changed. The light airy house changed her mood dramatically, and she was acting like a teenager again. Jack checked out the master bedroom, and realized it was huge, and had a ceiling fan with a light in the middle, and a nice big master bathroom with a huge tub/shower combo. He too took a shower, and literally watched the grime go down the drain. After dinner, Tanya took a shower, then they went to bed, but Jack and Tanya didn't go to sleep.

The next morning Jack walked over to Gene's house with a page and a half of questions. Gene was real patient and helped Jack as best as he could. There were supplies to be had, they were just expensive. Jack said that wouldn't be a problem, and handed Gene a Silver dollar for his advice. Jack told Gene who he was and what he used to do. Gene thought "Man you could buy this whole county if you wanted to, what are you doing here?"

Jack answered Gene's unasked question. "Gene, until I met Leroy and Tanya's father, I had never known a black man, and I was a greedy, money-grubbing real-estate tycoon. I was miserable too, because all the money I had wasn't enough. I always thought money could buy happiness, then I realized that I was really the poor one, since without my money, I was practically useless. If there's anything you need, just let me know."

“Jack, we’re happy right where we’re at, but thanks for offering. I guess if the tractor breaks down or something, I’ll know were to go!”

“Exactly - I don’t want my wealth to corrupt you, but I wanted you to understand that you don’t have to worry about money anymore either.”

“The Good Lord must be looking out for me!”

“I can tell you he’s been looking out for me lately, and the funny thing was up until a while ago, I denied his existence, and believed everything I had was due to my hard work. Then I had it all taken away from me, and found out you can be materially poor, yet spiritually rich.”

“Amen Brother!”

“So where’s the best place to buy Diesel around here, my truck’s about empty, and I wanted to put in a tank at the farm.”

“How big a tank you looking to get?”

“Probably right around 500 gallons.”

“The way things been going, if you’ve got money to burn, I’d get a couple thousand gallon tank, get it buried, and put in a pump.”

“Why’s that?”

“Things in the Middle East are heating up, and you would be better off having fuel than not.”

Jack thanked Gene and walked back to the house. “Tanya, I’m going to get the diesel tanks in the truck filled, do you want to come and go shopping later, or what?”

“Let’s get some groceries, things are getting low.”

They all got in the truck, and Jack drove to the fuel distributor Gene recommended. He filled the tank with diesel, and walked inside to pay, and asked for the owner. The clerk said “One minute” and knocked on a door. This big black guy comes out and says “May I help you?”

Jack sticks his hand out and says “Jack Van Buren, Gene Smith said you were the man to see if I wanted to buy a bunch of Diesel.”

“Just how much we talking about?”

“Somewhere between 2 and 5 thousand gallons depending on how big of a tank you’ve got, and

what kind of pricing you can give me.”

“Mister, 5 thousand gallons of diesel costs \$8,000 plus the tank, the pump, and the labor to dig it - just how were you going to pay for it?”

“Would you prefer a wire transfer, cashier’s check, or gold.”

“Where did you say you were living?”

“The old Miller place, right next to Gene Smith.”

His secretary handed him a note, and his face smiled.

“Must be nice to know the right people. Seems that your credit ratings better than mine!”

“How’d you get that information so fast?”

“We’re hooked into a national database that combines TRW and some other credit companies’ data with Dunn & Bradstreet. It’s worth every penny we spend for it. This says you’ve got about 20 mil in the bank, so we can take a wire transfer.”

“Ok, so you said \$8,000 for the diesel, plus the tank, pump and labor. I also need this fuel preserved with Pri-D or what the military uses. It might be in the ground a while.”

“Ok, 5 thousand gallons of treated diesel, tank, pump, and labor; let’s call it \$20 grand even.”

Jack looked at his shirt and saw the owner’s name was John.

“Ok John, just what pricing are you giving me on the fuel?”

“That’s my Jobber rate, to get wholesale, which is what I pay for it, you need to order 10,000 gallons per month.”

“Don’t think I’m going to need that much fuel. Was that road diesel or agricultural diesel.”

“That was road diesel, I don’t sell agricultural diesel. If you want to, I can give you the forms to request a refund from the feds, but don’t hold your breath.”

“Ok, thanks John. One last thing, I need your account number to do the transfer.”

“Where do you bank?”

“Right now I’ve got an account in Beaufort South Carolina at the Bank of America.”

“Why don’t you just follow me to the bank since I need to make a deposit anyway, and I’m sure they can take care of it there. I bank at the local Bank of America.”

“Thanks John - I’ll follow you there.”

10 minutes later, they pulled up at the local Bank of America branch. John got out and said “That truck looks like it’s been through WWII!”

“It has, it’s saved my bacon more than once in the last year or so.”

They walked inside, and John introduced Jack to the Bank President Jim Wilson. Jack gave Jim his account number, and Jim’s eyes flared, and his attitude changed considerably.

“Mr. Van Buren, it says here you have deposits on account of \$20 Million?”

“What - the last time I checked it was only 7 million, can I check your screen?”

Jim turned the monitor around, and there was a 13 million dollar deposit from the B of A crediting deposits of 13 million found in the Dallas B of A. Jack guessed his money finally caught up with him. He asked the president if he could use the phone. Jim handed Jack the phone, and he dialed the president of the Beaufort B of A’s private number. “Welcome to Beaufort Bank of America, this is Steve, how may I help you?”

“Steve, Jack Van Buren, how’s it going?”

“Jack, is that you? We thought you died, and started procedures to close your account, then we get an inquiry from the Sevierville B of A. Please tell me this is not a bad joke!”

“Sorry buddy, it’s me! The president here says I have an account balance of \$20 million now. I need to know if that figure includes my metal on deposit.”

“Jack, I’ve got your account information in front of me now, and it looks like Corporate has finally posted balances from Texas. I guess they had to use backup tapes. Anyway, you’ve got \$20 Million in cash, plus your metals.”

“Steve, can you hold on for a second?”

“Sure, I’ll be right here.”

“Jim, that was Steve at the B of A in Beaufort South Carolina. In addition to the cash, I have around \$7 million in gold and silver coins on deposit in their safe deposit. Are you equipped to store precious metal here, we’re talking around 800 pounds easy.”

“Holly Cow! I’ll have to check with my head teller, but we do have a safe deposit, I don’t know if we’re set up for metals, excuse me please!”

John looked at Jack with new-found respect - this guy was as rich as Howard Hughes!

2 minutes later, Jim said that they had sufficient capacity to store that kind of metal. It would cost him \$5,000 per month for storage and insurance. Jack thought about that, and asked how much interest a \$20 million dollar deposit earned per month. Jim caught his drift, and said he’d be back in a second. Jack guessed he was calling Corporate on another line, and his guess was confirmed when another light lit on the phone, and then went out, and Jim came back in. “I talked with Corporate, and as long as you maintain \$10 million in deposits, we’ll waive the storage and insurance fees.”

“Great, can I get that in writing, then I need a wire transfer to John’s business account in the amount of \$20 Thousand.”

“Sure Mr. Van Buren, whatever you want.”

“One last thing, I need the metal transferred by armored carrier from Beaufort to here at the bank’s expense and risk.”

“I’ll have to make the arrangements, but I’m sure we can accommodate you.”

Jack turned to John “So, when can you have the tank in?”

“I’ve got one in my yard, all I need to do is rent an excavator and a crane. Sometime this week, let’s say, I’ll get started and be finished within a week after I start.”

“How about permits, etc.”

“I’ll take care of all necessary permitting, etc.”

“Thanks John, nice doing business with you!”

Jack walked back out to the truck, got in, and started the motor. “Guess What?”

“What’s up Jack?”

“When I went into the bank to take care of the tank payment, the bank President tells me there’s 20 million in my account instead of \$7, and that’s not including the metal!”

Lindsay quipped “Gee dad, does that mean I get a Ferrari for my 16th birthday?”

“I can get you one now, but I don’t know where a toy store is.”

“You Meanie!”

“Lindsay, we promised each other we weren’t going to live like rich people. If you wanted a Ferrari, you should have gotten adopted by Mario Andretti!”

“I think I like it here better Dad.”

“Smart Girl.”

When they arrived at the Wal-mart parking lot, the same Security guard was sitting there with a shotgun. “Long time no see! I see you have some souvenirs from the last time you shopped here. Thanks for getting those guys for us, they were bad for business.”

They parked right in front, since the parking lot was practically deserted. The store was full, but the prices were way higher than before. Jack shook his head, and told Tanya to just buy what they needed. They’d wait until later to buy luxuries when the prices were more reasonable. Tanya bought everything on the list anyway, since she thought that they were necessary. Jack was stunned when they told him how much a single Canadian Maple Leaf was worth. Even since the last time he had shopped there, the value of his gold coin had doubled again, so 1 gold coin paid for everything. Thinking quickly, he ran to the back of the store, and the Sporting goods manager was there.

“Hi remember me? Do you still have anything for sale?”

“I’ve still got a truck full of stuff. What are you looking for?”

“I’m looking for a semi-auto 12 gauge shotgun with a extended magazine and a 3” chamber.”

Been doing a little research again I see. Let me check the listing real quick. I’m assuming you wanted some ammo for that? I’ve got a whole case of Federal 9-pellet Tactical 00 Buck, and a whole case of rifled slugs. Well look here, I’ve got an unsold Mossberg 935 Magnum Autoloader that will feed anything stamped 12 gauge, since it can accommodate anything up to 3.5” long. MSRP of \$600, I can sell it for \$550 plus the ammo if you’re interested. If I were you, I’d have a gunsmith cut it back to 20 inches if you’re not hunting with it, since it will lighten it up a bit.”

“How much for the Ammo?”

“It lists for \$149 for a 250-rd case, since you’re buying both, and taking this shotgun off my hands, I’ll sell it to you for \$280.”

“So that makes \$550 plus \$280 equals \$830.

“What’s a Canadian Maple leaf worth these days?”

“About \$2,000 an ounce. Let me check something.”

He checked his inventory, and he had an AR-15 and a case of .223 ammo for it.

“Jack, in case you’re interested, I have an AR-15 and a case of .223 ammo for it.”

“How many mags will you include, and how many rounds in the case?”

“It comes with 1 magazine, and the case is 1200 rounds.”

“Do you have anything else?”

“I’ve got another Glock Model 21 set up just like the last 1 I sold you.”

“Isn’t that kind of steep for a Glock - I’ve got around 1100 dollars left out of that ounce of gold. Last time you charged me \$800 for the whole deal. Way I see it, I need something worth \$300 to sweeten the deal.”

“How about 2,000 rounds of 7.62x39 ammo.”

“OK, I’ll see you out back in 30 minutes.”

Jack ran back to the truck, and Tanya had just finished loading.

“I did some horse trading for another Glock for Tyrone, and a sweet semiauto 12 gauge shotgun and 2 cases of ammo for it, plus 2 cases of 7.62x39 ammo.”

“What are you planning on doing with all those guns and ammo - Start WWII?”

“Nope, just trying to save our hides!”

From the back Lindsay said “I vote for saving our hides!”

Tanya shrugged, and they pulled around back. 20 minutes later, the Sporting Goods Manager came out with the guns, and Jack handed him the gold coin. It took both of them to load the ammo in the bed of the truck from his dolly, but they got it done. Jack shook the manager’s hand and he said “You know, with that truck, all you need is the vest, glasses and a cigar.”

When they got home, they packed all the ammo and weapons in the basement.

Chapter 10

“Honey, Do I look like Bert Gummer?”

“Who?”

“Bert Gummer, the guy in Tremors with the big truck and the high explosives.”

“Nah, more like Barney Fife!”

“Thanks for the input.”

“I’m going over to Gene’s”

“Why, you want a second opinion?”

“Not exactly - I’ll see you before supper.”

Jack drove over to Gene’s place.

“Gene, thanks for the advice. I’ve got a question. How you guys set for weapons?”

“I’ve got a .22 and a single shot 12 ga. Why you asking?”

“John said that things could get rough again. I wanted to make sure you guys were well armed. I might be able to get a deal on some AR-15’s or SKS rifles. Do you have any preference?”

“I was in Vietnam, so I’d be most familiar with the AR-15.”

“You look awfully young to be in Vietnam - you’d have to be 60!”

“I’ll be 63 in December Jack, Black men don’t show their age until they reach 70 or 80.”

Ok, so if I bought 4 AR-15’s and say 3-4 thousand rounds of ammo, could we form a Mutual Assistance Group?”

“I thought we already did!”

“Ok, but this means radios, practice, etc. It’s a little more formal than “hey can I borrow a cup of sugar?” We’re putting our family’s lives in each other’s hands. Also you guys might want some sidearms. We’ve already bought 4 Glock Model 21 45’s.”

“Hey, if you’re buying them, we’ll shoot them. The .45 should work just fine. Also, I know a place where we can practice.”

Jack and Gene talked for a while, and they made a list of things they’d need. Since Jack was “Mr. Moneybags” he’d make the purchases to equip the MAG with. Gene volunteered his experience in the Marines as a LRRP. Jack didn’t know it, but he just ran into the one person with the knowledge to save his butt if the stuff hit the rotating blade again. Gene’s list was more extensive than the one the gun dealer in Beaufort gave him, and luckily, Jack already had most of it. Since they had several hours of daylight left, Gene and Jack jumped in his truck and went shopping. The Wal-mart Sporting Goods Manager was surprised to see Jack again, but knew he was probably going to unload a lot of merchandise when Gene handed him a list.

- 4 Bushmaster AR-15 HBAR Flat tops
- 4 Simmons 3x9x40 AO rubber armored scopes with QD rings
- 3 Cases .223 FMJ Ammo
- 1 Case .223 SPBT ammo
- 4 Glock Model 21 3rd Gen w/ M -3 light
- 4 IWB Kydex holsters for above
- 8 military style holsters for above
- 8 open-style mag double-mag carriers for above
- 16 13-rd Mags for above, plus included mags.
- 16 single mag carriers, IWB
- 4 Mossberg 935 Magnum semiauto Shotguns
- 4 cases Federal Tactical Buckshot
- 2 cases Federal Tactical Slug
- 1 case Corbon .45acp JHP ammo

Jack and Gene went through the Sporting Goods section buying stuff while he put the order together. They paid the Sales Manager for the purchases, then drove around the back. 20 minutes later, they carted a huge pile of weapons and ammo out the back. Jack and Gene checked them over thoroughly. As agreed upon Jack gave the Manager 4 Canadian Maple leaves, and they drove home to Gene’s place. Gene distributed the weapons to his family, and made up everyone a pistol belt/butt pack combination including a 1 qt. Military Canteen with stove, cup, and cover. When Jack got home, he modified their butt packs to include the military holster and a double- mag carrier. Gene said he could get better knives for their use elsewhere, but they bought the Gerber Multipliers from Wal-mart since they would work OK and their price was pretty cheap. While they were out driving, Gene told Jack that they really needed at least 2 dogs for security, and he had a friend that raised German Shepherds that was about to have a litter. When Jack went home, he programmed the FRS/GMRS radios he bought with the same frequencies as his other radios. He’d bring those over to Gene’s house tomorrow when they went shooting. Tanya wondered what Jack was up to, but realized she’d find out soon enough.

The next morning after breakfast, Jack loaded the truck full of their “arsenal” as Tanya called it, and they drove over to Gene’s house. His truck was already loaded, and Jack handed Gene a radio, saying it was pre-programmed, and if he were on channel 1 and pressed the PTT button, Jack should be on the other end if they were in range. As soon as Jack got back in the truck, he heard “TESTING...1...2...3...”

Jack picked up his radio “Read you loud and clear.”

“Ok Follow me!”

Gene’s truck drove at a less-than sedate pace to an isolated abandoned junkyard, and they set up to practice shooting. During that day, they shot most of the ammo they had brought with them, but they could hit their targets in prone, sitting, kneeling, and standing positions. Gene insisted that they be able to hit a man-sized target prone at 200 yards, which was a stretch for the primitive sights of the AK-47, but they did it. Gene and his family plinked at the targets that were 200-300 yards away all day, and rarely missed. Later that afternoon Jack asked why they were such good shots.

“We used to live next to an Army base, and since I was a Vietnam vet, and a retired Marine LRRP, they let me on base, and soon my whole family was using the shooting range since I became friends with the Range Master, and he let us shoot when the range wasn’t being used for anything else. They had several M-16’s that had been blocked for semi-auto only and we shot those.”

As it started to get dark, Jack and Gene drove back to their farms. The next morning Jack walked over and asked Gene what he needed to do to start farming the property. Gene said he’d come on over and look, but he knew the tractor needed work, and since it was an elderly tractor, he might be better off getting a new one. Jack asked Gene if he owned one, and he said that he used to borrow Lenny Miller’s tractor, but hadn’t been able to lately since it was busted. He’d resorted to borrowing a mule-drawn plow from another neighbor just to make enough to keep body and soul together. The sad part of the whole thing is the Millers were on the way home from his Dad’s funeral when they were killed in the car crash, and they had received a sizable inheritance, more than enough to buy a new tractor, pay off the back taxes on both properties, and buy some new equipment that would make them both more prosperous.

Jack asked Gene what the back taxes were on his property.

“Guess bout 5 years worth, \$120.”

Jack took two Silver Dollars out of his money belt and handed them to Gene.

“Here’s the back taxes, and 5 years pre-paid. I pre-paid my property tax just in case.”

“Jack, I can’t take this - it’s Charity!”

“How about the guns?”

“I guess you’ve got a point.”

“Gene, your knowledge of farming and self-defense is going to save both our families. I’m so rich that I’ll never spend what I have in the bank in my lifetime, so I might as well spread the wealth around. Besides, remember what I said about worrying about money?”

“I do see your point Jack, Thanks!”

They walked into the barn, and the equipment was in horrible shape. Gene shook his head, and said “You might as well donate this to a museum, that’s about all it’s good for!”

“I can assume there’s an agricultural equipment dealer here in town?”

“Know the guy personally.”

“Would he have anything big enough to double or triple the production of both places?”

“Jack, you’re talking a combine here, not a tractor.”

“Does he have one?”

“He’s got a huge JD unit that’s got an air conditioned cab, and can pull any piece of equipment on his lot.”

“Well, what are we waiting for, let’s go!”

They climbed in Jack’s truck and drove to the local John Deere dealer. Parked on the lot was a huge combine already set up for harvesting soybeans. They weren’t out of the truck 30 seconds when the owner of the place was out shaking Gene’s hand. Gene introduced Jack to him.

“Jack, this is Sam Spade, the local John Deere dealer, Sam, this is Jack Van Buren, and he wanted to buy that Soybean combine.”

“You mean the JD 9660? Great - I’ve been stuck with that lot queen for years! No one around here can afford it!”

“Sam, Jack can afford to pay cash for anything on the lot, and maybe the entire lot.”

Sam would have fainted if he wasn’t already sitting on the concrete step outside his office. “So

where you guys farming?”

“The old Miller place right next to mine.”

“Too bad about the Millers, I really liked old man Miller.”

“Sam, the Millers’ old John Deere is only worth donating to a museum, so we need a new combine, implements, a tractor, and a transport wagon. Also, I think we should buy a couple of silos, since the silos down by the rail yard aren’t being used anymore.”

“Gene, if you’re planting soybeans, you’ll probably want the 8520 tractor as well.”

“Yeah, and a bunch of implements for it. Can you do us a package deal?”

For the 9660 Combine, the 8520 tractor, and all the implements, I could do a cash sale price, delivered to Jack’s place of let’s say \$480 thousand.”

“Can you get us a couple of Silos and the hardware for them?”

“Sure, if you want them installed, I can do the whole enchilada for let’s say half a mil in cash.”

“Would you prefer a cashier’s check from the Bank of America, or gold.”

“They’ve been on the lot so long that I own them, so if you want to do half a million in gold, I’ll give you an exchange rate of \$2,200 per 1 oz coin.”

“Canadian Maple leafs OK?”

“You bet!”

“How long will it take to get the equipment delivered, and do you want your gold COD or in advance?”

“Since I highly doubt you’ve got 227 ounces of gold on you right now, let’s do it COD, let’s say 2 days from today - it will take me that long to assemble all the implements and stuff, and arrange all the low-boys to transport it all.”

“Ok Sam, see ya bright and early Friday!”

They shook hands, and walked back to the truck.

“So where am I going to get enough soybean seeds to plant?”

“There’s a seed and feed store right down the street - let’s stop there.”

Half an hour later, Jack signed a contract for enough seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides to plant the entire 50 Acres in soybeans, plus Gene’s 50 Acres. Gene asked him why he bought enough to do both “You can pay me back out of the money you make selling all those soybeans. Let’s call it an investment. Next year you’ll have enough money ahead to buy your own. We’ll help each other plow and harvest both fields, since we need to operate the combine and the transport wagon at the same time to harvest as fast as possible. If other farmers need to use it, we can lend/lease the equipment to them when we’re done.”

They drove back home, and Jack took the rest of the day off. He knew the next couple of days were going to be hectic.

The next morning, John showed up with an excavator, and Jack showed him where the hole should go. Once he had the hole dug, a flat bed showed up with the 5,000 gallon underground tank. Jack asked him how he was going to lift it, and the excavator operator told him that he could pick it up easily and set it in the hole. He connected a couple of cables to the excavator bucket and gently picked up the tank and swung it over the hole and lowered it in. They disconnected the cables, and the excavator carefully backfilled the tank, avoiding the connections so they could connect the tank to the above ground pumping station. Finally when it was safe to connect the tank, one of the workers connected the draft and return pipes to the tank, and watched them carefully as the excavator finished filling in the hole. John drove back to his business, and came back with a tank/pump assembly on a trailer. They connected the pipes to the pump, and the power to a circuit breaker on the main. Half an hour later, a tanker truck came up the drive with 5,000 gallons of diesel, and connected to the fill/return hose. It took a while to transfer 5,000 gallons of diesel. While they did that, Jack checked on a couple of things. When they finished, John showed Jack how to stick the tank and read the stick to know how full the tank was. According to Jack’s calculations, there were 5,050 gallons in the tank. John said there would be some rounding error due to temperature variances, but his depot transfer pumps had very accurate meters on them. He showed Jack how to read the meter, which read 0 right now, and would keep a running total of the gallons pumped through the pump, and handed him a key to operate the pump with. He handed Jack the delivery receipt for the fuel, and drove back to his office.

The next day, Sam started showing up with the tractor and combine. Jack thought he made a major “Whoopsie” when he forgot to build a new barn to house the equipment. Sam told him that it would be fine outside until winter, but he should get it under cover by winter. Jack added buying a steel building big enough to house his equipment and the tools to work on them inside. He talked to Gene, who said he could save a bundle if he could do his own maintenance, like oil and hydraulic fluid replacement. Gene said they could go back to Sam’s store and buy all the tools necessary to maintain the combine and tractor. Jack added that to his do list. He thought of something, and asked Gene how often the power went out around here.

“Since the Chinks nuked us, more frequently than I’d like, why?”

“Where’s the closest place that sells Alternative Energy Products?”

“Jack, speak English!”

“I was - they make stuff like Photovoltaic panels or Solar Panels, wind turbines, battery banks, and inverters.”

“Gee, I don’t know, why not check the Yellow Pages. Might be some place in Knoxville or Nashville.”

Jack did exactly what Gene suggested, there was a company called Solar Sales and Service in Nashville, and they had plenty of stuff in stock. He bought enough solar panels to cover the roof since he had a huge roof line facing south, and a large bank of deep-cycle VLRA batteries, and 20KW worth of inverters. Jack decided to get the extra inverters since he needed power for the shop as well as the house. He told them to hold the order; he might be doubling it in a half hour, and walked to Gene’s place. Jack thought on the way that he really needed an easier way to talk to Gene than walking over there. Gene said they had plenty of room in the basement if he wanted to install a system in their house. Since Gene didn’t have a shop to power, he ordered a smaller bank and a 10KW inverter set. He didn’t skimp on the panels though. Both of their systems were grid-intertie, and any surplus power would go back to the utility, since Tennessee had a liberal rebate program for AE systems that were set up as intertie systems. He ordered safety disconnects so if the power went out, they wouldn’t backfeed the system and fry some poor linesman working to fix the lines. Jack hiked back over to Gene’s to give him the good news, and ask him if they had phone service. Gene said of course they had phone service; he just never got it connected. Jack walked away muttering, and called the phone company and got Gene’s phone service turned on, and had someone out the next day installing phones.

Chapter 11

The next morning Jack called Gene “Hello”

“Hello Gene, its Jack - who else would have your phone number?”

“Jack, it sounds like you’re right next to me. What can I do for you?”

“Just called to make sure the phone works.”

“It works.”

“Gene, don’t you need my number?”

“I guess so; let me get something to write it down. Ok, go ahead.”

“478-2486”

“Got it. Jack, I know where we can get some windmills cheap.”

“Why would I want a windmill?”

“Jack, air’s free. You can use them to pump water into a shallow storage tank, then use a little 12vdc RV pump to fill up a bigger Cistern, then a couple more to pressurize your house, and a couple more for watering your fields. You might want a huge water tank, say like 2-5 Thousand gallons, and a water filter for your house water. If you orient the building correctly, you could put solar panels on the roof and a battery bank to run the pumps.”

“You’re pretty smart for an old guy.”

“Smile when you say that Pilgrim!”

Gene gave Jack the info on the windmills, and Jack made some phone calls, and located 4 used and rebuilt windmills that were pretty cheap. Since his existing well was too close to the house, he had to have some extra wells drilled. He called Gene, and asked him if he wanted 2 of them when he found out 2 of them would be enough to pump most of his water, with an emergency backup deep well pump if they had a long period of no wind. Jack ordered 2 2,000 gallon water tanks, and 2 500 gallon shallow tanks that could be filled by the windmills. They said they’d be out in a day or two to drill the wells. Jack ordered 3 steel buildings at once, 1 huge one to hold the combine, tractor, and shop space, and 2 smaller ones to hold the filtration and pump houses, with the battery bank and inverter for the well pump. Jack located some higher GPM 12vdc pumps, and installed those instead of the Shur-flo RV pumps. They used 20 amps each, but

they pumped almost 10gpm @ 40psi, and could pump against a 15-foot head, which was what they needed to fill the huge 2,000 gallon tanks. They laminated the thin-film PV panels directly to the galv-alum roof of the pump house, and connected the output to a high-output controller that converted extra voltage to current. Once the wells were drilled and the windmills installed, the tanks filled quickly. Soon Jack was able to turn off the house well pump, since the 2 windmills were producing more than enough water for everything.

Planting season quickly approached, and Gene suggested they go with no-till farming. Jack didn't have a clue, and Gene explained that was where you disturbed the topsoil as little as possible, it was better for the soil, and not as much work. Jack liked the not as much work part and agreed. The next morning, they connected the seeder to the tractor and filled the hopper full of soybean seed. They had to keep refilling the hopper, and the diesel tank on the tractor, so they only got Jack's place done the first day. Tomorrow they'd seed Gene's place. Jack was tired when he got home, and was glad that Tanya had dinner ready. Tanya said that the dogs were in, and they needed to pick 2 puppies. Jack said he was busy tomorrow, but if Tanya and Lindsay wanted to take care of it, they could go ahead.

The next day they did Gene's place, which didn't take as long. Gene remembered they had forgotten to buy irrigators, so Jack called up the company that sold him the tanks and stuff, and they had the right type of irrigators, and they could install it. Since Jack only had a 50-acre field, 1 huge circle irrigator could handle the irrigation chore, saving him a bunch of money. The circle irrigators had a huge pipe in the center feeding a wheeled boom with Rain birds every so often, and a motorized drive wheel on the end. They controlled how heavily watered the fields got by how fast the drive wheel turned. Since they got quite a bit of rain, the irrigator was just in case of drought or a dry spell at the wrong time for the soybean crop.

Sam Spade located a couple of silos, disassembled, and shipped them to Jack's place. Jack suggested erecting the 2 silos next to each other on the common property line, so they'd only have to build 1 large pad. The silos were up and tested before harvest season, so Jack was happy.

Tanya and Lindsay came back with 2 German Shepherd puppies. One was jet black, and the other had white, tan, and black markings. Jack took Tanya aside, and asked if the puppies had any names yet, and when she said no, he suggested Spear Chucker and Zebra. She retaliated by getting into a tickle fight with Jack, since she wasn't ticklish. Finally after a nice kiss, he said "I give, How about Samson and Delilah?" Tanya thought that was a much better idea, especially since Gene would want to tan his hide after yelling "Here Spear Chucker!" They checked, and Delilah was definitely a girl dog. Tanya came home with a huge bag of puppy chow, and 4 large dog bowls. Jack told her that they'd have to potty train the dogs themselves, since he was going to be busy between the soybean cash crop, and the huge vegetable garden they were planting. Lindsay, Rebecca, and Tyler helped out in the gardens as their chores when they weren't being home schooled. Sevierville had a public school, but neither Jack nor Gene approved of what was going on at the school, and realized their kids could get a better

education, and be around the house to help if they home schooled them.

Gene suggested raising chickens for eggs and meat, and pigs to take care of any edible garbage and convert it into bacon, sausage, and pork chops. Jack guessed that the kids could take care of raising chickens and pigs easy enough, and bought enough pullets so they'd be in meat and eggs for the next several years. One of the nearby farmers traded them a dozen weaned piglets in exchange for using his combine for his harvest, and paying for the diesel fuel used. They quickly built a henhouse, chicken run, and large pigpen for the pigs. All the livestock were located downwind of Jack's house, since Gene's place was upwind of Jack's, so they shared the chickens and pigs instead of letting Tanya enjoy the smell of money from Gene's place. Jack found out how much chicken feed was, and it wasn't chicken feed. He checked with the feed store about volume pricing and storage. They said that since Chicken feed was basically cracked corn, if it was stored in a good weathertight bin, it would last a while. Since pig feed was pretty much the same, and their best discount was by the ton, he ordered a ton of each and several storage bins to hold it all. Jack was hedging his bets, and storing the chicken feed in 4 separate containers, and the pig feed in 4 separate containers.

Gene found a couple of cats and told Jack that if he was going to have that much feed around, they needed cats to keep the mice down. When the Siamese cat delivered a mouse to Jack, he decided to call the cat Mousey Tongue. When Lindsay heard the cat's name, she thought it was hysterical, since they were reading about Chinese History, including chairman Mao. Samson and Delilah grew rapidly, and were potty trained fairly quickly. They learned to bark whenever anyone unfamiliar came onto the property, and more important, learned how to be quiet with either a verbal or hand signal. Samson was going to be a big Shepherd judging by his feet. His sister Delilah was no slouch either, and they spent their time roaming the property. They learned quickly to stay away from the equipment, and not to chase squirrels or rabbits. What really amazed Jack was they didn't seem the least interested in cars driving down the road, but the second they turned into the driveway, they started barking their heads off.

Midway through the summer, the Sheriff drove his cruiser down Jack's driveway. Jack saw the flashing lights and knew something was up, so he hurried to the cruiser.

"Jack, we just received word that Castro has dumped millions of Cubans on the US shore near Florida. Evidently he found out he was dying from Pancreatic Cancer and decided to clean up Cuba as his "Legacy" like he did to Carter in the 70's. He's emptied his jails, prisons and mental hospitals, and cracked down so hard on the rest of the population that anyone who can is headed this way. Normally the US Coast Guard can handle it, but thanks to the Chinese, they're spread to far and thin to catch most of them."

"Sheriff, we're way North in Tennessee, why would what's happening in Florida affect us?"

"The Governors of the various states think that they will cause rioting and increased criminal behavior, which will either drive refugees or criminals northward. It will be almost impossible

to tell the sheep from the goats, so treat everyone as hostile until you've secured and searched them. We're setting up a refugee center at the old high school, and they'll be transported there. If you need extra workers for your farm, you're responsible for housing, feeding and clothing them. I brought 4 Motorola police band radios, and 2 8-hole battery chargers with 8 spare batteries each. I want you to wear these 24/7. I talked to the Sporting Goods Manager at Walmart, we go way back, and he said you're fairly well armed, so I was hoping to take advantage of that, and make the 4 of you Reserve Sheriff's Deputies. Since you haven't been through an academy, you won't have powers of arrest beyond a citizen's arrest, but the badges do allow you to carry concealed, which I'd highly recommend from here on out. You guys are out here on your own, so I wanted you to be my eyes and ears out here, and also be able to call for backup if needed. Leave your radios on, and if they ever tone-out, listen up, because it's a general announcement for all deputies and reservists, and we reserve the tone-out for emergency communications of a general nature. Channel 1 is Dispatch, Channel 2 is car to car, and Channel 3 is an unpublished tactical channel that you'll switch to in the event of a general emergency so the average citizen won't hear us. You Ok, with this? Good raise your right hand and repeat after me:

I (state your name) do solemnly swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United states, and to uphold the laws of the State of Tennessee, and obey the lawful orders of superior officers, so help me God."

"Ok, Jack, here's your badge, I need to swear in Tanya, Gene and Gertrude. From here on out, anyone old enough to carry a weapon in your households is authorized to carry concealed or open anywhere in Sevier County."

"Thanks Sheriff. If anything weird was going on down here, you'd be the second to know."

"If you call Dispatch, tell them you're Reserve Deputy Van Buren, and they'll have you on a list. Here's a sheet of "10" codes you need to memorize. Use them on the radio. Thanks for the help, and I gotta get going."

Jack took the radios, switched his on and added it to his belt, and passed the Sheriff on his way out of the house. Tanya was sitting there with a strange look on her face.

"That's the first time a White Sheriff's called me Ma'am. They actually want us to be reserve deputies?"

"That's what he said. I need to plug this charger in, and you need to wear this radio and leave it on all day. There are enough batteries here to keep a charged battery in the radio 24/7, and leave the radios on. He told me that if you hear the radios tone-out, you need to listen up, because they only use the tone-out for general emergency calls to all deputies."

"He said that we were to go armed all the time. When I told him we already did, he grinned like

he already knew. Sevierville is really a small town!”

“I wonder what happened to Leroy and Travis?”

“I doubt we’ll ever know.”

“Wait a minute, I’ve still got Sheriff Tanner’s private number. I’ll call him.”

Jack picked up the phone and dialed.

“Sheriff’s Office, this is Sheriff Tanner.”

“Sheriff, Jack Van Buren, yeah, we’re still alive. They did, Oh my God! Did anyone survive? Ok, thanks for the info. If you ever need to reach me, we’re living in Sevierville, TN. Here’s my number, right you too - bye.”

“Bad News Tanya - they’re all dead. The Klan came in with old outdated Sherman Tanks that they retrofitted flamethrowers to, mounted an M -60 on top for the Tank Commander. No one on Mocking Bird Lane survived, but your Dad took some of them with him, since they found 30 rounds of 7.62 brass lying next to his body. He didn’t burn, they shot him. Judging by the blood trails, he seriously wounded several of them before he took a burst of machine gun fire. Leroy and Ophelia had more time to plan, and let them burn the house while they hid in ditches, and once they climbed out of the tanks to investigate, they opened up with their AK’s, and killed most of them. Travis ran up behind the KKK members, and got a bunch before he was killed by return fire.”

“I know this isn’t very Christian of me, but I’m glad they got to send some of those damned Kluckers straight to hell first.”

Jack held Tanya for a while. She had already grieved for her father, but the Sheriff’s statement put a finality on it, like seeing the body in the grave. Jack mourned for Leroy and Ophelia, but somehow he knew they were already in Heaven waiting for him. Jack shook his head; he was confused since that wasn’t a thought he ever had before. Until now, he thought “when you’re dead, you’re dead - that’s it!” He thought maybe Tanya and Leroy were right. Suddenly he hoped they were right. He wanted to see Leroy again so he could thank him for saving his life one last time.

The next couple of days Jack was busy planting a huge garden. Of course he had help, since his family and Gene’s family all pitched in, but he was still tired from stopping over all day sowing seeds. Gene put it in perspective “Just be glad you weren’t born a black man in the 1800’s in the south, you rarely got to stand up during the day you were so busy picking cotton.” Out of Jack’s mouth came a phrase he never thought he’d say in his lifetime “Praise God!” Gene laughed and said that he guessed Tanya was rubbing off on him.

Jack came right back with “That’s funny, Tanya assured me that it wouldn’t rub off the first time I touched her!”

Gene practically fell over laughing, and Tanya’s look could have killed a Charging Bull. Jack thought “oops” and quickly changed the subject. They got the garden planted without any bloodshed, but Jack heard about it that night. He apologized, and Tanya decided to forgive him, but for penance, they made love all night. Jack was one hurting puppy in the morning. He felt like he felt on the morning after his wedding night, sore all over, but ridiculously happy. They made a trip into town once a week to stock up on stuff, and on one trip, Jack stopped by the Sporting Goods counter at Wal-mart.

“Jack, if there’s anything you need, you now get the Law Enforcement discount.”

“Ernie, you’ve got a big mouth, who else did you tell about my purchases?”

Ernie gulped like he swallowed a camel. He realized that he might have put Jack in danger.

“You said yourself that those attacks were an inside job. Did you ever think that they’d put someone inside the Wal-mart, and when you told them about all the stuff we bought, you were signing our death warrants? God, talk about stupid! Don’t you remember “Loose Lips Sink Ships?” If there were another gun dealer in town, I wouldn’t do business with you any more. Do me a favor, from now on keep your big mouth shut about what people buy, even if it’s not sporting goods. The only people who need to know what I’m buying is ME!”

Ernie broke down and cried right there. “Jack, I’m sorry, I had no idea I was risking your lives. I’ve always been the friendly talkative type, and I guess that it would be easy for someone to pump me for information.”

“Did anyone quit right after that last attack, the afternoon I left?”

“Yeah, it was funny, a stock boy quit 2 days later without giving notice.”

“Ernie, get that information to the Sheriff ASAP - he’s probably the leak.”

Ernie picked up his phone and dialed a number. “Richard, its Ernie. Yeah, Jack’s here. He reminded me about those hijacking cases, and I remember that a stock boy quit right afterward without notice. Yeah, personnel should have all his information. Thanks Richard.”

“Jack, I’m sorry. Richard agrees with you, and he said he’d send a deputy over to Personnel to retrieve his file. You sure you wouldn’t be interested in becoming a Full-time deputy?”

“Ernie, I’m too busy running the farm to do anything else. Thanks for the offer. Could you let me know if you hear anything from the Sheriff about the investigation?”

“Sure. Did you need any ammo or anything?”

“Yeah, we shot up a ton practicing. I need a case of 7.62x39 and .223 both FMJ.”

“I’m opening my own store, since Wal-mart’s getting out of the firearms business. They’re selling me their inventory cheap. If you need anything, let me know.”

“If I were you, I’d get some connections for LEO only weapons, since the Sheriff’s department will probably be your best customer. If you do that, I’ll want some LEO only Raid Vests with Level III protection, and chicken plates.”

“How many you want?”

“Let’s say 5 for now, and maybe a sixth one if you carry child sizes.”

“For Tyrone, I’d just go with a 1 piece slip-on Level III vest that you can put on him in an emergency.”

“How’d you know his name?”

“Sheriff’s got a big mouth too!”

Jack had to laugh. He hoped they didn’t know anything else about him.

“Jack, since I’m still selling Wal-mart stuff for the next week, I’ll give you those 2 cases at cost, instead of your discount. I feel badly about almost getting you killed, and if they were mine to give you, I’d just give them to you.”

“What’s cost on 2 cases?”

Ernie got out his calculator, punched some buttons, then said “Right around \$140 for both of them.”

“What’s a Silver Dollar worth today?”

“Right around \$120, but Silver’s rising again. How about I trade you 1 oz for the 2 cases of ammo?”

Jack extracted a silver dollar out of his money belt, and said “See ya out back!”

10 minutes later, Ernie loaded the 2 cases of ammo, and handed Jack a slip of paper with his new business address, and the opening date. Just then a Sheriff’s deputy pulled up front.

“Got to go Jack, they’ll probably need my help. Take care and thanks for not capping me!”

Jack started laughing until he realized Ernie was serious. He forgot all about the Glock he was wearing full time. It wouldn’t do to cap the guy for talking too much, but the fact that he knew Jack was armed definitely put things in perspective rather quickly. Maybe he shouldn’t have got so visibly angry with him.

Jack drove back to the farm unaware of the whirlwind he was about to unleash.

Chapter 12

2 weeks later, Jack ran into the Sheriff, who told him he wanted to show Jack his latest toy “Jack you’ve got to see this. I think you and Gene would like it.” Jack said he’d love to see it, but needed to pick up Gene first. The Sheriff handed him a slip with an address on it, and told him to be there in 30 minutes. Jack picked up Gene, and he knew exactly where they were going, it was the old Army National Guard Armory. They arrived 28 minutes later, and the Sheriff held the gate open for them, then closed it behind them. They followed him to a garage, and they stopped. Richard climbed out and unlocked the hangar-style doors.

“Gene, you’re going to love this. The ANG obsoleted some Vietnam-era equipment and the Department of Homeland Security transferred them to the possession of local Law Enforcement agencies. We got 3 M-113’s, and if I remember correctly they’re the ACAV variant.”

They walked inside, and Gene immediately recognized the familiar gun tub and gun shields of the ACAV variant of the M -113. The Ma Deuce and the 2 M-60A2 machine guns were still mounted where they belonged.

“The best part is the State is picking up the tab for the maintenance, since only the NG mechanics are familiar enough with them to keep them maintained. All I have to do to take possession of them in an emergency is to either call the Officer of the Day at the armory, or send a senior deputy here with a letter authorizing the release of the weapons. They’ve also included literally tons of ammo for the guns. Gene, if you don’t mind, you’ve got the most experience in Vietnam with around here, so if you’d help train my deputies, I can pay you for it.”

“Sheriff, don’t need to pay me, but we need to make sure we don’t schedule training too close to harvest time, since we’re going to be busy harvesting around 50 Acres of Soybeans.”

“Since when did anyone around here harvest that much soybeans?”

“Since my friend Mr. Moneybags here bought Sam’s most expensive combine and tractor. We planted both our fields to capacity with soybeans, and we’ve got a half-acre vegetable garden for personal use.”

“Jack, that was awfully nice of you - what’s in it for you?”

“Between you me and the wall, I’ve got more money in the bank than I could ever spend in my lifetime, and Gene’s got the experience in farming and survival/defense that could save our families in an emergency, so working together just made sense.”

“I can’t argue with that logic. You know the farm to the right of you is abandoned, and is

another 50 Acres worth of good fields. If you guys wanted to plant that next year, I'll arrange the paperwork so you can lease the land from the county for \$1 per year."

"Sheriff, do you know any out of work farmers that like to act as caretakers and laborers. It won't be sharecropping, because I won't own the land. All I want is the costs back from the county at the end of the year."

"Whoa there, you're asking me if we wanted to set someone up on that land, and you'd advance the cost of seed, etc. and all you want back is your costs?"

"Basically. They might need a well drilled, and irrigation hardware installed. I'll let them use the Combine and tractor, and the county can sell the soybeans, pay the laborers, and reimburse me for diesel and maintenance costs."

"Ok, so if the county makes say \$100 thousand the first year, all you want back is your start-up costs, fuel and maintenance on the combine and tractor?"

"Yeah, except Gene and I have priority on the combine and tractor. They need to schedule their use with us. If they break equipment, the county reimburses me for fixing it out of the profit at the end of the year."

"I know a good Christian family we could move in there right now that's been on County aid for the last 6 months when their farm went under. He's a good farmer, and I'm sure you'll get along with their kids."

"Ok, since Gene's here already, let's go meet them. You want to ride with us, or take your cruiser?"

"I need to take my cruiser everywhere, so you can follow me."

They followed the Sheriff over to a small apartment complex on the edge of town. They parked and got out, and Sheriff Richard Hardcase knocked on the door.

"Evening Sam, is Albert in?"

Samantha opened the door, and Albert was watching TV. Sheriff Hardcase walked up to him and said "Bert, I've got an offer you can't refuse. How'd you like to get back into farming?"

"How, the @#\$% banks won't loan us any money!"

"You know Gene, and this here's Jack. He just moved into the Miller place, and they're growing soybeans. 100 acres between the 2 of them. Jack's what you'd call independently wealthy, and has offered an exceptional deal to the county. If you want to farm that 50 Acres

next to him, and raise soybeans, the county will pay you let's say \$30 thousand per year, and you can live in the farmhouse. Jack's already got a huge John Deere Combine and Tractor. The county's going to own the soybeans produced each year, pay you a salary to manage the farm and provide the labor necessary, and the county will reimburse Jack for your start-up costs, like if you need irrigation or anything, and pay him for the diesel used. Well - what do you say!"

"Sam let's get packed, we're moving!"

"I guess that answers that question."

Sheriff Hardcase turned to Jack and Gene, and said "I've got to get back to work. Would you mind helping them relocate?"

"Long as we don't have to lift any boxes."

"The county owns a huge trailer that they could fill up with their personal belongings, and if you could tow it to their new house, and make a list of what they need, we'll take what we can out of Surplus storage for them."

"Bert, before I go, I wanted the whole family to meet Jack."

Sam, Jackie, Ralph, could you come out here for a second?"

Jack, this is my wife Sam, my son Ralph, and my daughter Jackie. Sam and I are in our late 30's, Ralph's 15, and Jackie's 14."

Any problems living next to a family of Blacks, and a mixed-breed family?"

"No Sir, I don't have any problems with that. I don't think any of my relatives belonged to the Klan, we just like to mind our own business and let everyone else alone too."

"Sheriff, they'll do fine. Thanks, we'll take it from here."

"Bert, how long will it take you to get packed?"

"Should be ready to go tomorrow morning."

"I'll be by at 9:00 tomorrow with a big trailer you can load up, and I'll drive you to your new home. I can't do any loading, since my back's bothering me."

"Jack, we can handle loading ourselves, I'm just glad you're putting yourself out for our sakes."

"Just following the example of an old friend. He told me instead of repaying him for what he

did for me - to pass it on. So I'm passing it on."

"Who is this old friend, I'd like to shake his hand!"

"Me too, but he died in a Klan attack and gave my wife and I a chance to escape."

"Mister, that is the saddest story I've heard in a while."

"You would have liked him. His name was Leroy, and he was a black Baptist preacher, and they took me in when the stuff hit the rotating blade just about a year ago."

"I'll remember that Jack, by the way, thanks."

Bert stuck out his hand, and Jack shook it.

"I'll see you at 9:00 tomorrow."

Jack and Gene got up and left.

"Jack, I know these people. They're good people, just down on their luck. He really knows his stuff, he just got overextended during the boom, and couldn't afford to pay the loans during the bust. The banks did it to people all over the US. Then Congress kept changing the rules on us every year. I'm amazed anyone is still working a family farm in the US anymore."

"Would you trust them to arm them like you're armed, and include them in our MAG?"

"I don't see why not, we're all in the same boat, and it would add 4 people to our MAG. Let's get them settled, and then ask them."

"Ok, by the way I talked to Ernie at Wal-mart, and he told me that he's buying out Wal-mart's inventory and going into the gun business since Wal-mart doesn't want to be in the gun business anymore."

"Probably because they can't buy them from China!"

Jack was laughing so hard he had to pull over.

"I wondered why my friends were calling it 'China-mart?' Now it makes sense."

Jack dropped Gene off at his house, and said that he was going to help Bert and Sam move tomorrow. Gene said he'd check on the fields tomorrow, and take a quick look at the field they were having Bert and Sam work. He'd make a list of what they needed, and get back to him tomorrow afternoon.

“Gene, let’s just set them up like we are. Think you could find a couple more windmills? I’ll call the people who installed the well and the water tanks, and get another setup like yours.”

“Sounds like a plan, see you tomorrow.”

Jack drove back to his house, and was greeted by 2 big puppies. These dogs were growing up fast! He played with Samson and Delilah for a while, then went inside, and received a much warmer greeting from Tanya.

“I just got a call from the Sheriff, seems you guys are starting your own self-help agency.”

“Why not, I’ve got the money, and the county has the land. It’s stupid to borrow money from a bank when I can loan it to the county for no interest. It’s not like we need the money, and with more trustworthy people around us, it increases our level of security. Speaking of which, maybe next year, I can ask the Sheriff if he has any more vacant property around here, and people he’d trust to farm it for the county. This has got to be better than sharecropping, because they’re county employees getting a salary, so if they have a bad year, the county just won’t make as much money off the land.”

The next day Jack helped Bert’s family move to the farm next door to theirs. When he was finished, he asked Bert if there was anything they needed. He saw that the cupboard was bare, and got a list of foodstuffs they liked to eat, and told Bert he’d be back tomorrow with enough food to last a while.

“Jack, why are you doing this?”

“I told you yesterday, I’m just passing it on. Also there’s self-interest. We’re kind of isolated here on this end of the county. Sheriff Hardcase made us Reserve Deputies because he doesn’t have enough deputies to go around. Gene and I formed a Mutual Aid Group, so if we’re attacked, we’ll all be able to defend the area.”

“I don’t own anything more than a shotgun and a .22 - I’m afraid I’m not going to be much help.”

“Bert, I’ve got the funds to set you up if you’re interested.”

“Ralph and I can pick which eye of a squirrel to shoot; we’re good old Country hunters, so you’ll probably want to outfit us with 30 caliber rifles and scopes.”

“Is there anything semiauto and magazine fed that will work for what you need?”

“Yeah, the FAL, G3, and the M-1a National Match. They all shoot a NATO 7.62 round. The most accurate and expensive is the Springfield National Match, it’s about twice the cost of a

good FAL, but is accurate out to 600 yards.”

“Considering I’ve got AK-47s and Gene’s got AR-15’s, the extra legs on the M1a’s might be a good idea. How about your wife and daughter?”

“They’re both shooters, but not Squirrel hunters like Ralph and I. If you want to keep with the .308 ammo for my family, I’d go with either the FAL or the G3.”

“Ok, one last question. Gene wants us all to wear bullet-resistant Raid vests, so I need to know everyone’s shirt size.”

OK, that’s real easy. Everyone wears a Men’s large. I found that out by shopping at Wal-mart. It’s amazing how much more they charge for women’s tee shirts than men’s.”

“Ok 4 raid vests in Men’s large. Any preference in sidearms. We’re all carrying Glock Model 21’s with 13-round mags.”

“You mean you’re packing right now!”

Jack eased his G-21 out of his Kydex IWB holster, dropped the mag, cycled the action and caught the chambered round, then handed it to Bert with the action still locked open.

“Cool, I’ve heard about Glocks, but never been able to afford 1.”

“Go ahead and see how it fits, I’ve got the ammo here so you can’t hurt yourself. Better yet, why not call the family in, and get this taken care of at once.”

“Sam, Ralph, Jackie, could you guys come in here.”

They each tried the gun out with Jack supervising, and none of them had problems holding the gun or reaching the trigger.

“Bert, mind if I get 4 of these for you. They’re just on long-term loan, so don’t sell them for any reason.”

“Don’t worry Jack, I’d never do something that stupid!”

“Ok, I’m going to buy you 2 Springfield National Match, and 2 more either FAL or G-3 rifles for Sam and Jackie. Do you have a gun safe to put them in?”

“Nope, but I think a rack in the basement would be just fine.”

“I was thinking security from burglars.”

“Well in that case, it’s your money!”

Later that afternoon, Jack called Gene.

Hi Gene, what have you got for me?”

“About what I expected. House is in OK shape. Fields are fallow, and any equipment left isn’t worth donating to anyone. They’re going to need an irrigation system like we do, and you might consider putting an AE system in their house as well. They’re also going to need a silo, and I’d suggest getting them set up to have their own garden, and their own flock of chickens, and some pigs.”

“Can’t we just split the output of our farm this year?”

“True, that would be 3 hogs each, with 1 going to the butcher instead of a butchering fee, and we’ll have so many chickens and eggs that you’ll probably never want fried chicken in your lifetime after this year.”

“They’re going to need a lot of food to get them through the year.”

“The county said they’d reimburse you for any start-up costs. I think a 6-month supply of food for the people doing the work could be considered a start-up cost. Once their salary checks start coming in, they’ll be able to maintain their own pantry.”

“I talked to Bert. Ralph and him are pretty good squirrel hunters, and instead of AR-15’s, I was going to get them Springfield National Match M-1as with good scopes, and either FALs or G-3’s for the women.”

“I’d just get Springfields for the 4 of them, that way you cut down on the different mags, and they can share mags as well as ammo in a firefight. Also they’d have a common parts kit.”

“I like the way you think Gene. Do you want to come to Ernie’s grand opening tomorrow?”

“Sure, I’d like to see you buy out half his inventory!”

The next morning, they drove over to Ernie’s Sporting Goods. There were several cars in the parking lot, including Sheriff Hardcase’s cruiser.

They ran into Sheriff Hardcase inside. “Good thing I placed my order before you bought out his entire inventory.”

“Actually Sheriff, I’m glad you’re here. I need 12 Blackhawk raid vests- the LEO only ones, and I need your permission to buy them.”

“Why do you need the LEO vests?”

“The Civilian ones only carry a Level IIa Vest, and we want the Level IV vests.”

“Must be nice to be rich Daddy Warbucks!”

“It has its advantages. Hi Ernie, I’ve got a huge order for you, so you better give me your best pricing.”

“Gentlemen, before we begin, my prices are 20% higher than Wal-Mart’s since I can’t afford to operate at a loss like they could, but I can get you anything you want, as long as it’s available.”

Jack handed him a long list:

- 4 Springfield Armory National Match M-1a
- 4 Simmons or Redfield 3x12x50 AO scopes with QD mounts
- 40 20-round magazines for M-1a
- 2 cases Lake City Match ammo 7.62 NATO
- 1 case Lake City SPBT ammo 7.62 NATO
- 12 Blackhawk LEO only (LEVEL IV) raid vests black w/ woodland Cammo cover
- 4 Glock Model 21 Gen 3 with M -3 lights
- 16 Glock high-cap mags for Model 21
- 4 IWB Kydex holsters
- 16 single-mag IWB mag carriers
- 4 military flap holsters
- 4 double-mag pistol belt mag carriers for Glock high cap mags
- 1 case Corbon JHP ammo
- 1 case 230gr. FMJ ammo
- 4 Mossberg 935 Magnum Shotguns
- 1 case Federal Tactical 9-pellet 00 Buckshot
- 1 case Federal Tactical 1oz Slug
- 12 6-shot Sidesaddles for Moss 935
- 12 light attachment adapters for Mossberg 935
- 12 Surefire P-3 lights with rear curly-cord momentary switch
- 4 Benchmade AFCK knives with sheaths
- 4 pistol belt butt pack compatible w/ Blackhawk vests.
- 4 Military 1qt canteen with cup, stove, cover to match color.
- 12 pair tactical boots (sizes to follow, call me)
- 240 sets tactical BDU shirt, pants, and jacket (see above)

The Sheriff got a look at Jack’s list and said “What are you doing, outfitting a Militia?”

“It’s all legal Sheriff, we’re reserve deputies, remember, and I’m just paying for our outfitting instead of making the county spend the money.”

“My other deputies are going to be jealous, you’ve got better gear than we do!”

“Well, when we bring in the first 100 grand, use it to upgrade your deputies’ gear. You said so yourself that things may get hot around here. If they’re wearing Level IV vests, they’ll have a better chance of coming home at night.”

Ernie interrupted “Jack, you forgot head covers.”

“Good point, let’s get some do-rags, face masks, and utility covers to match the colors of the BDUs. Anything else we forgot, let me know.”

“Will do, nice doing business with you. Your order should be in within a week.”

“You want a deposit?”

“I’ll need half down.”

“Ok, guess what it will cost, and I’ll write you a check for half that amount, and I’ll pay the balance on delivery.”

Ernie pulled his calculator to him, and gulped when he came up with his estimate.

“According to the calculator, you just ordered \$56 thousand worth of stuff!”

Jack took out his checkbook, and wrote a check for \$30 Thousand to Ernie’s Sporting Goods. If Ernie wasn’t made of strong stuff, he would have fainted. The last time he wrote a check that big was when he bought Wal-mart’s leftover inventory. The bank gave him a signature loan for the amount of Wal-mart’s inventory and 6 month’s rent on the building. When he got paid for Jack’s order, he would pay for over half the check he wrote to Wal-mart. If he paid it to the bank, he’d cut his payments in half. Today had been a really good day.

Chapter 13

Ernie called Jack back, and said it would be cheaper and quicker to order separate Level IV vests and raid vests designed to fit over the Kevlar vest, that way they could order the raid vests in black or woodland cammo and only have to buy 1 Kevlar vest, and get a better vest. Jack said he'd call him back, and called Sheriff Hardcase. He told Jack that the integral vests weren't as comfortable as the separate vest/raid setup, and Ernie knew what he was talking about, so Jack called him back, and told him to order them that way. Ernie said "I don't know a delicate way of phrasing this, but the women's Kevlar vests have to have bra and cup sizes to fit properly." He told him Tanya's bra and cup size, and Ernie thought "lucky guy". He said he'd have to get back to him with the other two. He called Gene, and he laughed his head off. Jack asked Gene if he could call Ernie with Gertrude and Rebecca's measurements since that was more information than he wanted to know. Next he called Bert, who almost blurted it out over the phone, then Jack suggested he call Ernie directly. Jack eventually stopped blushing later that afternoon. Ernie placed the orders with Blackhawk Industries, and Second Chance, since they had the best prices on Level IV vests and ceramic plates. Their prices were a little higher than Ernie had thought, but he left room in his quote for that. Since none of them would be using grenades, he deleted the grenade pouches, and added more ammo and utility pouches.

Meanwhile Jack was on the phone non-stop ordering stuff for Bert's farm. At least this time he knew exactly what he needed, and who to get it from. Later that afternoon, he had everything ordered, and was able to take a breather. Tanya, Lindsay, Rebecca, and Tyler were working in the garden, thinning the seedlings, and pulling weeds. Samson and Delilah were trying their best. He brought a pitcher of iced tea out to them, and Tanya gave him a sweaty hug and a kiss, but Jack still appreciated it. When they finished with the ice tea, Jack grabbed some gloves and joined them. Even a ½ acre garden was huge. They had a row of carrots, onions, garlic, greens, melons including squash, green beans, various root vegetables, Okra, Cucumber, peppers, and tomatoes. Once the beans and tomatoes started growing, they added climbing trellis made from ag fence, and tomato rings made from the same fencing material wired into a cylinder. The water well driller showed up, drilled a couple of wells, and installed the irrigation system, then the AE equipment showed up and Jack hired the same contractor as last time to install their AE System. Bert was really grateful, and Jack kept telling him not to pay him back, but to pass it on, since that was what Jack was doing. They planted Bert's 50 acres with Soybeans about 2 weeks after Jack and Gene's place, which would work out well, since it would give Jack and Gene 2 weeks to harvest if all 3 fields grew at the same rate.

Ernie had been on the phone to his suppliers, and had everything shipped and stored. Finally the vests came in, and he called Jack to come pick it up. Jack invited Gene to go with him, and they drove to Ernie's place. When they came in the store, Ernie asked them to pull around to the back loading dock, since all their stuff was still in the shipping boxes from his distributors. He was careful to remove the invoices, but left the packing lists. Jack checked the packing list against his order, and noticed several discrepancies, especially the Blackhawk order. Jack asked

Ernie, and he said that Blackhawk has several packages that were cheaper than the basic vest and pockets separately, so he ordered 4 designed to hold M-1a mags, 4 to hold 30-round AK mags, and 4 to hold AR-15 mags. Instead of grenade pouches, he ordered shotgun shell pouches. Jack agreed with his logic. Blackhawk included some other misc. pouches as well. Since he was under budget, he ordered the Blackhawk raid bags that were superior to the bags he was probably using, and carried almost a gallon of water in a Camelback bladder with an on/off valve instead of the bite valve. He also ordered their pistol belt/butt pack combination while he was at it, and their SAS drop-leg holster which freed up room on the pistol belt, and got the pistol down on the thigh and out of the way. The three of them loaded Jack's truck, and Jack wrote a check for the balance. On the way back home, Jack asked Gene if he had a driver's license "Nope, never needed one, so I didn't get one." They stopped at Gene's place first, and unloaded his family's gear, then stopped at Bert's place. Bert's family helped unload, which Jack was hoping they would do - that Lake City Match ammo was heavy! Finally Jack took the truck to his house and got it unloaded. Later that night Jack had fun fitting Tanya's vest to her, she kept giggling. Jack told her she needed to wear a bra and an undershirt under the vest, because sweat could damage the Kevlar, and make it age quicker. Once they got done fitting her vest, she pulled it off, and kept going. Jack decided there were side benefits to this job after all.

The next morning, he went over to Bert's place, and judging by the grin on his face, he had fun helping his wife try on her vest as well. Bert asked where they could go to sight the rifles in. Jack called Sheriff Hardcase, who said that since they were Reserve Deputies, they could use the county range, and told him where it was. He called Gene and asked him if they wanted to go shooting. The Sheriff had offered the use of the county range.

Gene said "I'd like to shoot at a known distance range for a change; I need to check the zero on our AR-15's. The county range has 4 300-yard and 2 600-yard targets for their snipers to practice on, so Bert can wring out those National Match M-1as. Why didn't you get the Super Match or the M -25?"

"The cost on them was astronomical, and Bert said he'd never shot farther than 300 yards in his life, so a 600-yard gun would be plenty according to him."

"Makes sense to me - instead we should be spending the money on ammo to practice. You should order another case or 2 of Lake City match. Get the lot number off that case, and have Ernie order a couple more cases of that lot, so once they get their zeros, they won't have to re-zero their weapons for a new lot any time soon."

"Why's it so important to get the same lot number?"

"That means it was made the same day on the same equipment. Snipers and competitive shooters only buy match-spec ammo from the same lot number to cut down the variables."

“Ok, so why not do that with the AK and the AR-15 ammo?”

“Because the guns themselves aren’t match spec. Kalashnikov designed his carbine to be fired by peasant armies and went for reliability with poor or no maintenance over accuracy. To keep those National Match rifles shooting, they’ve got to be seriously cleaned after every shooting session, but that AK-47 could have a bucket of sand poured over it, and it would still shoot. The AR-15 is somewhere between the two.”

Jack’s and Gene’s family piled into Jack’s truck, and Bert’s family followed in their truck. Even with the crew cab, it was a squeeze getting all 8 of them in there. Tyrone rode on his mom’s lap in the back seat next to Gertrude and Gene. Tyler rode up front with Jack, and the rest of the kids took the middle seat. They drove to the range, and the rangemaster handed them eye and ear protection if they didn’t already have them, then told them to set up on the 100 yard line to start with so they could get their zeros, then Bert and Ralph could start working the 300-yard line. He handed them a dozen sighting-in targets, and a roll of bullseye targets, and explained the range rules. The range was normally hot and he’d fly a red flag from the range booth. When it was time to change targets, he’d blow the air horn 3 times, and switch the flag to green. Once the horn blew the third time, whatever gun they were shooting should be on the bench with the action locked open and pointed down range. There were no loaded chambers behind the firing line, and no one went in front of the shooting benches while the range was hot, and they were to follow the marked lanes to the targets and back.

Next door was a 25-yard pistol range with target clips, and a rope/pulley setup to run them out to range. Every 15 feet there was a piece of colored tape on the rope, The first one was the minimum safe distance of 15 feet, coded red, then 30 feet, coded yellow, then 45 feet coded green, then 60 feet coded blue. There was a final mark at 75 feet coded black. The pistol range was always hot, and no one was allowed downrange for any reason. You were to clip your target to the target carrier, and use the rope pulley to get the target downrange to the correct distance. The first violation would result in a 24-hour removal from the range, and a 2nd violation would result in a permanent ban, or if the first violation was serious enough, it could also result in a permanent ban. They all got set up on their benches, and set up targets, then once the range was clear, the rangemaster blew his horn once, and raised the red flag. Minutes later, they were all shooting on the 100 yard line. Jack, Tanya, and Lindsay were having problems with their AK-47s. Gene told them that they could shoot at a 100-yard target, but their groups would look like someone was shooting at it with a shotgun. When Jack got his first target back, he could see that Gene wasn’t kidding. Bert and Ralph got their rifles zeroed, and wrote all the data down in a logbook that Ernie had sold them with each rifle. Once they got their groups down under 2 inches, they moved to the 300-yard line, where they worked the rest of the day getting their groups down. Later that afternoon, Sam and Jackie joined them. Gene and his family were getting their rifles dialed in on the 100 yard range, and decided to stay there, since the 300-yard range was crowded. Gene decided that they’d have to come back another day for pistol shooting instruction, and called it quits around 4:00 since the sun was in their eyes.

On the way out the rangemaster stopped and asked them if the AK-47's were full auto. Knowing that they had some leeway as Reserve deputies, Gene said "Wouldn't be much use if they weren't."

The Range master introduced himself as Gunnery Sergeant Mike Kelly USMC retired. Gene walked up to him, shook his hand, and said "Semper Fi. Lance Corporal Eugene Jackson."

They got caught up like old soldiers do, seeing if they might have served anywhere together. While they were both Vietnam Vets, Gene was several years older than GSgt. Kelly. Sergeant Kelly was amazed that he was speaking to one of the original "Lurps" as they called them. He found out that Gene was wounded during his first tour and given a full medical retirement from the Marines. Gene was really steamed, because he found out he was going to Recondo School just a few days before he was wounded, and never got to go. They talked for a while, and exchanged numbers. One thing that Jack was glad about was Mike was a Gunnery Sergeant, so he'd be able to teach them how to properly fire those AK-47's, and might be able to show Bert a thing or two about long-distance rifle shooting. They agreed to come back tomorrow to work on their pistol craft, then next week to work out their long-range shooting issues. Mike swore he could get everyone hitting a man-sized target on the 300 yard lane. Jack wanted to see that, he had enough trouble hitting a B-27 at 100 yards.

The next day they all met at the county range and Mike put them on the pistol range at 15 yards, which he said was a decent distance to practice at, since almost all defensive pistol work would be from 15 yards in. If they had a rifle on them, they had no business engaging with a pistol outside of 15 yards unless the rifle was jammed or out of ammo. First he had everyone who thought they knew how to shoot go to the line. Gene went first, then Jack, Tanya, Bert, Gertrude, Sam, and Ralph. Except for Gene Jack and Tanya, Mike was disappointed with their shooting, and his best DI impression said that they couldn't hit the blanking side of a blanking wall, and they better hope they scared their attacker off, because they didn't hit them. He told Jack "not bad for a cake-eating civilian" and to Tanya he just said "Ma'am, nice shooting!" since she performed the best failure to stop drill. All 3 of her rounds were in the kill zone of the B-27 target, and it had only taken her a couple of seconds to draw and put 3 rounds in the target. He expected Gene to be able to shoot since he was a Marine, and just said "Bravo Zulu Marine".

He spent the rest of the afternoon working with everyone. He said that defensive shooting should be taught using the KISS method, and everyone was going to learn and shoot FTS drill. Every time they drew that Glock (at least it was a .45) to shoot someone, they were to put 3 rounds into them, just to make sure, and 2 of them better be in the center of the chest, and they had better be sporting a third eye when their backs hit the dirt. By the end of the day, they were competent shooters, but they needed practice. Lindsay surprised him. She went from having never shot a pistol to shooting the 3rd fastest FTS by the end of the day. Tanya thought she knew why, and decided to have a talk with Lindsay since there were no qualified therapists around; she was probably slaying the dragons that still haunted her. She could understand, but

didn't want Lindsay going too far.

That evening before dinner, Tanya sat Lindsay down, and told her that she couldn't undo what happened to her, and she needed to keep the feelings that were surfacing in check, because the hate could eat her alive. Lindsay jumped off the bed and flew into Tanya's arms sobbing hysterically. She told Tanya that she had nightmares about it almost every night, except now it included her new family. When she stopped crying, Tanya explained that Lindsay was going through Delayed Trauma Syndrome. Now that she was safe, her mind could unblock the memories of what happened to her. Ironically, survivors of violent trauma are often ok immediately afterward, only to fall into deep depression later. Tanya explained that there weren't any qualified therapists to send her to, but anytime she wanted to talk about it, just the two of them, Tanya would help as best as she could. There was nothing that Lindsay would tell her that could shock her or stop her from loving her, since she was a nurse in Chicago, and had a front row seat on the results of Man's inhumanity to Man. Lindsay just held on and cried for almost an hour. Finally, Tanya put her to bed and made dinner. Later, when Tanya called her for dinner, she could tell that Lindsay would be OK, since she wasn't sleeping in a fetal position anymore. She'd read that children under tremendous stress sometimes reverted to sleeping in a fetal position and other infantile behaviors like bed wetting. Tanya prayed that Lindsay would be ok, and then touched her forehead. Lindsay slowly woke up, and said "Hi Mom" and smiled for the first time since Tanya had met her. Tanya gave her a hug, and told her to get dressed, dinner was ready. Lindsay told her the nightmares had stopped. Tanya warned her they might start again, but to realize they couldn't hurt her anymore, and to pray when they started, and that should help.

They worked around their farms the rest of the week, chickens needed to be fed and watered, the pigs needed tending, and the garden needed work. Bert and his family were in "hurry-up" mode to get their garden planted after they planted 50 acres of soybeans, so Gene and Jack's families pitched in. Bert took Jack aside, and said with that huge combine, they could easily double their capacity to 100 acres each without much more work. He suggested 3 vacant lots across the street that were abandoned over 20 years ago. They had good water, and the fields had lain fallow for at least 10 years, so they should be highly productive. Jack said "Let's see how this year goes, and then we'll talk to the County about buying them. By the way, do you know of any more abandoned farmhouses around here where the house is in good shape, and they have at least 50 acres of good farm land?"

"Jack, about 20 years ago, this area was full of farms. Just recently the banks started foreclosing, and the only people who were able to keep their farms owned small farms like Gene's and didn't owe the bank anything more than their mortgages on their houses. They just scraped by, but in the end, they were the smart ones. I was a rich farmer, making 50 thousand per year working 500 acres on the other side of the county. Problem was the bank owned all of it, and when the market went south, I lost everything. Didn't take much either, just a slight adjustment in the farm subsidy, and a few other things, and the banks soon owned 2/3 of the county."

“Bert, I don’t know how to tell you this, but I think the American Family Farmer was set up. The owners of the banks were big powerful people, and knew the only real asset is Land. When they saw that they could easily induce farmers to get over their heads in debt and mortgage farms that had been in family’s hands for decades, they decided they wanted your land, and deliberately manipulated the farming system. Guess who owns most of the farms in the US now? If you say several politically connected companies with ties to Major Banks, I’d give you a cigar if you smoked!”

“Jack, you’re not telling me anything I didn’t know already - why do you think I was so surly when I first met you? I mortgaged away land that had been in the family for over 100 years.”

“Bert, did anyone buy the land yet?”

“No, the bank can’t sell it, and the county won’t let them break it up.”

“What’s the balance on it?”

Let’s see 500 acres, plus equipment, I’m guessing 2 million.”

“I’ve got over 10 mil in the bank, and more on the way, how’d you like to own you land again?”

“How can you do that?”

“Simple, I’ll use the banks’ own greed against them. I’ll pay cash for it; then sell it to you for \$1, with a whole bunch of provisos, like you can’t encumber the land beyond a mortgage to build a farm house. IF anyone wants to give you credit, it will be unsecured. If they foreclose, they can’t touch it, since you don’t own it! Once you pay off the mortgage, the land will transfer to your name, but the provisos will still be in place. Of better yet, we’ll do a LLC Corporation. I’ll have to talk to a real estate lawyer I know, that is if he’s still alive, and see what we can do.”

“Jack, if you weren’t a guy, I’d kiss you!”

I’d rather shake your hand Bert!”

Bert stuck his hand out with tears in his eyes.

“Bert, if you want this thing to work, you can’t say anything, even to your wife. If word got out that I wanted to buy your farm, the price would double or triple. This way I can sneak in the back door and buy it off the bank for pennies on the dollar right off their foreclosure list. I’d like to see the look on that bank President’s face when he realizes he’s been swindled right back!”

“Me too, talk about a Kodak Moment!”

“Ok, first things first, we need to get through this season in good shape and cash flush, then buy the properties across the street. If you could wait a year or two to get your land back, the revenge will be that much sweeter.”

“Why Jack?”

“The longer a property sits on a foreclosure list, the more desperate the bank is to sell it. We should get someone inside the County Commission’s Zoning group to keep an ear to the ground, and see if anyone tries to change the zoning of that area, because that would be an indication that the bank is trying to split up the property so they can sell it. If that happens, we’ll buy it early rather than risk losing it.”

“Sam used to work for the county; I guess she could get a part-time job working in the Zoning office.”

“Works for me. Find yourself a good used diesel truck, and let me know how much they want for it. You can make payments to me out of the money Sam brings in each month; say 10-15% of her income.”

“We’re homeschooling our kids, that’s why Sam was staying home.”

“Do you think Ralph and Jackie would like if we combined the 3 groups together, then the parents can take turns supervising them, leaving the other 2 parents free to work in the garden, or outside the house?”

“Sounds like a plan, let me ask Sam, Ralph and Jackie.”

Later that afternoon Jack got a call from the Bank President.

“Jack, good news. The Corporate Office had finished updating and consolidating our records, and we missed \$30 million in deposits which we have now credited your account.”

“What about the insurance on my Dallas building?”

“Sorry Jack, the insurance companies declared that an “Act of War” and refuse to pay.”

“That’s OK, that’s about what I expected. So what’s my current balance?”

“As of today I show a balance of \$49.567 Million, and an additional deposit of \$8 million of Gold and Silver, which is fully insured.”

“So the \$49 million isn’t insured?”

“Not by anything I know of.”

“Would my money be more secure if I bought interest in the bank?”

“To be honest, not much more. If the bank went under, we’d lose everything. This building isn’t worth much, and the only assets we have are deposits, and they’re insured by the FDIC, but they have gradually lowered the cap, and after the last disaster, it’s pretty clear that they can’t honor major losses.”

“Thanks for the honesty - I’ll talk to you later.”

“Tanya, I just spoke to the President of the Bank. I’m now worth over \$49 million, and Bert told me that the banks had foreclosed on millions of dollars worth of land recently, and it’s been sitting on the foreclosure lists for years. I’m tempted to buy up all that foreclosed land, and put the remaining farmers back on their family lands, since none of the money in the bank is insured anyway.”

“Ok, Jack do whatever you feel is right, just don’t get us in over our heads so we lose everything too.”

“I’m going to talk to an Attorney I know if he’s still alive, and ask him what to do.”

Jack hoped the Attorney’s cell phone still worked, and dialed a number out of his phone’s memory.

“Armstrong, Durney, and Mathews - This is Nick Mathews, how may I help you?”

“Nick, Jack Van Buren. Yeah long time no see. We still have that confidentiality agreement in place and the retainer, correct?”

“I’m still your Real Estate and Corporate attorney of record, why?”

“I wanted to set up a dozen LLC companies in Tennessee fast and totally on the QT.”

“What are you up to now?”

“I’ve got \$49 million in the bank, and the bank won’t insure it. I’m living in Tennessee, and one of the farmers I’ve befriended told me the local bank foreclosed on a bunch of family farms here recently. I wanted to buy the land, and return the farmers to their family land without risking my investment.”

“OK, I’ve got it, what you want to do is put the land in a land trust, and lease the land to the farmers, and once they’ve paid the trust the value of their land, it reverts to them. With the land in trust, they can’t encumber it. If you’ve got the money, you could buy and lease them equipment with the property, and make money on both ends. Make sure that they understand that if they default on the lease, the land reverts to the trust. The good news is that if they work hard, they’ll get their land back, and the worst case scenario is they’ll get a lifetime’s worth of income out of it. It’s not share cropping, because the land trust is set up to return the land to the rightful owners after your costs have been paid up.”

“Nick, I like it, set it up ASAP, and then make an offer on all the foreclosed property in the name of the LLC/Land Trust. Make sure you call it something PC, like “Back to the Land” or something. I’m going to need some good PR out of this to pull it off.”

“Ok, Jack, it will take 2 weeks to set up.”

“You’ve got my Cell phone.”

“Copying the number off my Caller ID as we speak. Thanks Jack, talk to you later.”

Jack told Tanya, then walked over to Bert’s house, and told him.

“I don’t understand all that legal mumbo-jumbo, but I think what you’re telling me is you’re going to buy all the foreclosed farms in town, and lease them to the original owners, and once they’re lease payments equal the cost of the land, the land reverts back to them. Sounds like a brilliant idea. Where do I sign up!”

“You just did, I need you to sell this to the other farmers. I don’t want them to think they’re sharecropping, because the Land Trust is set up to return the land to the rightful owners once the costs are paid off. I’m doing all this on a Zero Interest basis, so that will help.”

“Jack, if you pull this off, they’ll probably erect a statue to you in the park!”

“I hope not, I wouldn’t want to be responsible for scaring little kids!”

Bert got a good laugh, and Jack reminded him he had to keep this under his hat until the land was secured and the title transferred to the land trust.

Bert shook Jack’s hand, then went back in the house. Jack walked over to Gene’s house, and sat on the porch to talk to him.

“Jack, why didn’t you just call?”

“Didn’t want to say this over the phone, but I’m going to buy up all the foreclosed farms in the

county.”

“Let me guess, one of your CDs matured?”

“Nope, the bank finally credited all the money I had in deposits. I found out I’m worth over \$50 million, and virtually none of it’s secured, so I’m going into the Land Trust business.”

“How does that work Jack?”

“My Real Estate Attorney is setting the whole thing up. He’s going to set up a Limited Liability Corporation and Land Trust, buy all the foreclosed properties in the county for minimum bid, and screw the bankers that swindled the farmers right back. Once the farmer’s lease payments equal the cost of buying the land, and the equipment lease costs, the land reverts to the farmer, with a proviso that he can’t sell or encumber it.”

“Remember that conversation we had a while ago? This is poetic justice, those greedy bankers are going to loose there asses, and there’s not a damn thing they can do about it!”

“Yeah and the best thing about it is it will transfer the bulk of my assets from the bank, which is making money hand over fist on my money, into a huge land trust, which will make me money, or at least do something positive with all that money!”

“Not bad for a City Slicker!”

“I think I stopped being a City Slicker shortly after I met Leroy. I owe him a lot!”

“Jack, you’re paying back everything he did for you 10-fold. God’s smiling right now, but don’t screw it up by getting prideful. All that money you have could disappear in a flash, and you’d be right back where you were. Make sure that money doesn’t become an idol to you. God gave it to you, and he could take it back.”

“What do you mean?”

“When you first met Leroy, you told me you were poorer than a church mouse. You had millions, but you couldn’t touch them. Finally when you got some money, you wanted to do the right thing and build up your friends, but something happened, and you were forced to leave. Now you’re heart’s in the right place, but something could still happen. You need to make sure you’re following God’s will and doing it for his Glory, not yours!”

“How do I do that?”

“Pray hard, pray often. Tanya can help you, she’s a good Christian woman!”

“Gene, could you help me? I don’t know how!”

Gene leaned over and placed his weathered hands on Jack’s shoulders and prayed out loud.

“Father give us guidance, Jack wants to do your will, but he doesn’t know you. Please open his eyes so he can see you, and your desires in his life. Amen.”

Jack didn’t understand it, but he felt different somehow. He could see his vision more clearly and thanked Gene. Leroy said “Don’t thank me, Thank God!”

Immediately, Jack said “Thanks, God. Help me, I can’t do it by myself.”

Chapter 14

Mike called Gene later that afternoon, and suggested that they come to the range tomorrow morning if they wanted to do full-auto fire, since the range was empty, and just to make sure, he reserved it. Gene called Jack and Bert, who agreed in a heartbeat. The next morning, they piled into the trucks and drove to the range. Mike did a 'weapons familiarity briefing' for the whole group, then showed them how to fire controlled bursts with the AK-47. He said with the trigger it had, shooting 3-4 round bursts were a neat trick, but you could learn how to just tap the trigger and release it, either in the hip assault position, or all the way up and shouldered. He started everyone at 25-yards, and slowly backed them away until they could put a burst into a target 100 yards away. Jack didn't believe that was possible until he showed them how. He said that the rate of fire was so high that the muzzle didn't have much chance to climb in the space of a 3-4 round burst. Now if they unloaded the whole magazine, he could guarantee that they'd be shooting over the target's heads after about 5-6 rounds. He said there were 2 schools of thought about FA shooting the AK-47. One the women loved was to start at the crotch and let the muzzle rise carry the rounds into the 10- ring, and the other was to resist the muzzle rise, and put a short burst right into the 10-ring instead of emasculating your target first. He said that they could tell after a firefight if the victim of a VC attack with AK-47's was shot by a man or women depending on whether or not the rounds started in the crotch and worked their way up. Then they discovered that most peasant VC shot like that anyway, since it was easier than learning the other way. Still, he wanted them to learn the other way, since a controlled 3 shot group was usually a quick-kill, whereas the other one didn't guarantee a kill, usually some very embarrassing wounds.

Later that afternoon they were all shooting controlled 3-4 round bursts at 100 yards, and scoring lethal hits. After the session, Mike told Jack that if he wanted some more AK-47's he knew where to get hold of 4 cheap. It would mean doubling up on ammo and weapons load. Jack was halfway tempted to buy them anyway and store them JIC. He asked Mike how much, and he said \$500 each with 10 30-rd mags, and they were FA. He asked why they were so cheap, and Mike admitted that they were taken off a gang years ago, and were lost in the paperwork, and he didn't want to keep them around anymore in case an auditor checked. Jack asked how much gold was trading for, and it had stabilized at \$1,000 per ounce. Jack handed him 2 Canadian Maple leafs, and Mike said he'd be right back with their guns. He came back with 4 cased AK-47's with folding stocks. Gene was looking at them, and shook his head. They were the rare original Yugoslavian Paratrooper variant of the AK-47 with the under-folder stock. Since they had the ammo, and Mike had the time, he taught them all how to shoot the Paratrooper.

Tanya took Jack aside and said that they would work much better in the truck, since with the stock folded it was way more compact and maneuverable in the vehicle. A light bulb went off in Jack's head, that was why the gang-bangers had them, they were easier to use in a drive-by. They all had after-market muzzle brakes/flash hiders installed, and were fairly accurate. Jack could put a short burst into a B-27 at 25 yards in the assault position, and he could hit targets

out to 100 yards with the folding stock. He hated the folding stock in the extended position, and decided to keep both sets of AK's, and put 3 of the folders in the truck. He remembered that the body man had installed compartments in the seat backs, and wondered if the AK in the folded position would fit. When they were finished, Jack drove everyone home, then stashed the 4 Paratrooper AK-47's in the seat back. Jack was impressed. The body man not only made the seat back big enough to hold the AK-47, but all 10 loaded mags, and he even had Velcro straps to hold everything securely and quietly in the back of the seat. If he ever saw him again, he wanted to make sure to thank him. His ingenuity had saved their butts more than once. Jack walked back in the house and told Tanya where he stashed the new AK-47's. She thought it was a good idea to have hidden firepower in the truck, and was glad that the AK-47's fit so well. She knew that the police would need a warrant to tear their vehicle apart looking for weapons, and with their Reserve Deputy badges, that was about as likely as Clinton suddenly confessing he had sex with Monica Lewinsky.

2 weeks later right on schedule, Nick called Jack and told him "You now own every foreclosed farm in Sevier County, and it only cost you \$25 Million."

"How'd you get it so cheap?"

"Connections - I found out the minimum bid on all the properties, and paid by cashier's check. They were all blind bids, so the seller didn't know you were buying. By the way, I registered the LLC and the Land Trust in the same name "Back to the Land" I purchased title insurance on all the properties and got zoning clearances to resume farming them."

"Nick, I'm not going to ask how you pulled that off, and I don't want to know."

"Easy, I always wanted to screw those bankers over royally, and used a couple of people who agreed with me. It's amazing how many people in the county employ used to either own or know someone who lost a family farm. Once they got wind of what was happening, they greased the skids. Don't worry it's all legal, it just usually takes months to do what the did in days. You might want to call a town meeting to explain to the people what's going on. I'll e-mail you a spreadsheet that shows what you paid for each property. While I was at it, I bought all the properties around you, so you have another 500 acres available to farm if you wanted to."

I'd love to see the look on my banker's face when he realizes that I bought all the foreclosed properties for less than 50 cents on the dollar, and cut my account balance in half. That's gotta hurt his bottom line."

They hung up, and no sooner that the line cleared then the President of the local branch of B of A was on the phone. "Jack, what the hell did you do to me?"

"The same thing you did to all those farmers for the last 20 years, and you did it without Vaseline - how's it feel to be on the receiving end?"

“I’ll get you for this Jack, I swear!”

“Was that a threat, because I’m a sworn Reserve Sheriff’s Deputy, and I’m recording this call. Would you care to repeat that?”

<Click>

Jack called Sheriff Hardcase and re-played the conversation.

“Jack, did you have to do that - Jim Wilson’s a friend of mine!”

“The only thing I hurt was his pride, and maybe a few million he lost in ill-gotten gains. Sheriff, if I were you, I’d be more careful in picking your friends.”

“What’s that mean Jack?”

“My Corporate attorney laid it all out in black and white for me, the corruption in the banks, and how they deliberately set up the American Farmer and stole their lands, then sold them to politically connected fat cats with some pretty tight connections to some major banks. If you doubt me, run a Hoovers or Dun and Bradstreet on the ownership of several big Agribusinesses, then cross- correlate that list with major stockholders on the major banks, then correlate that with Political donation records 5 years prior to the big farm foreclosures. What you find might shock you!”

“I never knew, Jim’s always been a straight shooter.”

“He probably wasn’t high up enough in the food chain to be in on the scheme, but he followed orders from Corporate, which makes him a willing or unwilling accomplice. Anyway, I didn’t really hurt him, he’ll still be the Bank President when this all blows over, and Corporate will just forget about it, since they own so much land that I’m just a flea jumping on an elephant to them. Anyway, I have Jim on tape threatening me, and I am a sworn officer, so you might want to talk some sense into Jim.”

“That sounds like good advice, I’ll talk to you later after I settle Jim down. Oh, I just found out, that kid that was working at Wal-mart and probably tipped off the hijackers is missing along with his extended family, and they haven’t been seen since the last attack. The bad news is they were pretty high up in the Klan. I tried to keep your name and Ernie’s out of it, but if they start digging, they might decide to retaliate against you or Ernie. I’ve already warned Ernie, and I gave him permission to carry his MP-5SD for the duration of the threat. You can carry whatever you want to as well, just don’t shoot any innocent bystanders.”

“How do you get your hands on a full-auto suppressed subgun?”

“Probably the same way you got those AK-47’s. You don’t need to worry, TN is Title III friendly, so all you’ve done so far is break NFA rules, but we’re not interested in those rules, especially since President Grassley’s granted immunity from those laws for the duration of the emergency, and so far he’s never rescinded those orders. If he does, you might want to register them or voluntarily surrender them to the Sheriff’s office.”

“Ok, Sheriff, I’ll cross that bridge when I get there. Just talk to Jim, and let me know what is going on. Make sure he knows that if he gives me too much trouble, I can transfer the balance of my deposits to another bank.”

“Ok, Jack, you’ve made your point, and I’ll make sure he understands. Talk to you later.”

Jack walked over to Gene’s house to talk to him.

“Jack, you just made a powerful enemy. I’d watch your back if I were you from here on out, and keep everything squeaky clean so he can’t pull something. He’ll probably get the District Attorney to investigate you and at least cost you some money to defend yourself.”

“Gene, you gave me an idea. Hang on a second.”

“Nick, It’s Jack - looks like I might have stepped in something here, and I need your help. You might get hold of the local DA and talk to him, seems like the local Bank President is pissed at me. I have him on tape threatening me, so if worse comes to worse we can use that.”

“Ok Jack, I’ll bail you out, but I’m charging my usual fee for the calls, etc.”

“It’s not like I can’t afford it!”

“I’ll let you know what happens.”

“Bye Nick.”

“Gene, thanks for the heads-up, I just sicced my Corporate Attorney on the local DA. He’s part Doberman, so by the time he gets done with him, he’ll be treating me with Asbestos lined gloves.”

“Must be nice to be rich, Mr. Moneybags!”

“Not really, Nick’s not cheap, and this little incident will cost me a couple of thousand dollars in legal fees if it doesn’t go past a phone call. Maybe I should take my funds out of the bank.”

“No, leave them in, it’s the only leverage you have against the bank president. Might as well save that option for a real emergency.”

“Dang, I almost forgot, I need to tell Bert, he’s been on pins and needles for the last 2 weeks. Thanks Gene, see you later.”

Jack was getting his exercise today, walking back and forth between the houses. He knocked on Bert’s door.

“Mind if I come in, I’ve got good news, and you can tell the family.”

“Sam, Ralph, Jackie, come in here please.”

“Bert, I’ve got great news for all of you. Bert’s had to keep it under his hat the last couple of weeks, but my Attorney just called and it’s official, the Back to the Land Limited Liability Corporation now owns all the foreclosed properties in Sevier County. That includes your farm. The good news is the properties are held in a Land Trust, with annual lease payment going to pay off the purchase price from the bank. Since I bought them for next to nothing, and I’m offering 0 percent interest, you’ll have your farm back free and clear in the next 10-20 years depending on how successful you are. Since you’ve already got this place planted, you’ll probably want to start farming it next season, and I can afford to carry everyone for at least that long. Also, I now own the 500 acres across the street, so if you want to expand your garden or anything this year, just let me know. We’re going to have to grow stuff that will sell locally since the interstate transportation is still recovering.”

Bert jumped up and gave Sam a big hug, then Sam hugged the stuffing out of Jack, then Bert shook his hand until Jack asked him to let go before his hand fell off!

“Ok, we need to call a Town Meeting to explain this to the displaced farmers. Bert, if you could act as my spokesman, I’d appreciate it.”

“I’ll call the paper and the radio station to get the word out. Thanks doesn’t even half cover it Jack.”

“Don’t thank me now, you’re going to be so busy you’ll wish you were twins. Could you help me locate someone to take over your location here for next year?”

“Sure, I know several people in town who were in our position, but they didn’t own a farm, they were working for the owners.”

“Ok, that’s settled, let’s get this meeting organized. Call me if you need anything.”

Jack forgot all about the meeting for the rest of the week, and concentrated on getting things caught up with his farm. Then 3 things happened at once. Nick called first.

“Jack, I explained things to the DA, who said that it’s obvious this is a personal vendetta from

Jim, and unless the Sheriff uncovers some serious wrongdoing, he won't bother you, so you're off the hook. All it took was a phone call, so I billed you for my time as usual. Nice doing business with you."

The next phone call was from Bert "The meeting's on for tomorrow morning at 9:00 at City Hall. Jim's raising a big stink, but the farmers know me, and they're waiting to hear what you say."

The third call was from Hizzoner the Mayor.

"What's this I hear about you buying up all the land in the county and turning all the farmers into sharecroppers? I thought that kind of stuff went out with the 1800's."

"Excuse me your honor, but that's not what's happening. The foreclosed lands have been put into a land trust, and the farmers will reimburse the land trust for the money it cost to buy their lands back from the bank. Jim Wilson, the President of the Bank of America I'm afraid is spreading rumors to stir up trouble. He's mad because he lost a million dollar kickback he would have gotten when the property sold to a huge Agribusiness. I've already had my Corporate Attorney talk to the District Attorney and explain things to him. I highly suggest you consult with your District Attorney before you go spreading unfounded rumors."

"I'll do just that!"

"See you at the meeting tomorrow Your Honor."

The next day, Bert, Jack, and Gene rode together to the meeting. The mood was lively to say the least. Finally the Mayor called the meeting to order.

"Ladies and Gentleman, Please sit down and here these people out. I've already talked to the DA, who said that they're on the up and up, and aren't doing anything illegal, or running a scam. Jack - you're on."

"Thank you Mr. Mayor. Briefly what we've done was buy all the foreclosed lands that would have been sold to a huge agribusiness, and been lost forever, using the same techniques the agribusiness does. In this case, we used their own tactics against them, and the Corporate Offices of the Big Banks stand to loose millions. Your local bank is safe, the only people who got hurt were the greedy SOB's that tried to cheat you out of your land. All the land is in a Land Trust called Back to the Land. What we're offering each farmer is the chance to buy back their home farms without having to use conventional financing. This is further irritating the banks, because that's how they got your lands in the first place. I'm independently wealthy, and have way more money than I'll spend in the rest of my life. A Baptist Preacher helped me out when the Chinese attacked, and instead of me paying him back, he told me to pass it on, so that's what I'm doing. Your lease payment will be 1/3 or less of what you were paying the

bank, and all the equipment will be owned by a co-op and shared equally. Your lease payment also includes depreciation, wear and tear, and routine maintenance on the equipment. You'll pay for all fuel used separately. I'm going to advance you your first year's seed, and anything else you need to get started farming your ancestral farms."

"So when do we get our land back?"

"I've a spreadsheet up here, and you can see exactly what I paid for it, and what your monthly lease payment will be, and how much of it goes to paying off your land. My estimates are that within 10-20 years, you will all own your land free and clear. There is a default clause in the contract, but it is very lenient. If you fail to make the lease payment for 5 years, the land reverts back to the Land Trust. I don't own any of this land, and neither will the banks, so you can't mortgage or otherwise encumber the land ever. Now if you'll form lines in alphabetic ranks, A-G, H-M, N-S, T-Z. I have 4 copies of the spreadsheet printed on huge paper so you can all see. The only columns I printed for your privacy was your last name, and first initial in the case of 2 families with the same last name, the balance I paid, the lease payment to the Trust fund, and the number of payments due to pay the balance in full. If you need more data on your property, I can print extra copies and mail them to you."

"So where do we sign up?"

"Bert and Gene will take care of the details, I'm disassociating myself from the land trust, except for the initial deposit of funds to offset any start-up expenses."

"You mean you're not making any money on this?"

"Not the way the trust is set up. If everyone successfully pays off their land, all I'll get is my money back."

They all stood up and started forming lines to look at their payments. Jack was right, in most cases the lease payment was less than 20% of what their combined loan payments were. Suddenly a very drunk Jim Wilson staggered into the room waving a gun around.

"Jack, where are you, I'm calling you out you SOB! You ruined my life, and now I'm going to kill you!"

Jack was way across the room, so he wasn't too worried. Sheriff Hardcase walked up to Jim and said "Jim, you don't want to do this, put the gun down!"

"NO, I'm gonna Kill that SOB if it's the last thing I do!"

"Jim, he's a Sheriff's Reserve Deputy, you can't threaten one of my Deputies! Like I said before, put the gun down!"

“You’ll have to kill me first!”

“Jim, don’t make me shoot you, we’ve been friends too long, now I’m ordering you to put the gun down!”

At this point Sheriff Hardcase was stuck in a dilemma, shoot his friend, or let him kill Jack or an innocent bystander. Jim made the decision for him when he cocked the hammer of his .45 Colt Commander and pointed the gun at a woman.

Sheriff Hardcase was out of options, and he knew he would hate himself for the rest of his life, but Jim wasn’t going to surrender his weapon, and He was threatening an old woman.

Seeing this, Jack took a big risk, and moved away from the crowd, so Jim could see him and not endanger the townspeople.

“Jim, I’m over here, Put your gun down, and lets’ talk man to man. There’s no need for you to die today.”

Jim swivelled drunkenly and aimed at Jack.

“I’m not going to talk, I’m going to kill you.”

Jim fired, missing Jack and striking the brick wall behind him. As Jim adjusted him aim, Jack drew and fired one round to the chest, so Jim would have a chance to survive. Jim fell in a heap, and Sheriff Hardcase went to him as quickly as possible, but his friend was dead.

“Jack, what you did was very brave, but stupid. He could have killed you!”

“Sheriff, tap me on the chest and tell me what you feel.”

“You’re wearing a Level IIa Kevlar vest with a plate - how’d you know?”

“I was praying this morning, and something told me that my life was in danger, and I needed to wear my vest. I was praying back then that I didn’t have to shoot, but Jim decided that for all of us.”

“Jack, I’m glad you didn’t make me shoot my friend. Still, you caused all this when you bought all the foreclosed land. I did some checking, and he stood to make \$1 Million in commission on this one sale.”

“Sheriff, if he wouldn’t have been so greedy, he wouldn’t have missed it. He’s worth way more than anyone in town besides me. His house is practically a mansion. I’m still going to have his death on my conscience.”

“Ok, it’s over. There’s not going to be much of an investigation since he threatened to kill you in front of witnesses, and even shot first.”

“Sheriff, you don’t know how sorry I am. I wish there was some other way to end this. I know you just lost a friend today, and I know I can never make it up to you except by telling you I am sorry.”

“It’s OK Jack, you did what you had to do, saved me from shooting my friend, and risked your life by drawing his fire away from the crowd.”

Jack stuck out his hand, and Sheriff Hardcase shook it. Suddenly Jack felt ill, and said he had to use the restroom. Sheriff Hardcase pointed to the door on the right, and Jack ran to the door and barely made it to the toilet. 20 minutes later, Jack came back looking ashen, but Ok for just having shot a man. Sheriff Hardcase told him to sit down, and threw an arm around him saying “I know, it happens to me all the time.”

20 minutes later, the coroner showed up to take the body. Sheriff Hardcase got statements from everyone involved and several bystanders. Everyone basically told the same story, that Jack was minding his own business, when Jim came busting in waving a gun around. They all heard Sheriff Hardcase order him to drop his weapon 3 times, then saw Jack move away from the crowd and ask Jim to put his gun down so they could talk man to man, followed by Jim’s final words and his shot. Jack wished he could have just wounded Jim, but knew from his training that shooting to wound could wind up with you in the casket. Finally Sheriff Hardcase said Jack was free to go. Bert volunteered to drive home, and Jack took him up on it. Gene stayed with Jack after Bert dropped them off, and they both walked home, but Gene stayed a while to talk to Jack.

“I’m here if you need to talk about it.”

“Nothing to talk about, I think my vanity and pride might have just cost a man his life.”

“His greed might have had something to do with it. He could have walked away from it and lived a comfortable life, but his ego wouldn’t let him live with the thought that someone had beaten him at his own game, and caused his own destruction. What he did is a variation of what they call “suicide by cop” since he was in no position to kill you, and he couldn’t kill himself, so he devised this plan to make a sheriff or deputy shoot him. We don’t get too many here in Sevier County, but in Nashville and Knoxville it happens several times a year. You have to put this past you, and get on with your life. Now go in the house and spend time with your family. This is what this is all about - you going home to your family every night.”

“Well right now someone’s not going home to his family, what about that?”

“Jack, he’d be just as dead whether you shot him or Sheriff Hardcase did. Your bravery

prevented Sheriff Hardcase from having to shoot a friend, and gave him one last chance to survive. If he would have put his gun down at that point, he would have lived, instead he chose to try and kill you and lost. This whole incident was about his bad choices, don't forget that!"

"Thanks Gene, I think I'll go home and be with my family now."

"Vaya con Dios mi amigo!"

"You too Gene, and thanks."

Jack went inside to begin the recovery process.

Chapter 15

Jack went inside, walked up to Tanya, who saw the look on his face, and without asking what happened, opened her arms to hold him while he cried. They lay on the bed when he got too tired to stand, and finally he told her what happened. “Jack, this wasn’t your fault. I’ve dealt with Suicide by Cop before, and this is a classic example. Jim wanted to die, but he didn’t have the guts to do it himself, so he forced someone to kill him. If it wasn’t you, it would have been the Sheriff.”

“I drove him to it!”

“No, Jim’s pride drove him to it. He had a puffed-up self-image, and when reality didn’t measure up, he couldn’t deal with it. Some people take drugs; some hang themselves, or slit their wrists. Some eat a barrel, and some don’t have the guts to take their own life, and make someone else do it by threatening an innocent party. You told me he pointed a gun at an old woman before you stepped into the clear to draw his fire away from the innocent. That was brave but stupid! He could have gotten lucky, and I’d be a widow. Please don’t do something that foolhardy again.”

Tanya decided to get undressed, and helped Jack take his clothes off, then they just lay in bed cuddling the rest of the night. Tanya knew that Lindsay was perfectly capable of making Spaghetti-O’s for the two of them, and taking care of Tyrone, since she left him in her care for hours at a time. The two of them were very close, and caring for Tyrone and playing with him helped her draw herself out and care for someone else, which was the best therapy in the world. Tanya was worried about her husband, since until now, Jack was always the strong one, and now he seemed to go to pieces. She hoped he would get over it, and she hoped it would be soon. She knew in the morning he was feeling better because he initiated their sexual activity that morning, not something someone who was feeling weak and passive would do. When they finished, his grin said it all, she had her husband back.

Later that morning Sheriff Hardcase showed up, and told Tanya he needed to talk to Jack alone. They went out on the porch.

“Jack, I talked to Mrs. Wilson, she’s not too upset about her husband’s death, and her exact words were “It’s about time someone shot that snake!” Well, I couldn’t let a comment like that lay, and she said he’s been sleeping with one teller after another, and his latest affair was barely 18, and she was worried that her daddy would find out and kill Jim. She was all set to either divorce him or shoot him herself, so she’s glad to know he’s dead, since she doesn’t have to split the estate with him.”

“Talk about a hard-hearted woman - I’m going through all this grief, and she acts like I did her a favor, well screw them both!”

“Jack, you did the right thing, even if his wife didn’t mourn him; you did - now it’s time to get on with your life. I talked to the DA. He said based on the statements he’s not even going to present this to a grand jury, especially with the way the widow feels, so you’re off the hook legally as well. By the way, I don’t know if I told you this yesterday, but even if he was a snake, I’m glad I didn’t have to shoot him, and you shouldn’t feel guilty either - Jim’s death was what we call “Suicide by Cop” and it happens sometimes.”

“Tanya’s already been all over this, I really feel fine. Can we get on to something fun, like setting all these farmers back on their land?”

“Great news, yesterday all the farmers signed up to get into the land trust lease agreement. Downside is Gene and Bert said they needed another \$5 million for equipment and seeds.”

“Sheriff, as of the day before I bought all the land for \$25 Million, I was sitting on almost \$50 million, so I can afford \$5 Million easy. I just hope Sam Spade can handle the order.”

“Sam called, not only can he handle the order, he’s giving you his best pricing based on volume, and extending a service contract at cost. Bert said we should take it, since he has several mechanics that aren’t doing much. They wanted to centrally locate the equipment in storage facilities, and Sam’s mechanics would keep them in top condition. John said he’d install underground tanks wherever we wanted them with card locks, and bill the trust for fuel used, and we could bill the farmers.”

“Why doesn’t he bill the farmers direct?”

“Because that constitutes a retail sale, at a higher cost per gallon, almost 20 cents more per gallon from what John said. The whole community is getting behind this Land Trust thing, because they know if the farmers are prosperous again, they’ll buy stuff, making the businesses better off, which makes the whole community better off.”

“I guess this means the land trust will have to hire people to handle the accounting and billing?”

“Bert and Gene are already way ahead of you. Remember yesterday you said that you were disassociating yourself with the Land Trust. Well, Gene and Bert took it upon themselves to get the ball rolling. They’re running things on a shoestring, and with as low of a budget as possible. They only have 2 full-time employees, and they’re not interested in working for the company - they’re farmers who wanted to get back to farming as soon as possible. Bert came up with an excellent idea. Instead of everyone planting soybeans, corn, or tobacco, they’re diversifying, and planting larger gardens, since the supply of fresh produce is extremely limited. Even the high schools are getting in the act, and soon we’ll have Farmer’s markets with fresh produce each week during harvest. The main grocery store said he’d buy as many cases of canning jars, lids, and rings as we want. He’d even give us a break on canning equipment. Bert said to plan on 3-5 truckloads full of canning jars and lids, and enough canning equipment for everyone that

didn't own at least two. Gene suggested that some of the landowners with marginal land that wasn't suitable for farming should consider running cattle like Dexter's or Highland breeds which are really hardy and low-maintenance, since fresh meat might be hard to find until the transportation system got straightened out. Several people decided to raise pigs and chickens as well for meat and eggs. Gene took a tally of what everyone was growing, and for the immediate future, after the first harvest, we'll be self-sufficient at least for food, and we'll be exporting soybeans, corn, feed grains, and cotton. Several farmers still want to produce tobacco, so Gene told them that would be a risky proposition with no real Federal Government, since if they brought in a new bunch that turned out to be Liberal health-nuts, the first things they'd do would be to tax or stop tobacco and alcohol production, and they'd be out an entire harvest."

"Sounds like things are well in hand. All they needed was the seed money, and now the community is pulling together."

"Exactly, and we have you to thank for it all."

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. All it takes is 1 major economic upheaval for the wheels to come off this bus, and then we're back in survival mode."

"Well at least if we were in survival mode, we'll have enough food to eat, and we won't have to worry about the bank foreclosing on the farms."

"Sounds like we should stockpile a year's worth of diesel. I'll find out from John how much diesel he thinks we'll use in a year, and get it delivered and stored. If he delivered stabilized diesel, it would last several years at least in storage. I need to get with Bert and Gene, and find out how much diesel John's planning on delivering at once, and how much he thinks we'd go through in a year. Talk to you later Sheriff - I've got to get inside and make some phone calls."

They shook hands, and Jack walked inside the house.

"Gene and Bert called, they needed you to call them back, they had some questions."

"Probably the same stuff the Sheriff and I were just talking about."

Jack called Gene and Bert, and they said they'd be right over.

"Jack, I hope you don't mind that Gene and I got the ball rolling."

"Actually I'm glad you did - I really don't want to get stuck running the Land Trust, but I will if I have to. So what's up?"

"We got everyone to sign up, and all the businesses are making sweetheart deals on supplies and equipment, guess they figured the quicker the farmers get back on their feet, the sooner they

start making some serious money. John's going to install centrally located diesel depots, probably co-located with the equipment garages, with card locks so we know who to bill for the fuel used. Sam's selling top-line equipment at a nice discount, and throwing in a service contract at cost since he has 4 mechanics sitting around with not much to do. The farmers got together and decided to diversify, they're all planting different crops, with no more than 2 farms producing the same crop. They're all increasing the size of their gardens to what you would call a truck farm, and we're going to get the Farmer's market going again. Everyone who has land to spare will be raising chickens or pigs, and several farmers have marginal land that isn't really practical to farm, but Gene suggested they buy some easy to raise cattle, and put them in there. All in all, we'll be self-sufficient for food, but we need to store enough diesel to last through any short-term snafus."

"One thing to make sure of is that John is only delivering stabilized diesel, since it will store for years if necessary. How are we handling the equipment leases?"

"Each piece of equipment has an hour meter on it, and the same card that operates the gas pumps runs the hour meters. When they check it back in, they download the hours, and we bill them for hours used. Everyone has x number of hours per machine included in their lease, and we'll bill for overage to prevent someone from hogging the equipment."

"Sounds like a plan. Now all we need to do is buy the equipment, cover the start-up costs, and buy enough diesel to cover any short-term emergency."

"Already got the figures here Jack. We got lucky; most of the farms are in condition to start farming immediately. Some need seeds, fertilizer and pesticides, and 1 or 2 need a better irrigation system. Your only really big ticket item will be the diesel. John wants to put in 50 10,000 gallon tanks around the county. That would be about 1 for every 3 or 4 farms since they are so spread out. The initial purchase of half a million gallons of diesel will cost \$800,000.00. With the volume of diesel he'll be selling, he said he'd install and maintain the tanks and pumps. Including the equipment and everything, you're looking at \$25 Million. That means you are basically broke like everyone else if we go for everything we ordered."

"What's the annual income for the trust?"

"Average payment is \$15,000 per year times about 150 farms equals \$2.25 million per year back. It will take 20 years to recoup your investment."

"I'm not worried about that, I just don't want the project to go bust."

"We've included a 20% "rainy day" factor into our figures, so unless there is a total disaster in the next 20 years this should work. Even if something does happen, all it does is delay your repayment schedule."

“Yeah as long as I have enough money to get things started again. I should have another 20-30 Million unaccounted for. I have to check with US Bank, seems I had some deposits with them that I haven’t heard back from yet.”

Jack walked back in the house, found an old US Bank statement, and called the 800 number listed on the statement. After speaking with 3 Customer Service operators, he finally got through to a supervisor.

“You say your name is Jack Van Buren, and you account number is 1222-365468-000-35681?”

“Yes sir!”

“Ok, we have your information here. The account has been held due to inactivity, but we show a balance of \$25,346,798.23. If you want to re-open this account, you need to present ID at your local US Bank branch and your account number.”

“I’m in Sevierville Tennessee, can you tell me where the nearest open US Bank branch is?”

“The closest branch is in White Pine, Tennessee. Do you need directions?”

“No thanks, I can find it. What hours is the lobby open?”

“Says here 9-4:30 Monday through Friday, 9-5 Friday, and 9-noon Saturday.”

“When is the branch manager or president in?”

“I’d give him until 10:00 and he probably goes home around 4:00.”

“Thanks.”

“I need to make a trip to White pine tomorrow, any ideas where it is?”

“It’s about 15 miles Northeast of here up route 40 north.”

“OK, I’ve got a map and the street address, I can find it from there.”

The next morning Jack and Tanya drove to White Pine Tennessee. They found the US Bank Ok, and the branch manager was most helpful, he even arranged the transfer of funds to his Bank Of America account in Sevierville. He almost fainted at the balance in the account, but Jack was insistent that it was too far to travel frequently to White Pine, and he wanted his money closer to him, and since there wasn’t a US Bank branch in Sevierville, he didn’t have much choice but to transfer the funds and close the account. When he got back, Jack checked with the local Bank of America branch, and they had already promoted a new Bank President.

Surprisingly, it was Mrs. Wilson. Jack said “Small world, isn’t it?”

“Jack, my family had all the money, and Jim was poor as a church mouse, but he was ambitious, and very good at seducing women. After we were married for a year or so, I found out he was already sleeping around, and guessed he had married me for my money. Believe it or not, you did me and several tellers he was hitting up on a big favor. That transfer from US Bank got here already. Your new balance is \$51,365,875.35, plus your gold and silver on deposit. Jim had an agreement not to charge you for storing your gold here, and I’m going to honor that agreement. Thanks for doing business with Bank of America.”

Jack practically floated out of the bank. His bank balance was almost back where he started again. He made sure he thanked God, and they prayed when he got back in the truck with Tanya. When he got home, he told Gene and Bert to order anything they needed, he just got another \$25 Million from US Bank, but that should be the last of his money that was catching up with him, so make it last. With that out of the way, Jack decided to take the afternoon off and make love to his wife.

When they finally had enough, he took a shower, got dressed, and made dinner for everyone. Jack was a pretty good cook, especially when it came to steak, and knew how to perfectly cook a prime rib ranch steak using a cast iron skillet. Jack was glad that they had installed the commercial range hood in the kitchen, or he might have smoked his family out while he heated the skillet to smoking hot, then added the steaks, further adding to the smoke. The big hood with its huge blower easily kept up with the smoke produced by the steaks. He cleaned and stuck 4 baking potatoes in the microwave oven, and made a mixed vegetable side dish, with broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, corn, and pearl onions in a garlic-butter sauce. By the time dinner was ready, Sampson and Delilah were salivating from the smells, so Jack kicked them outside, saying they’d get theirs later. Once dinner was ready, he called the family to the table. Tanya was wearing a pretty and slightly sexy dress, Lindsay was wearing a sundress and didn’t look like a kid for the first time in his life, and even Tyrone was wearing clean clothes, which was the best you could hope for out of a 5 year-old. Jack helped Tanya to her seat, and got a kiss in return. Once everyone was seated, Jack said grace, and then they passed around the plates. Jack made sure they saved the meat scraps for Samson and Delilah. Judging by the noises, everyone liked their steaks, and Jack made a note to himself to buy steaks more often, and cook for his family every now and then. After dinner, Samson and Delilah got their meat scraps, and Jack got Round 2.

The next morning, Jack said that farming was exhausting. Tanya said “You haven’t done any farming in almost a week.” “Who said anything about the outdoor aspects of farming - Farmer’s daughters are tiring enough by themselves!”

Tanya laughed until her sides hurt, then got up and made breakfast, while Jack got ready to go outside and take it easy. He had a long list of chores to do, and by the end of the day he was exhausted. He told Tanya “I take back what I said this morning; the outside aspects are just as

tiring, but not as fun.”

“You poor dear, let me give you a back rub.”

“Ok, but I wanted to warn you I’m too pooped to pop!”

That’s OK by me; too much activity wears me out too!

Tanya gave Jack a very nice back rub, and he promptly fell to sleep. Tanya made dinner for everyone, and later when Jack woke up, she reheated his dinner for him in the microwave, and then they went back to bed.

Sheriff Hardcase called the next morning, and told Jack to be on the lookout for 3 Hispanic males traveling together. They escaped from custody the other day, and they were considered armed and dangerous since they broke into an abandoned farmhouse last night in Little Cove, and are believed to be headed North following the roads. Since Jack’s farm was the Southernmost in Sevierville, he’d logically be the first to see them. He thanked the Sheriff, then called Gene and Bert and gave them the news. That night after dinner, Samson was acting funny, so he called Gene, and he said his dogs were barking too. That settled it as far as Jack was concerned. He called Sheriff Hardcase, and told him that his dogs and Gene’s were both barking toward the south, like someone was in the treeline to their Southeast. Sheriff Hardcase said he’d send a deputy, but they should go on alert until he got there, since these desperados had a habit of shooting first and asking questions later. Jack grabbed his FRS and said “Yellow Alert, probable intruders to our Southeast. Action plan Alpha.” That got everyone loaded up, and the women and children into the shelters, with the exception of Ralph. Once everyone was ready to go, their house lights were turned off, and their perimeter lights that they had installed facing out, leaving the houses in a pool of darkness, kicked in, turning the fields ablaze with lights. Jack spotted them in the lights and yelled. “Policía, Manos Arriba!”

“Damos Arriba!”

“¡Lance abajo de sus armas y coloque!”

The 3 desperados tossed 2 pistols and 1 shotgun away from them and lay down on the ground. 10 minutes later, they saw the Deputy’s lights as he drove up to Jack’s house. Jack picked up his radio, and said “Bert, Gene, cover them while I bring the deputy in to cuff and search them.” He got 2 clicks back and walked over to get the deputy, and explain that they had 3 subjects proned out but they hadn’t been searched or anything. The deputy got on his radio, and told Dispatch to roll backup code 2. She said “No backup available, use the Reservists on scene.”

“10-4”

“Ok Jack, you guys get to earn your keep today. Have Gene and Bert spread out some so

they're 45 degrees off center axis, and keep their weapons at low ready. We'll walk in on them 10 feet apart. I'll handle the prisoners; you're just there to back me up. If any of them attempt to attack either one of us, use any force necessary to stop them."

"Gene, Bert, spread out some, and approach subjects 45 degrees off axis. Maintain 20 feet separation from scene. You're containing the site, so don't let anyone out of it that isn't under our direct control."

Jack got four clicks, two from each, so they moved in as a group.

"Deputy, do you speak Spanish?"

"Just what I learned in the academy, why?"

"These guys are probably Cuban, and no habla Inglés, I'm fluent, and can translate if goes beyond lie down and hold still."

"Ok Jack. I'll let you know if I need help. I'm just going to cuff and stuff them; I'll wait for the interpreter to get here from Nashville to translate anything else."

They walked carefully up to the trio, and when they were close enough, the deputy said "Usted está bajo detención, pone sus manos juntas' detrás de sus partes posteriores, y guarda todavía el mentir."

Jack had to grin, this gringo sounded like he No Hablo Español. Still the subjects complied when they saw how many armed men they were facing. The Deputy was on the left side of the group, so he cuffed them from left to right, and quickly searched them. He used flexi-cuffs on the 3rd suspect, since he only carried two sets of cuffs. Once they were cuffed, the Deputy asked Bert to help him and Jack escort these prisoners to his vehicle. Since Gene had his 12-gauge, he asked him to hang back off to 1 side, in case any of them tried to escape. Gene knew proper gun handling from his time in the Marines, and had a round in the chamber, but the barrel at low ready, and his finger along side the receiver instead of inside the trigger guard. 10 minutes later, all three of them were in the cruiser headed to jail. The deputy said "thanks" and drove off with his prisoners. Once he left, the three of them huddled around and Gene said "Well that's gratitude for you!"

"Let's try to get some sleep- we've got work to do tomorrow."

Jack grabbed his radio and said "All Clear, condition Green." No sooner did he say that, then the house lights came back on. Jack shut off the perimeter lights before going inside for the night.

Chapter 16

The next morning, they were out doing chores, when Sheriff Hardcase drove up in his personal cruiser. Jack set down the rake he was using, and walked over to his cruiser.

“Morning Sheriff, what’s up?”

“Someone who speaks better Spanish than the Deputy on duty last night finally got around to talking to the 3 desperados you collared last night, and they had some very disturbing news. Castro had infiltrated professional terrorists in among the refugees, to attack infrastructure, and civilian targets. They said that the terrorists paid them to scout out and report back, it was dumb luck that they got spotted. There’s a force of 50 terrorists behind them loaded for bear. I called the 278th ACR, and they’re sending what they can. The Governor authorized the release of the ACAV M-113’s. I need your permission to stage one from your garage, since your farm is the first one in their probable line of advance. The other 2 will be stationed along their secondary lines of advance just in case. I don’t expect you to get into a protracted firefight with these guys; they’ll leave you in a body bag. I just want you to Observe and Report. Since they like to move at night, you should have everyone except spotters in the basement shelters tonight. Gene’s going to be the Commanding Officer of the M -113, and I’ve assigned 3 additional deputies as the driver and M -60 gunners. I only want them to show themselves in case the house comes under concerted attack, otherwise everyone is to lay low. Here’s 2 NVG’s with 4 sets of batteries, and a tactical backpack radio with a headset for quiet transmission. The radio is on a high band that the terrorists shouldn’t have. The 3 of you should go on a rotating 4-hour duty starting at dusk. The ACR has enough firepower to wipe out these turkeys as soon as they show their faces, so don’t worry, we’ve got your back covered. The radio connects straight to the tactical relay center at the ACR, call sign Archangel, you’re Red Dog 6. They’ll have 4 Longbow Apaches, call sign Comanche Flight on hot-pad alert for the next 72 hours, and a Kiowa Warrior, call sign Eagle Eye, flying a racetrack overhead, but you better not hear them, because they’ve got orders to stay above the Stinger’s max altitude just in case. They’ll be scanning the area with their FLIR and radar looking for anything moving that shouldn’t be. One last thing. Stay within 50 feet of the house, or you could accidentally come under fire.”

“OK, Sheriff, any thing else?”

“Well done last night with those 3 dirtbags. If you hadn’t taken them alive, we’d be unprepared in case the terrorists still try to come through here. Sorry, the reason that Deputy is on Graveyard is because he’s the least motivated of my Deputies, and he’s got the personality of a dead crawfish, but he still does good enough work to keep him on. When we get through this, I think HSD is going to up-gun the entire department to M-16/M -203 systems, if that happens, you can keep your AK’s, and I’ll either issue you some surplus M-79’s or if they send us more weapons than we need, you’ve got first pick of what’s left.”

“Sheriff, you should talk to Gene about that, I don’t have a clue.”

“Ok Jack, thanks for everything, and hopefully this is a false alarm.”

As soon as the Sheriff left, Jack talked to Gene, who helped him build a quick OP using the backhoe. It was as well camouflaged as they could make it in the time they had. Jack gave Bert the good news, and he made plans for everyone but Ralph to spend the evening in Jack’s bunker, since it was better built than his. Gene agreed with his logic, and said it would be easier to protect their families if they were all in one place. Gene wasn’t too happy about spending the evening in the unheated garage, but realized the guys in the OP would have it worse. They set up 4 cots next to the M -113, and warmed up the motor while they were still running implements. Dinner was a hastily eaten affair, and the families congregated after dark at Jack’s shelter. Ralph took the 6pm-10 shift at the OP, Jack took the 10-2 shift, and Bert took the 2-6am shift. There was a vestibule in front of the blast door with a steel door between it and the rest of the basement. Jack set up cots for the 3 guys in the vestibule, and they turned on Red LED lights and turned off the house lights for the rest of the night. They didn’t even have the perimeter lights on. Samson stayed in the OP, and Delilah stayed with Gene and the Deputies next to the M -113 to give them some warning in case someone was sneaking up on the garage that had gotten past the OP and Sampson’s ears and eyes. Ralph thought the NVG’s were cool, and he could see the entire area like it was lit up with the floodlights. He was wearing a camouflage net to break up his outline, and he only exposed his head above the lip of the OP line of sandbags. A trench dug out back was the exit and entrance to the OP, which was hidden by the front of the OP from direct observation, so if you stayed down, it would be hard for someone to observe when the observers traded shifts.

At Midnight, Jack crouched as low as he could and made his way to the OP. Ralph took off the radio, cammo net, and NVG and handed it to Jack. Ralph crawled out of the back of the OP, and quietly made his way back to the shelter. He rapped “Shave and a Hair cut” on the door, and his dad let him inside the steel door. They laid down on the cots in their clothes with their weapons next to them. At 1:30, Jack thought he spotted movement in the treeline, and Samson’s low growl confirmed his suspicions. He gave 3 quick clicks on his FRS, the alert code, then grabbed the tactical radio, and turned it on.

“Archangel, this is Red Dog 6. I’m seeing movement 200 yards to my Southeast in the treeline, and my dog is alerted. You might want Eagle Eye to confirm, and get Comanche Flight headed this way.”

“Roger Red Dog 6, any indication of size or strength?”

“Negative, whoever it is isn’t showing themselves enough to get a count, and these are older NVG’s, so all I’m seeing is movement.”

“OK Red Dog 6, Eagle Eye en route, ETA 2 minutes. Report all contacts.”

“Roger Archangel. Red Dog 6 out.”

4 minutes later, the radio came on in Jack’s ear. “Red Dog 6, this is Archangel, Eagle eye shows large moving group southeast of your position, estimated strength is upwards of 50. Good news is they’re on foot. Sit tight and keep your heads down, fireworks will start in approximately 5 minutes.”

5 minutes later, a pair of Apaches fired a cluster of 2.75-inch rockets into the treeline, and the results were spectacular. That entire section of forest was shredded and blown flat. 2 minutes later, the radio came on again. “Red Dog, Comanche is reporting no movement to your southeast and are RTB. Eagle Eye will stay in your area for the next hour or so to make sure we got them all. Nice call - Bravo Zulu!”

Jack got on the FRS “Code Yellow, situation stable, maintain low alert.”

“Jack, do you want relief?”

“On Schedule. Over.”

“Roger.”

Since it was already 2pm, Bert made his way to the OP. To say he was careful was a major understatement, since he knew there might be bad guys in the treeline. He was dirty and muddy by the time he reached the OP, but he wasn’t about to get any taller than he had to. Jack briefed him, turned the gear over to him, and crawled out the back of the OP while Bert took over. When Jack rapped on the door, Ralph opened the door for him, and Jack tried to catch some sleep.

The next morning, several Hummers full of NG troops in full armor climbed out and investigated the area where the Apaches had attacked. What was left barely needed body bags, more like a scraper and a sponge. They borrowed Jack’s backhoe, dug a common grave, and dumped the remains into the hole. When the Lieutenant in charge of the detail found Jack to tell them the mess was cleaned up, Jack said “thanks for clearing that field for me, and I could always use the extra fertilizer.” The Lieutenant was laughing almost as hard as Jack was. “Archangel told me to extend our thanks for spotting them, and we brought some presents.”

They unloaded several crates out of the back of one of the Hummers. 1 held 4 M-16A2/M203 combinations with 10 30-rd mags each, another held cases of 40mm grenades, including 4 cases of practice grenades, 1 case of Para Illum grenades, 2 cases of HE grenades, 2 cases of HEDP grenades in case they came up against APC’s, and 1 case of smoke grenades. The next crate held a case of SS-109 ammo, and 4 AN/PVS-7D NVG’s mounted with head straps, with a large quantity of spare batteries.

Jack called Gene over, who looked at the equipment. “Jack, this is front-line NG gear. The only reason they’d be issuing this gear was if they were expecting more trouble.”

“Lieutenant, are you expecting more of the same, or did Santa Claus just come early?”

Lieutenant Hutchins looked at Gene, and correctly guessed that Gene was ex-military. “Sir, my CO told me to distribute this gear to you in case we get another attack. It seems you guys are on the sharp end of the spear out here. My team will be stationed in Sevierville, and we’ll be patrolling several miles to your south, with Kiowa Warriors in support. This is just in case they get past us.”

“Thanks Lieutenant! If you guys need anything, food, water, a place to stay, just ask us. Tanya’s a trained RN, and we could act as an aid station if needed.”

“I’ll make a note of that.”

“Lance Corporal Eugene Jackson, USMC retired at your service.”

“You served in Nam, didn’t you?”

“1st Cav LRRPs, Sir!”

“My Dad would love to talk to you. I made it to Ranger School, but blew my knee out in Jump school.”

“Know how you feel son, I was wounded toward the end of my first tour, right before I was set to go to Recon school. It was what they call a “Million Dollar Wound” except I didn’t want out. I was having the time of my life. Sure it was dangerous, but so’s crossing the street in New York City.”

“I’d love to stay and chat Gene, but I’ve got to get my men set up and ready to patrol tonight.”

“OK Lt, just make sure you realize these are terrorists, and the Geneva Convention doesn’t apply. If you know they’re not unarmed civilians, shoot first! Bring all your men home!”

“Yes Sir!”

Even though he outranked Gene, and he wasn’t in uniform, the Lieutenant saluted Gene, who returned the salute, then shook his hand.

“One last thing Gene, my call sign is Snoopy 6, so if you hear us calling you, treat it as an urgent warning. It means either the bad guys are headed your way, or we ran into a superior force, and were forced to fall back and regroup. You might want to dig some more OP/fighting holes around here just in case.”

“Thanks Lt. Take care!”

Lieutenant Hutchins jumped back into his Hummer and drove down the road to an abandoned farmhouse about 2 miles further south of Jack’s place. For the next couple of weeks, it would be home away from home.

Gene called Mike Kelly when he got home, and said that they had some new very loud toys they needed training on, without any visitors. Mike caught the gist of Gene’s conversation, and said “I know just the spot. Meet me at the old Limestone quarry off 3-mile road at 0900.”

“Ok, know exactly where that is. Where do you want to meet us?”

“The first locked gate.”

“Ok, see you then Mike.”

Gene called Jack and Bert and said they were doing some more training tomorrow morning at 0900, and Jack needed to pick them up at 0830 tomorrow.

The next morning Jack loaded up the M-16/M203 combos, the case of SS-109 ammo, and the cases of 40mm practice grenades into the truck, and drove over to Gene’s place. Bert followed them to an old abandoned Limestone Quarry, where they were met by Mike, and he was driving his personal vehicle, a Jeep Grand Cherokee. He unlocked the gate, and after they drove through, he re-locked it behind them. They drove to near the bottom of the quarry to a spot that would suit their needs. It was wide and 400 yards deep. It must have been used for something like this before, since there were abandoned trucks and other junk ranging from 100-400 yards away to act as targets. Mike helped Gene unload the gear, and said “Must be nice to have friends in high places. I heard about the terrorist incident yesterday. Obviously this is the ACR’s idea of making sure the next time you’re better prepared.

Once he had everyone set up, he did a weapons familiarity briefing, describing the nomenclature and operation of the M-16A2, and the M-203 Grenade launcher. He explained that while they were shooting practice rounds, they still held enough explosive to kill you if you did something stupid like shooting it straight up in the air. He showed them how to load and unload the weapon using plastic dummy rounds, and how to aim the weapon using the ladder aiming device. He said you set the rear ladder to the range, and lined the notch in the rear ladder with the front sight, and pulled the trigger. It used a high/low ignition system to reduce recoil, and give them a maximum range of 400 yards and a max effective range for area targets of 350 yards. Once he showed them everything, he loaded a round, told them he was targeting the truck 200 yards down range, and adjusted the ladder sight to 200 yards, lined everything up, and pulled the trigger. The gun went “Bloop” and several seconds later, a white puff of smoke appeared above the truck. Mike explained the practice rounds were “marker” rounds, and would show where they hit by a white puff of smoke. Gene did a quick count, and 11 people

divided by 47 rounds equaled 4 rounds each, with 3 spares.

Mike got Gene to go next, and since he had some experience with the M -79 during Vietnam, he did pretty good, hitting the truck after his 2nd round, so Mike picked out another truck about 300 yards out, and told Gene “try to hit that one!” Gene changed the setting on the ladder sight to 300 yards, and hoped there wasn’t much wind in the quarry, so he aimed right at it. His first round was on line, but about 25 yards short, so Gene added 25 yards to his sight, and the last round hit the truck square on the roof. Jack, Bert, Ralph, and Tyler went next, and were hitting the 200 yard truck by their third or 4th round. Finally it was the girl’s turn. Tanya practically snatched the M -16 out of Tyler’s hands, loaded a round into it, and said “Now us girls will show you how it’s done. Either they had really been paying attention, or Tanya wanted to show up her husband real bad. Her second round hit the 200-yard truck, so Mike told her to hit the 300 yard truck. She remembered Gene adding 25 yards to his initial setting, so she set it for 325 yards, and 2 rounds later she hit that one as well. Gertrude, Sam, Jackie, Rebecca, and Lindsay did pretty well. Lindsay had problems with the weight of the weapon, so Mike suggested that she shoot it in Direct Fire mode at closer targets, out to around 100 yards.

He said for their own safety they shouldn’t engage targets inside 50 yards unless they were behind sandbagged cover, because the kill radius is 15 feet, and the HE round will throw fragments for 100 feet easy. To show them what he meant, Mike loaded one of the Sheriff department’s HEDP rounds and blew the 200 yard truck to smithereens. They felt the concussion 200 yards away, and Mike said that anyone within 15 feet of the impact was dead, and anyone within 50 feet could be seriously wounded if they were out in the open. With that little lesson over, Mike got them all shooting the SS-109 rounds at the 100 yard truck, and they each shot several mags full of ammo at the truck, which quickly resembled Swiss cheese. He said the SS-109 was a penetrator round, which meant it would blow through auto bodies easily, but not the block, so if they were under fire behind a vehicle, they should try to put the engine block between them in case the shooter had SS-109 ammo.

When they finished their “weapons training” they packed everything up and drove back home. Gene, Jack, and Bert agreed that they should divide up the rifles and grenades. Since Jack had the best shelter, he should store 2 M-16/M -203 combos and the bulk of the grenades. Gene and Bert would both store 1 rifle and a case of 12 HE rounds in their basements in case they got cut off, plus 1 para illum round, and 1 NVG with ¼ of the spare batteries. The para illum round would be an emergency distress signal in case they got cut off and were unable to use the radio. Gene reminded Jack that they should get 4 40mm bandoleers for the grenade launchers, since their Blackhawk vests didn’t have grenade pockets. Jack asked Gene if they were forgetting anything else. Gene said he couldn’t think of anything, then remembered only 4 of the vests were configured to carry AR-15/M -16 mags. Jack said “I guess Ernie’s going to get another order.” He called Ernie up, and he said that he had a supplier with the bandoleers and had 4 Blackhawk vests with the AR-15/M -16 mag pockets in stock. He’d call them when everything came in. Jack asked Ernie if the GPS satellites were working yet. “Nope, the nuke explosions damaged too many of them and the US Government has more important things to worry about than GPS navigation.”

“Can you give me a heads-up if they start working?”

“If I remember, naturally as soon as they do, you’ll want several GPS receivers?”

“What ever gave you that idea?”

“You’re a technology freak! You probably still have your shoe phone and PDA from your real estate business.”

Jack checked, and sure enough, he did. Checking further, he realized the PDA was still working, and it still had the account number of his corporate B of A account. He called up the local Branch of B of A, and gave Jim’s widow Janet Wilson the account number. He’d forgotten about his corporate accounts, and had only tapped his personal accounts. With most of his corporate holdings in Dallas either ash piles or rubble, and all of his directors probably dead, he could legally use his corporate funds to invest in projects in Tennessee, and use his personal funds for other projects.

“Mr. Van Buren, I’m sorry we didn’t check sooner. Van Buren Properties has deposits of over 20 million dollars.”

“Can you transfer the balance to your branch, so if we lose long-distance communications I’ll have access to the money?”

“I’ll process the paperwork, and it should go through tomorrow. You understand that we can’t insure deposits of that size.”

“Thanks Mrs. Wilson, I know that. Are there any worthwhile projects in Sevierville that you’d

recommend that I'd invest in?"

"How much are you willing to invest?"

"I'm going to get my personal funds out of the land trust, then invest half of it in local rebuilding and agricultural projects."

"I'll make a list. The bank gets proposals for worthwhile projects all the time, and we have to turn the bulk of them down for 1 reason or another. Since you don't seem too concerned about losing your investment, I'll send them your way. By the way, please call me Janet. Jim's dead, and I haven't gotten around to filing paperwork to resume my maiden name."

"Thanks Janet, in that case, please call me Jack."

After they hung up, Jack called Sheriff Hardcase. "Sheriff, I've just come across another 20 million dollars I need to invest. Does the County have any projects they need financing for, that will give me a good return on investment?"

"We've had plans for years to build a biodiesel plant to make biodiesel out of soybeans, and use the left-over meal for animal food."

"How many acres of soybeans do you need to make it profitable?"

"If 1/3 of the County's soybean production were diverted to biodiesel, we could produce around 5-10 thousand gallons per month."

"How much diesel are we burning per month now?"

"You'll have to ask John."

"Ok, I'll get back to you Sheriff."

Jack called John "John, how much diesel are the farms going to use per month?"

"I'm budgeting 10 thousand gallons of diesel per month."

"How'd you like to get 10,000 gallons of biodiesel per month?"

"Depends on the cost."

"Let's say 80% of what you're currently paying for diesel, with virtually no transportation costs. The county is looking into going into biodiesel production, so all you'd have to do is pick it up from the plant here in town."

“OK, If I took 10 thousand gallons of biodiesel and blended it 70/30 with diesel, it would be seriously cheaper. 40,000 gallons of diesel would make 50,000 gallons of blend, and if we ever ran out of diesel, you’ll be glad to have the 10,000 gallons per month to get by. All that biodiesel will really help stretch my stocks of diesel.”

“Thanks John, I’m going to call the Sheriff and find out how much it costs to buy a biodiesel plant.”

“The plant’s not your main cost; it’s buying the grain at market price. Soybeans go for almost \$600 per ton, and you’re only going to make 2 gallons of biodiesel per bushel, and you’ll only raise maybe 40 bushels per acre. That’s 4,000 bushels per hundred acres, so to get 10,000 gallons of biodiesel; you need 125 acres of dedicated farmland.”

“I’ve got 500 acres across the street that I just bought.”

“Soybean meal is selling for \$200 per ton, and produces 45 pounds of meal per bushel, means you’ll produce 112 tons of meal out of that 5,000 bushels you’ll need to make 10,000 gallons of biodiesel at \$200 per ton, gives you a yield of \$22,400 in meal. \$2.00 per gallon times 10,000 gallons equals \$20,000 plus \$22,400 is a yield of \$42,400 from 5,000 bushels of soybeans versus \$3,000,000.00 if you sold the soybeans outright - it’s a no-brainer! Diesel would have to go over \$10 per gallon to make biodiesel production from soybeans profitable. Not only that, but you’ve got your initial plant costs, plus the chemicals you need to make biodiesel, like methane and lye. Now you can get locally produced methane from pig farming, and lye from wood ash, but buying them on the open market raises your costs. Using used vegetable oil is a better way to go, but we only have a few restaurants in town, and use maybe a couple hundred gallons per month. If I were you, I’d put that project on the back burner and save it for when diesel skyrockets.”

“Thanks for saving my butt John - I would have lost everything if I would have tried it.”

Jack called the Sheriff back and told him biodiesel from soybeans was a non-starter unless diesel was either unavailable or over \$50 per gallon, because they could get \$3 million for the beans on the open market for enough beans to make 10 thousand gallons of biodiesel, and at \$2.00 per gallon, plus the price of meal, they’d only net out \$42 grand converting it to biodiesel. “I know Jack; I was just going to tell you when you hung up. John told me the same thing 6 months ago.”

“Ok Sheriff, if you come up with something more reasonable let me know.”

Chapter 17

A couple of hours later, the Sheriff called back.

“Jack, if we expanded the produce-growing capacity of the farmer’s new properties, instead of just raising cash crops, pigs, chicken, and cattle; we’d have more surplus produce than we could use locally. I know a dealer in Nashville that sells used commercial processing equipment, and could set you up with a food processing plant for between 1 and 1.5 million that could can, dry or freeze-dry just about anything that came through the door. The farmers would drive their transport wagons full of produce onto the scale, and we’d pay by weight and quality, then the automated equipment could clean, slice, cook, and freeze-dry or can the produce right then and there. We could ship to distributors all over the state. If farmers that delivered produce to the plant wanted to buy finished product, we’d call it a co-op and they’d buy for just over our cost for their own personal use or storage. Freeze-dried, nitrogen packed, and canned food could last more than 10 years without any deterioration.”

“Ok, Sheriff, let’s do some checking around, and get a better idea of how much the plant would cost, including a big steel building.”

Jack had just got off the phone when Sheriff Hardcase called back. “Jack, great news, the dealer’s sitting on all the equipment you need for a freeze-dry processing plant. He foreclosed on a small start-up company when they couldn’t pay the lease on their equipment. It’s less than 90 days old, yet he has to sell it as used equipment, and it’s still under warranty for 1 year from the original date of purchase. He was really interested when I said we could pay cash, and he offered to ship it down here at his expense, and install it in our building. He told me how big of a building we would need, and also since the equipment is almost totally automated, we only need 20 people to run the plant, and I know where to get them. The local college had a Food Technology program, and I know the director. He can put me in touch with any recent graduates of the program.

2 days later Jack had all the information he needed. The plant was capable of either canning or freeze-drying then nitrogen pack canning the full output of Sevier County. All he had to do to expand the operation was to add more RAY 100 units and processing equipment since the only room that had to be kept cold was the freezer room, and they designed it way bigger than they needed so he could add 2 more freezer units if necessary. Jack made sure that the building took full advantage of any possible solar electric power available. While he couldn’t run the entire plant on solar power because they didn’t have any inverters big enough left at the distributor, he could run all his 120VAC equipment off a huge inverter bank and battery bank. When he learned the State of Tennessee was offering nice rebates for grid-connected AE systems, he switched the inverters to grid-intertie inverters instead of the ones he was going to buy. This also saved him money since he didn’t need as big of a battery bank, if the power went down, he

was out of business anyway. Some of the canning equipment could run on 120 VAC, but the freezer and freeze-dryer used a lot of power, and high voltage. He'd check into a large diesel generator, and when he installed that pilot plant to make Biodiesel, he could use the biodiesel to run the generator, and stay in business.

Jack had a brainstorm, and made the County "an offer they couldn't refuse." He found out the county was 100% dependent on imported power through the TVA, and realized if he doubled the size of his building, he could install a full-scale Biodiesel production line as well, and enough diesel generators to not only keep his business running, but provide power for critical infrastructure like the phone company, water works, county government buildings, etc. All they had to do was pay for the wiring and transformers to set up a generating substation on his property with dedicated lines to the critical infrastructure of the county and pay 50% over the going rate for any electricity used. The hospital already had its own generators, and several farmers had seen the light and were starting to install AE systems on their farms as well with Jack's help. The extra cost wouldn't bother Jack, since if the stuff hit the fan while his money was sitting in a bank, he might not get it back this time. He decided to buy all the equipment now, and leave it dormant, except for a pilot plant that could process used vegetable oil into biodiesel, and give the people running the plant some experience in producing biodiesel. He found a company in Nashville that wanted Glycerin bad enough to send a truck to Sevierville and pick it up, and still pay him just below market for the glycerin. That same company used Lye, and was willing to sell them as much lye as they wanted at a good discount, and they'd ship it using their own tankers.

Jack had a huge tank installed when he built the plant to store the lye. Lye is highly caustic, so he had to take several expensive precautions with the tank and plumbing for the lye, since he didn't want anyone getting hurt at one of his plants, so everything having to do with safety was way overbuilt and over-engineered with multiple redundant systems to prevent an accident. The Nashville company was scratching their heads when they received the huge order for Lye, so they called Jack to confirm. He explained that he was using it to make Biodiesel, and he wanted enough on hand to make a million gallons of Biodiesel just in case. They were still shaking their heads, but filled the order. It took 20 double-tanker's full of Lye to fill the huge tank, but Jack knew he had the major chemical needed to make Biodiesel already stored. After some review and debate, the county took him up on his offer, since they knew how expensive diesel-generated power was, and he was probably going to take a loss if they county needed power for any length of time. What they didn't take into consideration was that Jack owned 550 acres of land suitable to grow soybeans, and he could make almost a half million gallons of biodiesel without having to buy soybeans, and he could still sell the meal to farmers, or process it himself in his packing plant, which would further reduce his costs to the point that regular diesel only had to go up to \$5.00 per gallon before he hit his break-even point. If he needed more than half a million gallons of diesel, he was sure Gene and Bert would sell their 50 acres each of soybeans at a reasonable price.

That got Jack to thinking. He wondered how much it would cost to add enough capacity to take

in all the county's soybeans and either bag them to sell as whole beans, or crush them into meal and extract the oil. He didn't have the answers, but hoped someone in Sevier County did. He knew it meant setting up a separate line in his food processing plant, but he needed the sorters and crushers anyway for biodiesel production, so all he needed was the back half of the equation, the sorting, bagging, and weighing equipment. He was glad the Internet was finally up, because he doubted he could get the answers to his questions locally. He found a site from the National Soybean Research Laboratory

<http://www.nsrl.uiuc.edu/aboutsoy/soyprocessing.html> that gave him all the info he needed about soy processing, and decided to use the more efficient ExPress system which could directly convert whole soybeans at field moisture conditions eliminating the need for a dryer, and the extra power and space needed. Google found the home website for the company that made the ExPress <http://www.insta-pro.com/index.html>, and he decided to go with their highest capacity system, since if he wound up processing all the soybeans the county could grow, he'd be running their biggest processor practically 24/7 to keep up. He sent an e-mail to their sales department, which was promptly returned. Their pricing was reasonable, and they had a sales location right in North Carolina, so the shipping wasn't too great. He made a couple of suggestions when Jack told him he was processing whole soybeans for meal and oil, and the quantity of soybeans he needed to process. The money was no object, since he knew that as long as the farmers had diesel to grow Soybeans with, he'd have soybeans to process.

Jack ordered a huge steel building, and hired a contractor to build a suitable reinforced concrete slab and erect the building, then install all the equipment. Between planning the building and business, and farming, he was burning the candle and both ends, and had to make a decision. Would he like farming more, or running a factory? Either way, he'd have to hire a manager for one or the other. Tanya made the decision for him when she said that she'd rather have him working at home, and he located a qualified plant manager through Sheriff Hardcase. Jack was back to being a Gentleman Farmer.

The plant was up and running just in time for harvest, and Jack was glad he'd decided to turn over day-to-day operations to a Plant Manager when he found out that he was spending 60 hours per week at the plant. When the Farmers heard about the canned goods for cost, they put their orders in early. Most ordered freeze-dried nitrogen-packed canned goods in #10 cans for long term storage, since Jack's prices to the farmers were 1/3 of what everyone else was charging. Even with the huge orders placed by the farmers, Jack had enough production left over to interest several large food distributors, and had contracts for all the canned produce they could produce, and all the soybean meal they weren't using locally. Jack packed the soybean meal instead of making the soybean meal into TVP, which required an extra step and cost. As the soybean oil started coming in, Jack decided to convert it to biodiesel and sell it to John instead of selling it as soybean oil when John offered to buy all the biodiesel he could produce. Jack felt that John was hearing the same rumblings he was of fuel shortages in the near future, and wanted to fill up the tanks in his fuel depot.

Later that afternoon, Jack received a cryptic call on his radio “Red Dog 6, this is Archangel; Snoopy 6 says to expect a lot of unfriendly company tonight from the same direction as last time.”

“Roger Archangel, We’ll have the lights on and the welcome mat out. Keep me posted.”

“Archangel out.”

Jack called Gene and Bert, and gave them a heads-up, then went and checked the armory. Ernie had come through with the Blackhawk vests and the 40mm grenade bandoleers. Jack kept 2 of them, and loaded them full of HE and HEDP rounds, then took out 4 rounds, and added 2 para illum and 2 smoke rounds. That still left 16 high explosive rounds in each bandoleer, which he hoped would be enough for what was going on. He loaded the M -16 magazines in both of the M-16-style vests, and decided to carry the M-16/M -203 tonight due to the extra range and lethality of the M -203. The M -16 mags were full of SS-109 rounds, which should penetrate as well as the 7.62x39 rounds, he hoped. Right before sunset, Jack, Gene, and Bert’s families assembled in Jack’s shelter. 10 minutes later, a sheriff’s cruiser showed up, and 3 deputies parked the vehicle in the garage, and manned the M -113. Gene, Jack, Bert and Ralph were all armed with AR-15/M -203 combinations, a bandoleer full of 40mm grenades, and the upgraded NVG goggles. All white lights were turned off and the houses were dark, so Jack and the guys used red lensed flashlights when they needed to see inside the vestibule. They kept the same schedule, and Ralph was the first out the door. Around 10:00, Jack got another call from Archangel.

“Red Dog 6, bandits 2 klicks south of your position and heavily armed. Snoopy has been harassing them all afternoon, but they show no signs of stopping to engage. Anyone approaching from your southeast is a bandit, and you’re free to engage. The Calvary is on the way, but they’re short-handed.”

“Roger Archangel, confirm anyone approaching from Southeast is bandit. Where is Snoopy?”

“Snoopy is relocating to your north to head them off at the pass if they make it past you. 2 Comanches are en route, but might not make it there in time. Use whatever force is necessary to stop bandits without endangering non-combatants.”

“Roger Archangel - we’re going code red right now.”

“Archangel out, Good hunting and God Speed.”

Jack got on the FRS/GMRS radio and said “Red alert, everyone man your bunkers!”

Jack and Bert hurried out of the house and went to their fighting holes, which were equally spaced along a line 50 yards from the house. The Red Alert Broadcast was for Tanya’s benefit,

so they would know that they were on their own to defend the shelter, since everyone else was deployed. Once Jack and Bert were outside, Tanya flipped a switch which activated several self-defense mechanisms to protect the basement shelter. Gene had heard the Red Alert, and started the M-113's diesel idling with the garage door open, so they could deploy at a moments' notice. Gene had already linked several belts for the Ma Deuce and the M-60's, and had loaded the belts into the feed trays. All that they had to do to get the guns into action would be to pull back on the feed handles and squeeze the trigger. They weren't in their fighting holes 10 minutes when Sampson alerted, and they saw movement to their southeast with their NVG's. "Gene, this is Jack, we have movement to our southeast. This group's twice as big as the last one."

"Any RPG's?"

"Can't see any yet, we'll keep you posted."

Jack knew that an RPG was a lethal threat to the M -113, so Jack and Bert scanned the treeline, looking for the unmistakable outline of an RPG gunner with rockets sticking out the top of his pack. Jack spotted 1 and Bert spotted another at the same time.

"Gene, there are 2 RPG gunners visible. We'll engage them first, and when we've eliminated them, we'll give you the Go code."

"Roger, standing by."

"Jack to task force, load HE rounds and launch when you hear my round going out, I'll take the lead, Bert you take center column, and Ralph, nail the Tail end Charlie. Keep firing until you hear Cease Fire."

2 seconds later, there were 3 quickly spaced "Bloops" then when the HE grenades went off, all hell broke loose. Rounds were coming in and going out. The difference was the invaders had no clear idea where the fire was coming from, and were spraying rounds indiscriminately. Jack's team fired 1 more volley of grenades, then Jack yelled into his mike "Go, Go, Go!" and turned to see the M -113 charging out of the garage with all 3 guns firing as soon as they had targets. The driver kept the M -113 moving so it wouldn't be too tempting a target, and the full-auto fire had a telling effect. They raked the column repeatedly with fire, and since every 5th round was a tracer, they could see what they were hitting. Gene called for illumination, so all 3 M-203's fired a para illum round over the column. As the parachute suspended magnesium flares burned, anything that moved was fired upon. Once the flares burned out, Gene was sure that there was nothing left alive in the enemy column, and called "Cease Fire!" Jack, Bert and Ralph remained in their holes, and Gene decided to drive the M -113 closer to make sure. Several short bursts later, Gene radioed "all clear" and drove back to friendly lines.

Jack got on the radio and told Archangel “Archangel, this is Red Dog 6, All clear, target terminated. Recall Comanche and tell Snoopy to relocate to our position.” Everyone remained where they were, and 2 hours later, Sampson alerted to the Northwest.

“Snoopy is that you coming in from the northwest?”

“Roger, Red Dog 6, just going to call you. We’re about half a mile out with Hummers and Bradleys.”

“We’re all 50 yards south of the house, with the M -113 50 yards in front of us. Anything in front of the M -113 is a bandit, but we’re pretty sure they’re all dead.”

5 minutes later, Snoopy team encircled the house with a defensive perimeter, and finally Jack, Bert and Ralph felt safe enough to come out of their holes since they each had a Bradley parked between them and the threat axis. They met Lieutenant Hutchins’ Hummer in the front yard, and he filled them in on what had been happening.

“Gentlemen, thanks for taking out that bunch. We didn’t anticipate heavy follow-on forces, and assumed that group you took out earlier was their main party. Now it seems that they were just scouting for the main group. There are several other large groups of Cuban terrorists running amuck south of you, but we’re marshaling some heavy duty firepower to deal with them. This group slipped through the dragnet, and seemed to be headed North, and wasn’t stopping for anything, since they left their dead and wounded behind. They must have originally been over 200 men strong, because we whittled them in half before they got here. According to the guys who checked out the remains of the column, there was about 100 bodies or parts thereof in the column. Gene, that was smart starting the battle with the M-203’s, since my guys spotted what was left of 2 or 3 RPG gunners who would have taken the M -113 out if they would have gotten off a shot. I’ll be back tomorrow with some more 40mm grenades and ammo. I’ve got to call in my report now. Thanks for everything, and try to get some sleep. We’ll stand guard for the rest of the night.”

They decided to stay in the shelter overnight, and the 4 men fell asleep exhausted as soon as they laid down.

The next day Lt. Hutchins was back with a trailer behind his Hummer. “Archangel sends his regards. We took everything we thought you could use that we weren’t using out of the Armory. If you can’t use it, give it to your Sheriff’s Department. Most of this stuff’s old or obsolete, but still works fine. We just got a new shipment from the Depot, and had to make room in the armory. I’ll leave the trailer here today, but I need it back by this evening.”

Lt. Hutchins shook their hands, then climbed aboard his Hummer and drove back quickly to the North. Jack opened the trailer and was amazed at what they had brought. There was a crate labeled M -72 LAW which Gene immediately recognized as the infamous LAW rocket, and

wondered why the National Guard was giving them anti-tank weapons. Another crate said M - 18 APM Claymore, there was another crate marked 7.62 NATO Combat Mix Linked, and another marked 12.7mm Combat Mix Linked. Whoever had shipped this stuff was either cleaning out their warehouse, or making sure they were loaded for bear. There was another crate marked SS-109 NATO, and several crates of 40mm grenades. The only thing missing was a GE Minigun or a MK-19 Grenade launcher! Gene decided that they should keep all the stuff, since they were seeing the bulk of the action, and had enough room to store everything. They took several hours unloading the haul, then called Lt. Hutchins to come and get his trailer. They got back to farming, and Gene suggested they use the Claymores in front of their fighting holes as a last-ditch defensive line, but not to put them out until they got a heads-up, since if a tractor hit one, it might accidentally go off.

When Tanya got a look at what Lt. Hutchins sent them, she got really worried, and Jack spent most of the night trying to calm her fears. He told her the weapons were a combination thank-you gift for taking out those terrorists, and a just-in-case supply of better weapons in case it happened again. Jack saw the bullet holes in his house, and he wasn't happy. He wanted to rebuild the house, but didn't really have the time, or any place to relocate his family while he rebuilt it. Besides, he couldn't really build anything above ground that would stop much more than a 30 caliber bullet that didn't look like a fortress, and all the damage was cosmetic. Besides, Bert and Gene were in the same boat, and they couldn't afford to rebuild their houses. He checked with his plant manager, and he said they were running 2 shifts just trying to keep up with the produce coming in. Jack asked him to set aside a case of everything freeze-dried in #10 cans, and he'd pay for it when he picked it up. His plant manager told Jack about an idea he had to use the soybean husks as a heat source. Jack thought it was a good idea since they had to use a lot of hot water to rinse and blanch produce and sterilize equipment. Jack suggested he check into it and get back to him.

John called later that day, and said that Diesel prices were going up, and he'd pay 20 cents less per gallon for biodiesel than he paid for diesel, so their contracted price would be going up as Diesel went up. Jack suggested selling blended regular and biodiesel to the Land Trust to keep costs down. John said he was already doing that, and slowly increasing the amount of biodiesel in the mix. He was at 20% biodiesel right now, and could blend up to 60% biodiesel without any noticeable difference. If he went over 60%, they'd have cold starting problems unless they started on pure diesel then switched. Jack asked John to modify his tanks for his generator farm so the generators would start on 100% diesel and automatically switch to biodiesel once they were up to operating temperature. John explained that manual switching was cheaper and easier. Jack said "Ok, make it happen" and John started filling his main storage tanks with 100% treated biodiesel, and installed a smaller 500 gallon tank of treated regular diesel.

As word spread about their food processing plant, more and more farmers from surrounding areas wanted in to the Co-op. Eventually demand outstripped their processing capacity. Jack had anticipated this, and during the slow season, shut the plant down for 2 weeks and doubled the number of processing lines, and hired more people. By the time the next harvest rolled

around, they were processing soybeans and produce from most of Northern Tennessee and parts of North Carolina. Even with the increased cost of diesel, they were the closest processing plant to a lot of farmers, so they took their produce to Jack's Foods. The Co-op deal was icing on the cake to most farmers, who were glad they didn't have to take the time to home-can their own produce in glass jars, and bought from Jack at 10% over cost. Finally, someone from the Governor's office called and asked to speak to Jack. The Governor's aide came right out and asked Jack if he'd help set up processing plants all around Tennessee that were close to the farmers. Jack explained to the aide how to do it, and where he bought his equipment, and that he was too busy to personally supervise the installation of 4-6 more plants across the state. The aide thanked Jack and said he'd get back to him if he had any questions.

Chapter 18

2 weeks later the Governor himself was on the phone.

“Mr. Van Buren, the State of Tennessee needs your help. We’ve got produce rotting in the fields with no way to get it to market since the transportation systems can’t handle the volume. My aide tells me that you built a processing plant from the ground up that is handling 3 counties.”

“Governor Bredesen, I’d love to help, but even I can’t afford to build as many plants as you’d need.”

“I know that Mr. Van Buren, that’s why I wanted you to make a proposal to the State General Assembly for a State Guaranteed Loan for sufficient funds to open 6 processing plants, including Biodiesel manufacture, since Diesel is still going up. You don’t need to risk any of your capital, and we desperately need the processing capability. All you need to do is buy the property for the plants, and I know you have enough money to buy Sevier County, so please don’t tell me No.”

“Wouldn’t dream of that Governor.”

“Mr. Van Buren, please call me Phil.”

“Only if you call me Jack.”

“Ok Jack, I need you to drive to Nashville next week to present your proposal to a joint session of the General Assembly. They will be very supportive, and the presentation is a formality due to the amount of money the state would be guaranteeing.”

“Phil, one last thing, I need the money like I need a hole in the head, and I’d like to set these factories up as non-profit public benefit corporations so once I have my initial investment and the loans paid off, the profits should be put in a trust fund to start up new small businesses in the areas of the plants.”

“Excellent idea Jack, I like the way you think. With that part, even the ultra-liberals can’t argue with this.”

“Phil, I’m not doing it to grease the skids, I’m serious. I’m sitting on 25 million, and my plant is making 2 million a year, and the land trust is paying off faster than I calculated. How much money does one need to be happy? What does a man profit if he gains the world and loose his soul?”

“Did you ever think about becoming a Minister?”

“Phil, before the attack, I was an Filthy-Rich Agnostic living life in the fast lane in Dallas, and miserable as all heck! Getting dumped in Beaufort, South Carolina was the best thing that could have happened to me.”

“How’s that?”

“The first man I met after I stayed overnight in an abandoned shack was a black man pointing a shotgun at me. It turned out he was an elderly poor black Baptist minister, who took me under his wing, and helped me learn some tough lessons. People in those small black communities have to pull together, or they couldn’t survive. The grocer was the wealthiest man in town, and that was only because he owned a working truck. The 30 gallons of gasoline in the tank of my disabled rental car was the most gasoline they had seen at one time. I finally had access to some of my wealth, and was using it to improve living conditions there, when we were forced to bug out and live in a cave for a year because the Klan and some Black gangs decided that our neighborhood would make a perfect battle ground. Leroy the old preacher, his wife Gertrude, and my wife’s father Bob sacrificed their lives in the attack to buy us time to escape. Tanya is a good Christian woman, who slowly warmed my hard heart, and I realized that everything that happened in my life had a purpose. Now I’ve totally given my life to God, since I can’t do it myself.”

“Amen Jack. Sounds like we’re in for one heck of a proposal next Thursday. See you at 0800 at the main entrance to the capitol building. A floor pass will be waiting for you and your wife if you want to bring her.”

“Phil, she’s half-black, are you sure that’s a good idea?”

“Jack, I did some checking and the fact that your wife’s mixed-race as they say is actually a plus with the Black Caucus - They’re the largest voting block in Tennessee. I’d definitely say bring her. You’ll find doing business on your level in Tennessee is all about politics. Maybe later you might consider running for public office. You’d do your area a great service if you did!”

“Thanks Governor, but I’m not really interested at this time. I’d probably be too tempted by the praise and adulation, and fall back into old habits. Too many people have died for me to throw their gift away.”

“Ok Jack, but keep it in mind, we need more good Christians in public office.”

“Ok Governor, anything else?”

“No, thanks for your time, and see you next Thursday.”

Jack told Tanya the good news, she decided that she'd never seen Nashville, and that Lindsay and Gene's family could take care of Tyler and the farm while they were gone. They went into town and bought her a nice dress and a new suit for him, then he went home and worked on his presentation. Looking at the State map, he saw the 3 main divisions of Tennessee, and realized that if he put 2 plants in each of the 3 main divisions, he would shorten the transport distances for everyone. He decided to leave the exact locations of the plants up to the state or various counties, since they knew what the transportation situation was. He'd rather have the plants closer to the farmers than the users, since they might need the biodiesel they were producing each year to run their farms, and the processed food could be shipped by truck or rail to the cities and surrounding states. He wrote several pages of notes showing the distribution and reasoning behind his plans. The next day, he drove to his processing plant, and showed the plant manager his rough drafts, and he made some suggestions that Jack implemented, using real-world information they had gathered through trial and error that slightly modified their plans. The main thing they were worried about was continuously mono-cropping soybeans for fuel, but no other bean produced near as much oil per bushel, so they decided on a crop-rotation scheme where they'd have sufficient soybean production, but each farm would only grow Soybeans once every 4-5 years depending on how many farms were being serviced by each plant, and how much diesel they needed to produce their crops and transport them to market.

Jack took the rest of the week to go over his presentation, and then packed his bags and briefcase for the trip to Nashville, which was about 200 miles west on I-40, so they needed to stay somewhere overnight. Jack called the Governor's office, who offered to put them up in the Guest House, and they could ride over the next morning in his limousine. Jack realized that arriving with the Governor had it's plusses and minuses, since it would forever ally him with the Governor as far as State politics were concerned, but at the same time, it would impress the various members of the General Assembly that he wasn't just some Yokel from Sevierville coming to Nashville to tell them how to do their jobs. He asked Tanya, and her only question was "Is he a Christian?"

Jack wasn't sure of his answer to that question, so he decided to call the Governor and ask him.

"Governor Bredesen, my wife had one question before we accept. You sound like a Christian, but you haven't come right out and said it."

"Jack thanks for asking, and yes I am - I don't hide my beliefs, but at the same time I don't beat people over the head with my Christianity."

"Why not?"

"Jack, if every time I tried to witness to someone my first comment was "You're a Sinner and you're going to Hell!" do you think they'd stick around to hear the rest of it."

"I guess not, matter of fact, Leroy was so low-key about it that I didn't realize he was a Baptist

Minister until Bob said he could marry Tanya and me.”

“There you go - sometimes the best witness is to lead by the example of your day-to-day lives instead of beating them over the head with the Bible.”

“Thanks Governor. We’d like to accept your hospitality. We’ll be there Wednesday afternoon. Look for the grey Dodge Cummings Turbo-diesel that looks like it’s been through WWII.”

“Sounds like you have a story to tell sometime, I’d love to hear it.”

“Tanya, I got the answer to my question, yes he is a Christian, but he doesn’t go around shouting it from the rooftops. He’d rather witness by the way he lives his life.”

“OK, sounds like he’s trustworthy.”

“Good, because I already accepted. We’re going to stay at the Governor’s mansion Wednesday night, and drive over to the Capital building Thursday morning with the Governor in his limousine.”

“Better leave our guns at home!”

“Yikes, I forgot all about that! I better call the Governor’s office.”

“Governor, Hi Jack again. I need a solution to a problem. My wife and I are both Reserve Deputy Sheriff’s in Sevier County, and we’re carrying concealed. I understand we can’t carry in the mansion or in the Capitol building, but how about between here and there?”

“If you leave the weapons in the truck, there’s no problem.”

“Ok, thanks, see you Wednesday.”

“Tanya, he said if we leave the guns in the truck we’re fine.

“OK, we should leave our personal sidearms off, since I’d have to get undressed to take off my IWB holster, so let’s leave the guns in the kits in the back seat, and we’ve still got the WP shotgun under the seat if we need any firepower in a hurry.”

“Forgot about that, I wonder if the Governor’s security detail would have a cow about that?”

“Probably, but the Governor said to leave everything in the truck, so obviously whatever’s in the truck is OK.”

Wednesday morning, they packed the truck, kissed Lindsay and Tyrone, and drove to Nashville.

They followed the aide's directions, and drove right up the driveway to the mansion. They grabbed their bags and Jack's briefcase, and walked to the main entrance, where they were met by the Head of Security.

"Mr. and Mrs. Van Buren, right this way."

He lead them through a metal detector, and checked their bags, then handed them photo ID's, and explained that the badges gave them the run of the mansion with the exception of the executive offices without an escort. If they wanted to go to the executive wing, one of his agents would escort them. They would eat dinner with the Governor at 6:00 sharp in the formal State dining room. Jack was glad they'd packed extra dinner clothes just in case. They were shown to their room, and at 6:00, they were escorted to the State Dining room. The Governor and his wife were waiting for them. He shook both of their hands, and introduced his wife Andrea. They made small talk until dinner was served.

"Jack, we have more in common than you know. I started the Land Trust for Tennessee."

"I know, it's amazing what you can get by reading the internet. I read your Bio and your wife's. We share something else. We found our adopted daughter Lindsay along the side of the road in the Smokey Mountain National Forrest on our way to the cave we would live in for over a year until we felt it was safe to come out. Lindsay's parents were killed in an attack that resulted in the rape of her and her mother, and Lindsay somehow escaped. I know your wife Andrea really has a heart for abused children."

"Well Jack, I can see you've done your research. Is Lindsay OK, if not we can help you locate a competent therapist."

Tanya spoke up "She seems OK, now, but when we first found her, she was shy and withdrawn, but latched onto me like a drowning man grabbing a life ring."

Andrea put down her fork "Tanya, that's the best description I've ever heard of a child that has experienced extreme trauma. After Jack's presentation, we should keep in touch, and if Lindsay develops any more problems, I'll put you in touch with a good therapist."

"Do you know any Ministers who are trained in treating Delayed Stress Syndrome related to sexual abuse?"

"Was she abused?"

"No just brutally raped, and she saw her Dad die, and probably saw her Mother beaten to death."

"Oh dear. I'll see whom I can locate. I know several excellent ministers, but they're all in

Nashville. I'll ask them if they know anyone closer to Sevierville."

"Thanks Andrea, I'd appreciate that."

After dinner, they went for a walk in the formal gardens. The wives were chatting as Jack and Phil were talking about Phil's idea for 6 food processing plants statewide. He was amazed when Jack told him that he was netting over \$2 Million each year from one plant.

"Phil, the plant was really expensive to build, since I added a bunch of Alternative Energy equipment to the design, but the good news is the plant itself is 100% energy self-sufficient, and produces enough biodiesel annually to just about equal the diesel used to farm the local farms. My diesel supplier said he's blending 40% biodiesel in the fuel he's shipping to the Land Trust, and the mechanics claim that the blend actually runs better than straight diesel. My back-up generators for the plant will start on straight diesel, and then run on straight biodiesel since they run at a constant rpm and load. The roofs of my plants are oriented to take full advantage of photovoltaic panels that make enough power to run all the 120-volt equipment all day. In some windier areas of the state, you could install wind turbines, but the wind speed in Sevierville is too slow for turbines, but works just fine for pumping water for irrigation using windmills. My house and my neighbors' houses, and several other farms in the area are 100% AE, with a grid intertie because the State rebates a portion of your costs if you connect to the grid."

"How does your Land trust work, I've heard a lot about it."

"Originally I had my Corporate attorney buy all the foreclosed farms off the bank's foreclosure list for the minimum bid, which usually get grabbed by the big Agri-businesses like Con-Agra, who in turn pay a commission or kick-back to the bank. I'm convinced it's a conspiracy to get the land from the Family Farmer and into the hands of the Huge Corporations. The Bank President tried to kill me a couple of days later, and I was forced to shoot him. He claimed I had ruined his life, and I later learned he stood to get a \$1 Million kick-back from Con-Agra when they bought the properties. The county held them up by refusing to change the zoning, and I came in and bought it out from under them, and ruined their little racket. So far the farmers are paying the Trust back for the costs of buying their land back from the bank. Their lease payment includes use of the combines and tractors that the Trust owns, and they pay for the diesel used with a card lock system."

"Jack, that's ingenious. Every farmer that I've talked to said that the payments on their equipment were killing them, and they only used it for a short period of time each month."

"They stagger their planting dates, so their crops come in on different dates, and they share the equipment just like Leroy and his neighbors shared what little equipment they had. I've built in maintenance and depreciation into the lease cost. Still, their lease payment to the trust is 1/3 of what they were paying the bank due to their lower equipment costs."

“Wow, I wonder if we could implement that State-wide?”

“I’m sure someone would accuse us of Socialism or Fascism, and I know the banks won’t like it! If my theory is correct, they’ll be really mad, because they encouraged the farms to go further and further into debt, then bought off Congressmen to manipulate the Subsidy levels, and the farmers lost everything the first time there was a major downturn.”

“Jack, I wouldn’t be surprised if you were right, but for your own safety, I wouldn’t go repeating that theory too much. People with that kind of power could make you disappear.”

“Yikes, I hadn’t thought of that - you’re not going to repeat what I told you?”

“Are you kidding, if a Governor of a State said something like that, I’d be recalled in a heartbeat unless I could prove it, and if I could prove it, the resulting revolution would tear the country apart, so either way I loose. I’ll look into it very carefully.”

“Be careful Governor, I’m starting to like you even though I’m a Republican, at least I was in the last election.”

They both got a good laugh out of that. Finally, the Governor said he had some work to do before he went to bed, and he’d see them tomorrow morning for breakfast around 0700, since the General Assembly got started promptly at 0900, and he was going to open the session with his presentation.

The next morning, they ate breakfast, then got into the Governor’s armored limousine for the ride to the Capitol building. The limo pulled into an underground parking lot guarded by State Police, and they were escorted to the floor of the General Assembly. At 0900 sharp, a Minister opened the day’s session with a benediction, and then the Speaker of the Assembly introduced the Governor, who received a rousing round of applause, since he was a popular Governor. Finally he introduced Jack Van Buren.

“Ladies and Gentlemen of the Tennessee General Assembly, I’ve called this special Joint Session of the Assembly to hear Jack Van Buren’s proposal to solve a state-wide problem. As you know, we have produce rotting on the ground since the farmers can’t get their crops to market. I discovered Mr. Van Buren built a food processing plant in Sevierville that is processing the entire output of 3 adjacent counties, and producing enough biodiesel and Alternative Energy to be self-sufficient, including producing extra biodiesel to run the tractors and combines in his co-op. This is exactly what the State needs, but we need to guarantee \$60 million in loans for this to work, so I wanted you to hear what he had to say. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Jack Van Buren.”

The applause for Jack was almost as loud as that for the Governor. Evidently the state farmers were really hurting. He shook the Governor’s hand, and strode to the podium with his notes.

“Ladies and Gentlemen of the Assembly. I’m just a businessman with an idea that worked. I have no idea if it would work in the entire State, but I’m willing to try.

Here’s what I did in a nutshell. The farmers who sell produce to me belong to a co-op and also to a land trust, but that’s another issue. They deliver produce right off the field transport trucks, and we wash, clean and sort it, and pay by delivered weight. We have 6 lines set up now, with 4 dedicated to freeze-drying produce and canning using nitrogen-packing techniques for long-term storage and best nutritional value. 2 lines generate conventionally canned produce, and I have 2 lines dedicated to producing Soybean meal from Soybeans and extracting the oil to make biodiesel. The biodiesel is sold back to the farmers to run their tractors and combines to produce more produce. The plant itself takes full advantage of Photovoltaic technology, and we even use the Soybean husks to heat water and the plant during the winter. The start-up costs are averaging \$10 million per plant, but they are almost self-sufficient with electricity, and can produce enough biodiesel to keep the farm equipment running. Once the produce is canned or bagged, in the case of the soybean meal, it takes up 1/3 to ¼ the volume and weight of the raw produce, and shipment by rail or truck to market is much easier. I’d highly suggest locating 2 plants per region, for a total of 6 plants, and centrally locate them as close to the farms as possible, since it uses more diesel to keep the plant loaded then to ship the production out to market. As to where exactly to locate each plant, I leave that up to the state or the individual counties. Please take one of the handouts that are being passed out with my business plans. Any Questions?’

A notoriously liberal member of the Assembly stood in the back and said “What’s in it for you?”

“Sir, I’m glad you asked that. I’ve discussed this with Governor Bredesen, and my answer is basically nothing. I’m currently worth millions, and my plant in Sevierville is making almost \$2 Million per year, so I need the money like I need a hole in the head. What I wanted to do was to set the companies up as Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporations, and as soon as my investment from buying the land is reimbursed, the profits will be put into a Trust Fund to encourage new small businesses in the areas served by the factories. I invested over \$25 Million of my own money into the Sevier Land Trust, and as soon as the farmers reimburse the money I paid for their land, they will own their land again free and clear. Their current payments are 1/3 of what the banks were charging, since I’m not charging interest.”

The Assemblyman sat down, and Jack asked “Anyone Else?”

When no one stood up, Jack said “Thank you for your time Ladies and Gentlemen, I now leave you to debate this among yourselves.” As he walked away from the podium, Governor Bredesen shook his hand as flashbulbs went off. They got up and walked back to the Limousine, and once they were seated and going back to the Mansion, the Governor said “Jack, that was perfect. You answered that question like a pro. I’m sure they’ll vote for your proposal.”

“Governor, I want absolutely nothing to do with the day to day operations of the plants, so I want to hire plant managers, and a supervisor who will report to you and future governors.”

“Ok Jack, if that’s the way you want it?”

“Like I said, I need the money like I need a hole in the head. If you didn’t ask me to, I wouldn’t even have considered it since it’s going to be a major headache getting these plants up and running.”

“Jack, if you run into any regulatory problems, give me or my office a call and we’ll take care of it.”

“Thanks Governor.”

Chapter 19

1 year later, all 6 factories were built in record time, but in the process, Jack had stepped on some very powerful toes, and they decided to make an example of Jack. Overnight, he was facing dozens of claims and charges ranging from ADA violations, wage and labor law violations, Affirmative Action law violations, and believe it or not, sexual harassment charges. He immediately contacted his lawyer, who did some checking, and all the suits were being run through the same high-powered attorney's office who Jack realized was in cahoots with some very powerful people in Tennessee and the Federal Government. They knew the charges were BS, but his attorney strongly advised settling out of court. Jack refused, and over several years, he lost everything in what his attorney called a "Kangaroo Court" proceeding. Jack had underestimated the power of the people whose toes he'd stepped on. One was a major shareholder in several major banks, including Bank of America, and had Congressmen, Senators and Judges in his hip pocket.

Several years later, he'd been in State and Federal Court so many times, he knew the clerks and bailiffs by their first names. He'd lost all the cases except the Sexual Harassment case, which Jack knew was baseless, but probably orchestrated to get him bad press so he couldn't get a sympathetic jury. The fines and damages awarded exceeded his net worth by 2-3 times, so Jack filed personal and corporate bankruptcy. The bankruptcy court proceeded to try and seize all his assets, only to find out the land trust and processing plant in Sevierville were in untouchable trusts, so they took his farm, the 500 acres of land across the street, and his house. Jack had seen the writing on the wall weeks ago, and moved his "survival kit" and his truck to Bert's new farm (he'd reclaimed his original farm and was farming across town from Jack and Gene) where Bert hid it for him. He bought an old beater truck that looked like the original truck for cash, and switched plates, then drove it around for a while. When the bankruptcy judge demanded the vehicle, he presented the old beater. No one checked too closely, since it resembled his old truck quite well, with the exception of the Kevlar armor, and other "special features". The next day, he packed Tanya, Tyrone, Lindsay, Sampson, and Delilah into the truck, loaded their "survival gear" and drove to Mexico. Gene suggested a small sleepy fishing village on the gulf coast of Mexico just south of Brownsville Texas, where they could live their lives out in peace, and could live like kings with the gold and silver "survival kit" he had stored in the truck. According to MapQuest, the drive would take almost 24 hours not including stops. He wanted to be in Georgia before they stopped. He'd have a tough time explaining to a Tennessee State Trooper why he was driving a truck he was supposed to have surrendered to the Bankruptcy court. Jack was hoping that they were slow filing their paperwork like all government agencies were, and hadn't processed the title paperwork yet for his vehicle, since the beater he turned in was barely worth \$5 grand. Right before he left, his attorney called, and said he'd found out that Governor Bredesen had connections with certain high-powered people who were majority stockholders in Bank of America, and he theorized that they wanted to financially ruin him, and make an example of him so on one else would mess with their land racket. Jack was so furious that he wanted to give all his remaining money to a hit man who

would kill the lot of them, then he remembered some of his less-than ethical behavior when he was a Real-estate tycoon, the people he had swindled, or took advantage of, and he realized he was no better than they were. He thanked God then and there for forgiving him, and decided to forget about the money, it was never his in the first place. Most of the money he had was corporate money anyway, except for some money in the Bank, and several hundred pounds of gold and silver he had managed to squirrel away over the years. He found out that if he took gold out of his deposit box slowly, no one would notice, and slowly removed almost half of the gold and silver he had on deposit. Gold and Silver had risen in value so much, that even with the half he took out, he had the same dollar value in precious metal in the bank. They bid a tearful goodbye to Gene's family, and then drove toward Texas.

2 days later they made it to Brownsville Texas, and stayed overnight. After carefully asking around, Jack found out a good place to cross the border unobserved, and they drove into Mexico the next day. They made arrangements to lease some oceanfront property for a 100-year lease, then slowly built up a huge, very secure hacienda, and built a new schoolhouse for the village, and a well. He purchased some AE equipment and picked it up in Brownsville, and saw a nice diesel-powered 40-foot sport fisher that was used but in good condition. He purchased it, and paid a crew to transfer it to Mexico. Jack paid to have the local fishing dock upgraded, and berthed the boat at the new marina. The local PEMEX distributor installed 2 10,000 gallon tanks of stabilized diesel, 1 at his hacienda, and the other at the dock, and installed 2 sets of filters, including a very good water separator. Jack was spreading the wealth around, and they called him "Alcalde" or "Santa Claus" depending on whether or not he was in earshot. Jack didn't care, he knew the favors and money he spent on the village would buy him some goodwill and security. Mixed race families were nothing new in that part of Mexico and almost everyone there had either Indian or Negro blood, or both in them. Hoped they'd live peaceful and idyllic lives there, and for the most part, he was right.

The End