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Ware Ye

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Ware Ye - Chapter 1

“Ware ye! Ware ye, I say! Ware ye! The end time is nigh! Confess! Repent! Ware ye! Ware ye!”

“The guy is a nut,” laughed Mike, the best bowler on the team. “Ware ye, my rear end.”

Larry Winkle didn't join in the laughter with the rest of his bowling team as they walked past the old, white haired man in his dirty, torn jeans and sweatshirt. And his cardboard sign that said the same thing he was voicing.

“I don't know how he lives,” said Claude, who happened to be the worst bowler on their team, but still pretty good. “He's been walking the streets with that sign for a month now.”

The fourth member of the team, Marshal, added his two cents to the conversation. “I wish the cops would pick him up. He's a nuisance and an eyesore. He was spouting that stuff down by the insurance office the other day. My clients were complaining.”

When Larry failed to speak up, Mike asked him, “What about you, Larry? What do you think?”

Larry shrugged and said, “Who knows? Maybe he's right.” He laughed a little when the others laughed at him. Larry was beginning to have thoughts along the same lines as the man was pointing out. He'd been a closet prepper for a while now. The old man was giving him the willies. All you had to do was listen to the news, and maybe read between the lines a little, and you could easily believe the man.

Not that he felt a need to confess or repent. Larry did feel the need to increase his preparations. Before Katrina he'd always assumed FEMA would be there to make things right. Katrina changed his mind. Rita, too.

And the news... Everybody and their brother and their sister seemed to have nuclear weapons. A bunch of those that did or were trying to acquire them, had a real hatred of the United States.

The Weather Channel was running special programming about all sorts of natural disasters that seemed to be happening with increasing frequency. Long dormant volcanoes were erupting around the world. Undersea earthquake were creating massive tsunamis.

To Larry it just seemed like everything was leading up to some kind of big disastrous event. When he brought up preparing for the worst to his former girlfriend, she called him a survivalist. In a bad way. When he broached the idea about getting a rifle she was adamantly against it. Just the mention of getting a handgun caused her to leave him. She wanted nothing to do with a crazy survivalist.

Larry figured out he was better off without her. He'd really been stocking up since she left. All the money he had spent eating out and the small gifts he lavished on her was now going into preps.

He had to prepare slowly, even with the extra money he had available. He was far from rich. Unlike Marshal's job with a big national insurance company, Larry worked in a small insurance agency and only cleared twenty-four thousand a year after taxes. He was paying eight twenty a month in rent, four fifty a month for his car, and utilities and insurance were another three seventy five a month. He was only putting forty a month in retirement savings. Larry knew that was a long way from what he should be doing. That only left him a little over three hundred a month for food and everything else, including preps.

Larry turned his mind away from the would-be prophet and concentrated on the league match the rest of the evening.

The following morning Larry saw the Ware ye man again, on the street

where he worked. The work was routine that day and the worries came back. One of the things he'd been doing to help his preps was to visit some of the many emergency preparedness web sites on the internet, especially discussion forums. He'd learned much, and was learning more every day. He spent his break time checking the forums of which he was a member. It made him feel better in a way. There was hope down the road if you could just prepare.

Larry went apartment hunting Saturday. He liked the apartment he had, but there were cheaper places around. He wanted to get a one bedroom, rather than an efficiency, since they weren't that much more than the efficiencies and he would need the storage space.

He didn't have much luck Saturday looking for apartments. Sunday wasn't any better. He was going to trade in his current vehicle and get something cheaper, and more in line with preparations, especially bugging out. He didn't need anything to impress the ladies, since he'd sworn off dating for a while.

After going to every used car lot in his area of the city, Larry gave up. There were some vehicles that came close in general to what he wanted, but none struck a chord with him. He needed to pick up a few groceries. When he was walking out with the few things he'd purchased he noticed the literature racks in the air lock entry/exit.

On impulse he took several. Both for automobiles and rental apartments.

Ware Ye - Chapter 2

Larry had much better luck the following weekend. He found both a decent apartment and a suitable vehicle.

The apartment he decided to take wasn't in anyway remarkable. A plain

old one bedroom. The décor was nothing to write home about, but he could live with it. It would be a slightly longer commute to work, but not much. He put a small deposit to hold it for the following week, plus the next month. He had to give a month's notice at the other place.

He checked quite a few possibilities in the used car papers. Some came close to what he wanted. But he knew just the right vehicle when he looked at it. The description in the paper hadn't been very clear, nor had the picture. Larry almost didn't go look at it, since it was quite a ways out of the city proper.

Not the very best choice for driving around town, but well suited for bugging out. He'd live with the size and sixteen to seventeen miles per gallon fuel usage. It was a 1993 Chevrolet four-wheel-drive, three-quarter ton dual cab pickup with a 6.5 liter turbo diesel. The selling point had been the engine. It was pre-electronic and should run even if some form of EMP weapon was used.

Couldn't say much about the overall condition of the body. The bed was a mess. Banged up and rusted out in places. The cab was very nice, considering the overall condition of the truck.

Like the apartment, Larry put down a deposit to hold the truck until he sold his car. He'd listed it in several of the automotive papers the Monday after he picked them up. He fretted for a few days, but finally the new papers came out and he began getting inquiries.

He didn't get what he wanted for it, but he did get enough to pay off the car, buy the Chevy, and have a little left over. Mainly, he got out from under the four hundred fifty dollar car payment. It would be put to good use for other things. The truck took a little to getting used to. It did come in handy making the move from his old apartment to the new. The bowling team lent their hands to the endeavor.

It made Larry realize that he didn't really have that many friends, and

none that close. Mike, Marshal, and Claude were the closest friends he had, and that was related to bowling. He'd left the one or two good friends he'd had when he left Senath and came to St. Louis. He hadn't seen either of them in over three years.

All the forums suggested getting in a compatible group, rather than going it alone, but Larry didn't have much confidence in the rest of the bowling team coming around to his way of thinking. But he would at least try and broach the subject with them. Also keep his eyes and ears open for like minded individuals.

Besides the savings from changing vehicles and the two-hundred-ten he was saving in rent, he asked his boss at the insurance agency for a raise, on impulse. And actually got one. Twenty-five dollars more a month. Not a huge amount, but every little bit helped.

Though he worked full time at the insurance agency, he signed up with a temp service to take work on weekends. He didn't get work every weekend, but everything he made through them went to his preps.

Most of his preps so far were food and water supplies. He moved them himself when he changed apartments. He wasn't ready to approach the team members about preparedness. The food preps were the result of double buying many of the foods he normally used and were suitable for a year or more in storage. Larry had almost twelve months of food stored.

Water was a different matter. He had quite a bit he'd at first thought. Several cases of half-liter bottles. When he ran across a discussion on one of the forums about how much was needed, he realized he didn't have enough. He needed to buy more, plus a way to purify more.

He decided to get four fifteen-gallon water storage containers. He checked the internet. With shipping they were more expensive than the local surplus stores. He bought four and filled them with tap water,

adding a little Clorox as preservative. He would rotate it every six months.

That was a medium sized purchase for him on his new budget. Forty dollars each, one-sixty for all four and a siphon pump. He was planning on one or two medium sized purchases per month, and one big one, plus the smaller stuff, under a hundred dollars plus shipping.

The large purchase for the month was an adjunct to the water storage. Namely a Katadyn Pocket Filter with post carbon filter. With it he purchased an additional filter element, and several refills for the carbon filter. He added several packets of Katadyn Micropur MP-1 water treatment tablets to cover all the freshwater hazards. Ultimately Larry wanted a Crown Berkey, but for the moment, something that was portable for use in a bug out was priority.

After a year of prepping, Larry now had a year's worth of food, three months of water, and the means purify more. And a bug out vehicle. The succeeding months went about the same way. A few small purchases a month, a couple of medium cost, and a higher cost item or group of items. Sometimes Larry would hold the large purchase money for a month or two to be able to afford an item.

One of the early, larger purchases, was a service bed for the Chevy. The original pickup bed was getting dangerous. The service bed was more expensive than a replacement pickup bed, but Larry liked the idea of the various bins and boxes for storage in case of bugging out.

The following month a used heavy duty front bumper designed for a winch was added to the truck. The bumper had brush guards. A good cable come-along went into a tool box and the Hi-Lift jack was mounted on the bumper. Two pieces of tow cable and clevis' went into the tool box with the come-along A winch would be added later. For the mean time the Hi-Lift, come-along, and tow cables would do for self recovery, if needed. Now he had the food, water, and the means to get out of

Dodge.

It took three months of accumulating large purchase funds to acquire a larger replacement tank for one of the original dual tanks the Chevy had, plus a bed mounted extra fuel tank. Now he had the un-refueled range to get way out of Dodge.

He was building a GOOD bag, or as some called it, a BOB or bug out bag, in case he couldn't use the truck for some reason and had to evacuate by foot. The bag itself was a Kifaru Marauder 2,500ci MOLLE pack in coyote brown. It didn't come with a waist belt, so Larry added that option. It could use any of the myriad MOLLE pouches available from Kifaru and other sources, but he would add some later. Right now it was the pack with belt only and add the contents. Most of the contents were in quart or gallon size zip-lock for convenience.

Larry added a three-liter MSR hydration bladder to the internal compartment of the pack.

Two packages of Katadyn Micropur MP-1 water treatment tablets.

A Katadyn Pocket Filter.

Three Mainstay lifeboat rations.

A pound of jerky.

Three pounds of gorp.

Half a dozen each of tea bags and hot chocolate mix.

P51 can opener.

An Esbit stove with extra fuel.

A Vargo folding handle Sierra Cup made of titanium.

A kitchen tablespoon.

Two containers of life boat matches.

Two Bic lighters.

A BlastMatch.

An eight pack of Wet Fire tinder.

A Fisher bullet Space pen.

A Write-in-the-Rain notebook.

A Maglite two AA battery flashlight.

Two pairs of extra socks and a pair of clean underwear.
A pair of 5.11 pants and matching long sleeve shirt.
A stocking cap.
A pair of hiking shoes.
Two bandanas.
A Orvis carabiner watch with altimeter and compass, since sometimes he didn't wear a wristwatch.
A pair of Body Glove photochromic safety sunglasses with neck lanyard.
A hundred foot hank of genuine 550 cord.
Eight tent stakes.
A GI poncho with liner.
Piece of heavy plastic.
A Cold Steel Ultimate Hunter lock blade folding knife.
Ten Hoo-Ahhs cleansing wipes.
Three Charmin To Go toilet tissue packs.
A pack of survival playing cards.
Copies of his driver's license, passport, contact phone list, and insurance information.
Spare keys.
A map of the city and one of both Missouri and Illinois.
A compass.
A Visa logo debit card.
Packet of cash he would add to over time, and supplement with some 1/10oz Gold Eagles and pre-1964 silver dimes as money permitted.
A waterproof gear bag to keep water sensitive things secure.
Leatherman Surge multi-tool
Wenger Survivor SAK
A partial roll of brass wire.
Small roll of Gorilla duct tape.
A dozen medium large zip ties.
A dozen large nails or spikes.
A hand crank multiband radio/light.
A whistle on a neck lanyard.
A small signal mirror.

Insect repellent & mosquito head net.
First-aid kit.

Each month the world situation seemed worse than the previous month. Natural disasters were near weekly events in the news.

There was talk of a new Assault Weapons Ban, even stricter than the original. Some surplus ammunition was becoming scarce and the price was rising. Larry decided to put off some purchases to acquire at least the start of a survival battery of arms. First came a well used Savage 99A in .308 Winchester and a case of South African 7.62mm x 51mm NATO ball ammunition. It was compatible with the .308 Winchester. A local gunsmith added a ghost ring sight to the Savage and tuned it up for him. Larry ordered and received two .308 to .32 ACP cartridge adapters and picked up two fifty round boxes of .32 ACP. They would do for small game hunting in the Savage.

Two months later he picked up a Glock 21 in .45 ACP, twenty magazines, and 500 rounds of .45 ACP ball ammunition.

The next month came a bargain on a Stoeger 12 gauge Coach Gun, 200 rounds each of 00 buck, #4 buck, slugs, BB shot, #4 shot, #6 shot, #7½ shot, and #9 shot. He would pick up more of the buck and slugs as time passed.

Of course, he bought a good multi-caliber cleaning kit.

Now, at least, he had the means to protect himself and hunt effectively. It wasn't the final battery he wanted, but those guns would have to wait just a while longer. However, he knew the rifle he wanted and began to pick up magazines and accessories for it before prices jumped, if a new ban came into being. Or was being seriously considered. Dealers probably wouldn't wait for the actual ban.

The HK-91/PTR-91 magazines were especially low cost at the moment. He bought two of the five round magazines for hunting use, and 50 each of the twenty-round and thirty-rounders and began to set money aside in a special fund to buy, hopefully, a good used HK-91, or a new PTR-91. Separate funds were started for a Benelli M4 combat shotgun and a Glock 30 compact .45 ACP. As soon as Beta released a C-Mag for .308, he added a couple of those for the 91.

As those funds began to build slowly, Larry kept adding to his retirement fund, as well as adding to his preps. He didn't see the possibility to own his own home any time in the future, but he did begin to watch for property for sale in the Missouri Ozarks for a future home and/or retreat. For now, he had a several locations where he could shelter in the case of a nuclear attack, be it terrorist or other power. He would have to take everything needed with him, but they would work.

One day in mid winter Larry almost ran out of toilet paper. Getting a reasonable supply went way up on his list of priorities. So did other alternate sanitation items. That included a Thetford 565 chemical toilet and plenty of chemical.

Ware Ye - Chapter 2

Another year rolled around and Larry was pleased with the way his preps were coming along. He still didn't have the weapons he wanted, but the envelopes that held the money were filling up nicely.

When winter dragged out well into what should have been spring, Larry decided to approach his friends about preparedness. Mike just laughed at the mention of trying to prepare so Larry dropped the subject immediately. Marshal was no better. He started talking insurance. Only Clyde showed an interest, and it was lukewarm at best.

Even with everything going on the way it was, they simply weren't interested. Larry decided, for the foreseeable future, he would have to go it alone.

In June, a piece of property in the Missouri Ozarks came on the market. It looked good from the internet pictures the realtor had posted. Larry arranged some quick vacation time and drove down to look at it.

He hated to do it, but it was a good deal. It cleaned out the retirement account, but he'd start putting money into it again immediately. Larry was the proud owner of 6.8 acres of not particularly prime real estate. But it suited him. It was remote, with barely a track into it. While he was in the area, he checked on having a well drilled. It would be another envelope project, but it would take some priority over other things.

Now that he had it, Larry decided to make it usable, if only marginal. He used some of his preparedness money to buy a Litis Oxhead double bit felling axe, a couple of long handle shovels, hoe, garden rake, and a Tanaka 18" bar chainsaw. He added a fuel can, oil, and safety equipment.

With the tools he was able to clear some dead fall timber and stack up a moderate amount of firewood. After exploring the entire 6.8 acres Larry picked a spot and cleared it, cutting up the trees to add to the dead wood firewood. He smoothed the area with the shovel and rake, to make a suitable camping spot. It was now his primary retreat, such as it was.

He adjusted his budget schedule to add more comprehensive camping equipment than his BOB. As summer came and went, Larry bought a Mountain Hardwear Trango 3.1 three person, four season tent. He liked having plenty of space. He was just a bit claustrophobic. A Coleman Black Cat tent safe propane heater would provide heat for the tent when needed. He picked up twenty one-pound canisters of propane, a refill fitting, and two twenty-pound tanks of propane to refill the cylinders at

the site.

A Slumberjack two bag sleep system using Quallofill insulation and a Thermarest Luxury XL self inflating mattress took care of the bedding. The MSR Whisperlight Internationale multi-fuel single burner stove, using MSR cookware and utensils, would provide him hot meals and drinks when he couldn't, or wouldn't, use an open fire. He had a folding cooking fire grate for when he did have a wood fire.

For light, he had a Brunton Glorb LED lantern for the tent. For around camp a Petzl TacTikka head lamp with red filter lens and a Maglite two AA cell flashlight would provide light. Another Brunton product, the Brunton SolarPort 4.4 solar panel with BattJack battery charger would keep the AA and AAA rechargeable batteries charged. A Firefly windup LED flashlight and cell phone charger was for back up and to keep his cell phone charged up in the field.

For water storage Larry bought four of the ten liter MSR water bladders. A Katadyn Drip Camp Filter with extra filter elements would allow him to purify local water until the well was in. To transport water from the nearest stream, he took up and camouflaged a fifteen gallon water barrel and siphon pump in the trees surrounding the campsite. Before he left Larry also planted the seeds he'd brought with him in some of the more open areas of the forest to start a guerilla garden.

The acquisition of the retreat property made him feel much better about his preps. He had a long ways to go, but the basics were covered. He even laughed with the guys when they made fun of his Chevy service truck.

Of course he continued to acquire more preps. But it wasn't just a matter buying things. He needed a survival oriented education. He took an advanced first-aid course that winter and began building not only an individual first-aid kit that he would carry on bug-outs and camping trips, but also fairly extensive first aid and trauma kits. One for home,

one for the truck, and one for the retreat. They contained basic first aid items he could use himself after the course he took, but the advanced kits contained quite a few items that an EMT, Paramedic, or Doctor could use in their treatment of him, if they were caught without their own kits. It was amazing how many in the emergency medical field didn't have their own extensive kits.

He began building up a trust relationship with his regular doctor in order to, hopefully, get to the point where she would prescribe medications and such for him to store for an emergency. It wasn't at that point yet.

Larry found a friendly range and practiced with all three of his weapons and decided on the load bearing equipment he would need for a combat load out after studying what was available on the internet, and based on a few suggestions he saw on the preparedness forums. He would get what he need the following spring if things worked out.

After much searching on the internet Larry found an herbalist that would teach him about not only medicinal, but edible and dangerous plants.

Ware Ye - Chapter 3

Larry had his first real opportunity for a live, hands-on test of his preps that winter. A fierce blizzard came swooping down from the arctic regions of Canada. It dumped nearly two feet of snow on St. Louis with temperatures hovering around zero for three days. The weather system went as far south as Memphis, though it had weakened considerably by that time.

Besides the Weather Channel on cable and the local channels, he listened to the reports on the Oregon Scientific NWS EAS SAME receiver he'd picked up that fall. After the power failed the NWS radio was his main source of weather information, though he listened to

regular broadcast radio on a crank up combination radio and light. It had the TV voice bands, too.

The city was virtually shut down with only emergency services out and about. Larry's building was only one of many that had power, water, and even sewer fail. Larry didn't really realize how difficult things were for many of the residents as he simply stayed home and used some of his stores and preparedness equipment to get through the week when the insurance office was closed. He was able to do so since the insurance office didn't do their own appraisals and claim work. They just sold the insurance at the office where Larry worked.

When he did get out and about he began to hear the stories of how bad it was during the blizzard. He could only shake his head. He'd been as snug as a bug in a rug. When it had begun to cool off in the apartment after the heat quit, he restacked the boxes of food and water that could be damaged by freezing and used the Coleman heater to keep them warm. He just bundled up and did fine.

The members of his bowling team didn't fare as well. Mike and Marshal each owned a home. When they lost power they suffered, according to Marshal. Mike had natural gas, which didn't fail, but his furnace was electronically controlled. He didn't have heat, either. Clyde, like Larry, lived in an apartment building. They lost power, but still had water and sewer service. Without power the circulating hot water heat system couldn't circulate. They had freezing problems, too.

Larry just continued to use his preps as the repairs were made on the frozen plumbing in his building. The other three continued to grumble having to do without, since, though the power came back on quickly, there were more frozen pipes to fix than plumbers to fix them.

Deciding it was a good time to bring up preparations, Larry did so.

Marshal's response: "This was a one in a hundred years blizzard. Won't

happen again in my lifetime.

Mike: “Hey! We survived it and the National Guard was right in there helping. Things have changed since Katrina.”

Again it was Clyde that was most responsive. Such as it was. “Yeah. You know, I’ve been thinking about storing some food and water. Enough for a few days. Then it hit me. If this happens again, the stuff will just freeze and we won’t be able to use it. So I said forget it.”

So much for the learning experience. Larry did. The others didn’t.

Larry had accumulated almost enough in his HK-91/PTR-91 and Benelli M4 envelopes to get them, so when he ordered load bearing equipment he did so with them in mind in addition to the three weapons he already had. He wound up picking and choosing from several sources over the spring months.

FMCO supplied a set of 8-point attachment H-suspenders, two one-quart canteen covers, a full flap hip holster for the Glock 21, four pistol single magazine pouches, and four 12-round shotgun shell pouches.

From Brigade Quartermasters he obtained a Write-in-the-Rain notebook and cover, a map case, equipment belt and Kovach Klip extender, and a Soldier’s Optimized Butt pack.

BDS Tactical provided two multi-use compass/strobe/bandage pouches, a Leatherman tool pouch, and six 16-round .308 shell pouches for the Savage 99A.

Op Tactical had a cell phone pouch and an EOD tool case for a small set of tools that would be useful in the field.

Custom Tactical supplied a MOLLE vest, a drop leg knife sheath, individual first-aid kit pouch, three dual-magazine pouches for 30 round HK/PTR magazines, two utility/SAW stiffened pouches, a dump pouch, and knowing he would be getting a respirator, a pouch for it.

RS Tactical had a weapon retention lanyard.

Larry wouldn't use everything together. All the equipment except the notebook case, map case, and pistol lanyard were MOLLE compatible or could be used with the suspenders and belt. He could arrange things the way he wanted and tried several combinations until he found the ones he liked. That was after he bought the PTR-91.

He decided on the PTR-91 over the HK-91 partly for cost reasons, but primarily because he learned on the forums and the J.L.D. Enterprises PTR-91 site that JLD had made some design changes that improved the rifle without negating the use of HK magazines and accessories.

With the savings getting the PTR-91 rather than the HK-91 he'd been pricing, he was able to add a 1,200 meter sight, sling, bipod, and alternate stock, the retractable one. He started a new envelope to get the quick mount scope mount and a scope for it. He'd already bought magazines for it.

To the Benelli M4 he added a sling and a 6-round sidesaddle shell carrier.

Larry practiced with them both and bought more ammunition to replace what he used and to increase his stocks.

Though there was much he still wanted to do, he considered himself fairly well prepared as a cold summer turned into an even colder fall. The winter of 2007/2008 turned out relatively mild, compared to the last winter. From mid 2007 to New Year's Day of 2008 Larry concentrated

on increasing his long term storage (LTS) foodstuffs. The year supply of regular foods he just considered short term.

Between one large Walton Feed order and one large Emergency Essentials order plus smaller monthly orders to Emergency Essentials and a couple of other suppliers, Larry put together a substantial two year LTS food supply that would be used if he went through the one year supply of regular food.

The LTS food supply was based on Emergency Essentials' Ultimate Year Supply of dehydrated and freeze dried foods, plus the Year Supply of Basics to make it more economical without having to eat whole wheat bread, rice, and beans for two whole years. He picked up a Country Living Grain Mill with power handle to do the grinding required by the whole grains in the Basics.

He added many additional #10 cans of individual items to supplement the packages. He wasn't a picky eater, but he did have favorites and the packaged supplies didn't have all the things he wanted. And he suspected the serving sizes were on the small side and he had a high metabolism. He needed plenty of food.

Larry added the Glock 30 to his armory in February and picked up an inside-the-waistband holster and two dual IWB magazine pouches for it. He applied for a concealed weapons license and got it after a considerable wait.

He began working on plans for at least a minimal retreat on the Ozarks property. He began buying 1/10 ounce Gold Eagles and pre-1964 silver dimes and quarters. Two of the Eagles and a roll each of the dimes and quarters each month.

He also picked up a few more of the edged tools, weapons, and field tools he wanted. Larry had already bought what he considered the most important ones over the last two years. They consisted of a Spyderco

CO8 Harpy pocket clip knife, a Cold Steel ODA, a Cold Steel 24" Latin machete, Victorinox Explorer Swiss Army Knife, Leatherman Surge with bits, a Cold Steel Rifleman's Tomahawk, and a Cold Steel Entrenching shovel.

The new acquisitions included a Spyderco CO7 Police model, another Cold Steel Ultimate Hunter folding lock blade, a short handled GI pick-mattock, a pair of Commando Wire Cutters, another Wenger Survivor SAK and Leatherman Crunch, a Sven 21" folding saw, and a Channellock fence tool. He put together a set of small tools to be carried in the EOD pouch when in the field.

A number of useful items went into one of the stiffened utility/SAW pouches. Two one-hundred-foot hanks of genuine 550 cord, a partial roll of Gorilla tape, 15' length of 12 gauge electrical wire, 20' of mechanic's wire, a 55' spool of brass wire, a partial roll of 3M electrical tape, 20 medium reusable wire ties, a package of JB weld, a tube of Shoe Goo, and ten 7" spike nails.

During the summer of 2008 things began heating up. Not only the weather in Mid-America, but the world political situation. Nothing had been resolved about either Iran or North Korea and their nuclear weapons programs. The US was still bogged down in Iraq, trying to prevent a civil war between Shi'ite and Sunni Moslems.

Despite democratization, Russia and the Republics were steadily rearming with their newest designs. China was, as well. And they were cooperating to a large extent. Many of the democracies in South America were becoming more and more Leftist. Mexico's economy was dragging and ever more Mexicans and Central Americans were streaming to America. The new Border Wall was only partially complete and on hold.

There had been another major war gas attack in Japan. Rumor had it that it was an al-Qaeda training run.

Human transmitted bird flu had just begun to spread on the East Coast of the US.

Larry's sense of being prepared was getting shaky. He had lots of preps, but he was lacking in a few critical areas. One was alternative sources of news. The major new networks were all about the same. Larry decided to get a Yaseu VR-500 multi-band, multi-mode receiver. It was a hand held model. He picked up a pouch for it from Maxpedition to carry it on his LBE.

Actually, he picked up two of the pouches. The other was for a Uniden Bearcat BCD396T public service band scanner. It had trunking capability so he could stay informed of where and what the police and fire agencies were doing.

The short wave stations he picked up on the VR-500 were not very reassuring. The entire world population seemed worried and about to react. And several of the people with their finger on the nuclear trigger weren't too stable.

Larry sprung for a MSA Millennium CBRN respirator. He had a trim beard he didn't want to shave off, so he opted get the MSA Optimair 6A PAPR (powered air purification respirator) to go with it. It would pressure feed clean air to the Millennium mask. Any leaks because of the beard would be outward. Extra filters for both. (He would shave if he had to.) Three spare batteries and an extra charger for the Optimair 6A. Larry got the ESP II voice amplifier for the Millennium and the support shoulder strap for the Optimair.

The Millennium was equipped with a drinking port so he got the two-quart flex canteen with pouch and shoulder strap, and a pressure cap adapter. A Tychem SL High performance containment coverall had an attached hood and bootie feet. Chem Tape II would seal the 17 mil nitrile gloves to the sleeves of the suit and the legs to the BATA

HazMax 16" over sock boots.

The entire package came from Approved Gas Masks.

Larry felt better now about having the means to safely escape a chemical or biological attack. The equipment was also suitable for decontamination chores after a nuclear incident.

Nuclear. He did have shelter space located if St. Louis wasn't a nuclear target. Larry didn't want to take any chances. He wanted shelter at the Ozark property. He turned all his spare time and finances to that end.

The first thing he did on the vacation he took to address the situation, was to hire a local man with a backhoe to dig him a trench off to one side of the camp clearing. He had a copy of Cresson Kearny's book Nuclear War Survival Skills. It had come in the package he bought from KI4U. Larry had added a CD V-717 remote reading survey meter to the original package, and though the package included a Nuk-Alert, he bought a RadDetect PRD 1250 keychain radiation alarm and several batteries for it.

Using Kearny's book, timber cut on his property, and heavy weight plastic sheeting, Larry constructed a trench shelter. It would be available if anything happened before he could construct a better one.

Larry watched the news closely, saving up his money for the retreat. He had finalized the plan and taken it to an architect he knew to review the construction details. The architect suggested a few changes to make the basement roof stronger, which was the main worry, as it would have three feet of earth cover on it.

It was too late in the fall to start the construction, according to a company that specialized in masonry construction in Poplar Bluff. Larry didn't like it, but he went along with the contractor. At least they were able to dig and pour the footings and floor of the basement for the house

after Larry had the area of the retreat contoured. The concrete would be cured by the time he started construction come spring, which was a plus. Another plus was the fact that he managed to keep his job. When he indicated he needed extended time off, it was not well received by his boss.

So Larry sweated out the winter, hoping nothing nuclear would happen. He also investigated home based jobs he could do on the internet if he moved permanently to the retreat and couldn't find something suitable in one of the small towns there.

Ware Ye - Chapter 4

As soon as the weather turned in the Spring of 2009 Larry told his boss he needed a month off. This time, when Larry made it clear that he was going to take the time, even if he lost the job, his boss, reluctantly, agreed to the time off. Larry let out a sigh of relief when his boss agreed. He hadn't found an internet job he liked and really didn't want to lose this one if he could help it.

It just so happened that one of the employees of the contractor had a decent travel trailer he was desperately trying to get rid of. Larry didn't want to buy it outright at the moment, but it was a good deal. He talked the man into a significant down payment and then monthly payments.

The down payment Larry offered was enough to get the man out of the trouble he was in, so he agreed to the sale on those terms, even if he didn't get what he was initially asking.

Larry lived in the trailer as he supervised the construction. The work of roofing the basement with twelve inches of concrete and back fill of gravel went well. The two main entrances for the basement shelter, one an opening through the roof and the other a set of wide concrete stairs

down to a right angle turn and entrance hatch, had enclosures built over them.

The contractor also built a six thousand gallon concrete tank for future water storage. A different contractor was hired to put in the escape tunnel. It led from the shelter to the expedient shelter that would now be used as a root cellar. The tunnel consisted of thirty inch diameter masonry sewer pipe. Larry bought a garage creeper and tied lengths of rope to each end so he could pull it to him from either end of the tunnel. It was a lot easier than crawling in the tunnel.

The house itself would not be built until Larry had the funds. But he had his shelter. Now he needed to equip it. Larry felt like he was running out of time. But he simply didn't have the money to do anything else major at the moment.

He did get more of the 15 gallon water barrels and took them to the retreat. He also moved the two year supply of LTS food there. He split his ammunition supply, keeping a small supply at home and moved the rest to the retreat. Larry slowed down on buying additional LTS food and increased the amount of funds going toward a well and a septic system for the property. He started a new savings envelope for a generator and fuel tank.

The world situation began to get worse as fall approached. Larry broke one of his own rules. He used the funds that had accumulated for the generator and tank to supplement the funds for the well and a septic system. Between them, the generator came in a distant second place.

The well driller he found was old and experienced. He doused for the best location for the well. Larry really wanted it closer to the shelter, but the driller guaranteed a minimum of a five gallon a minute well if he could drill where he wanted or there would be no charge. Larry was doubtful, but he agreed. The well produced eleven gallons a minute. It was safe water, but had a slight taste to it. Larry would filter the drinking

water. He used a Brita at home, anyway.

The retreat was already plumbed for water and sewer, and wired. The property was sloped such that Larry was able to place the septic tank down the slope from the house and have gravity drains through the floor of the shelter. Not the best way. Usually septic tanks were between five and ten feet from the foundation. His was twenty, but the plumber assured him that it would work. Larry insisted on three cleanouts for the sewer line, just in case.

A solar powered submersible pump went into the well, as did a deep well hand pump for back up. The solar powered pump would keep the six thousand gallon storage tank full and a second solar pump would feed a pressure tank in the shelter utility room. A hand pump was mounted on the sink counter and could pull from the storage tank when needed.

Larry couldn't determine for sure from his internet searches and questions whether or not solar panels would survive EMP so he bought an extra set for each solar pump.

Though it cleaned out both the plumbing systems and generator envelopes, Larry was able to install a three thousand gallon diesel tank and plumb it in with a fill hose at the end of the earth bermed tank, and a pipe to the utility room of the shelter, where the generator would be. He would begin filling it, slowly, with diesel treated with Pri-D.

Though Larry preferred to buy new, he began investigating used generators. He found several in the area, but they were all too expensive for what he had accumulated, or weren't what he was looking for. He wanted an 1800 rpm diesel driven generator with four to six kilowatt capacity. The Isuzu 12.5kw unit he wanted would have to wait for some time.

The smaller unit and some deep cycle batteries with a small Trace

inverter would supply limited electrical needs. It was a shelter, after all. By the time he got around to building a house, he would be able to get what he wanted. That was assuming the big balloon didn't go up before then.

Things had quieted on the world political scene, though all the old issues had not in the least gone away. Weather patterns and global warming were in the news every day now. It seemed the process had accelerated. Coasts were beginning to flood. The oceans were only an inch or so higher, on average, than in the past, but that inch was pointing out low lying spots on coastlines.

There was more cooperation in discussing the problem, but nothing was actually being done. It was obvious that man-made or not, the warming was not controllable by humans. Even most of the effects could not be countered, only prepared for. Nobody seemed to be willing to do even what they could.

Larry breathed a sigh of relief when the Spring of 2010 came and he was able to buy a used Onan generator like he wanted. It had been pulled from a wrecked motorhome, but was in good shape. He picked up Surrrette batteries and the Trace inverter from Affordable Solar, along with two small battery maintainer solar panels. One to put up, which he did, and one for storage in case something happened to the first.

Now he had reasonable power at the retreat. He continued to put money in the larger generator envelope, and started one for a moderate sized solar array, with a larger inverter and more batteries. That still left him money to continue preparations, though he wasn't as intense about it as he had been. He was in so much better shape than most people, he decided he could relax a little, while still continuing and upgrading his preps.

Even the guys on the bowling team mentioned how much more relaxed he was. Larry smiled and nodded. He didn't tell them why he was more

relaxed. They were the ones getting tense. And it was the opposite reason that he was relaxed. They were getting concerned a little about the world political situation and the wide swings of weather of the last few years.

So Larry brought up preparations one more time.

Mike's answer: "This is something the government should be doing something about. Like back in the sixties. FEMA should be doing a better job."

Marshal said, "FEMA may be slow, but they usually come through. It's all a money game. You guys probably need to look at your insurance coverage. Just about anything can be covered. You should know that, Larry, being in the business and all.

Clyde showed just a glimmer of interest. "You know, after that blizzard we had, and the heat this summer, I rinsed out a couple of milk jugs and refilled them with water. You know. In case the water goes out again.

Marshal and Mike laughed. "Wow," Marshal said, "We have a closet survivalist in our midst."

"I'm not one of those wackos!" Clyde protested. "It's just some water. And toilet paper."

Mike and Marshal howled with laughter, drawing stares from the other bowlers.

Clyde looked ashamed and Larry decided not to bring up the subject again. They'd probably throw him off the team if they found out the extent of his preps. He wondered if Clyde would keep the water and TP, or dump the water and just use up the toilet paper.

Larry bowled a 290 that night. Best score he'd ever had. It was his last

bowling game for a very long time.

Ware Ye - Chapter 5

The authorities said that when the next major terrorist attack came, it would not be the same as the last one. The authorities were wrong. In a big way. This time there were fifteen aircraft hijacked. Unlike the last time, however, the Air Force was quicker to react. Airliner or not. Passengers or not. Three of the aircraft were shot down before they got to their targets. Air Marshalls fought it out with the terrorists on two planes. One plane landed safely. The other crashed during the fight.

Passengers, not the Air Marshalls, fought with and subdued the terrorists on another aircraft. It was able to land safely. The other nine aircraft hit their targets, with redundancy. Two into the White House. Three into the Pentagon. Two into the Capital Building, One into the Diablo Canyon, California nuclear power plant. The last went into the San Onofre, California nuclear power plant.

Neither of the nuclear plants went up, as the authorities had claimed, but many had feared. In both cases the destruction of supporting buildings and equipment was enormous. The reactors at both plants were out of commission, probably permanently.

Osama bin Laden's video called for the US to abandon everything outside the US borders, or the attacks would continue unabated and would escalate to the use of nuclear weapons if the US didn't do as instructed.

Despite the fact that the destruction was on the east and west coasts, Larry didn't hesitate. He made immediate arrangements to head for the Ozarks. He told his boss he was leaving, but would be back when things settled down.

“Your fired!” was all the boss said. He went into his office and came out a few minutes later with a check. Larry’s final check.

Larry already had his few personal possessions in a copy paper box. He didn’t hang around. Instead, he bee-lined to the bank the check was written on and cashed it. He went to his bank and withdrew everything. He was lucky. He was one of the first in the bank after the attacks. He got his money. Those in the further reaches of the line that formed behind him weren’t so lucky. The bank restricted withdrawals to fifty dollars. Larry only kept enough in the bank to pay his monthly bills, but he wanted it.

Using his cell phone, Larry started to call Marshal, Mike, and Clyde. They were his closest friends. When Marshal got on the phone and heard what Larry was talking about he suggested a conference call. Marshal called Mike and Clyde and put everyone on speaker phone.

“Look, guys,” Larry said, “I was just telling Marshal I think this thing may get out of hand.”

Mike interrupted him. “Come on, Larry! It’s just another terrorist attack. The government will institute more travel restrictions and keep looking for bin Laden.”

“I’m inclined to agree,” Marshal said. “Sure, it’s worse than last time, but Osama having nukes? I really doubt it.”

“I don’t know,” Clyde said. “I think Larry may have a point.”

Marshal laughed and said, “You still playing closet survivalist, Clyde?”

Clyde remained silent. Larry then said, “Well, I’m getting out of town for a few days, just in case. I suggest you all do the same. If you don’t I know some places you can get shelter.” He gave them several addresses

of well constructed buildings in the outskirts of the city itself. Buildings with deep basements or underground garages.

Mike sounded a little less sure of himself. “You’ve thought about this before, haven’t you? We’ve been making fun of Clyde, but it’s really you that is a survivalist! I bet you have guns and everything!”

“Is that true, Larry?” asked Marshal. His voice sounded almost angry.

“Yeah. Yeah it is. I’ve been preparing for several years.”

Clyde finally spoke again. “You have a hiding place. A retreat. Probably a fallout shelter, don’t you? Look, Larry. We’re friends. Let me and Loretta go with you. Please.”

Larry hesitated. “I don’t know, Clyde. I’m really set up for one. I tried to talk to you guys about preparing, but you just laughed it off.”

When he spoke again, Larry realized that Marshal was, in fact, angry. Angry at Larry for being prepared. “Clyde’s right. We’ll all go. Enough for one for a long time is enough for many a short time. This is bound to blow over, but I’m not one to take chances.”

Mike chimed in. “Rebecca, Sally, and I are in. We’ll meet at your apartment and you can show us the way.” There was a click. Mike had hung up.

“I’ll see you in an hour,” Marshal said. “You’d better be there waiting.” It was certainly meant as a threat. Marshal cut the connection before Clyde could say anything else.

“Son of a gun!” Larry pounded the steering wheel for a moment. “Dang! I sure wasn’t planning for this.”

When he got to his apartment, he stripped it completely of his preps.

Everything went into the truck's bins and bed. He had decided to just take off and let the others fend for themselves. He'd tried to help them, but they wanted more than he was ready to give. Marshal's attitude was the most grating. Threatening him.

He didn't get away in time. Clyde drove up in his Volkswagen New Beetle. Clyde had been the most receptive before. "Maybe just him and Loretta," Larry thought.

But then Mike drove up in the Dodge minivan his wife usually drove. Mike opened the door and put one foot on the pavement. "We're ready. And we brought stuff. Supplies and things."

Before he could make a decision Marshal drove up in his Cadillac. Larry was surprised to see that Marshal was alone in the car. Marshal got out and said, "We're all here. Let's get going. There is wild talk on the news. You could be right. Anyway, I'm not taking any chances."

Larry was getting angry. "Now wait a minute you guys! I haven't agreed to any of this."

Marshal leaned into the Cadillac and when he stood up he had a Beretta Over and Under twenty gauge shotgun. "I said we are going with you." He looked at Mike and Clyde. "At least I am." He began to move the shotgun aim between Mike and Clyde. "You two guys just take off."

"Now wait a minute!" Mike cried.

Marshal turned toward him and the shotgun fired. Larry thought Marshal looked a little startled, like he wasn't intending to fire. But he had. The #9 skeet shot took a chunk out of Mike's left arm, just above the elbow. Mike screamed and fell back into the minivan. An ashen faced Clyde dropped the Beetle in reverse and sped away, zigzagging erratically, by choice or not. Larry wasn't sure.

What he was sure of was barrels of Marshal's shotgun pointing at him. Marshal edged closer to the Cadillac's open door. "I'll ride with you. You stand right there. I need to get something out of the car."

With Mike's moans filling the air, Larry made a snap decision. His hand whipped back and he began drawing the Glock 30 as Marshal began to lean into the Cadillac. But Marshal saw him and began to swing the shotgun back toward Larry. Larry followed his training. Two to the chest, one to the head.

Larry re-holstered the Glock, grabbed the truck first-aid kit and ran over to Mike's minivan. People were starting to approach. Apparently Clyde hadn't gone far. He came screeching to a halt behind the Cadillac.

Pulling a QuickClot ACS battle pack bandage from the bag, he ripped open the package with his teeth and pressed the body of the bandage against the notch in Mike's arm. The blood slowed almost immediately as the clotting agent in the bandage did its work. Working quickly, he wrapped the attached lengths of gauze around the Mike's arm and fastened them into place.

"Rebecca, you'd better take him to the hospital."

"No," Mike gasped, grabbing Larry with his good hand. "Let us go with you." Mike managed a weak laugh. "It's only a flesh wound. Please, Larry. I'm begging you. Just a while ago the news was reporting Americans attacking Arabs. Here in St. Louis. You're right. Things could get really dangerous. We can get a doc to look at my arm later. I just need something for the pain. Do you have anything?"

Larry's doctor had finally come through a couple of months previously. She'd given him prescriptions for some antibiotics and pain relievers, as well as furnish him, at cost, IV solutions and kits.

Larry gave Mike two Vicodin and helped him move to the passenger

seat. Sally, Mike and Rebecca's twelve year old daughter was hunched up on the far side of the seat, crying silently. Rebecca moved to the driver's seat.

"Are you sure about this?" Larry asked Rebecca.

"Whatever Mike wants," she replied

Larry nodded and looked over at Clyde. He sat in the Beetle, a resolute look on his face, hands on the steering wheel. He intended to follow. Larry decided to let him come to. He got into the truck without a further word and put it in gear. Before he could drive forward a green Jaguar came to a screeching halt behind Clyde.

Larry recognized Bettina, Marshal's wife. He got out of the truck, not sure how she was going to react when she saw Marshal's body. Well, she surprised him. She saw the body and asked, "Is he dead?"

When Larry nodded his head, she said, "Serves the SOB right. He was leaving me behind. Fat Chance. Lead on, cowboy. I'll keep up."

Larry got into the service truck. Bettina stepped over Marshal's body and grabbed the bag that was on the front seat of the Cadillac. Larry was already pulling out, the others following. The gathering crowd encircled the body after Bettina got in the Jag and followed the others. Through his rearview mirror, Larry couldn't see much, but someone had got in the Cadillac and was driving off. In the other direction. A couple of others climbed into it, too, as it slowed to let them in.

Larry couldn't see one young man reach down, strip off Marshal's Rolex, and take off running. By the time the body was reported and the police arrived, the body had been stripped down to its shorts. Larry had never had trouble, but he knew he hadn't been living in a very good neighborhood. He just didn't know how bad it actually was.

Instead of heading directly out of town, Larry led the little convoy to a parking lot at a medical building. Mike started protesting even before Larry got out of his truck and walked back to the minivan.

“It’s my doctor, not a hospital,” Larry explained. “I want to know that wound isn’t going to cause us complications, later.” He helped Mike throw a jacket over his shoulders to hide the blood on Mike’s shirt.

Rebecca stayed with Sally. Larry was getting a bit worried about Sally. She was still crying silently. She hadn’t spoken at all.

Again, Larry was surprised at someone’s reaction. Dr. Barbara Bellagrasso was on the young side of middle age, and had been Larry’s doctor since he’d come to St. Louis. She calmly instructed her nurse to take Mike to an examining room when the nurse went to get her with the unusual client.

Larry explained what had happened, leaving out a few details.

“You know I have to report this, don’t you?”

“I know,” Larry replied. “But I was hoping you’d let us get away before the cops showed up.”

“Just where are you going?”

“My retreat in the Ozarks.”

“Have you seen the news in the last hour or two?” Barbara asked.

Larry shook his head.

“Things are a madhouse wherever there is an Arab or Moslem population here in the States. People are rioting and killing anyone they

think is Arab or Moslem. Take a look at me. I'm neither. But what do you think?"

It was quickly obvious. "You very easily could get taken for one. I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry, Larry. Let me go with you. I could be a big help for things like..." she motioned twice with her thumb over her shoulder.

When Larry looked hesitant, Barbara continued. "I can pull my own weight in other ways. Since you talked me into giving you those prescriptions, I've done a lot of thinking about preparedness. I have some stuff at home that will pay my way."

Larry didn't doubt her. "Okay. After you take care of Mike. What about your nurse?"

Barbara shook her head. The nurse was motioning to Barbara. "Cancel the rest of my appointments today and reschedule them for later, with Julie. Actually, I'm going to be gone a while. Switch everyone over to Julie or Crandall."

"Are you sure?" When Barbara nodded, the nurse then asked. "But why?"

"I don't think you would understand."

The nurse accepted the answer. "Okay doctor. I'll take care of those appointments."

Thirty minutes later the convoy was following Barbara's Suburban toward her house. When they got there she had Larry, Clyde, Loretta, Bettina, and Rebecca follow her inside. They came out carrying boxes and plastic totes. Unlike Larry's friends, the doctor had taken Larry's cautions seriously. The interior of the Suburban was full, as was the roof

rack, when Larry took the lead of the convoy again.

Remembering just before he got in the truck, he pulled out two Motorola 1700 FRS/GMRS radios. He took one and gave it to Barbara, telling her the channel he would be on and that she was 'Tail End Charlie.' She seemed to know what that meant for she nodded and turned on the radio.

Larry took the other radio with him and got into his truck. This time they were headed for the retreat. All turned on their radios and listened to the news. It wasn't good.

As they left the metro area and entered the suburbs of St. Louis, Barbara called Larry on the radio and asked him to stop at the first fueling station. She was down to a quarter tank. Larry did so. Even though he had fuel to get all the way there, he knew the others might not.

They drove until they got to Cape Girardeau. They fueled up again, Larry topping off his tanks on general principles, before they found a motel for the night. Mike was in some pain again and Barbara gave him another pain killer and another dose of antibiotics. She also gave Sally a sedative to help her sleep.

The following morning the news was about the same. More riots and retaliation against Arabs and Moslems.

Barbara received a few scowling looks as she joined the others in a fast food place for breakfast. Mike and Sally both looked much better this morning. Bettina was showing no signs of anger at Larry about the death of her husband. Larry was beginning to think that it might not have been a good marriage.

Barbara wolfed her food and then took out a pad of paper from her skirt pocket and put it on the table. She was sharing the table with Larry and Bettina. They moved their things out of the way and Barbara began writing on the pad, sheet after sheet. Bettina reached over and picked

one up. “A prescription!” she said.

“Yeah. We need to stop at a Wal-mart, K-mart, Longs, Walgreens and big grocery stores with pharmacies. I want to get some working supplies. I’ve got quite a few things, but there was no way I could build up stocks of drugs. Everyone will take in a few prescriptions at each place and we’ll get what I need.”

“What if this all blows over?” Larry asked. “Won’t you get in trouble?”

“Probably. If this blows over. I’ll deal with it if it does.” She grinned at Larry. “I’ll tell them a crazy survivalist made me do it.”

Larry looked a little sour. “We’ll, if we’re going to do it, let’s get started. We can’t all just show up in a big group at the pharmacies. It’s going to take some time. But I guess we have it.

It took them all morning, and they would stop at a few more places on the way to the Ozarks, but Barbara was happy with what they picked up in Cape Girardeau.

Ware Ye - Chapter 5

Perhaps the United States would have knuckled under. Perhaps bin Laden would have kept his word. It became a moot point when Americans in city after city turned on anyone that could be identified as an Arab or Moslem. There was wholesale slaughter of thousands of Arabs and Moslems across the United States. When the video of the battles in the streets and in mosques aired, bin Laden ordered the nuclear devices that were already in the US to be detonated. One of the targets was St. Louis. The device was downtown, near the Mississippi River, apparently to damage the river bridges, to help cut the country in two.

It was five o'clock and they were nearing the retreat when the news broke on the radio. Clyde, following Larry, flashed his lights and sounded his horn, motioning Larry to pull over. Larry told Barbara on the radio and then eased over onto the shoulder, the convoy in line behind him.

Clyde's face was pasty white and he was shaking when the group assembled at Larry's truck. "I guess everyone heard the news. This changes things, but not much. We're only an hour away from the retreat. Clyde? Are you all right?"

"I think I'd better give him something to calm him down," Barbara said. She took his arm and they walked back to her Suburban.

"Loretta, can you drive okay?" Larry asked. She nodded.

"Okay. We'll resume the journey when Clyde gets ba..." Barbara was approaching, without Clyde.

"I put him in the Suburban. I think I need to keep an eye on him," she said when she rejoined the others. "How are you doing, Mike?"

"Okay. Pain isn't too bad. I should be okay for the next hour."

"Okay, then," Larry said. "Let's get going."

It was a rough ride for everyone when they hit the track into Larry's property. They had to abandon the Jag, minivan, and Beetle. Using the service truck and Suburban they shuttled everyone and everything the last half of the track.

By eight-thirty that evening everything was unloaded from the vehicles into the retreat and they were setting down to a hasty meal made from Larry's regular stock of foods. They watched the only TV station they

could get with the TV antenna Larry had installed. They weren't really learning anything and it was decided to go to bed early. Everyone was exhausted from the nervous energy expended that day.

The leadership of Iran, incensed at the slaughters of their people, used their newly made nuclear weapons and missiles to attack Israel in retaliation as those in the retreat slept. They were watching the news the following morning and all had ashen faces.

Already on a hair trigger, the US couldn't let that slide. The President unlocked the nuclear arsenal just after 1:00pm Eastern Time and essentially obliterated Iran.

The Russians and Chinese had treaties with Iran. They both targeted America and America responded in kind. North Korea took the opportunity to nuke South Korea and to start to invade. With missiles flying every which direction India's leaders became alarmed that Pakistan might nuke India under the cover of the other missiles. India did a preemptive strike. What was left of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal reached Indian cities.

Israel had half expected the attack from Iran, though not the magnitude. She retaliated with her nuclear arsenal against every one of her sworn enemies.

The group spent the morning arranging things to provide each family unit a bit of privacy. At the announcement that the United States was launching the attack on Iran, Larry gathered the others together to listen to the President's announcement. Clyde, Loretta, Mike, Rebecca, Sally, and Barbara sat together and prayed. Larry and Bettina weren't the religious type, but if you looked closely at each of them, their lips were moving, silently.

Larry was running the shortwave and amateur bands on the Yaesu VR-500. What he was hearing alarmed him. The TV news that the others were watching was suggesting that people keep calm, and that was about it.

Against the protests of the others, Larry disconnected all the antenna lines from their radios and attached them to a grounding panel. "If we get attacked, there may be an EMP. Electromagnetic pulse. It could burn out the electronic gear." He took a small AM/FM battery radio outside so he could get at least some information while he made a few last minute outside preparations with Clyde's help. Each of the others came out from time to time check with him.

There was no announcement. The radio squealed loudly and died. Larry knew the attack had begun, but there was no way to tell how bad it would be. He went inside and told the others. Clyde was frantic. Again Barbara took charge of him and moved him away from the others so his fear wouldn't spread to the others.

Larry battened down the hatches and checked the air filtration system and generator. Everything was fine. They'd been running the generator since they'd arrived the night before and the batteries were fully charged. He stopped the generator, and after it cooled down, serviced it, for something to do.

They all felt the ground shake lightly twice. Larry kept checking the CD V-717 remote reading survey meter. It was early evening before they began to get fallout, and from the initial readings it was fairly light. The others turned in after a light supper. Larry continued to watch the fallout meter.

He checked his keychain RadDetect keychain alarm. It wasn't showing anything, so the shelter's shielding was good. He decided to use the CD V-715 to check for hot spots all around the shelter. He didn't find any. They could use the full space of the shelter.

Larry was keeping a log of the CD V-717 readings. They showed a steeply rising outside radiation level, with a few points where it leveled off, and even dropped for a while. Larry surmised they were getting fallout from multiple strikes to their west and north-west.

The readings peaked at something over 500, the limit the CD V-717 would measure. Larry would use an Excel spreadsheet to calculate the rough peak when he had enough readings below 500. It didn't matter too much at the moment, the readings inside the shelter still showed only slightly over normal background radiation.

Larry woke up wondering if the 'Ware Ye' man had survived. He'd fallen asleep sometime during the night. He took a meter reading first and then hit the bathroom. The facilities were proving themselves more than adequate to meet their needs.

Barbara was coordinating breakfast for everyone. She seemed at home in the kitchen. Mountain House had something that everyone would eat. Though he didn't drink it, being a tea man, Larry had stocked coffee, just in case, and for bartering.

After she finished her breakfast, Bettina took Barbara aside and asked for something to help her resist the urges to smoke. Barbara had foreseen the possibility and had what Bettina needed.

Mike's arm was still bothering him, but had already started to heal. Sally seemed to be doing well with Barbara's help. Barbara wasn't a psychologist, but she did a pretty good imitation. Clyde was the one Larry was worried about. He was still withdrawn, though a bit wild eyed, Larry thought. Loretta, other than her worry about Clyde, seemed to be okay. So did Rebecca.

The fourth morning into their stay Larry got up to see Clyde passing

back and forth the length of the shelter. He grabbed Larry's arm. "I have to get out of here! I'm going crazy! It's all a big hoax. Like the moon landing. The government is just penning us up until they have soldiers on every corner. They know about this place and will be coming here to get me."

"Easy Clyde. Let me get Barbara. She can help you with something."

Clyde jumped backward. "No! Don't want any more drugs! Want out of here." His voice had been fairly soft at first, but Clyde was now shouting. The others began to wake up, asking what was going on from behind their blanket curtains.

Clyde ran over to his and Loretta's cubicle, knocking her aside as he dove inside. Larry started to get Barbara, but Clyde came back out, an over and under shotgun in his hands.

"Is that Marshal's?" Larry asked, incredulous. He'd had no idea Clyde had taken it in all the confusion after Larry had shot Marshal.

"Yeah. And you are letting me out of here right now." Loretta began begging him to put the gun down, but he just swatted her away and began moving toward the exit.

Larry had his hands out to his side, careful not to make any sudden moves. Clyde had seen him shoot Marshal. Any similar move and Larry was sure Clyde would fire. As it was, he wasn't wearing a weapon, thinking there was no need in the shelter.

With Loretta crying and begging him to stop, Clyde opened the heavy door just a bit and slipped through. The door was open only enough to allow Clyde through. The shotgun bridged the gap and Clyde dropped it in his haste to get out of the shelter.

Larry ran over and picked it up and followed Clyde. Clyde was already

at the edge of the forest, running as fast as he could. Larry shook his head and went back inside the shelter, unloading the shotgun as he did. He'd wondered for a few moments earlier if it was actually loaded. He found out it was.

Loretta was frantic. "You have to go get him! He doesn't know how to survive in the wilderness. And the fallout! Please, Larry! I'm begging you."

Larry put his hands on Loretta's shoulders and looked her in the eyes. "I can't Loretta. He just signed his death warrant going out with the radiation still this high. It will only take a few days, if he doesn't find another shelter or a cave or something, and he'll have a lethal dose. I simply won't expose myself to a similar fate.

Loretta bowed her head into her upraised hands. Larry gratefully let Rebecca and Barbara gently take her and begin to calm and console her. Sally was looking on, wide eyed. Mike went to her and took her back to their cubicle.

Again Larry was shocked at Bettina's attitude. "One less. More for us," she said with a shrug of her shoulders.

Larry untucked his shirt and went to put on the Glock 30 and a pair of magazines. The shirt covered it fine, but Larry wasn't too concerned whether anyone saw it anyway and didn't like it. He was tired of having a shotgun pointed at him.

When Loretta went to the bathroom Larry searched their cubicle. He found a box of 20 gauge shells half full. He took them and added the shotgun and shells to his arms locker, again not caring if anyone took note.

Loretta was withdrawn the next few days, but Barbara said she was doing okay. The rest had adapted to shelter living without much

problem. The fact that Larry had quite a few books and DVD's helped. The yard sale board games, too. What helped the most, Larry thought, was the fact that the entire basement was a shelter. There was room to move around. Room to be alone, if wanted. That was the important one for Larry. The ability to get away from the others for a few hours.

Larry suited up on the eighth day, after the radiation had fallen below 1.0r, and went outside to take a look. On the off chance that mutant zombie bikers were waiting for them to come out, he took the PTR-91 with a 100-round drum. He also had the Glock 21 on a belt around his waist.

There were no MZB's. Only silence. The grass and trees were coated with the fallout dust. But the sky looked stormy. If it rained it would wash much of the fallout to the ground, and with the slope of the property, away to the gullies that drained the area.

Larry told them what he'd seen, after he had decontaminated and come inside. Loretta asked him if he saw any signs of Clyde. When he said no, she walked away, looking forlorn.

After fourteen days in the shelter the radiation was at 0.50r Larry took another look around. Still silence. But either the other day when he had been out or sometime since, it had rained. The grass and the forest looked fresh and green under the noonday sun, despite the haze. At Larry's urging they all stayed in the shelter for another week.

Larry had a couple of extra Tyvek suits and plenty of dust masks. Two people at a time would suit up with him and go outside to start decontamination. The radiation was still 0.30, but everyone enjoyed getting out for a day or two.

It was decided, by Larry, they would stay at the shelter until the radiation level fell below 0.10. That wouldn't be for another five weeks.

Everyone was able to go outside for a few minutes a day, but they spent most of the time in the shelter.

Finally the day came when the radiation read below 0.1r. They didn't have to stay in the shelter. Of course, there wasn't any other place to stay, but they now had the freedom to go exploring.

There was an argument about who was to go. Everyone wanted to. Mike strongly objected that he was to stay behind with the others. Only Larry and Bettina would go. Larry chose Bettina because she was the only one, besides Mike, that agreed to go armed.

From what Bettina had said, she was no stranger to firearms. Larry believed her. Mike, armed, with no training might very well be a liability. They'd do something about that, soon. Unless, of course, things weren't as bad as many pre-war Apocalyptic Fiction writers made it out to be. Larry had his fingers crossed.

Bettina chose to take the Beretta 20 gauge. She'd shot it before. Larry would have liked to have been backed up by a little more firepower, but decided something you know was better than something you didn't.

He gave Mike the Savage 99A, for his comfort, and showed him how to load and fire it, to calm him down. He didn't want to be there without 'protection'.

They had already removed the tarps that they'd put over the truck and the Suburban and decontaminated the vehicles. Larry drove cautiously, not to stir up the dust that had accumulated. He had decided not to wear the Millennium respirator, but he and Bettina both sported P-100 masks and safety glasses.

The nearest town was normally twenty minutes away from the entrance to Larry's two track road. He took an hour to get there. They passed half a dozen stalled cars. "EMP," Larry told Bettina when they passed the

first one. They also had to skirt three wrecks. Two one-car accidents and one involving a car, a pickup, and a semi. The two one-car were fairly minor. There was no signs of anyone around.

The one with three vehicles involved made them gag when they stopped, got out, and went up to it on foot. The car had caught fire. There were three partially burnt corpses in it. They couldn't tell for sure what the other two vehicles might have, or did contain. The pickup and the cab of the semi were crushed beyond recognition. Both vehicles had the remains of rivers of blood flowing from them. It had been a high speed crash.

Larry and Bettina were even more somber than they had been. When they reached the town, it was even more eerie. There was simply no one about. Cars were abandoned, some with a door still standing open. Zigzagging around the vehicles they drove through town, and then back, using some of the back streets. They saw nothing. No dogs, no cats, no birds, no people. There were no corpses on the street.

“I don't know, Bettina. What do you think?”

“Beats me,” she replied. “There should be some survivors, shouldn't there?”

“I sure would have thought so. I don't want to try to go to the next town this trip. Let's go back and I'll listen to the radios some more. I've heard a few transmissions, but I think the atmosphere my still be ionized. There is a lot of static.”

The others were just as disappointed and Larry and Bettina when they got back and told them what they had encountered.

As if she hadn't heard them, Loretta asked, “Did you see Clyde?”

Larry just shook his head. He fired up the Yaesu and began searching

the bands. There were definitely other survivors, from the sound of the radio traffic. A transceiver had been on his list of items to get, but he'd figured monitoring was more important. He could hear the others, but not talk to them.

He tried the Cobra public service band scanner next. He programmed it for auto find and let it begin scanning. Almost immediately he picked up a sheriff's department transmission. It almost sounded like he was in a firefight, if the background sounds were any indication. When the deputy mentioned five attackers, Larry was sure of it. The others gathered around and listened to the transmissions.

They gathered from what they were hearing that the deputy had run into an ambush, but had backup on the way. After a few minutes, and the arrival of the backup, the deputy was able to disengage.

The others looked awed at what they had heard. "Law is on the job. That's a good sign," Mike said. The others seemed pleased, too.

Larry didn't say anything, but he wasn't so sure how good it was. There was the distinct possibility that the law were the bad guys. Probably not, but Larry wanted his first contact with them to be a one way meeting. He wanted to observe what they were doing before he made contact.

When Larry said he would be going out the next day, but alone, the others all objected.

"Let's just all go in," Mike said. "You heard the radio. The law is on the job. There must be a recovery effort going on. We can't stay here forever." The last was said almost pleadingly.

"Look, Mike... I know you want out of here. But I feel responsible for everyone here. Give me just this one trip before we make arrangements to get everyone somewhere else."

Mike sighed, but he nodded. The rest of the group turned and went about their business. Larry went to the communications desk and began searching the bands again for any clues about what was going on in the world, particularly the local part of it.

Larry took both the PTR-91 and Benelli M4. He had the Glock 21 in a belt holster and the Glock 30 in an ankle holster. A 100-round Beta C-Mag was in the PTR-91 and he had four 30-rounders on the LBE. The Marauder pack with the BOB contents and water bladder were lying on the seat of the truck.

He took the left hand turn onto the county road this time, instead of the right he'd taken the day before. Larry hadn't been on the pavement long when he saw smoke ahead. The road twisted and turned, so he didn't know if the smoke was coming from something on the road ahead, or out in the forest. He slowed down even more as he got closer.

He went around a curve in the road and saw that the smoke was coming from somewhere up a gravel road to his left. Larry stopped the truck and debated with himself for a few moments. And then he put the truck in gear and turned up the gravel road.

Driving slow enough not to raise a dust cloud he drove until he was certain the smoke was coming from just around another curve in the road. Larry pulled the truck off the road, turning it around in the process. He wanted to be able to get in it and take off quickly if the need arose.

Leaving the shotgun in the truck, he locked it and made his way into the forest, in the direction of the smoke. Larry's nose began to twitch. He smelled beef grilling. When he got to the edge of an open field he saw what was causing the smoke.

A pit had been dug, filled with brush, and set ablaze. A steer was on the burning brush. A tractor sat nearby. Two men were standing near it, watching the flames. One man carried a single shot shotgun, the other

had what appeared to be a Colt Government Model 1911 pistol stuck in his belt, cross draw style.

Larry had to make another couple of decisions. Approach the men or not, and if he did, how to be carrying the PTR, if at all. Well, he wasn't going to find out much if he didn't talk to them. He didn't want to look too threatening. He slung the PTR and stepped into the clearing. Larry raised his right hand into the air and called out, "Hello!"

Both men started, and the one with the shotgun shifted it slightly. Larry prepared to dive back into the forest, but the man made no further move. The man with the pistol put his hand on it, but didn't draw.

Larry started walking toward them and they just waited for him, not leaving the possible protection of the tractor. When he got close, Larry said, "Hi. My name is Larry. What's going on? I saw smoke and came to investigate. I haven't seen anyone since I came out of the shelter."

"Anthrax, we think," said the man with the shotgun. "I'm Joe Maxwell." Larry held out his hand for a hand shake, but the other man said, "No touching. Don't know what you might have, and you don't know what we might have. Have some masks, but didn't expect to run into anyone. So keep your distance, mister."

Joe grinned and said, "Grouchy here is Barry Cain." Barry nodded just slightly.

"Anthrax, you say," Larry said, looking over at the fire. It not only smelled of cooking meat but of burning diesel. Larry didn't comment on it.

"Don't know fer sure," said Barry. "Not gonna take any chances. Not with things being the way they are. Better to lose one than... Uh... more than one."

Larry nodded in return. He understood the man's reluctance to give away information like how big their cattle herd was. "I imagine so." He changed the subject abruptly. "Do either of you know what happened to everyone in town. I stopped there yesterday and didn't find anybody. I was sure there would be some survivors."

"T'was," Barry said, now talkative. "But the army came through and took them to a relocation center. Anyone that wanted to stay with local relatives with the means to support themselves got to stay."

"Was it forced?" Larry asked.

"Nah. Not really. You had to show you could make it where you were, or go somewhere else on your own, or, go to the camp. Joe here is my brother and law. We married sisters. His family came to stay. We got a right good cellar we holed up in till the army came by."

Joe spoke up. "Actually, the National Guard."

"Same thing," Barry replied. "Like I was sayin', from what the general said..."

Larry saw Joe mouth the word "Captain."

Barry continued, unknowing, "was that a few folks stayed with farmer family or friends, a few loaded up and headed out on their own. The rest went to the camp. Better than starving to death, I guess. The General said it would be some months before food deliveries started up again."

"Pretty much any deliveries to rural areas," Joe added. "Got to be self-sufficient or they get you to move. But they ain't making people go by gun point or nothin', if that's what you're asking. Noticed your artillery. Expecting the war to come local?" Joe was grinning.

"War's over," Barry said.

“Just don’t like to take chances. Used to be a lot of talk about all kinds of gangs would appear and try to take what you have.”

“Cops doing pretty good there,” Barry said. “Was a few no-gooders, but they took care of most of them. Last we heard there was one more gang, but they’ve been closing in on them. You saying the army ain’t been by to see you?”

Larry shook his head.

“You seem to be doing okay. Ain’t real skinny or nothin’. And how’d you get here? Walk?”

“Truck’s parked back a ways. Didn’t want to take any chances.”

Barry looked interested. “Gas or diesel?”

“Diesel,” Larry replied, hesitating just for a second. “Why?”

Rather proudly, Joe said, “Barry’s been makin’ and running bio-diesel for more’n year.”

Barry’s looked turned shrewd. “Got any canned fruit left? We’d trade.”

Larry didn’t need any diesel at the moment. For quite a while, actually, but here was a chance to develop some goodwill. “I’ll have to check and see what’s left. But, yeah, I think I do. How much for a gallon or two? One can for two gallons? Two cans?”

“It’s for the young’uns, you see.” Barry was obviously thinking it over. “I’d say a can a gallon ought to be about right. You come back with as much fruit as you can spare and we’ll give a gallon of bio-diesel for each can. Regular can. Not one of them little pop tops. We’ll take ‘um, but it’ll take four of those for a gallon.”

“These will be regular cans,” Larry assured Barry. “Where and how can I get in touch with the authorities?”

“They’re working out of Poplar Bluff. They’re not traveling any more than they have to. Got a deal with them, too, for the bio-diesel. Just call them on the radio.” Barry gave Larry a frequency to use.”

“Don’t have a transmitter,” replied Larry.

“You want, we’ll call them on the radio and tell them where you are.”

When Larry looked hesitant, Joe spoke up. “Or you can head in to Willow Springs. That’s where they’re dispatching the locals from. Cops are in the same shape as the National Guard. Got to watch their fuel. If you meet one on the road, be careful. They’ve been ambushed a couple of times by some redneck hillbillies. They ain’t shooting first and asking questions later, but you better have some good answers for the questions they do ask first.”

“They grabbing guns?” Larry asked.

“Don’t know of any,” Barry said. “Ceptin’ the bad guys.”

“What are they doing about scavengers?”

“Huh?”

“People taking things they can use from abandoned buildings and such.”

“Don’t rightly know,” Barry said, rubbing his chin. “Joe, watcha think?”

“Well... Some would say it ain’t a crime if you don’t get caught. I’m not saying anything. I’m just saying.

“And by the way. You being dressed like one of them survivalist people we hear about, you got others at your place? A doctor maybe? A nurse? Even a dentist. We got some sickness than needs seen about. The National Guard won’t respond unless it’s life and death.”

Barry added, “We’ll pay in diesel.”

“I’ll let her make her own deal. I’m sure she will come. She’s a good doctor.” Larry started to turn around.

“Hang on just a minute,” Joe said. “I want to talk to Barry for a minute. Private like.”

Larry nodded and stood calmly as the two moved away from him and began to whisper back and forth for a minute or so. The stepped back to him and Joe said, “Look it. We have one spare radio we can lend you. You got more firepower than we do. If you’re willing to come lend a hand if them rednecks show up here, we’ll let you use it ‘til you can get one of your own.”

“Really?” Larry asked, surprised. He wasn’t sure he would have done the same if the situation was reversed. “I’m not ex-military, but I’d do what I could.”

Barry nodded and Joe reached climbed into the cab of the truck and brought down a handheld radio. He gave it to Larry. Larry was impressed. It was a model he would have chosen himself. He favored Yaesu and the one Joe gave him was a Yaesu VX-7RB 6m-70cm.amateur radio handi-talkie.

“Takes double A’s,” Joe said. “We don’t have many spares. You got some?”

Larry nodded. “Some rechargeables and solar charger.”

Joe pulled a scrap of paper from his shirt pocket, and a pen. He wrote down the frequencies to use and a regular time to check in each day.

“Thanks. I’ll take good care of it.”

Ware Ye - Chapter 6

After he got back to the retreat and explained what he’d learned, Mike was the first to speak. “I think we should head for Poplar Bluff. Considering what we’ve been hearing about the cities that got hit, I don’t think we can go back to our old lives in St. Louis. We can get back into civilization and go from there. They’re bound to need cleanup workers. Rebecca and I can do that.

Rebecca agreed with him. So did Loretta. Bettina looked uncertain for several long moments and then nodded. She’d go, too. Barbara, on the other hand, wanted to think about it. They discussed it a little more, and made plans to go to Poplar Bluff two days hence. That gave Barbara time to go to Barry’s ranch and do her doctor’s work.

It turned out to be common flu and it was just making the rounds in the families’ close quarters. Barbara spent two hours at the house while Barry took Larry for a tour of the farm operation.

The farm was a medium scale operation. They had a few head of cattle, three breeding sows and a boar. There was a large chicken house. They also had a large garden, but Barry mentioned they wanted to increase it in size to have plenty of tradable foodstuffs in the future.

On an impulse, Larry asked Barry, “Would you trade some simple labor for some of that food? I don’t know squat about farming, but I can do common labor and I know there is a lot of that on a farm.”

“Well, now... Let’s see,” Barry scratched the stubble on his chin. “Our families’ children are still pretty young to put in a full day’s work. We could probably use a good part time hand. Just some of the time, when there’s more to do than what we got to do with.”

“I’ll take it.” Larry started to reach out and shake Barry’s hand, but remembered the earlier admonishment and pulled his hand back before it really came up.

Larry was leaning against the truck, whistling, when Barbara came out of the house. “What are you so cheerful about?” she asked as she climbed into the seat on the passenger side of The Chevy.

“Just got a part time job,” he told her, grinning. “I’m going to work for Barry for eats.”

Barbara smiled in return. She opened the large should bag she used as purse and doctor’s bag. In it were three lengths of homemade summer sausage. “Seems they process much of their own meat.”

Larry started the truck and put it into gear. Barbara filled him in on the health condition of Barry’s extended family.

Happy with the outcome of the trip, they rode back in silence. They found the others just as happy, with the thought they would be leaving the next day. Everything they would be taking was packed up well before the evening meal.

Barbara had already tried the Suburban. It was a 1994 model diesel. Larry had been worried that the EMP might have zapped the electronic fuel injection circuitry, but it started right up. Such was not the case when they got to where they’d left the Jag, minivan, and Beetle. All were heavily computer dependent. None would start, or even try to start.

“Well, it’s about what I expected,” Larry said. “We’ll have to take you

all in using the pickup and Suburban. There were moans and groans from the others, but he had told them not to count on being able to use their vehicles. They all climbed in the two vehicles and headed for Poplar Bluff.

There were signs of life in some of the small towns along the way, but it was very limited. Poplar Bluff, in contrast, seemed to be bustling. There were quite a few vehicles moving, some of them newer models. The National Guard was well in evidence. Larry stopped the truck at a check point at the edge of town.

“What’s your business?” the Guardsman asked.

“Bringing in some survivors from the Ozarks,” replied Larry. “Both of us.”

“Okay. Go here. They’ll take care of you.” He handed Larry a set of instructions and rough map. It took them twenty minutes to get to the city hall. It really was bustling. Vehicles were pulling into and out of the parking lot constantly. There were some bicycles and even two horses.

Larry helped them unload the two vehicles and handed the papers to Barbara. She told him, “I may be back for some of those medical supplies if they’re too short here. I’ve decided to join whatever mobile medical service they have going. Here. Give me a hug. Thanks for taking me in. I doubt I would have survived all this in St. Louis.

The others followed suit, thanking Larry profusely, but quickly. They seemed as anxious to get away from him as they did to go inside. “Oh well,” Larry said to himself. “Didn’t do it for the gratitude.”

When it was Bettina’s turn she didn’t try to hug him or shake his hand. Instead, she took a ring off her finger and gave it to him. “I pay my way.”

Larry started to protest as the others walked away. Bettina joined them, waving one hand in the air. “Don’t worry, sweetie. I got more.”

He shook his head and walked back to the truck, and went to look for a place to stay overnight. Going back now would put him in late and he didn’t want to risk it. One of the motels was operating, but taking only metal. A tenth ounce gold coin. Steep, Larry thought, but he forked it over. It did include a meal, he found out. An MRE. Meatloaf.

Larry left early the next morning. The way he figured it, they’d only used up the one year of regular food and just a little of the LTS stuff. He had two years of food, easy. Diesel for that long. Ways to get more, easy. Some gold and silver coins. A very nice diamond ring. There were lots of vacant houses. He should be able to find one he could use and keep the retreat as a retreat. Build a house on it as he got the extra funds. It would be slow, but he was still young.

Lost in his musings he almost didn’t see the man standing in the middle of his two-track road. The man was raising some kind of long gun. Larry hit the brakes, threw the truck into reverse and sped away, weaving wildly. The man ran toward the truck, firing as he ran. As far as Larry could tell, none of the rounds hit the truck. With at least two curves between them, Larry quickly turned around and continued for some distance.

Hoping he was far enough away, Larry pulled the truck off the track and deep into the forest. He made a wide loop, until he was pointed back the way he had come. He took a couple of minutes to calm himself down and then geared up. He had his already loaded LBE in one of the truck bins.

Larry shrugged into it and put the Glock 21 in the flap holster. He added the ankle holster and the Glock 30. Picking up the PTR he checked the drum magazine. It was seated just fine. Larry began to make his way back toward the retreat, paralleling the track, but staying well into the

forest. When he got near the point of encounter he slowed down considerably and moved as quietly as he could toward the track.

He spotted the man, but didn't approach any closer. Larry eased further in the direction of the track, taking even more care. And there he was. A second sentry, out of sight until needed. Larry turned and made his way deeper into the forest, and then turned toward the retreat once more.

Larry heard the others before he saw them. There was loud hammering and cursing. They were trying to break through the outer door of the retreat. Circling the open area, Larry made sure there weren't any more lurking about. When he was sure he laid down at the edge of the forest, folded down the bipod of the PTR and sighted in one of the men. He immediately targeted the other man after firing at the first.

Larry just wasn't sure where he hit the first one. He'd fallen down, but that didn't mean anything. He'd landed behind the entrance enclosure. The second man had fallen in view and he was obviously dead. Larry made double sure. He put a round into the man's skull.

Suddenly an arm appeared around the enclosure and snapped off three rounds from a major caliber handgun. Larry didn't have a lot of time. The other two would probably be showing up soon. They had a way to run, but Larry was sure they were on the way.

Larry waited quietly, checking the entrance of the road into the clearing. He was sure the man would show himself, to see if his firing had hit anything. Sure enough, there was a head creeping out from behind the enclosure, very cautiously. "Hey! You! Show yourself! See? I'm throwing out my gun."

Larry didn't fall for it. When he had a good sight picture he fired. There was no doubt this time. The man was dead. Larry shifted a little and aimed toward the track opening. The two men were still running when they entered the clearing. They drew up short when they saw their

companions' bodies. It was all the chance Larry needed. He dropped both of them. His firearms training sessions had just paid off. Just like they had with Marshal.

He waited until the sun was getting low before he cautiously approached the dead men. Yep. They were dead. It was a struggle not to throw up. He was surprised at the urge. There hadn't been one when he shot and killed Marshal. He left the bodies where they lay and went to get the truck. It was much faster going on the track, but he went cautiously, just in case.

With the truck back at the retreat, Larry struggled to get the bodies loaded into the bed of the truck. It wasn't as easy as it looked in the movies. He skipped supper and went straight to bed.

Larry was awakened by pounding on the side entrance door. Opening a spy hole, pistol in hand, he said, "Who is it? What do you want?"

"Highway Patrol. Open up. We want to talk to you. Something about four dead men in a truck out here."

What was he going to do? Wait for them to get C-4 and blow the door and then come in shooting? Use the escape tunnel and ambush them? He didn't think so. "Let me get some clothes on."

They didn't have much choice. They didn't have anything with them that would open the door.

Larry locked away all the weapons after he dressed and then went to the door. He said through the spy hole, "I'm coming out. I'm unarmed." He unlocked the door and walked out, hands over his head.

"We don't have a warrant for you," said the first trooper. "You can put your hands down."

Another trooper, toothpick in the side of his mouth asked, “You whack those four?”

They weren’t reading him his rights, but that might not mean anything later. Still, he had done it, and they could probably still do ballistics tests. Larry nodded.

The third trooper looked slightly amazed. “By yourself? Someone else in there?”

“No. Just me.” The Highway Patrol troopers were acting nonchalant. That could be bad or good. Larry wasn’t sure.

“Did you recognize one of them?” the first trooper asked.

Larry couldn’t help the look of surprise. “Recognize one? No.”

“Come on over.” The first trooper led the little group to the back of the truck. “That one, he said. “It’s the contractor that put in this place.”

“So that’s how they found it! I picked a remote spot to prevent things like that.”

“Small world,” said the second trooper. “Think you could drop them off in Willow Springs? Seeings as you got them loaded.”

The third trooper grinned. “Clarence doesn’t like getting blood all over his uniform.”

“Look who’s talking,” retorted the second trooper. “Who was complaining about the last one we hauled in, in the bed of your cruiser?”

It was the first he’d thought about how they got here. That track really wasn’t a car road. He almost laughed. There were three of the most decrepit looking pickup trucks you could imagine parked nearby. He

hadn't noticed them before.

Larry asked, "Well, how did you guys show up here?"

The first trooper explained. "The guy he told was part of the gang. His conscience began to bother him. Not the thievery, but the raping and wanton killing. He turned himself in and told us about this place, hoping we would go easy on him if he helped us capture the rest. "We were coming up here to ask you to let us set a trap."

The third trooper said, "We were too late. We saw the marks on the door. They were obviously trying to get in. A man has the right to protect his place."

"Should I bring in their weapons when I bring in the bodies?"

The first trooper smiled slightly. "No, that won't be necessary. We'll take those along with us in our vehicle. We thought we'd just escort you in. Kind of a victory parade. This was the last of the guys we've been trying to catch." His look hardened. "They killed one of my best friends. And his wife and daughter after... You did the world a service."

Larry was still a little anxious they might try to detain him when they arrived in Willow Springs, but they had let him bring his own weapons after he'd given them the weapons he recovered from the bandits.

He breathed a sigh of relief when they let him leave after he filled out a police report and signed it, and they had looked it over. Larry asked about scavenging things from abandoned places.

"The first trooper said, "Everyone is doing it. We tried to limit it at first, but as long as the property is obviously abandoned, we're letting it slide. We do ask that you note down what you took and from where. Leave a copy in a protect spot where you get the stuff and keep a record for yourself. The Guard is planning on a recovery sweep to get anything

useful that is left.”

Larry nodded. That was all he needed to know. He had the will and the means to scavenge. He should be able to fill in the gaps in his preparations. He wasn't leaving things to chance. After all, TOM, on Frugal's Forums, said things always come in threes.

End *****

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