

## Lessons Learned.

Grumbling about the homework that he couldn't locate, Adam rifled through the backpack as he sat in the back of the open-hatched, older model Explorer. He glanced at his watch and knew he still had a good 15 minutes to make his next class. He had just dumped the contents of a folder and began shaking the textbook by its binder to loosen any hidden papers jammed within, when he began to notice something wasn't quite right around him.

He felt his ears pop, and the air vibrate, as a distant rumble seemed to roll right through him. Standing quickly, and knocking his head on the open hatch-back as in the process, he noticed students all over paused, pointing and standing with eyes glued and mouths agape at something behind him. While rubbing his head he turned and focused at the campus distraction.

"Oh. Sh\*t" he exclaimed and turned to dive into the back of his SUV as the first shockwave hit. Not that it would do much good, but managed to barely snap the door down as he, and the vehicle were lifted into the air and sent tumbling 25 feet into the nearby Arts building. Amazingly the Ford landed on its feet, and he peered out the cracked windows to watch the event unfold around him. He had been fortunate, and much of the shockwave had already dissipated at this distance, but it was still substantial enough to send classmates, other vehicles, and a variety of large objects airborne. In the distance he saw the boiling black and brown mushroom as it ascended into the heavens..."Dear God" he thought. As the realization of what had just happened began to set in, a hundred different things rushed his mind at once.

"Oh sh\*t"

"Couldn't happen here..."

"No way"

"Mom and Dad...they both work downtown..."

"Kid brother at home alone today?"

"Oh sh\*t"

"What do I do? What do I do?"

The thoughts and panic ran for a few minutes when one thought rang out above the others...

"Fallout!"

Being only a 10-minute drive from home and knowing his kid-brother was there alone, he managed to focus on a plan. Faint and feeble, it gave him a direction...something to do that needed to be done right now.

Adam jumped out of the back and notice the "other pack" that his Dad had placed in there and forced him to carry. He always thought it was stupid, but just wrote it off as a "Dad-thing". The only reason he really kept it in there was because of the cool little H&R .22 Magnum target pistol his Dad had put in there with about 200 rounds of ammo. Adam had just thought that it was cool. He pulled that pack with him as he slid up front into the drivers seat. The old bucket still started. He was amazed, considering the tumble and that EMP stuff he'd heard about. It had ticked him off that his Dad had made him drive the old bucket, saying "The insurance is cheaper", or "It's paid for", or "It's a four wheel drive. You may need that one day." As he put it in gear he heard other students who had managed to survive the shockwave, trying to start their nice new cars. Adam smiled to himself as he made his way over the curbs and buckled pavement. "Guess Dad wasn't such a big kook" he thought to himself.

The thought worried him. He hoped for his parents safety and felt the anguish well up inside. Pushing it

back down he sped up the ramp onto the tollroad. At first he was shocked at the lack of traffic, but realized that the traffic had all been blown off into the medians. In any event he had a straight shot in at least two lanes and opened the old Ford up as much as he dared. There was still a large amount of debris and damage to scoot around, but his intent was to outrun the fallout that would soon be raining down.

He unzipped the main pocket of the bug out bag, as his Dad had called it and rumbled through it. He pulled out the pistol and set it in the seat, and continued until he found what he was looking for. Potassium Iodide tablets. He quickly rattled out a dose and sucked on the metallic flavored pills until he could dig a water bottle from the pack. Five minutes later he was off the interstate and weaving his way toward his house, cutting through medians, parking lots and lawns as necessary. Within 3 minutes he was pulling into the driveway. The house was in a secluded subdivision, hardly noticeable from the main drag. Grabbing the pack he burst through the front door and found his kid brother holding a phone and tv remote, neither working and power was out. They both sighed with relief, but Adam addressed the 13 year old directly. Adam was only 18 himself, but knew he had to get things done quick.

“Joey...quick, let the dogs out for a few minutes and come back to help me.”

“What’s going on bubba?”

“Nuke attack! We have to get ready and quick. Almost out of time.”

“Ok...” Joey paused. “What about Mom and Dad?”

“I don’t know, but we could die if we wait on them. I’m sure Dad has a “what to do if” list around here somewhere. Grab any pans and pitchers in the kitchen that will hold water and start filling them. Get the dogs back in here in” he glanced at his watch ”two minutes.”

“K” Joey said and set about the kitchen filling anything that would hold water.

Adam grabbed armloads of canned and boxed food from the cupboard and took them to the hurricane safe room his Mom and Dad had built into a large walk-in closet. There were already plenty of supplies there, but he was taking no chances. They secured the stores, grabbed the dogs and their food and locked the house up tight.

Adam found the “what to do if list” readily and read quickly to make sure his bases were covered....”Eew” he said out loud.

“What?” Joey asked.

“We’re gonna have to poop in a 5 gallon can for a while, and it will have to stay with us too. “

“Yuk! What about the dogs?”

“Guess we’re scoopin for a couple weeks”

“No Way!” Joey exclaimed.

“Well, probably not, but Dad had a Rad meter in here, so we’ll be able to take them to the garage for a minute or two in a few days.””

“Huh?”

“We’re just gonna have to make due the best way we can Joey. Mom and Dad may or may not have made it. We’ll just have to do our best and wait it out. Mom and Dad left all sorts of instructions and there are games and books and junk in here too. We’ll be ok, we’ll just have to pray for Mom and Dad.”

The structure was a reinforced concrete room that had a 2-foot deep, water reservoir mounted on the top for storage during a hurricane. Adam silently hoped that the fallout way out here wouldn’t be too bad and that the concrete and water would give them a measured amount of attenuation and protection from the radiation. Maybe along with the tablets they stood a chance. He added tablets to the dogs’ water too. He didn’t know if it would help them, but it couldn’t hurt.

Adam closed the steel door and lit the lantern. “Looks like we’ll be in here for at least 2 weeks Joey”

Joey just sighed and rolled his eyes. ”Great.....just great”.

## Part 2

Dad rubbed his head, groggily trying to put together what may have just happened. He had bent over to pick up an ink pen that he had dropped, and that’s really all he could remember. There was very little light, heavy smoke and dust in the air, and an excruciating pain in his left shoulder. To make it even more difficult, he seemed to be confined to a very small space and had little room to maneuver.

After a few more moments of gathering his thoughts, David realized that he was somehow under his desk, and also realized that his satchel/briefcase must be under there with him somewhere. As he patted the area, his hand came upon the item in question. Opening a side pocket, he found the small mag-lite and illuminated the area.

He was indeed under the desk. And he had perhaps 10 feet that he could move around in. The ceiling and walls had collapsed on and around the desk. What ever had happened, it had been enough to throw him under the desk and against the wall before everything began to fall in on him. The L-shaped desk had taken most of the impact. Had he been standing or even sitting there instead of bending over, he may not have fared so well.

So what had happened? It was either a massive earthquake or some type of bomb, and he was betting on the latter. As he pondered it, he began to realized that it was either a very large bomb or one very close, and his business was far enough from downtown to know there was nothing of importance to hit out there. A quick check of the cell phone and the lack of any type of response reinforced his growing fear. “Dead...EMP...a Nuke!” he thought. It washed over him and the panic, and bile rose in his throat. “Think! Think! Get it together Dave. What have I got available, what can I do with what I have.”

He had access to his bottom drawer fortunately. He stored a ton of canned and pre-packed lunch foods and snacks in there. He also had a couple fruit drinks and a six-pack of bottled water. “That’s a start at least.” He knew he had a well packed bug out bag out in his truck, but getting there may prove rather difficult at this point. He wasn’t allowed to keep his firearm in the office so it was also in the truck. It wouldn’t do much for him at the moment anyhow.

Rummaging through the satchel, he took 3 Tylenol to numb the pain in his shoulder, and remover the Leatherman multi-tool that he kept in there also. He also located the multi-band radio that he kept on his

desk, but it was in sad shape. “No power” he thought. “Had to be a nuke. I’ve got to get under cover somehow and quick!”

He dumped everything non-essential from the satchel, and loaded all the food, drink and medicine that he could find. He had spied some light filtering through the rubble and it just may be a way out. Ignoring the pain in his shoulder, he forced his way through the debris and somehow found his way out, thankful that his building was only a single story. It was eerily silent outside, as he made his way quickly to his truck. Knowing that it wasn’t going to start he crawled in and tried anyhow. “Nope”, he thought. “Worth the shot anyhow.” He grabbed his bug out bag, gingerly strapped on his Glock .40. Moving the seat forward he removed a carefully concealed Mossberg 500 and ammo pouch and laid all his gear in the back of the truck to consolidate as much as possible. He knew there was a very old abandoned warehouse just across the road that had what at one time had been a mission with an underground soup kitchen and pantry. Most of everything above the ground was flattened, but he hoped that the separate underground entrance at the side were still open.

His clock was ticking and he knew he had one more very painful thing to deal with...his dislocated shoulder. Wrapping his belt around his wrist he tied it off to the side rail of the truck and slowly pulled back, groaning as the socket slipped back into place. Heaving up the Mossberg he slipped quickly across the road and found the doorway clear. Kicking solidly against it, he managed to get the old door to give way and allow him access. He removed the mag-lite from his pocket and entered for a quick look. The basement was in relatively good shape considering the tons of brick and rubble that use to extend 3 stories above. “Should be enough shielding. I’ll just have to make do.” Dave quickly exited, and made two trips to the truck to get all of his supplies. Once back inside he began piling anything in front of the door that he could find, and using old towels and blankets to seal around any cracks that he could find in the windowless basement. He then moved several old tables together, covered them with anything loose including stacks of books and magazines. “Hmm...home sweet home” he thought, and moved all of his gear into the small space. He knew his big dilemma would be water and liquids. Fortunately the bug out bag had three, liter sized bottles that were recently filled and purification tablets in case he needed them. He set up his camp and removed the Kearney fallout Radiation meter that he had built and secretly hoped that he had constructed it right. Especially since he had one in each bug out bag that he had assembled, and 3 more in the safe room back home. He set up the device and sat, quietly staring at the unit.

It wasn’t until he had settled in that he gave himself time and recourse to think about his family and what had become of them.

The boys...well, Adam was probably at school, and maybe far enough out that the college didn’t get much. He remembered that his youngest son was home alone that day, and hoped that some way, by some miracle, Adam could get home, or maybe one of the neighbors had gone to check on him. His wife worked on the second level of a 5 story building downtown. Her office was right across from the fire escape. If she had the chance, he knew she would make for the underground parking structure where she parked. From there though he had no idea. All he had now was prayer and faith to get him through. The next two weeks would be a trial that he wasn’t sure he could wait out.

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As Adam read through his father notes, he realized that he had made a critical mistake. Grabbing the Duct tape and rolls of plastic, he and his brothers covered the windows that had broken or cracked due to the blast. There were only two that had faced the blast and shattered. Everything else was intact for the most part. It would be the last venture out of the safe room for several days. The dogs were confused, especially when it was time to go outside. Adam had fixed a small section of the room and laid down plastic and

PeePee pads that his father had put on the shelf. The dogs would eventually catch on.

Time did not pass quickly for them. It was excruciatingly slow. The games and books did little to enhance their spirits. The lack of news and information was also mind-numbing. Adam discovered a small metal, grounded container that housed a small radio, Television, batteries and hand held radio units. Though he checked them daily and often, there were no broadcasts of any type for several days.

Adam was a typical teenager. Did his own thing. Knew everything. Now suddenly the only things that were making sense to him were the things his Dad and Mom had done with this preparation stuff. It caused him to question a lot of his “new age” beliefs. As he thumbed through one of the many notebooks that his father had written, there was one notebook attached to an old bible with a rubberband. The notebook title just read “About Faith.”

Adam decided it was maybe time to read that one, and also read it to his brother, since they were in this together...

### Part 3

Mom probably had the toughest time of the whole family. She awoke down the hall perhaps 25 feet from where she had been standing. She was piled up in front of the vending machines near the stairwell. There was a nasty gash in her right calf and a deep cut on her head. Holding her head she attempted to pull herself up, until she discovered the wincing pain coming from her leg. After close inspection and realizing it wasn't broken, she removed her blouse and tied it over the gash, and leaned back to elevate it for a few minutes until it would stop bleeding.

“What in the h\*ll just happened.” She thought. It didn't occur that it was widespread, or that more than her building was affected. Her initial thought was a gas main had ruptured and blown. As millions of possibilities lined up for her review, she thought of her kids and husband and suddenly panicked as the scenarios ran through her mind. Grimacing at the pain she pulled herself up and made her way through the rubble toward her office. Just past her office the hallway was blocked, but at least she had a window in there.

The blinds, and window were gone, and she stared, mouth agape at the carnage spread out below her. As far as she could see, there was just total devastation. There was nothing recognizable still standing. She began to wail and moan, crying out in heart-wrenching sobs as the realization began to sink in. Not only her world was gone in an instant...”THE “ world was gone.

The panic over her children and husband seemed to drown out everything else at that moment, but somewhere she could here his voice of reason poking at her. She suddenly remembered the bag thing he insisted that she carry in her car. It had always just been one of his “strange” things that she just accepted. She always took it with a grain of salt...all that preparedness stuff. She always thought he went A LOT overboard, but he seemed to enjoy it, so she kept her mouth shut. He was a good provider and faithful to her and the family, so it was just a thing that she accepted. He spent too much too, but that was an argument for another day.

She fumbled in the office for her purse and made her way to the stairs, gingerly picking her way through the debris. Panting and still bleeding, she reached the basement and parking garage. She was a very thankful employee of the month, because she had a premium parking spot near the elevator and stairs. As she approached the car she hit the remote button to unlock the door but the car didn't respond. She hit it

several more time before she resorted to opening her car the old-fashioned way. Sliding in to the drivers seat, she attempted to start the BMW, but nothing happened. Finally giving up, she opened the trunk and went around to retrieve the bag. As she opened the top she found an envelope with her name on it, attached to the top flap.

“Dear Gina,

If you for some reason have had to open this, then I presume that something drastic has happened. Please find the small notebook just inside the bag. It has instructions and important information, depending on what crisis has caused you to read this letter. No matter what, even if you can’t contact me, stay near the car or wherever you are and I will come and find you. Find a safe place in the meantime, food and water, and I’ll be there as soon as I can get there. There is a loaded revolver in the bag and extra ammo if you need it. Hope you can remember how to use it.

I love you,  
Dave”

She laughed remembering the few times he had tried to take her out to shoot, and then began to cry because of the simple fact that he had left the note and the bag. He was still taking care of her.

“Hmm...a safe place” Glancing around she spied a storage room not too far away. It was rather dark, but she found a mag-lite in the pack and made her way toward the storage room. The hasp lock was hanging open, so she let herself in. The room held cleaning and maintenance supplies, but had an ample amount of room for her to set up house for a few days. The first thing she located was a large first aid kit, and set about cleaning her wounds and wrapping her leg and head with gauze.

“Food and water”. Gina shuffled through the bag and found a half dozen freeze-dried food packages, various snacks and three liter-sized water bottles. She found the notebook and quickly turned to what she felt was the most likely scenario...Nuclear Detonation.

Gina swallowed the panic because it caused her to immediately think of her boys, and tried to concentrate on what he said to do...”Ok, fallout, safe-place...check...two weeks!?! I need more food and water.”

She struggled back to her feet, placed the little S&W 357 holster and belt on around her skirt and chuckled about how she must look. She then removed a small hatchet from the bag, grabbed a handful of nearby garbage bags and made her way back up to the second floor. A few minutes later she had dispatched the vending machines handily and was filling up the garbage bags with tasty snacks and drinks. “At least it’s something edible,” she thought as she began dragging her treasure back down the staircase.

She noticed as she exited the stairwell that the main garage entrance seemed to be blocked by something rather large. “I guess I couldn’t have left even if the car did start.”

Once back in the room, she sealed herself in for a long ride. She formed a makeshift toilet in the back with old shelves, a 5-gallon bucket and a garbage bag. She found an old cot and bed roll and placed them in the middle of the floor. There were boxes of sterno, but she really didn’t need them because of the little mini-stove and heat tabs that were in the bag. She had 3 candles from the bag, and found another box in the storage area that contained another dozen white tapers. She found a couple harlequins, a stack of old newspapers, and decided they would make excellent entertainment for a little while. She cleaned around the area, set up her “kitchen” and cupboard, and emptied the bug out bag to make sorting an easier event.

There were many things that she wouldn't need, but having everything in plain site just made more sense and reminded her of David. She also got out the Kearney radiation monitor and read through the material until she thought that she knew how to use it.

The silence was deafening. She hadn't seen anyone at all. Her mind constantly thought of her family. Battling her imagination was the hardest part of all. "What if's" were mind-numbing and petrifying. "What about her husband? What about her kids?"

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David knew that as soon as the levels were down enough, he would be making his way to find his wife. He had promised, even if she didn't know it yet. As the minutes drug by, he tried to find things to do to keep him occupied, but it usually led to worry. With little to do, he slept much, and read anything he could find. He spent hours reading through an old hymnal that must have survived the mission era. Fortunately he had a backpackers bible, a few candles and several sets of batteries for the mag-lite. It was going to be a long wait.

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Joey and Adam had constantly locked horns. The complaining and whining and fussing had driven them both a little nutty. They were 5 days into it now. Barely. They had played every game and read every book and piece of information that was in the room. It stunk because of their waste and the dogs too. Adam decided it was time to check outside the door for maybe at least an occasional run out of the room for extra books or games, and to find a better place for the dogs to go, and maybe a place to dump their waste. The bucket was getting rather full.

After testing and calculating, he decided that they could both spend a maximum of 5 minutes out. So taking turns, Adam went first. He took the waste to the garage and put it in a garbage bag and into a covered garbage can. Then he spied several bags of topsoil. He ripped them open and spread the contents out on the floors. He bolted back to the room and grabbed the dogs and ran them out into the garage. Running back to the room he retrieved a stack of science fiction books and magazines that they both could read and so ended his turn.

Joey's turn meant that he could grab his game boy and games, a few other board games in case it didn't work and a few drawing supplies. On one trip he retrieved the dogs (who had figured out what they were supposed to do in the garage) and took them back to the room before their time was up too.

Unfortunately the game boy didn't work, so the boys played old-fashioned chess and between turns Adam played with the radio. In the static he finally picked up a station. Though it was distant, it was a relief to hear something from the rest of the world. It seemed that their metropolis wasn't the only city that had taken a hit. It also seemed that there was no law, no military and no society because of it. The fragile economics of the U.S. had been brought down in a day.... actually in a carefully timed hour. The eagle didn't land...it crashed and died.

It disturbed Adam and caused him to reflect on to something he had read just the night before. He jumped up and grabbed the bible and began fumbling to find the verse.

Joey gave him a confused look and asked, "What ARE you doing?"

"Here" Adam replied, "Check this out". And he began to read:

## Revelation 18

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

And check out this one....”10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”

“That’s kinda freaky Bubba” Joey said. “Kinda like what’s goin on right now huh? Kinda like we’re getting what we deserve?”

“Yeah more than kinda I think Joey....More than just kinda”

## Part 4

Gina knew that the corner of her building had survived at up to her second level corner office. She hadn’t taken any time to investigate what was left on the first floor. She was more concerned at the time of finding a safe place away from fallout and radiation. She had assumed that any survivors would find a way out and had seen a few people wandering the street below in the aftermath. Evidently someone had survived on the first floor. At first she thought It was her imagination, the sound of an engine in the parking garage, but when she heard the engine revving and the repeating crunch of metal on metal, her curiosity got the better of her.

Cracking the storeroom door, she could see the brake lights of a Gold Lexus as it slammed into the barrier that covered the garage entrance. “Whump!” then a screeching metal-dragging-over-concrete sound as the car reversed, backed up, revved and lurched forward again into the massive metal barrier. Soon the steam boiled from under the hood and the car overheated and finally died. Above the ensuing silence she could hear a female voice as it sobbed.

Compassion overcame her immediate fear, and Gina boldly made her way to the drivers side door. She had seen the pretty blonde woman before but had never talked with her. She was in finance, and Gina just ran the company fitness center. They would have hardly be in the same social circle. Gina approached and startled the female with a shout. “Hey! Lady!”

Her head jerked up suddenly with a look of surprise, anguish and then relief. “Thank God someone else is still here. Can you help me move that thing! I need to get home!”

“Look” Gina answered. Glancing at the nametag, “Laura. You need to come with me if you want to live.” Feeling much like the Terminator as she extended her hand toward the lady.

Laura cracked open the door and began to straighten her clothes and hair. It was obvious she was confused. Gina noticed the large bruised purple stain that had begun to spread under her right eye. “Laura. There was a nuclear attack and our city was hit. We need to get out of the open. There will be fallout and radiation.”

Laura nodded dumbly and followed as Gina led her back to the storage room. She gazed around absently as Gina inspected her bruises and abrasions. “Nothing too serious I don’t think” she told Laura.

“Who could do this to us? Why?”

“Take your pick. We’ve been minding everyone’s business except our own for years now.”

“I need to get home...my condo, my husband...”

Gina didn’t know what to say at that moment and chose to keep her mouth shut.

So it looks like you’re setting up house here um.”

“Gina” Gina interrupted

“Gina...are you staying here or something?”

“Just until it’s safe out there or my husband comes to get me”, she paused “and you’d be smart to do the same Laura.”

“Oh no. I have to get home. I can’t stay here” she replied and crinkled up her nose at the thought.

Gina caught the insinuation that it was beneath her and bit her tongue. “Suit yourself, but if you spend any time out there you’ll die.”

“Oh nonsense! I only live a couple of blocks from here. I can make a quick trip and if the buildings messed up to where I can’t stay I can always come back here.”

“No, I’m sorry, but once you’re out there and irradiated or glowing, my door won’t be open anymore.”

“Oh Bull!” she stood and laughed nervously. “I really should get going I think I made enough room that I can get out of the garage door. Did you know that a buss is overturned and blocking the exit?”

“No I didn’t. Laura you really need to listen to me. It is not safe to be out there or even breathing that air. Its full of radioactive dust by now.”

“Well I really need to get going.” Laura’s statement showed that she was oblivious and that the conversation was over. “Thanks for the medical,” she said over her shoulder as she walked quickly out the storeroom door.

“Don’t mention it” Gina replied after her. She stood to close the door, but peered though the crack as she watched the woman walk toward her death. Gina felt a wave of nausea as she saw the lady disappear

between the bus and side of the parking garage. “Guess there’s gonna be a lot of that,” she thought, and felt a cold shiver as she realized how easily that it could have been her.

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Time passed slowly for everyone. They could hear an occasional motor, or voices in the distance. The “not knowing” was the worst part. As time progressed, Dave began to make brief excursions into the area, as long as he stayed below his daily maximum dosage. Nearly two weeks had passed when he discovered what he considered a major find. The metal shed had protected it from EMP and the building that it was connected to had sheltered it from the blast. The tank was full and the key was in the ignition. Starting the Honda Shadow, he quickly made his way back to his shelter. In a couple days he could head out and begin the search for his wife. He couldn’t think much beyond that. His immediate purpose was to save and salvage what was left of his family.

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Aside from going stir crazy, Adam and Jonah had done fairly well. The levels had dropped gradually and they would spend more and more time out of the shelter. Adam had scrounged the two GRS radios from his Dad’s metal box and found them to be in perfect working order. He would make Joey stay at home and watch the timer, while he would venture into the neighborhood, keeping in constant communication.

It wasn’t a pretty site. The damage wasn’t extensive, but he discovered several dead bodies from those that had died from exposure. Most lawns were overgrown, but there were some homes that it looked as though some folks were attempting to live like nothing had ever happened. The grass had been cut, hedges had been trimmed and homeowners had eventually collapsed from exposure. He ran into Lee Wright and Jim Ona at different times. They had been local cops that lived in his neighborhood. They had been out for a little recon also. Adam briefly described how he and Joey had been living since the blast and both policemen commented that they were smart and glad to know someone else in the neighborhood had a little knowledge about being prepared. Adam didn’t explain that it wasn’t his doing, but assumed that the policemen could figure that much out.

His hope was that his Mom, Dad, or both would somehow make it back home. There were family plans to relocate to the old historical family property up in the Appalachian Mountains if things ever got really bad. He had seen them and read over them in the process of surviving the past couple weeks. He wasn’t sure how long he should wait though. Joey thought they should stay until the food was about to run out. Adam thought it was not a good idea, not knowing what was available at the old family place. They could go there and starve if nothing was there. His Dad’s notes made little mention of what was there. So Adam and Joey settled on staying an additional two weeks. They could load up the rest of the food and have plenty until they could learn to do for themselves on the old farm. They would leave a note and enough food for two for a week-long trip as a guess in case their Mom and Dad came home after they left. Fortunately they wouldn’t have to wait that long to make important decisions and moves.

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Gina woke during a nap one afternoon feeling somewhat confused. She thought that she had heard her name. A distant rumble...

“There it is again!” she thought. “I hear my name!”

Scrambling from her cot, she exited from her door and looked toward the bus that blocked the entrance. It was coming from outside!

She ran quickly up to the entrance and for the first time since the attack, stepped out onto the sidewalk as she searched for the originator of the caller. At first she wanted to slink back at the sight of a motorcycle and rider, until she recognized the familiar build and swagger of the figure that mounted the bike.

“Dave?” she muttered. “Dave! DAVE!” she screamed and raced toward her husband as he swung the bike back toward her voice.

Seeing her closing the distance, Dave dismounted and ran toward her. They embraced as if there were no tomorrow, for truly, they had no idea of what tomorrow would bring.

“Oh my Lord!” Gina groaned and pointed over his shoulder.

“What?” He turned to look in the direction she was pointing

“Over there. That looks like Laura”

“Who?”

“Just someone I tried to help. I told her not to go out. She didn’t make it a block, or maybe she was trying to get back here. Either way... I’m sure that’s her.”

“I know the fallout was heavy, but it couldn’t have affected her that fast, and it looks more like she was assaulted or shot. There’s an awful lot of blood over there.”

Gina was silent for a moment and turned back to her husband, releasing the guilt in exchange for the joy that she now felt.

They chattered excitedly until Dave suggested that they get out of the open and into some shelter. Dave squeezed his motorcycle through the small opening at the garage, and Gina led Dave down into her sanctuary for the past two weeks. They spoke of what they knew, their concerns, children and experiences, then they spent the evening catching up on other things more intimate.

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Without power, any noise outside was easily detectable. Silence was now the norm. There seemed to be no animals or birds to interrupt the silence. Joey and Adam stood at the door and watched the two Chocolate Labs frolic and run in the backyard. It was entertainment. It was something that seemed to be in short supply to a video game generation.

Joey noticed the rumble first and mentioned it to Adam. As Adam listened, they both realized that it was very close to their home. “Get the dogs in!” Adam panicked and ran to the safe room. He strapped on the Glock .40 and grabbed the loaded 12 gauge pump that his Dad had “prepared” for close quarter fighting. At least he had paid attention when his Dad taught him to shoot. As he rounded the corner leaving the safe room, the dogs bounded past him barking loudly. Joey stood back somewhat confused as Adam motioned for him to get down. It was then that Adam began to notice the dogs’ reactions. There were no hackles up. Their tails were wagging and they began to dance excitedly near the door. “What the...” he muttered.

He heard the quiet motor shut off and immediately he heard “ADAM! JOEY!”

The boys looked at each other and bolted to the door together. As a team, the boys (and dogs) tackled their parents in the driveway. After the initial joy subsided Adam looked at his Dad squarely in the eye and said, “Thanks for the notes and stuff. We wouldn’t have made it without you.”

Dave looked back at Adam proudly and said, “No, thanks for taking that step to trust me, and taking care of yourself and brother until we could get home. Evidently you paid attention to the info I left you. It’s amazing what you can learn when you start to listen!”

He hugged Adam and grabbed Joey. “And thank you for not giving Adam a hard time and sticking with him through this. You guys have done a great job.” Dave stood and motioned everyone inside. “I think we’ve all learned a lot so far. Times are changing now, and we have to make some changes to survive. We’ll be heading to the family farm soon, and I expect we all have much to learn there. We still have much to do, but at least we can still do it as a family. I doubt there are many in our situation that can say that right now.” They entered the home, thankful for their safety and apprehensive at what the future would still hold.

The End.