

Book II
The Bloodletting Trilogy

Michael R. Seymour, MA.
September 2, 2009

Copyright 2009 Michael R. Seymour

This is a work entirely composed of fiction. Decide for yourself how much of this could be real. If anyone is offended by my words, I apologize. As a work of fiction, names, places, characters and events are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, places, things, businesses, charities, corporations, churches, events or locations is entirely coincidental.

If you find errors in this work, they will be gladly rectified in future printings, unless they are insignificant.

This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright 2009, by Michael R. Seymour
Printed in the United States. All rights reserved.

Prologue

This is Book II of the Bloodletting Trilogy. The story line is that a few powerful people in a foreign country decide to take The United States for their own. A force of well trained mercenaries is organized and shipped to the United States.

Book I begins as the General of the expedition leaves in one of several planes destined for various locations in the United States.

Our story line revolves around a simple family caught up in this madness. Tom Brown and his wife, Mary are simple people who live on a farm in Timberlake, Iowa. They have lived happily there with their children, Albert, Marshall, Edward, and Mary II. The boys, Marshall and Edward, are commonly referred to as Two and Three respectively because of an incident that occurred with their sister Mary II.

Tom has a best friend named Carl Stoneman, who is African American. These two men were called into duty to rescue Mary and Mary II from the city where the girls had gone to visit Mary's sister Ashlee.

The men depart for the city and leave the home front in the capable hands of Albert and his brothers.

In their absence, the General's plane lands in this remote part of the universe and the invaders are miraculously repelled by the townsfolk.

The adults return just in time to help with the destruction of the majority of invaders on this plane.

Book II begins at this point

The smell of gunpowder hung heavy in the air, then the sun began to shine and a refreshing breeze carried the smells of spring to the gathering. The dead bodies lay on the white gravel, the circles of bright red blood growing slowly in size.

Albert and Juliette went to the kitchen to prepare iced tea or coffee for everyone. Juan was caring for the recovering Jenny, and Two and Three were helping their Aunt Ashlee find a drink. Mary Two made herself busy arranging the chairs at the table on the expansive deck.

Carl and Tom walked from body to body to render first aid, when they were satisfied first aid was not required, they walked to the deck and seated themselves at the table on the porch. The ladies helped the crying Sholing out of the barn and up to the porch table.

Soon the wonderful aroma of fresh coffee filled the air.

As they sat around the table and waited for the adrenaline to dissipate, no one spoke. The beverages were served all around. They held their warm cups in their hands as if praying, except Ashlee and those with iced drinks. Both Carl and Tom were watching the crying girl with a feeling of mutual uncertainty.

Mary and Alise were speaking with the girl who understood English and was able to speak haltingly through the tears.

Soon Mary stood and motioned for Tom to follow her to the other end of the porch.

Mary spoke in a soft tone of voice, "That evil man had this poor girl tortured, she showed me the scars. He threatened to kill her and her parents if she didn't come along with him. She sounds sincere to us. The pretty little thing wants to seek asylum in this country."

"Do you think she is dangerous?" asked Tom in a worried tone of voice.

"Let's keep an eye on her, but I think she's OK," said Mary, "What do you think?"

"Let's see what she has to say, she might be able to shed some light on this whole deal." Tom said as he turned and walked back to the cup of coffee getting cold. "We need to get this mess cleaned up. How many dead bodies are scattered out there?"

Two and Three, who were standing beside the wall, set their drinks down, picked up their rifles, and stepped off of the deck.

"We'll count em, dad." Said Two.

Mary Two gave Sholing a tissue to dry her eyes and Sholing thanked her.

As Mary Two walked back in the house Sholing's eyes followed her. She felt like a rabbit in a cage, would she be a guest for dinner, or just dinner?

She sat back in the lawn chair and studied the crowd of people. Who were these people? The middle aged man must own this place, the dark skinned man dressed in overalls must be hired help, the older lady must be the owner's wife and their three sons and daughter. The younger two boys answered to the names Two and Three. How unusual. The olive skinned lady who was dressed like a model might be the mother of the other girl. She couldn't figure out the rest but the threat seemed to be the two men.

Sholing's mind suddenly snapped back to the present. Tom was speaking.

"Let us all now bow our heads and pray for God's blessings," Tom was standing as he spoke. "Dear God, thank you for getting us through this mess in one piece".

Everyone at the table answered, "Amen."

Tom sat down and addressed the group seated around the table. "I don't mind saying, I am a bit confused. When we left, things were nearly normal. We come back home expecting normal and find bodies in the yard and a world turned upside down. From what I've seen, you boys, and girls," he nodded in the direction of Juliette and Jenny, "have done a pretty good job of protecting the home place while we were away." I can tell that there is still a lot to do, let's just sit down and finish our coffee and talk about it." He turned toward Albert. "Unless you know of something we need to be doing right now?"

Albert shook his head from side to side.

"Very well then, let's start with the most ancient among us," he said this with a grin, "Carl?".

Carl was seated to Tom's left, he pushed his chair away from the table, nearly to the edge of the deck and was resting his left arm on the railing. He raised the cup he was holding in his left hand and said, "first order of business is to refill this cup, anybody else ready?"

Albert started to stand but Juliette stood first and with her left hand pushed Albert back in the chair. "Let me get that for you Daddy" she said.

"Daddy," thought Sholing, "the well dressed lady was married to the field hand?"

"Please Honey," He stood and held the empty cup out with his left hand and embraced the girl with his right. She hugged him hard around the waist before she took the cup and disappeared into the house.

She returned a moment later with the cup full and a fresh steaming pot of coffee in her right hand. "Seconds anyone?" she asked and began filling the cups that were offered to her.

"The way I see it," began Carl as he regained his chair, "this whole country could be in a world of shit. We just left a city that after just a couple of days has already sunk to low levels. Knowledge is power. In my opinion, the first thing we need to do is get some knowledge and find out what we are up against."

"Well said, brother," said Tom, he looked in the direction of his wife, "Mary?"

Juliette had just finished filling Mary's cup. Mary looked up to the girl with a smile and spoke. "Thank you Honey." Mary addressed the group, there was genuine fear in her voice. "I'm with Carl, we just don't have enough data at this time. If it's worth anything, I was afraid when we left the city and I'm more afraid now. I would like to say that it appears that these kids have really grown up in the last couple of days."

Tom winked in her direction, "Albert, fill us in on what we missed."

Albert was peeling the label from a half empty bottle of soda. He thought for a moment and spoke. "I really thought we were goners. We had it all figured out, we saw them coming and set a trap, then those bastards drove straight for the barn. I don't think I've ever been so happy to see someone in my life, as when you guys showed up. You know the power went out just before you left, well it just never came back on."

"Never?" exclaimed Tom.

"Never did," continued Albert "Me and the other boys decided to take Carl's car into town and get some diesel delivered to fill our tanks. We were half way there when this big old airplane comes in at a couple hundred miles an hour at treetop height. We followed it to the airport and damn near got our asses shot off. Excuse my French. They put a couple of bullet holes in Carl's car and we high tailed it out of there. On the way back we ran in to Juliette here and brought her back with us."

"Lord be Praised," exclaimed Alise.

Juliette stepped to her mother's side and gave her a hug. Alise patted Juliette on the hand.

Albert continued, "First we stopped at the highway patrol office and told Henry He sent a deputy Wilkinson out to the airfield."

"Got his self killed at the airfield," exclaimed Two. Just the thought of the recent excitement caused him to stand from his chair and pace.

"Henry got killed?" Tom asked, with a tone of disbelief.

"Not Henry, said Two, "that new deputy Wilkinson." Two gestured with his hands.

"That Henry ain't worth a darn," injected Three.

"That's enough of that," said Tom, "please finish your story Al."

"Anyway," finished Albert, "Then we went to see Bill, he listened to us and took over from there." "We went by Mike's to stock up and then came out here."

"Tell me about the dead guys," demanded Tom.

"There are actually three groups of dead guys if you want to know the truth," began Albert.

Two chimed in, "The first bunch killed the Taylor family except for Jenny, and they raped her." He suddenly thought about what he just said and was sorry.

A collective gasp escaped the crowd.

"You poor dear," said Mary. She stood up and walked over to the girl and hugged her. Jenny began to cry again.

The two ladies began to talk in hushed tones.

Albert continued. "They drove over here in Taylor's SUV. Their plan must have been to kill anyone who lived here because they drove real fast up the driveway and jumped out of the car and riddled the back of the house with machine gun bullets. We heard shooting over there a little earlier so we got ourselves armed and were waiting for them when they showed up."

"We killed the heck out of them!" exclaimed Two, unable to keep out of the conversation.

"Oops." He said as all eyes turned to Corporal Sholing. She was seated on a reclining deck chair with her eyes closed and did not seem to have heard the thoughtless remark.

Two decided to sit down before his mouth got him in any more trouble.

Albert continued, "We were sure that the noise we made would attract attention so we hid the bodies. Then we sneaked over to the Taylor farm and retook possession of it. Jenny was sort of out of it but she wanted us to burn the house with her parents in it so we did. We put a couple of alfalfa bales on the porch and filled the house with that 200 gallon diesel tank and it went right up."

"You burned the Taylor farm?" asked Carl in disbelief.

"You should have seen that baby burn!", exclaimed Three. "Oops." He looked toward his mother who shook her head.

"I sort of felt like we had our hands full here, I sent Two and Three back into town and they kept us posted. Then today that bunch showed up here and I thought we were goners until you guys showed up. And that's pretty much it in a nutshell." Albert finished speaking and breathed a visible sigh of relief.

"We'll have plenty of time to discuss all of this a little later," said Tom as he stood up. "I better get on over to the plant and see what I can do."

He turned to Two, "Would you and Three hop in the truck and go see if Bill could come out and see us please?"

"Glad to Dad," said Two as he jumped out of his chair. He knocked Three's hat on the deck as he spoke. "That means you sucker."

Three jumped out of his chair and picking up his hat, followed Two to the barn.

"There's still a bunch of bad guys at the airport, according to Two and Three." Albert finished his drink.

"I need a word with you Al." Tom motioned with his finger as he turned and walked down the stairs to the barn.

He had taken no more than a couple of steps toward the barn when he turned and spoke, "Mary do you suppose we could have supper here for all of us about 5:30?"

"If I can get a little help it should be no problem," she replied. She began to clean up the mess on the table.

All the ladies spoke as one voice; they all agreed to help, except Sholing who seemed to be sleeping.

"I better get to the home place and see if it's still there," said Carl as he rose from his chair. "We'll come back this afternoon to get our stuff out of the trucks." He spoke in the direction of Tom.

Tom raised his left arm as he walked toward the barn with Albert, he was already in deep discussion with the boy.

"Keep your eye on that girl, son." Tom spoke quietly to Albert, "I don't trust her as far as I can throw her. As soon as Bill gets out here I'll have him take custody of her."

"Sure thing dad," said Albert, he removed the 45 from its holster and handed it to his father. "This is yours, Dad, Old Mike let me use it."

Tom looked at the weapon. "Fits your hand pretty good, keep it for awhile, OK?"

Albert smiled and returned the gun to the holster. He walked back to the house.

Carl stood behind Alise and placed his hands on her shoulders. "Well family, I think it's time to go."

"Would it be OK if I stayed here and helped Mrs. Brown with supper Dad?" Asked Juliette.

"Call me Mary, dear." Mary stated as she began collecting coffee cups.

Carl placed his arm around Juliette. “Would Albert have anything to do with that decision?”

She laid her head on his shoulder. “Would that be alright with you Dad?”

“Albert is the finest young man I know.” Carl said as he kissed his daughter on the head.

“We need to think about Mom,” Alise said to Carl.

“Hey Tom,” I’ll take that tank truck and generator back to the house. The keys are in it if you need it. We may run down to Bella Vista and pick up Alise’s mom. We may decide to get a little bit of sleep before we go. Can Juliette stay here for a while?”

“Always welcome,” said Tom. He looked at Albert and could see the pleasure on his face. “Stay just as long as she wants. Forever if she likes.” He winked at Albert as he turned to follow Two and Three to the barn. At that moment, Tom sincerely hoped that Albert would decide to keep the girl.

“We’ll probably be back around five, if that’s OK with you Mary?” Carl said to Mary as he helped Alise from her chair. “Please don’t wait for us, we’re pretty tired and we might just grab a bite at the house and get up early.”

“You know we always eat around six, you’re always more than welcome you know that. Julie would you please get those napkins?” Mary spoke as she disappeared into the house.

“My Lord, there’s bullet holes in my kitchen!” she could be heard through the doorway.

Senator James Arlen McCaffey had served one of the great and glorious states of the South for 25 years. He still remembered his first reelection campaign. He need not have worried. In the high stakes world of a Congressional campaign nothing was left to chance. In the twentieth century, the incumbent was almost always reelected.

Back in 1812 or so, a journalist or someone like a journalist was looking at a map of a congressional district. The land on the map had been adjusted and divided so that the congressional area took the shape of a salamander. The journalist, looking at the map, stated that the area had the shape of a Salamander. He was told that it resembled a Gerrymander. Named for the politician responsible for creating a district that guaranteed his own reelection.

Gerrymandering became a real science, the use of redistricting could assure the reelection of a legislator.

As a congressman remained in office his power became greater. His ability to control select committees was the real power. Earmarking of legislation allowed the committee members to sneak provisions into legislation that were written by lobbyists and special interest groups in return for campaign contributions and other bribes.

The corruption in the highest places of the American government became commonplace. Fifty years before, even the hint of corruption would have gotten a legislator run out of town on a rail. Now, their power had become so great and the elections so manipulated, that the legislators openly defied the will of the people. There were still a few honest legislators; one of these was Carla Sherman from one of the eastern states. She openly defied Senator McCaffee and he was furious about it.

The Senator knew he was a puppet, knew that he was bought and paid for, and didn't give a damn. He was in this for the money and the power. When his handlers gave him an order he obeyed. He remembered Kennedy, none of that Hero bullshit for him, no sir.

He didn't stand a chance of getting all the legislation passed himself, there were trade offs. Carla knew that, but this time she refused to play ball. Something had to be done.

Two days before the General's planes landed, Senator Carla Sherman was in a taxi speaking on her cell phone. As the taxi stopped at a light a semi with a load of cardboard drove completely over the back end of the taxi, squashing the Senator and her phone. The driver of the semi fled the scene, it turned out that the semi had been stolen that morning.

New cars came equipped with computers and transmitters that allowed the driver to know where the car was at all times. The down side to that technology was that it also worked the other way.

Mr. Thurston Haword III was on his way to the office, he was gunned down in a parking lot.

Mr. Eugene Trenton was in his boat, speaking to his attorney, his boat sank.

Mr. Theodore Newman had just finished dinner, and called his wife. A waiter cut Mr. Newman's throat.

Within a two day period, influential people began to quit breathing.

Senator McCaffee was expecting a call to confirm which way he was to vote on an issue dealing with sugar. The call never came.

The man was so used to taking orders, and fearing he would displease the wrong person, decided to skip the vote.

Tom followed Two and Three into the barn. It smelled of fresh hay and manure, farmers called that smell the smell of money. They were getting into a ¾ Ton, 4 wheel drive older model pickup. It was backed into an old horse stall and had a nearly perfect light blue paint job. The tires were large with deep treads and shiny chrome wheels. There was a fine layer of dust on the paint. The boys were rolling down the windows and Two was just about to start the engine.

“Marshall,” Tom spoke to the eldest of the two. “Remind me again about the situation in town.”

“Hey Dad,” said Two, “How come it is that you never call me Two like everybody else? It sort of confuses me.”

“Sorry son,” said Tom, “I just remember when you were born, and I was around when that Two and Three stuff started, I thought it was a phase but I guess I was wrong. How about I just call you anything I like so long as I call you on time for supper? I’m too old to change now, I guess you’re Mother and I will always call you and Edward by your given names.”

“Ok for me, Dad.” Two quickly changed the subject. He could tell this was a touchy subject and now was not the time.

“Last we knew, Dad, Bill thought the situation was completely under control at the airfield. A bunch of the good old boys resurrected a lot of the firepower they stashed years ago; he figured no matter what, the situation was under control.” Two said.

“You and Edward remember how to put this baby in reverse, get the heck out if you think there’s trouble.” Tom was justifiably concerned.

“When you boys see Bill, make sure he knows that the girl is here and that he should come directly out to get her. Understand?” he spoke with a definite tone of worry in his voice.

“Got you covered Dad, we’ll go find Bill right away.” Said Two in a no nonsense manner.

“Do you have guns?” asked Tom.

“Yes sir we do.” The boys answered in unison.

“Your Aunt Ashlee has decided, against my advice, to go back home. She’s going to take Grandma’s car, since Grandma doesn’t use it anymore.” Said Tom.

“That might not have been the last of ‘em.” Said Three. “Make sure Mom and Mary Two know about the neighbors and Jenny.”

Tom stepped back as the big engine came to life. The dual exhaust made a deep rumbling noise and the air was filled with blue smoke.

“See you shortly Dad.” Two added as he pulled the truck from the barn and into the sunshine.

He gave the truck the gas and peppered the wall of the barn with rocks.

“Yeehaw,” yelled Three as the truck sped down the driveway.

Tom stepped out of the barn and shook his head. He was thinking what a difference just a couple of days make.

He walked back to the deck and into the house.

“Where are the girls?” he asked Mary.

“I think they went out into the yard.” Mary answered. She was preparing to do a load of dishes by hand.

Tom had loved this woman since High School. Over the years they developed an understanding, she would take care of the house and he took care of the farm. That thought caused him to check his boots before he walked through the house. He stepped back to the mat and wiped his feet well.

Tom walked across the house and looked out the sliding door. The deep green grass was in need of mowing. Mary Two, Juliette, Jenny, and Sholing were barefoot and playing a game of volleyball. He watched Sholing intently. She had changed into shorts and a tank top. She looked to be younger than Juliette. The way she was laughing and playing he could just not feel that she was a threat.

“Mary,” he spoke quietly, “Do you still think that girl is not a threat?”

“I was worried for a while, but the way the other girls have taken to her in such a short time I think she’ll be alright. She just seems so young and sweet.”

“Just don’t trust her.” He said matter of factly. In his mind he wished that the girl was not here, and he had a nagging hunch that she would be trouble. He hated nagging hunches.

He walked across the deck and into the yard. He took a moment to breathe the fresh farm air, what a blessing he thought. He approached the girl Sholing.

“Excuse me miss, what shall I call you? He addressed the girl.

“My friends call me Sholing, that would be fine.”

“Very well then, Sholing. Come, sit with me on the deck for a moment.” Tom said as he led her to the edge of the deck. “What was the status of the group you were with in the airplane?”

“There was a lot of shooting after we left the airport, the General was talking about teaming up with a group that landed in Denver, so I guess they are all wiped out, thank God. That General was a really mean man. He would have killed my folks you know?” She spoke in halting but near perfect English.

“So you don’t think there will be any more soldiers coming here?” He asked.

“The plan was to get away from here and head for Denver.” The girl replied.

“The last I heard was that the Chicago landing had been a success. There was supposed to have been a Denver landing. I remember something about a team up with people from the south. They didn’t really trust me, so all I heard was second hand. I really want to thank you people for saving me. I’ll be glad to work to help pay my way.”

“Thank you Sholing, you girls just go on ahead and be girls.” He said as he walked back into the house.

“Mary, keep your gun handy just in case and keep an eye on the road and driveway. I need to get to the plant for a little while and I’ll make sure to have Al bring the car around to the back steps. If anyone comes down that road you girls load up in the old van and take the back roads to town and find me or Bill. You understand?” He spoke as he checked the loading of Mary’s gun and his own.

“I really need to get into town and see about Mother,” Mary explained, “she’s probably worried to death since the phones are out and the power is too.”

“That’s the first thing I want to do is get the power back on, I can’t imagine why they haven’t got it back on. Charlie and Louise were both set to work this weekend.

Between the two of them they ought to be able to solve any problem.” He spoke quickly as he passed out the door.

“Hide that gun, and don’t trust that girl. She seemed to be real sweet but you never know.” He spoke as he hopped off the porch and ran to the blue truck.

He started the big blue truck, checked the fuel level, and drove quickly down the driveway.

He tried to tune in any radio station with no luck. In disgust he turned off the radio and rolled down the window.

Driving down a country road in a big old pickup truck with the window rolled down put a smile on his face. He had a lot to think about right now but with the smell of spring and the with the birds noises louder than the truck noises he could put his cares behind him for a moment.

The good feeling lasted just a few miles, it ended when he had crested a hill and nearly couldn’t stop in time to avoid a collision. An SUV was blocking one side of the road and in the ditch was a smaller car that had recently burned. Five bodies were laid in a row in the grass beside the road. Three of the bodies were badly burned.

He slowed down and drove slowly past the SUV. He noticed that the windows were shot out and there was a lot of blood on the seats.

This had been the work of the second squad. These men were all now gathered around a pickup with a cooler in the back.

“Hey Tom, you missed all the excitement,” said a tall man with long brown curly hair.

“Looks like it, Pete.” he replied, “Do you guys expect any more company?”

“Don’t think so Tom, Bill sent word that things were all clear for now, that’s why me and the boys decided to have us a frosty.” He said this with a smile and the men all held up cans and bottles of beer. “You got time for a cold one?”

“Thanks, but not right now. Do you boys know where I might find Bill?” Tom asked the man.

“Try the airport, he was over there.” Pete replied as he finished his beer.

“When you gonna get the lights back on, Tom?” A short man with a beard inquired.

“Fixin to find that out directly,” answered Tom. “You must not have paid your bill John.”

“Must be the whole damned state forgot to pay a bill,” said the man.

Tom drove faster down the road toward the power plant.

When he got to the plant he was stopped at the gate by a guard holding a rifle.

“Thank God you’re back Tom” said the guard lowering his rifle. “We’ve got ourselves one heck of a mess here.”

“Isn’t Charlie here?” Tom asked. He looked up the road. “Isn’t that Charlie’s pickup?”

“You best get on up to the office, Tom; they’ll surely want to see you.” The man stepped aside and raised the red and white striped barrier that blocked the road.

Tom drove the truck to the big red brick building and stopped in front of a set of double glass doors. The sign on the wall read ‘OFFICE’. Another sign read, “All visitors must check in at the office.”

He parked the truck beside a sign that read, "NO PARKING FIRE LANE" and hurried into the building.

The doors opened into a large open lobby. In the center of the lobby was a large polished brass bell. A plaque beside the bell was inscribed "Gift from the ladies of St. Theresa's." The whole building smelled of burned transformer windings. This alone was enough to make Tom concerned.

He hurried past the bell and walked briskly down the hallway to the right. A sign hanging over a door said "OFFICE", the next door read "SECURITY". Tom walked past the first door and tried to push his way past the crowd of people who were blocking the entrance into the office.

Suddenly voices from within the room could be heard. "Tom!", "look it's Tom", "thank God you're here", "Somebody let Tom in".

Like the parting of the Red Sea, bodies shifted so that Tom could make his way to the front of the room where there were TV monitors on the desk.

The screens were in black and white but the picture was clear. One of the screens showed a scene that was obviously the control room. Two bodies were lying on the floor. Another camera was focused on an office, there were three bodies, two men and one woman in this scene.

Another screen showed the main transformer, two men were standing beside it smoking cigarettes. Tom had to get closer to the screen to get a better look.

"What's that?" He asked as he pointed his finger at the screen.

"That my friend is where the flames stopped." A tall man in a black striped suit, white shirt, and solid red tie spoke.

"Hello Ted," said Tom. "Want to fill me in?"

"Couple of days ago," Ted began, "Louise picks up a letter at the post office, takes it down to Charlie who opened it. Nearest we can figure is that whatever was in the package killed them both. The phones were ringing off the hook so Benny, he was on guard duty, goes down to see what the heck and he falls over too. Must have been a similar package going to operations, cause when they opened it both Matt and Jerry Lee died right where you see them. Thank God Curtis had his head out of his butt and locked this place down before anybody else could get killed. Just about that time, just like a damned coincidence, a car pulls up way out there on the gravel road and some guy puts two bullets into the main transformer. Now the shit hits the fan, the breakers trip but not before that transformer begins to destroy itself. The whole damn plant goes down and we can't get into the control room because nobody here wants to die. Besides, with the transformer down we're off line until we can get a replacement. That's six months with the factory working overtime. We can't even get in touch with the factory. We're out of the electricity generating business. We've got that one little diesel generator running over in the south yard, but that's just barely enough power for this one building. All these people want me to reassure them that it will be alright. Do you hear that people?"

"There's been billions of dollars spent on bio terrorism preparedness and practicing for clean up, and we can't even get in touch with those people."

He turned to face the crowd. "We are shit out of luck for at least six months." I suggest you all go fishing. Tom, what do you think?"

"Me and Carl and the wives just got back from St. Louis and there is no power anywhere between here and there. There may be some small areas that are on generators,

but we didn't see any. We should get somebody in there with suits on so that we can get to the control room and check for damages." Tom's mind was racing, all these people, all the time it took him to get across the country, and here nothing had gotten done.

Several thoughts went through Tom's mind.

"Ted, are you going to keep trying to get a transformer?" Tom asked.

"Don't know what else we can do, we have a whole office full of people and no electricity to sell."

"This would be a good time to take a couple of days off, do you need help with the bodies?" He asked.

"If we can ever get a hold of anyone from the hospital, or the morgue, or the CDC, or anyone for that matter, we sure can't do anything ourselves." Ted said with an air of resignation.

"I should be near the house," Tom said as he walked back to his truck.

He sat for a minute in his truck in deep thought. He always sort of expected a crisis like this would happen some day, here it was. His sense of relief was over come by fear.

Tom sat in the seat of the truck parked in the fire lane in front of the office of the power plant. The huge facility spread out before him, useless. Without electricity on the grid they couldn't make electricity. If they fired up the diesel generators it would give them enough voltage to create a field, and then some, but without the transformer they could not put high voltage on the grid.

It would be quite a while before this plant came back on line. Thank God it was a warm spring day.

He had rolled the window down in his truck and listened to the silence, his nose detected the absence of the odor that usually surrounded the plant. He looked at the sun in the cloudless sky and said a little prayer, things could be a whole lot worse he thought.

"They're damn sure gonna get worse," he said aloud as he started the engine.

That was stupid, he thought, I should not have started this truck without a clear idea of where to go. This diesel might have to last a long time.

Find Bill and the boys, he thought to himself. He drove to the airport.

A great crowd of vehicles was parked along the side of the road leading to the big hill that over looked the airport. The cars and trucks parked every which way effectively created a one lane road. He drove the big truck slowly up the hill.

As he neared the crest of the hill a green pickup with a ladder rack pulled onto the road coming toward Tom. The pickup pulled far to the right and there was just enough room for Tom to squeeze by. To be safe, Tom and the other driver pulled their drivers side mirrors in.

The sign on the side of the pickup was white with red letters, Stanley's Plumbing. "Hey Tom, where you been? You missed all the fun." Said the driver, a heavy set man dressed in bib overalls and a dirty baseball cap pushed well back on his bald head.

"Hi Stan, had to go to the city to bring Mary home. You do'in all right?" Tom had gone to school with Stan years ago.

"Looks like we got most of the Bastards, but a few got away. We lost some good folks today." The man had obviously been crying.

Tom felt uncomfortable, he had no idea what to say. "Seen my boys?" He asked. "They're up there helping Bill."

"Thanks Stan, see you later." Tom said, he pulled into the space left vacant by the green truck.

He stepped out of the truck and scanned the crest of the hill. He could tell that long trenches about four feet deep had been dug on the crest of the hill and the dirt piled high in front of the trench. These were the trenches the defenders used to surprise the invaders. Two police cars were parked sideways in the road and he could see that all the windows were missing. To the left side of the road he noticed old Mike and a couple of other men loading weapons in the bed of a red pickup truck with a camper top. He noticed an unusual unpleasant odor in the air. Everyone was speaking in hushed tones. To the right he saw Bill the Sheriff and the two boys. They were each dragging something parallel to the trench over to the fence line. He began to notice pools of blood here and there on the ground. As he approached the crest of the hill he turned to look back. All the cars parked near the crest of the hill were covered with bullet holes and the tires were flat. As he got closer to Bill he noticed that what he was dragging was the body of a middle aged woman. Half of her head was missing and grey matter was dragging along the ground. He could barely recognize the woman as Mary Worthington. She sold fertilizer at the feed store. He had talked to her just a few days ago. Each of the boys was dragging a male body. Tom Fisher the mayor and his son Kevin. Kevin was the star running back on the football team. Kevin was wearing a red T shirt. No wait, it had been a white t shirt.

He couldn't help himself, the grief just overcame him and he started to cry, right there in front of God and everybody he could not stop the tears. He instinctively turned his back on his sons until he could get control of himself. He wiped the tears on his shirt sleeve, took a couple of deep breaths and turned and walked toward the boys.

The boys had placed the bodies in a row and were catching their breaths. Tom stood beside them and looked down the row. There were at least thirty bodies in the row, mostly men and boys but a few women. He saw no girls. The priest, with an acolyte and two local ministers were walking among the dead. The priest was walking along the edge of the excavation, would stop over a body he recognized and give the last rites.

"What in the world happened here Bill?" Tom asked.

"People are starting to call this the Battle of Danner's Ridge. I never much cared for Danner, that old fart. Guess he still owns this land." Bill replied while shaking his head.

"Why don't you boys take a little break," Bill spoke to the boys, "you've been working your butts off and this is real bad work. I want to show your dad the hill.

He started to walk to the crest of the hill, "come here Tom," he said as he picked his way among the dirt clods to the face of the trench.

Tom looked down the hillside and whispered, "Good Lord."

"We haven't even started to do anything with these," his hand swept out in front of him to encompass the whole area.

The hillside was covered with dead bodies. The bulk of the dead were a few hundred yards or so down the hill. This would have been where the townsfolk raised up and began to shoot. The bodies got fewer and fewer as they neared the trenches. Those

left lying in the street were surrounded by pools of drying blood. An unpleasant odor emanated from the spot.

Bill spoke in a low voice. "Wish we had shot a little straighter at the beginning. There would have been a lot fewer dead townsfolk. Most of them were milling around behind those cars sort of watching, like this was a ballgame or something and these last couple of guys lobbed hand grenades into the crowd right before they were gunned down. Killed a bunch of good people."

"Remember Henry? That piece of shit turned out to be a brave SOB, he ought to get some kind of medal, posthumously."

"Thought you and Henry didn't get along, something about him stalking your old lady or something?" Tom asked.

"I personally hated the bastard, between you and me and the gatepost I'm glad he's dead, but I'll deny I ever said it. She went north to be with her family when the lights went out, lucky thing." Bill quickly changed the subject.

"What's the poop on the power Tom?" Bill asked.

"Looks like it's gonna be a long time till we get back in the power business." Tom shook his head.

"Do you mean days or weeks?" Bill asked. They walked along the crest of the hill as they spoke.

"Months!" Tom emphasized, expecting an outburst, everybody knew Bill had quite the temper.

Bill thought for a moment, "Months! No fucking way! We need to get those bodies on ice today, notice the third body from the left, that's Rusty Burleson the undertaker. I think he came out to see how much new business he was going to get out of this, and then, surprise, surprise. You're a smart man Tom what do you think we should do with all these bodies?" Bill led the way back to the row of dead town folk.

Tom thought a minute. "Let's bury 'em right here where they died. We could dig a long grave over by the fence line and just lay the bodies in there and cover them up. This is as pleasant a spot as you could find around here, nice view, peaceful. It'll give the next of kin better feelings than the old cemetery. If you have to be buried, this is as good a place as any. In later years, if we survive this, there will surely be a big monument with all their names. I'm sure there aren't enough caskets. We could put together some pine boxes. Why don't you check with the next of kin and see how that sounds to them. As far as all those bodies on the hill, let's strip them in case they are carrying anything that will help us, and we can dig a big old hole with the backhoe and bury them together and let the priest say a prayer over the lot of them.

"Good idea, Tom;" Bill agreed, "you asked what happened here, seems like a long time ago, was that just this morning?"

Bill stood stock still, his eyes looked toward the heavens and his thoughts faded back to that morning:

The backhoes had done their best to keep hidden behind the cars so that the invaders would not suspect that an armed entrenched force lay in wait. Bill gladly stood back and let the old soldier types set up their weapons. "Just like Nam." He had heard

them say. There were a few Korea veterans and a couple of soldiers from WWII. They had all fought well.

He cautioned them to wait until the last possible minute to spring the surprise, but to not wait so long that they were overrun. The soldiers came running up the hill and the police officers all of a sudden drove their cars from in front of the trenches. When the soldiers were about 300 yards away Old Mike yelled "FIRE" and the trench had erupted. To someone not used to gunfire the noise was deafening. The invaders advance was stalled for just a moment, but these were trained soldiers and they continued their advance and returned fire with their automatic weapons.

Bill had stationed himself behind the Highway Patrol car and Henry, the Highway Patrolman was kneeling on one knee in front of the bumper. When the attack came Henry began to fire toward the invaders with his revolver. Bill walked silently up to the kneeling man and knelt beside him. The car was parked to the far right of the field of battle, Bill quickly looked to the rear and saw that they were hidden from view by the patrol car.

As Henry fired two rounds with his pistol, Bill spoke in his ear. "Henry, why have you been stalking my wife?"

"You know we used to date in High School, Bill, she still loves me, and one of these days she's gonna dump your butt and marry me."

"That was one date you Moron, you've been stalking her for two years, you've got her scared to death." Bill said in a whisper. "You gonna stop it?"

"It's a free country, buddy, I'm gonna follow her till she says yes. And there's not a thing in the world you can do about it, buddy." He had turned to look at Bill with a smile on his face.

Bill shot him between the eyes.

As he spoke to Henry, Bill removed a sack from his pocket. He had kept this gun in a sack in his office for years. It was untraceable, recovered from a drug bust that was cancelled due to lack of evidence. The suspects disowned the gun, so Bill kept it.

Bill placed his knee on the back of the lifeless Henry and emptied the little gun at the attacking invaders. When that gun was empty he slid it in his pocket and picked up Henry's and emptied it as well.

Only a few minutes had passed but it seemed like a good long time. The ranks of the attackers were thinned and the last few were able to throw two grenades each into the crowd before they fell under a hail of gunshots.

The shock of the explosions sent Bill rolling down the hill. A bush stopped his descent and here is where he left the gun.

When the shooting ended, one of the townsfolk yelled that they were getting away, he was able to stand in time to see at least a couple of invaders disappear into the trees on the far side of the runway.

"You OK Bill?" Tom asked as he placed his hand on Bill's shoulder. The touch brought Bill back to the present.

“Just tired,” he smiled. The two men walked along the row of bodies as they talked.

Bill continued, “The boys said you were out of town. That big plane landed about the time you left and a bunch of real mean guys got off and shot the place up. They holed up in that Syracuse Building down there. We couldn’t figure out why they didn’t just come and take the whole damn town. We found out later that they was waiting for a container full of guns and food and shit that never came. Finally I guess they couldn’t wait any longer and they come charging up this hill. We was ready for em.”

“Why would they attack a well defended position like this?” asked Tom.

“We tricked em.” Bill explained. “They didn’t know about these trenches. We parked cars in front of them and kept the backhoe buckets real low and worked by the light of the moon. We let them think this was the easy way out. It wasn’t.”

“Did you say some got away?” Tom asked.

“First thing, about three trucks and a car sneaked out to the north and after the shooting started we saw at least two guys disappear into the woods across the runway.” Bill explained, he looked tired and sounded tired.

“I’m trying to get a handle on this whole deal, Bill. Why did these guys pick this no account place and how many of them are there all together?” Tom asked.

“Best we can figure from the Ham Radio guys is that several planes like this landed all over the center part of the country. Near as we can figure, they sneaked a whole bunch of guys and guns into the coastal cities using those shipping containers. I guess both coasts are in a hell of a mess. They must have had some inside help because shit started hitting the fan even before they landed. People started getting sick. The army got sick. A lot of the law enforcement types got sick as well as a lot of hospital people. A lot of people died, and the power went off.” Bill spoke rapidly.

“We ran into some of that in St. Louis, we didn’t see any power on to speak of and somebody did a number on this plant.” Tom said. He stopped in front of the body of a good friend, he said a silent prayer.

“Must be they targeted the electricity,” said Bill. “Do you think we are going to get invaded?”

“We have been invaded,” said Tom, matter of factly, “If they follow up with an army we can kiss our butts goodbye. Surely the army will mobilize.”

“This is all the help we could muster,” Bill said in disgust.

“What happened to the National Guard and the Reserves?” asked Tom.

“Most of them got sent overseas and most of those that were left got sick and many of them died.” Bill explained. He didn’t know all the details because dead men can’t talk.

“Died?” Tom was still not believing.

“They got poisoned. Who knew?” Bill exclaimed. “These old boys just about had us. The truckers went on strike over those kids getting killed, remember that?”

“OK” Tom didn’t remember but he would think about it.

“The truckers went on strike and a bunch of containers didn’t get delivered. Seems like these old boys had it figured that they would come over here with nothing and hook up with some containers full of whatever.” Said Bill, he began to pace back and forth.

“So the containers didn’t make it?” Tom asked.

“Ended up on the side of the road in a ditch or some shit. If these guys had gotten their weapons and food we’d be dead meat. I shit you not.” Bill said.

“Must have been the Good Lord. I’ve got to get back to the house, and you need to come with me. We’ve got one of their soldiers at the house, a girl. Wish you would take her off my hands.” Tom pleaded.

“The boys said you had a little trouble at your place. You got her locked up?” Bill asked.

“She said she wants asylum, Mary and the girls seem to think she’s all right but I sure wish you would come out.” Tom became more emphatic.

“Can’t today, maybe tomorrow, mind if I use your boys?” Bill asked.

“Just take care of em,” Tom cautioned, “see you later.” He extended his hand and Bill shook it. Then Tom raised his arm in a farewell gesture as he walked toward the truck. There didn’t seem to be much left here to worry about so Tom wasn’t worried about the boys.

The two boys had put the tailgate down and were seated on the tailgate.

“What do you think Dad?” Three asked. “Kind of gruesome, ain’t it?”

“Bill wants to use you boys, do you mind?” Tom asked.

“We were going to ask you that very thing.” Two replied. Both the boys were enjoying working with Bill.

“We be deputies,” said Three.

“Be careful. I’ll be around the house or in at your Grandma’s. I’ve got a sneaking hunch that you two better spend a lot of time at the house with the guns loaded if you catch my drift,” Tom gave both the boys a knowing look.

“They got most of the bad guys Dad, except for a few and they hi-tailed it.” Said Three. “They’ve had enough of this town.”

“You may have gotten rid of these bad guys, but the power’s out and people are going to get hungry. Do you understand? Before you know it you will be surrounded by a bunch of hungry carnivores in a panic.” Tom held out his hand and both the boys shook his hand.

“OK Dad, I’ll explain it to the moron.” Two replied.

Tom got into this truck and backed down the road, passing the parked cars until he was able to turn the truck around.

The two boys watched the truck disappear.

“Well deputy, what shall we do now?” Two asked.

“I see two more bodies.” Three stated. He put his hands to his mouth and said in a low enough voice that only Two could hear. “Bring out your dead, bring out your dead.”

“You just wait,” Two said as he shook his head and walked toward the bodies. “This may just be the beginning.”