

TEOTWAWKI

A Survival Story

Sam Williams sat on his corner watching the world go by, sipping a bottle of Thunderbird out a paper bag, as he had been doing for the last 20 years. He was what the people charitably called Homeless, and those who were less charitable called “A Drunken Bum”. He wasn’t proud of his station in life. He vaguely remembered his previous life, his family, and what he stood for. Several things had happened to him that drove him into the bottle. After his son died and his wife left him, he started drinking, and never stopped. His decline was gradual but predictable. He fell through the cracks, and now the only care he received was a hot meal and a shower once a week at the Catholic Mission Center in Downtown Dallas. He had been a man once, but couldn’t crawl out of the bottle enough now to care. Alcohol was the one thing that deadened the pain enough to make life livable. His family now consisted of the “homeless people” who lived within his block. Even though he was a vagrant, no one messed with him since he was over 6 feet tall, and still had a muscular build that someone once described as “bearish”. His blue eyes that once shown brightly, and could spot trouble a mile away, were now bleary and bloodshot from the affects of alcohol. His clothes were rags, and smelled. He still managed a shower and clean clothes once a week. He could have been cleaner and had fresher clothes, but he refused to live in the Homeless Shelter or “The Wino Farm” as he called it - the Nuns wouldn’t let him drink there, and offered no other alternatives that would deaden his deep emotional pain.

He noticed things, and recognized people who worked in the area by sight if not by name. He made up names for some of them, and not all of those names were complimentary. Even at night when he couldn’t sleep due to nightmares, some alcohol induced, and some that were flashbacks of a past long forgotten, he noticed things including the drug dealers that frequented the area after dark, the users, hookers and their pimps. Mostly people left him alone, and he preferred it that way. He got enough money from the government to eat as well as he wanted, and drink all the booze he could. Someone once said that he was on a liquid diet - rather uncharitably, but he agreed with them. He lived on Thunderbird, Twinkies, and cheap potato chips. Once a week, he’d eat soup with meat in it, but he had to listen to the harangues of the Nuns, but even still it was worth it in the long run since he got a shower and clean if worn clothes to replace the smelly clothes he wore.

One day he noticed a huge moving van pull up to the old Commercial Bank building and start loading stuff into the basement. He was curious enough to check when they left, and found signs that indicated it was an emergency shelter. The lock on the door was strong enough to keep out vagrants and looters, so he went back to his corner.

Sam’s life went on relatively normally until one day he heard an unmistakable sound - it sounded like the Air Raid sirens he used to hear. He thought it was just another flashback, until

he looked around and noticed people stopping and staring into space. It finally dawned on him that this was a real event, not a hallucination. Panicked people poured out of a building next to his “stoop”, and the shock of the event must have gotten through his Alcoholic haze, and a long-buried person re-emerged. He stood up on the wall and yelled “Ladies and Gentlemen, What you are hearing are Air Raid sirens. As you can see, the sky is clear, so it’s not a Tornado warning. The only other possibility is some idiot has started WWII. If I remember correctly we have about 10 minutes to get to shelter. I remember where one is, so anyone that wants to live, FOLLOW ME!”

Most of the people laughed at him, and went on their way, but a small group of about 50 people took him seriously enough to stick around. One middle-aged man walked up to him and noticed something about his bearing that evoked a deep feeling he hadn’t felt in years. He walked up to Sam and asked where the shelter was. Sam told him to go underneath the old Commercial bank building right around the corner. The man told him to get the people to the shelter, but not to lock up until 8 minutes had passed - he needed to grab something out of his vehicle. Sam recognized something in him as well, and agreed. The rest of the group followed Sam, but were frustrated by the lock. 7 minutes and 30 seconds later, the man walked up to the group carrying a large duffel bag over his shoulder, and a daybag over both shoulders.

“Thought you weren’t going to make it! We’re having problems with this lock, got anything in that bag of tricks to get us in?”

He set down his bags, opened his day bag, and extracted an electric lock pick. 10 seconds later, they were in. As soon as the group was all inside, Sam and the stranger closed the door, and spun a huge wheel that resembled a bank vault door, then set the inner lock. As soon as he closed the door, a small battery powered light turned itself on, illuminating the room.

Sam spoke up again “Ladies and Gentlemen, we are now in a bomb-proof shelter, but we aren’t out of the woods yet, I need everyone to take off glasses, dentures, and anything else breakable. Any women wearing high heels please take them off. OK, now we all need to lie on the floor on your side in the fetal position with your hands over your ears and your mouth open. There shouldn’t be any direct effects of the bomb explosion, but there might be over-pressure. Also stay away from the shelves and anything that might fall on you.”

No sooner had he said it, and they got onto the floor, then they heard a deep rumbling, and the lights went out!

Chapter 2

Aftermath

When they awoke, the lights were out, and dust filled the room. Sam was lying next to the guy with the duffle, who rolled over and groaned “Damn, that was worse than an Arc Light Raid!” He reached into his pack and extracted a Surefire P3 flashlight, and shone it around the room. Amazingly, there was little damage. When they got up Sam turned to the other guy and said, “Hi I’m Sam”

The other guy extended his hand, and shook Sam’s hand. “Hi Sam, My name’s Jake.”

With the introductions aside, they got up and started checking out the rest of the people, and as soon as they had checked everyone out, they sat down again to talk some more.

“Jake, you mentioned an Arc Light Raid. You’re too young to be a Vietnam Vet, and we didn’t do Arc Light Raids in DS II. That would make you a veteran of Desert Storm.”

“Sam, that’s right - I served in Special Forces, we were the guys out in the middle of the desert hunting Scuds.”

“That explains the go bag and the hair cut.”

“You a vet?”

“Yeah, I did two tours in Vietnam.”

“Sam, I didn’t catch your last name?”

“I didn’t - Sorry, my full name is Sam Eddington.”

“Wait a minute - Sam Eddington. I heard about someone from Vietnam with that name - It can’t be you - he won enough medals to sink a battleship, and was personally decorated by Richard Nixon.”

“That’s me - just goes to show you what alcoholism can do for you!”

Jake looked at Sam with newfound respect. Sam Eddington was a bona-fide War Hero. He served in the LRRPS and personally saved his entire team when they got ambushed by an entire NVA company when their LZ was compromised. He was wounded twice and still managed to save his Lieutenant, Sergeant, and the rest of his team who were wounded worse than he was. He called in an air strike right on top of his position that decimated the NVA company, and called in the dust-offs for an emergency Medevac, and even though he was badly wounded, he

stayed on the ground with his team until they were all aboard, and he boarded the last chopper.

“Jake, I know you’ve heard the stories, but they’re all just painful memories now, let’s just concentrate on helping these civilians survive.”

As Sam finished speaking, there was a low rumble, then the lights came back on all by themselves. Sam and Jake looked at each other, then noticed there was a box with fluorescent orange tape on it with the words “Open First” stenciled on the box. Every box in the building had an Orange CD stenciled onto it. Naturally they opened it first!

Jake pulled a Spyderco knife out of his shirt pocket and opened the box. Inside were stacks of manuals. Obviously someone felt they might run out of TP! The first manual was an inventory of everything in the shelter. Judging by the quantities of supplies, this place was designed to hold up to 500 people for up to 90 days, and there were 50 in here. They had enough supplies in here to last almost 3 years! They didn’t need to stay more than 90 days, but if gave them some options.

Jake read down the list:

- 100K gallons water
- 5K cu. ft. Liquid O2
- 10 sets Co2 scrubbers
- 2K sets BDU assorted sizes.
- 10K MRE Full Meal assorted including vegetarian and kosher meals
- 10 complete First Aid Kits
- 10 sets NBC gear
- 500 US Military spec gas masks
- 5K NBC filters for masks
- 2 50KW Diesel Generators
- 10K gallons diesel fuel
- 10 Sets Portable Radiation Detection gear and Calibration equipment
- 100 sets batteries for RD gear
- 50 Sets LBE (Alice) gear
- 50 AR-15 rifles
- 300 20-rd magazines
- 100K rounds SS-109 ammo
- 50 Colt 1911 pistols with holsters and pistol belts
- 200 7-rd magazines
- 10K rounds .45acp FMJ ammo
- 5 Remington Model 870 12 ga Shotguns
- 1K rounds 12ga 00 Buck
- 100 cases TP
- 10 cases Feminine products

1 case Bibles
1 case playing cards
100 Small Alice Packs
500 Sets boots assorted sizes
100 sets 90-day E&E kits (in Alice Packs)

The list went on and on - Jake was amazed there was so much stuff here - He didn't think this was supposed to be a Civilian Shelter. Jake looked at Sam, who was shaking - he was out of booze.

“Sam, I'm going to do you a favor. I'm going to get you detoxed while we're stuck here - besides there isn't any Alcohol anywhere on these lists. You may hate me while you're going through it, but you'll thank me later. Besides, I need you clean and sober, or we won't have as good of a chance of surviving.”

Jake spoke up, “Anyone here got any medical training?”

A man and a woman came forward. He was wearing an EMS uniform, and she was wearing a business suit.

“I'm Joe, I'm a City of Dallas paramedic.”

“I'm Janet, I'm an RN, but I'm really an administrator.”

“Thanks for volunteering, we owe our lives to Sam, and he's going to have to be detoxed cold-turkey, we don't have any alcohol here. I need one of you, or someone you trust to stay with him 24/7 until he's out of danger. They have some very extensive medical kits here, maybe you can use the contents to keep him comfortable. I need him clean and sober ASAP, so don't baby him, but don't be cruel either. Do either of you have any problems with that?”

Janet spoke up “I used to work at the VA hospital. I've done my share of detoxes, it's not a pleasant experience, but we can handle it!”

Jake turned to Sam. “Sam, you OK with this?”

“Of course, I would have dried out years ago, but I didn't see the point. Now I need to be clean and sober to Shepherd all these sheep.”

Chapter 3

Decent into Hell

After they had introduced each other, the RN walked up to Sam “Sam, this is going to be rough - we usually had Morphine and other drugs to sedate people for the worst of the detoxification process. I don't think we have anything stronger than Darvocet or Vicodin, and I don't want to get you addicted to Vicodin. so either you go cold turkey, or risk addition to pain pills, since I don't think your liver can take the dosages of Advil or Tylenol that you'd need to combat the side effects.”

“Sister, I can handle it - let's just get this over with!”

“OK, but my name's Janet!”

“Thanks Janet - I appreciate what you're doing, even if I call you every name in the book in a few days!”

“Don't worry Sam, Been There, Done That - Got the Tee Shirt! I worked a Rehab ward at the local VA hospital before I became an Administrator.”

“Jake, let's get Sam into an isolation bed and get him restrained while he's still compliant. I'd hate to try and restrain him when he's in the throes of what he'll go through in the next couple of weeks.”

They looked around, and sure enough there were several isolation rooms, including locked doors and leather restraints. Before they set him in the bed, they gave him as much water as he could drink, then had him use the bathroom and change into a hospital gown. When they were finished Jake talked to Sam alone.

“Sam, I need to talk to you. You're going to be out of it for several weeks. I know you don't know me from Adam, but I wanted to ask you if it's OK if I run things in your absence, since it appears you're in charge.”

“Jake, I didn't want to be in charge, but I guess you're right. I think the best way to get these sheep through the next 90 days is to run things as a Benevolent Dictatorship. You'll be in charge in my absence, but make sure to delegate as much authority as possible, but make sure they clear all important decisions through you, and make sure they save everything, and don't throw anything reusable away. You might want to read more of those manuals, I've got a sneaky feeling there is more to this shelter than meets the eye. How many people build a regular bomb shelter right under an abandoned Commercial Bank? Remember the phrase “Built like a Bank Vault” - when this building was built, they built the entire building like that, not just the vault. I think they sited this shelter where it is as a shelter for the Dallas Ruling Elite, and I

don't think they made it in time. Take advantage of that if it turns out that I'm right. Don't distribute the weapons while the shelter is sealed. Keep it sealed for at least 90 days - I'm pretty sure we were outside ground zero, but I don't know how far!"

"Sam, don't worry, I have things well in hand." Jake opened his day bag, and extracted a Para Ordinance P-14 Limited, locked and loaded, then strapped on his pistol belt, and stuck 2 mags in the off-side double mag pouch. "I think I'm the only armed person in the shelter right now - and I intend to keep it that way!"

"Jake, good idea! Tell the Sheep that you have no intention of shooting anyone unless they do something like trying to open the shelter, or something equally stupid that jeopardizes the survival of the group. Tell them until the shelter is opened in 90 days, you're in charge. After that, they're free to go!"

Jake walked back into the main room, and stood on a chair.

"May I have your attention please?"

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Congratulations, you just survived a Nuclear War. We have to stay here for 90 days locked up to make sure the background radiation is safe to go outside. I know some of you are worried about your relatives, unfortunately we have no communication with the outside world, and the bomb was close enough that if you live within a 25 mile radius of this shelter, especially if you're East of Dallas, you are probably the only survivor in your family unless you had a radiation shelter in your basement. The door is on a time lock, and I cannot open it for 90 days, so you can't leave even if you want to! I would suggest you take this time to grieve and pray, since we will be busy later with trying to survive. This shelter was built for up to 500 people for 90 days. Since there are only about 50 of us, we can last approximately 900 days or 30 months. Since we only need to be in here 90 days, it gives us several options. It's fully automated, and we have food, water, air and medical gear for 500 people for 90 days. At this time, I need everyone who can stand to form a line, and if there is someone here who would like to volunteer as our Secretary/clerk, we need to know who you are, and what skills you have. You'll find that keeping busy will help the time pass."

A 40 year old woman raised her hand, and Jake motioned her forward. "Hi Jake, my name's Sue."

Jake shook her hand, and handed her a legal pad and a pen. "Sue, I need you to take everyone's name, and any skills they have. We need to designate duties for everyone, and I'd rather give someone something they like to do. Will you do that for me?"

"Sure! Jake, are you positive about our families?"

"Sue, if they were within 25 miles of ground zero, they either died in the blast or shortly

thereafter. In this case, being close to ground zero is a good thing because you died instantly.”

“Thank God! My parents lived in a Retirement home 5 blocks from here!”

“Sue I can tell you for sure they never knew what hit them unless they happened to be looking at the blast.”

As the people started lining up, Jake walked away to inspect the facility. He found a locked door at the far end of the hall, and taking his electric lock pick out of his pocket, buzzed the lock, and it opened. He made sure it was unlocked, then went in. It was full of pipes and equipment. He saw 5 1,000 cubic foot liquid oxygen tanks. He checked the gauges, and they read full. Next he checked the diesel tank, and it read full too. He checked the air handling equipment, and noticed it was the same type of stuff he saw when he went aboard the Los Angeles class sub for familiarization training. This was definitely NOT your run-of-the-mill bomb shelter! The water tanks held 20,000 gallons each. Jake figured there were 5 of them for redundancy in case one leaked or got contaminated. He looked around, and found a radiation meter on the wall, and it was practically reading zero rads. This building must be shielded as well as bombproof! When he finished his “inspection tour” he walked back outside and re-locked the door - he didn’t want anyone getting in there without his approval, since one nut-case could sabotage the air handling gear and kill them all. Jake wondered where the armory was, but he figured if he didn’t know, then the rest of the civilians wouldn’t either, and left that to last. There was a fully equipped kitchen with a stocked pantry, and enough propane to run it for 6 months. This meant they didn’t have to eat MRE’s for the next 6 months. He looked around, and found an inventory sheet in the pantry that included staples, canned goods, frozen food including meat and vegetables in the freezer. If one of the people in the shelter was a good cook, they’d eat like royalty! Next he inspected the “facilities”. There were separate bathrooms for the Men and Women with individual shower stalls, but a common dressing area like a locker room. He hoped no one was overly modest. The sleeping areas were segregated by sexes, but he only saw “His” and “Hers” no “Its” - Oh well, guess they didn’t plan for that possibility! The restrooms were nice with private stalls and flush toilets. He wondered where the sewage went, and he hoped the tank was HUGE. When he got back to the main room, he sat down to read the list, and decide who was going to do what for the next 30 days. Most of the people were predictably businessmen and women, with some tradesmen and blue collar workers thrown in. It was what Sue did on her own that impressed him. She listed their hobbies in alphabetic order. It made it a lot easier to assign tasks.

Chapter 4

Recovery

Janet checked the supply of injectable vitamins. There was an ample supply of B-6 and B-12. She prepared injections of both for Sam and administered them to him. Sam was beginning to get the shakes. He was in a cold sweat and trembled slightly. She would have preferred to administer some Valium to take the edge off, but they had agreed that they could get by without it, and they needed to save their drugs for life-threatening emergencies. Most hospitals had a set routine that they used to detoxify a person from alcohol and other drugs. It involved a careful balance of medications, both to restore the body and prevent some of the more serious problems associated with withdrawal, like those Sam was beginning to exhibit.

She watched Sam closely. One time, he sat up in bed and began to carry on a conversation with someone apparently at the foot of his bed. It was a perfectly sensible conversation if you understood. Sam was experiencing an alcoholic hallucination as was typical in some cases. No doubt, he was talking to some Leprechauns or some such nonsense. She remained quiet and ignored his hallucination. As quickly as it started, it passed and Sam lay back down on the bed and dozed off. Janet could see that the vitamins were already having an effect. His color was better and the cold sweats had passed. Maybe another day or two and he'd be back on his feet. She gave him ice water, but avoided putting too much in his stomach. She hated to clean up vomit.

By the third day, Sam's color was back to normal and he was able to take a little clear broth. He objected to the broth, insisting that he wanted some "real food". Janet ignored his protests. There was plenty of time for 'real food.'" Meanwhile, Jake had gone over the list Sue had made, and assigned duties to everyone in the shelter. He had 6 people with great people skills assigned as a Morale committee, their job was to keep people busy and provide ongoing activities for those who weren't busy at the time. Jake did manage to find a good amateur cook, and when he saw the kitchen, his eyes got as big as saucers. "I always wanted to cook with the right equipment. Looks like whoever built this shelter knew what they were doing - they bought all the top-line kitchen gear." After he read the inventory for the pantry and the freezer, he really got excited. One of the members of the Morale committee walked into the kitchen, and they had a long discussion, since good food was a major morale booster. They agreed to find out which cuisines were the most popular, and serve those the most frequently. The Chef also asked the morale person to double-check for food allergies or dietary restrictions. If necessary, he could also do special diets for people with food allergies or major dietary restrictions if they were Jewish, Muslim, or Vegan. While everyone thought the Russians had dropped the bombs, it might have been some Middle Eastern Moslems that did it too, since the Saudis were so rich. Still, he couldn't blame the US Muslims for the maniacs in the Middle East.

Later that day, Jake went in to visit Sam, who was up and awake, and real grumpy!

“Jake, I’d say “thank you” for making me dry up, but it will have to wait a few weeks until I get over being mad at you!”

“Sam, you know I had absolutely nothing to do with your condition! If you want to be mad at someone, try the SOB’s who nuked the US! By the way, welcome back to the land of the living!”

“Jake, I’m not sure I’d call it “living” just yet - if you put a bottle in front of me - I’d drink the whole thing!”

“Sam, while you were passed out, I went through the manuals, and found some pamphlets from Alcoholics Anonymous. I also found someone who has been through the program, and has 10 years clean and sober, and is willing to sponsor you. When you feel up to it, you need to sit down and talk. He’ll get you started on the 12-step program, and act as your mentor. I went through the rest of the building, and you wouldn’t believe what you stumbled onto - it seems this was built as a nuclear survival shelter for the Elitist Ruling Class! I haven’t seen air handling equipment like this since I was on that Los Angeles Class Sub simulator for familiarization training. These things cost several million dollars a copy! There’s a huge commercial kitchen with all kinds of expensive foods, including 2 huge walk-in freezers full of meat and vegetables. We got lucky with the herd of Sheeple in this building. Most of them are businesspeople, but we have most of the major trades, and several people have useful hobbies. It seems we’re the only ones with Military experience, but a couple of them are hunters and outdoors types. I told a little white lie that the door was on a time lock, and wouldn’t open for 90 days to head off any attempts to leave at the pass.”

“Good Job, Jake - I approve! I’ll need another week or two before I’m ready to resume command. Just keep doing what you are doing, and I’d appreciate if you could come in here once a day and brief me.”

“Sure thing Sam! Anything else?” Sam shook his head, and laid back down - he was dog tired!

Later that afternoon, Janet came in, and Sam was feeling better and started talking to her.

“Janet, I don’t remember much of the last couple of days, but I wanted to apologize just in case I behaved badly.”

“Except for a couple of really weird hallucinations, you were a model patient. You were talking to a guy named Doc a lot!”

“Did you say Doc - Holy Shit, that was our team’s medic. He died in the last firefight we were in. I still have nightmares over that one - even when I was sober! I remember now, he was

standing at the foot of my bed looking real sad the first time, then last night he had the biggest grin on his face I'd ever seen. I think he might have been keeping me company. Too bad you didn't have a tape recorder, I would have loved to hear that conversation!"

"Most of the vets I treated had those kind of dreams - did you ever make it to the Wall?"

"Never made it, by the time they got around to building it, I was a Skid Row Bum."

"Maybe if DC survived, you could go, most of the Vets I know who have been there stopped having nightmares shortly after returning from the Wall."

"If DC's still there, I might do just that!"

"Sam, where's your family?"

"Dead probably, if you have time, I'll tell you the whole sad story. I was married right out of High School, couldn't find a job, so I joined the Marines. When Vietnam broke out, I applied for LRRPs since I figured they had the best chance of survival. The rest of the Marines were about as subtle as an Elephant wearing roller-skates, and Charlie would either avoid contact with a superior force, or if they thought they had a superior force, they would attack in human waves with heavy artillery support. In the LRRPS, if we did our job right, they never knew we were there unless some REMF talked to the wrong Vietnamese, who gave or sold the info to their uncle Charlie. We learned real quickly NOT to file for a single AO, and to ask for several LZ's in at least 3 different AO's to confuse Charlie. Even still, we were compromised during the pre-mission stages if our CO spent too much time over any of our LZ's. We constantly had to find new LZ's since Charlie learned to target our LZ's, and put out trail watchers.

The only casualties our LRRP team suffered were as a result of using an LZ one too many times. Charlie had a fire team waiting for us, and we weren't even out of the chopper when they opened fire on us. They shot up my entire team, wrecked the slick, and killed the co-pilot. The Snakes couldn't come in and shoot them because they were too close, and would have ended up killing us too with their rockets. Zuni's weren't too accurate, and worked better as area weapons. I was injured in that attack, but managed to get artillery fire in on Charlie, and they bugged out. I called in a Medevac, and helped load the critically injured first, then hopped into the door just before he took off. I was sent home due to my injuries, and found out my wife was sleeping around. She filed for divorce, and 5 years later, our only son was killed in a car wreck, and I dove into the bottle, and wound up a skid row bum. My ex married her rich divorce lawyer, and moved into a huge downtown apartment suite. If she was home when the bomb hit, she was vaporized in the explosion, since they were up high, and very downtown."

Chapter 5

Boredom

After a week in bed, and several sessions with his new sponsor, Sam felt good enough to get up and start working with Jake. Janet told Sam to make sure he always had some hard candy like a peppermint in his pocket in case he had a craving. First of all, the taste and sweetness would ease the craving, and the act of sucking a candy would act as a distractor. His sponsor told him “It’s not the caboose that kills you!” meaning if you didn’t take that first drink, you’d never take the second, etc. Knowing he would be vulnerable to relapsing, Jake kept him busy, but kept the stress level low. Sam had daily sessions with his sponsor and Janet talked to him as well. It seems Janet’s interest was more than professional, since she had been divorced for years, and really respected Sam. They were fast becoming friends, but Janet was careful to go real slow.

Luckily, there had been no major incidents, since the entire shelter was automated. The Morale Committee outdid themselves, and basically created a Cruise Ship environment inside the shelter. They said it was The Cruise Ship Adventure, minus the ship! There was Shuffleboard, card games, volleyball, chess tournaments, various board games, and a very competitive Contract Bridge tournament. The chef made a name for himself with the creations he came up with. The Morale Committee found out the most favorite cuisine was Tex-Mex - talk about a No-Brainer! The Chef concentrated on Tex-Mex dishes, but snuck some Italian, Chinese and Greek dishes into the mix. No one complained, and everyone gained a few pounds. When Jake heard about that, he decided that Morning Calisthenics were Mandatory. It was not his most popular decision, but when Sam was the first one out there, doing Military Calisthenics at age 65, the younger men were shamed into joining them. A few of the younger women realized they were getting “flanky” and decided they needed the exercise as well. Sam spoke to the recalcitrant few and explained to them that unless they had a broken leg, or a fatal heart condition, he expected 100% attendance at morning calisthenics. They were lucky that Jake didn’t make them run as well! Within a few weeks, they had lost the weight they had gained.

Once they were back in decent shape, Jake and Sam decided they needed some Basic Training, and turned the shelter into a “Boot Camp Lite” since the civilians would never tolerate military discipline, and there was no way they could practice shooting. Jake and Sam’s skills were complimentary, and most of the men and some of the women attended their daily Tactics lectures. When they had covered basic tactics, they were given practical instruction how to move as individuals and groups. When they finished that, they started Room Clearing drills and stealth training. More than once some practical joker after completing training decided to sneak up on someone and scare them half to death. Jake put the kibosh on the sneaking when someone tried it on him and wound up with the muzzle of his P-14 stuck in their face. The guy who tried to sneak up on Jake almost turned as white as a ghost, Jake was FAST! He drew and turned in one motion, and was starting his trigger press when he recognized who had snuck up on him, and that he was unarmed. Jake had a combat trigger on his P-14, and had maybe a few ounces of pull left before the gun went off. He quickly re-holstered the gun and picked the guy

off the floor and carried him to the infirmary.

Several of Jake's students were good enough that he and Sam decided to train them as best as they could to form a Recon/Scout team to evaluate the surrounding area as soon as the radiation meters said it was OK. There were 3 meters constantly evaluating the outside conditions, and they were slowly edging towards the green. None of the Bio or Chem monitors had budged since they had closed the doors. It seemed that at least around Dallas, they only used nukes. Judging from the initial readings, it had to be a big one, maybe 5 Megatons or so. That eliminated all Middle Eastern countries since they didn't have the rocket technology to throw such a heavy warhead that far. They knew it wasn't the British, but the French, Germans, Russians, and North Korea were all suspect. Every night they tried to get anything on the radio, but so far they weren't having any luck, which either meant that the stations were off the air, or their antenna was wiped out in the blast.

Jake and Sam's Survival and Evasion classes were popular, since everyone in the shelter realized that things were not normal outside, and wouldn't be for at least several years. They learned how to use all the gear in their E&E kits, how to read a map, and how to build shelter, make fire, and all the other skills they would need on the outside. Jake was frustrated at his inability to train them on marksmanship, so one day he and Sam went looking for the armory. It was behind a hidden door, and Jake had to use his "passkey" to open the lock. The 20x20 foot room was packed wall to wall and floor to ceiling with M-16A2/203 carbines, 1911 Colt .45acp pistols, and hundreds of cases of ammo and 40mm grenades. They were amazed at how many HEDP grenades there were. There were also several cases of M1029 Crowd Dispersal rounds. Jake guessed they were in case the Ruling Elitists came out of their bunker and the peasants were rioting. There was another door in the back of the armory that led to a 6 lane 100-yd rifle range. Jake was amazed at the level of expense they went to designing and building this shelter.

The next day, Jake and Sam interviewed the 6 guys that they wanted to form into a Recon patrol. They were all hunters, and were the best students at the Tactics classes. They all accepted the extra duty, and after they were sworn to secrecy, they were shown the armory and the shooting range. They locked the doors behind them and went to the range to practice, and by the end of the week, they were making head shots with the rifles at 100 yards, and with the pistols at 25 yards. Every day Jake and Sam would inventory the rifles and lock the armory when they were finished. The new recruits took their secrecy oaths seriously, since Jake explained to them that if the existence of the armory and the gun range were made public knowledge, there would be problems. Their training intensified as the 90-day limit approached. Finally, on the 90th day, Jake and Sam called a meeting for all the members of the shelter.

"As you know, we said that it would take about 90 days for the radiation to dissipate. The meters say it's safe to go out, but we have no knowledge of the outside world. We have been training a Recon patrol to evaluate the situation outside the shelter. It may be total chaos outside the shelter, and not safe for anyone outside. I will lead the recon team, and Sam will remain behind in charge like he was supposed to. We should be back within a week or two. This shelter has enough stored food, water, and medical gear to last several years, and unless

you really need to go somewhere, we should use this shelter as a base of operations until we find something better. That means we need to know what's out there before we let you all loose. If you can wait a week or two, we'll have a better idea of conditions on the outside." With that, he opened the floor for questions.

"I've a family south of Dallas that I'd like to get home to if they're still alive! Why should I wait?"

"Good question - my best answer is while we have been training you, you're still basically civilians, and we feel responsible for you. I just want to make sure the immediate area is safe, and there aren't any roving gangs of Criminals and thugs waiting to prey on you. A week or two will give us enough time to survey the area, and let you know the situation outside, and whether it's safe to travel."

The man was grumbling under his breath, but sat down. There weren't any more questions.

The recon team spent the rest of the day getting ready. They packed their gear, arranged their equipment so everything was in the same spot on everyone, so If someone needed to borrow a mag from a team member, they new where they were. The last thing they did was write their letters, and pray. Their Alice packs were loaded down with ammo, water, food, and a change of clothes. They wore a pistol belt, a LBE Alice vest, Kevlar helmets, Vietnam surplus boots, and cammo BDUs. At dawn the next morning, Sam checked the periscope covering the entrance, and pronounced the way clear. It took several of them to open the door, and Sam closed it behind them. The team stopped outside the door, and Jake said "Gentlemen, we're in Indian Country, Lock and Load. Remember, anyone out here is a potential hostile, but don't shoot if you don't have to. We don't have enough ammo for an extended firefight, and we have no backup."

Chapter 6

Walking on the Moon

Before he left, Jake gave Sam one of the 1911's and 4 loaded mags along with a pistol belt and a flap holster. When Jake left, Sam belted on the pistol belt, stuck the cocked and locked 1911 in the holster, and went out to meet the people. A few of the bigger whiners settled down when they saw that Sam was armed. The pistol served as his badge of office, and the final arbitrator of justice.

When he got outside the door, Jake smelled something familiar, and when he saw the dead bodies, he held his hand up with his fist clenched, and when the team stopped behind him, he donned his gas mask, and the others masked up quickly. Luckily the gas masks also did a good job of filtering odors, or what they saw next would have gagged a maggot. There were dead bodies piled up and rotting in the hallway. Evidently someone HAD remembered the bomb shelter, Sam's group had just beaten them to it. Once the inner door was sealed, they couldn't get in, even with the key. Jake carefully checked out the bodies, and found the keys to the shelter in the bony hand of the best dressed corpses. Several of them were armed, so Jake proceeded with the gruesome task of removing the guns and ammo from the rapidly decomposing bodies. He threw the weapons in a kit bag and attached it to the bottom of his pack. They didn't want to leave any weapons or ammo behind that close to their sanctuary.

As they rounded the corner, they were met by a scene out of either a WWII or Sci-Fi movie. Debris and rubble were all around them, and every recognizable building was either destroyed or heavily damaged. None seemed intact. Jake made a command decision and headed to the parking garage where his IH Scout was parked. The entire garage was subterranean, so it might have survived. There was debris in front of the opening, but the floors and ceiling appeared intact. Jake unmasked just long enough to tell the recon team what he had in mind, and quickly put his mask back on. They spread out into a combat file with Jake at point, and every team member behind him alternated covering left and right flank, and the GIB was responsible for checking their 6 periodically. 3 levels below ground level, they found Jake's Scout, and it was intact. He got the keys out of his pack, and opened the doors. It still had battery power, since the courtesy light went on. Jake immediately opened the back, and rolled up the carpet. Inserting another key, he unlocked a secret compartment, and took out several Pelican cases. They weren't big enough to be rifle cases, but they were bigger than pistol cases. The team lugged them around to the front, and Jake carried on a quick quiet conference with the team. They decided it was worth the risk to start the motor, since Jake had a full tank of diesel, and the team could fit into the Scout without too much crowding. They all climbed aboard, and Jake turned the ignition key. Amazingly, the glow plugs ignited, and then the engine fired. Jake let it idle for a few minutes, then backed out and drove toward the exit.

They spotted several other promising vehicles, and one member of the team confessed to a bit of larceny in his younger years, so they could attempt to hot wire the vehicle. Jake used his "key"

to pick the door lock, and then the ignition key. They used a screwdriver to turn the ignition switch, and soon they had 2 vehicles. Half the team transferred to the second vehicle, and Jake reminded the driver never to turn the ignition to LOCK. Off would work to turn off the engine without locking the ignition. Both vehicles had sufficient diesel fuel in their tanks, but they spotted another vehicle on their way up, and decided to give it a try - it was gasoline powered, but a Huge Suburban. It would make a great convoy vehicle in case they found stuff worth scavenging. Jake buzzed the locks, and amazingly, it fired right up. Jake didn't remember everything from his EMP training, but figured the concrete and steel, plus the fact they were almost 100 feet underground might have attenuated the EMP pulse that normally fried the electronics that most vehicles relied on to run. When they got to the top of the ramp, but before they got all the way out, Jake stopped, and opened the Pelican cases on the hood of his IH Scout. Inside the first case were 4 suppressed Mini Uzi's and 20 loaded 30 rd stick mags. The second case contained some C-4, detonators, and grenades. The 3rd case held 1,000 rounds of Subsonic JHP .45acp ammo designed for the Uzi's. The detonators were packed inside a static-proof box, with shunts across the leads. One of the guy's eyes started bugging out. "Just what branch of the Military were you in?"

"John, I was a SEAL during Desert Storm. Don't worry, I'm trained in all this stuff, matter of fact, we used it on a daily basis. The C-4 is perfectly safe, just don't smack it with a hammer. The detonators are in a static proof box with shunts across the leads. These little things that look like baseballs are M61 Fragmentation grenades. They are specially built for SEALs and other special forces with a 3-second fuse, not the 5 second one they normally use. I've got enough that anyone who wants one can have 1. They have a kill radius of 5 meters, and will cause serious casualties out to 15 meters, but can throw fragments over 200 meters. Use the 40mm M203 grenades when possible, but these grenades were designed to clear a room in an urban environment, which is perfect for what we might need just in case we come in contact with a large armed group at room to room distances. Just make sure WE are behind good cover before you throw it since it can throw fragments out to over 200 meters, and cause major casualties to 15 meters. Please, NO one throw one of these without alerting the rest of the team! You could kill a team member by mistake."

When he was finished, Jake distributed the Uzi's, grenades and ammo. Of course, everyone wanted a grenade, so Jake gave them 1 each and kept the rest, filling the grenade pockets of his LBE. Then Jake took one of the Uzi's, 250 rounds of ammo, and put the C-4 and detonators in another kit bag in his pack, gave an Uzi and 250 rounds to the GIB, and the other two went to the driver's of the 2 other vehicles, since they couldn't fire an M-16 and drive. The suppressors were already mounted, and Jake explained the reasoning behind the suppressors. It would keep everyone in the neighborhood from knowing that someone was shooting in the neighborhood. He told everyone to use the Uzi's in semiauto only - they were capable of full-auto, but it was a horrible waste of ammo unless you were trained to fire 3-4 round bursts with the gun. With the Uzi's, they could limit firing the M-16s to major firefights only, and not give away their position. Jake didn't think anyone in Dallas was still alive, but that wasn't something he could count on. At least 10% of the population might have found sufficient shelter due to dumb luck,

but 90 % plus of the population was either ashes, or simply dead. He thought about the people in the corridor outside the shelter. They must have died a horrible death, since they weren't taken out by the blast, they must have died from radiation sickness.

Jake opened a map of Dallas, and planned their first day's scouting. They would do a block-by-block recon of the immediate area first, then time permitting, they would investigate the surrounding area out to between 2 and 5 miles. Jake's Scout would lead, the diesel F-350 would be next, followed by the Suburban. They'd drive clockwise around the block, and make as few left turns as possible, to avoid possible traps or ambushes. Jake made a left turn out of the driveway, and two hours later, they determined they were the only ones left alive within a mile radius of the shelter. Jake figured they wouldn't see any survivors until they got outside of downtown. Jake noted several warehouses and stores that hadn't been looted, probably because no one was alive to loot. By the end of the day, they had accomplished their preliminary recon, and found no one alive, but hundreds of bodies stacked up where they fell if they survived the initial blast. There were wrecked cars strewn all over the place, and had to use the winches on their vehicles more than once to clear the street. Jake guessed that almost everyone in Dallas was dead, since they hadn't seen anyone, including National Guard forces that should have been patrolling by now, since his portable Geiger counter was showing background radiation only. Jake tried his radio, and got static only. Maybe he'd try the AM bands after dark to see if any commercial AM stations were still on the air. They passed a Radio Shack store, and Jake had a better idea. They dismounted, and formed a security perimeter while Jake went into the store, grabbed a couple of DX-390 Shortwave radios, and all the batteries they had in the store that would fit. He picked up some rechargeable batteries and a recharger as well for later on, and a couple of reel-type antenna extenders to increase his range. He stuck some batteries in the radio, read the instructions, set the radio to scan mode, and searched the entire dial. He didn't hear any English language programming, but remembered the ionosphere might have taken a beating if more than one bomb was dropped, so he would try again in the evening. After the sun went down, he tried again, and got BBC fairly clearly.

“This is BBC New South Wales. We are broadcasting under limited power, and can only broadcast for several hours each night. Here's what we think happened. There was a major nuclear exchange between the USA and Russia, resulting in 80-90% casualties in both countries. China and the Middle East were hit as well. Europe and Great Britain suffered from several errant missiles as well as fallout. Australia and New Zealand haven't been hit directly, but massive casualties resulted from the fallout since we didn't have sufficient shelters for the populations. No government in any country is intact, and what few countries still have a military have declared martial law. The US suffered the worst damage to its infrastructure, as the Russians used 3 waves of missiles in what we think was a first strike attack. Russia snuck two secret boomers within 200 miles of the Eastern and Western coasts, then launched an all-out attack, decapitating the government, and destroying both coasts. What they didn't plan on was the USA's Doomsday system that automatically launched all of their remaining missiles when contact was lost with DC. An automated ELF broadcast activated the US nuclear missile subs' Doomsday programs that launched a second wave at pre-selected targets world wide.

This second strike came several hours after the first retaliatory strike, and caught the Russians flat-footed, and destroyed most of the country's cities and towns, as well as killing their entire government as they moved from their Moscow shelter to a nicer shelter in the forests outside Moscow. Several Pacific based subs leveled China and Japan, since whoever wrote the program didn't want THEM taking over either. As the situation stands, between 80-90% of the world's population are dead, and the rest dying or starving to death. This tape will re-broadcast in 15 minutes. This is Allan Smith from BBC New South Wales."

Jake looked at the machine, and noticed it had a built-in tape recorder, then yelled "Somebody get a blank tape, I need to record this!" John ran into the Radio Shack and came out with a box of 90-minute tapes. Jake stuck one in, and pressed record right as the broadcast was repeating. When it finished Jake yelled "Saddle up - we're going back to the shelter!"

They quickly got into their vehicles and drove back to the shelter.

Chapter 7

Revelations

As soon as they got back to the shelter, Jake took out a metal bar and tapped “Shave and a Hair Cut - Two Bits.” on the door. A minute later, the door creaked open. Sam knew it was them because of the spy camera installed above the door. As soon as everyone was inside, they closed the door, and Jake took Sam into a private room so he could hear the tape.

Sam’s reaction was total shock. Jake had to catch him to keep him from falling. Sam was about ready to fall apart, and kept muttering “80-90 percent casualties. That means maybe 25 million people left alive in the USA. Unfortunately over half of them might be criminals, or will soon turn to a life of crime when they realized that society as we know it has ended.”

“Sam, what should we tell the people?”

“Tell them the truth - they deserve to know!”

“What if they riot?”

“We’re both armed, and the Recon force can act as an security force until they get settled down.”

“OK, Sam - you’re the boss!”

Jake and Sam strode up to the podium and microphone they erected for their classes. The room was Standing Room Only. Jake gave them the bad news “Ladies and Gentlemen, I’m afraid we have some very bad news. Any of you with weak hearts, or otherwise feel the need to sit down, I would highly advise it!”

Once they were all seated, Jake played the tape. When it got to the level of destruction and casualties, several women screamed and fainted. Grown men broke down and cried, especially the married men who had left families outside. When the tape was finished, Sam started talking again. “I know there were those of you who wanted to find their families. You now see how pointless that would be, and would only probably result in your death. Still, if anyone wants to look for their families, they are free to go.”

Several of the “Complainers” stood up, and Jake met them at the door. Most of them had little or no usable skills, and didn’t attend the classes. Since they had 100 E&E kits, Jake gave each of them an E&E kit, a pair of boots, 3 sets of BDUs, and 3 changes of underwear and socks. He gave each of them one of the captured pistols, but withheld the magazines until they were outside the shelter. Jake told them that if they left now, they were gone for good, and if they had any ideas of coming back and taking over, Jake disabused them of that notion by telling

them if he ever saw them again, he'd shoot on sight. The Shelter would patrol a 5 mile radius of Downtown Dallas. None of the men seemed to care, so Jake opened the door, let them out, and set the magazines down on the ground in a bag, then closed the door, and locked it. He figured as little as they knew about guns, it would take them an hour to figure out which magazines belonged to which guns. He gave them 2 chances to survive a year, Slim and None!

When he came back in, the people were over their shock for the most part, but were lost - they didn't know what to do. Sam was still among those in shock, so it was up to Jake to give them a purpose.

“People, we can't stay here forever, eventually we'll run out of food, fuel and air. We need to find another place to live, somewhere where we can grow food, have a large secure area that is easily defended once the survivors mass together. Those of a criminal bent will become warlords, and the rest will be peasants or slaves. We need a large defensible building with plenty of land around it.”

All of a sudden, Sam snapped out of his maudlin reverie “Jake, I got it, there's a huge State Jail about 12 miles south of Dallas called Hutchins, several of my street buddies did time there. It is a huge set of buildings, the security is excellent, and there are several huge parcels of land around it, and a huge lake next to it. If I remember correctly, it was built to house about 2,000 inmates around 1995. It's close enough so everyone should be dead, but far enough away that the buildings should be in usable condition. OK, here's what we need to do. We need to scavenge all the buildings that are still standing that might have anything we might need to survive there. One of the first things we need to do is bust into the National Guard armory and get us some big trucks, and hopefully they'll have some Ma Deuces that we can mount on the towers to discourage anyone from messing with us. Anyone got a Yellow Pages around here!” Sam ran off to pursue his new idea. Meanwhile Jake did a little checking of his own, and remembered the 49th Armored was somewhere in the Fort Worth Area. He ran to find Sam and borrow that Yellow Pages.

The rest of the people in the shelter were energized, and started making lists of things they would need to start a colony at the prison. Each person concentrated on their specialty. One thing was obvious, they would need every running vehicle in the parking garage to pull this off, especially large trucks. They planned to scavenge every usable item from the entire Dallas Fort Worth area if they could!

Jake had to do some planning first - now that the “Complainers” were gone, the rest of the people could be trained in marksmanship. He had 7 trained people to train 47 civilians. That worked out to 7 students per instructor. They would be short lanes, so they had to basically provide weapons familiarization and basic marksmanship training in the short time they had. Good news was the range was soundproofed, so they could train around the clock. Each group could have the range for 3 hours per day, and if they did their classroom training in the meeting room, they might be able to get 6 hours per group if half of them were in the classroom phase

of training. That would work much better. Jake ran off to find Sam again, and run the ideas past him. While he had him available, he bounced his idea about taking everything in the Fort Worth National Guard armory that wasn't nailed down, and they might take that too if they could find a hammer. Sam agreed, but wanted Jake and the recon team to check the target out first, in case the NG had security, or someone had beaten them to it. Jake wasn't too sure - he wanted to have everything ready to go and just strip the place bare if there wasn't anyone there. He figured that Ft. Worth was close enough to ground zero that unless the NG armory had a bomb shelter, they would be dead by now. The greatest risk they ran would be if someone beat them to it, and it was empty by the time they got there.

Jake got busy, re-assembled the Recon team, and told them to get the rest of the civilians up to speed as fast as possible on the M -16/203 weapons. They were to tell their students NOT to use Full Auto, since they didn't have the ammo to waste. They had 4 days to accomplish that task, then the Recon team would attempt to scout the National Guard Armory in Fort Worth, and see if anyone was still there, or if had been already cleaned out.

When they were finished with training, they went back to the parking garage, and got another 10 full-size trucks running, and siphoned the rest for gas. One of the first things they would need would be a better way to siphon gas, and a better container like a tanker to store gasoline in. Jake doubted any gas stations in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area survived the nuclear bomb. The next day the Recon Team left in 2 vehicles, Jake's scout, and the F-350.

They traveled the 40 miles to Fort Worth with only minor hassles, they had to stop every couple of miles and untangle a multi-car wreck that had thoroughly blocked the road. Whenever they came across a large diesel, they siphoned the tanks until all the tanks of both vehicles were full, and all the fuel cans they carried were full as well. They got to the Armory at dusk and it appeared abandoned. Jake wasn't sure, and they drove past, then stashed the vehicles in a convenient alley and left a guard behind. If someone stole their vehicles, it would be a long walk back. They snuck around the base and waited several hours laying in among some bushes observing the Armory. There was no activity, and no lights. Finally around 9:00 Jake called the mission a success, and they jogged back to the vehicles. Jake was glad to see the guard right where they left him, and he was wide awake and looking around. They got back aboard the vehicles, drove past the armory, and still didn't see anything. Jake noted the gate was locked and chained. He had something for that, he remembered. Around midnight, they arrived back at the shelter. Jake gave Sam the good news, then they all hit the sack.

The next morning, they packed all the tools and gear they would need to strip the armory to the bare walls into the trucks. Everyone was issued their basic gear and ammo load just in case. By 9:00, they were on the road to Ft. Worth. Since they had already cleared the road, there was nothing to stop them, and they made good time. By 11:00 Jake drove up to the front gate, and tried to use his electric lock pick on the lock. It didn't work - this turned out to be a high-security lock, so he fell back to plan B, took a quarter-sized piece of C-4, stuck a detonator in it, and backed up about 25 yards. The lock exploded, and Jake admired his handiwork. "The

Chief was right - I do use too much C-4!" Not only was the lock and the chain destroyed, but all the hardware that normally locked the gate. "Oh Well, At least we're in" said Jake to himself, and drove onto the base. The rest of the vehicles followed him right to the motor pool. The first thing they'd need was a bunch of deuce and a half's to carry all the stuff they were going to grab. Only 1/3 of the trucks started, and they were driven to the fuel farm and topped off with diesel. Jake located a 5,000 gallon diesel tanker, and tried to start the motor. After cranking for a few minutes, it fired up too. He drove it to the fuel farm and filled the vehicle's tank, and the 5,000 gallon tank on the back. Now they were set for diesel for a while. Jake did some quick calculations, and realized all these trucks would fit into the main level of the parking garage. It would be a tight fit, but it would work.

Next they drove to the armory itself. He passed several Bradleys and considered taking them, but they were too slow, and were maintenance hogs. Next they passed some Hummers, and Jake stopped dead in his tracks. Several of the Hummers had Ma Deuces on top, and one even had a TOW launcher. They quickly tried to start all the Hummers. Again, only 1/3 of them would start, but luckily they were the armed ones. Jake told the rest of the survivors to abandon the gas powered pickup trucks and grab a Hummer, since there were hundreds of them all parked in neat rows. They had about a dozen deuce and a half's and just about 24 armed Hummers. Jake passed on the 105 Howitzers and other heavy artillery for now. Down the next row of buildings, Jake struck the mother lode - the Armory. He wanted all their ammo, explosives, grenades, mines, and all their AT-4 and LAWS rockets. Since he had plenty of C-4, he didn't bother with the finesse method of getting the armory vault door open, and stuck another wad of C-4 on the lock assembly and stuck a pencil detonator into the plastique, and beat feet out the door. The lock was blown clear across the room, and when Jake walked back into the office, he turned the handle, and the door opened. "Jake you've hit the jackpot!"

There were ranks upon ranks of brand new M -16/203 combinations, cases of all types of ammo, dozens of M -60 machine guns, dozens of Ma Deuces with spare barrels, and several rows of grenades, mines, and rockets. Sam walked in and Jake said "Load them up - times wasting." They located several pallet jacks to move the ammo on pallets and save their backs. One enterprising guy located a forklift and started it up. After some false starts and comical collisions, he figured out how to drive it, and waited outside the armory to lift the pallets into the deuce and a half's. With the forklift and the pallet jacks, it only took 6 hours to clean out the armory. Jake was at his wit's end as to where to put it - there wasn't enough room in the shelter for all this, and he doubted the pallet jack would fit - only way to find out was to try! Meanwhile, Sam had located a supply of shells for the 105, and ended up grabbing 3 of them and hitching them onto the deuce and a half's. He personally drove the vehicle with all the 105 ammo, since if it went "Kablooey", he didn't want to risk anyone else's life. The truck was pre-loaded with the Basic Load for a 3-gun battery, so that meant they had several hundred shells of various types including HE, Spotter, VT, Beehive, and WP rounds. Sam had worked with the big guns enough in Vietnam to be familiar with their operations. He looked around, and found a box with an assortment of FM's. Hopefully there was one on Artillery. The last item they found was one of the most critical. The Kevlar helmets, Bullet-resistant vests with "chicken

plates”, MOLLE gear, boots, and boxes of brand new MOPP gear. They took everything that wasn’t nailed down, and made sure they even took the last roll of TP. Jake had no idea of all the stuff they took, he’d have to inventory it later.

They rolled through the main gate several hours after it got dark. Jake gave some of the men a quick lesson in how to use the Ma Deuce and put an armed Hummer in front of the convoy, and at the rear, then spaced the armed Hummers throughout the convoy. As slow as they were going, he could have brought some Bradley’s. He’d have to talk to Sam about going back tomorrow and either getting them, or destroying the ones that were left to prevent them from being used against them.

Chapter 8

Shop til you drop

The next morning Jake found Sam. “I don’t know how to tell you this, but we have to go back!”

“Back where Jake?”

“We left too much usable stuff at the armory, we either need to take it or destroy it to keep it from being used against us.”

“Jake, in order to take it, we need to take the tractor-trailers too, I don’t know how many people here can drive an 18-wheeler.”

“Sam, what if we ask the people. Anything we take today should be transferred to a commercial building I saw down the block with a huge roll-up door.”

“OK Jake, first we find out how many people we can train to drive an 18-wheeler and then we check out the building.” They walked into the great room where everyone had gathered for breakfast.

Sam spoke up “Ladies and Gentlemen, gather round - I need your attention.” When they had surrounded Sam and Jake, Sam continued “We left too much useful stuff at the Armory. We need to go back and either take it or destroy it to keep it from being used against us. I need some volunteers to learn how to drive an 18-wheeler. Women, you can do this too - all you have to do is be willing to learn - this doesn’t take any real strength, but it does require concentration. Anyone who wants to volunteer, step forward.”

2/3 of the crowd stepped forward. Sam was impressed, this crowd of civilians was willing to take risks to improve their situation. They might survive after all!

Sam continued “OK, everyone finish breakfast, use the facilities, and saddle up by 0900 sharp. That means everyone’s butt should be in a Hummer or a deuce and a half in an hour, with your gear and your rifle.”

With that, the meeting broke up, and Jake took the opportunity to gather the Recon force. “Guys, we have a Hurry Up mission to thoroughly scout that commercial building down the block. Saddle up and meet me at the door in 15.”

15 minutes later, the whole team was at the door ready to go. Jake and John opened the door, and Sam came up behind them to lock it. They quickly walked over to the building, and it was in remarkably good shape for surviving a nuclear war. Jake figured since it was surrounded by

bigger buildings that sheltered it from the blast, and it was so low and squat, it had a better chance of surviving the blast like the Radio Shack had. Jake buzzed the locks, and opened the front doors. The smells that assailed them made them mask up quickly. They knew there was a dead body in here somewhere, but couldn't see it. As they moved into the back warehouse, they saw a primitive camp set up with a sleeping bag and some discarded food and booze bottles. That's when Jake spotted the body. It looked like it could have been one of Sam's former neighbors. They quickly rolled the body into a tarp and carried it outside away from the entrances. They looked over the warehouse section, and it was large enough to park almost every vehicle at the armory inside. Since some of them didn't start for one reason or another, they would have plenty of room, then they opened the roll-up doors, and measured the openings. They were over 15 feet high - they could pull anything in the armory through those doors, since they were bigger than railroad tunnels, and all military gear had to be transportable by rail. They quietly rolled the doors closed, but didn't lock them, and hurried back to the shelter. Jake rapped on the door, and Sam was opening it before he finished rapping.

Jake gave Sam the good news, and Sam got the people into the vehicles that were parked out front, and headed to the armory. Jake had a brainstorm while they drove over, no one had checked the radios! He reached over and flipped the power switch, and the radio came to life. "No way those radios should work - the EMP should have taken them out" thought Jake. Then he remembered something he read about military radios that were mounted in vehicles had an overload protector on the antenna to allow the radio to work after a nuclear attack. He thought it might be a resettable breaker of some type, and when he turned the power back on, he must have reset it. When they got to the armory, Jake had them all try their radios, and most of them worked. He had them all set on the same frequency, and set the power on the minimum setting, so they wouldn't alert anyone outside the immediate area that they were using radios. Jake figured that it would be enough power to talk across the armory compound. Jake had some people looking for different things, but the first thing they needed to locate was the heavy movers to move the Bradleys and other heavy gear. Finally, someone located the heavy movers and radioed Jake, who came running with all the people who needed to learn to drive the 18-wheelers. Jake thanked God that someone had parked an 18-wheeler over by itself, and not parked a load on the lowboy trailer. If it would start, it would make a perfect training vehicle. Locked vehicles were no hindrance to Jake anymore, who was soon inside, and seconds later he started the tractor rig and warmed up the motor.

While he was warming the motor, he unlocked the passenger side door, and the first trainee, who turned out to be Sue hopped into the passenger seat like she knew what she was doing. Sue answered his unasked question when she told Jake her ex used to drive an 18-wheeler on a local delivery route that had him home every night, except for when he was sleeping with the dispatcher. She knew her way around an 18-wheeler, but never got her Commercial ticket. Jake was glad to hear that, and decided to show Sue how to drive an 18-wheeler. He gave her a brief demonstration and then swapped seats with her while she tried the controls. Her first couple of shifts were a bit rough, but no worse than any private in a transportation company. 10 minutes later, she was snaking the rig around the light standards like a pro, and anticipating her shifts.

Jake felt comfortable enough that he told Sue she was going to train everyone else, that he really needed to inspect the Bradleys and some other stuff. Sue's eyes lit up, no one had really given her any authority. Her boss treated her like an appliance, and she was kind of glad the jerk decided not to listen to Sam, and he was probably a pile of ash somewhere. After she stopped the rig, Jake hopped out, and the next student hopped in, and soon Sue was teaching everyone who wanted to learn how to drive a big rig.

Jake jogged to his Hummer, and got in and drove back to the area where the Bradleys were parked. Sam knew about some weapons systems like the M-113s that were parked in another lot, but the Bradleys were too new for him. Jake jumped into the first Bradley, checked it over thoroughly, and fired up the engine. As soon as the engine started, he gave the systems a thorough test, including the turret traverse. He made sure not to point the gun in a dangerous direction. On further inspection, he noticed the feed tray for the Bushmaster was empty as was the ammo case for the 7.62mm coax. That could be fixed. Jake checked out each Bradley in the row, and he found 6 in excellent working conditions, they were a mixture a M2A1's and M3A1's, although Jake wasn't worried about the TOW launchers - it was not likely that a band of marauders would have an Abrams M1a1 tank! The 25mm Bushmaster could deal with a Russian or an older US tank design.

Meanwhile, Sam had located and tested several M-113's including one that had a GE Minigun instead of the Ma Deuce. He grabbed it since they had literally tractor trailer loads full of 7.62 NATO ammo. Jake would get a big laugh out of this one! Sue finished training the drivers later that afternoon, and got on the radio with Jake, who told them were to go to load up the Bradleys and M-113's. Jake had found the bunker with the TOW missiles, and was confused when he found pallets full of 25mm ammo. He guessed some Supply Sergeant decided that Simplicity outweighed Safety. Anyway, it solved his problem. Since the bunker had a loading dock, it was a simple matter to have one of the drivers back a tractor trailer up to the loading dock and transfer the pallets to the trailer. They unloaded the entire bunker without worrying about the inventory, since they knew the bunker was full of ammo for the Bradleys. The bunker filled the tractor trailer to max capacity, and they pulled it off to a marshaling area to await the rest of the convoy. As the tractor/lowboy combinations pulled up to the Bradley's and M-113s, Sam dropped the ramps and loaded the M-113's and chained them down while Jake did the same for the Bradleys.

Jake was puzzled as to how he was going to destroy the remaining Bradleys and M-113s they couldn't bring with him until someone got on the air and asked him what the heck a AN-M14 was. Jake got back to him, and he told Jake he had a case of these funny looking grenades. Jake thought he knew what they were, told him not to touch them, and he'd be right over. Jake jumped into his Hummer, and was there in 5 minutes. What he had was a case of Improved Thermite grenades. His problem about how to destroy the equipment was solved. Thermite burns at 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and would destroy any vehicle in the US inventory if dropped down the hatch. Jake drove the case of grenades back to the parking lot. By this time, they had removed everything from the vehicles they thought they could use including radios and

any loose gear, or stuff they could easily remove. All the vehicles were loaded, and waiting in the marshaling area. Just before he left, Sam spotted another tanker truck, and ran it over to the fuel depot and filled it full, then topped off the tanks of all the vehicles, and went back to top off the tanker. Sam called Jake when they were ready to go, and Jake parked the Hummer on the end of the line of vehicles. Sam had left the hatches open, anticipating that Jake would want to destroy any vehicles they left behind. Jake started at one end of the line, and dropped a Thermate grenade down the hatch of every vehicle in line. By the time he reached the end of the line, the other vehicles were starting to cook off as the Thermate ignited the diesel in the fuel tanks. When he was finished, Jake got back in his Hummer, and his gunner manned the Ma Deuce. They drove off to the marshaling area, and all the vehicles formed into one huge convoy. They drove slowly in deference to the new truckers, who wanted to minimize shifting. Several hours later, they arrived at the commercial building, and Jake rolled up the doors, and sprayed several cans of Mil-spec air freshener/disinfectant into the building to kill the smell of the recent occupant. Then he played traffic cop, and directed the vehicles into the building one at a time. They didn't unload anything, since they were going to move it again as soon as they made sure the prison was clear and usable. When they got back to the shelter, the chef and the Kitchen Staff had a surprise waiting for them - a Prime Rib Dinner with all the trimmings.

Chapter 9

The Joint

The next morning, Jake talked to Sam and formed a battle plan. The Recon team would scout the jail to the south, and report back. Jake insisted on taking 2 Hummers armed with M-2's and a Bradley. Sam thought that was a good idea, so Jake and the Recon team walked over to the commercial building, and a Bradley was one of the last vehicles loaded, so it was closest to the back door. They opened the pallet of 25mm ammo and loaded the Bushmaster's feed trays full of HE and AP rounds, and took a crate full of belted 7.62 ammo for the coax. Jake was the only one vaguely familiar with the Bradley's weapons, so he loaded the guns but didn't charge the weapons. When they were ready to go, Sam found a military handy talkie, and checked it against the Hummer's radio. They figured it would easily broadcast the 10-15 miles to the jail, since there didn't seem to be any big buildings in the way. Sam would have to stay outside the shelter, since the radio didn't work inside due to the shielding. Jake would call him to tell him if the coast was clear, or whether to lock themselves in the shelter if the recon team came against overwhelming force. Since there were 6 members of the recon team including Jake, each Hummer would have a driver and a gunner, Jake and John would work the Bradley, with Jake acting as gunner and commander.

They headed south on IH-45 until they saw the prison, and drove behind a large clump of trees. They got out their binoculars to study the jail. There were signs of habitation, but they saw no signs of the original inhabitants. Several hours later, they saw a long line of what they assumed were slaves being escorted from the rear by a couple of dirtbags armed with AK-47's. They were headed right at them, so Jake got a brilliant idea. He told the rest of the team that he was going hunting, and to hold their fire unless he shot. Jake opened a pocket in his holster and took out a long black cylinder and stuck it on the barrel and gave it a half twist clockwise. Several of the more gun-wise members of the team gave Jake a wry grin, knowing the dirtbags would never know what hit them. Jake low crawled out to a clump of bushes that was about 10 feet away from their line of advance. When the prisoners got to the bushes, they kept on walking with their heads down. As the guards walked past, Jake rose onto one knee, and sighted in on the head of the dirtbag in the rear, and squeezed the trigger of his Para-Ord. A split-second later, the only sound they heard was the wet-slap sound of DB#1's head exploding. Before DB#2 knew what was happening, he joined DB#1. Jake got up, and walked to the prisoners. He tapped the one in the back of the line on his shoulder, and put his finger to his lips to tell him to be quiet, then pantomimed getting the attention of the next guy in line. When he had their attention, they walked into the treeline, sat down and drank some water, and told the recon team what had happened.

Jake got on the radio, and told Sam "Situation under control" meaning they had met some resistance, but they could handle it. One of the bums heard Sam's voice over the radio and asked Jake if he could use the radio. "Sam, is that you - It's Slappy from 14th and Commerce!" Sam recognized the voice, and they talked for a few minutes. Finally Jake called a halt to old

home week, and started questioning Slappy about who was inside the prison. Slappy told him that there were about 20 dirtbags in there, he assumed ex-residents of the jail that got out when the power went out, and they were armed with AK-47's, shotguns, and the guard's pistols. Jake asked Slappy if he could help lure the bunch of dirtbags out to where they could get a good shot at them. Slappy was all for killing the SOB's since they had tortured his best friend to death. Jake gathered the recon team around him and outlined his plan. There were too many friendlies to be able to use the Hummers, so they would have to outflank and surprise the dirtbags. Slappy told them there was a ditch about 100 yards from the prison walls. He was pretty sure he could lure the dirtbags outside the walls with a story he'd tell them.

Slappy and the slaves returned to the prison, covering the advance of Jake's men, who were mixed in among them, and when they crossed the ditch, Jake's recon team spread out in the ditch with a 10 meter interval between them. Slappy was pretty sure he could get the dirtbags to within 50 feet of the ditch, so Jake told the recon team that they'd start the dance with the suppressed weapons before opening up with the M-16's. The 4 members of the recon team with Uzis were grinning from ear to ear - the dirtbags would never know what hit them. The 2 members of the team without Uzis hoped they could get into the action. About an hour later, Slappy was leading the dirtbags to the ditch. They were yelling and arguing about something. Jake didn't care, he just wanted the dirtbags to get within 50 feet to guarantee head shots with the Uzis.

As they reached the 50 foot line, the slaves dropped as a man, and the recon team opened fire, killing most of the dirtbags in the first volley. Not waiting to be told, the M-16 gunners quickly cleaned up anyone still standing. 10 seconds later, it was all over, and Jake stood up and walked over to Slappy.

"Slappy, that took guts - I can't wait to tell Sam his friend is a hero!"

"Hero-smeero, I just wanted that SOB dead so bad I was willing to die in the process! By the way, nice shooting!"

"Slappy, any dirtbags left in the jail?"

"One or two maybe, but I doubt they heard the gunshots, since they were asleep inside the blockhouse they made us clean up for them."

"OK, Slappy, show us were they are, and we'll take care of the rest!"

Slappy led them inside the jail, and they just walked into the blockhouse like they owned the place. As soon as Jake saw the dirtbags, he put a bullet in each of their foreheads. Then they went back outside to talk. First, Jake called Sam and told him to bring everyone in.

"Slappy, now that we have the time, why don't you tell us how you got here?"

“Me and my buddies were living in a bo camp about 20 miles south of here when these dirtbags surrounded us, stripped us, humiliated us, then herded us into the jail and turned us into slaves. Then they made us clean out the jail, remove the dead bodies, and work the gardens. There were 100 of us, and they have managed to kill half of us. Some of the women were raped to death, and others were still being used as sex slaves by the ones that preferred women. If I understand correctly, you are wanting to take over this jail and move a whole bunch of people here. If you’ll have us, we’d like to join. We all used to be a bunch of drunks, but haven’t had a drop in almost a month, so we’re all dried out and sober. Some of us have some real skills, or did have them before we became bums, and the rest of us are capable of performing manual labor.”

“Slappy, I’ll have to talk it over with Sam when he gets here.”

“Fair enough, is there anything we can do while we wait?”

“Yeah, we need to move our stuff inside the jail walls, can you get the gates open, and find some empty buildings that we can park some Bradleys and M-113s in?”

“HOLY SHIITE, YOU’VE GOT TANKS?”

“Nope, just a couple of Bradleys and M-113’s. We figured they would be better for self-defense than a huge tank.”

Slappy and the rest of the homeless people opened the gates, and cleaned out a huge building while Jake and his team drove the Hummers and the 18-wheeler with the Bradley still on the lowboy inside the gate. The Bradley was too tall to fit inside the door while on the lowboy, so Jake unchained it, and carefully backed it off the lowboy, to the amazement of Slappy and the rest of his group. They left the Bradley out in the open, and parked the 18-wheeler around the back out of the way. Half an hour later, they heard a diesel air horn, and the rest of the survivors showed up. Slappy just stood there with his jaw hanging open at the display of firepower. When they were all stored away, Sam ran over to Slappy and practically knocked him over when he gave him a bear hug. Slappy didn’t recognize Sam at first, but when he heard the voice, he knew it was his old friend.

“Slappy, I thought you were dead! Glad to see you’re still alive!”

“Sam, Sleepy’s dead - those SOB’s killed him!”

The look of pure hatred from Sam’s eyes told it all. Sleepy was a Vietnam Vet, and was Slappy and Sam’s best friend. Sam realized that Slappy was waiting there, and he gave him another big hug. Then he turned to Jake

“Jake, there’s another load in the Commercial building and in the shelter that needs to come

here. We should move permanently to this building, and move everything that will move out of the shelter.”

Slappy told Jake that some of the people with him were experienced truckers at one time or another, and also wanted to help load.

Slappy whistled at the vagrants, and they formed up. “Anyone who wants to help load stuff or drive an 18-wheeler, follow Jake. They have good food, hot showers and clean clothes for anyone who wants them.” That got most of them headed to the trucks. The convoy going back to the shelter was as big as the one that just arrived, except they were returning empty. As Slappy promised, Jake fed them, let them take a long hot shower, and gave them brand new BDU clothes. They loaded the vehicles faster than the civilians had on the previous trip, stripped the commercial building of everything in it, and took everything that wasn’t bolted to the floor out of the shelter. They left the oxygen and water tanks, the generator and diesel tanks alone since they might need the shelter again in case there was another emergency. Later that evening, they arrived at the Joint as they were calling it, and unloaded all the stuff into the freshly cleaned blockhouses. Since it was designed to house 2,000 inmates, there was plenty of room for everyone who wanted their own room to have some privacy. Since they didn’t have the kitchen together yet, they ate MRE’s for dinner, and went to sleep.

Chapter 10

Rebuilding

The next morning, Sam, Jake and Slappy met after breakfast. The Kitchen staff had worked most of the night repairing the kitchen, and in some cases replacing damaged equipment. They served breakfast consisting of eggs, sausage, pancakes with syrup, hot coffee and toast with jam. They were still going to eat well for at least a year since they emptied the food stocks of the shelter. Sam and Jake asked Slappy a very blunt question, “Slappy, how many of the people with you would you trust with your life right now?”

“About half, but I think the rest can be rehabilitated.”

“Slappy, I thought you said they had been sober for months?”

“Some of them got into the drugs the dirtbags were using. I wouldn’t trust them at all, and you best show them the gate before they cause trouble.”

“Ok, point them out and they’re as good as gone.”

They walked through the crowd, and anyone Slappy indicated was grabbed by at least 2 members of the Recon team, and escorted to the gate and told to “get lost” and not to come back unless they wanted to be buried outside the fence - that is if they were in a charitable mood that day! The losers took the hint and hit the road. Then Slappy pointed out the ones that needed rehabilitation. They were offered a choice, straighten up, sober up, or ship out with the rest of the losers. They all chose to shape up. They were to begin “Boot Camp” first thing tomorrow. Jake and Sam would take turns acting as Drill Sergeant.

With that matter settled, Sam called a meeting of all the assembled people.

“OK people, we’ve reached a decision. Slappy has assured us all the people here are trustworthy, so we’re going to issue weapons to everyone. Anyone who wants refresher training, Sue will have a sign-up list. We need your help. This place is secure, but barely habitable, and we are way short on basic supplies. What I need is for everyone to get together, figure out what we need, and where to get it. Give the lists to Sue, and she will correlate the lists into one master list, then Slappy, Jake and I will try to prioritize it.”

The people gathered around Sue, who was busy handing out pencils and papers. They then toured the facility, and wrote their ideas. Sam, Jake and Slappy did the same, and came across the jail’s fuel farm, and noticed it had a huge diesel tank, that was about 1/3 full. Jake turned to Sam and said, “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“Permission Granted, Empty both of the tankers into the fuel tank, then keep filling them up

until either the Jail tank is full, or the fuel farm at the NG Armory is empty.”

Slappy spoke up “Sam, several of my guys can drive a tanker truck, and I know they can handle a Hummer. All you need to do is teach them to operate a M2, that would free you up to scavenge in the city.”

“Excellent Idea Slappy - you want to drive one of the tankers?”

“Actually I wanted to drive a Hummer - I’ve seen all those rich people driving one, and I always wanted to!”

“Ok, Slappy - go and take care of it. The Fuel farm is on the far southern end of the base. Make a right turn just inside the gate, and keep following that road until you see it. They had a huge tank farm full of diesel, so I doubt you’ll drain it.”

With that, Slappy grabbed a couple of his buddies, emptied the tankers, and Jake showed Slappy’s gunners how to operate the M-2s. The short convoy drove through the gate and drove as quickly as they could to Fort Worth Texas. They needed 3 days of steady driving to fill the jail’s diesel tank, which held over 100,000 gallons. After one of their trips, Slappy told Sam that he had spotted a farm implement dealer in Fort Worth with several large tractors and combines on the lot, and they looked in good condition. Sam dispatched several of the lowboys and 2 more armed Hummers to the farm implement dealer’s lot with instructions to grab a couple of tractors, plows, and anything else they might need, and keep their eyes peeled for a feed and seed store, since they were going to need tons of seeds to plant this spring.

They took off with the next convoy, and later that afternoon, they drove in with all the lowboys full of tractors, implements, and the Hummers were pulling trailers full of bags of seed corn and vegetable seeds. Jake and Sam went to help them unload, and Jake saw Sam’s M -113 with the GE Minigun for the first time. Jake started laughing his head off.

“Sam, you planning on defending against an air attack?”

“Jake - that gun also fires forward. We’ve got 7.62 ammo to burn, and that gun would make one hell of an anti-personnel gun! Even at low speed and maximum traverse speed, it would mow down a whole division of NVA in one pass! And the M -113 hull is bulletproof against anything smaller than 50 caliber.

“You’re right, if we get attacked by hordes of MZB’s, we could drive the M -113 outside the fence, face the onslaught, and mow them down like we were shooting bowling pins! Anything they had would likely bounce off its armor. We might not even need the Bradleys!”

“Jake, I’d keep the Bradleys just in case - Maybe someone comes up with an old Patton M -60 tank, or another M -113. The 25mm Bushmaster would punch right through the M-113’s armor

like a hot knife through butter. And if that's not enough, 3 of the Bradleys are fitted with TOW launchers. Those TOW missiles can just about knock out an Abrams!"

"Sam, you planning on fighting WWIII?"

"Nope, just some CYA - What if someone else gets our bright idea and raids a National Guard Armory? And just suppose, instead of being good guys like us, they're a bunch of Dirtbags and Warlords. We'll need all the firepower we can muster to defend this place. I want the guard towers armed with the extra Ma Deuces we got, and then heavily sandbagged. I don't want some dirtbag to get lucky with an RPG and knock out our towers. Also, they need to have a military radio installed in each tower. We don't have enough people for LP/Ops or roving patrols so the towers will have to be our early warning system. We need to scavenge some NV scopes for the towers, and some high-power telescopes to spot with, as well as binoculars for searching."

Later that afternoon, Sue handed Jake and Sam a 4-page list, and they sat down and pored over it. Some of the suggestions were almost ludicrous, and some were sheer genius. They talked about the list until dinner, and were still arguing after dinner, when Sue walked up, and handed them another list. She had taken the liberty of organizing it, and neither of them could fault her logic. She prioritized stuff that they needed to build or make other critical stuff ahead of stuff that was just nice to have. Then she had another page of suggestions no one had come up with, including a huge water cistern and some way to take advantage of the nearby rail line. She suggested using solar power to supplement their diesel generators, but didn't know where to get the stuff. Jake suggested stripping existing equipment from any sites that might use it. Slappy walked up, and Sam asked him if he knew where he could get some of this stuff. He mentioned several warehouses that Sam wasn't aware of in the Commercial district that would be full of stuff still in boxes or on pallets for quick and easy scavenging. Sam and Slappy made a list of the warehouses, and decided to hit them first since they covered building materials, foodstuffs, electronics, auto parts, and just about everything they would need including paper goods.

The next morning, they got every 18 wheeler, deuce and a half that they had, as well as 4 armed hummers for escort and headed for the commercial district of Dallas. They brought the pallet jacks and the forklift just in case. When they got there, some of the buildings were flattened, and some were still standing. They started in the standing buildings, and dragged whole pallets out to the loading docks, then got the forklift going as they made enough room for it to work. In the far end of the warehouse, they found another forklift, and after a bunch of struggling, they got it started, and soon they were moving stuff twice as fast. Meanwhile, Jake cruised the parking lot looking in trailers, and marked the ones they wanted with a big red X with a can of spray paint. Way in the back of the lot, he found an old Kenworth tractor, and thought it might still run, so he picked the locks, and turned the ignition - Rats, Nothing! He opened the hood and noticed the battery was missing - probably to keep someone from doing what he was doing. He rummaged around and found another 24 volt battery in the warehouse sitting on a charger. He knew the power had been out for a while, but hopefully the battery had enough juice to start

the big diesel. He almost had a hernia trying to pick up the battery, and finally got smart and grabbed the forklift driver, who drove over to the battery, slid his forks together and picked the battery up. Jake rode the forks next to the battery over to the truck. With some very careful maneuvering, they got the battery in place on the hood, then he backed the forklift out while Jake maneuvered it into the battery box, and made the connections. Crossing his fingers, Jake walked over to the cab door and jumped in. He tried the ignition again, and Eureka, it worked! He left the motor running, and jumped down to close and lock the hood, then drove over to the closest trailer, and hooked it up, then retracted the skids. Blowing his horn, he drove over to where Sam was, and suggested that they take the loaded trucks over to the Joint, and unload them with the other forklift, and use the one they had there to keep loading.

Sam agreed, and Jake took the 6 18-wheelers that were loaded and 2 Hummers back to the Joint. The forklift made short work of unloading them, and they returned to the commercial district, passing the other trucks going the other way. When they backed up to the loading docks, Sam had a pile of stuff to load into the trailers, so they turned around much faster than last time. They kept this up all day, and called it quits when darkness fell. They had almost emptied one warehouse, and were starting on the second one. So far they had gotten about half their list, including several trailers full of building materials that they could use to wall off the fronts of the cells with wall board for some privacy. Someone had found a Oxy-Acetylene torch with a cutting tip at the National Guard base, and was using it to cut the doors off the cells as they were putting up the walls. They even located some doors, and soon some of the cells almost looked like small apartments. They took the bunks down, and installed more traditional beds.

The next day, they hit paydirt when they located a Grocery warehouse. They carted off anything in cans, and were more selective of what they took in boxes. If the box or pallet looked like a mouse had beat them too it, they left it, but if it was in good shape, they took it. They also found pallets of Rice and Beans and other staples including Flour and Vegetable oil. They quickly checked them, and they looked good, so they took those too. Someone spotted several pallets full of Salt, Pepper and other spices. They took all of that too. Emptying this warehouse took several trips, but eventually they had removed everything they needed.

The next warehouse they came across had collapsed, and they didn't bother with it now - they could come back later. The next one in the row was a big hit with the women, as it was a Soft Goods warehouse full of clothes and stuff. Sam put his foot down and insisted that they take box or pallet loads of stuff instead of tearing through the boxes in the warehouse since they didn't have the time for this. Sue agreed, and the women got back to loading the boxes and pallets aboard the trailers. They found clothes, housewares, fabrics, pillows, etc. and cases of paper and cleaning products. They took all of this too.

Finally, they came to the warehouse the gentlemen were hoping for, a Sporting Goods warehouse. Anything and everything in the warehouse was loaded into trailers. It was a good thing the Jail was designed to hold 2,000 inmates, they needed all the storage space they could

get. They found some more ammo, camping gear, archery equipment including a case of compound bows and carbon arrows. There were boxes and boxes of fishing tackle, knives, multitools, pellet rifles, slingshots, FRS/GMRS radios, regular and Night Vision Scopes, GPS units, tons of batteries, flashlights, and bowling equipment - they left the bowling balls.

The final warehouse in the complex was the biggest treat - it was an auto parts warehouse. Jake decided to take it all, and sort it out later. It was the easiest warehouse to clean out, but took the most time. Several days later, it was finally empty. Meanwhile, Sue was going over her list, and except for some luxury items and the solar panels, they had almost everything they needed. On their last trip, they sent the tankers to Fort Worth to top off from the Diesel fuel farm. That gave them another 10,000 gallons of diesel. Jake was glad when he remembered Military Fuel was already stabilized for long-term storage.

When they got back to the Joint, they were amazed at all the stuff they had scavenged in a couple of weeks. It would take months to organize and inventory all of it. Sue tried to keep up, but they were bringing it in and unloading it faster than she could write everything down. At least she sorted stuff into different areas, so all the food was in one building, all the soft goods were in another, and all the automotive and sporting goods were in their own buildings. Sam commented that he hoped they could locate some cats to keep the mice from eating all their storage. A couple of days later, one of Slappy's crew found a mother and kittens, and carried them back to the joint. The populace promptly adopted them, and names were suggested. Jake reminded them that the cats weren't pets, they were there to catch mice, so he better not catch anyone feeding them!

Chapter 11

Calm Before the Storm

Jake, Sam and Slappy formed a Triumvirate, and ruled as benevolent dictators. Everyone in the compound was freer than they ever were before, and the only reason they were in charge was that no one else wanted the responsibility. They delegated whenever possible, and expected the person who they assigned to complete a project to do it to the best of their ability. There were a couple of minor snafus, but things were working better and better. Most of the people were busy making improvements to The Joint, as they had dubbed their compound. One suggestion met immediate approval - they had forgotten earthmoving equipment, so they checked out a couple of contractor's lots and helped themselves to bulldozers, backhoes, and anything else they needed. They had diesel to burn, and once a week, the 50,000 gallon tanker made a run to the Armory to top off the tanks. They rarely needed more than 1/3 of the tanker's capacity, but Jake insisted on keeping the Joint's tank full to minimize the air/fuel interface that aged diesel. Also pumping fresh fuel in each week circulated the existing fuel and minimized sedimentation of the tank. Some smart guy was reading the FM's and came across some info on fuel delivery. He showed it to Jake, who sat down with Sam and Slappy, and they decided that they could seriously increase the fuel storage at the Joint by moving some Military gear over to the Joint. It would take all their lowboy trailers, and they'd have to locate a crane. They needed one anyway to move the sandbags up to the guard towers, which were already armored against 30 caliber fire, but they needed more protection against RPG's or BMG 50 rounds.

With that settled, they decided they needed another trip to the Armory. Good thing Jake only destroyed the weapons systems instead of all the vehicles.

“Sam, you know what we need - A CEV!”

“Jake, what the Hell is a CEV?”

“A Combat Engineer Vehicle - a vehicle that was purpose built for combat engineers - they used to use M-113's, but they lacked the horsepower they needed for heavy earthmoving.”

“One slight problem Jake, we need a crane with a 100 ft boom!”

“Actually all we need is a heavy duty pulley, and a winch that can lift the load with over 200 feet of cable.”

“Jake, what are you talking about?”

“I can mount a heavy duty pulley to the top of the tower, thread the cable through it, and use the winch to lift the bags. We're lifting it to a fixed position, so we really don't need a boom.”

“Even still - I still want a crane - there might be other jobs where we need to lift and load stuff, like loading stuff at the armory onto the lowboy trailers.”

“Oops, Forgot about that! OK, If we find a CEV or an M -113 tank recovery vehicle, we’ll grab it, but still get the crane, OK!”

“Fine by me, but time’s a wasting, let’s get this show on the road!” Jake pulled out the Yellow Pages, and located a Crane Company that was on the way to the Armory. He told Slappy they needed a mobile crane with off-road capability, but wheeled since they might have to travel over paved roads. It also needed to have either a 100 foot boom, a hydraulic boom that could extend past 100 ft, or a boom with a jib that extended past 100 feet. He’d prefer a Hydraulic boom, since they were more easily transported and set-up, and didn’t need any special preps to lift light objects, like under 10 tons. Slappy took off with 2 armed Hummers to the Crane company on a scavenging trip. He took one of the ex-truckers with him, since he had the best chance of getting the crane back to the Joint in one piece.

The rest of the people loaded up all the empty tractor-trailer rigs, all the low-boys, and all the deuce and a halves they had, and then everyone else piled into the Hummers and they took off to the Armory. Jake was driving the lead Hummer, and spotted a roadblock of cars in the road ahead, and radioed a warning. It was heavy enough that the M -2 on the Hummer 50 feet behind him would take too long to destroy it, so Jake’s gunner engaged it with his TOW missile, locked it on the center of the roadblock, and fired. The resulting explosion blew the roadblock to smithereens, and whoever was standing behind the roadblock to ambush anyone stopping to dismantle the roadblock. A red mist floated in the air for a minute, so the gunner in the Hummer behind Jake traversed his M -2 back and forth searching for targets, and fired a quick burst into the nearby buildings just to make sure. While he didn’t think he hit anyone, he was sure he discouraged anyone from trying a roadblock or ambush against them again. He pulled forward and the convoy resumed. The second Hummer stopped and mounted guard until they were clear of the area, but no one showed their faces. Jake thought that either the initial TOW impact got them all, or anyone left was smarter than the guys behind the roadblock. He wondered if any of the losers he kicked out of the shelter had anything to do with the roadblock, since he assumed they were the only ones left alive. Jake resolved to look for some more armed Hummers, since every convoy would need at least 2 Hummers escorting it from now on, since the Bradleys lacked road speed with their tracks, and driving on pavement was hard on the tracks.

They made it to the Armory without further incident. The lowboys made their way to the Fuel farm, and found a light crane that was barely big enough to pick up the stuff and put it on the trailers. Jake hoped Slappy had luck at the Crane company. Someone came on the air just then, making a whole bunch of racket about some more armed Hummers. Jake asked him where the heck he was.

“I’m way in the back of the base near the Security Office. There’s a whole bunch of Armed

Hummers here, including a couple with full ballistic armor.”

Jake didn't have to be told twice and burned rubber over to the Security Office. When he got there, he got on the radio, and asked one of the tractor-trailers to meet him there too - they had some more stuff to scavenge. They tried to start the Hummers, but only half of them started. Jake started cursing until someone walked up with Jumper Cables. Jake almost slapped himself. “Of Course - we've got working Hummers, we could just jump start the other vehicles and hope the only thing wrong is the battery.”

Since they were diesels, the only things that could go wrong were either the battery, starter, or the generator. Jake hoped it was the battery, and started popping the hoods on the ones that wouldn't start. The other guy attached the jumper cables to a running Hummer, and every one of the Hummers started. Jake got on the radio and said he needed another dozen drivers to drive Hummers back. Everyone who wasn't driving a truck, a Hummer, or acting as a gunner in a Hummer were driven back to the Security lot, and drove a Hummer around to the front. The Security building had its own smaller armory, and they quickly unloaded all the small arms and ammunition from it aboard the 18-wheeler's trailer. They took all the helmets, ballistic vests, Molle gear, and everything else that wasn't bolted down. Next to the Security office they found a couple of pallets of some funny looking wire mesh and plastic thingies, labeled HESCO. Jake had the room in the trailer, so they loaded those too. By the time they were finished, the trailer was full, so Jake told the driver to wait in the marshaling area for them to finish in the fuel farm. Jake grabbed another box full of FM's and threw it in his Hummer without looking at them, at the worst case, they could be used for TP! When he finished, Jake radioed over to the fuel farm, and they were finished loading all the fuel delivery equipment, a bunch of fuel bladders they filled full of diesel, and every tank and tanker they had. They also found a dozen Military diesel generators, an M-113 Tank Recovery vehicle (No CEV's to be found) and a whole bunch of firefighting equipment. When they were finished, Jake took the lead again, made sure his gunner had a TOW loaded in the launcher, and warned everyone to be on the lookout for trouble. They drove back to the Joint, and when they got there, Slappy was waiting with not only 2 traveling cranes, but a whole bunch of heavy equipment and tons of rigging gear. They even took any manuals they had in the office, so they could learn how to operate the cranes properly.

Slappy told Sam and Jake “We thought we might as well take it while we were there - you never know what we might need!”

Sam had an idea about the 105's they had. After the ambush, Sam suddenly got serious about security. While Jake and Slappy were there, he discussed the ideas.

“Jake, Slappy, we need to seriously upgrade our security around here. We've got the stuff we need to upgrade the bullet resistance of the towers, and we need to dig firing pits for the 105's and line them with sandbags. We also need bunkers and bomb shelters in case someone has mortars or artillery. We've got the heavy equipment and the supplies to build enough bunkers

to protect everyone, and now we have the time too!”

When they unloaded the trailers, Sam noticed the pallets labeled HESCO that came off the trailer from the Security building.

“Jake, what the heck are these?”

“I don’t know, but it was sitting next to the security office, and we had the room.”

While they were jack jawing, Slappy walked over to the pallet and read the description.

“Guys - you won’t believe this, I think you picked up some HESCO units.”

Jake and Sam asked in unison “What the heck are HESCO units?”

Slappy told them “Instant Sandbags!”

Jake walked over to them “I knew they looked familiar, they used them in Desert Storm to protect stuff. They are much easier to use than sandbags - a front loader can fill one in a single load, and the bigger ones in a load or two. They’re perfect for building bunkers. Just dig down to make the center of the bunker, use the dirt to fill up the HESCO, and cover it with 6x6 lumber, plywood, and a load of dirt. Instant bunker! It may take 2 or 3 of the smaller ones to make a big bunker, but it has to be much faster than building it out of sand bags. We can save the sandbags for the towers.”

Sam plotted where he wanted the 105’s dug in. He wanted a spot away from the buildings, but not in the middle of everything. They ended up compromising and put them next to a roadway between buildings. They could hit anything outside the wire, but couldn’t fire point blank due to the buildings, but the buildings also hid the guns from outside observers. The loader/backhoe made short work of digging out the gun pits, filling the sandbags, and digging an ammo bunker to keep the ammo near the guns. Then they dug some shelter/bunkers for everyone in case they came under mortar/artillery attack, then they filled and lifted pallets full of sandbags to the towers where they stacked them inside the towers to give them some more protection against heavy weapons or RPGs. The BMG M-2’s in the towers controlled a mile in all directions, and they included daytime and NV scopes and binoculars into the tower inventory. The “terrible trio” as they were sometimes referred to made up a watch schedule for the towers. They always had 2-man teams in the tower, even though half the time they were women, with one spotting and the other resting unless they came under fire, then the guard who was resting would man the Ma Deuce to take out any targets. They also had radios in each tower to communicate with a security office that was responsible for base defense.

The Bradleys were loaded and fueled, and were started and ran on a daily basis to keep the batteries charged. The weapons were loaded and on safe until they were deployed. They loaded

the 10,000 round ammo compartment for the GE Minigun equipped M -113 with a mixed bag of AP, HE and Tracer 7.62 ammo so they could spot their fire at night. Since they didn't have a lot of tracer ammo, every 10th round was a tracer, but at 600 rounds per minute, that was plenty to spot with. Sam had estimated the number of 7.62 rounds in inventory at over a million based on the number of pallets they took from the armory. They had so many .223 rounds they didn't bother to count them. They had almost 10,000 rounds of various 25mm rounds for the Bushmaster cannons on the Bradleys including AP and HE, and thousands of 40mm grenades for the M-203s.

They were short on TOWs with 1,000 missiles, but they weren't expected to use as many of them. They also had almost 1,000 LAWS rockets. They would come in handy if they were forced to fight for the compound, since they were simple to use, and fairly accurate with a large warhead for the size of the rocket. Jake put 5 LAWS rockets in each Hummer that didn't have a TOW to give them more punch. It barely made a dent in their inventory. They now had 30 Hummers, half with TOW missiles, and half with Ma Deuce machine guns. 10 of the Hummers had Ballistic Armor, so they would be the lead and chase vehicles in convoy escort, since they would most likely see action first. The 6 Bradleys and the M-113s would stay at The Joint for defensive use. They were hidden in a concrete block building that was the most survivable so if they were attacked the "Big Guns" would still be useable. The 105 guns would provide long-range capability, and if they got in too close, the Bradleys and M-113s would take care of business. Jake wished they had some ROV's, but he hadn't located any sources of large model airplanes, or the cameras and GPS units to make them work. Jake hoped the towers and huge telescopes would make up for the lack of aerial reconnaissance.

They had so many generators and other stuff that most of them stayed in storage. Jake rescinded his orders about feeding the cats when one of them dropped a live mouse at his feet.

Several members of Slappy's crew used to ride the rails, and had an idea to check out the tracks that ran past the prison. Slappy agreed to let them take an armed Hummer and follow the tracks to the Depot in Dallas to see if there was anything usable there. The Joint was filling up fast, and they didn't know how much more stuff they could store, but if they found some railcars full of necessary supplies, they wanted to figure a way to get them down to the jail. They hoped there was a switching engine in the depot, but all they could do was look, since they didn't have enough people to spare right now. Later that day, they returned with a list of stuff that was just sitting in the depot, and they located a diesel-electric switching locomotive that could move about 10 cars at a time, that was still full of diesel. Slappy took the list to Sam and Jake and asked them if they felt it was worth the risk.

Chapter 12

Getting Ready for Armageddon

Jake, Sam and Slappy knew it was only a matter of time before someone tried to take what they had. They didn't know if it was a day, week, month or years away, but they knew the day would come, so they did everything in their power to get ready. They located mil-grid binoculars in the trailers, and added them to the guard towers so they could spot artillery fire. Sam took a surveyors tape they located at one of the construction companies and started plotting a reference grid. Janet spent more and more time with Sam as it was soon obvious he had no intention of drinking again. Sam's sponsor was still talking to him once a week, but he was really proud of Sam, who had made it 6 months clean and sober. The former man was taking over, and Sam liked being thought of as a real person again, instead of something to be avoided. The rest of Slappy's crew took their cue from Sam, and soon they had regular AA meetings for anyone who wanted to attend. They had the greatest motivation to succeed, since Sam had told them that if they fell off the wagon, they were out of there, and banishment was a punishment no one wanted to consider.

Sam completed the reference grid, and using a table from the Artillery manual they found, converted range and bearing to mils of elevation and azimuth. They fired a few test shots until they were convinced the tables were accurate. The plotting stakes were noted and given reference names, and copied so each tower had a set of reference points. They had 2 means of spotting artillery fire. They could either call the reference stake and adjust fire from there, or some of them were so good they could give the offset from the stake in mils to the gunners, who dialed in the azimuth and elevation to each gun. The second method was quicker, since they could immediately fire for effect without wasting a spotting round, giving the enemy precious seconds to seek shelter. The 105mm Howitzer had a range of 6 miles, which controlled a huge amount of real estate, although the spotters could only see 5 miles in any direction due to the terrain.

Once he was satisfied that they had their immediate defensive needs met, Sam Ok'd a scavenging run to the railroad yards. Since Slappy's crew had more experience with railroads (riding in the empty cars), Sam put Slappy in charge of finding a switching engine, checking the boxcars and bulk containers for useful stuff, and driving the cars over to the siding less than 100 yards away from The Joint's walls. Slappy came back from the railroad yard with a switch engine pushing 9 boxcars full of stuff, and he told Jake and Sam there were at least 10 tanker cars full of Diesel fuel. When he uncoupled from the boxcars and backed up, he backed all the way to the railroad depot, and hooked up to the tanker cars. An hour later, they had another 100,000 gallons of Diesel.

Slappy's crew had more than its share of veterans, and they responded to Jake and Sam's discipline so fast that they were soon the best trained and motivated members of the Joint. Jim was one of the members of Slappy's bunch and had served on a 105mm gun crew, so Sam

quickly organized the 3 gun crews around Jim, who was put in charge of the 105's. They used spotting rounds to get used to loading, firing, and adjusting fire of the guns. Sam was concerned about how many rounds they were going through, when one of Slappy's crew mentioned that he saw a boxcar with US government seals on it in the rail yard. Slappy told them to make a quick trip to the yard to check it out, with the proper tools to open the boxcar. Several hours later, they brought the boxcar back to the Joint, and Slappy was ecstatic when Jim told him it was full of 105mm rounds! Jake was wondering why they were getting so lucky, but didn't want to look a gift horse in the mouth! There was over 1000 rounds of HE and WP/Smoke rounds including VT and contact fuses for the HE rounds. Sam wanted all the HE rounds pre-loaded with VT fuses, since they weren't going to be used against dug-in troops. Sam wanted some M -915 submunition rounds, but he figured he could get by with VT fused HE rounds.

The gun crews had drilled to the point that they could hit any grid coordinate within 3 rounds and 1 minute of the order to commence fire. The only thing they were missing was modern fire control capabilities to do a Time on Target mission. Even with their limited capabilities, they could give an enemy some major grief. Once the gun crews were trained up, Jake had a "Battle Stations" Drill once a week, until everyone could get under cover, or to their equipment fast enough to satisfy Jake. It wasn't as fast as he would have liked, but then he remembered they were civilians, and they had other jobs to do in the Joint. The Bradleys had enough rounds to practice shooting the Bushmaster, but they didn't fire the TOW since they only had 1,000 of them. Sam gave a demonstration of the GE Minigun one evening firing at a target a quarter-mile away. After a short burst, the target was obliterated. People watching it fire described it as a red fire hose that sounded like either a dragon roaring, or a giant ripping a huge piece of canvas. They figured correctly that anyone on the receiving end of that barrage would be turned into Sushi! The guns were cleaned and serviced, and put back in storage.

Several months later, just after dawn, the Northeastern guard tower spotted movement several miles away, and quickly ID'd the vehicle as an M -113 with a Ma Deuce. He called the Security base, and Jake hit the Alarm. The General Quarters alarm blared throughout the Joint, and everyone manned Battle Stations within 5 minutes. The Bradleys and the M-113s were started, and the garage door was opened, but they didn't show themselves yet. Soon all the other guard towers were reporting M-113s in the tree line 5 miles away. They quickly called the coordinates in to the gun crews, who loaded HE rounds with VT fuses, and trained the guns to the coordinates, but no one fired yet. Jake had a bright idea when one of the guard towers told him one of the M-113's had a bunch of antennas on it. He quickly tuned the radio to GUARD and broadcast "Attention M-113s in the treeline around the Jail. You are trespassing on private property. If you intentions are friendly, stop where you are, turn your turrets away from the jail, and approach on foot."

Suddenly one of the Guard Towers broke in, "Jake, this is the Northwest guard tower, I recognize one of the guys with his head sticking out of the M -113! It's Dopey!"

Slappy heard the conversation, and told Jake that Dopey was one of the Dirtbags that they had

kicked out of the Joint on the first day. Jake made a snap decision.

“Attention All gunners, Target ID’d as Hostile by Slappy, Open fire as they get into range.”

The Gun crews made sure the guns were still on target, and Jim gave the command “FIRE”. All 3 gunners pulled the lanyards on their 105’s at the same time. The M-113’s coming out of the Northeast were rudely introduced to the superior firepower of The Joint! While none of the M-113’s suffered a direct hit, the fragments wiped out the dirtbags surrounding the M-113’s and rattled the gunners and drivers inside the M-113s. They are still out of range, so they went to Full Throttle to get within their range as fast as possible. Seeing this, Jake ordered the 6 Bradleys to deploy to the Northeast, Northwest, and 2 to stay in reserve. The Bradley drivers raced to get into position to use their Bushmaster guns, and suddenly the Southwest and Southeastern guard towers reported more M-113s and infantry in the tree lines. Jake knew someone had gone to a lot of trouble to try and take over the Joint, and if it weren’t for their superior firepower, they would have been decimated. Jake ordered the 105s to target the M-113’s as they came into range, and ordered the 2 remaining Bradleys, and the M-113’s to deploy to the South. The gun crews were working as fast as they could, spotting and firing on the go. As soon as the Bradleys got in range, they engaged with their Bushmasters, and quickly destroyed the M-113’s. The infantry knew their only chance was to charge in a Human Wave attack, and get inside the minimum range of the guns. Since the Southern dirtbags charged first, the M-113s on the South got into the action first, with the 50’s shooting as fast as they could. The GE Minigun equipped M-113 was firing wide arcs of blazing death. Even though there were upwards of a thousand dirtbags attacking the jail, very few of them made it to the fence. People in the bunkers engaged them with their M-16/M203 weapons on semiauto. Most were killed by a single gunshot to the head.

An hour later, the attackers that were still able to fled into the trees. Only 1 out of 100 attackers survived. Unfortunately, one bunker took a direct hit from a grenade, and 10 people were wounded and 2 people were killed: Sue and one of the original Recon team members. Everyone stayed at battle stations, and one of the M-113s drove over to the bunker, and loaded the wounded into its crew compartment, and drove them to the infirmary. Janet couldn’t do much for those who were critically wounded, but she was able to bandage and suture those without life-threatening injuries. Thanks to the quick actions of the M-113 crew and the medical team, they only lost Sue and the other guy. Jake was devastated by the news, and decided to take the rest of the recon team outside the wire on a search and destroy mission to hunt down and kill the surviving Dirtbags. Sam put together another group who had the dubious task of making sure anyone on the field of battle was dead. Single rifle shots echoed throughout the Joint all day long. Evidently no one inside the Joint was in a charitable mood after losing Sue and one of the recon team members. They also stripped the bodies of weapons and ammo, and piled it inside the wire. Finally they took their remaining Thermate grenades and made sure the M-113s were permanently out of action. Jake and the recon team came back several days later and told Sam they found the survivor’s camp 10 miles away from the joint, and no one was left alive when they left.

Jake, Sam and Slappy officiated at Sue and John's funeral (someone luckily remembered his name before the funeral.) Everyone was moved to tears, but Jake realized there wasn't anything they could really do about making sure this wouldn't happen again. They couldn't use minefields since they needed all the arable land they had to raise food on. They still hadn't located any animals, but they hadn't looked very hard since they had about 20 years worth of food in storage. What they did need was more people. 150 people weren't enough to guarantee long term survival of their group, especially since they were painfully short of women of child-bearing age. Sure some of the 40-year old women would have babies, but there were only a few women under 30 around. Most of the men were over 40, and there were no teenagers in the group. What they needed was to join up with another group to build their population to a sustainable level. Jake assigned someone to radio watch, to listen for any transmissions that might indicate another group of survivors who weren't a bunch of dirtbags. Sam counted the number of 105mm rounds expended, and realized they had shot up almost 1/3 of their original load. He was really grateful that someone had located that railcar full of 105 rounds. Even still, they needed to find more in case someone even bigger than this last group decided to take them on. Jake and Sam puzzled over the grenade incident, and finally decided it was just a lucky toss. Good luck for the dirtbag who threw it, and bad luck for the people inside the bunker. The only way it could have gotten in was through a firing port that wasn't much bigger than the grenade. The entire group stood down for a week and cleaned equipment and policed the grounds of the Joint, looking for unexploded ordinance that could cause problems later. They found a couple of dud 40mm grenades. Jake checked them out, and they had blue casings. Some idiot dirtbag was shooting practice grenade rounds! Jake still treated them as dangerous, and had a skip loader pick them up and bury them in a hole almost 400 yards away from the Joint.

Chapter 13

Rescue

The Joint took the next several months regrouping, rebuilding and getting over their losses. During this time, Janet and Sam got real close, and rumors were flying that they were going to get hitched. Jake set up a 24/7 listening watch on the radio. They almost never heard anything, and what they did was so faint that they assumed it was skip from very distant contacts. One day, the radio operator was scanning through the channels when she heard a “Mayday” on Guard. It was faint, but they identified themselves as being under attack at the Little Beaver Creek Ranch in Centerville, which was about 100 miles south of them. She yelled for Jake, and began copying the message with a pad and pencil. Jake ran to the radio shack, and she handed him the note. Sam and Slappy weren’t far behind, and gave Jake approval to answer the call.

“Go ahead Mayday, this is The Joint, just south of Dallas, TX. You’re faint but readable.”

“Thank God somebody heard us - we’re under attack by a group of Dirtbags. We’re holding them off, but we’re in a Mexican Standoff here, and pinned down.”

“How many are you up against?”

“Maybe 50 dirtbags armed with AR-15’s and M-16’s. Thank God they don’t have anything more powerful, or we’d have taken casualties by now!”

“How many people do you have?”

“We’re about even. We have 50 Men and Women, but over 100 kids, and some of them are too young to fight!”

Jake turned to Sam and Slappy, they nodded approval - this is what they were hoping for, a group with women and children to improve their long-term survival chances.

“Ok, we’re coming south from Dallas with 4 Ma Deuce armed Hummers. Do you think that will work?”

“Mister, those Hummers would be a gift from God right about now!”

“OK, it will take us an hour or two to reach you, button up and keep them from rushing you, we’ll be there ASAP. I’ll call you back on GUARD when we reach Centerville.”

“OK, make sure you turn East on Route 7 and go south at the 1119. We’re about 5 miles south of town. Just come roaring up the road. Anything moving outside the ranch houses is hostile, feel free to engage!”

“OK, we’re on our way!”

“Sam, I need 4 Hummers, 3 with 50s, and 1 TOW Hummer just in case we hit a roadblock.”

“Jake, they’re already outside and warmed up, just jump into the lead Hummer. Your vest and kit are already in it! Get Going, and good luck!”

Jake practically ran out the door, opened the driver’s side door of the Hummer, donned his vest with everything already in it, and jumped into the driver’s seat. His Gunner was already loading a TOW missile into the launcher. Someone had taken the liberty of grabbing 5 LAWS rockets for each vehicle as well. As soon as he was seated and the gunner strapped in, he hit the gas and floored the Hummer. Over smooth terrain, the Hummer could easily do 60mph, so Jake decided that speed was better than security right now, and went hauling down I-45 south like the Devil himself were chasing him. He arrived at the intersection of I-45 and Route 7 90 minutes later, turned east, and floored the Hummer again. He almost missed the turn to Route 1119 he was going so fast, but he made it- barely. With his gunner hanging on for dear life, he made the turn - on two wheels. The Hummers behind him, being forewarned, made a much safer turn, and hurried up to catch Jake, who was over 100 yards ahead. Jake got on the radio. “Little Beaver, this is the Joint, just turned south on 1119.”

“Go about 5 miles south, and you’ll see the ranch sign on your left - it’s a big huge cast iron sign spanning the ranch road.”

Two minutes later Jake saw the sign.

“Turning left now - were are you?”

“We’re all in the ranch house directly in front of you, about a mile up the road. All the Dirtbags are in the brush to the right of you.”

“Attention All Hummers, the dirtbags are in the brush to the right of the house directly in front of you. All friendlies are in the house. Defilade right, and engage at will. The gunners of the Hummers all popped out of their roof hatches, and cycled the actions of their Ma Deuces. Jake’s gunner elected to grab the 5 LAWS rockets they bought with them since the dirtbags didn’t have any armor worth using the TOW on. The 50s opened up full auto as soon as they spotted the muzzle flashes of the dirtbags guns. The noise was deafening, but the results were telling. The BMG 50 rounds destroyed the brush around the dirtbags, and blew several of them to bits with direct hits. Jake’s gunner took advantage of the situation and fired a single LAW rocket into the center of the group, which had the effect of a very large grenade. Every dirtbag was seriously wounded, and most of them were dead between the Ma Deuces and the LAW rocket. The ranchers took care of the rest, and anyone that moved outside the ranch house got a bullet in the head.

Jake pulled the Hummers up between the ranch house and the dirtbags. Since they had the ballistic Hummers, they could effectively block any fire from hitting the ranch house. Jake ran over to the dirtbags, to make sure they were all dead. The ranchers were good shots, and they were all dead with a single gunshot to the head. Once he was sure the threat was over, he yelled at the house “All Clear!” and a single rancher came out to meet him. “Mister, I don’t know who you are, but you saved almost 200 people’s lives, and 1/3 of them are kin to me!”

Jake introduced himself. “Hi, My name’s Jake. I’m from a group living in what once was the Hutchins State Jail. We’re survivors from Downtown Dallas. Sam, one of our other leaders, found a bomb shelter years ago, and when the balloon went up, about 50 of us followed him, and we survived. After it cooled off 90 days later, we needed to relocate so we could survive long-term, and Sam remembered the Jail about 20 miles south of town. We liberated it from a bunch of dirtbags who were keeping some Hobos as slaves, and the hobos joined us. We raided the 49th Mech’s National Guard armory in Fort Worth for all the hardware you see, plus a bunch more, and proceeded to strip downtown Dallas of anything usable. We fought off an attack a couple of months ago by some dirtbags and the losers we kicked out, and we are in the process of rebuilding.”

“Glad you talk so fast Jake, otherwise I doubt you could have got that all out in one breath! My name’s John McGuire, and I own the Little Beaver Creek Ranch. We’ve got a small ranch, just over 10,000 acres. We had several hundred head of cattle until those dirtbags started shooting them. They tried to ambush us, but my Ranch Manager Jose (God rest his soul) sacrificed himself and blew their plan, giving us enough time to get everyone under cover. It’s a might crowded in there, even with all the women and children in the basement. So what are your plans?”

“Ok if I call you John? Ok - we have a highly defensible space and advanced weapons at the Joint, as we call it. We have enough food and supplies on hand for at least 20 years, and we haven’t finished scavenging downtown Dallas, not to mention Fort Worth! What we are lacking are families, and women of child bearing age. We have plenty of women, it’s just that most of them are in their 30’s and 40’s, so it makes it difficult to sustain a population without in-breeding. If you care to join us, we can offer food, shelter, protection, and a chance at the future. We won’t force you to, we only wanted to ask you!”

“Jake, like I said, you’re an answer to a prayer. We are running out of food, barely have enough hay left for the cattle we have, and we are way short on transportation to relocate. We don’t have any medicines, although we have a Veterinarian and a nurse with us.”

“John, we have all the medicines you need, we don’t have a doc, so your Vet will be a big help! We’ve got enough transportation to move everything you need, and like I said, we have a 20 plus year supply of food on hand, over 100,000 gallons of diesel, and a huge supply of stuff we raided from the commercial district warehouses in Dallas. How many head of cattle do you have?”

We've got about 20 head in the barn, and enough hay and feed to last the winter. We've got 1 bull and 5 pregnant cows, and 5 cow/calf combos."

"Great, do you have any cattle haulers?"

"I've got several haulers, just don't have enough diesel to make the trip."

"If you want to join us, I can get on the radio and have enough diesel and tractor-trailers down here to haul everything you own back to the Joint in a day or so."

"OK, Jake, care if I talk this over with the rest of the families. Just wait here, and I'll be right back!"

15 minutes later, John came back and shook Jake's hand, "Mr. You've got a deal! We wouldn't last more than a year or two, and my older daughters weren't too happy about the pickings around here for potential husbands."

Jake walked over to the Hummer to give Jake the good news. Sam had a surprise for Jake! He figured they would say yes after he was gone so long without word, and sent the rest of the Hummers, and all the tractor trailers and a small fuel truck down to them about an hour ago. Jake thanked Sam, and gave John the good news that the convoy was already rolling an hour ago, and should be here in another hour. John thanked Jake, turned and walked quickly back into the house yelling, "Hurry up and pack, they're going to be here in an hour!"

Jake and the rest of the recon team helped where they could, and in the process, met quite a few of the people in John's group. Several of John's older daughters were in their late 20's and early 30's. One of them was a dead-ringer for Daisy Duke of "The Dukes of Hazzard" and she had eyes for Jake! Jake didn't know how to handle the extra attention, but luckily was too busy to worry about it right now! An hour later, the twin blasts of diesel air horns alerted everyone that the convoy was there. Jake had parked their Hummers out of the way, and John directed the tractor/trailers where to park. The fuel tanker was directed to the barn, and he filled the tanks of all the equipment in there, including some very nice farming equipment. Then the lowboy trailers drove up to the barn, and John's people drove the tractors and other equipment onto the lowboys like they had done it all their lives (They had) and chained them down. The tractor/trailers with the cattle transporters pulled up to the cattle loading gate, and they carefully loaded the cattle into 2 trailers, segregating the pregnant cows and the cow/calf combos from the bull and the heifers. Evidently the dirtbags had gotten all the steers - no great loss since they didn't need the meat, but the fresh milk would be nice! The tractor/trailer combos with the enclosed trailers were quickly filled with the household goods from the ranch houses, and acted like moving vans. Meanwhile, the tanker topped off all the vehicles from the Joint to lighten its load. The tanker could go much faster with an empty tank than a full tank! With all the help, everything was soon loaded, and the ranchers said goodbye to their old homes, and loaded into the Hummers and any other vehicles they had. Most of the ranchers had diesel pickups, so all

they needed was to be refilled with diesel, and some needed to be jump started. By 5:00 pm, they were all loaded, and Jake took the lead again in the TOW armed Hummer, with a Ma Deuce armed Hummer right behind, and another armed Hummer as tail-end Charlie. The rest of the armed Hummers were interspersed with the convoy vehicles. They met with no resistance, and were back to the Joint shortly after dark. Everyone helped unload, so they took the rest of the evening to unload, then met in the dining room for a late dinner. The kitchen staff made a nice late supper, and everyone was assigned rooms, and soon were fast asleep.

The next morning, John met with Jake, Sam and Slappy. He knew Jake, so Sam and Slappy introduced themselves. John chuckled at Slappy's name, so Slappy explained that the hobos, or bo's as they described themselves, never used their real names, so he has been known as Slappy for the last 20 years. He didn't even remember his real name, and frankly didn't care. John understood, and apologized for laughing. Slappy said that was OK, he chose Slappy because it reminded him of a clown at a circus he once saw as a kid. John handed Jake a list of everyone in his group, their ages and marital status. Out of the 50 men and women, 30 were married to each other with an average of 3-4 kids each, and the other 20 included 15 single women over 18, 3 of which were John's daughters. Of the "kids" 60 were girls and 40 were boys, and 10 of the girls were over 16, and the rest were teenagers. Most of the boys were between 13 and 18 as well. Some of the women Jake had seen were obviously pregnant, and the rest were still of childbearing age. All in all, they had greatly improved their odds of surviving. Sam asked John if he were in charge of his group. John said, "well 1/3 are kin, and the rest are neighbors. I've been running stuff since the day after the "big bang" as we called it."

"How did you guys survive?"

"I had a huge abandoned mine on my property, and I had stockpiled food, water, guns and stuff in there for over 50 years, so you can imagine I had quite a stash. It was an open secret around town, but unfortunately, not everyone made it there quick enough, I lost a lot of friends from the other side of town that day. I hope they died quickly. We just barely survived the 90 days we needed to stay indoors due to fallout. I'd forgot a Geiger counter, but knew from the CD manuals that 90 days should be enough for how far we were out. It turns out we could have came out after 30 days since we were 100 miles south of the blast, and the winds are from the west around here. Most of the cattle survived, and we gathered them up and corralled them. None of them seemed worse for the wear, so we let them back out. I guess we got lucky, and were home when the blast hit, instead of shopping at the Farmer's Market that day with the rest of the people in town."

"John, of the 2/3 that aren't Kin, how closely related to you or each other are they?"

"Most of the people in town originally moved from Dallas in the 1930's during the depression, so they aren't any closer than 2nd or 3rd Cousins. I don't think any of them are directly related to each other, and most families married outside their relatives - This isn't Tennessee you know!"

“Great, that answers my next question and solves a very sticky problem. I was afraid that we wouldn’t be able to have monogamous relationships since there were so few females before, now with your group who are sufficiently out bred to minimize inbreeding, I think it would be OK to let people maintain monogamous relationships.”

“Hold on their buster! I didn’t sign up for no danged Commune!”

Sam spoke up “Hold on a second John - that’s NOT what Jake said! He was worried about that BEFORE you guys showed up - your group solves the inbreeding problem! We didn’t WANT to do that, but it might have been necessary if we were the only survivors in the area.”

“OK, sorry Sam, it’s just we’re a bunch of God-Fearing Christians, and I wouldn’t approve of what you were talking about! I’m a Baptist Minister, and couldn’t allow something like that, even if it meant our survival. Now I see we were both meant to meet each other and help each other - this prevents you from contemplating something I think is evil, and we need your protection and supplies! Thank God!”

Sam spoke up, “John, you’re a Minister - would you mind marrying Me and Janet?”

“Are you both Christians?”

“I don’t know, a year ago, I was a drunken Bum! I’ve been going to AA meetings, and have decided I need God, but I don’t know anything about Christianity!”

“Jake, if you’ve got the time, I’ve got the answers, or at least some of them. Besides, I insist on pre-marriage counseling anyway!”

“OK, let me ask Janet - I’d much rather get married by a minister anyway.”

With that, the meeting broke up.

Chapter 14

Improvements

John looked over their operation, and noticed they were missing irrigation for the crops. He mentioned that to Jake, and Jake said they had used a water truck to haul water from the lake and then flood the fields. John laughed and told Jake he had a much easier way. Also he noticed they had a fenced grazing area, but no stock tanks or windmills to pump water to fill them. Jake smacked his forehead, and asked John what they could do about that.

“Just so happens there are a bunch of ranchers in Centerville that don’t need their windmills, stock tanks or anything anymore. Matter of fact, they don’t need their herds. I know some of them have huge cattle haulers, so if you want to make another run to Centerville, we can grab some windmills, stock tanks, cattle, and hay all at once!”

“How many head of cattle do you think we can handle?”

”With all the hay laying around, and if we plant hay in the fields you aren’t using for food and grab the irrigation equipment, we could have almost 100 head of cattle on this little spread, since you don’t need to range feed them. They can eat the grass all summer, and hay all winter, besides; I know were there is a hay and feed store in Dallas you probably missed.”

“I guess this means our truckers are going to be busy for a while?”

“Yup, also we need a crane to remove the windmills and pull the pipes. Good thing I have a drilling rig at the ranch!”

“OK John, make a list of all the stuff you’re going to need for this trip and I’ll get it arranged.”

An hour later, John gave Jake the list, and 15 minutes later, everything was loaded up and ready to go. They always had one light crane loaded on a lowboy, since the towers didn’t weight hardly anything; John thought it could handle it. Everyone who was going on the “scavenger hunt” loaded up and convoyed to Centerville. Since John knew everyone, he knew who had survived and who didn’t, and basically who had what. For the next week, they went from ranch to ranch, taking everything they needed back to the Joint. At the end of the week, they had 100 head of cattle, 10 bulls in separate enclosures, 15 windmills and stock tanks, as well as all the pipes, pumps and plumbing to pump the lake water for irrigation instead of using the water truck. They ran another line to the water tower inside the Joint, saving someone from having to fill it up daily. They still were no way near taxing the output of the diesel generators they had liberated from the National Guard armory.

John found 4 half-starved Australian Shepherds at his friend's ranch. For some reason they were left behind when they went into town on that fateful day. John figured they found a bag of dog food to tide them over for a while, or they would have been dead like the rest of the ranch dogs he found. John found a bunch of cans of dog food, opened them and dumped the contents into the dog's bowls and filled their water. They were very wary of John, while they knew him, he wasn't their "master". Finally the food worked, and their stomachs out-voted their hearts. John sat there and let them eat, giving each of them as much food as they could eat. Finally, the oldest dog walked over to John, and sniffed his hand. When they were done eating, John whistled at them, opened the door of his pickup truck and got in. All 4 dogs leapt into the back of his pickup just like they used to do. When they got to the Joint, they were apprehensive until they spotted the cattle - now that was something they knew about. As soon as John stopped the truck, they jumped down and ran over to the cattle and sat down like they were ready to go to work! John let them work the cattle for a while until they were feeling at home, then told them to stay. They kept watch on the cattle, and passed the day.

Meanwhile, Jake and everyone at the Joint pitched in digging the wells and installing the stock tanks for the cattle. Truckloads of hay kept arriving, and soon it was apparent they would need a huge pole barn. John had already thought of that, and had the scavengers dismantle one of the biggest pole barns in the area and truck it back over to the Joint. With the help of the big cranes, it went up faster than it came down, and soon there was enough room for all the hay under cover to keep it clean and dry. By the time they were finished, John told Jake that they had enough hay to feed the herd for almost a year, and he knew more was in Dallas. Jake asked about horses, and John almost slapped himself. They forgot to get the other livestock they were so busy with cattle! He knew of a working egg ranch not far from his place, and he knew a pig farmer, and someone who raised riding and working horses. John hoped some of the animals were still alive. They took off the next day, and rounded up the survivors. 1/3 of the animals had survived, but it was enough. The hogs were looking mighty skinny, but they'd fatten up quick on the leftovers from the kitchen. Some of the horses had to be put down, and some were too skittish to use, so they were let go to run wild and take their chances. The egg ranch was a mess, and they had to put their gas masks on to stand the stench of dying birds. Out of the thousands of birds, there were maybe 200 healthy birds left. They were put in cages and trucked back to the Joint, where they were released into a large chicken coop they made just for them. All in all, John thought they did pretty well with 20 riding and 10 working horses, 20 hogs, 5 pregnant sows and 20 pigs.

John told Jake they would need horse feed, and that they had to make a run to Dallas. This convoy was sent with a heavy escort of all their Hummers. They came back later with several tractor-trailers full of feed, and a bunch more where that came from. Jake asked John the best way to get it. John told him the feed grain was in huge silos near the railroad tracks, and that there were several railcars loaded with feed that were just sitting there. Hearing that, Jake asked Slappy to have his "engineers" run their railroad over to the feed store and grab some railcars full of feed. John went with them to point them out. Jake was amazed that no one else had thought of the railroad, then he realized they were probably the only people left alive in this

part of the state! Jake asked John if there was anything he had forgotten. Might as well get it now before someone else beat them to it, or it rotted. John said they needed Medical supplies, and the Vet could make a list for them, and where to get it. The next day, the Vet went with the scavenging crews as they liberated medical supplies from every medical supply company in Dallas. They brought the refrigeration units to keep the medicines that had to be refrigerated cold. They also grabbed every medical kit in inventory including bandages, surgical kits, and everything. They even took portable X-ray machines and other portable equipment from the local hospital. They encountered dead bodies wherever they went, so they routinely wore gas masks during their scavenging runs. They figured there wasn't anyone else in Dallas that would need it! John had raided the Feed store for all the vet meds they would need, so they were set! Jake was still troubled that they hadn't come up with any Solar panels or anything - the generators would give out eventually! He wouldn't be alive then, but he wanted to leave as bright a future as possible.

Later that month Sam and Janet were married. John married them in a building they had built and dedicated as a Chapel. It was used by all denominations even though they didn't have ordained ministers. The Sunday service was a Baptist service done by John, and other denominations met for bible study during the week. After months of counseling, Sam gave his life to Christ, and was baptized a Baptist by John. Janet turned out to be already a Baptist, but hadn't gone to church in years since her divorce. John told her that God forgave her, and she would be welcome at services if she wanted to come back. Janet and Sam were married as Baptists, which made John really happy. John's daughter Samantha, the one who looked like Daisy Duke, kept after Jake, who tried his best to keep things cool - he was almost 10 years older than her, and already had a wife and family. John took Jake aside and explained that he HAD a family, the truth was they probably died in the blast since they lived too close to Dallas, and on the east side of town. Jake finally accepted the deaths of his wife and kids, and Samantha finally got her man! 6 months later, they were married too. Sam and Janet were too old for kids, but Samantha managed to get pregnant on her wedding night!

Most of the married women were pregnant within the first year after they relocated to the Joint, since John heavily emphasized the "Be Fruitful and Multiply" part. He explained that each family had to have a minimum of 4 kids to increase the population and give the people a chance at survival. Most of the girls were married by their 18th birthday. Baby showers were so common an event, that they started scheduling group showers once a month. All in all, everything was going well for The Joint. Jake just prayed that it wasn't the Calm before the Storm.

Chapter 15

Born to be Wild

For the next couple of years peace reigned in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The population of The Joint was growing rapidly due to all the births. They sent scavenging teams out further and further afield to gather stuff that would have just gone to waste. John was in charge of the Southern Contingent, and Jake was in charge of the Northern Contingent. Everyone not involved in scavenging was either tending the livestock, or the garden, or responsible for the security of The Joint. Jake, Sam, Slappy and John put their heads together, and came up with some more ideas to help defend the Joint. They had located stocks of Black powder and cast iron gas pipe, and found a roll of cannon fuse. The welding shop quickly made cannons out of them. They were built into the front face of the upgraded and reinforced bunkers, which now had flaps for gun ports instead of permanent openings. They were built in case the attackers got inside the minimum range of the artillery as a last-ditch defensive measure.

They didn't want to use Claymores because they had to be exposed to work, and there was the risk of back-blast. 3 of each of these cannons were dug into each bunker and well hidden. The defenders only needed to light the fuses, and 3 seconds later, the cannons would fire a huge charge of shrapnel directly in front of them. They used all the rusted nuts, bolts, and nails they couldn't use for anything else as the shrapnel load for the cannons. Each cannon contained a large coffee can full of shrapnel. Jake figured it would work better than the beehive rounds Sam was whining for. Jake said the beehives wouldn't work since they sited the 105mm Howitzers in the center of the compound, and 3 buildings were in the line of fire if they lowered the barrels all the way down. As is, they couldn't shoot closer than a mile away, or further than 5. Besides, the Bradleys and M-113's could take care of any in-close danger. The GE Minigun on the one M-113 was so devastating in the last battle that it caused almost 1/3 of the enemy casualties.

Another idea was to build an improvised radio DF system using 2 military radios and a set of highly directional antennas built into 2 towers separated by almost a mile. They tried them out, and they could locate a transmission close enough to target it with an artillery barrage, then they duplicated the setup on the other side of the compound. They now had 4 radio DF receivers set up, and if they were attacked again, and the enemy used radios, they would regret that mistake if they lived long enough. The antennas were set up on bearing tables that they could read a precision bearing from, and transfer the information back to the fire control station at the security office. They would quickly plot the intercept, and then call the 105mm battery with a fire mission. Ordinarily, Jim ran his own show, but in this case, the extra step was needed since Jim would be too busy shooting to coordinate 3 DF bearings and estimate true range and bearing from the guns. The trick was that the phone circuit worked both ways - the Radio shack could alert the towers to tune to a frequency, then when they had it located, they would call back bearing and relative strength.

Samantha was pregnant with their second child, and Jake had gotten used to being a father

again. Most of the other couples had at least 4 kids, and some were trying to break a record! John reminded them that it was “Be Fruitful and Multiply” Not “Be Fruitful and Logarithmic Progression!”

One day, the Northern scavenging contingent heard an unfamiliar noise. Jake immediately recognized it as the roar of a Harley Davidson running straight pipes. It sounded like a lot of them! Thinking fast, Jake ordered a recall of the Northern Contingent back to The Joint. On the way back, he stopped and pulled a handbill off a telephone post.

“This in the Territory of The Sons of Satan. Tribute is demanded of anyone living here. Resistance is Futile!”

“Now where have I heard that line before? They must be a motorcycle gang full of Trekkies! “Beam Me Up Scottie!” Even still, we need to take this seriously - I’ll head back to The Joint and talk to Sam, Slappy and John.”

Later that evening, Jake showed Sam, Slappy and John the handbill. It was crudely printed, and there were misspellings. Obviously they weren’t dealing with Rocket Scientists either. But then again, they only need to be dangerous, not geniuses to cause the Joint a world of grief. Everyone had taken to calling Jake, Sam, Slappy and John The Bosses to make things easier for everyone. The Bosses decided to stop all foraging, recall the teams, and pull in the outlying farmers who were out of artillery range. They still had plenty of food, so it wasn’t worth risking anyone’s lives over. Jake had an idea to send out a recon team using the Hummers to get within a mile or two, stash them in a commercial building, and proceed on foot into the city center, and locate the motorcycle gang, assess it’s strength and how well they were armed. One of the guys volunteered to go in undercover, seems he used to be an outlaw biker at one time, and had one heck of a rep. Jake vetoed that idea, since they might have to make a preemptive strike, and there would be no way to warn him. Although he was welcome to come along with the rest of the recon team and identify any of the players he might recognize.

They loaded 2 of the Hummers up with enough gear for a 4-man team for 2 weeks, and an extended firefight, then took off at first light. They hid the Hummers in an old abandoned commercial building on the southern edge of Dallas, as far away from the center of the probable line of advance of the biker gang as they could without walking too far. Everyone put on their combination Level IV vest with chicken plates and LBV, clipped on their largest raid packs to the back, and clipped their pistol belts to the bottom. They then walked quietly and carefully out of the building after making sure the coast was clear. They walked towards the center of town, following the noise of the motorcycles. When they thought they were close enough, they climbed the stairs of a 10-story building, avoiding the remains of the previous occupants. They had seen so many dead bodies by now that it didn’t even faze them anymore. On the 8th floor, they walked, then crawled to the window, and looked down on a scene from Dante’s Inferno. There were hundreds of Bikers dancing around a huge bonfire and there was what appeared to be a woman tied to a stake in the center of it.

Jake lost it “My God, they’re burning her at the stake!”

Steve immediately tried to settle Jake down to keep him from doing something rash. “Jake, there isn’t a damn thing we can do about it now, but remember this in case we get a chance at payback later!”

As the father of one beautiful girl, and the husband of another, he had a hard time watching the spectacle of a woman burning to death. Then he noticed the cases of liquor, and figured they raided liquor warehouses. They were going to be bummed when they realized that the drug warehouses and anything useful had been stripped clean. Seeing this madness made Jake swear to burn the rest of the liquor warehouses to the ground.

The dirtbags seemed to have a large stockpile of AK-47’s but no heavy weapons were obviously lying around. Jake had to assume they were available, just hidden or stored.

“Steve, you know one LAWS rocket into the center of that group could have ruined their whole day!”

“Yeah Jake, and given our position away to any survivors! There are only 4 of us - to attack them now would be suicidal!”

They spent the rest of the night observing the comings and goings. The party broke up at dawn, and this was what they were waiting for - they wanted to see where the dirtbags would hole up for the day to sleep off their hangovers. From where they were, they easily spotted the lair of the dirtbags. Jake wished they had an Air Force to bomb the SOBs, or an Abrams tank to drive in there and blow them to kingdom come. They did however have several AT-4 anti-tank rockets that would collapse the building around them. Jake told the team of his idea, and they agreed easily after seeing that woman die the way she did!

They got back to their Hummer, and drove to The Joint. The other Bosses paled at Jake’s description of the scene they were forced to watch. John appeared Ill, and then he got Mad!

“Damn those Demon Bastards to Hell! I wish I could go with you and fire one of those rockets personally!”

The other 3 Bosses were taken aback at the vehemence of his response. When he calmed down a little, he explained his sister was kidnapped by a biker gang and gang raped to death almost 50 years ago. It still drove him insane to think about it! Jake thought about giving John a chance at payback, only to see Sam’s expression, and realized that a Minister had no business at this payback party. The guilt would be overwhelming when he realized he let his anger get the better of him, so Jake didn’t say anything. They had a dozen AT-4 rocket launchers, so Jake took 4 and a dozen LAWS rockets in case they needed them to finish the job, and headed out the next morning.

Jake met a very pregnant Samantha before he left. “Jake, I heard what they did to that woman from my father! Make sure you get every last one of those bastards so they can never harm another woman - You hear me Jake!”

Jake was surprised at her reaction, then told her not to worry - he’d make sure they got every last one of those bastards. He still had the image of the woman burning at the stake, screaming an inhuman wail of pain, which he heard even through the thick glass almost 10 stories up. Jake promised that woman she would be avenged - Her and all the other innocent women they had viscously murdered throughout the years!

They geared up, and loaded up. Since this was an attack mission, they traded their LRRP packs for their raid packs which were full of various nefarious devices designed to make the payback to the Sons of Satan a prelude to Hell!

They arrived quietly later that morning, and parked in a different commercial building. By the time they got there, the party was well in progress. This time the festivities included gang rapes instead of burning at the stake, but it still turned Jake’s stomach, and set his resolve to send the Sons of Satan straight to Hell.

They walked over to another building that had line of sight on their hangout, and set up 4 shooting perches for the AT-4’s. The windows were blown out on this building which made their jobs easier. They put 1 shooter in each room to prevent backblast injuries from the AT-4 rocket, and left the doors open to vent the blast wave into the rest of the building. During the rest of the party, Jake carefully set various nefarious devices, and waited for the party to break up around daybreak. Once all the Sons of Satan were bedded down for the day, the Real Party Started. All the gunners got in position, and Jake started the party with a single rifle shot into the building. He wanted to make sure the SOBs were wide awake for their trip to Hell! The gunners ripple fired their AT-4s into the building, turning it into a pile of rubble. One or two Sons of Satan struggled out of the building and went to their Choppers. Bad move! As soon as they were all mounted, and trying to start their mounts, Jake touched the button on a remote detonator, and several of the bikes blew up from a charge of C-4 stuck under the tanks. Some of the Sons of Satan weren’t blown up by the explosion, but died nonetheless when the flaming gasoline ignited their clothes and skin, and they were barbecued.

“Justice - Crispy or Extra Crispy!” was the only thing Steve heard Jake say

Later when they were mopping up, Steve walked up to Jake. “Jake, remind me never to Kiss you off! You’re really mean when you’re mad!”

Jake laughed and punched Steve in the Shoulder. They checked out what was left of the Sons of Satan’s lair and found a stockpile of weapons, food, booze, drugs, and 2 Russian BMP’s. Jake wondered where they got those! Since they didn’t have the ammo for them at the Joint, Steve wired the whole garage to blow, backed off a safe distance, and blew the rest of the building sky

high, creating a funeral pyre for the Sons of Satan when the gasoline and alcohol fire caught the rest of the building on fire. Steve secretly hoped some of the SOBs were still alive in there to get burned to death!

They packed up and returned to the Joint. Samantha saw the look on Jake's face and knew that no one from The Son's of Satan would ever hurt another woman again, and gave him as big of a hug as her very pregnant belly would allow!

Chapter 16

Scavenging with a Vengeance

After the defeat and destruction of the Sons of Satan, the Scavengers had a new mission: Destroy all the Liquor wholesale warehouses after having cleared the surrounding block of anything useful. This included all liquor stores, etc. The scavengers were going to be busy! Slappy's crew knew every liquor store was in Dallas, and they quickly located the warehouses as well. After removing anything useful, they torched the building, often taking the whole block with it - "Just call it Urban Renewal" said John. As a Baptist Minister, he was all for the latest assignment of the scavengers. As they cleared out the neighborhood, they threw a Molotov Cocktail into the building, and let it burn. It also solved the problem of disposing of the dead bodies that were rotting in the buildings. They found tons of usable stuff, and soon had to build extra storage buildings at the jail. They found more weapons and ammo than they knew what to do with, but instead of destroying it in place, they made up large caches of the extra guns and ammo, and built waterproof underground bunkers with guns, ammo and supplies just in case they were forced out of the Joint. Life had settled down to a monotonous contentment, but no one was complaining, since the alternative was usually death and destruction. The radio watch continued to hear long-distance communications, but nothing local.

John's Southern contingent of scavengers were the next ones to make contact. They found a small band of survivors in Crockett, TX. They had all they needed, except they were sorely lacking automatic weapons, and long distance communication. Their leader was a well-known minister, so John offered to help them out. The Bosses had a powwow, and agreed to give them whatever they needed, as long as they had surplus to give. The next day a convoy full of 18-wheelers drove down to Crockett and delivered a cache of AK-47's with 10,000 rounds of 7.62x39 ammo, a Military radio with DX capabilities, and a long list of other stuff they needed. A friendship grew between the two groups, and several years later, they started intermarrying. It seemed the Human race would survive after all! John kept looking for other groups, and slowly found small pockets of survivors in Southeastern Texas. All in all, they had between 1 and 3 thousand survivors in that part of Texas. John had no willingness to go west of I-35 into Waco (or Wacko as he called it!) and search for survivors, since he didn't get along with those people before. Western Texas was basically on its own. The Joint continued to provide surplus supplies and equipment from their huge stocks to any surviving groups they found. They all had military radios by now, and were able to communicate and get mutual aid and support. They found a few country doctors among the survivors, and John made sure they were well provided for since they might need their services later. Jake delivered huge tankers full of diesel to anyone who needed it out of the Armory's vast storage tanks. They had located a tractor-trailer full of 55-gallon drums of Pri-d, so they didn't have any problems with long-term storage. They started sharing bulls with ranchers that had cows, but not enough bulls. This made the bulls very happy, and tired!

Finally Samantha had her baby. He was a 10lb 8 oz boy who everyone said looked just like Jake. They named him Joshua. Sam found a box of cigars, and John looked the other way while the men celebrated the birth of Jake's son. Common sense had broken out at the Joint, and fewer and fewer families had more than 6 children. The average continued to be 4 children, since there was no TV or radio to keep them entertained. They spent their days working hard, and slept well at night. All kinds of ideas were tried like worm farming and aquaculture. Some succeeded, and some failed, but they kept trying. The most successful projects involved their greenhouses and worm farming experiments. With the plastic sheeting greenhouses, they were able to grow almost year round, and the worm farm provided much needed fertilizer, chicken feed, and rich humus soil to plant vegetable gardens in. When the worms died, their carcasses were dried and pelletized and fed to the chickens as a much-needed source of protein. They were reproducing so fast that they easily kept up with the mortality rate, and were making literally hundreds of pounds of humus per month. Their aquaculture experiment was a failure since they couldn't regulate the temperature and pH of the water well enough. They didn't know how to do it right, so the project was put on the back burner until they could find a hardier species to aquaculture. They located small quantities of solar panels, controllers and battery banks, but not in the quantities they needed. Jake theorized that they were manufactured in the Midwest and west coast, and they didn't need them that bad! As they found smaller National Guard Armories, they donated extra Hummers, APCs and any other vehicles or ammo they considered surplus to the surrounding groups. They were unable to locate any more Bradleys or 105mm howitzers, but they did find some more ammo at some of the NG units. That was a real head-scratcher, since they had the ammo, but no guns to fire it! Jake was now wishing they had taken more of the Bradleys instead of burning them.

According to the radio, the US was slowly pulling itself together, but anarchy still reigned, especially in the big cities that managed to avoid getting blown to bits by nuclear bombs. The situation in some cities was grim, with mass starvation the rule rather than the exception. The citizens of the Joint felt grateful they were where they were, and that gratitude was expressed in a religious revival. By default, most of the members of the Joint were practicing Baptists, since the other denominations slowly fell apart and were absorbed by the Baptists. Sam and Jake had converted years ago, and Slappy went occasionally.

Word the Bosses were hearing about Warlords to the west was unsettling to say the least. They didn't know how far west, since they never went west of I-35 to find out! They talked and talked, then talked some more about what to do, but there were no easy solutions, and any course of action could result in casualties or fatalities. Sam just hoped they would ignore them since they were so close to Dallas, and everyone knew Dallas was blown to bits. Jake wasn't such an optimist, and voted for sending a recon team west to find out. Slappy sided with Sam and Jake, and John wanted no part of a war.

Chapter 17

The Anti-Christ

Sam Ragland was a 54 year old Televangelist from Texas. Twice indicted for Tax Evasion but never convicted. Rumored holed up with 5,000 converts in his 50,000 acre Ballinger TX compound. Of the 5 thousand, 500 hard core members form "The Army of God".

Ragland practiced "Self-Revelation" and based his theology on whatever "God" told him to do, including having sexual relations with every woman in the compound over 13. Several families left shortly after this announcement, but a large majority bought his Snake Oil, or didn't have the balls to refuse Sam Ragland's desires for their wives and daughters. Interestingly, he didn't desire everyone's wives, just the stunningly beautiful younger ones. He did have sex with every girl over 13. It seemed Ragland was a closet pedophile. For years after TEOTWAWKI, Sam authorized the "Army of God" to loot, rape, rob and pillage all the "Heathens" outside his compound. Unfortunately for the people outside his compound, he had the same idea as the people from the Joint, and looted a NG armory. While he didn't get as good or as much equipment as The Joint did, their superior firepower more than made up for their fundamental lack of tactics. They converted Jeeps and Hummers to machine gun vehicles by mounting old M -60 7.62mm machine guns on pintle mounts, like the SAS did in WWII in the African desert.

Unfortunately for the people of The Joint, Ragland's group was less than 200 miles WSW from them, which turned out to be too close for comfort. They heard one of their transmissions from Fort Worth TX. Someone forgot to turn the power down on the radio, and the radio call came through loud and clear. Ragland, being the Greedy SOB he was, lusted after all their supplies, and their women and children. He convinced the Army of God's leader that The Joint was a bunch of Heathens that needed to be eradicated.

Karl Kloss was the head of The Army of God, and as big of a pervert as his boss, but his perversion was a well-kept secret. His perversion was very young boys, and he limited himself to "heathens" that they captured. The rest of the Army of God didn't say anything, they were too busy raping and killing to care. Kloss was once a supply clerk at the San Antonio National Guard depot, until his CO caught him stealing weapons and ammo. He ran into Sam Ragland a few years later, and talked his way into becoming the head of Sam's Army of God. Actually he was such a brown-noser that Sam had the choice of giving him the job, or listening to him suck up to him for the next 20 years. The radio traffic at The Joint wasn't encrypted, so Karl was able to listen in, and found out they were just south of Dallas, and they had huge stockpiles of supplies, and over 100 families. When Karl told Sam, they both lusted after what The Joint had. Sam told Karl to Destroy the Heathens. What he meant was to kill the men, capture the women and children, and bring all the supplies back to his compound. Being the supreme tactical idiot he was, Karl ordered the Army of God into the Jeeps and Hummers to attack The Joint at first light the next day without doing any recon. That mistake would prove costly.

The next morning, the Northwest Guard tower spotted a cloud of dust moving in from the North, checked to see if any convoys were due in, and when he found out that no one was out yet today, sounded the alarm. 5 minutes later, the entire Joint was at Battle Stations. The Hummers, Bradleys and M-113s were warming up in the garage, but they had yet to deploy them. As they got closer, the guard tower reported music from the convoy. "Onward Christian Soldiers" was the song he thought he heard. He was about to call off the alert when the radio blared a surrender demand. Karl sounded like a chicken on speed, so he had to repeat himself several times. When he mentioned Sam Ragland's name, John went ballistic! "Jake - they're NOT what they claim to be, Sam was kicked out of the ministry years ago for various offenses. Last I heard of him, he had a huge compound in Ballinger, and had over 5,000 converts staying with him. This guy's a snake - if they're armed, they aren't here to sell Girl Scout Cookies. I highly recommend we strike first!"

Jake got on the telephone to the 105 Howitzer battery, "Target the convoy as they come into range, Fire at will!" With that order, Jim sprang into action, ordered all 3 guns trained on the azimuth the guard tower gave him, and set for maximum range. He had them all load HE rounds with VT fuses. The convoy must have been run by an idiot, since they were driving right down the road, and making themselves an easy target. As soon as the guard tower radioed that the convoy was in range, Jim gave the order to fire, and as soon as the front of the convoy blew sky high, including the jeep Karl was driving in, the gun battery received the command "Target, Fire for Effect" and the battery went into hyperdrive to get as many rounds on the target before they bugged out. One jeep survived the barrage, and amazingly kept coming. When it got within range of the tower's Ma Deuce, he engaged the jeep with a short burst that shredded the Jeep and blew it up.

Jake, John, Sam and Slappy had a powwow right after the attack was over, and decided that Sam Ragland needed to go. Jake wanted a hurry-up mission, but Sam and Slappy pointed out that a recon team would be a better idea, since not doing any recon of the Joint proved to be the undoing of The Army of God. Besides, Sam wouldn't be expecting them back for at least a week. Matter of fact, they could make that work for them, if Sam thought the Attacking force was his raiders returning from a successful raid. Jake remembered one of the guard towers reporting hearing "Onward Christian Soldiers" blaring from a loudspeaker as the convoy approached. John said that was Sam's trademark song when he used to be on the air as a televangelist. Jake had an evil idea to do a "Trojan horse" attack and make Sam think they were his raiders returning triumphantly. He asked John if he had a tape with that song on it. John grumbled and groused until the light bulb went on! "You Devious SOB! I think that just might work - we better keep the heavy artillery hidden until the Hummers are close enough to take out the guard shacks." Jake had an even better idea. "John, do you think some of the members of the compound might recognize your voice, or at least identify you as a Preacher?"

"What did you have in mind?"

"Just a little Psyops tactic to separate Sam Ragland from his flock, and save some people that

might be worth saving. If you got on the radio, could you convince some or most of his Converts not to attack us? We'd have to defend ourselves, but there must be at least 500 people out of those 5000 that are worth saving."

"Jake, I think I know what you want, give me a day to prepare a sermon that will get their attention!"

"OK, John, it will take at least a day or two for the Recon team to scout the camp and evaluate the situation. I wonder how they found out about us?" Jake thought someone might have had a radio set on High power, and sure enough, one of the Hummer radios had the power set to HIGH. Jake put out an order for all radios to be set on LOW and the power switch duct taped in that position. He wasn't going to let that happen again!

The next morning, the Recon team took off with 2 armed Hummers. Their radios were turned off, and were under radio silence except for an absolute emergency. They drove back roads in case Ragland's group had road watchers out, but based on their tactics during the attack, he doubted they were doing anything other than sitting Fat Dumb and Happy behind their compound walls, waiting for the loot to pour in. A couple of hours later, they arrived in a grove of trees almost a mile away from the compound. They quickly covered the Hummers with camouflage nets, then started their approach to the compound. They found a perfect OP about 200 yards away from the compound, and started scanning with binoculars and a "big ear" shotgun mike and a parabolic reflector. They picked up snatches of conversations, and they hit the jackpot when they pointed the Big Ear at the guard shack.

"Larry, this is Sam, any word from the Army of God."

"No Sir, Reverend, they weren't supposed to make any radio transmissions and I imagine they're busy right now. We'll probably hear the theme song when they get close, just like last time. I wouldn't expect them for several more days to a week, depending on how much they were able to capture from the Heathens."

"OK, keep me posted!"

Jake told the rest of the team what he heard, and it gave him an idea. He needed to find out if a M-113 would fit inside a trailer of a tractor trailer. If they could put 2 of them in there, including the GE mini-gun unit, they could win this battle in a matter of minutes. Just drive right up to the front gate, set the trailer door up to remotely open and drop a ramp and have the M-113s back out. Jake imagined the "reverend" would need to change his underwear if he saw a M-113 pointing a Ma Deuce right at his house!

Jake completed the recon mission ahead of schedule, drew a very detailed map of the compound, gathered the recon team and rushed back to The Joint. As soon as he got back, he took a tape measure, and the M-113 would fit with less than a foot to spare, but it would fit. He

talked to some people with welding skills, and had them fab up a pair of hinged ramps that would allow the M-113s to drive into and out of the trailer. He used a moving van trailer since they were lower to the ground. While they were working, he gathered volunteers who wanted to make sure they couldn't get attacked again. John had found a tape, and rounded up a loudspeaker to blare the music like it did when they attacked the Joint. Jake mounted the loudspeaker to the armed and armored Hummer he would drive. Jake said that the TOW armed Hummers would have to hang back with the Bradleys, since he knew they didn't have any TOW mounted Hummers. The mechanics finished the ramps, and they drove the M-113s right into the trailer. Unfortunately, the drivers and gunners would be stuck inside the dark trailer for the duration of the trip, there was no way around it, they couldn't mount them on lowboys and transfer since they just had enough lowboys to take all their Bradleys. The M-113 drivers came up with a solution by bringing a handful of Calume Lightsticks with them and a couple of LED lights, and a good book.

Jake had a meeting with Sam, Slappy and John. "The only armed people we could see was the guard shack. Evidently Rev. Ragland didn't trust the rest of his flock with guns. All we have to do is take out the guard house, and storm the gate, and they're virtually defenseless with the Army of God dead and buried, or at least dead. The beauty of all this is that they're expecting their convoy to return any day - so we're going to make them think that we ARE the convoy. John, once we bash the gate in, I need you to get on the radio and do your thing. We're hoping that at least 500 of the people at the compound are worth saving, otherwise this entire attack plan is a waste, and we might as well destroy the compound from extreme range with the 105's."

John spoke up. "Jake, I know the type. My guess is the compound wall and the gate are there as much to keep the "converts" in as to keep anyone out. Given a chance, most will want to leave and start over - they're probably treated like peasants or slaves inside the compound. The "Army of God" was probably all the hard core members, since they were the only ones armed."

They loaded up and left a guard force behind to protect the Joint while they were on their "Mission From God" as Jake quipped - someone said he had watched "The Blues Brothers" one time too many! They made excellent time, and as the compound got closer, Jake had the lowboys with the Bradleys park where they parked the Hummers for their recon mission. Jake told them that if they heard "Code Red" over the radio, to get the Bradleys into the compound and level it, since if he broadcast that phrase, it meant that their attempt to get the converts to surrender had failed, and they were in a firefight. The Bradleys drove off the lowboys, and left their motors idling just in case. Jake got back into the Hummer, and stuck the tape in the player when they got within sight of the compound, and turned the volume all the way up. The guards saw the convoy coming, heard the song, gave the Reverend the good news, and opened the gate. That was the last thing they were to do in this life, since Jake shot all 3 guards with one burst from the suppressed Uzi and then put a round into each guard's forehead just to make sure. They drove into the Compound, and the trailer doors and ramp came down right on cue. The M-113's came charging out and the Ma Deuce on the M-113 fired a couple of rounds into the

main house. John got on the radio demanding Rev Sam Ragland surrender, or his house would be leveled with the next blast. 2 seconds later, a white flag waved from the master bedroom window. John told Rev. Ragland to show himself and walk out front unarmed and alone. He had one minute until they started blowing up the building. Sam came stumbling out of the house 45 seconds later, still trying to pull up his pants. As soon as John identified him, a single shot rang out, and Rev. Ragland slumped over dead with a bullet hole in his forehead. John took the cue to go into his prepared sermon. When he finished, the “converts” came out of hiding carrying anything white they might have handy from hankies to brassieres. Jake took a team into the main building, and cleared it room by room. they found a very young teenage girl in the master bedroom tied to the bed and gagged. It seemed they interrupted Sam Ragland in the process of violating another young girl. One of the Recon team cut her loose, and threw a blanket over her. She was escorted out of the building, into the waiting arms of her mother. The look on her mother’s face made Jake wish he hadn’t shot Sam Ragland, she would have made it last a while! The recon member whispered something into the mother’s ear, and her face softened. Evidently he told her that Sam didn’t have time to molest her daughter before Jake shot him.

Jake gathered the people around, then John joined them. They agreed to a man that they didn’t want to stay there, and were relieved to learn that the “Army of God” was resolved into a red mist. John had an idea, and talked to Jake, who called back to the Joint, and gave them the “all clear” signal. Jake asked Sam to get hold of the survival group in Crockett and ask them if they knew of a large abandoned ranch between them that could handle 5,000 people - make that 4,500 - the Army of God was toast! Through the radio relays, Jake learned of a compound much larger than Ragland’s that was abandoned and would be perfect for the group. It had a huge tract of arable land, and enough pasture to raise hundreds of head of cattle. Jake explained to the group what they wanted to do, and told them they could give them enough supplies to last through the winter until they had their crops in next season.

All of a sudden, a runner interrupted Jake, and whispered in his ear. Evidently Sam Ragland had been holding out on the “peasants” and had huge locked storage buildings full of supplies, and a huge armory for the Army of God. Jake told them of the huge amount of stuff they found, and at first they didn’t believe him until Jake took them over to the storage buildings and showed them. Sam Ragland’s spread really wasn’t set up to support a large population, so they were kept on the edge of starvation. Seeing enough food and supplies to last them several years made several of them angry enough to kick Sam Ragland’s body as they walked by. Jake got on the radio, and ordered a convoy of 18-wheelers to meet them at Ragland’s compound to help move the people who wanted to relocate. Since Sam’s compound was located in the “Texas Dustbowl” and there was nothing else around since the Army of God had wiped out everyone within a 100 mile radius, there was nothing here to make them want to stay. They got busy preparing for the move, and when the 18-wheelers and deuce and a halves showed up, they started loading rapidly. The sooner they were out of this place, the better! As they drove past the Bradleys mounted on their lowboys, they thanked God they didn’t try to fight!

When they had settled into their new digs, they held an early Thanksgiving celebration. They were thankful for Deliverance, and for a fresh start where they could grow and prosper. If they ever needed help defending themselves, they had radios to contact either the Crockett group, or The Joint since they were right in the middle of the two groups. Jake located a huge diesel tank, and located it at the new location, then drove over to the tank farm at Fort Worth and filled several tankers and filled the tank at the new ranch. They located diesel tractors and other equipment on adjacent abandoned farms and ranches. Jake told them if it was abandoned, it wasn't stealing, it was scavenging. Soon the new group was as good at scavenging as the people at the Joint were. Soon each family had their own house, and they had several community wells that used windmills to pump water and they dug septic systems to give them flush toilets. The doctors from the Joint visited periodically to check on them, and vaccinate the children with what vaccines they had. Soon life settled down to normal again.

Chapter 18

Save Our Books

Several months later, The Bosses were meeting in the Security Office. One of the guards had a paperback novel on his desk. No one had any bright ideas to do anything they weren't already doing when Jake spotted the book, and something clicked. He smacked his forehead, and yelled "Ouch". The rest of the Bosses laughed until Jake told them why he smacked his forehead, and they felt like joining him. They had been so busy scavenging supplies that they forgot to scavenge specifically for books. I'm not talking Romance Novels here - I mean basic textbooks and how-to books. Jake told the other bosses a little known fact "Did you know the Romans developed Concrete and Cement over 2,000 years ago, and we just recently re-discovered how to make it! Think of it, when those books rot and the people who know how to do stuff die, their knowledge dies with them!"

Sam's profanity at what Jake told him gave Jake a perfect idea to call the project "Save Our Books". Everyone including John had to laugh at that! They quickly started making lists, and then called in everyone who could build or make something and got their opinions. Eventually they decided that the list would be over 100 pages, and a bear to carry around, so they focused on what types of books to scavenge. Textbooks, how-to books, trade publications, manuals, and classic literature. The last one was John's idea - after all they didn't want to raise a bunch of Philistines to re-populate the world. They came to the realization that all the stuff they scavenged would wear out or break down eventually, and they needed to know how to build, fix or replace it!

All the scavenging teams were contacted, and given new assignments. Find and save books! They still wanted them to scavenge for supplies, but if they came across a library, bookstore, or a large private collection or personal library, to take anything of value, and they would have people going over the take on this end. Obviously they could and should bypass any paperback novels unless they were of a historical nature that might contain information on how to do stuff.

Jake got another bright idea - Computers! They had power to burn, and they could hopefully resurrect and repair some computers that weren't fried by the nuclear explosions. Some of them, like research facilities, had to have technological information stored on them. Luckily, they had several computer programmers and IT experts in the Joint who would love to dig for nuggets of information stored in a hard drive. Jake added PCs to the list. Hopefully some high-tech companies stored their information on hard disks that might have survived the blast.

While the scavengers got into high gear, everyone who had a usable skill suddenly got an apprentice, and was told to tell them everything they knew. Jake contacted the other 2 compounds, and they agreed to join the Joint in their Quest. They would send anyone not involved in urgent projects with the scavengers to help locate books, magazines and computers. The phone books they had located would now be priceless, since they have the addresses of all

the High-tech businesses in the Dallas-Ft Worth area, and the addresses of all schools, colleges and Libraries. They literally went from A to Z through the phone book, and 6 months later, had located most of the books they had wanted. The University of Dallas TX was inside ground zero and was vaporized, but they did find some community colleges with excellent libraries, as well as the entire libraries of every high-tech business, and every construction firm in Dallas. It took them 3 years to sift through all the books they had accumulated, and most of them were fed directly into the curriculum of the schools they had started. They had located several tape recorders, and were busy taking oral histories of some of the older residents who remembered how they did stuff before high tech. One old geezer even remembered working in his dad's blacksmith shop building windmills. His information was priceless.

Meanwhile the IT geeks were hard at work resurrecting the hard drives from all the computers. Eventually what they did was rebuild one Sun Microsystems Computer and installed RAID Technology Software in it, so they could swap hard drives at will. They then read the hard drives, and ran a program that searched for certain types of files, and performed a key-word search of those files to determine their technological value. One hard drive turned out to be priceless, since it explained in detail exactly how to make various antibiotics and other very valuable drugs. The scavengers went back and stripped the labs to the bare walls, removing all the equipment necessary to make antibiotics and drugs. From various sources they located medical textbooks covering every subject from Anesthesiology to Zoology! They located 10 complete sets of the Encyclopedia Britannica, as well as several other research volumes on CD ROM. They located all kinds of information, some dubious value, but then you never knew when you would need to build a semiconductor!

In their search for High-tech, they finally located a source for Photovoltaic cells and a huge battery bank. It was on the roof of the bio-medical building. Their entire roof was made up of PV cells. They had enough cells on that one building to replace 3 generators, so they took them off-line as soon as they had the PV panels up and running. One of the books had a design for a heliostat to power a steam turbogenerator, but since they didn't have a steam turbogenerator, they put that plan on the back burner until they located an undamaged power plant, and a way to take the huge and heavy turbogenerator out of it with all the steam pipes and the electrical equipment. They kept looking for more PV panels, but they figured that Texas wasn't the home of Alternative Energy since they had so much oil. They found more batteries, and expanded their battery bank, and soon had all the huge inverters running at capacity. Eventually, they took half their diesel generators off-line and further conserved fuel. Since it was basically sunny year round in Texas, they only needed the generators during stormy weather when the clouds obscured the sun, and then just to recharge the batteries. They did however, use the solar water heating idea they found in a magazine. It saved a bunch of fuel since they didn't need to run burners for hot water hardly at all any more. They scavenged and rebuilt a blacksmith's shop, grabbed some metal and wood lathes and other metal and woodworking tools from various businesses. They took complete sets of mechanic and surveying tools from other businesses. Basically anything they thought might be useful, they scavenged.

Meanwhile their efforts to grow food and raise livestock were extremely successful to the point where they could start bartering among the other communities for things they didn't have. Several of the women at the newest community turned out to be excellent weavers, and knit or crocheted blankets, and made quilts, and even fabric for clothes. It was a heavy cotton fabric, but it was well-suited to the heavy work most people now did. One-half of the survivors were now officially farmers, and the other half were scavengers, or supported the scavengers. Among the scavengers was a small group of people who could make or fix things. Everything was re-used and recycled even after it was worn out.

They finally had 10 years of relative peace, and the population of the communities was booming to the point that they started 2 new communities with all the newly married couples. As John got older, he found a younger man who he felt would make a good pastor one day, and was taking him under his wing, giving him daily lessons in the Bible and theology from among the books they had salvaged. One smart person had gone back to John's old home and found boxes upon boxes of religious books John had forgotten about, and boxes of Classic Literature that he studied in Bible College.

Jake and Samantha eventually had 3 kids, and decided to stop there. Jake was too busy running things, and Samantha was busy working in the school. After 3 kids, she didn't look like Daisy Duke anymore but she was still stunningly beautiful. Slappy never married, and was one of the first of the Bosses to die. John thought it might have been complications of Alcoholism, but didn't share that viewpoint since Slappy was dead and you never spoke ill of the dead. John gave an excellent Memorial service, and Slappy was buried right where he wanted to be, next to a big oak tree.

Soon they were stripping hardware stores and lumberyards of anything useful, and building huge storage buildings. One idea Jake totally approved of was distributing knowledge and equipment among the various communities, so if a plague or virus wiped out one community, the others might survive. They also encouraged intermarrying between the major communities to keep things as out-bred as possible. There was a small chance that some communities like the Crocket community might be related in some way, since they were all from the same geographical area, and had lived there all their lives. Every 20 years they added a few new communities, and the scavengers spread farther and farther afield. Evidently, they were the only people left alive in this part of the country, because they never saw anybody else, or saw evidence that anyone had lived there since the Big Bang. Soon they grew big enough that they repopulated Southeastern Texas after about 100 years.

The End