

BITCOIN TOWN

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2021 / block 690,354

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O.01

It's been two years but I knew from day one this wasn't going to be two weeks. Two weeks to flatten the curve they said. The alarm bells went off somewhere in the vast wilderness of my head. Could anyone else hear them? I tried warning them. Everyone I could. "It's just two weeks." They'd say. Oblivious and brainwashed. Completely unaware of what was coming. Believing every lie their masters told them. Why was I able to see it so clearly and they weren't?

"No. You don't understand." My attempts to warn were shrugged off. I don't remember how I knew, but I knew. The videos from China. The people falling over in the streets. The boarding up of residential buildings. That wasn't a virus. That was something else. Eventually, I was proven right, but what difference did it make. We're here now. Well, I am at least.

"They're trying to cover up the collapse of fiat money." I'd say. No one seemed to care. Wake up. Go to work. Get home. Microwave something. Watch TV. No one cared what I had to say. I was used to being shrugged off but this time was different. I knew something monumental was happening and they were using what they called Covid-19 as a scapegoat.

There was Kary Mullis a Nobel prize winning chemist talking about how you cannot use the PCR test to detect viruses in any meaningful way. He had just died months prior to the onset of this manufactured crisis. They used his invention to falsify the number of what they called cases. It was completely fake and anyone could see this if they tried to. If there were others out there who knew this I sure as hell didn't know them.

Understanding the PCR test is the lynch pin to understanding how the entire pandemic was manufactured. It works in cycles. The higher number of cycles you run the test, the higher amounts of whatever it is you're looking for will be found. Kary Mullis even said "PCR, if you do it well, you can almost find anything in anybody, it starts making you believe in the Buddhist notion of everything being contained in everything else. Right? Because if you can amplify one single molecule up to something that you can really measure, which PCR can do, then there's very few molecules that you don't have at least one single one inside of your body, okay? So that could be thought of it as a misuse of it. To claim that it's meaningful. The real misuse of it is you don't need to test for HIV, you don't need to test for the other 10,000 unnamed retroviruses that are also in the subject... it's not an estimation it's a really quantitative thing it tells you something about nature and about what's there but it allows you to take a very miniscule amount of anything and make it measureable and talk about it in meetings and stuff like it is important. See that's not a misuse of it that's a misinterpretation."

If you were paying attention, like I was, you would know that many governments around the world began using the PCR test with a cycle threshold of around 40. They deliberately did this to get their case numbers up. Viola! A pandemic was born out of fraud and pseudoscience. The mainstream media brainwashed the public with fear and fraudulent numbers and suddenly millions of people were afraid to leave their homes. If you got shot, died in a motorcycle accident, or had a heart attack, they would PCR test you, find "Covid-19", and the hospitals would declare you died of this "novel coronavirus" and they were making around 50,000\$ per

head in the USA for it. The biggest scam in history, enabled by fiat money, the end game of the globalist totalitarians was happening before my very eyes.

The tests, still being used to this day, bring in billions to big pharma, and still people blindly accept the swabs deep up into their nasal cavities or up their asses without even questioning it. I've never gotten one. I never will. Never wore a mask either. Always told people I was exempt. They were dumbfounded. They would say I had to wear one. I would say no. They would get angry and demand that I do it because they had to do it and I needed to obey. Eventually they would give up and just tell me to wait outside or something. I'll never forget those times. If only they knew what I knew. I can't explain everything to everyone. Why should I?

For the most part people believe whatever it is they want to believe. They want something to tell them what to think. They've been indoctrinated into the system since birth. They don't even question any of it. They are heroes for putting on a mask that doesn't even do anything. When I think of what a hero is that isn't what comes to mind.

Two weeks to flatten the curve based on fake numbers. Two weeks to flatten the curve turned into two months. I don't need to tell you this. You remember it too, don't you? The entire world brainwashed to stay indoors and not fight back. The paltry and pathetic stimulus checks I threw into the trash. I didn't even want to buy Bitcoin with it. I couldn't bring myself to be complicit in this scam. I wanted nothing to do with any of it. I saw right through it all from day one. A totalitarian takeover under the guise of a manufactured pandemic and the public bought it hook line and sinker.

Something I'll never forget. The president of Belarus coming out saying he rejected 940 million dollars in "covid relief aid" from the world bank and the IMF. They said for him to accept he needed to impose extreme lockdowns, force his people to wear masks, impose very strict curfews, impose a police state, and straight up crash the economy. He refused. There it is. Everything I already knew. The central banks working in cahoots with globalist organizations like the Bill Gates controlled World Health Organization and Klaus Schwabs World Economic Forum to bring in eugenics and medical tyranny just like the Nazi's did. They exploited everyone's deliberately amplified fear of death to further their clampdown and division of our society between the haves and the have nots. A scar on our history we can never forget or forgive.

Two months turned into a year and they were still locking people down over lies. The mainstream media was still shouting about cases and deaths at the top of their lungs. All of it was fake. Without the PCR test, they would have nothing. There would be no Covid-19. No cases. No deaths. Just a seasonal flu that wasn't even worse than the one the year before the fake pandemic started. I remember going to the hospital then. They were pissed I even came. They were at max capacity and they thought my problem wasn't bad enough to warrant a trip to the hospital. The doctor told me to go though. What was I supposed to do? The hospitals were already full before a "pandemic" even started. At least that's how it was where I was living at the time.

It was around this time I quit smoking weed. I became allergic to it for the first time in my life. It's rare, but it happens. So I gave it up. I planned on moving from the west coast to a state that either never locked down or was repealing its emergency restrictions. I booked a place to stay and got my car ready for the trip. The week I was set to leave they began requiring proof of vaccination to enter stores without a mask. Something I had been doing the entire past year and no one was able to stop me. This was the first step before their digital biometric vaccine passports. Something I decided I was never going to comply with. I drew my lines in the sand and drove away.

These experimental gene therapies they were pushing on everyone were not vaccines. They called them vaccines to skirt liability in the event anyone had any adverse reactions or deaths. There were more adverse reactions and deaths in six months from these things than in the entire history VAERS began tracking the data. It was a hockey stick that rose up from the surface of the graph. Yet they were telling everyone they had to take it. Many were fired for refusing to take it. How was this not illegal? How was this not a violation of the Nuremberg code? Lawsuits were filed. A great battle against medical tyranny began.

The FDA classified them for emergency use authorization, and to legally justify this, they had to prove that there were no other treatments available. That is why we saw such a massive pushback against any cheap anti viral drug like hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin. They were demonized because their existence threatened their agenda to push this experiment on everyone and to usher in a new age of technocratic dictatorship where people are forced to give up autonomy over their bodies.

I am convinced still to this day Covid-19 was just the seasonal flu rebranded. If you went to the doctor five years ago and asked to take a test for the flu they would tell you you're a fucking idiot. The lab leak theory was all over the news. Yet I never saw a single shred of real evidence it came from there. Nothing. It was all propaganda. Always focused on Wuhan. Never any mention of Fort Detrick where they've had documented leaks for years and everyone living within proximity of it was dying of cancer. That told me everything I needed to know. There was never any proof it came from anywhere. They would never figure it out either. It was all a charade. No one ever cared where viruses came from. They were everywhere. All the time. Mutating. Inside of us. Outside of us. If Covid-19 was a bioweapon, it was the weakest fucking bioweapon I had ever seen, that's for damn sure.

They started pushing the variants on everyone hard. The Indian variant they made out to be especially scary because they showed videos of Indians burning bodies in the streets. What people didn't realize is people in India are always burning bodies in the streets. They have billions of people there, and it's something that they have always done. It had nothing to do with a seasonal flu, or the fake disease called Covid-19. Another psyop used to justify another lockdown. If more people were dying, it was because they were locking people down, less people were working, more people were struggling and starving. Suicides and drug addictions were up. Surprise surprise.

Migrants flooded the southern border of the USA for the same reason. Lockdowns in central American and south American countries were particularly bad and draconian. Soldiers

outside of stores checking papers. Some places required permission from the local police to leave your house. Many starved and emigrated. Joe Biden even said in a speech that they should immediately surge the border if he were elected President. He was, and they did. They were given cash and plane tickets upon arrival and they dispersed throughout the country. Cartels would sometimes take their phones, put them to work, and they would never see their families again.

Where I was living, there was no pandemic. There never was one. I was in a small town in the middle of nowhere. I watched the hysteria play out on my computer. It had been almost a year and a half since it all began. Even California started to open back up but they were slowly rolling out their biometric "vaccine passports." The fear was waning but the totalitarian tip toe still clenched tighter in some places. The pot of water they had some of their frogs in began to get a little hotter.

They had deliberately turned down the cycle threshold of the PCR tests in the USA for people who have had the experimental gene therapy they're masquerading as a vaccine, and suddenly cases plummeted. Gee, who could have predicted that? The scam couldn't be more obvious. How were these people not in jail, tried for crimes against humanity, and put to death? I will never understand.

The fear was waning but the Great Reset was far from complete. Anyone who had been paying attention knew this. Try telling that to a normy though. They all wanted to believe things were going back to normal. They lined up to be guinea pigs for big pharma without even questioning it. I guess they forgot all about the opiate epidemic. Thousands died including some of my friends and family. At this time it's possible this experiment killed as many people as the seasonal flu did if you look at the real numbers and not the fake PCR test numbers. Even the CDC had to admit it was causing inflammation of the heart in young people. Less people were taking the shots. They needed a new pandemic to keep the fear going and to give them an excuse to clamp down even harder. A cyber pandemic.

Suddenly ransomware was all over the news. A pipeline's billing system was hit so they shut down the entire pipeline because they couldn't get paid. Oil prices began to rise. Inflation was running rampant just like I knew it would. They paid the ransom and it was eventually recovered because the alleged hackers left it sitting on a cloud server. The whole thing reeked of a false flag to me. If you were a three letter agency, and you wanted to survive the collapse of fiat money, you would be acquiring Bitcoin at all costs, even resorting to illegal means. Just saying.

Cyber Polygon, a World Economic Forum led coalition of businesses from around the world, mostly USA and Russia, was meeting soon to simulate what they called a cyber pandemic, a term Klaus Schwab coined the year prior. A total collapse of the power grid and internet for weeks at a time. JBS, a meat producer who was a member of Cyber Polygon, got hit with ransomware one month before the meeting and temporarily shut down. I'm sure that was just a coincidence. Nothing to see here.

I remember Event 201 however. There was also a pandemic simulation just months prior to the Covid-19 psyop. These people are psychopaths and they are brazen. They plan things out before they do them and they do it all in the open thinking we are all too stupid to figure it out.

For the most part, they are right about that. Now that I knew this though I couldn't help but wonder if they were simulating the shutdown of the power grid and internet because they were planning on actually doing it. I found some other clues that led me to think this was likely to happen as well.

For example, this document from 2017. "The SPARS Pandemic 2025-2028: A Futuristic Scenario to Facilitate Medical Countermeasure Communication." This document is somewhat of a smoking gun in my opinion. It basically outlines the entire "pandemic" that just occurred as if it were some kind of play or war game. Telling people to not wear masks, then telling them to. Locking people down. Hypeing up nurses and doctors as heroes. Even taking down health officials as fall guys the way they did to Fauci when he was no longer useful. Reading it was like reading what I had just lived through and it offered some insight into what might be some other future events.

Like for example the three week period the pacific north west loses power in the middle of winter because of a terrorist attack on their power grid infrastructure. You mean like what Cyber Polygon is simulating? That's interesting. I remember also the governor in Oregon right at the beginning of the psyop signed an executive order declaring her administration has the right to suspend due process for thirty days in the event of an emergency. I always thought that was shady but it makes sense now if you think about it. I began to see the bigger picture. They would shut down the power grid, blame hackers from Iran or something, and suspend due process. Martial law with no electricity. A real dark winter.

Why would they do that though? Because they need a crisis in order to force their new system on everyone otherwise no one would adopt it. A digital currency linked directly to the treasury and federal reserve linked to a biometric vaccine passport. George Orwells nightmare realized beyond his wildest dreams. I could go on and on about why this is such a bad idea but it's not relevant for now. What matters is I could see their plan coming from a mile away and most people could not. I told everyone I could. Hardly anyone cared which was typical. I prepared the best I could just in case I was right.

Another thing the document outlined was six months after people took the "vaccine" they began to get very sick and started dying in massive numbers. Around six months after the majority of people had taken it that is exactly what I began to see. I don't know how they knew this in 2017 but they did. The mainstream media and their overlords at the CDC blamed variants for the deaths and the sickness. They blamed the "unvaccinated" people for spreading a new deadly variant of Covid-19. It was the biggest load of bullshit I had ever seen in my entire life and I wanted it all to stop.

I got through the days by telling myself it would all be over soon. This was the end of the fiat money empire. Without fiat money, there would be no billions of dollars printed out of thin air and given to the CDC to brainwash people into taking their experimental gene therapies which killed untold amounts of people. Saving them from nothing their own immune systems could have fought off like it was nothing but another seasonal flu. Governments around the world wanted to clamp down before they fully lost control. This was it. Their last shot. And they were giving it all they had.

I wasn't sure how it was going to end but I knew it would. They would lose control over the dollar and the rest of fiat money would hyperinflate with it. It would be the biggest disaster in history. Millions would likely starve. How much could Bitcoin soften the blow? That was anyone's guess. It was a test that we had yet to see the results for. Something we could see coming over the horizon but hadn't arrived yet.

I would imagine what life would be like in a post fiat world. I tried to think about what government would be like if it would exist at all. How day to day interactions with people would be. How much would it limit the endless wars we had seen for so long? Would it put an end to them completely? There was only one way to find out. I waited patiently while watching observantly. Honestly, it was surreal. I still to this day fail to see how what happened wasn't genocide yet no one uses that word that's how brainwashed everybody was. They did it right in front of everyone and many didn't even question it. If there was one thing about this world that we could know it was that evil lurked within it.

"How easy it is to make people believe a lie, and how hard it is to undo that work again!" Mark Twain said that and he was right. There was no undoing this. This scar was so deep that it changed everything forever. There was no forgetting this. No forgiving this. How could I go on living knowing what I knew? I asked myself this question every day. I did so in defiance. I would live in defiance and fight back with everything I had left. I always believed knowledge was power and it saved my ass more than once. I would never give in to their lies. I would never comply with their demands. They weren't going to win. This time it was going to be us. I just had to make it long enough. I bided my time. I watched like a red tailed hawk perched high up on a cliffside.

I became wealthy enough to never have to worry about money ever again by hodling Bitcoin. I cashed some out at the top of the four year cycle so I could buy a house and kept the rest in cold storage. I was going to get something off grid out in the country so I could weather the storm as far away from everything as I could get. I figured being self-sufficient as much as possible was the way to go with the way everything was going down. I wanted to be in control of my life and my destiny. I was about to learn a hard lesson however. There are some things in this world that we have no control over. At least that's the way it seemed at the time.

O.02

When I wake up from dreaming about being on a boardwalk in India with a flip phone looking for friends I was with I had lost, I immediately know something is wrong. It is colder than usual. Winter is starting to creep in. I can see my breath in the apartment. Everything is quiet. Way too quiet. The power is out. Of course it is. I rub the crust from the corners of my eyes and try snap out of it. I am always void of energy in the morning because of my disease. Much more so than the average person. It takes me a long time to wake up but I'm starting to feel awake with the shot of adrenaline running through me. Something isn't right. The power has never gone out here. This is the first time and I have no idea how long it's going to last for.

I go to brush my teeth but there's no water coming out of the faucet. Obviously. I have water stored in a few large seven gallon jugs just in case of an emergency and go to fill a glass. I brush my teeth and release the intense pressure from my bladder. I don't want to waste water so I leave it in the toilet. Now I need coffee. I always need coffee first thing. Even now. Especially now. The stove isn't working of course. I have my own that runs on alcohol. I get it out of the closet and fire it up on the table in the kitchen. The wind outside rattles the external window pane and I can see a naked tree I can't identify blowing around in it. There are no cars or people outside.

The water boils in the tiny steel pot and I pour it over a couple tablespoons of some sumatra in a filter. The fragrance of it fills the room with it's delightfully earthly smell and it sounds loud due to how quiet everything is. I still haven't thought much about the power outage. The coffee's made now. I can sit and drink it. I drink it black with a splash of water to cool it down. Why would I wait for it to cool? I need to wake up. I need to wake up and try to process what's going on.

I go to check the price of Bitcoin on my phone, something I do every morning, and it doesn't load. There's no network. No roaming. No wifi. That's weird. I get why there's no wifi. No roaming though? How widespread is this outage? I can't even call someone if I wanted to. This might be more severe than I thought. Is it happening? Is this what Cyber Polygon was simulating and planning for? Shit. How fucked am I right now? I have no way of knowing. I tried to prepare for this the best I could. I am just one man though. Did I do enough? Am I getting ahead of myself right now? What do I need to do right now?

My mind begins to race back and forth between all of this stuff and I feel the warmth of the coffee in my cold hands watching the steam swirl into the cold air. I sip it to savor it but I can't get enough of it's bitter spicy warmth. Do I have enough coffee? I probably don't. I'll have to cut back. This is going to suck. It's ok. I'll make it through this. I will survive in spite of them and their so-called great reset.

Calm the fuck down. You don't even know if it's happening or not. You just woke up. It could be a fallen tree or something. You should go outside and check things out. Talk to your neighbors. If you need more water you can drive to the lake. You have gas. You're going to be okay.

It's winter in a state that gets very cold but I have a tent. I'll put blankets up over the windows. It's not going to kill me. I'm not going to let them kill me. It's possible this kills untold amounts of people but I won't be one of them. I had a fair warning. I saw them planning this out in the open. I did the best I could. Knowing their entire playbook and watching everyone fight over how they're playing the game. This world. This fucking clown world. I will never understand it. To think you have to do this. To do this to so many people. For what? For power? Their power is waning and yet they still have the power to do this. That is still a great power, and it's more power than I have. One man drinking coffee cold in an apartment without power. I have canned meat. I have water. I still have my sanity but I have no way to contact anyone.

I should have bought a sat phone. I didn't. Oh well. Nothing I can do about it now. I tried warning everyone. I showed them the articles. I told them to prepare. No one wanted to believe they would do this. What good would a sat phone even do if everyone else's phones are down anyway. This is fucking insane.

It hasn't even been twenty minutes since I woke up and I'm already running through worst case scenarios. I drink the last bit of coffee I have left and I want another cup but I have to stop myself in case I have to ration. This may be the hardest part of all of this. I don't know. I normally drink coffee all day every day but I'll stop here. I decide I'll get up and take a walk outside and see what's going on out there. The apartment is quiet. I don't even hear the neighbors at all.

I throw my boots on and head out to the street. I live in a residential area by a school close to downtown. I'll head that way. The day is as cold as it is clear. The sun's rays are piercing but barely provide any warmth. I'll get warmer as I walk more. No one is outside. No one is driving. There's no one walking their dog. A rabbit hops around in a field behind my apartment. The bare trees blow in the wind. The wind is the only thing I can hear. Something about this seems wrong to me. It reminds me of last year when the pandemic psyop first started and no one would go outside. It was one of the creepiest things I've ever seen. I was the only person on the road then like I am now. The only other things out here are the birds and the insects they feed off of. Where is everyone? I'm not dreaming am I?

That would be some shit. To just wake up from this. I move my hands around in the pockets of my jacket. Feels real enough even though reality always seems like a dream to me anyway. After a while you can distinguish the two despite it all. I'm not dreaming. The powers out and people are just in their houses and apartments. I hear a car. A white SUV drives by. I wave. The woman waves back. I wonder what she's thinking. Where she's going. She probably has no idea how deep in shit we might be right now. I thought maybe I would be insulated here from this. I was hoping they would only do this in the Pacific Northwest if they decided to even do it at all. Hell, I don't even know for sure if it's happening yet or not.

Downtown is basically dead. The stores aren't open. The gas station is closed. There's a sign on the door. "No power, no gas. Back at ____" and it shows a clock with no hands on the dial. They went home. I'm the only one out here. Walking around aimlessly. What did I expect to even find? I'm really on my own now. It feels somewhat surreal. It doesn't feel right. If what I think is happening is happening the people in this town need to band together and help each

other through this. I'm such an introvert that this thought strikes me as idealistic and naive. How would I even realize such an endeavor? This society of ours has a tendency to isolate people making us more susceptible to the weaknesses of being a solitary individual. Yet at the same time many of us are moving towards being sovereign individuals through things like Bitcoin and the internet.

Well the internet is down. The power is down. I don't have a HAM radio. I don't have a Blockstream satellite. I have no connection to the rest of the world. I have no idea how widespread this power outage is. I have no way to access my Bitcoin but it will be there when it all comes back online. They might try to force people into their biometric vaccine passport ID system to use the internet when it comes back but there will be ways around it. Cyberpunks always find ways to route around . I walk along the cold hard sidewalk. Very few cars are on the road. Nothing is open. The school is closed. There's a park with some grass but it's too cold to sit on. I'm warmer now from walking. My breath is visible in the pure morning air. I want to head back to the apartment but I don't want to be there. I want to do something to warn everyone about what might be happening but I'm still not certain it is yet.

Besides, it might be too much for people anyway. No one wants to believe this could all be planned and executed by the powers at be. They've been filling the main stream media with predictive programming for months and years about how foreign nations were targeting our power grid and it was susceptible to hacking. They've been planting these seeds all along so that when this happens they already know exactly what to think and don't even consider that it could actually be them.

I'll walk to the lake. I have nothing else to do. Maybe there will be other people there. I don't want to go back to the apartment. It's cold and I have nothing to do. I'm a millennial. I grew up on the internet. Sitting in an apartment with no internet sounds like torture. It is torture. That's the whole point of this if what I think is happening is happening. They want to bring us to a breaking point so that we'll beg them for it all to come back and accept it under whatever conditions they want to give it back under. That's what's so sinister about this. Not that untold amounts of people will probably be killed. But that they will have people begging them for the biometric vaccine passport to use the internet or get their power turned back on or access their bank accounts. It wasn't enough to just roll it out and force it onto everyone. They had to brainwash everyone into begging for it. They had to manufacture a crisis to make it not only acceptable but ubiquitous.

I can't think of anything more evil than this. This has got to be some final stage of centralized governance on a global scale. One last attempt at taking over before fiat money completely dies and they lose all of their power and fade away to their bunkers and yachts. They felt they had to do this because they felt we had become too free and they became too afraid. It's an act of war declared on an entire population covertly so that they don't even know they're under attack. It's as genius as it is insidious. And here I am living through it. Unbelievable. Has anything like this ever happened in history on such a massive scale? This feels like some kind of profound and tragic moment in history. How will people look back on and remember this time when they control most of the narrative through their behemoth media companies? It's all so surreal. To be at war. One man against a machine. If we all united we could win this but they've

got us all spread out. Compartmentalized and brainwashed to the point many wouldn't even believe it was happening if you laid out all of the facts for them and showed them the way.

How do we unite as one against the horror that is the Great Reset? I don't know. I'm just one man, diseased, doing the best I can. There has to be a way but they've got us right where they want us. Closed off, dumbed down, and unable to fight back. I don't know if I believe that. I think we can fight back. I think we have to. You don't do this to people. Nobody does this to people and gets away with it. They can't win this. They are fighting against nature. A chain link fence propped up to stop an avalanche. We are that avalanche coming down hill to take you out and bury you. You'll see. One foot forward at a time along the sidewalk. Along the dirt. The birds on the road. The wind through the trees. I wish I knew what kind they were but I don't. This is the calm before the quiet killing storm.

People here in this small town might be better off than people in places like New York City or San Francisco. They're probably more self-reliant than most. We're not off grid out here though. I was meaning to move somewhere more like that but I didn't have time. That was literally the next thing I was going to do. Oh well. What the fuck am I supposed to do about that now? There's nothing I can do.

There's an old chain link fence lining the sidewalk between me and the empty school. There's an old piece of newspaper crumbled up and stuffed into one of the holes. For some reason I feel like reaching out, grabbing it, straightening it out, and looking at what it says.

"Biden Rushes To Protect the Power Grid as Hacking Threats Grow"

It's from last April. I remember reading about this when they were first writing about it. Biden's 100 day plan they called it. Calling for intelligence agencies to basically install backdoors into the power grid throughout the USA. At least that's how I interpreted it. They tried to spin it to look like they were going to incentivize power companies for installing monitoring hardware into their systems to prevent future attacks by giving intelligence agencies information. Reality is often the opposite of whatever it is they are trying to claim. If you wanted to install backdoors into the system allowing you to shut it down and blame another country this is exactly what you would do in my opinion. I'm not an expert by any means but this was obvious to me.

Not wanting to put the newspaper back into the fence I fold it up and put it into my right front pocket. I'll throw it away later or something. Doesn't feel right to leave it here. I can hear a dog barking in the distance but other than that nothing. Nothing but wind. It's so quiet I can hear the blood rushing through my veins.

Walking to the lake I see very few cars and no one else outside. It's too cold I guess. I don't know. I can see it coming up. I'll be there soon. The sun shines on the back of my head through my beanie and on my back. My shadow stretches out before me. There's someone at the lake. The first person I've seen outside this entire time. It's a woman and her dog. She's using a plastic toy to pick up a neon tennis ball and throw it. The golden retriever runs after it having the time of it's life completely oblivious to what might be happening. Imagine that. Being a dog. Doesn't seem so bad.

She's wearing jeans, a wine red parka, and a black beanie. She's wearing Ray Ban type sunglasses and her straight brunette hair hangs down from the back of her beanie. She looks about my age maybe a little older. I decide what the hell I'm going to talk to her. She smiles as she throws the ball for her dog giving praise for his obedient retrievals.

"Hey. How's it going?" I ask her. That's a decent enough way to strike up a conversation I guess, isn't it?

"Hi, power's out at your place?" She asks.

"Yeah, I got a bad feeling about this to be honest." Not wanting to sound too conspiratorial or whatever yet.

"So do I." She says looking down. Her dog comes back with the slobbering ball and drops it at her feet. She's about a foot shorter than me by the looks of it. The dog looks up at me with its tongue hanging out and its breath panting.

"I'm David, I live down on Willow street, not too far from here." I say. She throws the ball and the dog does running.

"Yea I know where that's at. I'm Jessica." She tells me. "That's my dog Mage. He loves that ball more than anything. Probably even more than he loves me."

"That's a cool name. I like it. He seems like a great dog." I say as I watch him gobble up the ball and come running back with it.

"He is. We couldn't stay cooped up with the power out even with how cold it is today." She scoops up the ball again and throws it even further this time.

"Do you have heat?" I ask.

"No, do you?" She says looking at me. I can see her eyes through the sunglasses.

"Sort of. I bought a gas heater for indoor use in case of an emergency. I hope I don't have to use it but it's there in case I do."

"Oh that's smart. I should have done that."

"Yeah I was actually planning on moving off grid, I mean I still am, but---"

She scoops up the ball again and launches it down the flat grass along the lake.

"But what?" She asks.

"I mean we don't know how long this power outage is going to last. It might come back online today. It might be back online right now for all we know." Should I mention the Cyber Polygon thing yet? She pulls out her phone and turns it on then stuffs it back into her parka.

"Nope. It's still off. No cell service."

"Oh shit, yours too. Mine was off when I checked before I left."

"This never happens." She says looking a little worried.

"You're right. You know what. I first got a cell phone when I was thirteen or so. That was like twenty years ago. I've never once in my life seen cell service go out except when I was like driving through the desert or something." I say.

"Something isn't right. I can feel it. But I can't explain it. I don't know. Do you know anything?" She asks throwing the ball again. She adds more water to the small bowl she brought for Mage in a water bottle she had in the grass. He slurped what was left of the last of it up.

"Well I mean only speculations. I have no way of knowing exactly what's happening." I tell her matter of factly.

"I know. No one knows. But what do you know? What are these speculations of yours?"

"I don't want to come off as conspiratorial or whatever---"

"You're not. You're good." She cuts me off.

"Ok. I just mean how long has the power even been out. It hasn't been that long yet. I don't want to jump to conclusions yet." I'm being rational, right? At least I think I am.

"Honestly I don't know. Some time last night I guess. I woke up and it was off." She tells me.

"Same here." I say.

"I'll tell you this though. I've lived here for years now and I grew up here when I was a little girl and I don't ever remember this happening. We don't have power outages here. It's just not a thing. That's why I'm so weirded out by this. What do you think is causing it?" She asks after another scoop and toss of the ball. Mage runs off into the distance. His golden fur shining in the ice cold sunshine beside the gentle sound of the lake not too far from where we're standing.

"Okay. So if this goes on longer than a day I think I know what's going on. I think this is apart of some elaborate plan to be honest. But I don't know yet, like I said, don't want to jump to conclusions. I think if by this time tomorrow the power's still off and cell service is still off it's safe to say it's happening." Should I say it? Tell her everything? How do I even talk about all of this without sounding crazy?

"What's happening?" She asks. Concerned and curious.

"The great reset." I say. I feel disgusted even saying the words out loud.

"The great reset?" What do you mean?" She really wants to know. I'm going to tell her.

"Yeah. The great reset. This whole elaborate plan orchestrated by the World Economic Forum and a consortium of corporate and government entities from all around the world. They

recently met up last July to simulate a (air quotes) "cyber pandemic" that shuts down the power grid for weeks at a time and puts the blame on an adversarial nation so that when they turn it back on everyone whose left that isn't dead basically begs them for it to the point they'll accept it under any conditions." I lay it all out. Is she going to think I'm crazy?

"Under what conditions?" She asks. She seems to understand.

"You know like the biometric ID, the vaccine passport thing they've been trying to force on everyone for a while now but this state banned. Needing it to use the internet, or to get into a store, or to use a bank account, or to travel. To participate at all in society basically." Am I explaining this good enough? I don't know.

"They would shut down the power for weeks to force us all into doing this?" She's in disbelief and is almost a little angry at this point. She stopped throwing the ball and Mage has laid down by her feet to catch his breath.

"Yeah I mean that's been the plan all along. With covid and everything. It's to cattle herd us all into this weird technocratic totalitarianism where we're forced to use their surveillance money, give up all autonomy and freedom of choice over our bodies and medicine, and live in a constant state of surveillance outside of our bodies and inside. They want the ability to be able to control what we buy. What we eat. Where we go. Everything. They want to tell us what experimental shots to take and when and if we don't comply we get shut out of society and hunted down for wrongthink. The governments have lost their minds. They're out of control. This is like their last attempt at clamping down and they're going all the way." Am I talking too much? Does she understand what I'm saying? Do I sound crazy?

"Holy fucking shit David what the fuck!" Her jaw isn't really dropped but her mouth is open and I see the sun shine down on her lips as she processes what I just told her. She looks down at Mage then back up at me.

"I didn't know how much I should tell you. I mean we just met. I don't know you." I say.

"No. I knew something was wrong. I knew it. I could feel it." She says looking down at Mage.

"We still don't know if it's happening yet though." I say trying to sound rational.

"It's happening. Everything you said makes perfect sense. I get it. That's the setup. That was the plan all along wasn't it?" She takes a sip from her water bottle. A small sip.

"Well I mean they literally simulated this exact same thing last July. They simulated a pandemic, Event 201, months before the covid hysteria too. I sort of knew this was going to happen. I mean these people, they're literal psychopaths, they plan this stuff out in the open and think we're too stupid to figure it out. I mean hell most people are. Or if they're not they're just totally living in the dark because they don't follow alternative news or whatever." I tell her trying to cover all of the facts I know but I feel like I'm missing something. I always feel like I'm missing the most important parts but I'm doing the best I can in the moment.

"Like me. I don't follow alternative news. I was living in the dark. Now I am literally living in the dark with no power." She's starting to sound distressed now.

"Are you going to be okay? Do you have everything you need to get through this if this does play out?" I ask.

"No, not really. I didn't plan for this at all. This never happened before. I feel like an idiot. I should have prepared better for an emergency. Especially after last year. How could I not see this coming?" She takes a deep breath, sighs, reaches down and pets Mage on the head who looks happy. Ignorance is bliss.

"Don't be hard on yourself, think about how many people are in your shoes right now." I say trying to sound reassuring.

"Yeah. Like millions of people, or something, right? Holy shit." She asks looking up at me. Her eyes are visible through the glasses in the sunlight. Her hair is gently blowing in the wind beneath her beanie.

"It's possible. I don't know." I say. "I wish I did."

"Yeah. Come with me, will you? Let's check the radio." She picks up her bowl and water bottle and Mage gets up knowing it's time to go.

"Sure, good idea, I haven't checked it at all this morning. I just got up had a coffee and walked here." I say as I follow her toward the parking lot. She's got the only vehicle in the small gravel lot. A navy blue Ford Explorer. She unlocks it, opens the back door, and Mage jumps inside. I get in on the passenger side and leave the door open. She hops in and shuts the door.

"Shut the door, it's cold." She says. I close the door. She fires up the engine and turns on the radio. I feel the heat from the car already on my bearded face and it feels good. She flips through the radio stations one at a time. There's nothing. Nothing but white noise. Static on every channel. She goes through every channel and then stops pressing the power button and it's silent again. I can hear Mage's dog tag jingling in the back seat.

"No power. No internet. No cell service. No radio. Nothing." She says contemplating the current state of the world we find ourselves in.

"We're on our own. Left to fend for ourselves while they bring us to a breaking point. I keep thinking people need to band together and unite against this somehow but how are we supposed to pull that off you know? When they've got us in the positions so many of us are in right now?" Does she understand what I'm saying? I wonder. I just speak my mind and hope she does.

"I know what you mean. I agree. I mean we're doing it. We just did that. We just met right? We don't have to do this alone if we don't want to. We can find others. We need to work together to make it through this, right? I mean what am I supposed to do?" She asks me as the gravity of it all begins to weigh in on her.

"You're right. This is a start. I mean what if it doesn't even happen---"

"It's happening." She cuts me off again.

"Okay I just mean, let's wait and see. Let's take this one step at a time." I'm trying to be rational. Maybe I'm just in denial. I don't know. How can I even tell at this point?

"Listen. Let me drop you off at your place. I'll head back to mine. If by this time tomorrow everything still hasn't come back on I will come over to your place and we can figure out what to do from there. Is that okay? I'm not like imposing myself on you or something, am I?" She sounds sincere and I want to help however I can. I don't want to be alone dealing with this probably about the same amount that she does by the looks of it. I was just thinking about how we need to band together and unite and I guess this is a good place to start.

"Yeah. I mean no. You're not imposing. That sounds good. Solid plan." I nod yes along with telling her.

"Okay, great. I hope you're wrong but my gut is telling me you're right." She says.

"I know how you feel. I hope I'm wrong too. The problems of the past seem so miniscule compared to the ones now."

"Tell me about it. I'll come over even if the power does come back on. Is that okay?" She asks me bluntly.

"Sure, I'd like that. That's the ideal scenario, isn't it?" I ask.

"Ideal is never realistic." She says as she backs up the Explorer and pushes it into drive. We head down the road and she takes a left on Willow street.

"It's that one. Number 333. I'm apartment #1." I say as she pulls over to the curb.

"That's easy to remember." She says.

"Thanks for the ride. It was nice to meet you and Mage." I smile and hold up my hand.

"You too David. I'll see you soon alright?" She holds her hand up to wave goodbye and smiles with her lips closed.

"Alright." I shut the door. She turns the wheel and heads back down the road. There's no one else outside. The sound of the Explorer blue shifts into the background noise of the wind through what's left of the trees shedding their leaves in anticipation of a dark winter.

I open the door to the apartment. It's dead silent. I wonder what everyone else who lives here is doing. Should I tell them? No. I'll wait. Maybe they already know. Maybe it's not even happening. The power could come on any second. Who knows? I turn the key to the lock of my door and go inside locking the deadbolt behind me.

I grab a staple gun from the closet where I keep my tools and a couple blankets I have laying around. I put them up over the windows and peel them back to allow some light in. I pull

the tent out from the closet and start setting up in the middle of the living room after pushing the coffee table to the wall. The small space and thin insulation will keep me warm enough. I might not even have to use the gas heater. We'll see. I'm feeling a bit hungry now. I have a bunch of roasted sunflower seeds. I always buy them in bulk and keep a bunch on hand. I grab a measuring cup and fill it to the brim of the brown toasted seeds. They're crunchy, delicious, nutritious, and stupid easy. No preparation needed and they keep for a pretty long time. I sit in the silence of the apartment hearing the sound of myself eating them one bite at a time. It's weird how loud it is.

I would be bored if I wasn't so worried. I finish the cup of sunflower seeds. I drink some water and swish it around in my mouth. I get inside the tent. I have pads to lay on. I have blankets and pillows. I have a book to read. *The Sovereign Individual*. I've read it before but it seemed appropriate to read again. I lay down, open up the book, and I wait. Not knowing what I'm waiting for exactly. The power to turn back on. Jessica to show up if she ever does at all. I don't know. Something. Anything. Soon I'll know what's going on. Soon I'll know if it's really happening or not. For now, all I can do is wait and see.

0.03

I've never gotten used to being able to hear my neighbors in the apartment. It's an old building. I never let it bother me but it's just strange. Before I lived here I lived on a ranch for a few years in my own house. The only sounds were the coyotes, the grouse, all the different kinds of birds, my landlords sons cows, and my other neighbors cows. Here there's none of that. There's the creaking footsteps of the couple above me. I normally have fans on but they're turned off now and the sound is more pronounced than usual. I can even hear them talking sometimes but I try to tune it out. Normally I have music or podcasts or even games. Now it's just me and my book. I wonder what they're doing? I wonder if they have any idea how deep of shit they might be in? I wonder when I should tell them? Is there anything I can do to even help at this point?

My mind starts wandering again. This could get bad. Unbelievably bad. I want to believe it won't come down to that but something tells me it will. Something's been telling me that for months now. Ever since I started reading about Cyber Polygon and how they were simulating this. Now it's here. This is exactly what they wanted. How am I supposed to stop this? This place has been taken over by totalitarian psychopaths that would make all of the ruthless dictators throughout history roll over in their graves in glee if they could see what was happening.

Technology is something that benefits humanity and contributes to the deflation of all goods and services. Under an inflationary monetary system this becomes skewed because inflation allows tyrants to utilize technology in these insane ways that go against the natural progress of nature. Take away their ability to print money and we go back to the natural order of things. The way they're supposed to be. We've had fifty years of catastrophic monetary policy and we are at the end of it's life cycle. This is their end game. The parties over. One last hurrah before the house of cards comes down. This kind of power over a society and people would not be possible in a world that runs on sound money. They printed their way to the top of the pyramid. They shouldn't have this power. The power to shut off the power. But they do. And we're here now. What are we--- what am I going to do about it?

I unzip the tent and it's noticeably colder inside of the apartment. I'll leave the blankets peeled back over the window for light a little while longer. I don't need to turn on the gas heater yet. I'll save that for when it gets really cold. I can survive this for now. So far so good. You got this. You're not going to let them win. You're a rebel. A renegade. You never complied with any of their bullshit up until this point and you're not going to let them win now.

I should make some food. I have a fridge and freezer full of food that is going to go bad soon. It's hard to say how long it's going to last for. I'll try to eat as much of it as I can before using up the canned meat. I fire up the alcohol stove, splash some olive oil and chop a piece of butter off and put it in a skillet. I grab a rib eye from the fridge and when the pan heats up drop it into pan covering it with a metal mesh after sprinkling some salt onto it. I get my phone out from the tent which I had turned off and turn it back on to check the time. There still isn't any cell service. Surprise surprise.

Six minutes later I flip the beautiful piece of meat on it's other side. Salt it. Cover it with mesh. And wait. The sound of the sizzling. The smell of the meat. This isn't so bad. It hasn't even been a day yet though. I can't vent the air outside and I can't open a window. I know it's not good but I'll just have to breathe it in. I hope my neighbors have food. I don't think I have enough for them. This could get bad. Very bad.

Another six minutes passes. I shut the burner off, wipe the mesh down with a paper towel, and fork the steak off onto a plate, covering it with cracked black peppercorns. I grab my knife and fork and sit down at the table looking out of the window with the curtains and blanket peeled back. I cut into the perfectly cooked cut of steak and fork a piece of it into my mouth. The fat melts on my tongue. Just the right amount of crunch on the outside. Just the right amount of tenderness on the inside. Doesn't need any more salt. I'm alive in the moment and grateful for this meal. How long am I going to have to endure this before they let us live our lives again? I don't know. Their war games say weeks. It could be weeks.

Outside the tree with no leaves blows in the wind waiting for spring to come so it can bloom again. There's no one outside. No animals can be seen. The sky is clear. Everyone waits inside their homes. How long before they realize what's happening? How long before they take to the streets and look for answers? How long before they start going hungry? What a nightmare. I can't believe they did it. I mean if they really did it. If this is it. I can't believe it. I must be living during one of the most evil times in history. A slow psyop genocide. They no longer need gas chambers they can just shut the power off and starve you. They can just lock you down so you can't work or leave your house and starve you. They can just coerce you into taking an experimental shot that gives you blood clots and you die or else you can't work. You can't travel. This is sick. This is a sick society at the end of it's life. And I want to see it die.

My mind wanders as I cut my sharp knife into the tender steak between the prongs of the fork and cut along it in chewable pieces. One sawed cut long ways, then another to cut it in half, then each piece raised up to my mouth to revel in it's flavor and texture. It never gets old. There's no better food than this. And I'm going to miss it when I have to rely solely on the cans. Better than nothing though. It's scary to think about how many could have nothing and how that was literally their plan. Who has the money to afford canned goods when they can barely pay their rent? Preparing for an emergency has become a luxury in the late stages of the fiat monetary world. They don't want people prepared. They want less of us. What a perfect way to achieve that. It's happening before my very eyes.

I find it all so disturbing. A silver truck drives by on the road outside. I eat the steak slow but not so slow that it becomes cold. One cut, one bite, one chew at a time. Feeling it fill my stomach. Thinking about everything. I wonder if Jessica will show up. I wonder what my neighbors or going to do. I wonder about my landlord and rent. I wonder about my family. There are so many things I can't know. So many things I'll have to wait and see. I feel a pang of anger rising up inside of me. I'm generally a pretty zen man but something about this makes me furious. It's an attack. An attack on me. My neighbors. Possibly my family. Everyone they're forcing to try to survive through this like a sick twisted type of hunger games or something. Klaus Schwab and everyone in control of this must be loving this right now. Wherever they are.

I don't believe this is going to work though. I think this just shows how desperate they are for control over us. I still think we're going to win. No, I know we are. We have the technology on our side. They can't keep printing forever. Their system is going to collapse. I am going to live to see the day. This is just the end. This is their very last grand finale before they finally lose all control. I'm sure of it. I just have to make it. We just have to make it to the finish line so we can beat them. I believe in humanity and I know we will prevail. They are fighting a battle they cannot win. A chain link fence trying to stop an avalanche. Despite their power, they seem so pathetic. I will never forget. I will never forgive. Whoever is responsible for this will receive the justice they deserve.

An empire on it's last legs looks towards its people as the enemy. Ever since the Patriot Act I've watched as this dynamic has slowly unraveled out of control. We're there now. This is it. They've declared war on us. They want to win by taking down as many of us as possible so we're easier to control and we cannot let them win. To simply survive would be an act of defiance during this era of insanity. To thrive and have a family would be the ultimate fuck you to them. I don't know if I could do it. To be a father. I would do it just to spite them. Is that a good reason though? I don't know. I would do it just to say fuck you I'm alive and I'm not going to let you kill us.

I finish the last bite of the steak. I am so full. I wipe the plate, fork, and knife off with a paper towel and leave them on the counter, throwing the paper towel in the trash. Now what am I going to do? You want me to wait? I can wait. I've played this game before. Not to this extreme of a degree of course. I can take it. They can't shut the grid down forever. People will demand answers. There will be too much chaos. There can only be so much. They have to turn it back on at some point to complete their so-called great reset. They need the emergency to justify the rollout of their agenda so they manufactured it. They can't shut it down forever. It would go against their plans. They want society to keep functioning. Just with less people and more controlled by their various agendas. I get it. You want me to wait? I can wait. But don't think for one second I'm okay with this. I may be one man but I will make it my life's goal to put a stop to whoever did this. Maybe I'm crazy. Maybe they want to radicalize us so that we get brought to this point. I don't know. I just know you can't do this and get away with it.

We don't live in a society. We don't have a government that is for the people. Those things are gone. Whatever this is I want no part of it yet it's forced on me. They want me to think there's nothing I can do about it. I reject that. I think it's clear what I have to do. The objective is out there beyond the horizon I just have to realize it. I don't know the path to get there but I'll find it. I have time. I have all the time in the world. You may have trillions of fake paper dollars and all the assets you can snatch up with them but I have something you don't have. Integrity and a rebellious spirit. My ancestors fought and died to keep this country free and I'm not going to let them take this away from us. Even the constitution of the USA says in an event just like this we have the right to overthrow the government. And if we admit that in public we get labeled a terrorist. Gee I wonder why. They want to stop us before we even have the chance. I'm sorry but no. That's not how this works. Your power is waning. This is your grand finale. You may destroy some of us, but you won't destroy all of us. We are freedom and we reject your slavery.

Who is we? I don't even know. Everyone who feels this way. I know I'm not alone. I'm alone right now in this apartment, yes. But there are others. They are out there. I was connected to them online but I need to find them here now. I can't be the only one in this neighborhood. In this town. No way. There are other freedom fighters here. There are others who want to survive. All these good people who never saw this coming who just want to live their lives and be free. We are one and we outnumber you. You can't take all of us down even if you wanted to. I need to find them somehow. How am I going to find them?

Tomorrow. Tomorrow if this is still going on I'll try to find them. I'll make signs. I'll put them around town. We'll meet up in the park or somewhere. Not here. I can't have everyone here. People can't be alone through this. We need to band together and unite to make it through this. We'll come out of the other end of this stronger. We'll have what it takes to win this head on. Medical tyranny, genocide, and now the hunger games. There's only so much of this we can take. People are sick and tired of being treated this way. This is how revolutions are born. If they could only hear me now. They'd be here at my door with a warrant for my arrest and send me straight to the hole for even thinking these things. Let alone speaking them. Or writing them. I should write. I should write all of this down. This is history in the making. People are going to want to read this. They're going to want to hear my side of the story.

I grab a pen and start writing in a notebook I have laying around. "It's been two years but I knew from day one this wasn't going to be two weeks. Two weeks to flatten the curve they said. The alarm bells went off somewhere in the vast wilderness of my head."

That's not too trite, is it? Whatever. I can't worry about that now. I need to just write and keep writing. I'll worry about the details later. I have nothing else to do anyway. This will help pass the time. Everything that happens I will document. Everything that has happened I will try to cover up until this point. So I write and keep writing until my hand hurts. That's when the sun begins to set. I let the blankets fall back over the windows and turn on a battery powered lantern. I realize I don't really need it on. I'm done writing for now. There's only so much writing I can do at a time. I get a cup full of sunflower seeds and head into the tent, zip it up, and sit down under the blankets. I can hear my neighbors meandering and murmuring. The floor creaking. I crunch the seeds into a pulp and swallow them one mouthful at a time. I wash them all down with a glass of water.

I know I shouldn't lay down right after eating but I'm tired. I turn the lantern off. It's not that cold inside of the tent. I can see a phosphorescent neon and indigo shimmering somewhere inside of my mind oscillating between one another. I always wondered what this was. I still have no idea. I know if I follow it deeper I'll eventually wake up after being taken through the dream world and that's exactly what happens. I am lulled into a trance and taken deep into the depths of my soul to regenerate for whatever tomorrow may bring.

I wake up to hear my ceiling creaking from my neighbors. Because of the blankets over the windows I have no concept of time. I feel like I've slept enough. I don't think I remember any dreams. That's probably a good sign. I peer out of one of the vents in the tent. There's some light behind one of the thinner blankets over the window in the kitchen. So it's at least morning. I feel

like I can barely move. My head is swirling in a dizzy vertigo. I need coffee. I need coffee right now.

I stretch and let out a little whimper of satisfaction. I survived the first day of the extermination. Hurray me. It's only going to get worse from here. A nightmare you can't wake up from. Great. I sit up and let the vertigo calm itself. Eventually it will subside. I don't even care. I unzip the tent, put my pants and jacket on, and zip it back up. This is my new morning ritual. I brush my teeth and floss because I forgot to last night. I get a pot of water boiling on the burner. I pour it over some sumatran grind. I add a dash of water to cool it. Then I sip it like it's a ceremonial cup of ayahuasca. The holiest of the holy. The lifeblood of the universe being pumped into my veins. It's wonderful. Even under such dire circumstances. I turn my phone on. There still is no cell service. The power is obviously still out. There's still no running water.

I need to use the toilet. I have one flush left before I need to refill it with some other water. I'd rather not use my good drinking water if I don't have to. I'll go to the lake later with some buckets or something so I can use it for stuff like this. I'll eventually need to wash up too. I flush the toilet once I'm done draining it of all of the water that was left in it. Hopefully I don't need to use it again until I can make it to the lake.

I'm going to hold off on that for a little while in case Jessica shows up. If she doesn't show up I'll head down there tomorrow morning. So what now. Should I make some signs? Why not? What am I going to use? I've got some cardboard and some sharpies. I've got some rolls of duct tape too. That should be good enough I think. What should I write on them?

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That's good enough, right? It's short and sweet. Right to the point. I don't think it needs anything else. I'll make another one. I can make probably at least a dozen of these or so. That should be enough to spread the word. People who go into town will see them. They'll see people gathered at the park. It's cold out there but we can figure something out. Right as I'm finishing the last one on my final scrap of cardboard somebody knocks on my door scaring the absolute shit out of me. Is that Jessica? I take a look through the peep hole and I see her standing there with Mage by her side. I unlock and open the door.

"Hey, you made it, come in. Hi Mage!" I gesture for them to come inside.

"Hey David. I told you I was coming. You thought I wasn't going to?" She walks into the apartment with Mage at her side.

"I really didn't know. I thought maybe the power was going to come back on." I say.

"Yea I told you I was coming no matter what silly. What's the tent for?" She asks.

"Insulation. It stays warmer in there than out here. I have a heater. I could turn it on if it gets too cold."

"No it's okay. You should save it. What if this lasts for a long time like you were saying?" She says looking up at me from underneath her brown and white beanie with a ball of fluff at the top and intricate weaves lining it around the outside. She's wearing a pink and white snow jacket today and tight fitting jeans. Grey and white runner shoes cover her small feet.

"That's what I was thinking. It would be nice, but it will probably get colder. Let's see how it goes I guess. Can I get you anything, or a bowl of water for Mage or something?" I ask.

"Yea actually that would be great." She smiles. I can see the insides of her brown eyes shining in from the light coming through the window with the blanket peeled back.

"Blankets over the windows too? That keeps it warmer?"

"Yeah. Insulation. Every little bit helps." I pour some water in a bowl for Mage and put it on the kitchen floor. He goes over and laps some up. "So what do you want?" I ask.

"Oh I don't know. What do you have?" She asks.

"Coffee. Water. Sunflower seeds. And meat. Lots of meat." I say.

"That's it?"

"Yeah. Don't need anything else really. Better than nothing."

"I suppose you're right. I'll have a coffee. Thanks" She sits down at the kitchen table with Mage at her side. I light the burner. Pour some water from the jug into the small pot and let it boil, pouring it over the coffee grinds in the filter, filling the apartment with it's seductive aroma. I add a splash of water and pass the mug to her on the table. It's a red mug with the white words RNC on it. I forget what that stands for.

"So how are you holding up? How was yesterday?" I ask her, sitting across from her at the table. The blanket on the window peeled back. We're both looking out the window at the grass and the street. The clear blue sky and the trees without leaves.

"Oh, I'm fine. I mean yesterday sucked. All my food is going to go bad. I brought what I have left. It's in the car. No shower or anything. I had like one bottle of water left to drink. Ugh." She sighs and sips her coffee.

"Yeah same. I mean no shower obviously. We'll go get some water from the lake today so we can use it for that."

"That's a good idea. I didn't even think of that. We can just wash up in the lake."

"Oh man that would be cold as fuck."

"You're right." She says. "Can you even heat it up here though?"

"Yeah a little bit. We can use a pot and warm that up then use a wash cloth."

"Ah, so that's how it's done. I've never done this before. You seem like you have." She sips her coffee and takes her eyes off the window and moves them toward me from above the steam swirling off the mug.

"I mean, I've camped a lot, it's sorta similar I guess. Never lived through a government extermination program." I say wondering if I was too blunt.

"Oh Jesus Christ that's exactly what this is isn't it?" She looks out the window again.

"If we're not going to beat around the bush, yeah. If this goes on for weeks, yeah. I don't see how it isn't." I take a sip of water wishing it was coffee but this is going to have to do for now.

"So what have you been up to? Have you thought about what you want to do if this does end up taking weeks like you were saying?" She asks, looking down at Mage beside her, petting him on the head.

"Well I made these signs I want to post up around town. I think people need to start organizing somewhere. I chose Mackenzie Park because I don't know where else would be a good place for a meeting. It's right next to the school. If we can get the school involved then we could use their gym too if we needed to. We could probably just break in if we had to but that's got a bad look to it. It's probably better if we form some kind of community cooperative. The weather is going to get really bad soon. The meeting place might need more shelter. We'll see how it goes but we'll be okay here. That's as far as I've thought about it. There's enough food here and plenty water. I can filter more water if needed and we'll go get some non-drinking water today."

"You're the man with the plan." She says sipping her coffee slowly gazing up at me from behind the steam. "No I think you're right. People can't just suffer alone in their homes through this. If this keeps going on, there needs to be some kind of like tribal meeting zone. Is that like what you're thinking? A place where people can pool resources and be together? Instead of stuck in their houses alone to die basically?"

"Yea exactly you get it. It's an alien concept in our society but that's what needs to happen. People need to know they're not alone. And I'm not a socialist or anything. I believe in capitalism. But this is an emergency and people need to band together. If people don't have enough to make it through this hopefully others do and can help those in need. I don't know. We have to at least try. There's fish in the lake. We have water at the lake. There are grocery stores shut down without power in town. There are churches that are always working to feed the needy. If enough people come together we can figure this out. And if we can't, hey at least we tried, I'll be okay, and you'll be okay at least. And Mage too of course." He looks up at me when I say his name.

"Okay. Sounds like a plan. I want to do something. You know? This is all so fucked. Ugh this coffee's good. Thanks. I needed that." She takes the last sip and puts the mug down on the

table. The steam is gone. Now I can see her face. Her eyes look into mine then shift down towards Mage. I look out of the window not knowing why. There's nothing new out there. It's the same scene as yesterday. A stunned town wondering waiting to return to normal mostly oblivious to the gravity of the situation.

"It feels weird knowing this much. Knowing what seems like their whole plan and yet feeling so limited in what I can do about it." I muse.

"They want you to feel that way. Powerless. You're not. We're not."

"I know. You're right. I've been thinking about that. Writing about that."

"You've been writing?" She asks.

"Yeah. I want to document this."

"Good idea. Did you write about me?"

"Not yet. I will. You seem like you're a main character in this story."

"I guess I am." She says. "I'm glad I am. What if we didn't meet yesterday? I would be fucked."

"Not true. You would have seen the signs posted. We would have met anyway."

"Maybe. Maybe not." She says.

"What do you mean maybe not?" I ask.

"I just mean who knows what would have happened. It's pointless to think about really I guess. We should get to work. Let's go get water. And post the signs up. What do you want to do at the park?"

"Hmmm. I don't know. I haven't thought this through enough. What should we do?" I ask her.

"Well I've got a table, a shade tent, and some cooking stuff. We should make a giant pot of soup or something with all this food that's going to go to waste and see if anyone shows up just to get the ball rolling and encourage others to do the same. What do you think?"

"That's a good idea. That's where we start. If no one comes we can just eat the soup and we'll do it again tomorrow. Eventually people are going to show up. They're going to have to."

"Yeah. Okay. Let's do this." She gets up and Mage gets up with her. I follow them with the signs out of the kitchen, around the tent, grabbing a couple buckets from the closet along with the duct tape, and we head out the door, locking the deadbolt behind me.

O.O4

"Whose this?" I ask her. We're driving down the road to the lake. There's some indie type of music on. Not something I usually listen to but I like it right now. There are barely any cars on the road or people outside. The town looks like a ghost town just like yesterday.

"Low Roar. They're so good. Do you like it?"

"Yeah it's quite good. I haven't heard this before." She turns it up. I sit back and listen while looking out the window. I always love hearing new music. For a moment I almost can forget what is happening. For a moment I almost let myself forget. Soon it will be impossible to forget. I should enjoy this while it lasts.

"Under the rug

Old shadows inside

Wait for their moment

They plan their surprise

A confetti supply

When I'm feeling feeble"

Oddly appropriate lyrics that send chills running down my spine and up into my tingling brain. My whole body starts buzzing. What an eerie but incredible feeling. I feel a wave of gratitude wash over me. I don't feel afraid. I feel like I'm right where I'm supposed to be. I'm alive in this moment feeling the vast infinite potential before me taking it one breath at a time. One breath in. One breath out. Nothing more. Nothing less. This is it. I am whole. I can do this. She stops the car where it was parked yesterday. I open the door and grab the buckets out of the back. Mage comes running out. His golden fur glows in the morning sun light. Our breaths are visible and emanate into the sky. She gets his ball and he goes running for it. I fill the bucket up with water and press a lid over it then do the same to the other. That's when I notice we're not alone.

I look up at see an older man in a camo hat waving at me not too far from where we are. I raise my hand up and wave at him. He's got his fishing pole and is sitting in a camping chair and has a plastic blue cooler by his side. I start walking over towards him. Jessica continues throwing the slobbery tennis ball for Mage.

"Hi there. I'm David." I extend my hand.

"I'm Johnny. Nice meetin' ya." His lip crimps to the side as a sort of lazy smile and he shakes my hand. His ear length shaggy salty blond hair dangles out from beneath the hat. I can almost see who he was when he was a boy but that face is long gone now covered in the wrinkles of time.

"Powers out." I say. Captain obvious over here.

"Yeeup powers out. Tryin' to catch some trout. Got nothin' else to do. Got some beers, want one?" He opens up the cooler, there's some Bud Lites and a sandwich.

"I'm good, thanks though."

"Power never goes out. Been out for a day. What the hells up with that?" He asks.

"Well, I mean, I'm trying to prepare for it going out for weeks."

"For weeks? Are you fuckin' shittin' me? Who told you that?"

"I really hope I'm wrong. It's a long story. This has been in the works for a long time. Shut down the power grid. Blame Iran or something. Yeah, it's evil, I really hope I'm wrong."

"Yer not wrong son. I believe ya. We got trout here here tho we'll be aight."

"I'm organizing a meeting for everyone in town. Mackenzie Park. Come down there if you want, okay? If you have any supplies, bring them. If not, just show up, tell your friends, neighbors, whoever you can, whoever you're close with and you're still in touch with."

"Will do. Thanks."

"I'm going to go put some signs up around town, good to meet you, hope to see you there." He nods then spits in the sand. I walk back towards the buckets and Jessica tossing the ball for Mage happy as can be. The sound of the lake gently sloshes along the shore. She pours some more water for him into his bowl and he laps it up.

"Ready?" She asks with a closed lip smile from behind her sunglasses in the cold sunshine.

"Yeah." I grab a heavy bucket and waddle it over toward the back of her Explorer. Then go back and grab the other one. I shut the back door and hop in the passenger side. She starts the engine, the music comes back on, and we start to back up.

"Hold up. Stop for a second. Let's put a sign here."

"Oh, good idea."

I get out, grab a sign, some tape, and tape it to the light post in the parking lot. Looks good enough. I get back in the car. She finishes backing up and we hit the road towards downtown. We don't talk. Just listen to the music. I'm cool with that. I think she is too.

We put the signs up where we think they would be the most visible. Outside of the grocery stores. On the corner of the busiest streets downtown. Outside of the post office. Outside of city hall. The last one we put on the sign for the park. We drive to Jessica's house which isn't far from my apartment. It's a small town. The house is white, needs a paint job, but otherwise looks like the average family home around here. We park and she opens up the garage with a key,

"Help me load this stuff, will ya?"

"Of course."

"Take this."

I put the long bagged shade tent in the back of the car. She heads into the house from the garage. I spot the table leaning against the wall and put that in the back underneath the tent. I don't see anything else we could use. There's a lot of random stuff laying around. A plastic horse with springs for a child to ride on. Tons of tennis balls in tubes. A creepy old clown in a cupboard that looks like it's from the 1950's. I head into the house to see if Jessica needs any help.

"You good?"

"Yeah just packing up. Here take this." She hands me a big pot full of food. I walk it out to the car.

"What are we going to cook with?"

"You have a stove don't you?" She asks, turning her head enough to meet my eyes while rummaging through her fridge.

"Yeah we could use that. We'll stop by on the way to the park."

"Okay cool. Almost done. Don't want to waste anything."

"Good idea. I wonder if anyone's going to show up." I stand there in the cold house trying to imagine the outcome of our plan.

"We'll see soon."

"Hey nice house you have here by the way." I tell her.

"Thanks, it was my parents. I grew up here. It's the only place that feels like home to me."

"That's really great. I wish I knew what that was like." Should I tell her? I feel like I've never really had a home. I can't even remember how many times I've moved in my life. Going from one place to another. I have no home. I'm not jealous, I'm happy for her, but I've always wanted this. This was what I was working toward. This was the goal. Until this happened.

"It drives some people crazy, you know? Staying in the same place their whole lives. They feel like they miss out on something. It nags them for the rest of their lives. Luckily I got out for a while and realized I liked my hometown better. So I came back and haven't left since. Haven't felt like leaving. Except maybe now. But I don't think I could even leave if I wanted to at this point. Everything's shut down, right?"

"Well it's been over a day now, so yeah, I think so." It dawns on me that it's probably really happening. The more time that passes the more sure we can be that the powers not coming back on anytime soon.

"Fucking crazy, man. Here." She hands me a big bag full of food and we both walk out to the car putting the stuff in the back, shutting the door, and climbing back in. She backs up out of the driveway and heads down the road to my apartment.

"So where did you go? When you left town." I ask.

"New York City. I went to Juilliard for a couple years. That place is crazy though. The city. I couldn't stand it. The people. The noise. It wasn't for me."

"Oh shit. That's prestigious. You're a musician?"

"Yeah I dabble. I grew up playing piano. I wanted to be a composer. Write scores. That kind of thing. I grew out of it. Been doing real estate around here instead. But I still play. Just not as much as I used to."

"That's really cool, I play a bit of music myself, but you're probably way better than me."

"Oh yeah? What do you play?" She asks looking over at me briefly then focusing back on the road.

"My dad got me into playing guitar when I was young. So I started with that. Got into synthesizers and stuff later on. Had to teach myself music theory when I was like 25 because I didn't learn it when I was younger. I still feel like a total noob because of it."

"Right on. We could jam sometime. We got time, right? You got any instruments?"

"I do. I guess we could. You'll dance circles around me though I'm sure."

"Oh shut up." She smacks my leg and smiles at me. "We're here. I'll just wait here. You don't need help do you?"

"Nope, be right back." I hop out and walk into the apartment. I notice one of my neighbors doors is open. That's unusual. I take my key out and unlock the deadbolt.

"Hey David!" It's my neighbor Shanna. I've barely ever talked to her before. She's a short slightly chubby black woman with corn rows. I think she drives for Lyft because I always see a sticker on her Jeep. She's wearing jeans and a white Nike hoodie and looks a like she might be dealing with some shit at the moment judging by her body language.

"Hey, what's up? You know, I've been meaning to go around and knock on all of your doors. Can you do me a favor?"

"What's going on? What's the deal with the power? Have you talked to Desiree?" Desiree is our landlord.

"No, I haven't. Power's out everywhere. Cell service is too as far as I know."

"I can't make any calls." She says sounding distraught.

"Same. Hey so we're having a meeting. A community meeting. I want everyone in town to come. Go knock on everyone's door here and tell them. It's going to be at Mackenzie Park. They can probably all hear me talking anyway. But make it formal. We're having food and we're going to make a community plan for dealing with this power outage. It could last weeks." I try to cover all the bases with her as quickly as I can.

"Weeks? What in the hell is goin' on? Why would the power be goin' out for weeks at a time?"

"It's a long story. Look. What matters is how we're going to deal with it. If you have supplies bring them. If you don't, just show up, and get as many people to show up as you can, okay?"

"Okay David. Mackenzie Park. I'll tell 'em." She heads on off up the stairs to tell the neighbors what they probably already just heard us talk about. I head inside, grab the burner and the jug of alcohol, and head out, locking the door behind me.

"I told my neighbor what's going on. Well, briefly. I told her to tell the other neighbors we are meeting at the park, to bring supplies, and as many people as they can." I tell Jessica as I get in the car. She's got the music turned down low. She contemplates for a second, looks over at me, and nods.

"I can't think of a better plan. This is so much better than just hiding out inside and waiting. Right? Fuck that. This is how we fight back. This is how we beat them." Her eyes get fierce for a second. Like that of a hunting cats. Her eyes open wide. Her lashes spanning outward. I can feel the gravity of what she's saying and it hits me hard. She puts her sunglasses on, the car in drive, and we head down the road to the park.

"Yeah I'm with you. It's cold out here but hiding out in the tent would get pretty boring after a while."

"We can do that later."

"True. I mean I guess it's not supposed to be fun. This engineered catastrophe. This sick twisted hunger games-esque total takeover of society. It should suck, right? I mean it does suck. It's horrifying to be honest when you think about just how deep in shit we are right now." I say. It really is a nightmare. The kind you can't just wake up from when things get really bad.

"We can still make the most of it. There's a silver lining to this David. Maybe we were born for this. For what happens next."

"You think so? How are you so optimistic?" I ask. "I could learn a thing or two from you it seems."

"Yeah, you could. You will. I've seen some shit I guess." She shrugs it off like it's nothing. We pull up to the park and stop the car. Before she gets out she looks over at me then turns and opens the door. I get out and start unloading all the stuff.

"We should just set up right here so everyone can see." I say. There's a vast stretch of grass alongside the road on the other side of the sidewalk making it easily visible and accessible. If people drive by they'll see we're out here. The sign we posted up earlier is still here and it's right there. Lots of other cars could park alongside the curb if they needed to. We set up the shade tent and I use my hiking boots to pound the stakes into the ground. We set up the table underneath it and place the burner and all the food out on it. Mage is wagging his tail wondering when Jessica is going to throw his ball. She sets out a bowl of water for him and he patiently drinks from it then stares up at her.

"Okay. Let's do this. I have tons of food I need to use. Tomatoes. Peppers. Onions. Garlic. Potatoes. Carrots. I have chicken. Beef. Cheese. Butter. Everything. Let's just put it all in there. I brought seasonings, paper towels, a bag full of paper bowls, plastic spoons, we should be good, yeah? Cutting board, knives, we're good to go." She's got everything laid out and ready.

"Hand me one of those." She hands me a knife and cutting board and I get to work chopping stuff. She fills up the huge pot with some of the filtered water out of one of my seven gallon jugs. I light the burner and it hisses with fire. I put my hands around it for a few seconds just to feel its warmth then get back to chopping.

An old Ford pickup truck pulls up behind Jessica's Explorer. The man driving stops the engine and gets out. I see his camo hat and wonder if it's him. It is. It's Johnny from earlier at the lake. He's got his cooler and is rummaging around in the bed of his truck for something. He walks over to us with his hands full.

"How ya doin?" He's decked out in full camo now.

"Good. You? We're making soup. We're hoping others show up." I say. Jessica smiles at him.

"Oh just fine. Just fine. I told my neighbors what you doin'. They might come might not ya know. I brought ya some chairs and some trout. You want a beer?" He opens up the cooler and reveals his Bud Lite stash.

"I'm good." I say.

"No thanks." Jessica doesn't want one either.

"Suit yourself." He grabs one and cracks it open, taking out one of the chairs, and setting it up in front of the table. He gets out two others and puts them near where we are.

"Thanks, good idea. We need all the help we can get." I say.

"Yea, you do. You need a hell of a lot of help." He says. I wonder what exactly he means by that. "I can bring a generator down tomorrow if needed. Wanted to come out here and see

what's what you know? Might have some other stuff too we'll see how things go how many folks show up and all that.

"That sounds great. What kind of other stuff?" I ask, smashing garlic and throwing it into the pot.

"Oh you know. Tons of other stuff. I'm somewhat of a collector, you see? I'm a war veteran. A survival enthusiast as they'd say. I'm probly more prepared for this than most. This here what you're doin' is the right idea. Don't wanna just be holed up in a bunker somewhere. I don't think that's right. Not everyone can do that. I'll do that if it comes down to that but I'd rather not, you know?" He spits and takes a sip of his beer and looks around.

"We were just talking about that. How boring would that be? Right?" The last of the three heads of garlic gets tossed into the pot and I move on to the potatoes.

"Sometimes life is boring as shit and there's not a god damn thing you can do about it." Johnny says whimsically. He sips his beer and stares off into the distance of the park. "Then again sometimes there is somethin' you can do about it and that's why I'm here and you're here and she's here and the dog's here too. So who all's coming? I saw the signs posted." Johnny looks up at me now. His eyes are grey like that of a wolfs.

"I don't know. Hopefully the whole town honestly. I told my neighbors."

"That would be so great if the whole town showed up here" Jessica says dropping some carrots into the pot.

"The whole god damned town here in the park? It would be like a god damned festival. Like Woodstock all over again." Johnny says with a lazy smile.

"Yeah, that's the idea, I mean, are there even as many people in this town that went to Woodstock?" I ask him.

"That's a good question. Maybe. I don't know. 'Sides they won't all be comin' out. Not yet anyways. A lot of 'em will just be holed up. They'll have to come out though. If this keeps on keepin' on. How many got enough food and water? Probly not a lot. They'll have to come out. They'll be comin' here eventually."

"Right. That's the plan. We gotta start somewhere. When I think about what this town would look like after three weeks of no power it freaks me the fuck out a little bit. No gas. Supply chains totally shut down. The only way I see this working out is if we have some kind of community meet up where everyone comes together and helps each other out. Otherwise things could get really ugly. Look, I don't know if this going to work, but think of the alternatives. We at least need to try." I say, finishing up the potatoes, and dropping them in the pot.

"Yer right. There'll be deaths. Lots of 'em. For what. By who. That's what I want to know." Johnny sips his beer and stares down into the grass. Mage is sitting with his tongue out looking up at him.

"Well I hope not. If we can prevent that we'll have done something good here, right?" I ask.

"Right. People need to at least know there's hope and that they don't need to be alone. Regardless of what happens. Whether we succeed or fail. If we fail we at least tried." Jessica says dropping chunks of tomatoes into the pot which is starting to simmer.

"No you're right. Having no power knocks us back into a primitive-like state. It's natural for people to gather when we're living under these types of conditions. It's like inevitable it feels. There's no way people are going to just stay holed up in their houses for weeks and die. They're going to come out. They're going to get mad. They're going to get desperate. They're going to come here and congregate and we're going to work it out together." I say as I cut up chunks of onion and put them into the simmering pot of soup.

"You think we'll have enough food for everyone? Or they gonna start eating people?" I can't tell if Johnnys joking or not. I don't think he is.

"Just catch as many trout as you can. That will be your job okay?"

"Only so many trout I can catch in a day and it's usually good fishin' in the morning time."

"What about the grocery stores? The butcher shops? All the farmers that live around here? There's gotta be enough food. We just need to find it." Jessica says. She has a point.

"You're right. We just need to find it. That's the hard part. Plus it's not ours." I say.

"Plus how much of it gonna stay good?" Johnny asks.

"Yeah. I don't know. We're about to find out I guess." I'm done chopping up everything now. So is Jessica. She starts seasoning it with stuff she's got stashed in her bag. Turmeric. Cumin. Black pepper. Salt. Basil. It starts to smell really good and the steam is spiraling through the cold air. It's probably around noon. Maybe a little in the afternoon now. I have no real way of knowing. The piercing sun up there doesn't tell me much when I look up and it blinds me.

I sit down in the bright green camping chair. I pet Mage on the head. I take a deep breath and savor the smell of the soup. Jessica finishes seasoning it, stirs it with her wooden spoon, then closes the lid.

"Okay. All of the ingredients are in. Now we just have to wait." She says sitting down. Then she gets right back up and Mage gets up with her. He knows why she got up. She walks over to the car and Mage is following her wagging his tail. She grabs his ball and her throwing tool. She launches the tennis ball down over the grass and Mage goes running for it as fast as he can. His golden fur bounces with his stride.

"Well it's a start, eh?" I gesture towards Johnny. He sips his beer and spits.

"One small step for man." He says with his lazy smile. The sun shines down on his wrinkled face and he squints but he doesn't wear sunglasses. I don't have any on either. I forgot them at the apartment.

"You know, this reminds me of somethin'." Johnny says.

"What?" I ask. Jessica launches the tennis ball again. Mage goes flying like a rocket over the grass.

"Nam. We used to camp out like this there you know. All we had was each other. I've done this before. We had no power out there often times. We survived. I survived I mean. Many didn't. I saw many lives taken. I saw men take their own lives. Some held grenades to their chest. We'd be runnin' out of grenades and they'd hug one another and hold a grenade between them. Sometimes they'd be duds. Sometimes not. You'd hear the bang and then the sound of it all splattering raining down on the jungle. We'd be smoking O Jays all day. You know what O Jays are?" He asks, sipping his beer, staring down at the ground.

"No, what are O Jays?"

"Opium joints. With reefer. We smoked tons of them. Hell I'd smoke one right now if I had one. Haven't smoked one since then."

"I've never smoked an O Jay." I say.

"You haven't lived son." He points at me with his other hand not holding the beer.

Just then another car pulls up. It's my neighbors white Jeep Cherokee. And my other neighbors minivan. I don't know what kind it is but it's dark blue almost black. Someone else pulls up behind them too driving some kind of sedan. People are starting to show up. Shanna gets out and waves. I wave. She starts unloading stuff.

"You need any help?" I ask.

"No that's alright thank you though. I brought my huge camping tent if anyone wants it. I only had so much food left but I brought it all. What are we going to do about water?" She asks.

"Good question. We got some here. If we need more I have a filter I can bring."

"I got a filter too." Johnny says raising up his beer as if to greet them.

"That's Johnny. I met him earlier at the lake. Luckily we have a lake. If we need water we can just head there." I say.

"Yeah thank god." Shanna says. I know what she means and I feel the same way she does. We would be pretty screwed without the lake. But it's a man-made lake. They made this lake a long time ago so the town could have enough drinking water. Turns out it was a good idea. There aren't a lot of lakes out here in the prairie. This is one of the only lakes in the state as far as I know. I wasn't thinking about it when I moved here. I just saw something was available to rent and rented it. Serendipity. Luck. Whatever it is.

My other neighbors are a couple in their late twenties. A short blonde girl and a tall man with buzzed brown hair. She's wearing her dark red alumni sweatshirt, some kind of black snowboarder pants or something and white baseball cap with an unfamiliar symbol. He's got skinny blue jeans and blue north face jacket. No hat despite the cold. They're unloading stuff from the car. The people behind them look a lot older. They're probably family.

Everyone comes over to the table area and introduces themselves. The couple's names are Amanda and Bryan. One of their parents is with them. A nice old couple both wearing glasses and flannels. They setup chairs in a circle and everyone starts going over their inventory list. Offering each other what they have. Asking if anyone needs anything. We're starting to form a group. There are eight of us now. Nine if you count Mage. The smell of the soup wafts into the chilly afternoon air. Some comment on how good it smells. Others ask if there's anything they can do.

"Look at it like this. It's all up to us how we do this. If there's something you want to do. Do it. If there's something you want to contribute, do it. This is just the start. We're making soup for us all but tomorrow we're going to have to do it again, for more people. If you know someone who runs a grocery store. Go to their house and ask them if they want to donate. If you know someone who runs a church. Do the same. Know a farmer? Go see if they can help. We all need to do what we can every day." I say. Then I realize they might not even know what's going on.

"Look. This could go on for weeks." I explain to them.

"Weeks? How do you know. But why?" One of the couples' parents ask.

"Oh god, it's a long story. I've told it to Jessica already. Look, basically, how can I make this succinct, they, the government, shut down the power grid, they're trying to blame another country for it, like Iran, or North Korea, they'll blame it on a cyber-attack but really it was them, I know it sounds crazy, but I'm positive. They look at us like we're the enemy, they did this to clamp down on the freedom this country was founded on. They did it so that not only would we beg them to return to normal but we'd accept it under any conditions. Conditions like a new biometric identity tied to a vaccine passport. Conditions like a new central bank digital currency, which don't get me started, is a horrible idea. It's surveillance money that will hyperinflate into oblivion. They want the ability to turn your money on and off. They want to be able to censor what you can buy. They want to say how much you can buy and when. They want the ability to tax you automatically. It's all bad. CBDC's will fail. They want to cattle herd us into this biometric ID to use a bank account with this type of money and they want to dictate what we have to do to our bodies to be able to use it and be a part of their society. It's a horrible disgusting totalitarian idea and we need to reject it at all costs no matter what. That's why they did this. Shut down everything. So they can force this on us when it all comes back. It might sound crazy, I don't know, but I did massive amounts of research on this before this happened and that's how I know this. They planned this whole thing out for years. They simulated this exact same thing last July. Then they did it. And now it's happening. And now we're here and we need to survive in their fucked up version of Hunger Games: Cyber Polygon edition."

People are staring at me wide eyed. I just dropped a bomb of info on them.

"Fucking commie scum." Johnny says, swigs his beer, and spits in the grass.

"Is that true?" Amanda asks me sounding very worried.

"It's all true. The power could be out for weeks. So we really need to let that sink in and think about how we're going to make it through this together and what happens if the whole town shows up desperate and angry which I don't see how it isn't going to happen if this keeps going on.

"Holy shit this is fucked." Bryan says. His hands in his pockets. His eyes gazing toward his sneakers.

"Weeks. Weeks." Shanna repeats softly under her breath.

"How are we going to survive for weeks without power?" The father asks sounding pissed.

"That's up to us. Whatever you can bring to the table. Do so. We'll meet back here tomorrow. With hopefully more people. We'll take it from there." I tell him.

The soup simmers behind me. It's delicious smell swirls into the air and fills the street. Jessica gets up, lifts the lid, and stirs it. Mage follows her and watches intently hoping to get something. Anything. Two other cars pull up. I don't know who it is. Maybe they saw the signs and were curious. They get out and I wave. Another car comes up the street. It's a black SUV. A black and white SUV with red and blue lights on the top. It stops in the road beside our cars right in front of where we're gathering. The red and blue lights begin to flash.

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It's a cop. A local city police officer. But why? What does he want? And why is he flashing his lights at us?

"DISPERSE FROM THE PARK IMMEDIATELY!" A loud over modulated voice screams out from a loudspeaker attached to the vehicle. He's just a shadow in there. All you can see is the silhouette of a turned head wearing sunglasses above a stereotypical mustache. The sound of his voice bounces around the street then disappears with a fuzz and a click.

"We're not doing anything wrong." I say to the group. Everyone has their head turned looking at the cop flashing his lights in the street.

"What the fuck is this guy's problem?" Jessica's staring at him from behind the table. He's sitting in his SUV watching us waiting for us to move. None of us move.

"What in the hell he think he's doin'?" Shanna looks at me and asks.

"This isn't illegal." I tell her. "We're doing nothing wrong. He can't make us leave. What's he going to do, arrest all of us for making some soup in the park? What is this park even for anyway? We're the only ones here.

"DO NOT RESIST!" His clownish voice screams out across the park and down the street again from his P.A. system.

"Resist what?" Bryan shouts at him.

"COMPLY WITH THE ORDER OR FACE ARREST!" This can't really be happening. Is this guy serious? Everyone is starting to get upset. We've been without power for a day and this cop wants to prevent us from having soup? The group starts to stand up but not to leave. They just stare him down like what? What are you going to do? That's when he shuts the engine off and opens up his door. He slams the door behind him and comes waddling over to us. He looks like the living embodiment of a Tim Dillon sketch. I'm not even kidding. His bulge falls below his belt line like Mage's tongue sticks out of his mouth after chasing his slobbery tennis ball. His stupid police hat tries to contain the monstrosity that is his head but fails miserably. He hides behind his black aviator glasses adorned with a thick mustache like he's wearing a disguise. This guy is a fat clown on a power trip and his uniform doesn't even fit. He almost loses his breath just from getting out of the car and coming over to us in a fit of rage. He starts to lose it.

"THERE'S A PANDEMIC AND YOU'RE GATHERING HERE UNLAWFULLY I CAN ARREST YOU ALL FOR THIS YOU KNOW!" He screams at the top of his lungs and I almost burst out laughing at him. The group is looking at him in total disbelief. Even Mage is wagging his tail low and barking at him now.

"What the fuck are you talking about? There's no pandemic, and we're allowed to be here. Show us the law we're breaking why don't you otherwise fuck off." I'm not putting up with any of this guy's shit. He is clearly not competent enough to be a police officer. He reminds me of a child that woke up in a fat guy's body one morning and had no idea how to act.

"Bro calm the fuck down we're making soup." Shanna goes at him now.

"WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE TALKING TO AN OFFICER OF THE LAW LIKE THAT?" He is getting red in the face now. The people who recently drove up have walked up to us to see what's going on and are just standing on the sidelines.

"The power is out. We're meeting here to eat. We're allowed to do this. Show us the law we're breaking otherwise get back in your car and get the hell out of here. You're disturbing the peace." I use some reverse psychology on him just to piss him off more. Why not?

"THIS IS A SUPERSPREADER EVENT AND YOU SHOULD ALL BE TAKEN TO JAIL IMMEDIATELY!" He has his hand on his taser like he's about to use it and as he screams at the top of his lungs it echoes down the street bouncing off the houses dissipating into the town with the wind.

"A superspreader event?" Amanda asks and bursts out laughing with a good portion of the group all laughing with her. It makes me laugh too. This makes him angrier. His hand twitches on his taser. He is visibly shaking. There are beads of sweat forming on his forehead dripping into his eyes even in the cold. He looks like he's about to have a heart attack or something.

"We're not leaving. We have a right to peacefully assemble here in the park. If you can't show us the law we're breaking you got nothing. Get back in your car and get the hell out of here." I call his bluff. I'm sick of this guy already. He reminds me of the cop who used to work at my middle school. Just a huge fat stereotypical piece of shit. I know they're not all bad but this one clearly is.

"Yeah get the hell out of here!" Shanna echoes what I'm saying and he stands here enraged and twitching looking like he wants to tase us all. He might try for all I know. This guy is crazy.

"SO YOU THINK YOU'RE A TOUGH GUY HUH? YOU'RE THE LEADER OF THIS GANG OR WHAT?" He's screaming at me like a psychopath and everyone stares at him in disbelief growing even more upset.

"Gang? What the fuck are you talking about? We're neighbors. We live in this town. Who the fuck are you? Do you even live here? I've never seen you before in my life."

"I ASK THE QUESTIONS DIRT BAG. I'M THE LAW. NOT YOU. I SHOULD ARREST YOU RIGHT NOW. COME HERE! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!" He's pointing at me with one hand. The other hand on the yellow plastic taser. This is getting out of hand fast.

"Under arrest for what? I haven't broken a single law. None of us have here. Why don't you handcuff me and throw me in the car then if I'm under arrest?" He just stands there with his hand on the taser fuming. Beet red in the face and sweaty. He doesn't move. He doesn't walk over to me. He looks like he wants to say something but can't. He's choking.

He turns around and shuffles back to the car. He opens up the back and grabs something from the storage area. Is he grabbing handcuffs? The group turns around to look at each other with faces mixed between exasperation and disbelief with a dash of imminent laughter. He slams the back door to the SUV as hard as he can. It's almost comical. It is comical. It's just unsettling that this guy is supposedly in power and he's targeting us. And me specifically for pushing back. He waddles like an animatronic Mr. Potatohead to the front of his vehicle with a metal clipboard and a pen. He scribbles furiously on it then fiercely rips a pink page off. He looks over at me from behind his aviators and starts to wobble his way over to me grunting with every step forward.

Still with one hand on the taser he shoves the pink slip in my face as if it were a punch. He's standing in the middle of the group. They're all looking at him. He's looking directly at me and is waiting for me to take it. He can't even keep it still. It shakes in his hand he's so angry. His lips are pursed in rage. His face is covered in sweat. From this distance I can smell him even over the smell of the soup and it disgusts me. He's standing right in front of me then takes a step closer. He's inches from me now shoving the pink slip in my face trying to stand me up and scare me. I take the slip from his sweaty shaking hand to see what it says.

He turns his back to me then wades his cumbersome eggplant shaped body through the group and meanders back toward the car still with its bright blue and red emergency lights on. He opens the door with all the might he has and slams it behind him once he's able to fit into the seat. We're all watching him. Saying nothing. I still haven't looked at the pink slip.

"IF YOU ARE STILL HERE TOMORROW YOU WILL BE ARRESTED FOR TRESPASSING IT IS UNLAWFUL TO CONGREGATE AS A SUPERPSREADER EVENT DURING A PANDEMIC!" He screams through the P.A. again and then floors it down the road shutting his lights off and disappearing into the town.

"What the fuck was that?" Jessica asks from behind the table.

"I know right? Who the fuck that guy think he is?" Shanna is visibly upset.

"We aint leavin'. We're stayin'. They can't make us go. They can eat shit and go to hell. It's our god damned right to be here." Johnny spits and swigs his beer.

"I agree, we're staying." Amanda's dad chimes in, his wife quietly nods in agreement.

Four other people walk up. A family by the looks of it. A mother, father and their two children, a boy and a girl who look to be on the verge of being teenagers.

"What just happened?" The father asks.

"That crazy ass cop try to tell us we can't meet here and make soup." Shanna tells him.

"The guy was clearly on a power trip. I mean you heard what he said obviously. We're just meeting here because as I'm sure you know, the powers out, and it's likely going to be out for a long time, and we need to come together as a community to come up with solutions on how we're going to make it through this." I tell him. I look down at the pink slip.

"What's that he gave you?" Jessica asks.

"It's, uh, looks like a ticket or something." I say trying to read his horrible scribbled handwriting.

"What makes you think the powers going to be out for a long time?" The father who just joined us asks me.

"They pulled the plug on us." Johnny says with a tone of ire.

"What do you mean?"

"It's a long story, I just went into the details, I should write this down or something. I'll do that. People are going to need an explanation. Long story short, we need to plan for weeks without power. We'll be meeting here every day until we figure out something better. Today we're making some soup and getting things started. Tomorrow everyone bring whatever supplies they can and we'll start working on the next steps. Sit down and join us. I'll explain everything in detail the best I can."

"Wow. Weeks. Are you serious?" The mother asks.

"Yes. Things could get bad if we don't work together. Have a seat and join us. The soup should be ready soon." I look over at Jessica. She nods.

"What's the ticket say?" She asks me.

"Oh, uh, I don't know. I can't read it. Something something five thousand dollars. I think it's a fine for five thousand dollars. It doesn't even have my name on it or anything. This can't be valid. I'm not paying it obviously. They can fine me all they want I don't care."

"Five grand? Are you serious?" Shanna asks with her wide wild eyes.

"Yeah, it's a joke, a total joke. For meeting in a park and making soup." I tear it up in front of everyone and stuff it in my pocket.

"Calling us a superspreader event. Can you believe this guy? Like it's still 2020." Amanda says with a chuckle.

"Like there even was a pandemic at all." I say.

"There sure as shit wasn't one here." Johnny says.

"There was in the minds of the authorities apparently." Bryan says.

"I'm glad we're all on the same page here. I think we're off to a good start. We just gotta take it one day at a time and we'll make it through this." I say with a closed lip smile trying to stay positive.

Amanda's mom walks over to Jessica and asks about the soup.

"Almost ready." She says. "You guys hungry?"

We get a "Hell yea" from Shanna and some nods from the rest of the group. By now we're all starting to shake off the shadow cast by the tyrant who just tried to unlawfully shut us down. It just feels so right to be in a group right now. We're all in the same boat. No power. Forced to live in a regressive primitive state. We might as well do so together. Imagine trying to shut this down. Over something as ridiculous as a pandemic that never even happened at all. There has to come a point when they stop using this as an excuse. Can't they see they have no credibility going on and on about a pandemic? When do they think this is supposed to be over? The real pandemic is them. They're out of control. They've become a cancer on our culture and society. They say the same about us and that's why they do the things they do like shutting off our power.

They think we're not worthy of being free in this world. If you ask me, they're the ones who aren't.

"Soups ready ya'll. Come and get it!" Jessica smiles, places the pot's lid on the table, and the steam wafts out in beautiful liquidlike spirals. The group gathers around the table. Jessica pours everyone a bowl of soup and gives them a spoon and paper towel. They sit in a circle some on chairs some on the grass in peace.

"If anyone wants more feel free. There's plenty for everyone." Jessica says sitting down. I grab a bowl and some soup and sit down next to her.

"Thanks for doing this" I say to her. "And thank you all for coming. I don't know what's going to happen but I know if we stick together we're going to be alright." I say to the group.

"So you really think the powers going to go out for weeks? I'm Mark by the way." Mark, the recently joined father, asks me, wanting to know more about what I know in-between bites of soup.

"Yeah. I'll have something written up about this tomorrow. We can use it to pass around to new members in the group. They're going to blame this on a terrorist attack. They're going to call it a cyber pandemic. They're going to say some other country did it. But I think this was deliberate. I think it was planned. The same people who simulated a biological pandemic before the covid hysteria simulated a so called cyber pandemic last July to shut down the power grid and here we are. If you've been following along like I have it was obvious. They've had news articles published all year saying we need to protect the grid from foreign threats and intelligence agencies need access to the grid to monitor it for intrusions. It created the perfect opportunity for them to implement back doors so they could pull something like this off. I know this might sound crazy but think adversarially. If you were an empire in its final stages where the population becomes the enemy this is what you would do. This is exactly what you would do. You'd do it in a way that the people wouldn't even know that it was happening so they wouldn't even think about fighting back because they wouldn't even know who to fight back against or how---let alone have the means to do so. It would be brilliant if it wasn't evil, but these people, they're not geniuses, they're crazy, incompetent, and desperate to remain in power. If we fight back, if we band together and make it through this, then they will have failed. Whatever new normal they want us to live under when they turn everything back on we must vehemently

reject. The world is not their hunger games prison and we are not their slaves." I take a bite of soup. It's hot but not too hot. It's savory and delicious and warms my soul. I'm grateful to be eating it with these people who I barely know.

The group is quiet digesting the soup and what I just said.

"If that's true, if what you just said is true, then our democracy is under attack." Mark says in-between bites of soup cooling it with his breath one spoonful at a time.

"We're at war son! The wars come home to roost!" Johnny slams his empty bowl down and cracks open a new beer from the cooler. "Anyone else want one these?" He asks the group.

"Yea I'll have one." Mark says.

"Same." Johnny hands one to Mark, then another to Shanna. They crack open their beers and sit quietly taking sips from their effervescent cans.

"I never imagined this happening. Here. Of all places. The power down. For weeks!" Amanda says.

"It's not just here. We don't actually know how widespread this is. My guess is it's everywhere. As many places as they could pull it off for maximum effect. If they did it here in this small town, it's probably the whole state, could be the whole country. We have no way of knowing." I tell her.

"That aint true Dave." Johnny spits and looks up at me from his feet. He squints and his wrinkles fold up.

"What do you mean it aint true Johnny?"

"We can know. You'll see damnit."

"What are you talking about."

"I said you'll see. Aright?" Johnny is persistent but doesn't seem to want to give me details. He spits in the grass and takes a swig of his Bud Lite then gazes off into the horizon of the park. I don't quite understand what he's getting at but I don't push him. I don't want to piss him off.

"Okay." I finish up the bowl of soup and feel warm despite it being so cold. The sun looks like it's almost setting on the horizon even though it isn't that late.

"That was so good, thank ya'll." Shanna says. A chorus of yeah's and thanks echo throughout the group.

"We're meeting back here tomorrow. If you have food or filtered water, bring it. If you have camping supplies, bring them. If you have contacts with resources, get in touch with them. Tell everyone you know to meet here and explain what's going on. Don't let what happened with the police officer deter you. We're doing nothing wrong. It's our right to peacefully assemble and

we will exercise it no matter what they try to throw at us. If they try to stop us from meeting then it just further proves why we need to gather in the first place." I tell the group. They nod in agreement and start getting up.

"Wash the bowls and spoons out with water and save them for tomorrow." Jessica says. People heed her advice and hang onto them after using some of the water on the table.

"What should we do with the leftover soup?" I ask Jessica.

"I'll take it." Johnny says crushing his can of beer with his boot.

"What? Why?" I ask him.

"I got a genny. I'll keep it cool for ya."

"A genny?"

"A generator. Get it? I got power. I got a fridge. You don't. See?"

"Oh. A generator. Yeah take it then. That works."

"What time we meetin' here tomorruh?" Johnny asks.

"Anytime. How's around noon sound? We don't have power, remember?"

"Yea, aright."

"We'll tell our neighbors. We might be able to contribute something. We'll let you know tomorrow." Mark says and shakes my hand firmly.

"Sounds good. You guys take care and thanks for coming. See you all tomorrow." His kids wave at me and they walk off toward their car. The group starts packing up. The sun starts getting closer to the horizon.

"Should we leave this here?" Jessica asks, referring to the table and shade tent.

"What do you think, think someone will take it?" I ask her.

"I doubt it. Let's just leave it."

"Okay."

"See ya'll tomorrow." Shanna waves then heads out. Amanda and Bryan give their farewells and thanks. Her parents give a wave and a nod and head back to the car. Johnny's packed up his truck and takes off down the road with the soup in the back. It's just Jessica and I now like it was when we first got here a few hours ago.

"Success." She says to me. Hands in her jacket pocket. Smiling what can only be described as beautifully in the golden hour light.

"Yeah, success, except for the cop, fuck that guy."

"Oh don't worry about him."

"I'm not."

"I know you're not, David."

"Want to head back?"

"Yeah." She says. It's getting colder now.

"Your place or mine?"

it." "Let's go to yours. You have all the blankets up. And the tent. And the heater if we need

"Yeah, true. Okay."

"I have a bottle of wine." She says.

"Oh, what, really?" I wasn't expecting that.

"Yeah, might as well, right?"

"Yeah, might as well, why not, sounds good."

"Come on Mage." She says and he gets up and follows.

We walk across the grass, over the sidewalk, open the doors, and hop back into her car.

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We get back to the dark apartment with the windows covered up with blankets and the tent propped up in the middle of the living room. I turn the lantern on so we can see. Jessica's got her bag with her and sets it down on the kitchen table. I get a couple glasses for the wine out and pour us both some water from one of the jugs. I get Mage a bowl of water and he drinks some of it.

"Do you have another bowl for his food?" She asks.

"Yeah of course." I grab one and hand it to her. She pours him some food. He wags his tail excitedly and buries his face in the bowl. He looks up at her in between bites as if it were some kind of gesture of gratitude. Jessica sits down at the table and I take a seat opposite of her. The sound of Mage eating reverberates through the apartment. She grabs the bottle of wine from the bag and a cork screw. She stabs the cork with the tool and spirals it down then yanks it out with a plunk. She takes a whiff of the cork and then hands it to me. I take a whiff of it and it's strong. Earthy. The bottle itself has no label. It's just dark green translucent."

"Where did you get the bottle?" I ask her. She pours us both a tall glass.

"I sold a vineyard to a client that had a fully stocked wine cellar. They gave me a bunch of these. They're actually really good, and it was made around here. She picks the glass up and wants me to do the same.

"Cheers." I say.

"Cheers." She takes a sip of the wine then exhales in satisfaction. I do the same. I can't remember the last time I had wine. It's warmth starts to spread through me like a wildfire.

"I haven't drank in years." I tell her.

"Oh no. Really? Should we stop? I'm so sorry."

"No. It's fine. Really. I want to. This feels totally appropriate."

"Are you sure?" She looks at me intently lit up by the glow of the lantern.

"I'm sure. I wouldn't lie to you."

"Okay. I don't think you would. Why then? Why so long?" She takes another sip. I take another sip as well.

"My mom drank. A lot. Yeah. That's why. I didn't want to go down that road. I started going down that road. So I gave it up. But it's been so long. Like I don't even know how long now. It's not something I crave or want in my life all the time. This is okay. This seems right. I want this. I don't need this but I want this. Does that make sense?"

"It does. That's smart. I think you know what you're doing. I admire that." She says sipping the wine and petting Mage on the head who is now lying down at her feet taking a nap after eating all his food.

"So tell me more about you. We got time, right?" I ask her curiously.

"Heh, yeah. We got time. Lots and lots of time. I still can't believe this is happening. Anyway. Where to even begin? What do you want to know David?" She locks eyes with me.

"I don't know, tell me more about your upbringing, how'd you get to this place in your life where we met at the park? What stands out?" We sip our wine and she looks down at Mage.

"I had kinda a crazy upbringing honestly."

"Do you not want to talk about it?"

She sips her wine again. I'm starting to feel buzzed already but want to keep up with her so I do the same.

"No, I do, it's just..." She trails off, staring into the glass.

"It's just what? We don't have to talk about it if you don't want. It's okay." I say not wanting to upset her.

"No, no you should hear this."

"I'll hear whatever you want to tell me."

"Okay. So, my mom was schizophrenic. My dad was a hardcore Methodist. Religious fundamentalist or whatever. Super religious upbringing. Church every Sunday and all that. When I was 10 my mom lost her mind. I mean she was never really there I guess. I sorta knew. But things got really bad. She ended up shooting my dad with a .44 magnum straight to the heart killing him almost instantly while I was home in another room. She was screaming he was possessed. She said she had to exorcise him. It was the only way. That god was with her. God would forgive her. God was waiting for him. I was playing with dolls or something. I can't remember. I just remember the screams. He was screaming at her too. Then the gun shot. The loud thundering crack. My ears rang for days. The smell of the gun powder filled the house. I cried. I screamed for daddy to come back. There was blood everywhere. It was all over me. My mom kissed me on the forehead and said she would be back. She never came back."

"Holy fucking shit. What the fuck."

"Yeah. Turns out she drove her car to another state. She lit her car on fire with a tank of gasoline right at the top of a bridge. And she jumped. It killed her. I ran to a neighbors covered in blood. The police came. Then my grandparents came and picked me up. I didn't find out about my mom until days later."

"I don't know what to say. I'm so sorry."

"I told you it was crazy. That's the epitome of crazy. Isn't it? You don't have to say anything. It's in the past now." She sips her wine and looks at me.

"What a tragedy, I mean, god, it breaks my heart to hear, honestly."

"I know. I think about them all the time. Still. But I've moved on, you know? Sure I'm aware it's contributed to who I am or whatever, I don't let it get to me, but it's not like I've forgotten, you know? I still remember them. I remember that day. I remember the blood, the gunpowder, the screams, all of it. I don't go to church anymore. I'm not atheist though. It's hard to explain."

"You don't need to explain, I think I get it." I tell her.

"Do you?" She asks.

"I think so. I mean that sounds like me. Minus the tragic upbringing thing."

"Yeah, most people, don't have an upbringing like that. I know. My grandparents took care of me though. On my moms side. The ones on my dads side had already died. They cared for me and that's what matters. I'm not sure what I'd do without them, who I'd be, and all that."

"Are they still around?" I ask her.

"No, they've passed on now. They left me their other house. I still stay in the house where it happened. Don't ask me why. I like it there. It still feels like home to me." She says and sips her wine some more. I take a sip of mine as well.

"Home is a foreign concept to me. I appreciate that about you. People should have homes. Places they feel like home."

"You don't?" She asks.

"No, I don't. If I ever did, it's long gone." I say taking a deep breath.

"Tell me more. I want to know."

"Oh, it's just, I've moved so many times, my family moved states when I was a teenager, then I moved back, then moved to other states, I've just been moving all my life. I've never been able to stay in one place for one reason or another. I was out on the west coast. It was okay for a while. Then the corona thing happened and it became a total dystopian nightmare. I left as soon as they started saying you had to prove "vaccination" to get into stores. Should have left sooner honestly."

"And you came here? To this small town in the middle of nowhere?"

"Yeah, it's as good a place as any, why not? They're at least trying to push back somewhat here."

"Ohh, I see." She sips her wine.

"You know, I was actually looking for a property. I wanted to move off grid. I mean I saw this coming. That's why I prepared. I was planning on buying some land off grid. But then it happened. This happened. They pulled the plug before I could make my move. Nothing I can do about that now." I say.

"I'll help you David. That's what I do you know. There's tons of land off grid for sale."

"Yeah, thanks, that would be great. We need to make it through this first."

"We will."

"I like your optimism."

"I like your fortitude."

"Fortitude?" I ask.

"Yeah. Fortitude. Your courage. Your strength."

"Oh, thanks."

She smiles and sips her wine. I take a sip of mine. We're almost done our first glass and I'm sure there's more to come but I try not to overdo it. She probably has more than a tolerance than me. I don't want to get too drunk or whatever.

"I actually think that's a good idea." She says.

"What, the property?"

"Yeah, living off grid, I mean what good's the grid if they can just turn it off whenever they want?" She finishes her glass and sets it down on the table and looks up at me.

"Exactly. That's what I'm saying. At least be properly set up for when something like this happens. Not living in an apartment like I am."

"Oh David, it's fine, it's cozy in here."

"You think so?"

"I think so." She says.

I finish my glass of wine and set it down on the table feeling warm and fuzzy like I haven't felt in years. It feels good. It feels special or something. The weight of all the insanity vanishes and I'm floating in my chair lifted up by the plethora of butterflies flying around inside of me. Jessica pours me another glass. Then another for herself. I think about everything she just told me. I wonder where I should take the conversation next.

"I like this." I tell her bluntly.

"I like this too. I don't think there's anyone I'd rather be spending this apocalypse with." She tells me and I laugh a little.

"Apocalypse!"

"Isn't it apocalyptic?"

"Yeah. It is. It really is. What the fuck is even happening? To be living through this moment right now. Nothing like this has ever happened before I don't think. Right?" I say. I sip. I muse.

"No I think you're right. I'm no expert or whatever. But this is something else. I'm glad you found me. I would just be in my house right now if we never met. Probably running out of food. Water. Not knowing what to do. Like a deer in headlights. That's how they want us, isn't it? Caught off guard. Frozen with fear. Powerless." She says sipping more of her wine.

"Yes, powerless, that's exactly right." I sip more of mine. The warmth sinks into me and I spin a little with bliss.

"Why did you go to the lake that day? Wasn't that yesterday?" She asks me.

"Oh god I mean I was restless."

"So you just walked to the lake?"

"Yeah I mean what else was I supposed to do? If you knew what I knew yesterday. I was wondering if this was it you know. Is this what they were planning. Had they done it? Were people even aware? What's going on? Where is everyone? What do I do now? Those were all the things running through my mind. I walked into town. I didn't want to head home so I walked to the lake. I barely saw anyone out and it reminded me of last year when they first started locking people down. I would drive into town in March and April and there would be literally no one. It was a ghost town. One of the creepiest things I've ever seen in my life honestly. And it reminded me of that. Freaked me out a little. I didn't want it to happen again, you know? I saw you with Mage and wondered if you knew. I wanted to tell you. I wanted to tell everyone. I didn't know how to do it. So much emotion but not knowing what to do with it." I sip my wine not knowing what else to say.

"So it was serendipity. You felt like going to the lake. You found me. You saved me." She looks up from her glass at me as she says that.

"Saved you. Really? You think so? I don't know about that."

"I know about that. I told you. I'd just be in my house right now. Stupefied. Now I'm with you. We have somewhat of a plan. You've got supplies. I feel safe despite it all. Is that okay?" She asks me.

"Of course it's okay, Jessica, you don't need to ask that."

"I think this plan of yours is going to work." She tells me.

"What plan? You mean the gathering?"

"Yes. I have a good feeling about it."

"You think so? Even after that shit show with the cop?"

"I don't think so, I know so."

"How do you know?" I ask her.

"I don't know. I just do."

"You don't know, you just know?"

"Oh shut up. You're onto something, okay? I know it."

"Okay."

"The more of us there are the harder we are to stop." She says.

"Exactly. I know you get it. I'm just messing with you."

"You can mess with me all you want." She tells me playfully.

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah."

She sips her wine. I ponder the meaning of what she's saying but I think I get it. She's flirting with me. Maybe it's just the wine. I don't care if it is. I swirl the wine around in my glass and take a sip of it looking up at her looking at me. Suddenly the light goes out. The battery on the lantern dies. We're plunged into pitch black darkness. Oh the absurdity of it all! I get hit with it in a flash.

"Hold on. I got this." She tells me.

"It's the battery. I have more."

"No it's okay. Hold on. Watch."

I can hear her rummaging through her bag. She sets something down on the table. Then a spark of light and a flame emerges from her hand. She lights a candle with a Bic lighter and places it between us.

"See. I can be prepared too." She tells me with a smirk.

"Nice. Great idea. I love it."

"David, it's getting cold, let's move this to the tent." She sips the last of her wine and sets it down on the table.

"Yeah, let's do that, It will be warmer in there." I finish off my glass as well and set it down on the table by the flickering candlelight.

"Yes, it will."

She stands up, holds out her hand. I take it in mine. She leads me over to the tent. I unzip the door, let her crawl in, then crawl in behind her, zipping it back up behind us.

Should I write the details to this part of the story or leave it up to your imagination? Perhaps the latter would be best. The reader doesn't need to know these intimate details. Besides, there aren't even words to describe the ecstasy I feel in this moment. No amount of words, nor any arrangement of them, could ever do justice to accurately describe this moment I find myself in. Perhaps you know what I'm talking about. Perhaps you don't. This is what we were made to do. There's no containing it. This attraction. An unstoppable force. It may burn out some day but that doesn't matter now. We're underneath the blankets. Her lips are slippery and lush with some kind of unexplainable vibration. I can feel it buzzing in my teeth. Then it sinks down. It sinks down into my solar plexus. Something ineffable inside me spins. A solar system of emotion and glowing light that's now interwoven between us. The gravity of both of our stars orbiting each other in the candle flickering void of the tent in my living room. A supermassive black hole at the center of the galaxy that may someday consume us tugs us a little bit toward it but for now we remain.

I feel the smooth skin around her hips and her lips press against my neck. We're both writhing like the coiling of snakes. I know what's coming next but I'm enjoying this now so much I almost don't want it to come. We're holding off as long as we can. All of our clothes are off now. Why did we ever have them on in the first place? I don't know. All I know is this. The gravity of her body in my hands and grinding up against my body. The buzzing vibration on my lips when we kiss. What is this? I don't ask her if she feels it too. Isn't it obvious? There's no need to ask. No need to speak. Our bodies do the talking. Our hands lead the way. First along the outside. Then along the top. Further down now. I feel her but feeling isn't enough. I can't get enough. I never want it to stop.

Her hand's on my head. Pushing me down. She's uncontrollably vocal. Legs up in the air. Do I even need to write about what happens next? Or can you use your imagination? We make love savagely. We give each other all we've got. We sweat all over each other forgetting all about the cold and the power and everything else. Our spirits tangled. Our bodies engaged in a primal fury. We don't want it to stop. We make love fiercely then teasingly. We both want more. We lose track of time. I watch her eyes close then open in the soft orange flickering candlelight from outside of the tent. I feel her curves and explore every inch of her. She brings me to the brink and beckons me even further. I tell her its coming and she pulls me in deeper. Suddenly it bursts and I squeeze. I hold onto her tight. We're both shaking. Our breaths are heavy and synchronized.

"Holy shit." She says between panting breaths.

"Yeah. For real."

Our breaths slow. The buzzing gravity doesn't subside. There's something happening between us words cannot describe. It's something that can only be felt. I lay behind her holding her. She holds my hand in hers. I draw a spiral on her solar plexus with my finger and her sweat. Around and around. She giggles. I've never felt more in love and it scares me. I know we just met and it will probably fade like it always does and I don't want it to.

"I don't want this to fade." I tell her quietly. Our breaths are calm now. Still synchronized and deep.

"Then don't let it. Promise me you won't let it." She says to me hushed and blissfully.

"I won't let it if you won't let it. I promise."

"I won't let it David." She pulls me in tighter.

Are we being naive or is this real? Can we even know the things we speak of? Are we being foolish or is this some kind of pact? Is she like me or is she just saying it?

"Are you just saying that?" I ask her.

"No, I mean it, don't you mean it?"

"Of course I mean it."

"Stop worrying about the future David. We're here now. Don't you see it?"

"I see it. I feel it. I'm just not used to it. I want to know that this is real, you know?"

"Let's never get used to it then." She turns around and faces me and looks at me. I can only see her shadowy silhouette with the flickering candlelight in the background outside of the tent. I feel her breath on my lips. I feel the quantum electricity buzzing coming off of her connecting us.

"I've just never had this before, you know? Never thought I would to be honest."

"I'm here now David."

"We're here now together." I say.

"You found me. It was meant to be. Don't overthink it. Okay? Don't forget this night. Don't ever forget this night."

"I won't. I won't forget it. I promise." I tell her.

"Good. Whatever it is you're feeling. I feel it too. The universe is telling us something. I know you can hear it."

"I do. Loud and clear."

"We don't have to be lost anymore." She puts her finger on my lips. Then kisses me. I feel a wave of butterflies reverberate through my entire body then up into my brain. Vibrations of liquid light fill me beyond which any drug ever has and could ever do.

"I know."

She turns back on her other side and presses her back side into me a little holding my hand tight to squeeze my arm around her. Now we lay in silence with the soft flicker of the

candlelight and tiny synchronized engines of our breath. I can smell her hair and her neck with every one of my breaths and it fills me with butterflies. To be so close to someone is such a special thing. Both physically and emotionally. To be so close to *the someone*? I think so. I want it to be so. It's up to us, isn't it? Or is there some outside force that dictates whether or not we were meant for each other. I honestly don't know. I know what I want though. I want this. Right here. Right now. I want her. In my arms. Forever.

We fade into the neon night one breath at a time. The indigo and lime green washes over me in the darkness of my mind. I hold her in that other world but I'm somewhere else now. Formless and glowing. I'll be back for you in the morning. I'll be here for you for as long as I live. I'll do whatever I can for you. I promise.

Waking up next to Jessica's warm naked body pressed up against mine exactly where we had left off last night under the blankets in the tent in the cold quiet apartment remembering the fact they shut the power off on us is the most surreal moment of my life. I don't want to wake her. I lay still and try to take it all in. She breathes softly. She's somewhere else right now. Protagonist in her own dream story. I'd love to watch it if I could. How many days has it been now? Is this the third day? I'm starting to lose track. I should keep better track of this. I think this is the third day. I'm pretty sure. We could have like eighteen left if they try stick with what the SPARS 2025 document said. There's only one way to know. We just have to wait and see. Take it one day at a time. Hope for the best. Prepare for the worst. Here we are. Living through it. Worst case scenario. And yet it could get even worse. It could get unimaginably worse. My mind starts wandering down those dark paths again.

Jessica is waking up now. She presses my hand into her a little more. She yawns and stretches out up against me letting out a little whimper of relaxed satisfaction.

"Mmmm... good morning." She says to me.

"Good morning."

"Do we have to get up yet?"

"No. We can do whatever we want."

"Then come here."

"I'm right here." I say.

"Closer."

She pulls me in and presses herself into me. I know where this is leading and I can't stop it. You never want to go against the power of nature. I know this all too well. Everything wrong with our world is because of people too arrogant and insane that think they can go against the unstoppable flow of nature. I'm not one of them. I give in to the gravity and embrace her. We'll get up when we're done with each other. We pick up where we left off last night ravenous for each other. The candle still flickers in the background outside. It didn't burn out and neither did we.

It's cold outside of the tent. We put our clothes on absorbing the sweat from our skin. Jessica goes to use the bathroom. I put on water for coffee. It's dark inside the quiet cold apartment. Just a tiny bit of light barely shines through the blankets. Just enough so that you can see it isn't night any longer. The only light in here is coming from the candle. It's burned about half way down leaving a puddle of wax on a white plate at its base. I pull one of the blankets back and let in some morning light. It's overcast and looks like it might be raining a little. I blow out the candle and smell it's thick soot fill the air. The water boils and I pour some coffee through the filter into a cup. Jessica sits down at the table bundled up in her jacket, beanie, and fingerless white gloves. I hand her a cup and she smiles. Mage is awake now too. He

wags his tail and sits down next to her by her feet beside the table. She looks outside. I pour myself a coffee and sit down across from her after adding some water to cool it down.

"Today should be interesting." She says to me looking over from behind her steaming mug of hot coffee. I don't know what's more entrancing. The spirals coming off of it or the way she looks. The way she looks at me.

"Yeah. Day three." I say sipping the coffee.

"Day three. What if this goes on forever?" She asks.

"No way. It won't. They wouldn't do that. There would be nothing left to control. They would just end up destroying everything. That's not what they want."

"I know. But how crazy would that be?"

"Well, slightly crazier than doing it for 3 weeks, I guess. It's both pretty crazy."

"Yeah it is." She says sipping her coffee and petting Mage.

"I had a great time with you despite it all." I tell her.

"Me too. Still am now."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"I wonder if that cops going to show up again today." I muse out loud.

"We'll find out soon I guess. They can't expect us to just stay inside and die or whatever, can they?" She asks.

"I don't know, I'm sure that's what some of them want."

"They probably can't even think that far ahead. They're idiots." She says.

"That's also true. I mean the cops may not have any idea what's going on." I tell her.

"You're right. I didn't even think about that. Maybe they think the power's going to come on any time now or something."

"Who knows. It's possible. I'll ask him later if he shows up what he thinks is even happening or what he's been told. I doubt he'll tell me anything. Seems all he likes to do is yell like a little bitch. And finger his taser."

"Oh god that was so fucked. I know. I thought he was going to use it on you."

"The thought crossed my mind too. I had a run in with the police once when I was younger. It's a long story. But they basically got bored while they were on my property and

started tasing one of my cherry trees. It was the weirdest thing." Jessica bursts out laughing as I tell her this,

"They tased your fucking cherry tree? Are you fucking serious?"

"I'm not kidding. They were so bored and trigger happy they started tasing the tree. Can't imagine what that poor tree felt like." I sip my coffee smiling at how stupid it is to think back on this memory.

"But why? Why were they there to begin with?"

"That's a good question. I should have known better. I was young at the time. I didn't know I could have told them to fuck off and get a warrant like I should have. I let them on the property. Lesson learned. I'll never do that again."

"But why? I don't get it! They must have been there for something!" She's egging me on dying to know.

"Okay okay. Weed. It was weed. I used to grow weed. The sheriffs were going around to all the grows in the county. They would fly their choppers over and then file anonymous complaints giving them the ability to show up to peoples grows. They went to every single grow in the county and tried to shut it down that year. It was a total shit show."

"Ohhhh. I see. I get it. That's why you're so defiant. You've done this before." She says between a sip from the steaming mug.

"I guess. Yeah I mean I didn't think about that. It's not like I haven't had to stand up to them before. If you just say no sometimes there's nothing they can do and they hate that. You don't have to comply unless you're legitimately under arrest or whatever. They'll try to coerce you into giving yourself up for shit you don't need to give yourself up for. I don't play that game. They'll even lie to your face too."

"Yeah. I've never had to deal with them. Except after what happened with my parents. But that's different." She says.

"We should prepare for more. That asshole yesterday was probably just the beginning. Who knows though? What if we can get them to come to our side? That would be the ultimate goal I think. I don't want to fight the police. Or the government. Or anybody. If we can get them to come to our side peacefully then we've won and we won without violence."

"Yeah, but, can we do that?"

"Of course we can. They're fighting a losing war. I told you. They can't win this. They will try and they will fail. We will make them see that they're the ones in the wrong. Imagine trying to stop your own town from surviving a quote "terrorist attack." You'd be straight up evil. How could you live with yourself knowing you're forcing people to stay in their homes to starve and die? After a while if we persist and grow they're going to have to see they're in the wrong. We'll have the numbers against them too and then there will be nothing they can do anyway. They'll

join us. They'll have to. After one week, two weeks, three weeks, we'll have them on our side. Even that psycho potatoman from yesterday will retreat in shame and think about joining us by the time we're done."

"I don't know. That sorta sounds like wishful thinking David. I want to believe it. I do. But I don't know."

"This is how we win this. Even after they plug the power back online on there's still a war going on. They will still try to crush us with their new normal and all the restrictions they want to make us jump through to function in their technocratic totalitarian society. We peacefully opt out. We get everyone to peacefully opt out. We create our town on our terms. That's it. That's how we win. It's that simple. With enough peaceful cooperation they won't have any way to control us like they can do to people in a large city who have no connection to each other. And here's the kicker. After enough time passes and the bonds between us grow their power will weaken even further. Their new currency, the CBDC, central bank digital currency, it can't last forever. It's not like Bitcoin. This piece of shit is going to be hacked and it's going to hyperinflate. When it eventually succumbs to total hyperinflation it's game over for them. All money in the system goes to zero. They will have lost the game. They will lose all control. They will have to retreat to their bunkers and super yachts because the people will rise up and hey if people want heads to roll let 'em roll 'em but we don't need to do that. All we need to do is work together and wait and the system will collapse in on itself. Then it's up to us to pick up the pieces and build the world we want for ourselves and for our children. Does that make sense?"

Jessica pauses with the mug of coffee in her hand looking down at the spirals of steam coming off it.

"Yes. I get it. I never thought of it that way. I think you're right. That's what we need to do. That's how we beat them. That's how we win this. Without ever having to fire a bullet or anything."

"Exactly. We don't need to be like them. We don't need violence or coercion for our plan to work. Only they do. We're not like them. And because of that we will win. There will be a point when the money no longer pays the police. No longer pays the army. No longer pays the intelligence agencies. It will be worthless. Who will their allegiance be to then when the check stops coming in the mail? Game over. It won't take that long either. It will happen in our lifetime for sure. It will happen this decade for sure. It could even be a matter of years. We're already starting to see the cracks form in the foundation. They can't keep this up much longer. That's why they're doing all this. They know they're losing control. So they've gone into hyper control mode. All we need to do is opt out and survive their tyranny for a few years and they will implode and fade into the black hole of time where they belong. I truly believe that. What happens between then and now I can't say. What unimaginable horrors will we and other people have to endure between then and now I can't even imagine. But we keep our eyes on the prize. We work toward our goal. We work together. They can't stop all of us. We'll make this spread like a virus. We'll make them run for the hills with their tails in between their legs clutching their sacks of gold and vials of children's blood. Fucking Nazi commie scum." I take a deep breath and

sit back in my chair finishing the last swig of coffee. I want more but I can't have more so I just set the mug down on the table and look down at it.

"I like where your head is at. I didn't know you thought this through this much. It's very convincing when you lay it all out like that." She tells me.

"I didn't know either. I mean I always knew this. But now we're making it happen. And this is bigger than you and me. This is human nature. This is something that's happening within us as much as it is outside of us. This is the unstoppable force they're trying to suppress. They can only try for so long. The dam will burst. I'm sure of it. Any day now, if we try, and keep going, it will happen. It has to. We'll only fail if we give in and comply.

"Do you think we can convince others of this?" She asks me.

"We don't need to. There are many other people like me out there who get this."

"Really?"

"Oh yeah. Definitely. And think of it like this. What choice do people have? They either wake up and realize we all need to work together or we get taken over by some demented form of technocratic communism. No one wants this. They want to live their lives. They want things to go back to normal. Once they know the truth they'll know which path to take. We don't need to convince anyone of anything. We just need to lay out the facts and show them the truth. They'll make up their own minds. We'll have this whole entire town on our side and there's not a god damned thing Klaus Schwab will be able to do about it." I'm getting animated with my hands laying this all out for her. They hit the table with emphasis.

"Who's Klaus Schwab?"

"Oh god. He's the architect of the Great Reset. Wrote the whole book on it. Literally. Dude's a literal Nazi. I'm not even kidding. Runs the World Economic Forum by family decree. They're the ones that ran the Cyber Polygon simulation. A real psycho piece of shit. Said we'd be dealing with a "cyber pandemic" that will make covid look like a minor inconvenience and here we are. How that mother fucker has so much power I have no idea. I still don't know. Him and his cronies somehow convinced people in deep parts of our government to pull this off. I wish I fully understood who and how. We may never know. It's almost pointless to try and fight them. How fucked up is that? You couldn't even if you wanted to. Or maybe you can. I don't know. I can't. How would I even do that? It would be like fighting ghosts. No, see, that's not how we do this. If someone wants to do that, be my guest, I don't care, have fun. Maybe it's possible. But we don't need to do that. They're on their last limb. I know it. They can't keep this up forever. They're desperate. They're terrified of us. If we get enough people to peacefully opt out. We win. End of story."

"I think you're right. I really do. I think it's the only way. I think we can do it."

"I'm glad I'm making sense."

"You make perfect sense." She tells me finishing her coffee and placing the empty mug on the table.

"Okay good."

"Has this ever happened before? A war where one side won without violence?"

"God I don't know. That's a good question. I think about this all the time though. This has to be some monumental historic moment we are living through right now. I'm sure people always think about that though. World War 2. World War 1. There's probably plenty of times where people thought that. But peacefully? I wish I knew. History doesn't repeat, it rhymes, so who knows? Maybe. We can't be the first to try I don't think. I vaguely recall hearing about some native tribes that wouldn't engage in violence. They were slaughtered. I feel like this is different though."

"Do you think they'll try to slaughter us?" She asks me.

"What do you think this is right now?"

"Good point. You're right. They are trying to right now as we speak. That's so fucked."

"I know. And they do it in a way where you question whether it's even happening or who's even responsible. That's what's so fucked up about it." I say.

"Yeah. God. I always knew there was evil in this world. I did. But such evil on such a large scale like this. I wasn't expecting it. How naive of me. Especially me."

"Don't beat yourself up, you're one of millions if not billions of other people. Remember that."

"Yeah, you're right, who could have seen this coming? Well, I mean like, except you."

"I've been on the fringe my whole life. Just who I am. I told everyone I knew about this months ago. No one cared. Imagine that. Imagine Paul Revere running through town and everyone politely telling him to fuck off. Story of my life."

"Really?" She asks.

"Yes, really. People don't want to know the truth. I'll never understand it. They want to just live their lives in peace and believe whatever it is they want to believe. They don't want to think about evil and bad things happening. It just doesn't interest them. It does me for whatever reason. This is precisely why I believe we can win. These psychopaths rely on manufactured crises to manipulate people into not only accepting their draconian bullshit but to brainwash them into begging for it. It goes both ways though. The more you push people the more they're going to want to push back. What incentives do people have to go along with any of this? Well, there's none if we can show that by working together we can do it better than them. It's that simple. We don't need them. We don't need their fake money. We don't need their biometric ID vaccine passport bullshit. We don't need their fake meat lab sludge made out of soy and bugs they want to make us eat. We don't need their mandates and decrees. We can do everything they

do but better without them. Watch and see. This is the new revolution and this is how we win. We've separated money from the state with Bitcoin. Now we separate the state from society entirely."

Jessica sits there listening to me. Looking down at the table then back up into my eyes contemplating it all.

"Do you think the town is the best approach? Or should we just get some people and go off grid?" She asks.

"I think so. I think we should start here. I think we should do both. If we just go off grid we put a giant target on our back. They can surround us out there if they wanted to. They can't surround a whole town. They would have to drop bombs on it and level the entire thing. I don't think it's going to come down to that honestly. We start here and branch out. We get places going off grid too. People here and people there all working together. Decentralized."

"That makes sense." She tells me nodding.

"I feel like I've talked your head off this morning." I say.

"No. It's good. I needed to hear this. I'm glad you did. Honestly. We need to get everyone at the gathering up to speed on this."

"Yeah. I need to make a written explanation to pass around, and I'll make a plan list that's easy to read so everyone knows what the goals are. I got some cardboard. I'll bring it today and get that done. There's only so many times I can explain this."

"Keep explaining it. So everyone hears you. I think if everyone heard what I just heard we could beat them over night." She says.

"Yeah this is going to take some time."

"I know, just saying."

"Do you want some food?" I ask her.

"No I'm okay for now."

"Okay. We'll head out soon I guess. I don't even know what time it is." I say.

"Time doesn't matter anymore. We go where the sunshine goes. Then we fall into the depths of night with the moonlight darling. Together at last."

"How much gas do you have?" I ask Jessica as we drive down the road toward the park. It's not that far but I didn't even think about it before.

"Almost a full tank. We're good." She tells me turning down the music. I don't know what she's got on now. I have trouble concentrating on it with so much on my mind. Physically I'm relaxed though. So much so I could melt into her seats which seem to have seat warmers in them.

"Okay, cool, I have some too, not sure how much, probably at least half a tank. I should have kept it full. Oh well."

"I'm better prepared than you are for this." She says playfully.

"Oh shush."

"What do we even really need gas for? The parks not that far. We can walk, right?"

"The lake water." I say.

"Oh that's right."

"Imagine walking with five gallon buckets full of water."

"We could do it. I have wagon."

"A wagon?"

"Like a little red wagon. You know?"

"Yeah I guess that could work. If we had to. We should be fine though."

We barely have time to talk in the car. We're already at the park and Mage gets noticeably excited knowing its ball time. There are people already here. Someone set up a dome. A geodesic dome covered in camouflage.

"That must be Johnny's." I say.

"Holy crap that is awesome!" Jessica says as she parks along the curb. We get out and walk toward the gathering area. There are unfamiliar faces. More tents are set up. There are more coolers, bottles of water, and boxes of food. Even a couple other shade structures with tables. One has a sign draping from the table indicating they're a local church. Even though I don't go to church I'm happy to see it. Jessica throws the ball for Mage and he goes running down the grass. It's still a little overcast but the sun should be coming out soon.

I walk over to the dome and peel back the parachute. Johnny, all decked out in camo again, is sitting in his camping chair drinking a beer just like he was yesterday.

"There ya are. Was wonderin' when you'd be showin' up."

"This is yours?" I ask him.

"Ayuh."

"You set this up all by yourself?"

"Ayuh while you were gettin' busy on the saddle I'm sure."

It's warmer inside the dome. He has a gas heater set up like the one I have for the apartment. The dome isn't perfectly sealed but it does make a bit of a difference. The parachute gently flutters along the bottom of the dome. The struts connect in triangles from the bottom all the way to the top in the shape of half of a sphere. There's a lot of room inside and the light passing through the parachute gives it a unique vibe. There's some gadgets and things I don't recognize that he's put in here as well.

"What's this?" I ask him pointing to what looks like some kind of radio.

"Ham radio." He tells me looking at it proudly.

"Oh nice."

"Yes, it is."

"Have you used it yet?" I ask him.

"I have."

"What can we use it for?"

"Got in touch with someone down in Alabama earlier. They said the same thing. Powers out and been out for days." He spits on the grass.

"So it is widespread."

"Guess so, yea. Talked this other fellow from New York. Same thing. Told them we out here dealing with the same shit."

"So that's it then. No other news?"

"No not yet."

"What about emergency broadcasts or anything like that?" I ask.

"I scanned AM/FM radio earlier. Nothing but static. I'll keep checkin' it." He says in-between sipping his canned bud lite.

"So I guess it's really happening then." I say.

"Jesus fucking christ kid. Of course it's fucking happening."

"I just mean---"

"I know what ya mean. You gotsta snap outa it though. Bein' all in disbelief aint gonna help nobody at this point. Get it through your head. They're going full speed ahead with their plan and they'll steamroll us first chance they get. Comprende?" He spits again.

"God you're even more pessimistic than I am."

"I'm realistic son there's a difference I've been around longer than you I've known this day was comin' for a long time. I know my history. I know what's comin'. Now. It's time to start planning on how we fight back." Johnny reaches over from his chair and opens up a case he has lying on the floor and pulls out a shiny gun metal AR-15 with multiple magazines a scope and a bayonet. He looks in the chamber, makes sure it's clear, then hands it to me. It's not as heavy as I thought it would be. I hold it pointing down toward the ground.

"I don't think this is the way." I tell him.

"You're bullshitting yourself son." He says.

"I just mean I don't think we need it."

"Of course we fucking need it. You young bucks are naive as hell you know that?"

"We can win this without violence. I believe we can."

"How in the hell do you think we can do that?"

"Economically."

"Econ--- are you fuckin' serious?"

"I'm dead serious Johnny."

He sighs a deep sigh and takes back the AR-15 from me and lays it down on the case.

"Okay. Let's hear it then. How do you reckon we pull that off? Without violence? Up against the most violent regime in the history of man whose pointed their attention toward us the free people of this great nation?" He swigs his beer and sits back looking at me in the eyes from between his wrinkles and blond salty hair.

"I really need to write this down. Our action plan. But let me just summarize this. We don't need to fight with violence. We need to peacefully opt out of their system and it will collapse on itself. That's it. That's all we need to do."

"I need more information. How's that supposed to work? You haven't convinced me son."

"They want to reimagine society as some kind of technocratic totalitarianism. We reject it by forming strong bonds within the community. Refusing to use their surveillance money they can use to control what we can buy. And rejecting their biometric vaccine passport bullshit they will try to force us into using when this is all said and done. If we do this and we wait it out long enough their central bank digital currency will hyperinflate and its game over for them. We won without ever having to fire a single shot. They will retreat to their bunkers and super yachts and

we will be left to pick up the pieces and create the world the way our founding fathers intended. With freedom."

"Boy they're going to fuckin' crush us for even trying. You know that?"

"We have to try. What else are we going to do. We can't take them all with AR-15's. How many of those do you even have?"

"I got plenty more where this came from. Plus I can print as many more as I'd like with this here printer." He says pointing to his 3d printer with his hand that's holding the beer.

"We can't win that way and you know it. You've been to war before. It's not a war we can win. We have to wait for them to topple under their own weight. It's the only way. We have to survive without them. In spite of them. I believe they will eventually come to our side. They'll have to. This is a war they can't win, just like fighting them with violence is a war we can't win, and should not even consider."

"Alright I hear you. If you're right we might have a chance but we still need these babies." Johnny slaps his AR-15.

"You're probably right too. Just to show that we have them. And could use them. But we should not under any circumstances use them." I say.

"Alright. I see where you're coming from now. This is warfare. Economic warfare. Like art of war type shit. I read that book once you know. I'm keeping my guns though. I'll bring more down if I have to and print some more here while I'm at it. They should see we're packin' heat and don't fuck with us."

"Sounds good. As long as it's defensive posturing only. Okay?" I tell him.

"I won't provoke them. But what if they start provokin' us? What's the protocol?"

"Let them. What are they going to do? If all we're doing is peacefully assembling there's nothing they can do. They can't arrest us all. They can't tear down the camp if we're here and it will get harder to take down as it expands."

"'Spose yer right about that." Johnny swigs his beer. Jessica peeks her head under the parachute and crawls in.

"Nice dome dude." She tells Johnny.

"Thanks Jess."

"Nice AR too." She points to the gun.

"Yessum. Your lover boy David here doesn't want me usin' it though."

"He's right. Did he explain why?" She asks.

"He did, and I reckon he's right. Makes some good points. Economic warfare. Waiting for the enemy to weaken and retreat. With a leviathan state out of control as this one I 'spose it's the only way. Never thought of it like that to be honest. It's smart. We need to be smart about this. Outsmart the enemy and stay one step ahead of them." He swigs his beer.

Mage comes barging in from beneath the parachute and holds his paw up for Johnny. Johnny takes his paw and gives it a shake.

"Let's see what else is going on outside. See you in a bit Johnny." I say.

"Yeup."

More cars are showing up lining the sidewalk down the street. There's already more people here than yesterday. People are setting up chairs, tents, shade structures, bringing boxes and generators. It's really starting to come along it seems. Another dog runs up and sniffs Mage's butt. They roll around on the grass. Looks like some kind of black lab mix or something. I don't know dogs that well. By the looks of it the cops couldn't shut us down even if they wanted to. There's probably not even enough cells in the local jail for everyone here right now. They wouldn't arrest a church would they? Well I guess they sort of did earlier this year in Canada. This isn't Canada though. That wouldn't happen here, right? Who am I kidding. They kill the power the like this, they're capable of anything. I wouldn't put it past them to try.

"We have muffins. You want one?" We greet the ladies behind the church table. Jessica takes a muffin but I decline.

"Thanks for coming. We need to work together during this time of crisis." I tell them.

"Couldn't agree more. This has never happened before. The power never goes out like this." One of them says to me.

"Yes, I know, and we don't know when it's coming back on." I tell them.

"Can't be too long now, right? We'll be out here as long as it takes."

"It could be weeks and the weathers about to get really bad." I say.

"You really think so? This could go on that long?" The other one asks. For some reason they vaguely resemble prairie dogs to me.

"I do. They're going to say it was a terrorist attack. It's really about bringing us to a breaking point so we accept their new totalitarian regime."

"Lord have mercy. My parents used to tell me about this. About communism. Now it's happening here isn't it?"

"It is. That's exactly what this is. It's just technocratic in flavor. Instead of building gulags they're trying to turn all of society into the gulag." I say.

"The battle between good and evil." One of the ladies says.

"I had a vision once about this." The other says.

"What did you see?" Jessica asks her standing by my side.

"I saw a great gathering of people who had come together due to strife and starvation and who endured in spite of whatever brought them to that point." The church lady says closing her eyes for a moment.

"Basically now." I say.

"Yes, I believe so. I remember having to hide people from the police. I've had this dream more times than I can remember. I never understood it. Why I would be seeing it over and over. But now I think maybe I do."

"Why would you have to hide people?" One of the church ladies asks the other.

"I, I don't fully know, to be honest." She says.

"It will probably be me." I say pessimistically.

"Why do you think that?" The vision haver asks.

"Oh, I don't know, a cop showed up here yesterday and tried to fine me, but the fine didn't even have my name on it, I ripped it up and threw it--- no wait it's still in my pocket here. I still need to throw it away." I say.

"God bless you for standing up for what is right. What do they expect us to do? Not help the community in need? What's the purpose of life if we can't do that?"

"Yeah I agree that's why I put the signs up. If we band together we'll make it through this. I'm sure of it. Anyway thanks again for coming and bringing supplies. I'll see you later."

"See you, nice meeting you both."

"Likewise." Jessica says.

More people are showing up now. There are cars lined all along down the road on both sides of the street now. It's starting to look less like a gathering and almost like some kind of festival in just a day.

"Oh man this is good. We're going to be harder to stop now." I tell Jessica walking over to our table.

"This is great honestly. I wasn't expecting this many people to show up." She says.

"People are bored. They don't want to be alone stuck inside with no power."

"Pretty soon the whole town is going to show up."

"I just hope it doesn't snow." I tell her.

"Yeah that would be shitty. Can we use the school? They're not open, are they?" She asks.

"No, they're not open, and I don't know, I don't know them."

"We've got to find a way to get in touch with them."

"I know but how?" I ask her.

"I'll ask around. I'll go around and greet everyone and start gathering information. See who everyone is, who they know, what they can bring, who they can get in touch with, and all that. You should work on your info sign and your action plan while I do that." She tells me in between bites of her blueberry muffin. Mage waits patiently by her side for her to give him some. His tail wags in anticipation.

"Okay. Solid plan. I'll be here."

She walks off down to a group of people who just showed up setting up tents and I get a couple pieces of cardboard ready and a sharpie to write on them with. God, where do I even begin? I'll just improvise it the best I can and hope I cover all the necessary bases.

*

The power could be out for weeks. They will say it was a terrorist attack from another country. Don't believe them. This is a ploy to bring the freedom loving people of America to a breaking point so we accept their Great Reset under any conditions. When the power comes back on they will try to force biometric ID vaccine passports on us, they will try to force us to use their central bank digital currency which can be turned on and off at will and programmed to control what we can and cannot buy while it continues to rapidly lose all purchasing power. We must reject their new normal at all costs and work together as a community to build the world we want to live in.

Do not comply with the technocratic totalitarianism. They cannot stop us all from peacefully opting out and working together.

*

Okay. This is good enough, right? It has enough details to wake people up to what's going on but it's still succinct. Don't want to bombard them with too much info at once, right? Maybe too much info is a good thing. I can write more if needed but for now this is good. I've got another idea. I get another piece of cardboard and write "WELCOME CENTER" on it in big bold lettering. I duct tape it to the table. We're out here in the front of the park by the road and sidewalk so it should be easy to see. When people show up they'll come over here and I can give them a run down on what's going on. The more people who understand what's going on the better. We'll have more ammo to fight back with. I duct tape the information sign to one of the poles of the shade structure so it can be read at eye level for when people walk up.

Now I need to make an action plan so everyone knows what the plan is. Where to even start with this?

*

1. We must peacefully assemble together and not resort to violence. Anyone talking about violence or planning violence should be called out for likely being a provocateur.

2. Get as many people to show up and help out as possible. We are stronger together.

3. United non-compliance is key. Under no circumstances do we accept their new anti-human agendas. We don't need their "great reset" and they can't stop us all from working together.

4. Bitcoin must be adopted as the main form of money to route around the incoming central bank digital currency and biometric ID / vaccine passport agenda. If you have any questions talk to David at the Welcome Center.

5. After a while their currency will hyperinflate and become worthless and they will lose all power. This is when we can restore the freedoms this country was founded on and take back our country from these tyrants without ever having fired a single shot.

*

There. Is that it? Can it really be as simple as that? What am I missing? I'm sure I'm missing something. I'm not a genius or anything but I think this is the blueprint. Whatever happens in-between those points I can't predict. But if we stick to the plan regardless of whatever they try to throw at us we should still be on the right track. The end of fiat money is inevitable and so is the inevitable demise of the state that has grown so out of control because of it. All we have to do is wait it out. If we all work together we can make that happen. It might sound crazy but look at where we are right now. This whole situation is crazy. This action plan is the least crazy thing about all of this to be honest. This is the only thing that makes any bit of sense.

If people understand what this manufactured crisis is being used for they will be more likely to reject it at all costs. They'll be less likely to believe the fear mongering or that all of these things they want to force on us are for our own safety. The oldest trick in the tyrant's book. This is where we start and this is what will guide us. Whatever happens will happen. Can't say we didn't try though.

Instead of duct taping the action plan to the pole like the other sign I keep it on the table. People can read it when they walk up and I can explain anything else they want in more detail. I don't want to be the leader of all of this per se but we do need some form of direction and I'm

probably one of the most informed people here in regards to all of this. Besides, I remember Occupy Wall Street, and I don't want this to go down the way that did.

O.1

I've been greeting some people explaining what I think is going on and what we should do about it. Most people I've talked to weren't expecting this to be such a big deal. A couple were already somewhat up to speed and agreed Bitcoin was the best method for opting out. One person asked me how do we use Bitcoin if there's no power. Unfortunately for now we have to wait for this to be over I told them. After a while I see Jessica making her way through the gathering. We're slowly forming a town within the town.

"How'd it go?" I asked her.

"A lot better than I was expecting." She tells me while pouring some water out for Mage. She sits down next to me in the camping chair behind the table.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I just mean we're in way better shape than I thought we would be. Some people I talked to were from a food bank. They have a significant amount of resources they can donate if needed." She tells me.

"Oh that's good news."

"Yeah. Imagine if we ran out of food." She says.

"I did. Not good. Hope it doesn't come down to that."

"It shouldn't. I mean I don't think it will. I guess it depends on how long this lasts."

"Right. Hope for the best. Plan for the worst." I say.

"I couldn't find anyone who knew anyone at the school."

"It's okay. Maybe someone will show up. I've been greeting people here and giving them a rundown of the situation. I haven't met anyone yet either."

"Can I see?"

"Yeah there's that sign duct taped up there and then I got this one here on the table." I tell her. She stands up to check them out and stands there reading for a minute.

"This is good. What's the responses been like?" She asks.

"Most hadn't a clue we were in as deep of shit as we are, a couple people were already basically up to speed though. I think they get it though for the most part. It's not rocket science. I think people have a hard time accepting it because it's so evil. But they understand it and seem to get how we need to work together if we want to make it through this. I think it will start making more sense as time goes on and we get more people using Bitcoin." I tell her.

"Yeah how are we even supposed to use Bitcoin without the internet?" She asks me.

"It's for after. Obviously we can't now. There's no internet. We don't have any satellite connections. They can't keep it off forever though it will have to come back at some point."

"Someone put a satellite dish on the dome. Did you see it?" She points over toward Johnny's camouflaged geo dome. Mage's eyes follow her hand.

"No, who?" I ask.

"I don't know."

"I'm going to go check. Can you stay here and I'll be right back?"

"Sure. Can you bring back the soup? I'm hungry."

"Yeah Johnny's supposed to have it, I'll ask. Okay be right back."

I get up and head over to the dome and notice that there are two different types of satellite dishes now attached to the dome. There's a normal looking grey one and a rectangular shaped one beneath it. I peel the parachute back and crawl into the dome and the warmth of the place starts cracking the skin on my lips almost immediately. Johnny's sitting in his chair where he was earlier with two other men sitting around a table with two monitors.

"David. Marshall and Jean. Marshall and Jean, David." Johnny introduces us.

"Hi guys." One nods and the other waves. The one I'm guessing is Marshall looks like a chad. Chisel faced with a buzz cut and stout brows. He is stoic and muscular wearing an army green T shirt that is tight fitted due to his bulk. He peers at me from above the monitor. The other one, Jean, is much smaller and is wearing thin rimmed glasses that tint automatically. He has shaggy black hair and is much thinner than Marshall. He's wearing a dark grey hoodie without any symbols on it.

"How's it goin' out there David?" Johnny asks me nursing a Bud Lite like he always seems to be.

"Tons of people are showing up. I can't keep track of them all. What are you guys up to in here?" I ask.

"Just doin' a little recon right boys?" Johnny says. Jean smiles.

"A little recon? What's that supposed to mean? What are the satellite dishes for?"

"You'll see David. Let the boys do their work. They're trained professionals. Good friends of mine. They believe in what we're doing here. Don't you worry. Aright?" He spits off to his side on the grass.

"Are you able to get internet? Radio? Have you talked to anyone else outside of town?"

"Look as soon as we got somethin' you'll be the first to know aright?"

"What about on the ham?"

"It's the same deal everywhere. Everyone I've gotten in touch with says the same damn thing. Powers out. Don't know when it's comin' back on. Some are oblivious. Others say prepare for martial law. Everyone's all over the place. No one has any got damn idea what in the hells goin' on out there."

"Hmm. Alright. Well what's up with the soup?" I ask.

"I brought it. I ate some of it last night but I brought it back. It's in the mini fridge I brought." He points to it on the other side of the dome. "The pot's in the back of my truck. You know which one it is right?"

"Yeah, I think so. I'm going to go do that. If you get any news come see me."

"You got my word captain."

I grab the soup from the fridge which is packed full of canned beer and crawl out of the warm dome into the cold. I need something set up like this over at my station. I'll ask everyone who shows up from now on if they have any plastic they can donate that I can drape from the shade structure so we can run the heater in there like Johnny is doing. I walk over to his busted old truck and grab the big pot out from the back and head over to the table where Jessica is sitting greeting some people. They walk off into the camp as I walk up with the soup and pot.

"Any news?" She asks me.

"Not really. They're in there working on something. Not sure exactly what. Johnny said he's been in touch with some other people on the ham radio. Same deal everywhere basically. But nothing news worthy I guess."

"Hmm. Alright. You got the soup though!"

"Yeah let's get it going."

I fire up the burner on the table and dump it into the pot.

"Johnny's got a mini fridge in there and it's packed full of beer."

"That's such a Johnny thing to do." She says.

"That heater they have in there is nice. We gotta do something like that over here."

"But how would we?" She asks.

"We can drape plastic from the sides of the shade tent and use my heater."

"Oh that's a good idea! Do you have any?"

"No, I'll be asking around." I tell her.

"I'll ask around too. That would be so nice right now."

"Yeah it would. Imagine if it starts snowing. We'd be screwed."

"Not if but when." She says standing up and stirring the soup with the wooden spoon.

"When does it usually start snowing around here?" I ask her.

"Like now. I'm surprised it hasn't already to be honest."

"Oh great."

"I know. We need a plan B." She says to me.

"I'm hoping we can get access to the school's gym." I say.

"I know you do. But what good is hope without a plan?"

"I see your point. Johnny might be okay over there. It's too bad we don't have more structures like that. Some of the tents I've seen are outfitted with wood burning stoves so at least some people are prepared for it. My tent's not that big and I don't have a stove. Where do you even get wood around here anyway? Aren't we in a gigantic prairie?"

"There's some but it's pretty rare. Most people around here use gas." She says.

"We could build an igloo if we have to."

"Oh David. We're not doing that. I'd rather be with you in the apartment."

"What? You don't want to sleep on snow with me?"

"No!"

"But we have to hold the fort down somehow right?"

"It doesn't even snow that much here. Not enough for an igloo at least." She says.

"Really, you don't think so?"

"We're not doing it."

"Okay. So what are we doing? This structure wouldn't hold up in a storm would it? Even with sides?"

"Doubt it." She says.

"We might just have to retreat to the apartment at night and let the hardcore stay here and hold it down if things get really bad."

"Yeah but what if they try to tear everything down in the middle of the night while we're gone?" She asks.

"In the snow? Like straight up snow plough our entire town here in the park? Can they even do that?" I ask.

"I have no idea. You know they'll try though."

"Won't argue with that. I'll work on it okay? I'll make sure we have people here at all times even if we can't be. And hopefully they'll open up the school for us." I say.

"Yeah, *hopefully*."

"I know, I know, believe me."

"Soups warm, you want some?" She asks.

"Yeah might as well, haven't eaten yet. I brought some sunflower seeds too."

"You and your fricken sunflower seeds." She says.

"What? They're good!"

"Yeah if you're a bird."

"I'm a bird. I'm free as a bird. Understand?"

She gives me a funny look and hands me my bowl of soup then scoops herself out some and sits down next to me. People start showing up at the table and we give away the rest of what was in the pot. They thank us and hang out around the table to eat with us. I pour some water in the pot so it's easier to clean later and finish off my bowl.

"It's even better today for some reason." I say.

"Leftovers have a tendency to do that."

"You sure you don't want any?" I pull out the bag of roasted sunflower seeds from my backpack underneath the table and scoop out a cup of them to eat.

"Yeah I'll have a little." She says.

"So what, you're a bird now too?"

I pour some into her bowl she's wiped dry with a paper towel.

"They're not bad actually. I don't know what I was thinking."

"Coconut oil roasted sunflower seeds. This shit is gourmet." I say.

"Yeah I don't know about that. But they are good. I like how they're crunchy."

She dumps the rest of the seeds into Mage's bowl underneath the table and he wolfs them down without even thinking about it.

"Mage isn't a bird." I say.

"No, he's definitely not. Although he can fly along the grass like one when he's going after his ball. He's my majestic little fluff ball. Aren't you Mage?"

He knows she's talking about him and he looks up at her. There's a group of people walking up to us at the table from the sidewalk hauling coolers and other types of bags. That's when I notice Policeman Potatohead is back and he's brought three of his friends with him. Their brand new SUV's park in the middle of the street right in front of our camp and they flash their lights and even squelch their loud siren a little as if that was needed at all.

"Here we go again." I say looking over at Jessica.

"Yep. We got this. They can't do shit." She says.

The group walking up to the table stops and turns around. Jessica and I stand up and Mage obediently stands to attention with his tail wagging slow and low.

"Don't worry about these guys." I tell the group. There's about six of them. They could be a family by the looks of it.

"Why are the cops here?" One of the men wearing a red flannel asks me.

"They showed up yesterday too. They might get on their loudspeaker and yell at us but it's just scare tactics. We're not doing anything wrong. You guys go get your camp set up okay? Come back here when you're done and hopefully they'll be gone by then." I tell them.

"Alright, sounds good. Good luck." They wave and head in behind us.

"IF YOU DO NOT DISPERSE FROM THIS UNLAWFUL GATHERING YOUR PROPERTY WILL BE REMOVED AND YOU WILL BE ARRESTED!"

The cop is screaming over the intercom again. Everyone at the camp is now watching by the looks of it. Johnny, Marshall, and Jean have stepped outside of the dome, each holding a black rifle and pointing it toward the ground with their fingers above but not on the triggers. We all just stand there looking at them waiting for what they're going to do next.

"They can't do that, can they?" Jessica asks me.

"Let them try. There's too many of us here now." I say.

"DISPERSE FROM THIS UNLAWFUL GATHERING IMMEDIATELY! NON-COMPLIANCE WILL BE MET WITH FORCE!"

The screaming loud over modulated voice blares out from the tiny speaker housed somewhere on the vehicle and bounces around the street before dissipating leaving just the lights flashing.

"I need to get a bull horn. Can you make a note to look for one?" I ask Jess.

"Good idea." She says.

There's probably, I don't know, fifty, maybe even a hundred people here today, between all the church people, my neighbors, their friends and family, and all the random people who saw the signs and showed up. They've all come to gather near the road to watch. There's no way these four cops could arrest us all and they know it. They don't have the tools or resources to tear down the camp either. They're bluffing. There's nothing they can do.

"Guys, there's nothing the police can do, if we just stay peaceful, and exercise our right to assemble, there is nothing they can do, and they know it. They're trying to scare us. Don't let them scare you. We're standing up for our freedom and our rights and if this scares them they're on the wrong side. We're in the right here. Remember that." I pick my voice up so more people can hear me. I can see people nodding and I get some exclamations of agreement.

"Turn our power back on!" Someone in the crowd has a bull horn and just started using it. Awesome. Now we can fight fire with fire. The crowd cheers in agreement with whoever shouted at the cop. This is out of my hands now. There are too many people here to control. I know that and they know that. There's a feeling of power buzzing through the crowd. They may be able to turn off our electricity but they can't shut off this feeling bubbling up from within us.

"GATHERING DURING A PANDEMIC IS A TERRORIST ACT AND YOU WILL BE DEALT WITH LIKE THE DOMESTIC TERRORISTS YOU ARE! DISPERSE AT ONCE! I'M NOT GOING TO SAY THIS AGAIN!"

"Domestic terrorists? You're the fucking terrorist!" The guy with the bull horn claps back at the cop and everybody cheers with loud roars of "yeah!"

"Holy shit." I look over at Jessica. She smiles at me.

"We're not dispersing bitch!" Some woman yells from the crowd and everybody cheers even louder this time. I can't even imagine how mad the cop is right now. Who is he going to take it out on this time? What's he going to do come out and rage ticket all of us?

"YOU ARE ALL PARTICIPATING IN AN ILLEGAL SUPER SPREADER EVENT AND YOU MUST COMPLY IMMEDIATELY! DISPERSE OR BE MET WITH THE UTMOST FORCE OF THE LAW!" It's so loud it almost hurts my ears and I feel a wave of disgust wash over me. He can't actually believe what he's saying, can he?

"Super spreader my ass! You're a lying sack of shit! The only pandemic is your authoritarian ass trying to stomp all over our freedom!" The guy with the bullhorn yells at the cop who just sits there in his car staring at him from behind his aviators and mustache in a fit of rage and what must be fear now at how many of us there are. The crowd rages back in a fit of cheering. The lights flash brightly blue and red in the street. The cop lies on the siren a little bit again. It squelches and squeals and echoes down the road off the houses across the street.

"What are you going to do? Come out here and arrest us all? You won't even get out of your car!" The guy with the bull horn goes on. Members of the crowd start egging on the cops to come out of their cars and do something. They just sit there and stare at us with their lights

flashing. They don't get out. They look like they're talking to each other over an internal intercom now. The crowd watches in anticipation and does not back down.

"YOU HAVE TWENTY FOUR HOURS TO COMPLY WITH THE ORDER OR YOU WILL BE FORCIBLY REMOVED AND YOUR PROPERTY DESTROYED! WE WILL NOT ALLOW THIS ILLEGAL SUPER SPREADER EVENT TO CONTINUE ANY LONGER! THOSE WHO ARE CAUGHT HERE TOMORROW WILL BE PROSECUTED TO THE FULLEST EXTENT OF THE LAW!" Potatohead screams at the top of his lungs through the P.A. and people in the crowd are laughing at him now. He's so ridiculous nobody can take him seriously. How is this guy in charge? Of all the cops they have on the force, they pick this one for this job? What's going on?

"Get out of here you can't do shit we're doing nothing wrong. Get out of here and don't come back unless you plan on protecting our rights and freedoms. We'll be waiting." Bull horn guy tells them off and they all turn their flashing lights off and start heading down the road the way they came. And just like a bad dream they're suddenly gone.

"They didn't even get out this time." Jessica says.

"Yeah but there was more of them." I say.

"They didn't do anything though."

"They can't do anything."

"Do you really think they'll try to take us down tomorrow?" She asks.

"How? What are they going to do? Bulldoze all of us while we sit here and eat soup and stand around with guns?"

"Yeah good point. I guess they really can't do shit. So why are they coming around every day trying to scare us?"

"Who the fuck knows. Some higher up order? Or they're all just insane? It's hard to tell. We should expect opposition of all kinds. Externally. Internally. It will probably ramp up. We will stand our ground and stick with the plan. We cannot give in. We stay on track and we can bring in a better world without them. We let them win and they will crush us. It's a no brainer. This is a fight we can't give up on or lose." I tell her. Johnny's walking over to the table.

"You see that? They didn't even get out of their cars this time." I say.

"I saw'd it alright. They know there's nothin' they can do. They saw'd us standin' there with our AR's and the crowd all out here together. What are they gonna do?"

"Do you think they're going to clear us out tomorrow?" I ask him.

"Nah. They can't. They're bluffin' sure as shit. Come on down to the dome would ya? I got somethin' I want to show ya."

"Okay, I'll be right over."

Johnny walks away back to the dome.

"I'll be right back." I tell Jessica.

"For sure, I'll hold it down here for anyone who shows up."

"Thanks. You're the best."

She smiles and reaches for my hand and presses it into hers. It's warm from being in her jacket pocket and her skin feels so much smoother than mine. I let go and walk toward the dome crawling in under the parachute which has been reinforced to be more tighter fitting than it was before.

Marshall looks up at me. Jean gives me an eyebrow raise as a greeting from behind the monitor. Johnny cracks open a beer and lifts it up in my direction before taking a drink from it in his chair. He sighs with bubbly satisfaction and motions for me to come over with his other hand.

"So what's going on?" I ask.

"You want to explain Jean?" Johnny says to him.

"Sure. Have you heard of Skylink?" He asks me.

"Yeah, the satellite internet service. Is it working?"

"Well, not exactly. They shut down operations in the USA as of a few days ago. Curious though isn't it?"

"I figured this would happen. No power. No internet. Nothing. That's the plan." I say.

"Exactly. The plan. Well there's an emergency broadcast channel that we were able to connect to without them knowing and we're able to access the network."

"Holy shit good work! They can't track you here?"

"Nope. They have no idea. The service is still operational in some countries. It's just the US, Canada, UK, and Russia where it's down. They're still using the emergency channel here on the ground in the US. They need to use it for their communications. They can't tell where the encrypted data is coming from plus we have it routing through Tor. It could be any number of their partners sending and receiving the bits. There's no way they can geolocate it with the way we have it set up here." Jean explains.

"So we have internet now?" I ask.

"Yes. There's wifi. The network is called FREEDOM. The password is COMEANDTAKEIT69420."

I laugh out loud a little.

"Appropriate."

"Thanks."

"So have you done any digging yet on what exactly is going on with everything? Like how widespread this is? How many countries? Is it the entire USA?" I ask.

"I'll get back to you on that. That's what we're going to work on next. Also I just want to say I believe in your mission. Bitcoin is the way out of this. I'm fully on board. When Johnny told me what you were doing here I instantly pledged my allegiance. If we succeed we can finally realize the world Satoshi dreamed could be possible. An economy built on voluntarism and sound money rather than violence coercion and inflation. That's the dream. Let's make it happen." He says and gives me a salute.

I nod.

"I'll check back in on you guys again soon. Thanks for all of your hard work so far."

Jean smiles. Johnny lifts his beer and fiddles with his 3d printer. Marshall lifts his eyes up off the monitor then returns them almost immediately. I crawl back under the parachute and out of the warm dome back to the Welcome Center.

"We have internet now." I tell Jessica.

"What, how? " She asks.

"They got it set up. It's complicated. Do you have your phone?"

"It's in the car."

"Can you grab it?" I ask.

"Sure, hold on." She gets up and walks over to her Explorer. Mage follows behind her wagging his tail. The sun is out now but it's not that much warmer. A cool breeze moves through the camp and my breath is visible with every exhalation. Patches of greyish clouds smear across the icy blue sky. She walks back with the phone and sits down next to me.

"Here." She hands it to me.

"Thanks. Let's see here. The network is Freedom. The password is COMEANDTAKEIT69420 all caps lock." She laughs a little when I tell her.

"Come and take it 69420?" She asks.

"Yeah. Why not. It's a good password."

"Is it working?"

"Yeah I'm connected. I wonder what websites will even work? If all the servers are down we can probably at least still connect to the Bitcoin network. Let's see."

I type in duckduckgo.com and it fails to load.

"Duckduckgo is down. Figures."

I type in google.com. Same thing. Totally down. Next I try baidu.com and it works. It loads almost immediately.

"Baidu is working." I say.

"What the hell is Baidu?" Jessica asks.

"It's a Chinese search engine."

"But what good does that do? Doesn't China censor shit?"

"Yeah it's better than nothing though. Just those other two being down tells us a lot. And just being able to connect to this one shows it's working. I'll do more research. Marshall and Jean are working on that as well. I want to see if I can connect to the Bitcoin network. I'll probably have to set up a node here before we can do that though."

I try Yandex. It's also down. Not surprising from what Jean said. Skylink was shut down in Russia and I think they're from there.

"So a large chunk of the global internet appears to be down. Fucking crazy. Nothing like this has ever happened before. I need to get my laptop from the apartment. One of us should stay here for when more people show up though." I say.

"I'll get it. No problem. It's not far anyway. Where's your keys?"

"Thanks Jess. Here. Do you know where it is?"

"It's on your table isn't it?"

"Yeah should be. Bring the charger with it. The cable."

"K. I'll be right back." She bends down to take a moment and kiss me. I feel that electricity tingling on my lips and in my teeth again. She smiles and walks away with Mage at her side toward her car. I sit for a moment and think about how crazy it is that she makes me feel that way and I watch her as she walks towards her car, gets in it, and then drives down the road.

I type "price of Bitcoin" into Baidu and scroll through the search results. I click a couple links that don't load and then finally something comes up. I click on USD. There it is. It's still trading. I'm watching the exchange rate move up and down. It hasn't moved much since the last time I saw it. It's a little lower in terms of percentage but that's to be expected after a boom phase. We're moving into the bust phase of the cycle now. It's amazing to see it's held up which I guess makes sense. There's less people able to sell. The network must still be functioning. I can't wait to get my node up and running to test it out.

The Baidu site is hard to navigate since it's all in Chinese. I don't know what any of the buttons or links do. I can just type in a search and hit enter. I type in "power outage" just to see what comes up. There are news reports of power outages in the USA but they don't reveal much I didn't already know. Maybe Jean would know of a better site to use. I type in "terrorist attack" and some more results come up. There are some sites claiming the USA power grid was hit by terrorists. Surprise surprise. I go over three of them and they're basically all the same. None of them go so far as to say who they think did it however.

Well they're not wrong. It definitely was a terrorist attack. Just not really an external one. More of like a corrupted and co-opted internal one from what I understand. What actual proof and evidence do I have of this other than the simulation run last July like event 201 and them war gaming this stuff in documents from John Hopkins? That's the hard part. These things are done in such a way that how do you even prove who exactly did it and how they did it? It's too easy to cover your tracks. They've been planning this out for years. They wouldn't do it if they knew they could get caught even though the entire thing is totally obvious. That's really what's so evil about it. How the world got to this point I will never understand. We've come so far with our technology that it has enabled the most complicated and insane ways of manipulating and enslaving people. We have the technology now to free ourselves from this enslavement we all just need to work together and use it and their old dying system will collapse in on itself leaving us with a blank slate and a predictable block time and halving schedule.

We've separated money from the state, and now we're separating the state from society. It's going to happen. We're going to make it happen. In some ways they're as responsible for their own undoing just as we are for opting out of their system and letting it die. They'll blame us but they really only have themselves to blame.

In the short time it took Jessica to head to the apartment and back I've greeted probably a couple dozen people and explained the basics on what I think is going on and what I think needs to be done about it. A group of natives showed up and apparently brought three large tipi's with them they're going to set up. I guess there are a lot of them that live around here on reservations outside of town. Most people are surprised to hear I think this could go on for so long but occasionally I get people who are as pessimistic, or as realistic, as I am, and they agree we're in some seriously deep shit. People are playing music, cooking food, playing with their dogs and their children. Some people sit around in chairs just talking. I'm pretty cold sitting here but I shrug it off for the time being. I still haven't found any plastic for the sides of our tent yet so there's not much I can do.

"Did you lock the door?" I ask Jessica as she hands me the laptop.

"Yes David."

"Thank you. No one's probably going to go in there but you never know. People might start getting desperate. That's when people start looting."

"Well they shouldn't now that we're getting set up here don'tcha think?"

"That's the goal." I say.

"This place is getting so lively. I love it! We need to upgrade our tent somehow though." Jessica says giving mage a pet on his head. He wants to play with his ball again.

"Maybe we can just use a bigger tent or something. There are some people setting up some tipi's over there. See the poles going up?" I say pointing behind us above the crowd and all their tents and tables.

"Oh nice. But that's back there. We need something up front here, you know?"

"Yeah I agree. We'll figure something out." I say.

"I'm going to play with Mage for a bit I'll be right back." Jessica does that thing where she presses my hand into hers and then walks off into the field. I grab the laptop and head over to the geodome to plug it in. It's so much warmer in here. Marshall and Jean are doing their thing behind the screens. Johnny is not sitting where he was earlier.

"Where's Johnny?" I ask them.

"He went fishing." Jean tells me.

"Oh, right. That makes sense."

"How's the web working for you?" He asks.

"I've been able to connect. I couldn't think of many websites to visit though. I'm going to try running Bitcoin right now and see how that works."

"Yeah a lot of sites are down. We can give you a list of good ones if you want when we do some more research."

"That would be cool. No rush really." I say.

I plug in the laptop and boot it up. I type in my password then wait for it to load. I connect to FREEDOM then open Bitcoin Core. It takes a while to load like it usually does after I haven't used it in a while then the empty wallet opens up. It's 3 days behind and will take some time to synchronize the blockchain. I check the peers list and can see other people I'm connected to. It works!

"I'm connected to the network!" I say out loud to either of them.

"To Bitcoin?" Jean asks.

"Yes. Node is syncing. Peers are connected." I say.

"Oh hell yes. We are operational."

"How do I connect other people in the town to the node? I only know how to do my own wallets."

"We can get that set up for you." Jean tells me looking up from behind his monitor.

"Let's do it."

"Okay give me a minute while I finish this up." He says.

"I'll just leave this here. Do you have to configure the node?"

"Yeah, that works, then I'll show you how you can show others how to connect to it with another wallet without syncing the chain. No problem."

"Thanks Jean."

"Don't mention it boss."

I head back out underneath the parachute into the cold winter day. Our little town is growing despite the threats from the crazy police calling us domestic terrorists and super spreaders. The desire for freedom is stronger than the fear tactics they use to try to take it away from us. It's a war they couldn't win even if they wanted to. I walk back over to the Welcome Center. Jessica and Mage are coming over from their play time. She pours some water into his bowl and he laps it up panting tiredly then plops down on the grass next to her chair.

"They're holding a supper for everyone around 3:30 pm so we can all eat together before the sun sets." Jessica tells me sitting down in the chair next to mine.

"Oh nice. Who are they?"

"The tipi people."

"Well that works out." I say.

"Yeah things are coming along."

"Still a long ways to go though."

"I know. Don't worry. We got this." She says.

"I'm not worried."

A woman walks up to our welcome tent. She's short, kinda fat, has short shoulder length blonde hair, and beady black eyes. She's wearing grey sweat pants and a yellow plastic rain coat. Her tennis shoes are white but strained with dirt. She's not carrying any bags or anything and she looks slightly lost.

"Hi, how's it going?" Jessica asks her.

"What is this?" She asks her.

"We're gathering here because of the extended power outage. Take a moment to read the brief outline of the situation posted there and what we plan on doing about it here." She points her to where she should direct her attention. The woman stands there a moment taking in the words written on the sign.

"How do you know that?" She asks Jessica.

"David here. He's been researching this stuff a long time."

"That can't be true." She says.

"You're entitled to believe what you want. No one's here to convince you." Jessica tells her.

"The power will be back on any minute now. I just know it." The woman tells Jessica matter of factly.

"What if it doesn't though?" Jessica asks her.

"That's never happened before." The woman says looking exasperated.

"I know. I've lived here my whole life. You're right. But what if it happens now?"

"A terrorist attack? Give me a break." The woman says.

"Not a terrorist attack. That's what they want you to believe it is. It's really a ploy to get people to support their new system they want to enslave us all with. They make up these

problems so they can come in and act like they have the solution." I tell the woman standing there who hasn't looked at me once. She still won't look at me even after saying that to her.

"That's utter nonsense. You people are crazy, you know that? Utterly crazy." The woman says looking at Jessica with her small beady black eyes and nasal voice.

"Do you have food and water?" Jessica asks her.

"No. I ran out yesterday. The power will come back on and the store will be open soon though." The woman says to Jess.

"We have food and water here. Here have this bottle." Jessica hands her a half gallon of water we had sitting on the table.

"I don't want that bottle."

"Okay. Suit yourself. We're having supper at 3:30. Will you stay?"

"What are you having?"

"I don't know. But you should join us."

"How do you not know. Aren't you the Welcome Center?"

I almost burst into laughter but I refrain.

"Yes ma'am. The people organizing the supper just arrived today and I haven't had the chance to talk to them much yet."

"Well how do you know it's good? What if it's poisoned?" She asks.

Okay this is getting ridiculous.

"If you want some food meet us back there at 3:30 or just before the sun starts to set. There will also be water. Stick around and hang out as long as you like. You're free to be here just as we are and if you want take a look at this action plan I have written for how we plan on dealing with this." I push forward the action plan I have written on cardboard and she takes a look at it.

"What is Bitcoin?" She doesn't ask me, but asks Jessica.

"It's money. Digital money. Freedom money. We're going to use it to opt out of the current system." Jess tells her.

"You people are loony. Why would you want to do that? I work at the school. I have a good job. I make a good living. I don't need Bitcoin." She says.

"You work at the school?" I ask her.

"Did I stutter?" She still won't look at me for some reason. She will only look at Jessica.

"We've been trying to get in contact with people at the school." Jessica tells her.

"Why?" She asks.

"We were wondering if we could use the gymnasium if it snowed." Jess tells her.

"Snowed? You're really planning on being out here that long? Even in the snow?"

"We have to come together as a community somehow." I say.

"I don't want to be alone anymore." The woman suddenly blurts out looking at Jessica.

"You don't have to be. We're not alone here. We're all out here dealing with this just the same as you are." Jess says.

The woman breaks down into tears suddenly and is bawling her eyes out standing there in front of our table. A group of what looks like two families walk up behind her and are standing there wondering if they should wait or move on. I wave for them to come up to the table.

"Can you help her?" I ask Jess.

"Yeah sure." She says. She gets up and walks the woman over behind the tent where she cries into her shoulder. Mage is standing there with his tail wagging for emotional support. I get the families up to speed on everything I've gone over what seems like a hundred times now. They give their thanks and head into the gathering to set up their camp. Eventually Jessica comes back and sits down next to me again. The woman she was helping has wandered off into the crowd.

"What's her deal? Is she okay?" I ask her.

"Her husband died last week apparently." She tells me.

"Oh jesus christ no wonder she's so distraught."

"She has nothing at her house apparently."

"That's so fucked."

"I know. She seemed really scared of everything here but I told her we're all here for the same reason, to peacefully assemble, and not to be afraid of anyone and if she needs anything just ask. I'm sure anyone would be willing to help."

"Yeah exactly. That's nice of you. She wouldn't even look at me. I was like what's up with that?"

"Well if the whole town shows up there's bound to be some quirky folks that turn up with it. She's probably just completely traumatized though."

"Yeah. People don't want to believe something so evil as this could happen. It's so out of their ordinary frame of concept that they never even considered it as a possibility. Because of

that they have a hard time even understanding it as it's happening. That's the most common thing I get talking to people who walk up here. I think as more time passes people will start to get it more though."

"I know David. I get it. Truly. I'm like that too. But I get it now. Everything you've said makes sense to me. From why they're doing it to what we're going to do about it. I'm totally on board."

"I was worried at first I would sound crazy." I tell her.

"Not even remotely. Not as crazy as what we're living through right now. If anything about the last two years has taught me anything it's that. I should have been more prepared." She says.

"It worked out though."

"You're right. It did. Life finds a way. Doesn't it?"

"Where there's a will, there's a way, right?" I say.

"I suppose you're right."

"Did the woman say anything else about the school? I ask her.

"Yeah actually. Thanks for reminding me. She said she has the keys to the gymnasium and other parts of the school."

"Will she let us in to use it?"

"I'm not 100% sure. She wasn't very responsive to the question." She says.

"Hm. Alright. Maybe she'll come around in time. What was her name?"

"Dorothy."

"I'll remember that. That's easy. Not in Kansas anymore." I say.

"I know I thought the same thing."

Johnny pulls his truck up and gets out grabbing his cooler from out of the back.

"I got trout!" He yells at us triumphantly.

"There's supper at 3:30." I yell back at him.

"No need, I'm eatin' trout tonight!"

He disappears under the parachute into the dome.

"Not gonna lie that sounds pretty good." I say.

"Will he give us some do you think?"

"I'm sure he would."

A cool breeze meanders through the camp taking with it the sound of people's music and the scents of all the different types of food people are making. I think I smell chili. Barbeque. Maybe even corn bread or something. I can hear kids playing somewhere behind me. All the bustle of the normal town sounds minus all the cars and buildings to reflect them. I start wondering if there's anything else I need to do or if I can really just sit here next to Jessica waiting for more people to show up.

"Should we be doing anything else?" I ask her.

"Like what?"

"I just mean like, are we doing enough? Am I missing something?"

"I, I'm not sure, I don't think so."

"It feels like I'm missing something I just don't know what." I say.

"I think you're overthinking it."

"Maybe."

"Hey guys!" Shanna walks up and waves. Looks like she's wearing the same thing as yesterday. I don't blame her. So am I.

"Hey. Suppers at 3:30." Jessica tells her. I wave and smile.

"Excellent! How's everything goin'?"

"Good, really chill, feels like I'm not doing enough honestly." I say.

"Bro you're the one who started all this." She says.

"True. Good point."

"You're the one who told us what in the hell was even goin' on." She goes on.

"You're right." I say.

"AND you wrote up a plan for how we fight back peacefully." She says while looking over the action plan at the table.

"Yeah it's simple really."

"Maybe to you it is. This was a foreign concept to probly 99% of people here yesterday. Now you got all these people here on the same page. You've done more than enough David. You should be proud." Shanna tells me.

"Thanks. I appreciate the support. It's good to hear your perspective on this." I say.

"Shanna's right. You're the man with the plan." Jess says.

"Well I couldn't do it without ya'll. It would just be me out here getting harassed by the cops.

"Fuck that sumbitch. Did he come back here?" Shanna asks.

"Yeah actually. Earlier showed up with 3 other units." I say.

"What they do this time?"

"It was almost comical to be honest. They sat in their cars and didn't even get out this time. The same cop from yesterday was yelling over his intercom we were all domestic terrorists and super spreaders. We had some guy yelling back at him with a bull horn it was fucking great. Other people were yelling at him too. He said if we don't clear out by tomorrow we're all under arrest and they're clearing the camp. Then they drove off." I tell her.

"They can't do shit right? We're not clearin' out right?" She asks.

"Nope. Exactly. I'm staying right here and I think everyone else is too."

"Damn right!"

"You brought your tent?" I ask her. She's carrying a bag with her.

"Yeah I'ma go set it up now. I'll catch ya'll in a bit aight?"

"Sounds good we'll be here." Jessica says. Shanna waves and heads back into the camp.

"Well that was good to hear. I felt like I wasn't doing anything. I'm the reason this is even happening. The mind plays tricks on you, you know?" I say to Jess.

"She's right you know."

"Don't you think this would have happened anyway though? Like what are people supposed to do for weeks on end without power? Isn't this the natural outcome? I literally can't think of anything else other than stay in your homes and die basically and I don't think people would accept that, would they?" I ask.

"Who knows. Maybe they would. I have no idea. What would I have done? I don't know. Try to fish I guess. I don't even know how to fish."

"We should go fishing sometime." I say.

"I'd like that."

"When we're not running the Welcome Center."

"Of course. How long do you think we need to do this for?"

"God I don't know. Good question. Either until the power comes back on, or the whole town shows up and then there's no need to welcome anyone else I guess."

"We need like a game to play or something." Jess says.

"A game? What kind of game?" I ask.

"Like a board game."

"Do you like chess?"

"Yeah I'd be down."

"I can bring my board here tomorrow." I say.

"Do it. It will help pass the time."

"Yeah good idea. I love playing. I play mostly online. Will be nice to use the board again for once."

"Do you like betting?" She asks.

"Betting what?"

"Like wagering things on who wins."

"Yeah we could do that. Why not?"

"Cool, sounds good."

A frisbee flies out of nowhere and smacks into one of the poles of our shade structure freaking me out a little. Two kids come running up laughing saying sorry then running off with it. It's a surreal moment for me seeing people living their lives in spite of everything going on. That's ultimately how we win this. We just go about our lives and ignore them. They will do everything in their power to try to convince us this isn't possible but they've overplayed their cards in my opinion. They've tried to go too far. No one wants their great reset. Their great reset is trash. Our reset is better. Look at it happening all around us flourishing where they were expecting us to just roll over and take it. It gives me hope that I'm not just some crazy idealist. That what I've started may actually have been the right move. That the outcome that I envision may be more than just a dream. It's a beautiful feeling, whatever this is. When I was planning for this to happen earlier this year this is not what I had in mind.

I thought I'd be holed up on a property by myself somewhere living off rations waiting for it all to blow over. That obviously didn't work out. I can't actually remember the moment this plan started to emerge in my consciousness. Was it something sporadic I came up with when I woke up without power? Was it something Jessica and I came up with on the fly? I can't remember. It's sort of weird I can't remember but I shrug it off. What matters is I thought of it at all and then Jess and I made it happen. Now look at it. We've formed a tribe out here in the cold to weather the storm together. I feel a wave of gratitude flow through me. I feel the tingling

euphoric bliss I get from Jessica as well. Come what may. Whatever's happening right now feels so right and I'm honored to be here in this moment experiencing it.

Jessica and I sit for some time chatting, holding each other's hand, and greeting people at the table. Now it's time to head over to where they're holding supper. They have a large circular space surrounding their tipis for everyone to gather and sit together. We all sit together in a circle with a multilayered radius after getting some food from the kitchens that are set up. There's chili, corn bread, and barbeque. Jessica gets some of each. I just get the meat. It's grilled and smoky and mouthwatering. We sit together with everyone else just eating. Some people say prayers. Some people give thanks. Shanna gets up and says we should all be thankful for me and my vision that brought us together and gave us a path forward. People clap looking over at me smiling. I smile back and lift my hand as a gesture of reciprocated appreciation. Although I am aware I am the one who did that it still feels weird to me for some reason. I guess I'm just not used to it yet.

By the time we're all done and people start to leave the circle the sun is almost starting to set beyond the early winter horizon. I thank the people who cooked for everyone and they shake my hand. They say they're staying the night here and will be staying as long as it takes. They invite me to stay in one of their tipis anytime I'd like. Jessica seems to like the idea. We thank them and say we'll plan on doing so tomorrow. We head back over to the Welcome Center, realize there's nothing we really need to get from there, then head back to her car parked along the sidewalk. We'll stay another night at the apartment and bring whatever we need with us tomorrow to make staying in the tipi more manageable. By the looks of it I'd say less than half of the people who have camped out at the gathering are planning on leaving. The majority of them are staying. This is great. We'll be way harder to stop when they come and try to shut us down tomorrow.

Overall it felt like a productive day. A lot of people showed up. I got them all up to speed. We got internet. I got a Bitcoin node working. So far so good. I'm looking forward to spending the evening with Jessica. We'll light a candle and just enjoy each other's company again. We don't need anything else. We have food and water there if needed. Still can't help shake the feeling like I'm missing something. I just don't know what it is. I shrug it off for now. Maybe it will come to me later. Jessica drives us to the apartment, we head in and lock the door behind us. We light the candle and sit down at the table. There's no wine tonight and I'm perfectly fine with that. We have some water instead. I want a coffee but I hold myself back from having one.

"So, after all of this is said and done, the power comes back on, then what?" Jessica asks me looking into my eyes from across the table. Her cream and coffee colored beanie fits snugly on her head and her straight brown hair dangles down from the sides of it down her shoulders and back. She gazes intently. Ponderously.

"I guess we'll have to wait and see." I say.

"You don't know?"

"There's some things I can know and some things I can't." I explain.

"Yeah. I get that. So what do you know?"

"It depends on how far they take this. Is our state going to push back against this at all or is this going to be like a federally mandated thing and states don't have the option to opt out at all? I don't know. That's what's going to be interesting to see. That's one reason I moved here really. Seemed like they were really pushing back here. Thought maybe we'd have a fighting chance here instead of like the west coast for example which went full speed ahead with every single draconian restriction. There won't be any push back there. They will have all of this bullshit forced on them there. Here, I don't know, states' rights may play a key role. They shut down the power here too though which is a bit concerning. I was hoping they wouldn't do that. But you know, of course they'd want to crush this state especially, for fighting back."

"Didn't Johnny say it was every state though?" She asks.

"Every state from those people he spoke with that were from them, yes." I say.

"So it's not just red state retaliation."

"No, they want maximum chaos so they can force all that garbage on us and say it's for our own safety. It's been their plan all along."

"So after they turn the power on what then?"

"I guess that's where we test the hypothesis. Are people going to just roll over and accept the biometric ID, I hate calling it this, "vaccine passport", system to access their bank accounts that are now digital wallets connected directly to the federal reserve and treasury? Or are they going to be inspired by what happened in Mackenzie Park and adopt Bitcoin as their primary form of savings and transactions making their new system of surveillance and control completely irrelevant. Will that even be an issue here where they're banned? When they turn the power on is when the real work begins. Yes, I mean, we need to survive for a few weeks. You and I will be fine here, we have the supplies. I mean the whole town needs to survive three weeks, without eating each other and going insane. It's after that, and they turn the power back on, that people must not succumb to their old ways of behavior. I'm hoping we have enough of an impact that we can get this whole town running on Bitcoin and make an example for the rest of the state. The rest of the country. There are other towns out there doing it. El Zonte in El Salvador. Bitcoin Beach they call it. Bitcoin is even legal tender money there and other countries are moving toward the same thing as we speak. What's happening right now, what they're doing, is only going to accelerate this trend. They might think they can coerce everyone into using this system by dangling it in front of them like a carrot they have to jump through hoops to get, but if we show people there's a better alternative, and that it's working right now, maybe we really can put this town on the map as one of the first places that rejected the great reset and adopted Bitcoin. If we pull this off it will spread like wildfire throughout the rest of the country and the world. That's the plan. That's the goal. That's what I'm hoping for. That's what I want to see happen." I take a breath and sip of water. Jessica is sitting there listening to me contemplatively.

"God I hope this works, I don't want to see that happen. That new system you describe sounds so horrible. I don't want my health tied to my money. I don't want my money turned on

and off if I say or do the wrong thing. I don't want someone watching what I buy and saying what I can and cannot buy. I'm not a fucking child." She says to me with a bit of fire in her voice.

"I know. I feel the same. If there was ever a time to make this happen it's now. Right now."

"So how do we ensure it? Like what are the steps we need to take to make it a certainty and not just a hope? You know?" She asks.

"I've been telling everyone at the Welcome Center that Bitcoin is the most important thing. Without it we will all be forced into this new system for the reasons you just described. They seem to get it. But getting everyone to actually use it. That's the next step. That's what I need to start doing tomorrow. Make sure everybody has a wallet and knows how to use it. I'll explain not only how to use it but why. For example, it allows us to save over time due to its deflationary nature. It allows us to transact freely without a centralized third party that can censor or control our transactions. There's no centralized third party which means it's resistant to hacks or changes to the protocol thus making it robust, predictable and dependable. And so on and so forth. It's the weapon we use to peacefully opt out and defeat their plans for global control. We can't let America fall to these people. That's not what this country is about and the American people don't want to see it happen. Even if a lot of them just want to put their heads down and go along with things so they don't stir the pot. If you sit them down and explain to them what's happening, what we can do about it, and how it will benefit their lives vs. the nightmare they want to make everyone live under, they'll get it. It's not hard to see. Freedom vs. tyranny. Savings vs. enslavement. My body my choice vs. being a guinea pig they might kill just to participate in society. No one in their right mind wants that. They will try to convince everyone that's what they want or that's what they have to do so it's our job to convince them better. You and I, we're genuine. People can see that. They're tired of fake bullshit. They're tired of being lied to. We have something they don't. We have truth on our side. We're on the side of the natural flow of nature. We just need to stick with it we're on the right path I'm sure of it." I say.

"Okay sounds like the plan. Tomorrow everybody gets a wallet and starts using Bitcoin and understanding why they need to start using this for everything in town. They need to get all of the shops on board. Everyone they buy things from. How are they going to do that?" She asks.

"We'll boycott any shop that doesn't accept it and only patronize those who do."

"Is that going to work?"

"Of course it will. Businesses need to make money. If everyone refuses to shop there they'll have no choice. Hopefully we don't even need to take it this far. The best outcome would be they just come out and decide to do it on their own voluntarily. They might need a little nudging though. We'll see."

"What about online shopping though?" She asks.

"We'll discourage it as much as possible. How much stuff do you really need to get online anyway?"

"People love shopping online." She says.

"Yeah but if shopping online means I need to comply with your experimental medical procedures and use your fake digital money to hell with it. I don't want to buy shit online." I say.

"What about for things you can't get locally?"

"There are sites that aggregate lists of stuff you can buy with Bitcoin. I'll make sure that's posted up at the Welcome Center. Maybe we all just need to find a way to live more locally. I don't know. If being free means not buying anything online I know which one I'm picking." I say.

"I know you feel the way David but you have tons of conviction. Not everyone is like you."

"Maybe, or maybe they'll come around due to everything that's happening. I think people are fed up with everything. I think people are more adaptable then you give them credit to be. It's freedom or slavery. We just need to hammer this home. I don't want to see the people of this town fall victim to this scam that's being perpetuated on so many. I want to see freedom restored in America and you know what it starts right here because we say it does. People love to bitch and complain about how fucked the world is but how often do you actually come up with a viable path to restore something so important as this? Freedom itself is at stake here. This is bigger than you, and me. This is bigger than going out and voting for the left or the right on machines that are obviously corruptible. This is the most dire moment in the history of this country. Hands down. And we have a chance to take it back and restore the values it was founded on. We have a way to do it we just need to do it. And if we don't do it we lose. We lose our entire country. And then what. We become like China or something? Fuck that. We're not standing for that. And I don't think other people are going to stand for this either. Not when you lay it all out like this. Not when they realize how important of a moment this is. Not when the path to freedom is so obvious and clear cut and the alternative is so unbelievably retarded." I sigh and take a sip of water.

"God when you put it that way." Jessica says looking into my eyes. The candle flame flickers between us in the middle of the table. She stands up and pours some water and some food for Mage in his bowls on the floor then she reaches out her hand and I put mine in hers. She leads me toward the tent in the middle of the living room without saying a word. I unzip the door, she crawls in and gets under the covers, and I crawl in behind her, zipping it back up and crawling underneath the blankets with her. There's that floating feeling again. I'm made of wax softened by the flicker of her flame. There's something buzzing coming off her lips. I'll never understand what this is but I love it more than anything.

O.12

The morning starts creeping in emerging from the vague incompatible dream world I was just inhabiting. I don't move as not to wake Jess. Only my eyes and eyelids flicker like the candle was last night. It's burned out now. The apartment is dark except for the tiny bit of light that barely makes it through the blankets and the tent material. We slept together spooning. My arm is still around her. I feel her slow breath bobbing my arm up and down like a boat out on the water. What day is it? It's day four. The power's still out. Surprise surprise. What was I just dreaming? It's barely detectable at this point. I remember the confrontation. The men in beige camouflage uniform. A possibility or a premonition. Maybe both. It's cold outside and outside of the tent but it's warm in here under the blankets with her. I want to just lay here forever but I know there's a revolution happening and we have to get up and go. I have a lot of work to do.

Jessica wakes up almost as if she can hear me thinking. We spend some time together in the tent. A layer of sweat collects on our bodies again. We can't help ourselves. It feels just as important as what we're doing at the park if not more important. We're not afraid of what this means. This is what life's all about and we both know it. We put our clothes on and sit down at the kitchen table. I heat up some water for coffee and peel back one of the blankets on the windows for light. We brush our teeth and use the bathroom. I heat some water up in a bigger pot and we use it to wash our bodies with a wash cloth. It's been a while since we've both had a shower. So it goes.

We both eat some sunflower seeds and talk about random things and plans we have for the day. Mage starts getting antsy and we decide to head down to the park. We grab the heater, some pillows, blankets, and a sleeping bag and load up her car with it. She has another sleeping bag at her house so we stop by there before the park. We listen to music on the way there. I don't know what it is. I don't ask. I just enjoy it. Whatever it is.

There's no parking when we get there anywhere in sight. Both sides of the road are packed all the way up and down the street. The gathering in the park has turned into what looks like a large festival. The dome and the tipi stands out tall among the tents which scatter throughout the park. A lot of people are out and about already and it's probably not even 10 am yet. We drive a ways up the road and find a place to park and get out hauling all of our stuff with us. Jess says she'll take the sleeping stuff down to the tipi and play ball with Mage for a bit. I carry the heater down to the Welcome Center and am confused for a moment when I don't see our shade structure. There's a large tent where in it's place where it was yesterday. Posted on the front is the Welcome Center sign and my information piece. Did someone upgrade our tent?

The tents set up in a way that offers an enclosure with an opening for the table and for us to sit behind it and not be totally inside hidden from everyone. It will give us some protection from the elements while I greet new people to the camp. I wonder who did this? I can set up the heater in here too. Checking out the inside I see the bag with the old shade structure in it. I put the heater in the back of the tent and head out. I start going around to everyone and telling them what the plan is for today. At 10 am, 12 pm, and 2 pm I will be gathering people at the tipi circle and we will installing Bitcoin wallets on everybody's phones and devices. Some people say they

didn't bring their phones or laptops. I tell them to bring them tomorrow I'll be doing this every day until everyone is up to speed and knows how to use them.

I check in with the guys in the dome. Johnnys out fishing again. They've configured my Bitcoin node running on the laptop to be able to be reached by other peoples' wallets. They show me which wallets to use and how to get them to connect. It's easier than I thought it would be. We have access to decentralized sound money while the rest of the country has lost power and access to the fiat banking system. I thank them for their incredible work and check the time. It's almost 10 am. Jess says she's got the Welcome Center covered and will direct people to the tipi circle if they're ready to be briefed.

The first turnout is pretty good. I'd say about a quarter of the camp showed up already, which could be about 100 people by the looks of it. We have generators set up for charging devices. We connect them to the wifi. I have everyone download the wallet depending on their device and I show how to connect to the node I have running. Everyone writes their seed down and I make sure they understand that if they lose it they lose access to their money. They need to keep it in a safe place and away from the prying eyes of anyone who can steal it.

"This is super important. By connecting to a full node you know your transactions aren't going to be surveilled or censored by a man in the middle. You're in full control of your money. Normally you want to connect to your own full node if you can but this is the quickest way for now. If you have a laptop you can try to run Bitcoin Core and synchronize the chain but it could take days or longer depending on your device. By all means try to do so if you can." I explain.

"So we just run the software and that's the full node?" A woman in the crowd asks.

"Yes, there's different implementations of nodes, but this is the most basic setup. You link your wallet to your full node and that's how you know you're not relying on a trusted third party who could be skewing the data."

"Well aren't you a trusted third party?" She asks.

"Exactly. That's exactly right. But in this instance you know me. I'm like the Uncle Jim of the camp. So it's a little different. I'm not some chainalysis company operating to hoover up all your transaction data."

"But what if we don't have Bitcoin? How do we get it?" An older man asks me.

"Great question. There's a few different ways. Normally you could just buy it. Right now that may be next to impossible given the current situation with the power and internet outage throughout the country. If you have a GPU on your computer you can bring it down and mine on it that will probably still work. Basically you can use your computer to generate Bitcoin with some services that allow you to do that. Here's what I'll do though. To jump start this project I will be giving everyone here Bitcoin to use. If you want to pay me back some day you can but you don't have to. That's assuming you can even pay me back at all once this is all said and done and they flip the power back on. We don't know what restrictions they're going to have on the banking system when it comes back online. Some of you may choose your liberty is more

important than your bank account. I may end up doing the same I don't know yet. We'll have to see what happens." I explain.

"So you'll give us Bitcoin to use within the circular economy here at the camp?" He asks.

"Right. And for when the power comes back on. When the power comes back on we need to spread this to the rest of the town if the rest of the town isn't already on board by that time. You can use the Bitcoin for goods and services in town from people who are accepting it. We will boycott anyone who isn't accepting it to motivate those who aren't to start doing so. If we have access to our money we can move it into Bitcoin. If we don't we'll just have to make do with what we have and start from scratch. I don't expect anything in return for this I just want you to use it and understand the importance of it. Get more of it if you can when you can. Understand that this is our peaceful weapon for restoring the freedoms this country was founded on. By using this decentralized money we can reject their great reset and limit the governments overreach."

"This is so fucked. What if we can't access our banks?" One of the women asks.

"That's the whole point of why we're doing this. Do you see? They can shut down the banks but they can't shut down Bitcoin. They can force biometric ID's and vaccine passport bullshit on people who rely on banks but they can't do that to people using Bitcoin."

"Yeah. I get it. I just never thought. I never saw this coming."

"You and millions of other people. The reason I've gathered you all here today is because if we opt out peacefully and start working together making this circular economy work we have proven we don't need them and there's nothing they can do about it. We win. Freedom wins. Tyranny loses." I say.

"Are we going to have enough Bitcoin to make this work?" One of the younger men asks me.

"We have to start somewhere. We're probably not going to be using very much of it here at the camp. If you want to start entrepreneurial endeavors here at the park by all means do so. I'm sure some of you are creative and driven enough to do that. But it's mostly just something to get started and familiar with. Hold onto it and keep it safe for when the power comes back on and try to get more from an exchange if you can. If not I will figure something out. I have enough to get this started and there's nothing else I would rather use it for to be honest. We may need some outside help. I will put some feelers out for that today as a backup plan."

"How much are we getting?"

"I'll give everyone the same amount. In fact we'll do that right now. I'll show you how sending and receiving works. Come up in a line and give me one of your receiving addresses, I'll scan the QR code, send it to you, and show you how I send it. Remember everyone, **DO NOT LOSE YOUR SEED!** I mean it! That seed is your access code to your Bitcoin. Without it you lose **EVERYTHING** if your phone dies or you lose it or something. Keep it safe and secure. Some people keep their seeds on metal or other types of things for added security. Whatever you do,

do not lose it, do not let anyone see it." I explain. Everyone seems to understand. They all get up and get in line with their phones and laptops.

I show each person how I send it from my wallet to theirs. They get 0.01 in their wallet almost instantly. I explain how it needs to wait to confirm before it should be spent and that blocks usually come in around every ten minutes. They're a little slower than usual from a lot of miners dropping off the network from the power outage. I give out over 1 Bitcoin before I tell everyone thanks for coming and that if they have any other questions please do not hesitate to ask. A lot of them hang around asking me little things here and there. I'm happy to oblige. By the time everyone is confident and up to speed on what the plan is its 12 pm and time for the next group. There's even more people this time and they've packed the circle to the max.

"Guys it's freedom or tyranny take your pick. Digital freedom or digital enslavement. The choice should be obvious but I'll let you decide. If you want to be a part of the revolution this is how we win this. Bitcoin is our tool to peacefully opt out and create the society our founding fathers had envisioned for us. Limited government, voluntary cooperation, and sound money. By using Bitcoin we reject their so called Great Reset, we reject their biometric ID vaccine passport they'll use to control what we have to put in our bodies to participate in our own society, and we reject their central bank digital currencies they'll use to surveil, censor, and control what we can and cannot purchase. This is it. This is how we win. If we all work together and use Bitcoin we win. They lose. Totalitarian governments rely on fraud to deceive the masses and when the fraud is exposed they rely on force. Well guess what? They can only keep up the force for so long. Their digital currencies will hyperinflate and go to zero. They will no longer be able to pay for the enforcement. There will be no way for them to stay in power. This is how we win. Bitcoin cannot hyperinflate. Bitcoin is deflationary. It accrues value throughout time and into the future. It stores value better than anything else we've ever had in history and has beaten everything else in terms of performance on how fast it has achieved this." I go off on a rant in front of the crowd.

After answering another round of questions I have everyone line up and I give out more Bitcoin to everyone for them to hodl and get familiar with. If they choose to use in within the camp somehow they can. If they want to hold onto it for savings they can. If they want to use it for purchasing goods and services in town when the power comes back on they can. It's freedom money and I don't care what they do with it. We are starting something big here. Something El Salvador and Paraguay have already done. This has the potential to be even bigger. We're not using fiat money at all. We're going straight into Bitcoin for everything and completely rejecting the totalitarian fiat regime. It's gotten too out of control and this is the only way to stop it. If everyone did what we are doing now it would be over tomorrow.

I help the others who stick around after the presentation and more people start showing up for the 2 pm meeting. There's about the same amount as last time. A full crowd. I'll turn hundreds of people into Bitcoin users just today along. I won't stop until I get the whole town using it. Then we need to spread it to the whole state and the whole country before the Great Reset attempts to destroy what's left of this great nation and what's left of everyone's savings. They will attempt to hold their funds from them if they don't comply with the total takeover of their health and freedom. This is what the Nazis did except on a whole new level. They started

out with a caste system dictated by medical tyranny. That's exactly what they're trying to do again except with their technocratic spin on things. It's not going to work. We've exposed their fraud. They'll be coming in with force now. We need to be prepared.

In the middle of the third talk of the day, which is going very well, people are really starting to understand the importance of this, I see the cops pull up with the lights flashing and there's even more of them this time. I can't even count how many of them there are. Behind them are big green trucks that look like something the army would use. They fill up the entire street as far as I can see. We've exposed their fraud. Now comes the force.

"Ok guys. Let's meet up back here later. Let's say after supper. Or one of the 10, 12, or 2 timeslots tomorrow, okay? Don't be afraid of the police we are here peacefully assembling and there's nothing they can do. Stand your ground. Exercise your rights. Do not let them scare you into leaving. If we stay here together there is nothing they can do. They can't expect us all to sit alone in our houses without resources waiting to die. If they want to violate our constitutional rights we need to be prepared to stand up and defend them. Meeting adjourned for now." I walk toward the street to see what's going on. A large portion of the group comes with me and gathers near the sidewalk. There are soldiers, or national guardsmen, pouring out of the dark green trucks and lining up along the sidewalk at the edge of the park. We do the same. There are dozens of them. Maybe even a hundred. I don't know. But we outnumber them still. They're all wearing medical masks and they look completely ridiculous doing so. Aren't they aware those things do nothing but trap bad bacteria and restrict breathing?

A bulldozer comes bouncing down the road and parks along the grass on the outskirts of the camp limits. The driver stops it and sits there waiting. Things start to feel tense but the crowd is unshaken by their presence. We dealt with the cops yesterday. Now there's more of us. Now there's more of them. The cops don't get out from the cars they just sit there with their lights on. The guardsmen stand at attention along the sidewalk looking like zombie clones saying nothing.

"So what are you guys here for?" I ask one of them. He doesn't say anything. Doesn't even look at me.

"Well? What's the plan?" I ask another. Same deal.

"Whose in charge here? Do you have a commander? A leader? Who told you to come here? What's your mission?" I speak up loudly. Then I see him. He gets out of the passenger seat of one of the trucks and starts walking over to me. His uniform is a bit more decorated than the grunts who line the street but I couldn't tell you what that means exactly. I notice his name tag says Sanchez when he walks up. He's the only one not wearing a mask.

"You were informed yesterday by the police department that if you did not vacate the premises you would be arrested and your property removed were you not?" He asks me very sternly. He's got a chiseled face and a buzz cut and a thin line shaved out of the end of his left eye brow. I never understood why people do that. His tanned face is clean cut and shaved. Not even a five o' clock shadow.

"Informed? You mean screamed at over the intercom by a clearly disturbed individual? That guy should be fired. What kind of police officer acts that way?" I say.

"Answer my question!" Sanchez isn't having any of it. He sounds angry already.

"What question? Can't you see we're here peacefully assembling? We're exercising our constitutional rights. Remember that thing? The constitution? Didn't you swear to uphold it or is that not a thing anymore?" I ask.

"The constitution does not apply during a pandemic." He claps back. He said the quiet part out loud. The crowd behind me roars. There's a mixture of mirthfulness and vitriol. Sanchez almost winces he's so uncomfortable by the reaction.

"There is no pandemic you fucking moron. It's been two years. Two years of lies. Two years of fraud. You're out of your fucking mind. You can't honestly believe this can you? Where's your fucking mask then huh why aren't you protecting yourself from the big scawy viwus?" I say straight to his face.

"You are all going to be detained for violating quarantine!" A vein bulges out from Sanchez's forehead as his voice picks up in intensity. The crowd behind me erupts. People are yelling "they can't detain us all!" They're yelling "freedom!" They're yelling "he's a liar!" No one here is taking his shit. I can tell by the look on his face he wasn't expecting this and doesn't know what to do.

"You swore to uphold the constitution. Now you claim it doesn't apply over lies and fraud. Is this the America you really want to live in? Do you, a soldier, really want to be the Gestapo of a totalitarian state? Can you see how far you have all fallen? How are you not ashamed with yourselves?" I ask not backing down.

"I have orders---" Sanchez starts to bark.

"You have orders. Orders to stop American people peacefully assembling in a park during a power outage. Listen to yourself. Shame on you! Shame on you!" The entire crowd erupts in "Shame on you!" at the top of their lungs over and over. Sanchez tries to speak but he's barely audible at this point.

"I HAVE ORDERS TO DETAIN YOU ALL FOR VIOLATING QUARANTINE!" He's yelling now to try to be heard over the shouting of the crowd. No one is listening. They're yelling "Shame on you! Shame on you!" over and over and if I didn't know any better it looks like it's working. Sanchez stands there looking absolutely defeated. He's a man that's just trying to live his life and move up in the ranks of the army or national guard or whatever division he's a part of. He knows what he's doing is wrong. He may even be aware that there is no pandemic anymore or that there never was one to begin with and the words he speaks are pure bullshit used to try to undermine us with authority. He's a conflicted man. He stands there sweat beads rolling down the side of his face on this cold winters day. The sun barely shining down from the overcast sky.

"Look, Sanchez, we're not leaving. You're not going to round us up. There is no pandemic. Your quarantine is unconstitutional and we're not going to put up with your attempts to force us all to slowly starve in isolation. Do you understand?" I ask him somewhat fiercely.

He stands there a moment staring at me looking like he's going to snap or like he wants to say something but doesn't know what to say. Then he turns his back to me and walks down the sidewalk along the line of guardsmen and trucks parked in the road. The crowd roars with cheers. Bullhorn guy yells "We will not comply! We will not comply!" The national guardsmen start to look uneasy. They stand there with their rifles not moving not saying anything. Some survey the crowd. Others look down at the ground. I can see the conflict in their eyes and faces too. These people are just trying to get through life. Go to college. Support their families. Whatever it is. They know what they're doing is wrong. Somewhere deep down inside them there's a voice saying there are some orders that should be violated. They're not there yet though. They stand at attention waiting for the signal. Are they going to try to round us all up? Or will they retreat back to their base where they came from?

I turn to the crowd who has all gathered towards the front of the camp. I see Jessica and Mage watching me. She's smiling and I smile back for a quick moment.

"Okay ya'll. We're done here. Let them act like they're rounding us up. They can't do shit and they know it. Go back to doing whatever it was that you were doing before these guys showed up." I try to speak up loudly enough for everyone to hear. They cheer victoriously and start dispersing back into the camp. Bull horn guy goes on:

"That's right! You know what you're doing is wrong! You can't stop us all from gathering! We will not comply! We will not comply! United non-compliance people! We will peacefully assemble and exercise our constitutional rights! We are free beings and you're not! Join us! Don't be an arm of the totalitarian state! Stand up for what is right! Restore the values this country was founded on!"

I walk over to Jessica and kiss her on her electric lips. Mage barks and wags his tail. We walk together over to the Welcome Center. She's got the heater going in the tent and it's much warmer than it was yesterday.

"Everything good?" I ask her.

"Yeah, you? Should we be worried about them?" She asks.

"No. Look at them. They're just standing there looking scared and conflicted. They're trying to scare us. If they had orders to detain us why aren't they doing it? They're either lying or they know they can't."

"But what about the bulldozer?"

"What are they going to do run us over? They probably thought we would just leave. We're not leaving. Doesn't this just prove our point even more? The conviction of the crowd grows more intense by the day. They don't want to back down." I say.

"I know. That was crazy. Everyone was pushing back."

"Yeah pushing back but peacefully. That's the way. That's how we do this."

"How did your meetings go?" She asks.

"Very good. I'm setting up wallets and giving out Bitcoin. Getting hundreds of people on boarded just today alone. Got more work to do. We'll have the whole town on board in no time." I say.

"You really think so?"

"Fuck yeah. At some point we're going to reach a tipping point and the dominoes will begin to cascade. We're not there yet but we will reach it I know it. We just have to keep pushing for it peacefully. Onboard as many people as possible. If we can get the town on a Bitcoin standard, we can get the state, and we can get the country. It starts here like it's already started in El Salvador and Paraguay. Hell, maybe it's already starting elsewhere in the country and we just don't know about it. I wouldn't be surprised. There are people far smarter and richer than me out there with the same ideas I have. This is going to spread like wild fire. The dark winter they wanted so bad is our renaissance. It's happening." I say and Jessica grabs my hand and squeezes it. I'm buzzing with energy from her and from dealing with Sanchez and the roars of the crowd and the guardsmen standing at attention waiting for the order.

We sit together at the Welcome Center until supper time. A few dozen more people show up, some with supplies, some with nothing, and we get them up to speed. The circle around the tipis is even larger today. There's pumpkin pie, roasted chicken, and macaroni salad, among other things. Jessica has some of all of it. I just eat the chicken. When we're done the people who I was meeting with earlier stay and I try to finish up with as many of them as I can but the sun starts setting and I call it for the night. I tell them we'll meet back up at one of the time slots tomorrow and make sure everyone else in the camp joins and gets on board. They thank me and Jessica and I walk back over to the Welcome Center to grab the heater to use in the tipi for the night. The police with their flashing lights are long gone. The guardsmen and their trucks have disappeared as well. The bulldozer is the only thing that remains. I tell Jess I'll meet her in the tipi and walk over to where they parked the dozer. They didn't even lock it. They didn't even take the keys out of it. I fire up the engine and put it into drive.

Driving the dozer through the park away from the camp makes me feel giddy. These idiots weren't even thinking! I drive it all the way to the other side of the park far away from the outskirts of the camp. I take it on the road and head down into the residential streets. I drive for about half a mile then park it in a parking lot by some abandoned building. I hold onto the keys for a while then toss them into a random garbage can on the way back to the camp where I'll crawl under the covers with Jess in one of the tipis for the night.

0.13

I wake up in the middle of the night to the sound of something tapping the outside of the tipi. Jessica is still asleep rolled over on her side facing away from me. I don't think it's rain. It could be snow by the sounds of it. There's an iciness to the air despite the heater still being on. I quietly put my clothes back on trying not to wake her up. I get my hiking boots on and crawl out of the flap of the tipi into the cold dark night. It is snow. The first snow of the season. I can see a thin layer covering everything glowing in the diffused moon light. The night is quiet and all is still except for the falling flakes on everything around me. I get a whiff of some kind of smoke and look over and notice there's someone else outside. One of the natives. He's smoking a pipe. I can see it glowing red hot like a dragon's eye peering through the darkness at me. The smoke spirals up and away in the overcast night. I walk over to him leaving tracks in the snow behind me.

He hands the pipe to me and I take a puff from it. It tastes like some kind of tobacco maybe. I try not to cough. I exhale it slow and watch the smoke spiral away. I feel light headed but not in a bad way. It's relaxing as hell whatever it is. I hand the pipe back to the man who I can now see better than before. He looked just like a shadow when I first came out here. Now I see he's dressed in a traditional outfit made of some kind of animal skin. He wears a head dress of feathers that protrude outward in all different directions. For a moment I wonder if I have stepped back in time. It hits me that we are one in the same. This man is keeping the traditions of his past alive in spite of it all. I can relate to that. Despite whatever conflicts our ancestors had we are here now gathering together. What does that say about us? I think deep down we may both want the same thing. We both want freedom.

"I'm Little Lightning. I'm honored to meet you, David." He says to me taking a hit from the long decorated pipe. He passes it to me and I take it into my hands analyzing its carvings and details before putting it to my lips and breathing in the hot cherry.

"Likewise." I say quietly. There are people sleeping nearby. I don't want to wake them up.

"What brings you out from your slumber?" He whispers, I pass the pipe back to him. I feel light as the feathers that line his headdress. Like I could float away at any moment if I'm not careful.

"I, I don't know. I heard the snow. I wanted to come check it out." I say whispering realizing I don't really know why I got up.

"You got up from your warm sleep with your woman to come outside in the cold?" He asks me quietly.

"I think I'm worried about the snow." I admit in my hushed breath.

"Don't worry about the snow. It is worrying you should worry about." He exhales the spiraling smoke and reaches into a leather pouch attached to his belt and packs more dark material into the bowl. He covers it with his hand and inhales slowly and it ignites. Then he passes it to me and I breathe it in again. It's spicy in a way. Has a bite to it. I start spiraling the

same way the smoke does as it leaves my body. My spirit dissipates into my surroundings the same way the smoke does. We are one in the same. The smoke and I.

"I know what you mean. But if it snows really bad we might not be able to gather." I whisper to him passing back the pipe. He pauses for a moment and looks up at the sky as if to say a silent prayer. Then inhales the smoke deeply exhaling it slowly from his nostrils.

"That's nonsense. That never stopped us." I can barely see his face but I can tell he's looking up at me now.

"I don't know if everyone here is going to be able to tolerate it the same way you can." I explain as quietly as I can. There is snow collecting on our heads and on our clothes. The pipe feels warm in my hand as he passes it to me. The smoke I inhale is like a fire burning in my soul. The wind picks up when I exhale and with it comes a howl coming from somewhere.

"They can. They must."

"I hope you're right."

"Some things can be known before they happen. You know that just as well as I." He explains to me in a hushed whisper as we squat outside the tipi covered in a thin layer of powder snow. We pass the pipe back and forth. I am beyond high. If high is even the right term. It's as if a tornado is connected to my soul and the sky and is twisting around inside my body with profound force. He packs more material in the pipe and gets it cherried taking a huge hit and blowing the smoke up into the heavens.

"So why are you out here?" I whisper.

"For you, David."

"For me?"

"I knew you would be coming outside." He explains as he exhales the smoke and passes me the pipe.

"How did you know?"

"The same way you knew the snow had fallen."

"But you were out here before me." I'm confused, Is he fucking with me?

"Seeing down the arrow of time is like hearing the first snow fall of the season. You just have to know what to listen for." He whispers and I get shivers down my spine.

"So why were we supposed to meet out here?" I ask him.

"The spirits want me to assure you that you're on the right path. The snow will not deter you. You face many obstacles but if you persevere you may reach the summit." He takes one last long drag of the pipe then puts his thumb over it and blows the smoke toward me. I think I see a faint smile painted across his face as he opens the flap to the tipi and crawls inside. Now I'm

squatting outside in the snow in the dark by myself with a massive head rush in somewhat of an entheogenic trance. I wonder if he means what he said or if he's just bullshitting me. He sounded awfully sincere but you never know. I take a look over the park, the tipis, and the tents all covered in fresh powder and decide to head back into the warm tipi with Jessica. I still don't know why I came outside but I guess I'm glad I did. I peel back the flap to the entrance of the tipi and feel the warmth from the heater.

My clothes are covered in snow. I place them along the floor by the heater and brush the rest of the snow off my head and beard. I crawl back under the blankets with Jessica who doesn't look like she has any idea I ever left. I close my eyes and give in to the spiral. The ethereal part of my being is soaring and I let it soar. I let go of my body and disappear.

I wake up with the sunrise as the light of morning penetrates through the darkness. I can't remember any dreams. My clothes lying on the floor by the heater reminds me that meeting Little Lightning was not a dream either. Jessica is still asleep on her side this time facing me with her arm around me. I'm on my back looking up breathing slow. It doesn't sound like it's snowing anymore. The only thing I can hear are the engines of trucks in the street. The camp is otherwise totally quiet. I can hear Jessica's small breaths through her nose and that's it.

I think about what Little Lightning told me. Reach the summit? Does he know about my plan for using hyperbitcoinization as a peaceful weapon against the Great Reset? Do the spirits? Who are the spirits? I have so many questions. He just got up and left last night after he told me that though. Who knows? Maybe he knows something I don't. Maybe he can read my spirit like a piece of sheet music. Nothing would surprise me at this point. I feel the urge to get up and see what's going on but I don't want to wake Jessica. Being here beside Jess is more important than a cup of coffee even though I want one really bad. What are those truck noises in the street? Are the guardsmen back?

As the sun becomes stronger I hear more hushed murmurs and shuffling of objects in the camp as people start to wake up and realize it snowed. Luckily the snow wasn't that bad but it's going to get worse and with it comes unbearable cold. I wish we were better prepared for this. How can we be better prepared for this? I can't shake the feeling I'm missing something again but I just don't know what it is. I hate when this happens.

Jessica's hand moves down my chest towards my stomach then even lower and she grabs me gently. I look over and notice her looking at me looking sleepy eyed but happy. It makes me smile and she does the same. Her hair is messy and all over the place and I love when it looks like this for some reason.

"You're awake." I say.

"No you are." She says.

"I've been awake."

"What was that sound last night?"

"It snowed."

"Oh, it did!?"

"Yeah, a little." I say.

"Have you seen it?" She asks.

"I went outside last night and smoked a pipe with Little Lightning. The snow wasn't too bad. A couple inches at the most I'd say."

"Mmmm. Okay. You know it's going to get worse."

"It's not so bad in here though is it?" I ask.

"No, it's not, but not everyone has a heater like we do."

"I wish there was something we could do about that."

"We'll figure something out. I have a good feeling about it." She says with a yawn and squeezes me slightly.

"Day five." I say and she echoes it back to me.

"What are those engine noises?" She asks as she starts appearing more awake.

"I don't know. We should get up and check."

"Ugh. I don't want to get up." She says and pulls the cover over her more.

"We've got a revolution to win babe."

"Fine. What's on the agenda today boss?"

"Don't know yet. Finish onboarding people. Onboard some more. Try to brainstorm ways of combating the snow. Run the Welcome Center. Drink coffee. Eat sunflower seeds. Play with Mage." I say and Mage's ears perk up as I say his name. He had been sleeping on the floor by the foot of the bed but is awake now with us.

"Sounds like a plan." She says as she sits up giving me one final squeeze. We want each other but we leave it hanging there for later. We'll want each other even more later. We get up and put our clothes back on. Mine are pretty much dry from the snow last night. Mage stands up and looks excited to play in the snow. I shut the heater off and crawl out of the tipi squinting my eyes at how bright everything is. The morning light reflects off the snow on the ground and it's blinding.

"I should have brought my sunglasses." I say.

"They're in my car. Go get them." Jess tells me. She's got hers. She's wearing them with her coffee colored beanie on. Mage runs around in the snow leaving tracks behind him wagging his tail excitedly.

"I will later. Let's go to the Welcome Center, have a coffee, and check what's going on out in the road." I take Jessica's hand and we walk down there with Mage running all around us playfully. Other people are waking up from their tents. Some have coffee going. Others have little stoves for things like pancakes or eggs. Other groups have formed kitchens to feed others and people gather around them. We grab our stuff and brush our teeth in the bathroom using a jug of water to rinse with then head back over to the tent.

I turn the heater on in the welcome tent and get a coffee going. It's impossible not to notice what's going on in the street. They're back. The guardsmen. They have lined the sidewalk again with their trucks parked in the middle of the road. What if people need to leave? They're basically blocking people in. They can go around and drive on the sidewalk I guess but that's illegal. Illegal. Do laws even matter anymore? I have no idea. I make a cup for Jessica first then one for myself. Then I make another cup. I kiss Jessica on the lips and there's that tingly feeling again. I get one last look at her beauty then walk with both steaming mugs in my hand toward the road where all the guardsmen are standing at attention with their rifles. It's the same scene as yesterday minus the police cars and with a thin layer of bright white snow covering everything except for their uniforms.

I walk up to the closest guardsmen within my proximity and he looks up at me.

"Where's Sanchez?" I ask him. At first he doesn't respond then he gives me a type of head nod that insinuates he's "over there." So I walk in that direction.

"Sanchez?" I yell out. Some of the guardsmen watch me. Others gaze out into the camp without flinching. Others stare at their boots in the snow.

"Sanchez I got you a coffee! Where you at!?" I yell even louder now walking down the sidewalk along the line of guardsmen stretched all the way down the park. Then I see him hop out from behind one of the trucks with his back straight and his shoulders squared looking the same as he did yesterday. He's not even wearing a hat or anything. How is his head not cold? He walks up to me like a drill instructor walking up to a private who just fucked up. I'm not a private though so I'm not worried about it.

"Sanchez. Good morning. I got you a coffee." I tell him.

"No thank you." He says.

"No, please, I insist. You can't be out here without coffee." He pauses a moment then looks at the mugs.

"Pick whichever one you want. They're both the same." I say. Then he reaches his hand out and takes one of the steaming hot mugs of black coffee. I take a sip of mine just to show him it's not poisoned or whatever then he takes a quick sip of his to test how hot it is.

"I have orders to detain all of you today, you know that?" He asks me calmly. Much more calmer than yesterday.

"You had orders to detain us yesterday too but you didn't." I tell him as I take another sip of the bitter deliciousness in my hand. He does the same.

"Orders are from higher up. Nothing I can do." He looks me in the eyes with his intense gaze and chiseled flawlessly shaved face.

"I think there is something you can do." I tell him bluntly slowly sipping the coffee. I want to make this cup last as long as I can. Until it's no longer warm.

"Orders are orders." He says militantly slowly sipping from the mug in between our dialog.

"I know. Orders are orders. And some orders are unjust. What do you do then?" I ask him. He pauses and looks out at the camp then down at the line of his men standing at attention waiting for the order. He almost looks stumped or like he can't really say what he wants.

"Look, David, I---" I cut him off.

"You know my name?" I ask.

"We know much more than that." He claps back.

"Fair enough. I'm not surprised. I think we both know you're not going to detain us." I honestly don't know if I fully believe this but I say it with a sense of faux confidence anyway just to gauge the reaction I get from him looking into the mug then back up at me. His eyes are fierce and locked onto mine.

"Pretty soon I'll give the order. My men will head into the camp. Everyone will be arrested. You'll all be taken to a detention facility we have designated for you all---" I cut him off again.

"What kind of detention facility?" I ask.

"That, I can't say."

"Oh come on."

"There's not enough room in the jail, so---"

"You have a special detention facility just for us?"

"That's my mission today is to get you all round up and down there."

"Why are you telling me all of this? Why aren't you just doing it? Do I sense some hesitancy from you?" He pauses again and takes a sip from the coffee then gazes out at the camp surveying it for some kind of answer. Then he looks back up at me from under his thick dark brows.

"Come with me David. Let's take a walk." He says to me. I follow him over the snow covered grass to the outskirts of the camp away from the guardsmen and the people gathering.

Some of them watch us but they're out of hearing distance now. We sip our coffees and stand here overlooking the camp covered in a thin layer of bright white fluffy snow. It could be melted by the end of the day if we're lucky and another storm doesn't come in.

"So what's the deal? Why haven't you rounded us all up yet? You can't and you know it. Is that it?" I ask him. He pauses a moment takes a deep breath and takes another sip of coffee.

"No. In fact I think we can. We must. Those are the orders." He says.

"That won't go over well and you know it just as well as I."

"That I do know. I want to avoid conflict. If we go in there it's not going to be pretty."

"Damn right it isn't." I tell him.

"You see, David." He pauses a moment. "The guard, they don't pay me nearly enough to do this. To risk my life rounding up and detaining innocent people? Are you fucking kidding me? Over what? Under the guise of a pandemic that was over last year? I'm with you David. This isn't right. But I have no choice. I have orders. They will terminate me if I disobey and then what? I'll be screwed. My family will be screwed. I can't do that to them. It's them or you all. Do you understand what I'm saying?" He looks up at me with his intense gaze and I'm starting to get what he's getting at,

"Yeah. I get it. How much?" I ask.

"What----"

"How much? Just answer the question. Don't act like you haven't thought about it. We both know that's what this is about." He pauses for a moment with the half cup of hot coffee steaming. The two of us stand in the snow on the outskirts of the camp. He doesn't answer for a while. He looks out at the camp, at his men standing there waiting for him to give the order, then back up at me right in the eyes.

"1 BTC." He tells me.

"1 BTC and then what? How do I know you won't just tell your men to start trying to round us all up?"

"You have my word David. I'm a man of my word. For what it's worth."

"But you just said you had orders. From higher up. What about them?"

"I'll say you outgunned us and it would be a suicide mission. They'll probably terminate me for it. So be it." He explains and takes another sip of coffee.

"But what about your higher ups? Won't they just come back? Send another guy to finish off the job?" I ask.

"Buys you time." He says.

"Yeah I suppose it does."

"Here. Take this." He reaches into his pocket and hands me a folded piece of paper. I unfold it and see a string of letters and numbers.

"A wallet address. Is it non-custodial?"

"It is." He says.

"Okay. We have a deal. I'll send it when I'm back at camp. I want your men gone by noon."

"I'll do that." I shake his hand and it's so firm it almost crushes my cold bones. We start walking back toward the sidewalk and finish our coffees. Should I have done that? What alternative did I have? Not offer it and then try to physically fight them off? I think I made the right decision but I don't know. I try not to over think it. If there was a fork in the road between peacefully working out a deal for them to leave vs. having to deal with them try to forcibly detain us I think I made the right choice. Still it feels weird though. I just bought off a commanding soldier of an entire unit of guardsmen. There's a first time for everything I guess.

"Good luck Sanchez. I hope I never see you again." I say somewhat cheekily.

"Godspeed David." He gives me a salute, hands me the empty mug, then turns around and walks away. I walk back over to the Welcome Center and Jessica is busy checking some people in. I wave to her and she waves back. I head over to the geodome and crawl underneath the parachute. It's so much warmer in here. Johnny is sitting in his chair with his AR-15 in his lap. Marshall and Jean are sitting behind their computer screens like usual.

"You said you had more of those, right?" I ask him.

"Got a fuck load more. Been making a few new ones too. Why? We need 'em?"

"We're going to need them. For defense only."

"What's going on out there with the guardsmen?" He asks.

"I bought us some time. They're going to leave. But they could come back. When they come back we need to show them we mean business and we're a force not to be fucked with. All hands on deck. All guns on deck. But *PEACEFUL*. Okay? Absolutely no instigating or using violence." I say and Johnny slowly nods mulling it over.

"Yer right. I should have brought 'em. Dunno what I was thinkin' only bringin' these three."

"How'd you get them to leave?" Marshall asks me.

"Negotiated with the commander." I say.

"But what? How?" Jean asks.

"They had orders to round us all up today guys. They're not fucking around. We got lucky. We can't let this happen again. We outnumber them now we need our guns to outnumber them too for the next time they show up."

"I got some I can bring down too." Marshall says.

"Good. Take a break and go get them. Get them into the hands of whoever in the camp is willing. Bitcoin may be our peaceful weapon of choice for the economic warfare of creating a circular economy to opt out with, but we need the guns to show we have the defensive capabilities if they wanted to try anything. It will deter them next time they come down here." I say.

"So they're coming back?" Jean asks.

"I imagine so. They showed up once. Why wouldn't they show up again?"

"They might try to come back down on us even harder." Marshall says.

"Exactly. We need to prepare for that." I say.

"Fucking communist scum. What in the ever loving fuck happened to this god forsaken country?" Johnny spits on the grass that's thinning from the lack of light in the dome.

"Don't worry Johnny. We're going to win this. What's that old saying, you cannot stop an idea whose time has come, or something?" I tell him.

"Somethin' like that."

"They probably think that same thing about their Great Reset bullshit." Jean says.

"Maybe they do, but they're wrong, and we're right." I say.

"I hope you're right David."

"I know I'm right. I'll meet you guys back here later." I peel the parachute back and head out into the cold snowy harshly bright morning. The guardsmen are no longer standing at attention along the edge of the park. They're packing up and loading onto the trucks. Some are starting to drive off down the road. I wonder how long this reprieve will last for and what they'll try to throw at us next? Only one way to find out.

I feel the piece of paper Sanchez gave me in my pocket and pull it out standing outside the dome. I pull my phone out of my pocket and open up my wallet. I type in the address, the amount, then hit send. I confirm the send then off it goes waiting to confirm. That was easy. Next time might not be so easy. I have a feeling it won't be.

O.14

I'm getting ready to head to the circle for another Bitcoin meeting with Jessica at the Welcome Center when a large flatbed truck pulls up and stops in the middle of the street right at the entrance of the park. There's a bunch of cargo in the back of it but it's hard to tell what it is. At first I thought it was going to be more guardsmen. A man gets out of the driver's side and I notice it's Mark who I met the first day we held a gathering here and just made a pot of soup. I get up and walk over to meet him by the truck.

"What's this?" I ask him.

"It's a tent!" He says enthusiastically.

"What kind of tent? It looks massive." I ask.

"Oh, it is. We use it for horse shows. It's like a circus tent." He explains as he undoes latches holding down the material along the sides of the truck.

"Where'd you get the flatbed?"

"We know a guy who let us use it."

"Wow that works out."

"Yeah thought you'd like it! Where should we set it up?" He asks.

"Put it in the center of the camp. Over the tipis. Spread out other camp sites if needed so we can make the circle as large as the tent." I say.

"You got it boss."

"You need any hands to help put it up?"

"Our crew here should be able to do it fine. They're the same ones who've set it up in the past. We brought some gas heaters for inside and to place around the camp too. Do you know anyone who has gas in case we run out?"

"I might. I'll ask around and let you know." I say as he walks along the truck undoing more latches.

"Sounds good. Hey the guardsmen are gone. Are they coming back?" He asks.

"Gone for now. They could be back at any time. If you have guns make sure to bring them and keep them visible but do not under any circumstances use them against the guardsmen, military, police or anyone like that, regardless of how they try to provoke us when they show back up. I'm sure they will."

"Of course. I've got my concealed carry. I'll bring a few hunting rifles down when I take the truck back later." He says and whistles to his crew.

"Thanks for everything. Can't wait to see it all set up. I'll leave you to it."

"No problem. See you later David." I shake his hand and walk back to the camp. Jessica is welcoming a bunch of newcomers. I check the time on my phone, it's almost 10am. I head down to the circle to get set up for another Bitcoin meeting. There is already a packed crowd waiting. The snow hasn't fully melted yet so the ones who don't have chairs are standing. Right at 10 I start my whole spiel on why Bitcoin is our peaceful weapon of opting out of the totalitarian system of control they want to try to force on us once they turn the power back on. I explain how it works on a basic level for even laymen to understand. I answer questions from the crowd then everybody lines up to receive some. I give everyone in line the same amount and show them how to do it. I'm going to run out of Bitcoin at some point and I need to save some for myself. I can keep this up for another couple days if I keep getting the same turnout but we're going to need outside help.

This is how Bitcoin Beach in El Zonte, El Salvador started. The project to create a circular economy in their beach town was seeded by an early investor in Bitcoin who wanted to see it used as their main form of savings and method of payment. That's exactly what we're doing here. I hope that if I reach out online there will be someone who sees what we are doing and donates to seed our circular economy. I only have so many Bitcoins and I am giving most of them away because I want to see this work and succeed. I think if I show the world, or whoever is still online, what we have started and what we have achieved, someone who can help may notice. Otherwise we'll have to put the onboarding process on hold until further notice until we figure something else out.

After answering the crowds questions I have a little bit of time to kill before the next meeting so I head down to the geodome where my laptop is. I say what's up to Marshall and Jean who are doing their thing at the desk. Johnny isn't here right now. I start writing up a brief summary that I can post online to try to attract the attention of someone who can help us seed our circular economy.

*

Dear Bitcoin Community,

I am a somewhat early investor in Bitcoin but not as early as some of you may be. I am writing to you from an undisclosed town in an undisclosed state in the USA. I don't want to give details yet as we have already had attention from a battalion of national guardsmen who tried to shut us down and we will not surrender. We are gathering in our local park during an unprecedented power outage that has lasted for five days now and is likely to last much longer for reasons I won't go into right now. I will attach pictures of what we are doing for proof so you all can see how far we have come in such a short amount of time. There are hundreds if not a thousand people here so far and there are about eight thousand people total in our town. Soon we may have the whole town down here. Which brings me to my next point.

I have given away almost all of my Bitcoin to the people of the community here who have gathered in the harsh winter weather in defiance of being told we are violating quarantine and must go back inside of our homes without power. They have called us a super spreader event. They have told us we are all under arrest. Do not ask me how I got the national guardsmen to leave without attempting to round us all up but I did. I am teaching every person who has come to the camp how to receive, hold, and send Bitcoin and why it is important to do so. I am teaching the people of our town that it is how we can beat the Great Reset by opting out of the current system of totalitarian control they are going to try to force on us when the power comes back on. Biometric ID's, vaccine passports, central bank digital currencies, all of these things fail if everyone starts using Bitcoin now, which is why I am asking for your help.

If you are an early investor with a sizeable Bitcoin stash and would like to see a portion of that go to a real Bitcoin only circular economy that is forming please consider sending it to the address I will provide below. My hope is to get our whole town on the same page as Bitcoin Beach using Bitcoin and only Bitcoin in defiance of their Great Reset agenda. I want to see the Great Reset fail. I want to see humanity and freedom win. I want to see the values this great republic of ours was founded on restored in a new impenetrable way. If we make this work we can hopefully inspire the rest of the state and eventually the rest of the country to follow suit. The dominos are beginning to fall and you can help push them down with your donations. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Signed,

bc1q7px6gjq2txkj6we06mcf9p43hy4ywn48ksy5mp

*

Done. This will have to be good enough for now. I don't have any more time. I will take pictures today so I can have this posted tonight. Time is of the essence now and there isn't much left to keep this going at the pace that it is.

"I'm going to post something online later and include pictures of what we're doing to try to attract seed funding to further our circular economy. Find me the best sites that are still online by the time supper is over tonight so I can get this out, will you please guys? I don't know what's still online." I ask Marshall and Jean.

"You got it boss." Jean says. Marshall nods. I head out of the warm geodome into the cold and squint my eyes. There's still snow on the ground but it's starting to melt at least. I take a few pictures before heading over to the center of the camp where people are waiting and the new circus tent is being set up. So far they've only got some poles up but it's coming along. I take a picture of the crowd and explain to them how I'm going to be asking for outside help to continue our onboarding effort. The whole speech feels like a routine now and I feel like I've got it down. I cover all the what's and the why's. I answer everybody's questions and they line up to receive their Bitcoin. The majority of them have never used it before in their lives but seem to have a pretty good understanding of why it's so important now more than ever.

I go around and take some more pictures and even get some pictures taken from a drone someone in the camp brought. On the way back to the dome I check in on Jessica and Mage who are holding down the Welcome Center. They're doing good and I leave her with a kiss that leaves an electric tingling on my lips. I transfer the pictures to the laptop and read my letter I wrote earlier again. It's good enough. I leave to let Marshall and Jean to do their thing and it's already time for me to hold another meeting for a new crowd of people. The snow has almost melted now. The grass is muddy and patched with melting snow. The sun shines down from the cloudless sky but still a cold chill blows through the winter air. The park is packed with people and camp sites doing all different kinds of things. I don't even have time to go around and see everything but I think it's wonderful. I wasn't expecting this to work out like this but I shouldn't let my guard down.

The final meeting of the day goes off without a hitch. Another Bitcoin given away to newbies who now understand the importance of opting out of the current system and moving into a Bitcoin standard. It's really happening. I just hope we can keep this up. If Bitcoin Beach can do it why can't we? I understand why it's so important for this to happen in El Salvador but with all of the bullshit they're trying to force on us now here under the guise of this manufactured emergency it's just as important here. We will lose what's left of our country if we don't do this. I truly believe it. What's happening is an attack not just on the power grid but on every aspects of our lives from our freedom to choose what we want inside of our bodies, to the freedom to choose what we want to buy, to the freedom of not being tracked over every single thing we do at all times, it's all connected, and it's fueled by the inflationary fiat monetary system. Without it none of this would have ever happened and without it they will fade back into the abyss where they belong.

I don't get to sit down for even five minutes before the horn blows from the center of the camp indicating it's time everyone gathers for supper. It feels good to be so busy and driven by such an important purpose but damn I am feeling physically exhausted for feeling so mentally charged and on fire. It's a strange dichotomy. Jessica and I head down to the circle with Mage strutting happily by our side. We hold hands and she squeezes it tight every so often to remind me. I'm not going to forget.

Some of the kitchens collaborated today on what they're serving. There's bread, turkey, stuffing, and some kind of seasoned rice and beans with vegetables. I just grab a bunch of turkey and sit down in a chair next to Jess who is having some of all of it. She gives the rest of what she doesn't eat to Mage who wolfs it down without hesitation. I eat every morsel of turkey down the bone and feel rejuvenated. People give thanks. They say prayers. We all eat together in a big circle and there's almost not enough space. We'll have to make the circle even bigger tomorrow if we can. The heaters Mark brought are set up sporadically and people are sitting under and hanging around them for warmth. The snow has almost completely melted now. The sun hangs low on the horizon getting ready to disappear and blanket our world in darkness once again.

"Let's go to the dome. I gotta finish something up." I say to Jess. She follows me there with Mage by our side. We crawl in under the parachute and into the warm dome lit up by red blue and white Christmas lights. Marshall isn't there but Jean is. Johnny's in his chair drinking a beer.

"Hey guys, how's it going?" I greet them.

"Going good. Got that set up for you whenever you're ready." Jean says.

"I'm ready. Let's do this."

"Let's do what?" Johnny asks.

"I'm posting a message to the world asking for seed funding so we can further our circular economy. I've given away most of my Bitcoin and at this rate I'll have none left soon and I obviously need to keep some for myself. I'm hoping someone out there hears my call and sees what we're doing here and wants to help the same way they did for Bitcoin Beach in El Salvador." I say.

"I've got like a dozen sites here that are still up that should have the kind of readers you're looking for." Jean says.

"Let's hope so. Time is running out." I tell him.

"You want me to do it or do you want to do it?"

"I'll give you the files and you can post them. Post them under the user name "BitcoinTown" or whatever isn't taken. Something like that."

"No problem. I'll have it done this evening." He says. I put the files on a SD card and hand it to him. He takes it from me and plugs it into his laptop.

"What happens if they don't?" Johnny asks.

"Well, that's going to complicate things, because how do we acquire enough Bitcoin to get a circular economy going, especially with the power and internet out in the rest of the country and parts of the world?"

"We could steal it." Johnny says with a sly smile.

"I'm not down for that." I say.

"Well what are you down for then boss? How you reckon' we're supposed to seed the circular economy you want so bad without the funds to do it?" He asks.

"I hear you, but we can't steal it, we end up being just as bad as them if we do that." I tell him.

"Not if we use it for good." He says.

"Yes, even if we use it for good. We're not doing it and I'm not using stolen funds. Got it?"

"Alright. Just an idea. Sheesh." Johnny swigs his beer. Beside him are two gun racks packed with rifles. He went and got more of them today.

"I appreciate the idea."

"Well what if we stole it from them? What if I stole it from Klaus Schwab himself?" He asks rather drunkenly. I'm somewhat taken aback by this question and don't know what to say. I smile a little because it's amusing to think about. Surely he's not serious, right? We shouldn't steal period. Someone's going to be able to help voluntarily I'm sure.

"That would be better than stealing it from some random person or a corporation or something but---"

"But what god damnit!? This is war! They want to shove their Great Reset down our throats why don't we take the only asset that will be worth anything at all from them so they can't fight back? They'll lose all of their shitty fiat money as it goes to zero and they'll lose all of their Bitcoin because we stole it!" Johnny exclaims fiercely drunk in his chair.

"I hear you Johnny but it's Bitcoin. You can't just steal it. What if they have it in a hardware wallet like I do? How are you going to get it?" I ask.

"Oh I have my ways. I have my ways." He mutters.

"No there are certain circumstances where there are no ways. That's the point." I say.

"And there are certain circum *hiccup* stances where there are ways. That's the ways we hit. That's the ways we drain them of the only resource they'll be able to fight back with. David, these people are threatening us. They have declared war on us. And yer gonna stand there with yer woman and that slaphappy dog and tell me we can't fight back?!" He chugs the rest of his beer and crushes it under his boot then tosses it into a garbage bag.

"I don't know what to say. I feel conflicted." I tell him.

"You don't have to say anything. I'm already working on it." Johnny smiles the most I've ever seen him smile. He looks over at Jean who doesn't say anything.

"I mean if you stole Klaus Schwabs Bitcoin, assuming he even has Bitcoin, I would probably just laugh, even though I don't condone it. I won't use it for onboarding newbies in town who don't have any but if you want to hold it as some strategic reserve as a means of fighting back against them what am I going to do to stop you?"

"Exactly."

"You better make damn sure you're targeting the right people. Any collateral damage and you're just as bad as they are. And just for the record I want no part in this. You should have never even told me. If you guys want to be offensive that's on you. I'll focus on doing my thing getting this off the ground here in town." I tell him.

"Don't worry about it. We do our diligence. Anyone even remotely involved in pushing any of these *hiccup* agendas and who stands to gain from its implementation will be targeted. If they didn't attack us first we wouldn't have to. We didn't start this. They did. Remember that."

Johnny cracks open another beer and lifts it up in my direction then takes a long swig from it before exhaling in satisfaction like he always does.

"Yeah, I know, still, I'd rather do this with peace, not war, you know?"

"Peace can only get you so far in this world kid." He says with his raspy drunk voice.

"I'm not sure about that."

"I sure as shit am."

"We'll agree to disagree then."

"Suit yourself." He spits on the floor of the dome. There's hardly any grass left. It's all thinned out now from the lack of sun and a layer of beer spit.

"I'll see you guys tomorrow. Thanks Jean."

"Have a good night David." Jean says.

"Sweet dreams love birds." Johnny slurs.

Jessica and I head out into the cold and it's starting to get dark. People are getting ready for another night at the camp. They hang around portable heaters. They gather under the heaters Mark brought in center camp. They crawl into their tents. Some take off back into town in their cars. Someone got a bonfire going and a crowd gathers around it. Drummers play in sync with each other in the presence of it's warmth and light.

"Fucking Johnny man." I say.

"I know, right?" She says while looking up at me.

"He is crazy. Crazy or brilliant. I don't know."

"Do you think he'll really do it?" Jessica asks.

"Who the hell knows?"

"I hope you find someone to help fund the economy here." She says.

"Thanks. I hope so too. We should know pretty soon what kind of response the post gets. And if any Bitcoin shows up I'll see it in my wallet."

"I think you've done a really great thing here giving so much away into the hands of all these people." She says squeezing my hand as we walk through dusk with Mage to our tipi.

"Yeah I mean it had to be done. Someone had to do it. I still have plenty for myself. For us. But without Bitcoin in the hands of all these people this would be just a pipe dream. We'd have no ammo to fight back against their new system and everyone would get sucked into the trap they have set. I don't want it to just be me and you that escapes and opts out. I want it to be

the whole town, the whole state, the whole country on a Bitcoin standard. The whole world." I say.

"We're doing it. It's happening." She says.

"It's happening. In spite of it all."

Little Lightning is squatting outside the neighboring tipi smoking his pipe and I wave. He sees me and nods. I peel back the entrance to the tipi and Jess crawls in after Mage hops in. We get the heater going, take our clothes off, and get underneath the blankets to spend another night together in the warmth of each other's arms.

Day six is smooth sailing. Jess and I spend the early morning together intimately. We hang out in the Welcome Center, drink coffee, and eat sunflower seeds after brushing our teeth and using the bathroom. It's cold but the snow has almost fully melted. There will be more coming soon but it hasn't stopped us yet. It's overcast like it usually is in the morning but the sun begins to chew its way through the clouds. A never ending stream of new people show up at the camp. It's grown so large now that there's no discernable entrance. People in the camp direct new people to come meet us here so they know to. People are parked up and down every street that lines the park on every side. Many show up on foot. Some bring bikes or wagons. Others just park up the road and walk in with their stuff making multiple trips. There are people moving in and out of the park in all directions. If the national guard shows up again they're not going to be able to do anything if they even wanted to. They would be outnumbered ten to one.

I go about my day algorithmically. I give my talks and I answer their questions. I give out Bitcoin and make sure they understand the importance of it and why we're doing this. I hang with Jess then I go and do it again. Every time a new crowd. Every time our camp growing stronger more resilient. And every time growing closer to the point where I'll have to stop and say that's all for now. Is someone going to step in before that happens? I estimate I have two days left before I have to call it. Has anyone read the post yet? How has it been received by the community who is even still online to see it? I have no idea. I'll check later. I finish the last meeting of the day with a group of enthusiastic patriotic townsfolk then head back over to the Welcome Center and sit down with Jessica and Mage. I pet him on the head and he pats his tail on the grass.

"Today's been the busiest day yet. They just keep coming." She tells me.

"Good. I wonder how many people are here now?" I ask.

"I have no idea. Get Bryan to take a drone shot. Maybe we could get an estimate from that." She says.

"Yeah good idea. I'll ask when I see him."

"You know where his camp is?" She asks.

"No, where is it?"

"Look." She points. "It's to the center of the camp then head seven o' clock, you'll see him and Amanda's big green tent with a garden gnome out front." She says.

"Okay, that's easy enough."

By now Mark and his crew have set up the giant circus tent he brought. It's dark blue and protrudes upward into the sky in two peaks. It covers the entire circular middle section of the camp we use for our meetings and for supper. The tipis stand tall in the center. Pretty soon it won't be big enough to fit everyone if it isn't already as of today. The camp will have to become more decentralized. I'm sure we'll be able to make it work. We've made it work thus far.

There's music being played. There's food being cooked. There are pets being played with. Kids playing games. There are heaters on for people who want to be a little warmer. All seems to be well at the camp from what I can see. No screaming cops are on the road power tripping. No national guardsmen line the park with guns threatening to arrest us. People hang out in front of kitchens. They gather under tents talking, eating food and sharing drinks. Before supper I want to check in with Jean. I kiss Jess and she leaves that energy lingering on my lips and teeth. I walk over to the camouflaged geodesic dome and crawl inside feeling the warmth on my face and engulf the rest of my body. Jean's sitting where he always is. Marshall's tinkering with some wires on the floor. Johnny's gone, must be fishing or something. He looks up and nods.

"How's it going Jean?" I ask while sitting down in Johnny's chair.

"Good, I got your message posted everywhere that's online and would be relevant." He says while looking up from behind the monitor.

"Any news? What have the responses been like?"

"Come over here and check it out. Lots of praise. I think it just might work. Have you received any donations yet?" He says. I get up and walk over behind the desk.

"Not yet, no." I say as I scroll down through the pages of comments on various websites. There are a lot of likes and comments. It's gone viral on one site I'm not familiar with. There are people saying they're going to donate some coins to the cause. I feel a wave of hope wash over me where there was faithful uncertainty before.

"Looks good, thanks Jean." I say smiling. I sit back down in the chair across from him.

"You're welcome. Least I could do." He says. Marshall sits back down next to him behind his monitor.

"Will you do me a favor?" I ask to either of them.

"What's up?" Jean says.

"Johnny, If he really does what he says he's going to do, make sure you mix the coins at least before sending them into cold storage, okay? I don't want anyone tracking them to anything even remotely related to this. Leave them in unspent capacity for as long as you have to. Have them mix several times. We can't risk any more heat coming down on what we're doing here. Alright?" I say.

"Of course. That would be the only smart way of dealing with the UTXO's." Jean says.

"Just as long as we're on the same page with that. I don't know how skilled Johnny is, you know?"

"You'd be surprised. He's the least person you'd expect that would be good at this kind of stuff if you judge him by his demeanor and appearance. He knows how to hack satellites. I mean how many people can do that?" Jean says. Marshall nods in agreement.

"I can't do that." Marshall says.

"Neither can I. Wouldn't know the first thing about pulling something like that off." I say.

"Same here. Marshall and I, we're pretty good at this stuff, but Johnny's on another level." Jean says.

"That's so crazy, I met him fishing, I never would have known. Thought he was just some old veteran fisherman" I say.

"That's what he wants you to think. Opsec." Marshall says.

"Yeah makes sense. What do you think, is there anything else we should do, or do you think that post will be enough to gain some traction and get the funding we need to complete our mission?" I ask.

"If we find any other relevant sites we'll cross post it." Jean says.

"Alright. I guess it's just a matter of time then. We'll have to wait and see how it goes. Thanks guys I'll see you later."

"Peace David." Jean says. Marshall gives a head nod. I duck under the parachute and head back out into the cold. Jessica's talking to a group of people at the desk. I head over and sit down next to her and answer some questions they have about what's going on. They're all bundled up in snow gear and have brought a wagon full of camping gear with them. They thank us and head into the depths of the camp that is overtaking the entire park more by the day.

"They gave us this." Jessica says holding up a bag of ground coffee.

"That will come in handy."

"I know. I want some now." She says pouting her lips a little.

"Don't get me started. I want one all day every day like usual. We aren't in Kansas anymore. The coffee doesn't flow from the eternal fountain of youth like it used to." I say.

"Gah. I know. At least we have enough to last a while." She says.

"Exactly. Imagine if we didn't."

"That would be the worst. Like literal hell."

"Yeah why bother even living at that point." I say unsarcastically. The horn blows from the center of camp letting us know it's supper time in Bitcoin Town again. The people occupying the town start heading toward the center to gather together for a meal under the cover of the circus tent in a giant circle. We might not all fit this time by the looks of how many people are here now.

"Let's go. I'm so ready for some food." Jessica says and gets up grabbing her chair. Mage gets up at attention knowing what time it is. I grab the chair and the heater and we head towards

the center of the camp with everyone else. It's packed full of people who are sitting and gathering around the various kitchens who have set up on the outer edge of the circle. The tipis are no longer in the center where they were before. There's more room in the center now for people to sit. Jessica and I put our seats down and I tell her I'll be right back. I walk with the heater to the other side of the giant tent where the tipis are now set up outside. Little Lightning is there speaking with a woman who I haven't met. They see me walking up and she walks off to the main circle. He's dressed how he usually is. Full traditional garb and head dress.

"You moved the tipis." I say. He nods gently.

"Yours is this one." He points and I acknowledge.

"Thanks. Just making space?" I ask.

"The tipi does not need a cover. The tipi is the cover. The tipi is our house in space. The stars are meant to shine down on the tipi. That is how we get the most out of our dreams." He says as he points up toward the stars. His hand streaking across the sky like a shooting star.

"That makes sense. Just wanted to make sure all is okay." I say.

"Yes David. A great wave is coming up from the horizon. Will you choose to ride it, or let it crush you on the shore?" He asks stoic and whimsically. I pause for a moment. Does he know something I don't know? Or is he just trying to offer me something to think about?

"I see it coming. I'm going to ride it." I say.

"Then you are on the warrior's path."

"A peaceful warrior, I hope."

"A warrior nonetheless."

"I hope we get another chance to smoke the pipe. It was nice." I tell him.

"Yes, we will, I am sure of it, now go gather with your family. They are waiting."

"See you later Little Lightning."

He turns his back to me and looks up at the sky with the sun setting near the horizon. I place the heater inside the tipi and walk back to center camp where all the people are gathering to eat. There's music being played from acoustic instruments and speakers. There are multiple lines formed in front of different kitchens offering different types of food. There are people walking around with sacks of bread and fruit giving them away to people who ask for them. It's a different setup then we had yesterday but it's working out. I find Jessica at our chairs. She has a plate of some kind of squash and barbequed chicken. She got me a plate full of chicken without any sauce. That's exactly what I would have picked.

"Thanks. You know what I like." I say sitting down next to her. Mage is sitting in front of her wagging his tail waiting for her to give him some.

"You like meat. You're easy." She says.

"Yeah. True." I say and take a bite of the chicken. It's salty and juicy and just what I needed. The skin on the outside is crisp and crunches between my teeth.

"I got some butternut squash. It's really good. One of the kitchens made pizza but the line was way too long." She says.

"You want pizza?"

"I mean yeah kinda I just don't want to wait."

"Alright hold on. Which camp is it?" I ask.

"That one. See the line?" She points. She's right. It's the longest line. There are probably a hundred people in line right now.

"Be right back." I get up and head to the kitchen bringing the chicken with me taking bites out of it as I walk. I walk into the kitchen from the back and ask one of the people working it for a piece. She hands me one on a paper plate and I thank her walking back with it through the crowd. I give it to Jessica and sit down next to her.

"How'd you get it so fast?" She asks.

"I just asked them for it."

"You didn't have to wait?"

"Nope. We don't have to wait. We helped organize this." I say.

"I guess you're right. I just feel bad cutting."

"Don't feel bad. Next time just ask for it."

"Oh my god it's so good. How did they make it, do you know?" She asks while taking a bite of the pizza.

"I'm not sure. They made some kind of oven out of clay or something. You'd have to ask them."

"Fucking brilliant." She says taking a mouth full of pizza.

"Yeah there's a lot we could learn from the past I guess. People have been doing this type of thing for longer than we even know." I say.

"Do you want some?" She asks.

"Nah I'm good I got my chicken."

"Figured." She says then takes another bite of it.

We sit and watch the crowd of people sitting around and standing around the circle. Some are huddled under the heaters. Some wait in line and hang around the kitchens offering help or just chatting with one another. People say prayers. They give thanks. Some hold hands in a circle before eating. We all have our rituals and this is now our ritual together before the sun goes down. There's light that comes through from underneath the tent. The material doesn't fall all the way to the ground. It's rolled up along the edges so we can all see better on the inside. They installed a string of white lights along the edge of the tent for when it gets dark. The camp has a place to gather and hang out after hours under the heaters and they can roll down the material if they want to help keep out the cold.

"This is so cool. I've never seen anything like this happen in this town. Ever." Jessica says looking over at me. She finishes up the pizza crust and decrumb her hands.

"It's the Bitcoin Town." I say.

"Yeah I guess it is." She says.

All around us people are happy despite being without power for six days and we're all outside in the cold. Something is happening here. There is freedom in the air. A photographer in a fedora walks up to us and asks if he can take our picture. We smile with our plates of food sitting in our camping chairs and he snaps a photo then smiles back, thanks us, and walks off. Jessica gives Mage the rest of her chicken and I finish up eating mine. By now all the lines at the kitchens have subsided. The people with bags of food have given away all their provisions. The whole town has eaten or is eating and a calm sense of serenity can be felt pulsing through the camp. They wanted us suffering. They wanted us to starve. Look at us now. If we keep this up there's no way in hell they're going to win. It almost feels like we've already won but I don't want to feel victorious yet. We still have two weeks to go if my projections are correct.

"Oh my god I'm stuffed. You ready to retire for the evening?" She asks me.

"Yeah. Let's use the bathroom first."

"Did you see the new bathrooms one of the churches set up?"

"No, what is it?"

"They have solar showers with privacy and water you can use for brushing your teeth and stuff. I guess they have compost toilets too but I don't know what they're doing with it." She says.

"Huh, that's cool, that could be useful I guess."

"They set up three of them earlier today."

"That's probably smart, we only had those two that were here from the park, and had to bring your own water for everything. The more the merrier, right? Especially with how big the town is getting." I say.

"At this rate we'll probably need more." She says.

"Well at least someone's on it." I say.

"We're all doing our part."

"Certainly seems that way. I can only do so much."

"Okay let's go grab our stuff I'll show you where one of them is." Jessica gets up and I follow her and Mage with the chair to the tipi on the outskirts of the circle outside the circle tent under the great orange and indigo sky. The stars start poking through the veil to twinkle at us as we look up at them. We grab our toiletries and head on down to the new camp bathroom they set up. It's nicer than I was expecting. There's a long sink for teeth brushing and outhouse style compost toilets. I thank the church for setting them up and tell them if there's anything they need to come and find me at the Welcome Center. They thank me and Jessica and I head back to the tipi. It's getting dark now. Mage runs around us playfully. There's no light pollution anywhere and the stars begin to shine profoundly in the sky. I stop for a moment before crawling into the tipi with her. I'm going to come back out here later just to take a look in awe.

She sets up Mage's food and water bowls then crawls into bed under the blankets leaving her clothes at the foot of the bed which is really just a thick floor mat but it's comfortable. I turn the heater on and crawl in with her. Mage curls up at the foot of the bed.

"Another day." She says to me wrapping her arm around me.

"Yeah. I was just thinking the same thing."

"What else are you thinking?"

"Trying to think about all of my blind spots. What am I doing wrong? What's next that I can't foresee?"

"You're worrying again."

"I'm not worrying I'm---"

"You're worrying. Instead of focusing on the good, you're focusing on the bad." She says.

"I get your point. I just want to be realistic. I want to be ready. You know?"

"I know. But look at how far the town has come along in such a short amount of time. Isn't that good?"

"It is. We just narrowly escaped a potential round up by the national guard though and don't know when they're coming back." I say.

"What if they don't come back?" She asks running her hand along my beard.

"I don't see why they wouldn't. Remember that cop that showed up here? How pissed he was and how he threatened us all with arrest? I don't think they'd give up that easily you know? They're probably planning something." I say.

"It's too big now. It's out of your hands. They can't stop it even if they wanted to. What was it you said a few days ago to me. About them coming to our side. Remember that?" She asks.

"Yeah, eventually, they will come to our side, but who knows how long that could take, it could take years, until the collapse of fiat money, when they no longer have any allegiance, when they no longer have a choice." I say.

"Or, it's happening right now." She says.

"I did get Sanchez to come around." I tell her.

"See. Maybe it's already happening."

"Maybe. We don't know though."

"We can only know what we can know." She says kissing me on the cheek.

"I know." I tell her pressing her hand into my chest tighter.

"Kiss me. Leave your worries outside in the cold dark night under the galactic beauty of the infinite sky." She tells me softly in her hushed slow voice. How can I argue with or say no to her? I abide without question. Come what may. Tomorrow a new day will come and I'll still be here to think, plan, and muse. I don't need to think about anything anymore. I've done all I can for now. I fall down into the vortex of our intertwining spirits pressing her body into mine. Fireworks of electric light spiral off our lips when we kiss. What is this energy we have between us? Why is it so intense and all encompassing? Whatever made us into who we are gave us such a beautiful and profound gift. To feel this. To give this to each other.

I wake up on a small sandy planet. I can tell it's not very large by the curve of the horizon. It looks small enough to run around if I wanted to. So I run. I run in the sand under the clear baby blue sky. The sun shines down on me from the very center of the sky barely casting a shadow. I can see something up ahead. Someone walking in the sand. They're walking towards me. Who is it? Who else would be all the way out here with me?

As I get closer to the figure walking in the sand I realize its Little Lightning wearing his usual traditional getup and headdress. He's walking barefoot in the sand and is carrying a walking stick with spirals carved into the handle. We stop walking once we're facing each other. The sun starts setting rapidly like a balloon being deflated and falling to the ground. Night falls on the small sandy planet fast and with it comes the brilliance of the starlit night. We stand there in the dark under a sky without anything between us. It looks like I can see every star in the Milky Way and it's one of the most incredible things I've ever seen.

"Is that the Milky Way?" I ask him.

"Yes, our home in the sky." He says.

"It's so beautiful."

"Enjoy it while it lasts. A storm is coming." He points his walking stick behind me. I turn to look. A dark cloud comes over the horizon obscuring the sky behind it. It starts to cover the entire sky until its pitch black and I can barely see him. I just see what looks like electric blue bioluminescence pulsing through his skin but can't tell if it's just my imagination. That's when I feel it. The cold wind blowing. It's starting to snow.

"It's snowing." I say starting to shiver.

"Look behind you David." He says. I turn around. There's a light on the horizon. I see a line of people walking. They look like soldiers marching out into the distance. They form a single file line and more keep coming illuminated by the spotlight on the horizon. The spotlight is coming from a helicopter hovering but I can't seem to hear it. The soldiers disappear into the darkness but the spotlight remains. That's when I see it. A tank. A big tank without wheels driven by a belt moving through the sand in the spotlight. It disappears into the darkness then another one follows. Then another one. I turn to look at Little Lightning but he's gone. The snow starts to pile up on the ground, on my clothes, in my hair and it's getting colder.

What is this? Why am I being shown this? Where am I? How did I wake up here? The spotlight on the horizon faces away as it flies further into the distance. It's all so theatrical. Who staged this for me to see? The snow is getting thicker and the wind is blowing harder. I'm starting to freeze. I feel my body slowing down. The blood flowing through me getting colder. I trudge through the snow in the dark with the wind howling having no idea where I'm going and without any sense of direction.

Just as suddenly as the storm blew in it starts to recede. The wind dies down. The snow stops dumping as fiercely as it was. The clouds start to fade away and I can see the Milky Way in all its glory again. I can see the sun about to come up over the horizon. First it's just a subtle glow and then it peeks itself over the horizon almost blinding me. It quickly rises to the center point in the sky and then stops there. I watch the snow melt into the sand instantaneously. I don't feel like I'm going to freeze to death anymore. I look up at the sun with my hand covering it to shield my eyes. There are three birds circling overhead. They're vultures. They're waiting for me to die. There's no one, there's nothing else around. They circle ominously overhead. An omen. A sign of what's to come.

"What are you waiting for?" I yell out at them. They are unphased. They can smell death coming from a mile away. One of them flaps its wings and soars down to the ground and lands right in front of me. Its one hell of an ugly looking bird and it's big. It stops and stares at me straight in the eyes. What is going on? What is this? I hear something behind me now. I turn to look and don't have time to process what I'm seeing. A huge black jaguar pounces on me for the kill. Its jaw lined to sharp white teeth is open wide, its eyes are wide open and ready to destroy me. I freeze up in fear but it's already too late. That's when it hits me. It doesn't aim for the neck. It goes straight to the heart. It leaps straight into my heart and vanishes inside of it pummeling me toward the ground.

That's when I wake up.

Jessica is asleep with her arm wrapped around me softly breathing oblivious to what just happened. Mage is also fast asleep down there. I'm lying on my back with my eyes open looking up at the inside of the tipi. I don't know what time it is but it isn't morning yet. I don't know how I'm going to get back to sleep after that. I was just awake inside of a dream and was just shown something incredible and somewhat disturbing. Little Lightning in the dark glowing with blue bioluminescence. The soldiers in the distance in the snowstorm. The vultures circling above me. The jaguar leaping into my heart. What does it all mean? I take a deep breath and try to relax. I've had lucid dreams before but not like that one. That one felt like something was trying to show me something.

I feel it. Some kind of shift happening. I knew this was going to happen. I sensed it happening but didn't know how to describe it. Now I know what I was feeling. I have to get ready. Am I ready? Are we all ready for what's coming? Have I done enough? This all wasn't a mistake, was it? Are we going to fail after having already come so far? I don't know, but if we do, it wasn't for nothing. We have to try, don't we? What good are we if we don't try? What will we tell our children? That we rolled over and let them take us over and didn't fight for their freedom? This is it. It's already in motion. There's no stopping it now. Little Lightning was right. That wave on the horizon. We can all see it coming. There it is. Now what are we going to do about it?

I listen to the wind blowing outside through the tipi and the soft sound of Jessica's breath feeling its pulse with her gentle heart beat and the warmth coming off her into me. I wish things could be as simple as this forever but I know how foolish it is to think this way. I'm no longer tired at all. I don't think I'm going to be able to go back to sleep tonight. I'll just have to

wait and I'll enjoy the peace and quiet here with her while it lasts. Soon the sun will rise again and the camp will start to come alive in spite of it all. What's this, day seven? Almost a full week into the psyop. Who knows how long this could go on for? Another two weeks? Another two months?

I don't know how long I spend lying here but eventually I start to see a faint glow emerging from outside. Morning is here. Jessica will wake soon. We usually wake up with the first sign of sun light since we've been going to sleep so early. Maybe I'll get up and find someone donated to my wallet address. Today's the last day I can realistically seed our town on my own if I want to keep some for myself. I watch a tiny spider dangle its way down from the tipi skin and land on the grass on the floor. It wanders off and disappears. It's getting brighter now. Jessica should be up anytime now.

The camp is unusually noisy for this time of morning. We're further away from the road now but I think I can hear something going on there. I want to get up and see if there's anything going on but I don't want to wake her. I hear someone call my name from somewhere in the camp. Something is going on. I gently kiss Jess on the forehead and tell her we need to get up.

"What's going on?" She asks me barely awake and stretching.

"I don't know. Someone just called my name. I need to see what's going on." I tell her.

"Okay. I'll come with you." She says.

We waste no time getting up and getting our clothes back on. Mage has woken up and is wagging his tail looking at us. I can hear a chopper in the distance. I get a flashback of my dream.

"Hear that?" I ask.

"The helicopter?"

"I had a dream about one."

"We knew this was coming. On some level." She says.

"Yeah. Let's go see what's going on." I take her hand and press her into me kissing her with my eyes closed. Something amplifies within us and leaves a tingling mark of energy on my lips. No matter what happens I don't want to forget this. I can never forget this.

"Let's go. I'm ready. Come on Mage."

We crawl out of the tipi and into the cold overcast winter morning. Our breaths spiral outward like clouds of tobacco smoke. I hear someone calling my name again. I think it's Johnny but I'm not sure. People are waking up and wondering what's going on. I follow the voice calling out and we head towards the road, the geodome, and the Welcome Center. The helicopter grows louder and suddenly we can see it. It's right overhead and it's so loud I want to cover my ears. It flies over the camp then turns back around with barely any clearance. If there was anyone still asleep here they aren't anymore. The vibes in the camp are starting to feel tense. The people who

are already up and at 'em are looking up at the helicopter nervously. I want to reassure them somehow but I don't know how. My voice would barely even be audible over the sound of the chopper flying overhead. By the looks of it it's not a news helicopter or a police one, it's a military one. It even looks like it's equipped with weapons on the sides.

Mage is starting to freak out a little bit. He doesn't like the noise. I don't blame him, I don't either. I hold Jessica's hand through the maze of camp sites and kitchens and that's when I see it. The road is full of trucks again and there are soldiers pouring out of them. They don't look like national guardsmen. They look like military. The army or something. Why would the army be here? We walk over and Johnny's standing outside with his crew of veterans. They're all armed. A lot of people in the camp are armed. They have been openly carrying this whole time. He motions for me to come to him and we do.

"They're sendin' in the big guns today." He says as loudly as he can and I almost can't hear him over the sound of the helicopter.

"What's the plan?" I ask him. I can barely hear my own voice.

"You tell me boss."

"Whatever happens we're not shooting. Okay?"

"Code red. Look at how many of them there are." He says.

"We still outnumber them probably 10 to 1 at least." I say.

"We'll hold the line up here to try to deter them a little. I reckon you oughta go warn the others of what's comin'." He says.

"You think they're going to try something?"

"Look at 'em. They wouldn't be here unless they were tryin' somethin'. Those trucks they got were empty. See 'em?" He points out some of the trucks on the road that look like they can detain a couple dozen people at once.

"Fuck. They can't detain us all." I say.

"They might try. Go warn the others."

"Good luck." I shake his hand and turn around. I grab Jessica by the hand and we head back into the camp.

"Come on."

"What's going on?" She asks me sounding a little worried now.

"Looks like they're going to try to stop us today." I say.

"Don't we outnumber them?" She asks.

"Yes, but that appears to not be deterring them. We have to warn the others. Come on."

We walk through the camp and I start shouting to whoever is listening if they can even hear me over the sound of the helicopter flying low overhead.

"The army is here! Everyone remain calm! We can beat them with peaceful non-compliance! They cannot detain us all! Do not be afraid! We are doing nothing wrong! We outnumber them ten to one! Do not let them scare you! Remember do not use violence under any circumstance!" I repeat this over and over walking with Jessica steadfast through the camp. Everyone's awake now standing ready or somewhat timidly in their morning haze. Many are heading toward the road to see what's going on. Mage barks along with me warning everyone. The guy with the bullhorn has joined in from the front of the camp by the road.

"We will not comply! You cannot detain us all! Go back to your base where you belong! We're exercising our right to peaceful assembly! You shouldn't be here and you know it! Who are you to say we can't gather together! The power's been out for a week and what do you expect us to do? Stay locked up inside our homes to die? We will not comply! We will not comply!" Bullhorn guy is absolutely going off on them as more soldiers gather on the road and sidewalk. They look like they just came home from Afghanistan and were sent directly here. They have beige camouflage and helmets. AR-15's and walkie talkies. They're all wearing black face masks. The helicopter stops and hovers right above where everyone has gathered at the front of the camp. The people are undeterred. Many have already been through this before a few days ago. This is a little different this time. It looks like this time they mean business.

We make our way through the camp trying to warn everyone the best I can but by now I think everyone knows what's going on. They hear the bullhorn guy and the helicopter. They're all heading to gather at the front of the camp by the road. A good portion of them are armed and have their firearms ready. The helicopter hovers so low I think I can feel the wind coming off the blades of it. The sound is deafeningly loud. There are at least a thousand, if not thousands of us here now, and how many of them are there? Dozens? Maybe a hundred at the most? Can't they see they're outnumbered? We start to head toward where everyone is gathered now.

I stop for just one moment and turn to Jessica still with her hand in mine.

"Jessica. Whatever happens. Know that I love you."

"I love you too David."

We embrace each other. We kiss and I lose myself in that feeling she gives me. I open my eyes and see her looking into mine. She doesn't look afraid and neither am I. We continue moving through the camp and the crowds of people gathering. Mage follows us but is not happy about the situation and keeps barking at how loud everything is. We push our way to the front of the crowd. How am I going to diffuse this situation? Am I even going to be able to at all? Johnny, Marshall, Jean, and some of the other veterans are standing with their guns at the front of the crowd to the right of us. Jessica and I stand across from them at the front of the rowdy group gathering behind us. They are chanting "We will not comply!" over the sound of the helicopter hovering overhead.

I scan the groups of soldiers gathering on the road and along the sidewalk like the guardsmen had just days prior. They're getting ready and are waiting for their orders just like last time. Who is their commander? Should I approach them? I have to think fast. I press Jessica's hand hard and tell her I'll be right back. I let go and walk forward towards the soldiers. They do not like this. One points his rifle at me and starts yelling at me to get down. I stop. Two others point their rifles at me and are shoving their hands toward the ground trying to get me to drop to my knees. The crowd starts losing their shit behind me. I can hear Mage barking. I can hear Jessica yelling my name. Time slows down. I put my hands up to try to show them I'm not a threat. One of the soldiers who looks just like all of the other ones advances in a rage and shoves me to the ground. I fall to my knees. So this is how this ends, huh?

The crowd is losing it. They're even louder than the helicopter now. The three soldiers force my hands behind my back. I feel a zip tie wind tightly around my wrists. They force me back up on my feet and start pushing me into the road. That's when all of the soldiers start advancing on the crowd and all hell breaks loose. People start screaming. Bull horn guy is yelling "We will not comply! We will not comply!" I get one final look behind me before I'm disappeared behind their truck and I see Jessica on her knees with her wrists being zip tied. I let out a primal scream that no one can even hear. I can't see her anymore. I try to struggle myself free from their clutches but they only grab on tighter. I make them drag me and I kick and I scream. They end up throwing me in the back of one of their detention trucks and leaving me alone. All I can hear are the screams of the crowd who are still yelling "We will not comply!" I can no longer hear bullhorn guy. They must have got him too.

I need to get back to Jessica. I need to protect her from them and make sure she is safe. I can't waste any time. They could come back at any moment. I twist my hands around and grab my innocuous bracelet. I undo the latch that connects it which gives me something to work on the zip tie with. It's basically like a tiny saw. If I just press it enough and move it enough--- there. It goes. I'm free. I put the bracelet back on then hop on the ground and peer behind the truck. They're rounding people up and throwing them into the back of trucks. The crowd of people are still up front trying to peacefully resist the best they can but the soldiers don't care. They're just ripping some of them out and zip tying them in front of their families and dragging them off.

There's a loud bang and I flinch. What was that? Was that a gun shot? Are they shooting people now? The crowd is losing control now. Some of them are running away. Others are advancing towards the soldiers. I need to do something. I run back into the camp and head into the back of the crowd who is pushing forward like a mosh pit at a rock concert except if there was a fire. I try to get a visual on what's going on. The soldiers are retreating. The crowd is gathered around in a circle at the edge of the camp and yelling at the soldiers to get the hell out of here. Trucks are starting to drive off with people loaded up in them. Jessica. I need to find her. I desperately search the trucks but I don't see her. She could already be gone. I yell out again but no one hears me. I force my way to the front of the crowd and I see Bryan on the sidewalk with a pool of blood around him. Some people are trying to save him. Bryan. They shot Bryan!

The chopper ascends into the sky and leaves just the sound of the enraged crowd. A cacophony of screams, pleas, calls for defiance, and a total blur of voices meld together as one

ungodly roar. The trucks drive off with the soldiers and the people they detained. I feel helpless. They got her and there's nothing I can do. I run out into the road and search for her not caring if they detain me again but it's too late. As quickly as the soldiers came they are already almost gone. The last of the trucks are starting to drive off. I look into every single one for her. I don't see her. I think I see her in every truck but it's not her. It's just my mind playing tricks on me. They took her. They took her away from me.

Mage comes running up to me barking as I stand in the road watching the last truck drive off. I look down solemnly at him. He knows just as much as I do how fucked this is.

"They took her from you too." I tell him. He barks and looks up at me. I squat down and pet him and I start crying. I can't remember the last time I cried. Why? Why did they take her? What did we do that warranted that kind of response? I need answers. I will not stop until I get answers and I find her and get her free.

"I'm sorry boy." I say to Mage rubbing his fluffy golden fur.

"We're going to find her okay? We're going to bring her back. I promise." Mage is not happy. He is clearly distressed by what just happened and so am I. Where do we even start? Where do we go from here?

"Come on boy." I get up and we head over to the crowd of people who have gathered by the road and around Bryan. I get one look at him and I know he's dead. They killed him. For what? He wasn't even armed I don't think!

I want to try to reassure everyone gathered here it's all going to be okay but I can't. How could I after something as devastating as this happened? This isn't something I can fix. This will leave a scar on our town for the rest of our lives. That could have been the death blow to everything I've been working towards for all I know. I need to take things one step at a time and I don't know what the next step is.

Some of Johnny's crew are pushing the crowd back away from Bryan's body. There are people all around crying. Screaming. Huddled together in groups. How many people did they take away? How many fathers? How many mothers? Sons? Daughters? I see Johnny. They didn't take Johnny.

"Johnny!" I run with Mage over to him. He's standing with Marshall and Jean and some other vets I haven't met yet.

"David? I thought they took you with them?" Marshall asks.

"I escaped."

"How'd you pull that off?" Johnny asks.

"I was prepared for that I guess. They killed Bryan." I say.

"Yep they did them fuckin' nazi scum. My boys are takin' care of it. Don't you worry. He'll be buried proper. We ain't like them."

"Thanks. They took Jessica."

"I sawed it. We tried to stop 'em. Could only do so much. They just came at us. Took the ones who weren't armed after they took you. Figured it was their chance before shit went south. Filled up the trucks then took off."

"Do you think they'll be back? Why did they shoot Bryan?" I ask.

"Probably. What are they gonna do? Round us all up? How many they get? A few dozen? They can't get us all. They're trying to scare us into giving up." Johnny says then spits. "Bryan went after them after they took his woman. One of them shot him point blank."

"Jesus. Where are they taking them? Do you know?"

"I do know. The only place they could be takin' them. These fuckers are easy to predict really. They stick with their protocols. We can exploit that."

"How so?" I ask.

"We'll have a plan put together by night fall. Be ready we're gonna need you." He says.

"I'm ready. For anything." I say.

"Good. You'll need to be. Meet us back here tonight after ya'll eat." Johnny nods and spits in the grass. I nod, and turn around back in the crowd with Mage at my side. Bryan has been covered with a sheet and is being loaded into a truck. People are crying. People are furious. But there's a sense of something else lingering in the camp in the aftermath of what just happened. It isn't fear. It feels like unbridled conviction. I see the bull horn lying on the ground. I walk over to it and pick it up. I step up into the bed of a truck and then address the crowd of people who are all still gathered at the edge of the camp.

"Great people of this town what just happened was a tragedy and it was not your fault. We've gathered here together to weather this storm brought upon us by the corrupt psychopaths who think they run the world but they don't. We have formed a movement to defeat them here and we will not be deterred. They killed one of my neighbors Bryan. He was a great man who loved his girlfriend very much. They took the love of my life Jessica with them. They took some of your fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. We will get them back and bring them home to us. We will stop at nothing until we succeed. We cannot give up now! If we give up now they win. They may lock some of us up but if we give up now we will ALL be locked up in their surveillance economy of totalitarian control they have planned for us when they decide they want to turn the power back on. We must continue gathering here in defiance of them! We must continue our mission to opt out of their evil anti-human agenda! We must continue fighting with peace until we have won and are living in the world we and our families and our children all deserve! We are on the right path and we will not give up!"

The crowd roars, cheers and applauds. There are hundreds of people still gathered here at the front of the camp. Some looked shocked, terrified and somber. Others are mad with anger. Some are just electrified by our collective energy. I hop down from the truck and place the bull

horn on the ground for anyone else who wants to use it. I walk with Mage over to the tent where we welcome people and I take a seat behind the table. I make sure the dog has food and water then I pull out my phone to check the time. It's almost time for me to hold another meeting. Will there even be another meeting today after everything that's happened? Fuck it, might as well keep going. I open up the wallet app I use to check to see if anyone's donated and see some new confirmed transactions. Some people have sent me 100 BTC.

At 10 am I head into center camp to see if anyone wants to have a meeting today after everything that's happened. I have a hard time dealing with it myself. All I can think about is Jessica and the other people who were taken from us today. But maybe this is good. Maybe focusing on this will help me get my mind off it for the time Johnny needs to formulate his plan. It's hard though. I am devastated. I wish I could have saved her and Bryan from them. I wish I never advanced on the soldiers and sent them into a frenzy to begin with. Maybe none of this would have ever happened at all. Being given 100 BTC to fund the towns economy is surreal and it helps balance out the pain of everything I'm feeling right now but it's still hard to deal with.

I'll use my anger and pour it into my conviction for the crowd who has gathered for the meeting. There are fewer people today than yesterday but still a decent amount. Maybe 50 or 75 or so. They should know that by opting out we are defunding this madness. The only way they can pay those soldiers to do those things is by printing money. Take away the inflation they tax us with and good luck paying for any of it. It needs to end. And it ends here. With us. By opting out. The dominos are already starting to fall in other countries and we're kicking down the first one in ours.

I give my talk on the why's and the how's, I give everyone their Bitcoin, I answer all of their questions, and I thank them for coming and for staying even after the incident earlier today. They understand now more than ever the importance of this. They see it first hand how out of control everything has gotten. I don't even need to explain it to them. I just need to show them the way out.

Mage waited patiently and worriedly by my side during the meeting. We head back over to the Welcome Center. Not seeing Jessica there fills my heart with physical pain and a tremendous amount of rage. I need someone else to operate it but I don't know who. Mage and I walk over to the bull horn and I get back up in the bed of the truck with it.

"Great people of this peaceful town. I humbly ask you all for some assistance. While I am busy onboarding everyone with Bitcoin, the Welcome Center stands empty and there's no one currently there to assist new people of the town with getting them up to speed on everything that's going on. If you or someone you know would like to volunteer your time please come and see me down here. Thank you!"

I put the bull horn down and head over to the desk with Mage. He has some food and some water and I relax in the camping chair. It feels weird without Jessica by my side. I can't stop thinking about her. The pain I feel from them taking her. The incredible intense physical feelings I would get when we were together. They took that away from me. They killed one of our people too. If they could they would take everything from us. I take a deep breath and sit back. I've got like half an hour. Maybe someone will show up who wants to volunteer. Maybe some new people will show up who I can help get up to speed. I get lost in my own thoughts looking down at Mage and petting him on his head. By now the crowd that had gathered at the front of the camp has dispersed.

"David." I hear someone say my name. I look up to see who it is. It's Shanna. My neighbor.

"Hi Shanna. How's it going?" I ask her.

"How's it goin' with you? I'm aight."

"Oh, man, I'm--- losing Jessica, I can't stop thinking about her and need to get her back. Them killing Bryan. We need to bring them all home. I can't get my mind off it. We got a donation though. To fund the circular economy here. So I'm trying to look on the bright side here and stay focused." I try to explain my feelings but it just all sounds like word salad to me.

"Yeah. Heard about Jess. Saw what they did to Bryan. I'm so sorry. That's good news though on the donation. At least somethin's goin' right 'round here. I came over because I heard you needed help."

"You want to run the Welcome Center?"

"Sure, should be easy enough, right?"

"Yeah, just show people the sign and have them read what our mission is and tell them to meet at center camp at 10 am, 12 pm, and 2 pm where I'll explain how we're opting out with Bitcoin and I'll fund their wallet. Try to answer whatever questions they have and tell them if they have any more don't hesitate to ask me. I'll make sure you're compensated for your time." I say.

"I can do that."

"Thank you Shanna. You're the best."

"Least I can do David. I can't imagine what this town would look like if we never gathered like this. A week without power. What a nightmare." She says.

"You still feel that way? Even after today?"

"Of course. What alternative do we have? Bein' holed up inside with no one and nothin'? Like we're s'posed to jus' lie down and accept that? And die like that?"

"I know. That's exactly what they want. It's sick. If we didn't even try to fight back we would all be the biggest losers in history. Even if we don't succeed. We at least tried to beat them and we tried to do it without stooping to their lows and killing people." I say.

"Thas right. I know you'll get them back. I know we're gonna beat them too. We jus gotta keep goin'. So when do I start?" She asks.

"Right now. I got another meeting. If Mage wants to stay with you take care of him. He might want to follow me to the meeting though and that's okay."

"Aight." Shanna comes around and sits behind the table in the chair where Jessica sat not that long ago. A family of five shows up and I let Shanna do the talking. I don't even need to

say anything. She's got it. She'll do just fine getting everyone up to speed. It's all written down on the sign and the action plan anyway. The only thing I add is that the army showed up this morning and took some of our towns people away and killed one of them. This frightens them but they also understand what the alternative is. They've been holed up in their house without power and ran out of food and water. They don't have a choice but to come down and gather here in defiance with us. That's why by the looks of it, despite what happened this morning, no one has left the camp. At least not in any significant amount of numbers that I can see. More people are showing up and I leave Shanna to take care of it and I thank her for volunteering. I get up and head to center camp. Mage gets up and follows me.

I walk by all the kitchens, all the camp sites, all the families, all the music being played. People greet me as I pass but it all feels like a long smeared blur. I have tunnel vision. I try to stop thinking about earlier and about her but I can't. I keep seeing Bryan lying there in the pool of his own purplish red blood. One foot in front of the other. I need to be strong. I wonder what the plan is for getting them back? I wonder if there even is one or if Johnny was just bullshitting me? How are we even going to get them back? It's us against them. A group of renegades vs. the military. This is going to go over well. I can hardly wait.

The group is waiting for me at center camp. I thank everyone for coming and go through the motions. I feel like I've done this so many times. It's a routine at this point. I say everything that needs to be said. I answer every question everyone has. I make sure they all understand what Bitcoin is and why we're using it. They write their seeds down and they get in line. I distribute the BTC to their wallets and send them on their way. Even though I just spent an hour and a half with them talking about opting out into our circular economy I never once stopped thinking about her. I tried to stop myself and I just couldn't. Still I think I did a good job getting everybody on board. I did the best I could.

I hang with Shanna for a bit at the tent and chat with her about how it went. A lot of people have still been showing up. Pretty soon we'll have the whole town here I guess. Unless they turn the power back on. They probably won't though. The horn blows for supper and I don't feel like eating. I know I should though. I force myself to get up and head down to center camp. I get some beef kebab and sit down with Mage to eat it. I end up giving him half and he wolfs it down.

"Jessica will be back soon." I tell him. He looks up at me longingly but grateful for the beef.

I waste no time after eating and head straight to the dome where Johnny told me to meet with him. It's warm inside and they have the patriotic Christmas lights on illuminating the inside. Jean's sitting behind the computer doing his thing. Johnny's in his chair with a pad of paper and a pen. He's got his beer in the cup holder of his camping chair.

"Hi guys. I haven't been able to stop thinking about everything that's happened all day." I say.

"Hey David." Jean says.

"Well you better stop 'cause you got a whole new set of bullshit you need to be worryin' about." Johnny tells me.

"Tell me. I'm ready. What's the plan?"

"Sit down."

I sit next to Johnny and he hands me the pad of paper he's scribbled all over.

"See this? This is the base outside of town. They call it Big Horn. This is where they're keepin' 'em." He says.

"Okay. So how do we get them out?"

"Aright listen up. You'll be enterin' on this side via drone." He says.

"Via drone? What?"

"We have a drone that will drop your ass in."

"Are you fucking serious?"

"Yea I'm fuckin' serious. Now listen up. Yer gettin' dropped off here. You'll be wearin uniform in case anyone sees you. See this building? That's where they are." He says while pointing to a rectangle near the drop off point.

"Okay. Land there. Building there. But then what?"

"We're gonna distract 'em on the other side of the base. You'll hear us and know you're good to go." He says.

"What kind of distraction?" I ask.

"You'll see. We got drones for that. A whole swarm of them. We'll load some type of ballistics on 'em. Don't worry we aint killin' nobody. Just want to scare 'em." He says.

"You really think this will work? What if they don't all leave the area where they're keeping them?"

"Oh it's gonna work alright. There'll be too much damn chaos. They won't even notice you walk in and let them out. They'll be worried about all the commotion we're causing on the other side."

"How do I get in the building?"

"You just walk in like you own the joint. They won't even question you. Once yer in, here take this, I want you to place this in one of the computers. Doesn't matter which one. This is crucial. Understand?" He says and hands me a USB stick.

"What's this?"

"Part of the plan."

"Alright."

"Walk in, insert USB into nearest PC, and head toward the holding cells. I'll have remote access at that point. You won't need to do nothin'. They'll be able to escape. They'll recognize you. You can guide them to the rendezvous point here near where you'll be dropped off. If there's a guard you'll have to rush him. We'll have busses waiting right down the road under the hill where they can't see them from the base. You'll need to move quick. Understand?"

"I understand. Is it really that simple? I thought it would be way harder. I mean they're the military. What are we missing here? What's the backup plan?" I ask.

"We don't need no backup plan. Plans gonna work. Only plan we got."

"I don't know about this Johnny."

"Well I do know about this. How d'you reckon we get them back then genius?"

"I don't. I don't know."

"You want them free don't you?"

"Of course I do." I say.

"Then we're doin' it. Any questions?"

I take a deep slow breath and try to think but I can't. A whirlwind twists and turns in my head and through my body.

"I don't think so. I can't help shake the feeling like we're missing something. What if something goes wrong?"

"At least we tried and didn't let them just take us for no got damned reason." Johnny says.

"We need to do more than try though, you know? We need to succeed."

Johnny throws his hands up.

"You got a better plan Einstein?"

"No I just told you I don't."

"Okay then. You're goin' in. Tonight. We got your clothes right here. Get dressed." He says pointing to the camouflaged uniform on the floor.

"What if I get caught? What if they see me get dropped off? What if they recognize me? Have you even thought this through at all?" I ask.

"You worry too much you know that?"

"What if though? What's the plan?"

"Don't worry. Not happening."

I sigh. I grab the clothes. I put them on. I'm now dressed like a soldier from boots to hat.

"What about my beard? They don't allow beards right?" I ask.

"Good call. Go shave it off." Johnny says.

"God fucking damnit."

"Stop complaining. Go do it. Here take this." He hands me a lantern and a trash bag. I head to the bathroom where there's a mirror. I shave my entire beard off for the first time in longer than I can remember throwing all the hair in the bag. It feels weird, somewhat smooth, somewhat prickly. I look ten years younger. Or so it appears. Someone comes in the bathroom asking why I'm dressed like a soldier. I think it freaked them out a little. I tell them not to worry about it. I throw the bag of hair away and head back to the dome.

"Thanks." I hand Johnny the razor.

"I don't want that shit." He says.

"Fine. So are we doing this or what?"

"You need to see the plans again?" He asks.

"Drop off. Head to building to the right. Walk in. Insert USB. Holding cells open. Guide everyone out of the exit near the drop off. Run our asses off. What am I missing?"

"Yea that's right."

"I still think this is fucking insane."

"What's insane is turnin' the power off for a week then takin' our women for no got damned reason."

"I know. Believe me I know."

"Alright lets go. Come on Jean. Where's Marshall?" Johnny asks.

"I'll go get him."

"Get 'im. We're headin' out now."

"Got it. Be right back." He says.

I take a deep breath and go over the plan in my head over and over. It's insane. How could a military base be this easy to thwart? Are they really that unprepared? Or is Johnny the one that hasn't thought this through enough? What choice do I have? If I refuse, what better plan could I come up with? I desperately rack my brain for some kind of answer. Nothing's

there. It's go with Johnny's plan or nothing I guess. I don't know if I could live with myself doing nothing. How could I live here at the camp knowing Jessica and dozens of the other people who were gathering here earlier are being detained just for exercising their right to peaceful assembly? What they're doing isn't legal, it's unconstitutional, and freeing them is a moral imperative. It just feels so overwhelmingly surreal. Last week I was just a man trying to live his life. Now I'm breaking into a military base. It's crazy how fast things can change. I wish I didn't have to do this but someone needs to so it might as well be me.

Jean comes back with Marshall and we head out to Johnny's truck carrying crates and cases. We fill the bed up except for enough space for Marshall and Jean to sit in the bed of the truck. Johnny and I are up front. He tells me to sit low so no one notices me. It's kind of impossible but I try anyway. He turns the engine on and we head down the road. We head out of town and get on a bumpy dirt road. It's dark and cold. The heaters on full blast in the truck and it barely works. He checks the radio for signals. There's nothing there.

We stop the truck in the middle of the dirt road in what seems like the middle of nowhere. There's no one around. We can see the base lit up in the distance. We start opening up the crates and cases. They get their drones set up and fitted with their special accessories. They show me the drone I'm flying in on. It's like a quadcopter but larger and has six oscillating blades instead of four. Each one is about the size of a dinner plate.

"You gotta be kidding me. How are they not going to hear this?" I ask.

"They won't hear it." Johnny says.

"It's going to sound like a swarm of bees. I know it."

"There will be explosions goin' off over yonder. Don't worry about it. They won't notice the drone. Now put this on." He says and hands me a brace that I wear over my shoulders and between my legs. Jean makes sure it's fit snug and clamps the back pieces together.

"Pull this when you land. It will detach you from the drone." Jean says pointing out the thin rope to the right behind me.

"Got it. You guys better not drop me."

"We were practicing earlier. You'll be fine." Jean says.

"Yeah but you weren't practicing with a human." I say.

"True, it can deal with the weight though. Don't worry."

They get their drones going and Marshall has them connected to a controller with his laptop open on the bed of the truck. Jean stands next to him with another controller in his hands.

"You guys ready?" He asks.

"Ready." Jean says.

"Ready." Johnny says.

"Yeah let's do this." I say.

"Godspeed David. We'll see you back at the camp later. Your woman too." Johnny says.

"Yeah let's hope."

They send the drones off in a swarm. There's probably at least eight of them and they all have stuff attached to them I can't identify. They activate the drone I'm attached to and it lifts off of the ground then it hovers above me. It slowly pulls more and more until my feet leave the ground and I'm lifted a few meters into the air. It buzzes overhead like a mad screaming swarm of bees just like I knew it would. They wait a moment for the other drones to make way then they start advancing me toward the base. I spin a little on the cord attached to the drone. I see the base and then I turn and I see the darkness where they're parked controlling the drones. I see the base again and I'm getting closer. Any minute now I should hear it. The diversion.

Something explodes in the distance. That must be them. I hear what sounds like gun shots ringing out from the far side of the base. I'm almost there. I'm just high enough to clear the fence. A bright explosion of light booms from the other side of the base. It's a firework. They attached fireworks to the drones. I can see soldiers running to where it's happening. Trucks are driving off. I'm almost over the fence. Just a little closer. There. I'm in. The drone lowers and my feet touch the ground. I pull the rip cord and the drone flies off behind me. I walk toward the building where they're being held. I turn the corner and see the whole base attempting to deal with the drone swarm. There are explosions, fireworks, and what sound like gun shots going off. I reach for the door of the building and open it. It opens. I walk in and there's a computer behind a desk. I pull the USB stick from my pocket and insert it.

I take a deep breath and try to focus. I walk into the building and there they are. They're being held in large cells together. The cells line the walls of the large warehouse. Each cell has about half a dozen of them. Surprisingly I don't see any guards. There's no one here but them. The explosions of the fireworks can be heard outside. I walk into the center of the warehouse with the cells all around me. Everyone's looking at me now.

"It's David!" One of them says.

"David?" They all start to gather at the front of their cells.

"How did you get in here?" Someone asks.

"Don't worry about it. I'm here to get you out." I say.

"David!" It's Jessica. I run toward her voice. There she is behind the cell doors. She reaches out her arms and I grab them. I kiss her in-between the prison bars. There's that feeling again. That overwhelming electric tingle that lingers on my lips and teeth like some kind of unexplainable energy. I stop and look at her in her orange jumpsuit with her cell mates. I want her free now. I want every one of these people free.

"How are you going to get us out?" She asks me.

"Johnny said he's going to access the doors remotely." I tell her.

"Hurry up! Let's get out of here!" She says.

"I know. Believe me I know."

"What's taking him so long?"

"I don't know."

"Do something David! The guards were just here. They could come back any minute." She says.

Fireworks explode outside. What's going on? Why aren't the doors opening? I nod to Jessica and run back to the computer. It's on. The drive is recognized. I look for some way to open the doors. I don't see anything. I look for keys. There are none. How the hell do the doors open? What the hell is taking you so long Johnny? Relax. Try to relax. He wouldn't send me in here without a solid plan, right? The doors are going to open and we're going to get out of here. It's only a matter of time. I try to mess with the computer some more looking for a way to get the doors open and someone walks into the door behind me. I freeze. Is that it? Am I caught? Just like that? You've got to be fucking kidding me!

"Can you believe it? Someone's launching fireworks at the base." The man who just entered says to me.

"Oh they're just fireworks?" I ask playing dumb.

"Yeah drones launching fireworks. Gave us a good scare. Nothing to worry about though." The voice says. I'm still acting like I'm using the computer. I turn around to face the voice. It's another soldier who looks just like I do.

"Bored kids or something?" I ask.

"Guess so."

"The computer restarted, I've been trying to get that program up we use in here, do you remember which one it is?" I ask him.

"Yeah let me show you." He gets on the computer and types in a command. A generic looking app pops up. He enters some credentials. Now it's on the screen. I see buttons like "Open door 1" and "Open door 2".

"It's SecureCell. For next time. Took me a while to get familiar with all this too." He says.

"Thanks. SecureCell. That's it. I was looking for SafeDoor." I tell him. He laughs and pats my shoulder.

"Hey you want anything from the vending machine?" He asks.

"Yeah. Get me whatever you're having."

"Big Texas?"

"Big Texas."

"You got it chief." He smiles and heads back out the door and leaves me alone in the warehouse with the cells full of prisoners from our camp. The doors are still not open but I have the ability to open them myself. I guess this is it. The plan didn't work. I need to intervene. I hear fireworks still going off outside but they're coming in less frequently. I'm running out of time. God damnit Johnny! Why didn't the doors open like you said they would?

I'm back on the computer. I hover the mouse over the "Open door 1" button. I click it. I'm prompted for a password. Shit. A password? I frantically start trying passwords. Password. Password1. Password123. 1234. password. password1. password123. I go on and on trying different things. Big Horn. bighorn. BigHorn. Nothing is working. Shit. They'll be back at any moment. How am I supposed to get the doors open without the password? God damnit Johnny you fucked this up big time! You crazy old asshole! Why did I ever trust you with something like this? I take a deep breath and try to relax. The door opens back up behind me.

"Here you go boss." The soldier says.

"Thanks." I turn around and grab the Big Texas. It's a cinnamon roll wrapped in plastic. He opens his up and takes a bite. I don't eat cinnamon rolls. But I open the bag up and take a bite.

"Damn these things are good! Can never get enough of them!" He says. I take a bite of mine. It's absolutely disgusting.

"I know. Me either. Fucking delicious." I say.

He sits down on one of the chairs behind the desk and chomps down on his Big Texas. I need to think. I need to think of something fast.

"One of the prisoners won't shut up about having to take a piss." I tell him. He chews on his Big Texas a moment then takes a big gulp of the mashed sugary cinnamon roll.

"You know the drill. Let 'em out one at a time." He says with a mouth full of the roll. I take another bite of mine. I can't stand it. I know it will make me sick. But I pretend to like it in front of him.

"Right. I was waiting for you to come back." I say.

"That's smart. Better safe than sorry. They won't try nothin' on you I bet though." He says almost finishing the entire cinnamon roll already. I'm only a few bites into mine. He turns to the computer and wipes his hand off on his camouflaged pants.

"What cell was it?" He asks.

"Cell 1. The password they gave me didn't work for some reason. I thought I had the right one." I say.

"We changed it yesterday. They didn't tell you?" He asks.

"Nope. No one told me."

"Figures. It's BLM888." He says.

"Oh. Thanks. I'll remember that." I say.

"Here, I'll write it down." He gets a pen and writes it on a post it note and attaches it to the monitor. "There. Nobody will forget it now. I'll open the door. You can escort them to the bathroom." He says.

"10-4." I say walking back out to the cells. Door 1 opens as I'm standing in front of it. Does anyone know what's going on? Did they hear what we were just talking about?

"Which one of you was it? That needed to use the bathroom?" I ask the people in the cell. They look at me. Then one of them steps forward. A man I'm not familiar with. He walks out of the cell. It closes behind him. He walks toward the bathroom which is good because I don't know where it is. Everyone is watching me. No one says anything. I want to look at Jessica. I want to tell everyone what's going on but I can't. The fireworks are over. The base is quieting down now. The man goes into the bathroom and I wait outside. When he's done I walk him back to the cell. The door opens. He walks inside and the door closes behind him. They look at me wondering what's going on but I don't say a word. I walk back to the office area with the other guard then sit down in the other chair. I pick up the Big Texas and try to finish it. I feel like it's rotting my teeth with every bite.

"Man you eat slow. I don't know how you do it. I wolf those things down." The soldier says to me grinning.

"I'm trying so savor it's delicacy." I tell him. He laughs.

"You're funny. I haven't met you before. What's your name?" He asks.

"I'm Anderson." I say.

"Anderson. Like Mr. Anderson." He says, imitating a voice from the Matrix.

"Exactly. Mr. Anderson."

"So you're new?" He asks.

"Yeah was working logistics before being assigned here." I say.

"Oh alright. Yeah I didn't know we'd be put on prisoner duty like this. It's so BORING." He says throwing his Big Texas wrapper in the trash. I take a bite out of mine and chew it between my teeth before swallowing its overly sweet and poisonous mass.

"Me either. Easy work though." I say.

"I guess." He says sounding exasperated. "All they do is bitch and complain. Poor bastards."

"What are they locked up for?" I ask.

"Insurrection." He says.

"Insurrection?"

"Yeah their group attacked us earlier." He says.

"Attacked, really?"

"Yeah, who attacks the US military? Are they fucking stupid?"

"I know right. How is that an insurrection though?" I ask.

He just kind of looks at me blankly.

"That's just what I was told." He says.

"Oh alright. Just wondering. How long are we assigned to them for? Do you know?" I ask.

"Until they get transferred. Won't be long. Probably tomorrow." He says.

"Transferred?"

"Yeah we're not keeping them here for very long. They'll be taken to federal prison. They have more adequate facilities than we do here. This place is ghetto as fuck." He says.

"Makes sense. Good riddance." I say.

"I know right. I'd rather be watching MMA reruns." He says.

"Same."

How long am I going to be able to keep this up for? What if someone comes in and recognizes me? What if the doors open up out of nowhere? I have so many questions that I can't answer. Something needs to happen. I've made it this far. I need to finish the job. I can't keep them all waiting in anticipation like this.

"I got an idea." I say.

"What's that?"

"Let's play tic-tac-toe. Loser buys the winner a Big Texas." I say as I take the last bite of mine throwing the wrapper in the trash.

"Fuck it I'm game. Let's do this."

"Two out of three?" I ask.

"Sure boss." He pulls out a pen and paper and passes it to me. I draw the lines and fill in an X and pass it to him. We pass it back and forth. I win the first game.

"Damnit!" He says.

"You can still win this." I tell him. I fill in another X then pass it back to him. We pass it back and forth. He beats me.

"Yesss! Booyah!" He says.

"Down to the wire. Let's see who wins this." I say. He fills in an O and passes it to me. We fill in our X's and O's passing it back and forth. I win. Two out of three.

"Damnit!" He says. "I'm buyin' you one AND I'm buyin' me one!"

"Sounds good. It's only fair." I say. He smiles obliviously. He gets up and heads out the door. Now's my chance. I rush to the computer and click Open door 1. I type in BLM888. The door opens. I click Open door 2. I type in the password. I do it for door 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. They're all open. I get up and run out there.

"Guys, come on! We need to go! NOW!" I yell. Everyone in their orange jumpsuits runs out of the cells. Jessica comes running to me. They stop in front of me and I take Jessica's hand.

"Follow me!" We all head for the door. I open it and we go running out of it and around the building on the side facing the outside of the base. We get to the end of the warehouse and a siren starts blaring. I see the exit Johnny was talking about. There's a guard there waiting at attention. We don't have a choice. We run toward the gate and the guard comes running out of the booth.

"Hey! What the fuck are you doing!? You can't do that! STOP!" He yells and tries to stand in our way but we run right by him. We're all running down the road now. The busses should be just up here unless Johnny fucked that up too. The siren blares behind us. I can hear soldiers yelling and the stomping feet of dozens of escapees running for their lives. I look back just enough to see that everyone made it. There are soldiers running after us. They're opening the gate and a truck is coming after us.

"Come on!" I yell. I see the busses parked along the road. They flip their lights on and open their doors.

"Get on!" I tell Jessica as the others pour into the busses.

"I'm not leaving you again." She says.

"Get on! They're coming!"

"I'm not getting on without you."

"Guys hurry up they're coming!" The busses are almost full. The trucks are coming down the dirt road and they're starting to catch up with us. Jessica won't get on the bus. She's still waiting for me. I make sure everyone gets on then I get on the bus furthest to the back with Jessica. The driver, who must be one of Johnny's veteran friends by the looks of it, closes the door and he pulls out onto the road and starts driving down it toward town in the pitch black darkness. I take a deep breath. I feel an overwhelming rush flowing through me as my heart feels like it's going to beat out of my chest and I can barely breathe. I stand at the front of the bus near the driver watching the road and the trucks closing in behind us. Jessica sits down on a seat near the front and looks up at me with her big doe eyes glowing from the dash lights. I watch the trucks close in. What are they going to do? Follow us? Round us all back up again?

"David! You saved us!" Someone in the bus says.

"We're free!" Someone else says.

"Thank you David! I had no idea how long we would be locked up for. I just want to see my family again." Another faceless voice tells me from somewhere on the dark bus. I look back at them.

"The voices! They're gone!" Someone else cries out from somewhere on the bus.

"They were going to transfer you all to a federal prison." I say speaking loudly.

"What? Are you serious?" Someone asks. I can't see them and don't know who it is.

"Dead serious. I talked to one of the guards."

"How did you do that?"

"It's a long story." I say.

"We owe you one David."

"You owe me nothing. Just remember everything I've told you about why we're gathering and why we're opting out. They rounded us up today because they're afraid. They're scared of us and they don't want us to be free. They just showed us why we must fight for our freedom better than I ever could." I say to the bus full of people who I can barely see. Jessica's still looking up at me while I stand at the front of the bus. I turn back and look at the rear view mirror. They're right behind us and following us down the road. One of them is approaching fast. So fast it looks like it's going to hit us. Then it does and I almost fall to the floor of the bus. People scream suddenly but I don't think anyone is seriously injured. The truck just hit us but the bus keeps driving and picking up speed. I look at the driver. He doesn't look at me. His eyes are on the illuminated road. He glances back at them in the mirror for a split second. The trucks coming back. I hold on to the handle tight. They come in at an angle and ram the back side of the bus trying to make us spin out. People scream again but the bus is not deterred. We keep going. Two other trucks are trying to get ahead of us but the driver floors it and keeps them at bay for a while. Then one zooms past us and slams on the brake right in front of us. The driver doesn't even stop.

"Hold on guys!" I yell.

The bus smashes into the back of the truck slamming on its brakes at full speed. The windshield shatters and people scream in fear again even louder this time. The truck gets pushed off the road and rolls over onto its roof. The driver rolls his window down and starts driving the bus with the window down. A freezing cold breeze rips into the cabin of the bus and although it's chilling it's the least of our worries right now. I look down at Jessica and see she's nervous but okay holding onto her seat with her jumpsuit on.

The busses pull onto a paved street as we get closer into town. We're almost there. It's not much further. The trucks behind us stop at the dirt road and stop following us. We made it. For now. I can't even imagine what kind of bullshit they're going to try on us next time. I can't believe I did it. I can't believe that just worked. They're going to be so pissed. We drive through town and make a few turns and before long we're there. The busses pull up in front of the park. The driver opens the door. I get another look at him, I think I recognize him, I thank him, and walk off the bus with Jessica behind me. Mage comes running up to her and is freaking out he's so happy. People trickle off the bus and back into the camp. It's dark but some of the camps have lanterns and Christmas lights so there's a soft glow emanating from the camp and onto the street. Everyone heads back to their camp sites and families somewhat relieved somewhat shocked still. I stand by while everyone gets off the bus. They thank me, I shake some of their hands. The busses close their doors and drive off to who knows where. Where did Johnny even get these?

One person stays behind with Jessica and I. It's Amanda. Bryans girlfriend. She kneels down where he was murdered earlier. The blood stain is still on the ground but it's dried. She cries with her hands on the ground where his body was just hours earlier.

"Where is he?" She asks through the tears.

"Johnny gave him a proper burial. I'll make sure he shows you where." I tell her.

"Why! Why did they kill him?!" She shouts crying into the night.

"He didn't want to leave you. Didn't want them to take you." I tell her.

"They didn't have to fucking shoot him!" She cries uncontrollably. Jessica gets down and hugs her. They're both still in their orange jumpsuits. She cries into her shoulder. I can feel her pain just being in her presence and its gut wrenching. I wish there was something more I could do. She cries and cries and I sit down with them even though it's so cold. The camp is alive with commotion behind us. They are celebrating everyone returning. At some point I need to find Johnny. Ask him what the hell happened. It can wait. Tomorrow will be here soon enough. With it, a whole new set of problems, I'm sure.

"I'm so sorry Amanda. If there's anything I can do, please don't hesitate to ask, okay?" She doesn't say anything. Just cries hysterically. I don't say anything more either. Jessica holds her. We sit under the cold overcast winter sky with the moon glowing from behind the haze. I can free these people from detainment but I can't bring Bryan back. No one, nothing can. Life is

short and can be taken away from us in the blink of an eye for reasons we would never agree with or begin to understand. It almost makes me want to cry too when I think about it. But I don't. I just sit with them. The tears pour down her cheeks and into Jessica's jump suit. This is something I can't ever forget. This is something we can never forgive.

I want to find Johnny but Jessica is tired and possibly traumatized. It can wait I guess. What's the point anyway? He fucked up and I can't trust him again. I learned my lesson the hard way and it could have cost us all big time. Especially me. They would have locked me up and thrown away the key had I been caught. It's one thing to round up a bunch of peaceful people gathering. It's another to nab the one guy infiltrating a military base to rescue them from an unjust detainment. They are probably planning it out as I think these very thoughts. Or maybe they have no idea it was me? No way. They have surveillance footage. They'll know it's me, they have to know, right?

Jessica tells Amanda to get up from the cold blood stained sidewalk and at first she refuses but then she gets up and we all walk together to center camp. She is still crying her eyes out. Jess gets her a paper towel to blow her nose. Someone makes her a cup of chamomile tea with honey from one of the kitchens we pass by. The place is lit up with multi colored Christmas lights and looks like a bar you'd find in a post-apocalyptic desert. The person running it is just happy to be here and able to help. We move on towards center camp where the heaters are set up under the circus tent. People are hanging out in chairs chatting and drinking. Amanda doesn't want to sleep alone tonight she says through the endless flow of tears. Jessica says she can sleep with us. I don't mind. It's a small bed but we'll all fit. I can't imagine the pain she must be in right now. Like what I was experiencing earlier times a thousand. It's one thing to lose a loved one to a corrupt military dragging them off to a cell, another thing to lose one to their bullet.

We all crawl into the tipi, turn the heater on, take off our clothes and jumpsuits and crawl in bed. I lay holding Jessica, she lays holding Amanda. I think about everything that happened over the past day while listening to her waning sobs and feeling the pain in her voice. I think about what might happen tomorrow. Are we going to get a reprieve or are they going to come at us even harder? I guess we'll have to see. They came at us today with everything they had and they only could drag dozens of us off. There are probably thousands of us gathered here now. A good portion of the entire town. If we all band together they don't stand a chance and they know it. I just hope the people here know it. I think they do now. I hope they do.

Before long I start seeing cloudlike flashes of lime green and deep neon indigo oscillating somewhere in my mind. I know I'm almost there. The frequency is winding down and I fall further into myself feeling Jessica's soft slow breath. I breathe slow along with her. We're synchronized like we usually are. I let go of everything and fade away into sleep.

It's funny how hours can go by in the blink of an eye yet there's still that residual feeling that time has passed. I wake at dawn at the first sign of sunlight. Mage wakes up next. Then Jessica. We're all still holding each other. Have we not moved once all night? Amanda wakes up and turns on her other side facing Jessica. I lay on my back and listen for any commotion outside. The camp seems calm. For now.

"The voices." Amanda suddenly says.

"It's okay honey. We're back now." Jessica tells her soothingly.

"Those fucking voices!" Amanda cries out. I'm somewhat startled. What is she talking about?

"What voices?" I ask bewildered.

"Oh David. You can't understand. You can't understand!"

"Shhhh, it's okay. It's okay." Jessica tries to calm her down. Amanda bursts into tears again and Jessica hugs her.

"What's going on?" I ask. There's a moment of pause before Jess answers me.

"Yesterday. At the military base. We all heard voices." She tells me.

"What? What kind of voices?" I ask.

"Inside our heads. Telling us things." She says.

"Are you serious?"

"Dead serious. First they all injected us with something one by one. Some of us tried to fight it but they would just restrain us and shoot it into our arms. Then the voices came. They would say things like what we had done was wrong. We had caused a super spreader event. The pandemic was killing millions. The government was saving lives. We had to obey or our families would suffer the same fate as us. The voices told us to repeat after them, that the government was good, the government was just, the government was the only reason anyone had survived, and if we disobey again we would be locked in solitary confinement forever. We were told we were bad, unfit, needed to be sterilized. We were told being free means doing what we're told. We were told we were never getting out until we proved we loved our government and would never act out or think wrongly of them ever again. The voices told us they were reading our thoughts. They told us there was nothing we could hide from them. Once it started it didn't stop. It was a constant stream of a voice that sounded like my own. It was like I was saying all of these things to myself without having any control. We all looked at each other like "do you hear that?" but after a while it became obvious. They had tapped into our minds. We don't know how they did it, but they did. They did. Those motherfuckers did." Jessica's voice scowls a little as she's telling me this and Amanda is crying her eyes out again.

"Holy fucking shit." I say.

"It gets worse David." Jess says to me while she holds Amanda crying into her shoulder.

"How much worse?" I ask.

"They were able to control us. Our bodies."

"What do you mean?"

"We'd all be sitting there, or standing around in the cells, listening to the voices, looking at each other or down at the ground horrified, then all of a sudden we would all stand up and move into a formation." She says.

"What do you mean move into a formation?"

"We weren't doing it. They made us do it David. They were controlling our bodies. They were controlling the voices in our heads. They made us raise our right hands to our hearts and say the pledge of allegiance. They made us do it over and over. Then it stopped. It was like being paralyzed or possessed. I can't explain it. I don't know how they did it. But they did." She says while running her hand through Amanda's hair. She's trying to calm her down but recalling the memory only seems to disturb her further.

"Jesus fucking christ. What the hell is going on there?"

"I don't know. I don't know if it's going to come back. If the voices, if their ability to control us, is going to come back. I don't know. But I'm scared. Amanda's scared too. Thank god you saved us from there David. Whatever they're doing to people is beyond evil. And for what? What did we do? Nothing. We chose not to stay in our homes while they shut the power off on us for an entire week. You think that's a good excuse to experiment on people? Control their thoughts? Control their bodies? Fuck no it isn't!" Jessica is almost in tears now too but she holds it together. I've never seen her so mad before. I can't say I blame her either. I am in shock to hear what they are saying. I didn't even know anything like this was even possible. And for it to happen to her, and Amanda, and so many other people here, just because they chose to camp together in a park, is sick, it's beyond reprehensible.

"I don't even have words you guys. I am so sorry. I'm so glad you're here now. And I'm so sorry they took you. I'm sorry I walked towards them from the crowd and that set them off." I say.

"David please it's not your fault. They were going to do what they did anyway. Why do you think they even showed up yesterday if they weren't planning on rounding some of us up and doing what they did?" Jessica says.

"I know. Still. It's horrific. They tortured you. For no reason. The people who are supposed to be protecting this country. It's unbelievable. It fills me with rage and sadness all at the same time." I say. It's the best thing I can come up with. There are really no words for what they have been through. Jessica soothes Amanda with her hand in her hair. I lay with them quietly now thinking about everything they just said. I don't understand it. They can make people hear voices? They can control their bodies? What the fuck kind of planet am I on right now anyway?

"I'm going to make some coffee. I'll bring you guys some." I say after a while of lying there.

"Thanks." Jessica says.

I put my clothes on and crawl out of the tipi. Mage stays in there with the girls. The sun has come up over the horizon. The sky is clear but its bone chillingly cold. I watch my breath spiral away into the air around me. It feels like my nose is going to freeze. I make my way through center camp down to the Welcome Center bringing the heater with me for Shanna. She's already there getting ready.

"Hey Shanna how's it going?" I say.

"Good morning David. It's fine, but there's just too many people coming. We're getting floods of people coming in and I don't have the ability to help all of them. They wait in line but then they wander off because the lines so long." She tells me.

"Okay, how many more people do you need?" I ask.

"Probably at least three more and one other tent." She says.

"You got it. Whatever you need just me know, okay?" I say while getting the burner going for the coffee.

"Thank you David. Otherwise it's all good. I like helpin' folks, you know? People got nowhere to go. They got nothin' to eat." She says.

"What a fucking tragedy." I say.

"Yes but at least we're here helpin' folks, you know?"

"I know. It's the only logical thing we can do in a time like this. And they want to try to stop us from this. How fucked is that?" I ask.

"Yup, It's fucked aight. Whatever happened to government by the people for the people? That shit's long gone I guess." She says.

"You want a coffee?" I ask.

"Yes please."

I hand her the first cup and get another one going. She sits behind the table and sips her steaming mug slowly with the hood of her black hoodie on. I walk over to where I left the bull horn and make an announcement.

"Good morning great people of the Bitcoin Town. Wake up and rage! I, David, am humbly requesting some further assistance at the Welcome Center. We need three volunteers to help greet people and getting them up to speed on what's going on and what our action plan is. We also need another tent that can fit a table and if anyone has a spare heater we could use that too. Come see us down here anytime you're ready. Thank you all!" I put the bull horn down and walk back over. The water's boiling, I pour it over the coffee into another mug, then get another one started.

By the time I'm done making the coffees, three people have already shown up to help, and they brought a tent just like the one we were using along with a heater. I thank them, tell them I'll compensate them, and that they should make as many copies of the info sign and action plan that they need. I walk back to the tipi with the coffees. Crawling in is a bit tricky. I place them on the floor first then crawl in. Jessica and Amanda are asleep again. I gently nudge Jess to wake her. I sit on the edge of the floor mat sipping my coffee. She gets up and I hand her one for herself. Jess nudges Amanda a little and she wakes up startled.

"I'm sorry, didn't mean to scare you." Jessica says to her.

"It's okay. I know it's you. I don't know why I did that." Amanda says.

"Here." Jess hands her the coffee. She sits up and takes it holding it up to her face so she can feel the warmth of the steam. We sit together quietly drinking our coffees. I don't want to bother them about what they just went through but I have so many questions. I'll save them for another time. For now I'm just happy they're back. I hope whatever they did to them doesn't last. I hope it doesn't happen again. I hope it doesn't have any long term residual effects. Although I hope so, I don't understand how it wouldn't. But I don't understand anything. I'm just making assumptions at this point. I need to see the facts. It's possible I never will and I find that somewhat disturbing.

Amanda's no longer crying but I can tell the girls are both shocked by everything they've been through. We sit and drink our coffees while the sun starts to move up from the horizon. Mage keeps putting his tennis ball in his mouth and dropping it by the foot of the bed. He just wants to play.

"Soon, Mage." Jessica says to him. It only makes his tail wag more in anticipation.

"He's such a good dog." Amanda says.

"I know. He's the best." Jess says.

"Good boy Mage." I say.

We finish our coffees and decide to get up. Jessica gives Amanda some of her clothes to wear and we crawl out of the tipi. Jessica is going to play with Mage for a bit. Amanda's going to hang out with her. I tell her I meant what I said last night, if she needs anything, to just let me know. She thanks me. We part ways. I need to find Johnny before he leaves to go fishing. That son of a bitch. I walk through center camp under the circus tent and feel the warmth of the heaters. People are gathering for breakfast and coffee and just hanging out. I make my way to the geodesic dome covered in camo and duck under to get inside. It's warm but Jean's the only one here.

"Where's Johnny?" I ask him.

"I think he went fishing." He says.

"You know what happened don't you?"

"No, what happened?"

I stop for a moment to chill out a little. There's no use in going over this now. I'll wait.

"I'll wait for Johnny to come back. Do you know when he'll be back?"

"Usually around 10 or so. He likes getting them in the morning." Jean says.

"Okay. I'll hang out here until then. I'll check up on my posts. You can show me what parts of the internet are still up and all that fun stuff. Sound good?"

"Sounds good." He says.

We spend a couple hours hanging out on our computers. I read all the comments on the posts that were made about Bitcoin Town. Lots of people giving their praise and wishing us luck and success. He shows me a few other search engines. I check up on the news. They're all saying it was a terrorist attack that knocked out the power just like I knew they would. They've been blaming everything on terrorism for decades now. I don't understand how anyone believes it anymore. And now they've flipped the narrative on us and call us domestic terrorists if we even question them at all. That tells you everything you need to know in my opinion. They are not a government at the peak of their power and they know it. They're on their last limb. Hyperinflation of their fake fiat money will be the final blow. They'll go down with the ship. And the world can start over without their tyrannical totalitarian control. I can't wait. There's nothing else I'd rather be doing than trying to put a stop to them.

In some ways all you have to do is wait and they'll collapse in on themselves. But it's not like you can't accelerate things on your own like with what we're doing here at Bitcoin Town. This really throws a wrench in their spokes. They were not expecting this. They thought we would all accept it and fall into the trap but we didn't. We've got the whole town already on board ready to say hell no. And to think just nine days ago I was totally alone. Eight days ago I was posting signs around town with Jessica. And now this. Despite everything that's happened we've at least fought back. And someday we're going to win. I don't know how long it's going to take. I don't know what is going to happen between now and then. But I know it starts here. I know what we're doing here is how we do it.

It's eerily chill at the camp today. Jean and I are just hanging out on our computers chatting. The camp has woken up and you can hear everyone doing their things outside. There are no soldiers or police anywhere. No helicopters buzzing low overhead. I guess I was expecting more of a push back. Maybe this is just the calm before the storm and I should enjoy it while it lasts. So I do. I've always enjoyed hanging out on the computer. It's just different this time. Only part of the internet is up and we're connected from a renegade outpost in a park via a hacked satellite network in the middle of nowhere.

Eventually Johnny shows up in his camouflage gear with his cooler in his hand. I wait for him to get situated before bombarding him with questions. He sees me and has an uneasy look on his face like he knows what's coming. He sits down next to me and cracks open a beer. He takes a sip, releases a satisfactory sigh, and places it in his cup holder in his chair.

"So, Johnny. What the fuck happened?" I ask him.

"You tell me brother." He says with a physical shrug.

"I'll tell you alright. I went in there and the doors didn't open. So what happened?"

"They should have opened. I had them opening just the day before." He says.

"So you were opening the doors the day before? What? Why?"

"I've been in that damn network for a long time David. I mess with them all the time." He says.

"So that's why then. They knew they were compromised. They changed something. Locking you out. Is that it?" I ask. He just shrugs and sips his beer. I roll my eyes at him.

"Jesus fucking christ." I say.

"Calm the fuck down alright? You got them back didn't you? The fuck's the problem with you?"

"Yeah, barely!"

"Well how'd you do it then? If my exploit didn't work, how'd you get them outta the cells and on the busses?" He asks.

"I was in the office messing with the computer and the guard came in. It's a long story. I got him to show me the program they use for controlling the doors. I got him to tell me the password. I got him to leave so I could open the doors. I don't know how it even worked to be honest. That shouldn't have worked god damnit!"

"But it did work. That's friggin' genius kid."

"No, not genius. Luck. It was luck. I got fucking lucky because you fucked up." I say angrily.

"The universe has its ways David. I got you in. You found a way. We make a hell of a team you and I, you know that?" He sips his beer and holds it up as a toast to me. I shake my head exasperated. I see where he's coming from but he put me in danger despite it all. At the end of the day I'm the one who accepted the mission though. He didn't force me to do it. And it was me who figured out a way to get them out. I guess I really can't complain all that much.

"It was luck. It was pure luck. And luck isn't something we can depend on." I say.

"There aint a goddamn thing we can depend on 'cept each other at this point." Johnny says.

"And maybe Bitcoin." Jean says.

"I hear you. I agree" I say.

"We can't sit here and bitch at each other all day. They could come back at any time." Johnny says.

"So what's the plan then?" I ask.

"You tell me boss." Johnny says.

I take a deep breath and pause for a moment. What is the plan?

"We're doing it. More people show up every day. We'll have the whole town here soon by the looks of it. There's no way they can detain us all. Maybe they won't even try to again." I say.

"Oh don't be so naive, they'll sure as shit be comin' back." Johnny says.

"You think so?"

"I know so."

"We can't let them get any of our people again Johnny. They're torturing them. Did you know that? They're making them hear voices. They're controlling their bodies somehow. Jessica and Amanda told me all about the horrors they went through yesterday. We can't let it happen again." I say.

"I know all 'bout it. Which is why I'm so down for the cause." Johnny says drinking his beer staring out at nothing in particular with his old eyes and wrinkled face.

"You've known this? But didn't say anything?"

"Would you even have believed me if I told ya?" He asks.

"I don't know. I honestly don't know."

"Xactly. I'll tell ya what. Here's what we do. Next time they show up. We get up front with the guns and form a wall. All ya'll unarmed keep back. Hell just go about your business and ignore 'em if you can but I know that aint happenin'. It's like a frenzy when those clowns show up, innit?"

"Alright. Is that it?" I ask.

"Get on your horn and call up everybody whose got a gun and tell 'em to meet me here at noon and I'll brief them on the new protocol." Johnny says finishing off his beer and crushing it under his boot.

"You got it. Sounds like a plan." I say.

"It's the only plan amigo."

"Attention great people of Bitcoin Town, calling all who are in possession of a firearm, we have a new safety protocol we would like to go over with you. Meet us up front by the welcome tent ASAP. Thank you." I announce over the bull horn. I set it down and wait for everyone to show up. I sit on the back of Johnny's truck for now. The wind is icy cold on my face and I put my hood up. Clouds gather overhead. It looks like another storm may be brewing. This time the snow will probably be worse I'm sure. It is winter after all. People start showing up and we chat about whatever's on their mind. Some seem a little distraught by how long the power has been out and how drastic their lives have changed. Others seem right in their element and are totally down for the cause. Like their almost loving it even. Like maybe they were always longing for this to happen. For everything to change. It's a personality thing I guess. Some people like their routines. Other people hate them and want something new.

I've waited long enough. There's a massive crowd of people who have showed up. A lot more than I was expecting. People hold their rifles. They carry their pistols on their hips. Some have their guns concealed by the looks of it. I stand up on the bed of the truck without the bull horn and speak up loudly so everyone can hear me.

"Thank you all for coming and being armed. Although we are a peaceful tribe our weapons are a deterrent and self-defense tool. We must remain peaceful at all costs no matter what. One shot fired and they will come down hard on us next time they show up. One of our men already died and he wasn't even armed. He tried to rush the soldiers who were taking his girlfriend away. That is why I have brought you all here today. We have to talk about how we're going to handle this next time so we're all on the same page. I also want to tell you this. I have heard reports from those who were taken and detained that the soldiers tortured them with experimental methods I was not previously aware of. They were forced to hear voices inside of their heads telling them all kinds of horrible things, and not only that, they had full control over their bodies. They made them stand in formations and pledge allegiance over and over. They told me it was as if they were paralyzed or possessed or something. We cannot let any of our men and women be taken and tortured by them again. They were injected with something prior to these incidents and we do not know what it is or if it had anything to do with it. Next time they show up everyone who is armed should get up front between the townspeople and the soldiers. If they see you holding the line up front they will be less likely to do what they did before. We need you up front to protect our people from the horrors that they experienced yesterday. We need you to remain peaceful but present with your firearm. We need to show them we have the firepower to fight back if we had to but we cannot use it against them. If someone fires a single shot it's over they will crush us and everything we have worked for. There will no longer be a Bitcoin town. We will never spread to the rest of the state and country. So please take my words to heart and consider everything I have just told you. If you want to protect our people from what happened yesterday get up front and stay there firm with your firearm visible. They aren't going to murder us out right. They want to see a provocation. Someone come at them. Someone rush them. They want us to fire the first shot. So we will not do so. You will serve two functions. Holding the line from them entering and preventing townspeople from rushing them. It was I who stepped forward yesterday to try to speak to them

and that's what set them off on their detainment spree. They were just waiting for someone to do it. They'll look for any excuse they can find to come at us. That's why we hold the line firm and remain peaceful. Thank you for meeting with me and listening to me today. Be ready for when they show up next. It could be any day, any hour now. Now head back into our camp of freedom and try to enjoy yourselves in spite of it all. They cannot shut the power off forever. We have already made it over a week. When the power comes back on you all have the tools to opt out into a better system and we will get the whole town working within our circular Bitcoin economy. This is how we win. This is how we restore our great country. This is how we preserve freedom for ourselves and for our children."

The crowd cheers after I step down from the truck. Some people stay for a little while shaking my hand and asking me a few questions. Eventually they all leave and I'm alone again at the edge of the camp by the dome and the welcome tent. They look busy over there. There's four people working the welcome tents and there are lines of people waiting but they seem to be getting them up to speed quickly enough. I wonder what Jessica is up to. I wonder how Amanda is holding up. I hear some kind of commotion happening from within the camp. I walk over to where it's happening. Some people sound agitated by something and are getting confrontational.

"You fucking spook. Who sent you? Who you workin' for?" I hear a woman ask from within a crowd of people that have gathered around the scene. There's a bald muscular man with sunglasses wearing jeans and a navy blue hoody arguing with her. I push my way through the crowd and finally get to her.

"David! This motherfucker right here is a spook!" She says to me pissed off.

"How do you know?" I ask her in front of him. He's trying to deny it shaking his head.

"He was just standin' here tryin' to get people to get violent against the police and the soldiers. Just like you were sayin'. He's some kind of agent. I just know it!" She tells me pointing her finger at him.

"All I said was peace isn't working. We need to step it up a notch. Give them a taste of their own medicine." The man says to both of us.

"No actually peace IS working." I say to him.

"See, what did I tell you? Look at this bitch, this is the most obvious cop if I've ever seen one." She says staring him down.

"If they're shooting us we should be shooting them." He says bluntly. The crowd erupts in boos all around him.

"We don't have a lot of rules here in Bitcoin Town. Remaining peaceful is one of the only ones. You're violating one of our core principles. What's your name?" I ask him. He hesitates.

"I'm Henry." He says after a pause.

"Henry. I'll make sure every camp and kitchen in town knows who you are and refuses to serve you with anything from here on out. Can you take a picture of him please? I'll make sure everyone sees it. Do me a favor and head back to wherever it is you came from. You clearly do not belong here." I tell him. He looks pissed I'm calling him out. He's not acting like someone desperate for food or water that just wants to survive with their neighbors. He's acting like the provocateur we all know he is. Maybe I shouldn't have been so direct on cutting him off. What if I'm wrong? I think it has to be done though. We can't have provocateurs here agitating people and stirring things up. They need to be ostracized immediately. If you can't remain peaceful you don't belong here simple as that. We aren't going to force you out we're just going to make sure everyone knows who you are and treats you like exactly who you are. A spook and provocateur who deserves nothing from us and our town. For what it's worth, I've never seen him before. I never gave this guy any Bitcoin at a meeting. Looks like he just showed up today to start shit.

The woman who was arguing with him takes a picture of him on her cell phone. He tries to cover his face but she gets a decent shot. He seems really flustered now and is trying to leave but there's a crowd around him talking shit to his face. He doesn't say anything else. He knows he's failed. He works his way through the crowd and walks off further into the camp.

"Send it to me. My email server is working. Use Atomic Mail if yours isn't. David@atomicmail.com." I say to her. She tells me she'll get it over as soon as she can. I follow the man through the crowd around campsites and kitchens. I try to stay a distance away from him so he doesn't see me. Where is he going? I'm going to find out. He meanders toward the edge of the camp near the road then he walks out onto the street. I hang back at one of the camps along the edge of the town and watch him. He gets into a car on the passenger side with tinted windows on the other side of the street then he sits there for a while. I can no longer see him but he hasn't driven off. I start walking toward them. I get closer to their tinted black sedan but once I'm close enough to be across the street the engine fires up. They flip their lights on and pull out speeding away down the street.

Whoever that was they definitely didn't belong here. The town called them out on his bullshit immediately. It gives me hope but I wonder how many more of them there are. I stop and take a look up and down the street. Nothing else seems off. No other suspicious cars. I start walking back watching the black birds pick through the grass for their next meal. The clouds get darker overhead. The wind gets stronger. I feel rain starting to fall.

"The weather's getting shitty." I say as I duck into the geodome feeling the warmth of their heater dry out my lips. The tight parachute fitted around the dome flaps a little from the wind.

"Yeah it's gonna snow again." Johnny says while rummaging through a crate.

"Great." I say.

"When it clears we're going to work on a new project." Jean says.

"What's that?" I ask.

"We're setting up antenna relays in town for when the power comes back on. You'll all have internet without having to plug into the local ISP. We don't know what kind of restrictions they're going to have set up in place." Jean says.

"That's such a great idea." I say.

"It's essential at this point. What if they try to make us comply with all their bullshit to use their service? Well we won't need them." He says.

"Great work."

"Well it's not done yet."

"You're one step ahead of them and that's the right place to be." I say.

"Right. One thing we've talked about doing also is starting our own ISP. We'll get that going soon. Right now it's not possible obviously but it should be relatively soon. Hopefully at least. We obviously won't have any restrictions on the ISP and we will accept BTC as payment."

"Brilliant. This is exactly the type of thing I love to hear. Thank you."

"Of course. It's really a team effort. To make all this work." Jean says looking up at me from behind his computer. Marshall nods. Johnny grabs a spool of wire from the crate and shuts it.

"Keep up the great work. I'm heading off for now. I'll see you guys later." I say with a wave and then duck back out into the cold rain. Except it's no longer raining. It's starting to snow. I walk over to the welcome tents to check on them and see how they're doing.

"Shanna, you guys good over here?" I ask.

"All good David. They keep flooding in. We're gettin' them up to speed in good time." She says.

"If the weather gets shitty feel free to take the day off, okay?" I say. She nods and tells me she will. I pull out my phone and take a look at the time. Ten minutes to ten. Perfect timing. I head down to center camp and there's a large crowd gathered already waiting. The day goes by in a blur. When I'm done with each meeting I hang out at one of the kitchens drinking coffee, tea, or water. When I finish the last one Jessica finds me. I hug her I'm so happy to see her. Mage wags his fluffy tail at me too.

"How was your day?" I ask her. We sit down in some chairs in center camp under the circus tent underneath some of the tall heaters.

"Good, Amanda and I hung out, talked and stuff, she's a mess but she's doing okay, she's hanging with her family now." She tells me.

"So sad. I feel so bad." I say.

"I know. But don't. It's not your fault."

"Yeah. I still wonder what would have happened if I never tried talking to them though."
I say.

"They would have come at us one way or another." She says.

"That's exactly what Johnny said."

"Great minds think alike I guess."

It makes me laugh out loud a little. Mage is laying down at Jessica's feet and is chewing on a bone someone brought for him.

"Yeah. I guess. I chased a provocateur off earlier. Which reminds me I need to do something. I got a picture of him. We need to get this picture onto everybody's devices somehow. We should have set up some kind of community mailing list." I say.

"A provocateur?" She asks.

"Yeah. An undercover cop. Trying to start shit. Get people to commit violence. Someone called him out. I told him he's not welcome here. I need to get his picture to everyone somehow." I say.

"I'll do it. Send it to me." She says.

"Okay. Do you have an Atomic Mail account?"

"No I'll sign up for one now."

I wait for her to do that then she tells me the address. I send it to her the picture of the cop.

"I'll go around tomorrow showing everyone until you have a better idea." She says.

"Yeah, that's going to take forever, we need a better way. I'll get our tech guys on it tomorrow so you don't have to do that again. Thanks."

"No problem David. Gives me something to do while you have your meetings." She says.

"True. I'm not sure how much longer I need to keep this up for. Every day more and more people show up. I guess it's to be expected. It might not stop until the whole town is on board. That would be the ultimate goal." I say.

"It's okay. I think it's great. It really seems to be working out."

"Yeah except for yesterday."

"David stop beating yourself up. You saved our asses yesterday regardless of whatever got us there in the first place. Okay?"

"Yeah, I suppose you're right."

"I can volunteer at a kitchen or work the welcome tents during the days anyway. This place is fascinating. It's like a giant festival of resistance. I kind of love it to be honest. A part of me doesn't want it to ever end." She says.

"I know what you mean. I don't know what's going to happen to this place after the power comes back on. If we all tear it down and head back into town at least we had a place to make it happen. If some people want to stay and continue it then I think that's great too. I really have no idea." I say.

"Maybe it will be more of a community meetup than it was before now that all this has happened, you know?"

"Yeah possibly. I could see that."

"I mean people always came to the park, but not like this, you know?"

"We should keep the tradition alive and have a meetup at least once a week." I say.

"I love that idea." She says.

"Good. It's settled then. Bitcoin Town is as much of a place as it is an idea. It's a virus that will overtake the larger town and hopefully the state and the country and the rest of the world afterwards. But we'll always keep meeting here for as long as we live here as a reminder of why we originally met here in the first place."

"What if we move out to the country?" She asks.

"I'm sure we will eventually. But we got work to do here making sure this works. Once we get the whole town on a Bitcoin standard then we can consider it. Once it's done there will be no turning back. That's when it spreads like wildfire. But we can't let the momentum die off until we reach that point. If we just run to the hills and hide then it's possible all of this could have been for nothing." I say.

"Yeah I agree. We do community meetups wherever we end up." She says.

"That's true too."

"Sorry I'm thinking about the future so much." She says.

"Don't be sorry. I do it all the time. We're living in such uncertain times. How could you not, right?"

"Right. I know I try to be present in the moment as much as I can too though."

"That's important. I do the same." I say and reach for her hand. I place it in mine and press it gently. She looks over at me and smiles. The horn blows alerting the whole town that it's time to feast. I get a visual of the man doing it this time. He's wearing a suit that is made out of a hunted bear. The bears head is worn like a crown at the top of his head. Its black fur comes down over his back. I love these moments when I can just sit and enjoy it. When the camp is

peaceful and there's a palpable spirit of victory and perseverance. I revel in this moment because I know that it is fleeting. It's transitory. Like a bridge in a song. We get a key change and a reprieve. But we know the chorus is coming back again. And for us, that chorus is survival. With verses of confrontation and resistance leading up to them.

After eating in the most packed circle we've had since inception, which always feels like a calm celebration, we walk through the snow forming and grab the heater from the welcome tent. It's running low on gas but we should have enough for the night. Mage runs through the snow playfully hopping up and down in it. For us, it's not as amusing, but it will be okay. We walk with our hoods up to the tipi and crawl inside. We get the heater going and crawl under the covers with our clothes off and Mage laying at the foot of the bed. The sound of the snow patters on the outside of the tipi. The wind howls but we keep each other warm. Between the early sun setting and the storm it's dark now. There are no lights in the tipi. There's just the faint glow of the camp from outside we can see. We can hear the music playing in the distance. The people playing drums. The flutes. The guitars. The trumpets. The storm hasn't stopped them. If anything it's given them a renewed energy. We lay embracing one another listening to the music travel through us in the howling wind kissing feeling the energy tingling and mirroring between us. It's just as overwhelming as it always is and it never ceases to amaze me. I'm so happy she is here with me. I couldn't imagine trying to spend a night without her.

Our love for one another gets out of hand. I feel her trembling and we lay motionless catching our breaths covered in a thin layer of each other's sweat. I hold her as our consciousness melds and wanes into the darkness of the stormy night. It almost looks like I can see the stars somewhere up there with my eyes closed. Our breaths sync up and we fall into the strange not quite death of dreaming.

O.2

I wake at sunrise to find the camp unusually quiet. It's no longer snowing but it came down hard last night. I want to go outside and check it out but I'll wait for Jess to wake up. I think the sounds of the camp are being muffled by the snow on the ground. There must be a lot out there. It's colder than usual in the tipi. The heater has finally run out of gas. The only thing keeping the place warm is our collective body warmth emanating into the space around us insulated by the hide that's wrapped around the structure. The nice thing about tipis is they can't collapse from snow fall. I worry about the circus tent at center camp. Is it going to fall? Before long Jessica and Mage wake up yawning and stretching.

"Brrrr, it got cold in here!" She says pulling me closer to her.

"The heater died. We need to get gas. Plus it dumped snow last night." I say.

"Do you know where to get more?"

"I'll ask Johnny. He's gotta have some."

"Good. Let's get up and get moving around." She says. We share an electric kiss for a moment then put our clothes back on. I grab the heater and let Mage and Jessica out of the tipi crawling out after them. I squint my eyes at how bright it is from all of the snow. There's a thick layer covering everything. At least a foot or more but it's hard to tell. I put my hood on so my ears don't freeze solid. The camp doesn't look too bad otherwise. The circus tent held up despite being covered in snow. There's a thick layer of snow around everybody's camps, kitchens, and tents. A lot of people moved their camps underneath the circus tent last night. It's no longer snowing but the sky is still hazy and overcast. The sun hovers somewhere above the horizon beyond the clouds.

"Can you get some coffee going? I'll try to catch Johnny before he takes off fishing, if he's even leaving today at all." I say to Jess holding her hand as we walk through the snowy camp.

"Sure." She says with her hood up and sunglasses on. She's had her hair in braids since yesterday. They dangle down both sides of her face from her hood.

"Thanks. I'll be right back." I say and head over to the geodome still lit up by the Christmas lights. The warmth from inside is so relieving. Jean and Johnny are playing a video game on their computers. I can't see the screen but sounds like they're racing cars.

"What's up guys?" I ask.

"Hey David." Jean says looking up at me.

"Mornin' Dave." Johnny says without taking his eyes off the game.

"Johnny I need some gas. My heater's dead. Got any?" I ask.

"You betcha I do but not gettin' down there today by the looks of all the snow." He says.

"Fuck. The tipi was freezing. The welcome tents are going to be freezing too."

"Shoulda planned ahead." He says.

"Oh come on."

"I have a spare tank on the passenger floor of my pickup. Swap it out. I'll head down there fill it up soon as the snow clears. Quit yer bitchin' sonny."

"I'm not bitching, but thanks."

"You stay warm now. Jeans over here whooping my ass."

"I'm glad you two are having fun. I need something else from you today too." I say.

"Jesus Dave. So needy!"

"Look, we need a way for the camp to communicate with one another online. I have a picture of a known provocateur that I need distributed and right now I'm having Jessica go around today showing people the picture. There's gotta be a better way." I say.

"Yeah there's a way better way. We can have a community forum hosted on our own server. You can post it there. Anyone can post what they want. Everyone will be able to access it from their phones. Easy. I'll have it done today. Stop by later and I'll give you the link." Jean says.

"Thanks Jean."

"You got it boss."

"Provocateur? Tell me about him." Johnny says while staying concentrated on his game.

"Some bald headed sunglassed muscular dude trying to incite violence, a lady called him out, I heard the commotion, we took his picture, I followed him out of the camp, he got in a black sedan with tinted windows on the passenger side, then they drove off after a couple minutes. Was the most obvious provocateur of all time." I tell him.

"Show me the picture later." He says.

"I will. It will be posted on the site." I say.

"Good, call them out, ostracize them, do whatever it takes, we can't be havin' these sonsabitches in our camp startin' shit. I knew they'd be here at some point." Johnny says.

"I know. There's probably more."

"Course there is. All we can do is call 'em out when we see 'em though. They stick out like a sore thumb in these parts."

"Right. Anyway I'm going to head out. I'll be back later. You guys have fun, thanks again."

"Later David."

"Bye spook." Johnny says then bursts into expletives as it sounds like Jean beats him in the race.

I walk back out in the cold and squint my eyes again. Where the hell are my sunglasses? I trudge through the snow over to Johnny's truck and find the tank where he said it would be heavy and full. I swap it out with the old tank and shut the door. I haul it over to the welcome tents with the snow crunching underneath my shoes. Jessica's got the coffee ready and she's sitting down in a camping chair. I attach the heater to the new tank and set it behind the chairs. I turn it on and ignite it then sit down next to her.

"Thanks." I say and grab the mug of hot coffee feelings its warmth on my half frozen face.

"Of course." She says. Mage is playing with a bone underneath the table.

"Shanna and the others should be here soon." I say.

"It's okay. I'll go around and show everyone that guy's picture." She says.

"Tell everyone we'll have a website up later too. A community message board. So we won't have to do this again."

"Oh that was fast."

"That's what Jean said at least."

"Those guys are so great." She says.

"Johnny and him are in there playing a racing game right now."

"Are they? That sounds kinda fun not gonna lie."

"Go play with them later if they're not working." I say.

"I might do that."

"What day is it now? Day nine?" I ask.

"I don't know I'm losing track." She says.

"So am I."

"Oh well. What difference does it make anyway?" She asks.

"I know, right."

We sit drinking our coffee in the welcome tent as it warms up. By the time we're finished Shanna shows up and we make her a coffee. We sit talking with her for a little bit and eat some sunflower seeds. The rest of the welcome crew shows up and more people start flooding into the camp from town. I leave to let them do their thing and Jessica heads out to play with Mage then inform everyone about the provocateur and our community message board. Eventually the sun shines its way through the clouds and it starts to clear up. It's going to take days for all this snow to melt assuming it doesn't show again. People start clearing their tents from center camp as more people start waking up. The camp is alive and thriving despite the winter storm we had last night and I love to see it.

I thought I heard a buzzing sound so I look up and I see it. A drone. There's a drone hovering overhead barely visible and audible. I have no idea if it's someone's from inside the camp or from the police or the military but I wouldn't be surprised if it was the latter. Of course they'd be using drones to spy on us. Especially after their provocateur got publically shamed yesterday. I have no way of taking it down even if I wanted to. I bet Johnny does though. I'll ask him later.

The camp has grown so large we've almost filled the entire park now by the looks of it. I have no idea how many people are here now. My goal of getting the whole town on board may be more realistic than I originally thought. It's happening before my very eyes. Even despite all of the opposition we have faced so far. If anything it seems to have just galvanized our town further.

I walk around the camp checking everything out, saying hello to people, talking with them, getting a feel for how everything's going, seeing if anyone needs anything. I have a little bit of time to kill before the meeting at 10. I use the bathroom. I brush my teeth. For having spent nine or however many days it's been without power we're all doing relatively okay. No major issues I'm seeing right now. Some people who weren't able to get sleeping spaces around the heaters tell me they were pretty cold last night and had to knock snow off their tents in the middle of the night. It's too bad we can't get the school gym open for people to shelter in overnight. Where is that one woman who works there we met earlier on last week?

I find Jessica walking around and ask her to find her for me so we can get the gym open for people who don't have heaters. It will at least give people protection from wind and snow. Some people have things like generators and electric blankets, or small wood stoves with a stovepipe that comes out of their tent, or they have gas heaters like I do, but not everyone is as equipped as that. Some people didn't even have a tent at all. They showed up with nothing and had to rely on donations from one of the churches. As the weather gets worse, and more people have to deal with the cold, morale is sure to start going down amongst those that are exposed to it. Or worse, it might start threatening peoples' lives.

Someone driving a snow plow clears the roads that surrounds the park where we have established our resistance camp. It's an old silver and red Ford F-250 from the '80's. Doesn't look like they work for the city. Some people head back to their homes to grab more gear. Another circus tent gets brought in on a flat bed. A local food bank unloads a box truck full of food. I see a cop occasionally drive by but he doesn't stop or get on his speaker or flash his lights.

Someone driving a propane truck shows up. They say everyone is free to take as much as they want. I get on the bullhorn and tell everyone to who needs one to come down and grab a tank. People come flooding in and before long the truck is completely empty. Now we need to get the heating elements for people somehow. I ask around the camp if anyone knows where we could get any. I get one lead from someone who works for one of the churches but nothing definitive.

I spot another drone hovering overhead watching me watch it. It ascends higher as if that will make it harder for anyone to see. I check the time on my phone. It's almost 10. It's almost time for me to start walking down to center camp where I'm sure a packed crowd is already forming under the heaters. I hear the sound of a distant helicopter. It's too quiet to be concerning. But it starts growing louder. I get a sinking feeling somewhere inside of me. Is it happening again? It is. I think it is. The chopper gets louder and louder until it becomes obvious it's heading in our direction. Other people in the camp hear it now too and they stop what they're doing and look up for it. I walk over to the bullhorn and pick it up. I tell everyone not to worry if they show up. I remind the camp of our new protocol if they do. Some of the people who I met with yesterday are already starting to show up with their guns.

As the flatbed truck with the circus tent drives away after unloading the first army truck shows up and parks far down the road. The chopper gets closer and soon it's buzzing overhead again with its alarmingly loud rotor blades spinning like a cyclone. They're flying so low I can see the weapons, I can even see the faces of the pilots through the window and the guys sitting in the back with the door open on the side. More people with guns show up to defend the camp and stand in line just like the guardsmen did when they first showed up. The chopper flies the extent of the camp and then turns around and flies back. Any lower and it would be hitting power lines and crashing into the ground in an arc and a fireball. The whirring sound of it is deafening. I'm sure Mage is freaking out again. I wonder where Jessica is?

I was wondering why only one truck had showed up and parked so far down the road. Now I know why. Tanks. They brought in tanks. They drive in formation along the road completely blocking the cars parked on both sides. I can't even count how many there are. They fill the entire street. They're huge. The color of sand. Their cannons point forward down the road. Are they going to use those on us? I get a sense of panic coming from the camp even though I can't hear anything from the sound of the chopper. Some people are gathering watching now. The people with guns are holding them back. Some people are heading away from the group and further into the camp as fast as they can.

The tanks eventually stop rolling down the street and park dead center in the middle of it taking up the entire road. Their presence is disturbingly ominous. Why would they send in tanks if they weren't planning on using them? They're not going to try to run us over, are they? Jessica. I need to find Jessica. People are starting to freak out and run all over the place. The line of people with guns grows longer. The crowd behind them grows larger and more belligerent. I can't hear anything they're yelling but I know it's loud and chaotic just by the sight of them. Will they even be able to hear my bull horn or is the chopper going to completely drown that out too?

"Hold the line! Keep them back!" I say over the bullhorn. By the looks of it I think they can hear me. I get nods and thumbs up. Trucks full of soldiers are showing up on some of the

streets down the road. They're getting out of their trucks and getting ready to head over by the looks of it. They're all armed with rifles wearing their black face masks. Things are getting tense. We don't want a repeat of last time. But this time looks like it's going to be even worse and everybody knows it. This is it. This is why we're all here. If we can't be free and we don't fight for our freedom we deserve whatever it is they've brought for us. No matter what happens at least we tried and at least we were on the right side of history. Never forget this moment.

"Peaceful united non-compliance! We are gathering to exercise our right to free assembly! They cannot take that away from us like they took our power away from us! Do not provoke them! Stay back do not give them any reason to advance like last time!" I yell over the bullhorn. I see Jessica and Mage. They heard my voice. They come running over to me. The scene is absolute chaos. The helicopter whirring as low as it possibly can overhead circling the camp around and around. The thick layer of snow everywhere. The group of townspeople absolutely having none of it and the line of people with guns firmly holding them back. The line of tanks in the street. Now the soldiers are starting to advance. My heart feels like it's going to beat out of my chest. Time dilates and slows down. I give Jessica my phone and turn the camera on record. She starts recording everything while standing next to me. Mage is barking and I can't even hear him.

I feel an overwhelming sensation of not quite fear, but anxiety. Not knowing what they're going to do but seeing how much firepower they have is alarming. I watch as the soldiers start to line up a little further back than last time. Last time they all stood on the sidewalk in formation. Now they're lined up along the tanks in the street a good five meters or so from where our people are standing. They stand at attention with their rifles shouldered looking Manchurian and dronelike. I can't count how many of them there are but it looks like we've got more people with guns than they do. Except they have fucking tanks and we don't.

"Peaceful! Everybody stay peaceful!" I yell over the bull horn. I feel like at any moment something really bad is about to happen. I keep waiting for the soldiers to do something more than stand there but they don't move. Our gunmen and gunwomen hold the line. By now there's a huge crowd that's gathered behind them. They're still completely inaudible over the sound of the helicopter. Occasionally I'll be able to hear people yelling things and chanting things faintly when the chopper makes its way to the other side of the camp. But it comes right back and everything is impossible to hear again. What's going to happen? What are they going to do next?

"What are you guys even doing? Why did you come here? Why are you following orders? You brought fucking tanks? For what? Some people peacefully gathering in a park? What the ever loving fuck is wrong with you all? Shame on every single one of you for complying with those fucking orders. For what? So you can go to college? So you can put food on your table? Are you having second thoughts yet? Is it really fucking worth it? Is this what you all signed up for? To drive a bunch of fucking tanks over people peacefully gathering in a park during an unprecedented power outage which we all know was deliberate and planned. Shame on all of you! What has happened to our country! Can't you see what you are all doing! Is this the USA you all want to be living in! You all know god damned well it isn't! Shame on you all. You know what you're doing is beyond wrong. It's immoral. It is evil. You are all cowards if you do not disobey your orders and stand down immediately and you all know it!" I go off over the

bullhorn. I can see the soldiers looking at me. Their faces emotionless and blank like clones. The crowd is absolutely losing it now even though I can't hear them. They can hear me.

"We have food here. We have resources for learning. You don't need college. You do not need the army. You can defect right now and join us. You know you want to! You know you don't want to be standing there right now looking at the citizens of your own town, your own state, your own country like we're the enemy. Like we're terrorists! Ask yourselves, who are they real terrorists here today? Is it the people peacefully gathering in a park trying to survive a power outage, or is it you all with your fucking tanks?" I keep going off on them over the bull horn. I can't even describe the anger I feel right now and I want them to feel it.

In unison, like a death squad of synchronized swimmers, the tanks slowly rotate their cannons clockwise from noon to 3 o'clock. Now they're all pointing straight at us. The soldiers stand there motionless. Expressionless. Faceless. I think I see some of them looking at each other. What are they doing? Are they having second thoughts yet? They're not going to use those cannons, are they? They're just trying to scare us, right?

This is bad. This is beyond bad. I never thought they would show up with tanks all the way up and down the street. Let alone point their cannons at us. At any moment they could fire on us. Blowing us all up like boney water balloons. Then they could go back to their base patting themselves on the back excited by all the action. Mission accomplished. I stand with Jessica recording everything watching the soldiers and our own militia standing in line in front of the crowd who all look like they have had enough. People are yelling even though they can't be heard. I can feel their anger and frustration just looking at them. The chopper does another round over the camp and comes back.

I keep waiting for them to do something. I wait for the cannons to fire. They don't advance. They don't shoot. We're like a chess game that is set up but hasn't started yet and they're playing white.

But nothing happens. The chopper flies over head. The soldiers stand unmoving. The tanks point their cannons. The militia holds the crowd back. I don't know how much time has passed. I don't know how long this is going to go on for. I don't know what happens next. What are they waiting for? If they were going to do something wouldn't they have done it by now? Or is this part of the plan? To terrorize us for as long as they can so we're easier to deal with once we're all afraid?

"You don't have to do this. Put yourselves in our shoes. All we're trying to do is survive. We've had no power for nine days. Many people in our town ran out of food. They ran out of clean water. They would have starved if we didn't gather here. Is that what you want? Honestly? To see a whole town of people starve to death? What about the rest of the state? What about the rest of the country? How many people are starving right now? Have you even thought about what you're doing and what we're going through? Have you? What kind of soldier tries to stop their own people from surviving? What is wrong with you all for following these orders? Can't you see what they've done to you? Can't you see the military you swore an oath to has lost control? Can't you see that the only moral and sane choice for all of you is to defect right now and join us? You have no future with them. You think they only want to destroy us? They want

to destroy you all too and you know it. How many shots have they made you take? Think about it. If your allegiance is with them then you are on the side of authoritarian corruption and evil. Our government will never change and represent the people again unless soldiers like you who are ordered to enforce this totalitarian psychopathy stop and say NO! You're not going to do it! This ends with you all right here! You all have a choice right now. Do you stay with them and let them destroy us for trying to survive, or do you defect and come to our side and help us restore the values our country was founded on? I know some of you are patriots who want what's best for our country and you hate seeing what has happened to it! Do the right thing! Join us NOW!"

I give them another mouth full on the bull horn. I don't know if it's working. I can't think of anything else to say. I want them all to see how fucked what they're doing is. I don't know if it's going to work. Unless the army has completely brainwashed them they have to be able to see what they're doing is wrong. If there was ever a time for our military to defect it's now. It should have happened so many other times but this has gone too far. There's no lie they could have told them that could justify them turning on a bunch of hungry desperate people. They're the arm of a tyrannical out of control government at the end of its pathetic life and they know it.

The standoff continues and it's unbelievably tense. It feels like something terrible is going to happen at any moment. My anxiety is through the roof at this point and I'm physically trembling there is so much energy zapping through my solar plexus and legs. So much time passes that my phone dies and Jessica stops recording on it. She hands it back to me. She starts recording on hers now. I go for what feels like long periods of time where I say nothing over the bullhorn. The death machine whirrs relentlessly overhead. Then I pick it back up and start chanting for them to join us. Start repeating everything I've said before. I want to drill it into their heads. If they're going to attack us I want this day to forever haunt them to the point where they eventually commit suicide looking back on what they did to us. I hope it doesn't come to that. I really hope it doesn't come to that.

The standoff goes on long enough that Jessica's phone runs out of battery while recording. They're trying to use time against us. We have all the time in the world though. They're waiting for one of us to slip up. They're waiting for an excuse to use force on us. The standoff has gone on so long that some of the people in the crowd have left and gone back into the camp but there's still a massive group of people being held back by the line of our militia in the front. The chopper flies around and around the camp trying to scare and salience us all. The soldiers stand in formation along the line of tanks in the road with their cannons still pointing at us. The tension is wound so tight it feels like that at any moment it's going to snap violently. Then another moment comes. Then another.

A few black birds fly overhead and disappear over the town. The sky is clear but the air has a snowy chill to it. Some of the soldiers are talking to themselves. Leaning in to listen to each other over the obnoxiously loud chopper hovering overhead. I wonder what they're saying to each other? I want to approach them but I know better. Last time I did that all hell broke loose. So I hold back and wait and they do the same. Who's going to make the first move? It isn't going to be us.

I hear something incredibly loud and metallic snap all of a sudden from up above me. It startles me with an uncontrollable jolt because it was louder than the chopper itself. What the hell was that? I look up suddenly at the sky along with everybody else. Even the soldiers are looking up now. Something's wrong with the chopper. It starts spinning out of control. People start freaking out and running. I stand next to Jessica in a state of shock. I look over at her for a split second to see her jaw drop. I look back at the chopper going down across the street behind the tanks. It lands on somebody's house and the explosion knocks us both down. All I can hear now is ringing. A fireball mushrooms up into the sky.

"Are you okay?" I ask frantically but I can't hear my voice. Can she hear me? I get up and help her up and she nods that she's okay. Mage is really scared and ran to hide under a table. It all happened so fast. People are getting back up on their feet. The soldiers nervously attempt to hold their formation after getting knocked to the ground. Our militia line looks noticeably spooked but they are undeterred. The crowd behind them no longer looks like an angry defiant mob. They are giving off a palpable shocked vibe now. I think everyone is to some degree. The explosion was so loud. The fireball rages on into the sky. Some soldiers rush to assist but the majority hold their formation. They're saying things to each other. Things I can't hear beyond the ringing in my ears. Black smoke spews into the sky behind the tanks almost looking like an inky liquid defying gravity above the flames. The house is completely destroyed. There's nothing left of it. There's just a charred carcass of the chopper engulfed in flames and the disgusting smelling black smoke pluming off of it.

What the fuck just happened? What caused the chopper to go down? It wasn't one of our people was it? Are they going to use this as an excuse to attack us? I get a sinking feeling somewhere deep within me. Things just went from bad to worse and everybody knows it. I wish there was something I could do to diffuse this situation. There's gotta be something I can do. I pick up the bull horn.

"Please do not think we had anything to do with that! We are a peaceful gathering and do not want war! We do not want to fight you. Our people would not have done that. We do not take responsibility for the tragedy that just occurred. Do not attempt to use this as an excuse to use force on us. History will show you are wrong." Even with my voice being amplified by the bull horn I can barely hear it. I mostly just feel the vibrations moving through my skull. The ringing is too loud.

A second explosion sends people ducking and putting their hands up over their faces myself included. Another fireball launches towards the sky. The putrid black smoke pours up like an oil slick pouring out of a broken pipeline in the ocean. I pick up the bull horn again not knowing what else to do.

"Your government can't even protect you while flying in choppers. They are incompetent and out of control. Look at the horrific tragedy they just caused. How many of you did they just kill? How many more could have died if it landed on you? Or us? And they want you to come down here and point your tank cannons at us because our town is going hungry with the power off and the supply chains shut down? Are you on the side of the people or the side of a failed state government that doesn't give a fuck about you or the rest of the people of this great town, this great state, and this great country?" I don't even know if they can hear me but I'm going off on them anyway. This standoff needs to end. Something needs to give.

"Let's end this right now. Get back in your tanks and trucks and go back to your base. Or come to our side and join us and be on the side of the people. Your choice. We would welcome you with open arms. Make a statement and show the rest of your brothers and sisters you're brave enough to stand with us. Be the first domino that falls and may the rest of you fall with them. Please. This needs to end. Let's end this peacefully. Let's end this rationally. We've already lost enough people today. We don't need to lose anymore. Get back in your trucks, turn your cannons around, and drive away. Or turn your backs on your corrupted military and come to our side." My amplified voice is starting to get slightly louder but it's still mostly drowned out by the high pitched ringing.

Some kind of fluid from the downed chopper has leaked all around the house that it crushed in a fireball of exploding flames. Some of it made its way into the road and down the gutter lighting that on fire as it trickled away. Some of it seeps over into another property igniting another house on fire. I don't think the fire department is going to come to the rescue. The roads are completely blocked off by the military. I'm not sure if there's even any pressure in the fire hydrants anyway. The fire rages on and there's nothing anyone can do about it. Some soldiers stand around examining it. Some of the other soldiers in line look back at it. They're more loosely grouped now. Some of them have gathered together and are having conversations. They no longer form a perfect line. Our line is still holding strong.

The crowd of townspeople are chanting something now. They're chanting "Join us! Join us!" over and over. There's something remarkable about it. What they're saying makes so much sense but when in history has the U.S. military ever stopped what they were doing and joined the side of the citizens? Probability is not on our side. And yet for some reason it feels like it is. I can't explain it. We've crossed some kind of rubicon and everybody knows it. They've gone too

far and they know it. Are they going to retreat or double down and run their tanks over us? The anxiety is unbearable. The constant waiting for something, anything, to happen. The overwhelming feeling that I need to do something. The sinking realization that I've done all I can. I try to breathe deeply and deal with it the best I can.

The soldiers are arguing with one another now by the looks of it. What is going on? Should I try to intervene? I don't want to fuck this up. It may already be fucked up beyond my control though. It's impossible to tell with all the fire, smoke, tanks, and chaos. Our militia holds firm. The crowd of people continue their chanting and hollering. I get back on the bull horn.

"We can resolve this like men. There's no need for violence. Send one of your men forward if you want to open up a dialog. There's no need for this standoff any longer. We've both shown what we're here for. Now let's end it." The soldiers look up at me. One of them signals for me to come down. Did it work? One of their men steps forward. A generic looking grunt in a black face mask and beige camo just like all the rest. I put the bull horn down. I press Jessica's hand and look her in the eyes. She tries to get me not to go but I insist. This needs to end. They've signaled they want to open up a dialog. I step forward cautiously. The soldier and I meet half way in-between their loosely grouped line and ours. I reach my hand out and he grips it firmly. We shake them and let go. Behind him a cloud of charcoal black smoke pours into the sky as the fire rages on. I can feel the heat coming off it from here.

"We have orders to disperse this illegal gathering and eradicate anyone who stands in our way." He tells me. I can barely hear him through the muffled face mask and my ringing ears and I think he's yelling. I lean in closer to try to hear him better.

"Then stand down. I know you heard what I just said. There's no way you and your men can comply with those orders." I say as loudly as I can without screaming. He hesitates and looks around for a moment.

"If we defected they could kill us." He says.

"You really think they're going to do that? Who's going to do that if you all defect?" I ask. He pauses again nervously trying to remain stoic and dronelike.

"I don't know if all of our men will." He says.

"So some of you will?" I ask somewhat astonished but trying not to show my cards too much.

"We didn't sign up for this. Some of us grew up here. This is our home. Our families are out there with you. How could we do this to our own families? To our own people? In our home town?"

"I know. This has to end. It ends here. It ends with your men making a choice. You heard what I said. We do not want violence and we welcome you with open arms. History will look back on this moment true patriots stood up for what was right. How far have we fallen? End this now!" I say. The soldier, whose nametag says Grant, pauses to think for a moment. Then he

looks back at his men who all look at him. He turns back to face me. The toxic smoke of death plumes on into the clear blue sky behind him.

"I can't predict the consequences of our actions if we choose to defect. Are we going to cause a ripple effect of patriotic defiance or are they going to come down harder on us? And I don't want to be responsible if they choose to double down and try to hit us harder." He says through the mask. I hold my ringing ear toward him to hear him better.

"It doesn't matter what they try to do. What matters is you making the right choice. Others will follow with their own decisions. You can't comply with these orders so you're not going to. End of story. Whatever happens because of that isn't on you just like your tank cannons being pointed at us isn't on us." I say loudly so he can hear. He looks at me while he digests what I said. Then he looks at the line of militia men and the crowd chanting "Join us! Join us!" behind them.

"It's a lose lose situation. We lose if we comply, we lose if we defect." He says.

"You're wrong. You lose if you comply. You win if you defect. Winning is standing up for what is right."

"We lose our scholarships. We lose our payroll. We lose our careers. Everything."

"It's not worth murdering a whole town and your own families because we tried to survive a power outage that was deliberately forced upon us. Now go. Tell your men to turn their backs on the orders and join us. Our men will not shoot. Our people will not attack you. We all want you to join us. Send a message to everyone around the country and the world that freedom can beat totalitarianism. Be on the right side of history. It's more important than whatever it is they've given you. We will help you get your lives back in any way we can and never forget this day. Understand? Now go." I say to him firmly. He nods.

"Wait right here." He tells me then turns his back and walks over to his men. I'm standing right by one of the tank cannons. To think that it could fire at any moment sends shivers down my spine. I stand as calm as I can between my men and theirs while he talks to them. The fire rages on and the warmth coming off of it is so intense that I'm not longer cold. I glance back at the people behind me. They eye me optimistically. Jessica looks worried. I try to tell her its okay with my lips but I don't know if she can understand. The soldier, Grant, goes around the line of his men and the groups that have gathered. Then he pulls out a walkie talkie and talks with someone on it. He sets it down on one of the inner wheels of the belt driven tanks and walks over to me.

"Okay. This is it. Get on your bullhorn and inform your people of the situation. We're defecting. We don't want any confusion." He says.

"You got it. Thank you for making the right decision." I say. I shake his hand firmly then walk back over to Jessica and the bull horn.

"They're defecting." I tell her picking up the bull horn.

"What? Really?" She asks surprised.

"Really." I say then turn the bullhorn on.

"People I need your attention please! We have reached a breakthrough in our dialog with the military. They had orders to clear our camp and eradicate anyone who stood in their way and I just now received confirmation that some soldiers are defecting and coming over to our side. They don't want any confusion as to why they're coming over so please welcome them peacefully and warmly." I say but before I'm done the crowd erupts in cheers. Some soldiers start walking over and shaking hands with the line of militia men and women. They join them and our line grows longer. It's now our militia with newly added defected military support and townspeople against whoever is left on the other side. Dozens of soldiers have defected and some have exited their tanks to join us as well. I can't tell how many are left but there aren't many. I look over at Jessica and she is smiling excitedly.

"We did it!" She says.

"Yeah, unbelievable. Hold on, okay?" I leave her again and walk over to Grant, the soldier I was just speaking with still with the bull horn in my hand.

"What now?" I ask him.

"I'll show you what now. Give me that." He says. I hand him the bull horn and he turns it on.

"Now it's time for the rest of you to leave. Mission failed. Those of you who are left can drive the tanks back and report back we've defected. Don't even think about trying anything. There's nothing you all can do and you know it. Shame on each and every one of you who won't join our side. You heard our man here. You're all a bunch of fucking pussies! Get the fuck out of here! Come to our side or get the fuck out of here now! You're either for freedom or you're a slave to the murderers and traitors who have stolen our country. To hell with all of that and to hell with the rest of ya'll. We're taking this country back and you can't stop us!" He yells into the bull horn then hands it back me.

"That's what." He says. Some more soldiers are joining us. Some of the tanks are already starting to drive away moving their cannons forward as they slowly roll their gargantuan death machines down the snowy street. A few soldiers stand around like deer in headlights afraid to defect too stupid to realize the trap they're in.

"Get in the tanks and drive away if you're not going to join us you fucking pussies." I yell over the bull horn. They do just that. By the looks of it more than half defected. Probably closer to 75%. They have enough stragglers to retreat with all of their vehicles by the looks of it.

"Move the tanks and the trucks or we will move them for you." I say loudly over the horn. They scatter like cockroaches. The street begins to clear. The cannons turn away from us. Slowly, one by one, the war machines disappear. The trucks that brought them here disappear. And it's just us standing here. The chopper fire rages on. The house next to it continues to burn. We just dodged a .50 caliber bullet point blank to the face. What now? What comes next? What

unspeakable horrors will they try to inflict on us all now that our ranks include dozens of their defected soldiers still armed with their weapons? I don't know. All I know is whatever happened was a turning point. If it can happen here it can happen elsewhere. Maybe it already is, or has, happened elsewhere. It's only a matter of time before this pushback against tyranny spreads and our people are free and prosperous again. I pick up the bull horn and address everyone.

"Great people gathered here today in defiance of all that is wrong, this is a turning point in the history of this country, and our movement here in town. What happened here today is never going to be forgotten. The people here who made this decision will never be forgotten for doing what is right. I know the weather is shitty but this calls for a celebration. We must celebrate our victory over tyranny! We must celebrate our new members of our town! We must celebrate freedom! What do you all say?" Before I click the bull horn off the crowd erupts in roars, cheers, and howls. The energy is primal and electrifying. I can't help but smile feeling it and seeing the response from the crowd.

"That settles it then. Show the men and women who defected today a good time. Help them get familiar with the camp and get set up with whatever they need. We owe them more than gratitude." I say loudly over the horn. I shake many of the soldiers' hands. I tell them to find me if they need anything and to meet me at center camp tomorrow at the usual meeting times. People are coming up engaging with the soldiers telling them they have things they can use. Some of the soldiers have spotted family and are hugging them who rush up to greet them.

When I initially thought of gathering townspeople together many days ago when this first started this is not at all what I had in mind. Of course how could I have predicted any of it? There's no way I could have. Something feels so right in the way the pieces fell together today. This feels like a major victory for not just us but for the country or maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. If word gets out about this it could start a chain reaction. Like the chain reaction I hope to start with the circular economy we got going here. Is this the start of the Great Defect? Is this how the Great Reset ends? I never could have imagined this. Of course I always wondered when this day would come. But I thought it would have been through economic warfare. I thought we would see soldiers defect because the fiat currency they were being paid in had hyperinflated and was worthless so they had no choice but to defect. Instead we saw it happen because the orders they were given were too immoral and the consequences of them too reprehensible to bear.

I bet their higher ups were not expecting that just like we weren't expecting it. What if they start defecting too? How do we get them to defect? I have a million thoughts running through my head as I watch the camp integrate our new members with open arms. Jessica and Mage come walking up to me and she looks visibly shook but relieved and even somewhat happy. Mage hasn't quite calmed down yet but he sticks by Jessica's side and looks up at me with his tongue hanging out of the side of his mouth. I hug her tightly and for long enough to let her know how relieved I am to have her in my arms again.

Today could have been so much worse. But here we are. The fire burns on behind us. The warmth is almost kind of nice. The smell of everything burning not so much. There must be bodies somewhere in there. By now likely just charred skeletal remains if anything. Life is

precious and freedom is the natural state of life to exist in. Don't think you can try to take it away from us and not hit resistance. We'll give it everything we've got to be who we are and who we were meant to be. The harder you try to stop us the harder we're going to fight back. We're going to win. Freedom is going to win. They wanted to reimagine our society into an open air prison. Instead we took the opportunity to say fuck that and lay the foundations for the world we always deserved to live in. We've got a long ways to go but this is a big step in the right direction.

O.22

The crowd starts dispersing back into the camp with our newest members the soldiers who just bravely decided to defect against their genocidal orders. Johnny's got in touch with some of them. They're talking in a group by the geodome. I ask one of them, Grant, who I negotiated with earlier, if he'll have supper with Jessica and I later. It's probably going to be late today due to the chaotic events that just occurred. He obliges still wearing his soldier's uniform and carrying his rifle strapped to his body. We walk away from the road with the house fire and the charred remains of the downed chopper. The fire blazes on and there's not a firefighter anywhere in sight. We don't have any resources to put it out. The only thing that can be done is to let it burn until it stops. Who knows when that will be?

As we walk through the cold camp still with snow on the ground as the sun makes its way down toward the horizon there is a new vibe I haven't felt before. Spirits are high despite the harsh conditions we're all living under. They can take away the power from the grid but this... they can't take away this. To see these people so alive, smiling, helping one another, in the face of such great adversity and hardship gives me hope that what I started was worth it and will work out the way I want it to for the benefit of everybody here and wherever this movement ripples outward to.

I need to write all of this down so none of it is ever forgotten. I'll work on that tonight. I should make another post for the internet too so everyone following along has an idea of the breakthrough that occurred here today. People should know that not only is it possible to get the most powerful military in the world to defect to our side it's already happened. I can't imagine the type of reaction people will have when word of this gets out. They might even think we're bullshitting. We have videos of the confrontation. If I can get a video of someone like Grant explaining why he did what he did we can show the rest of the world what we accomplished here. I'll ask him later if he would be interested.

The second circus tent isn't fully set up yet but someone lit a giant bonfire out of pallets they dragged out here in the center of it. The drummers are fierce and in perfect rhythmic synchronicity. Hundreds of people are gathered around the fire and other types of musicians, guitarists, flutists, a violinist, and a guy with a saxophone all join in with the sounds from their soul. Like birds taking turns in a singing circle sitting around a tree. Their spirits hovering somewhere hidden above them controlling their bodies in mysterious unpredictable ways. The three of us sit down for a while to watch and listen. Mage joins us too. He looks a lot more calm now than he did earlier.

"I was wondering if you'd be interested in doing something for us." I say to Grant as we sit in some camping chairs by the fire as the sun begins its early winter setting.

"What's that?" He asked.

"Tomorrow, if you're willing, I'd like to record a video of you or one of your fellow soldiers, asking you why you decided to defect. I want it as documented proof of what happened here today so we can set an example for the rest of the country and the rest of the world and

show them all that not only is this possible but it happened today. I perfectly understand if you don't want to do it." I say.

"It would be my honor. Let's do it right now." He says.

"My phones dead."

"Mine is too. We recorded the confrontation earlier." Jessica says.

"Well charge your phones then. I'll be glad to do it whenever you're ready." He says.

"Thanks. Can you imagine the reaction people will have when they see this?"

"I can. Everyone is under the superstition that the U.S. military would never do something like we did today. But the truth is we had to. We had no choice. The cowards that didn't and left with the tanks are pathetic and quite frankly I'm glad they didn't defect. We don't need or want that kind of scum here, do we? They tried to make us commit genocide on our own people, on some of our own families, and they went back to their base to sleep in the cots and eat their slop and follow their orders? Fuck those people. Those little cockroaches can burn in hell." Grant gets expressive with his hands as he speaks to emphasize his points.

"Do you think they're going to be a problem? The ones who didn't defect?" I ask him.

"Fuck no. They have almost no men after all of us who defected today. They'll have to call in reinforcements. But they won't. There are no reinforcements. They're all assigned to their local jurisdictions doing the same things we were doing probably being given the same orders we were given. They have no reinforcements to call." He says.

"Are you sure?" I ask.

"They brought out the big guns today David and not even that worked. They lost one chopper. They lost almost all of their soldiers some to death others to defection. They lost big time today. What can they even do at this point but admit defeat?"

"That doesn't seem very characteristic of the military though." I say.

"Neither is what we did today." He says.

"Touché. But won't they come after you? Like don't you all risk getting court martialled or whatever" I ask him somewhat cluelessly.

"Hah! Court martial! No David. There won't be any court martials. We will not be going with them under any circumstances. We will not obey any of their orders. They won't risk losing any more of their men to come and get us or get you at this point. They know what a massive loss this is for them. They know what they're up against now. And now you have us on your side. That's a force not to be reckoned with and they know it." He speaks with an air of confidence backing his words.

"Okay if you say so. I mean what's the next step after tanks? Drone striking us all in the middle of the night? Detonating a nuke on the whole town?" I ask half seriously.

"They could do that but they're not going to. They'll save the resources for if we get offensive. If we organize to try to take over their base then that's something I'd be worried about." He says.

"I guess we shouldn't do that then." I say.

"Nah. No need. We have a base here."

"Yeah but it's not quite a base. It's a park we're all camping in."

"It's as good a base as any." He says.

"It's been working out okay. It gets damn cold. We haven't even got the gym open on the other side of the park yet. We've all just been roughing it out here. Some with heaters. Some without." I say.

"And you're stronger for it."

"I suppose." I say. He's an optimist. Can't say I mind.

"Maybe we can help with that."

"Yeah whatever you can do feel free. Just letting you know the situation here on the ground." I say.

"Preciate it. I'll get together with some guys tomorrow see what we all can do."

"And I appreciate that. I'm sure speaking for everybody here."

"Teamwork makes the dream work brother." He says.

"I think my phones charged enough to do a video." Jessica says.

"Let's do it." Grant says and stands up tall with his back straight. He turns his back to the fire and the people gathering around it. Jessica walks in front of him with her phone in her hand. I sit in my chair off to the side with Mage at my feet watching her.

"You ready?" She asks.

"Always. Hit it." He says. She gives him a thumbs up to let him know she's recording.

"Hello world. My name is Commander Grant. I was commander of a special forces unit for the U.S. military until today this afternoon when me and the majority of soldiers in my unit defected from our orders to disperse a peaceful gathering and eradicate anyone who stood in our way. Yes you heard that right. I said ERADICATE ANYONE who stood in our way. These people who we have joined after defecting are gathering peacefully in a park in their town because the power has been out for over a week. Many if not most of them ran out of food and clean water

days ago. They had no choice, if they wanted to survive, they needed help from their fellow townspeople and the resources they could collectively pool together. Who are we, the former U.S. military, to tell these good kind people, our people, that they cannot do this? That they do not have the very right to survive in the country our forefathers fought with their own blood to secure for them? We have friends we have known our whole lives who have gathered out here. Some of these people are our own family members. Some of them were our neighbors. They are all Americans just like we are. We did not sign up to fight a battle against our own people. We did not sign up to wage war on our home turf. We did not sign up to eradicate people peacefully gathering. No. That is not who we are. No amount of coercion or manipulation will ever make us comply with those genocidal totalitarian orders. Make no mistake people. The orders we were given today were genocide. 100%. Your government wants to commit an act of genocide against you. Do you see how far we have fallen? Do you see why we had to disobey and defect? Are you hearing me out there, people of the world? Are you in a similar situation? Are you being prodded and goaded into genocide? I call on you all to hear my words and do the right thing. Disobey your orders. Defect from your ranks. Take up arms with your local people like we have and let's make a stand against this attempted takeover. The time is now. Let's make god damned sure they fail. Will you choose to be on the right side of history or will you take the side of the genocidal murderers? That's not who we are. That's not who you are. If you can remain peaceful, please do so, but the good lord watching down on us will understand if you have to defend yourselves. Signing off for now. Be brave knowing there are others out there who have already done what you need to do. Godspeed."

"That was perfect. Powerful words." Jessica says sitting back down in the chair and putting the phone in the cup holder.

"It had to be said." He says. He sits back down with us too.

"Send that to me please." I tell her.

"Sending now." She says.

"I've been documenting our entire process, both online for others and in a personal journal, so other people out there can replicate what we've done here. I don't know if you know anything about Bitcoin but we are using it to create a circular economy here that's completely cut off from the fiat banking system. So when the power comes back on and they try to force everyone into their central bank digital currency that can only be used with a vaccine passport or whatever we can all say fuck that, we're not using it, we already have our town running on Bitcoin completely decentralized." I say.

"I know a little bit, but not much he says. Sounds like a good plan to me." He says.

"It's okay. Tomorrow at the meeting I'll explain everything and send some your way to get you started."

"Anything would be better than that fiat crap. It's lost so much value already." He says.

"Yeah exactly. And it will lose even more. We haven't seen anything yet. The way I see it, their centralized bank coins will be hacked because of course they will be, public will lose trust in them after massive funds are lost, hyperinflation will kick in even faster, Weimar Germany style, their value will plummet to zero. Bitcoin will be the only viable payment method and store of value left. And instead of standing there like a deer in head lights dead broke with no money all of us will already be opted out and it will have no effect on us whatsoever. In fact we're likely to even profit profoundly off of the inevitable collapse as the rest of the world realizes they were late to the game and piles in with whatever wealth they have left." I tell him.

"You've really thought this through, haven't you? You're not just out here making shit up. I like that." He says.

"I've been planning for this to happen for years, then it did. The power shut off just like I knew it probably would. Just like they were simulating. Jessica and I went around town and put up signs telling everyone to meet here. The first night it was just a hand full of us. Mostly our neighbors. We ate soup and talked. Then the rest of the town slowly started showing up. I've been getting everyone up to speed, showing them how Bitcoin works, putting Bitcoin in their wallets, explaining how to use it, why it's important, and how our goal is to get the entire town operating on a Bitcoin standard so not only can we fully opt out and create a better world for us all but hopefully spread what we're doing to the rest of the state and the country. That's the dream. It's yet to be determined if it will happen. But we've made good progress so far."

"That makes a hell of a lot of sense. That's how we beat them isn't it? That's how we win. Economic warfare. Brilliant. But what were you saying about simulations before?" He asks.

"You know, Cyber Polygon? The World Economic Forum's simulation? They simulated a cyber-attack that shut down the power grid for weeks at a time over huge amounts of areas. That's how I knew this was going to happen. Lots of people did. These people, they're completely insane, they announce their plans via simulations for whatever reason. So they can orchestrate them as if we're all on a stage or something. Pawns on a chessboard. They did the same with Event 201 just before that whole corona hysteria." I say.

"I didn't know that." He says.

"Yeah, Klaus Schwab, the head of the WEF, even said verbatim "there is going to be a cyber pandemic that will make covid-19 look like a minor inconvenience." I mean come on. How brazen is that? He straight up said it in a speech he gave. Now we're here. I'm not even going to entertain the possibility that that's a coincidence. I know better. I'm not naive." I say.

"No I believe you. That's out of control. They need the crisis so they can come in and say they have the solution, right?"

"Exactly. That's exactly right. Without this manufactured crisis, the power going out for weeks, because of "terrorists", they can't justify their central bank digital currency, their vaccine passport / biometric ID or whatever the hell it's going to be. They're going to claim it's for everyone's safety. They're going to sell the technocratic slavery of the American people as it's for their own safety. And people will believe it. They're brainwashed. They have to comply or else

they won't be able to function in the society they grew up in. They won't have a bank account. They won't have their paltry universal basic income or stimulus checks. They won't be able to use the internet. The list goes on and on. There's no limit to the amount of control this gives them over us. That's why it's so important we do not give in and we use this chance to adopt a Bitcoin standard. I believe it's the only viable way we can truly fight back peacefully, opt out, and win. Without it we would be screwed. But we don't have to think about that. Let's keep our eyes on the prize. We are getting closer by the day I can feel it." I say.

"I like your style. You think like a top military operative. Except you're for the people. I knew I liked you the first time I heard you start yelling over the bull horn. You started opening my eyes. You started affirming what I was feeling deep down inside but was too afraid to confront. Thank you brother. Everything you just said makes so much sense and makes me understand the direction we are all moving in so much better. I have a clear vision of where you are taking us and a strong sense we will make it." He tells me as he looks over at me.

"Thank you. I'm so glad you understand, and we have you, and your people, on board with us."

"History will look back fondly on this day. I couldn't be more sure. This is bigger than us. So much bigger. I had no idea earlier when we defected. I was thinking about me, my men, this town. I wasn't thinking about the state, the country, the world, but now I am. Now I see where this is going. Now I see the magnitude of what we've done and what we must continue doing. You have my full support. Whatever you need." He says.

"Likewise."

We shake hands again. The sun is setting now. The sky is a smear of deep indigo fuschia and burnt tangerine clouds swirling in the icy atmosphere. The bonfire burns bright and tall with people gathered all around sitting, standing, and dancing. The music is loud, wild, and upbeat. Behind us smoke spews into the sky from the fire ignited by the downed chopper. The horn for supper blows loudly multiple times letting everyone know kitchens are ready to serve. I get up from the chair and tell them to hold our spot while I bring back something for them to eat. Mage looks up at me sitting by Jessica's feet as if to tell me not to forget about him too.

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As the sun sets beyond the horizon the glow from the downed chopper can be seen illuminating the night with the house fire that's starting to burn out leaving a plume of deathsmoke trailing high up into the sky. I go around getting some food for Jessica, Grant, and Mage. Mashed potatoes with butter. Mac 'n' cheese. Venison. I give Mage some of my Venison and we eat together at the second center camp that's formed without the top of the circus put on yet. The bonfire burns in the center. We're far enough away so that the heat isn't overwhelming, but close enough not to be freezing. The snow has melted around the fire. There's still a ton of it everywhere. As night creeps in a cold unforgiving chill comes with it blowing in the wind. It whips up the fire in a rage. I don't think about anything while I eat the venison. I just mash it up, tasting it, then swallow it. I've never had it before. It's pretty good and I'd like to have more of it more often in the future if possible. I've always wanted to learn how to hunt but never got the chance to.

After eating Jess and I part ways with Grant after we find him a place to crash and tell him we'll meet up with him tomorrow. We head over to the geodome. It's completely dark now. The only lights now are the stars above, the embers from the burned house, and the Christmas lights and LED's in the camp. The geodome is easy to spot due to its size and the fact that it's glowing. The warmth from heater inside the dome is always a nice contrast from the freezing cold outside. Marshall and Jean show us the new website they've made for the town. It's a typical forum with topics people can post in and it will work out perfect for what we need it for. We go over what topics we should add then I thank them for their work. I send some BTC to their wallets and wish them a good night.

Now it's just Jessica and I with Mage by our side. We got our hoods on and I have her hand stuffed in my jacket pocket to keep it warm. We stop for a minute to take a look at the aftermath of what happened across the street. There's now just an evil looking red pile of scintillating embers and an acrid leftover smoke.

"Good thing it didn't burn down the whole neighborhood I guess." I say.

"Yeah, or land right on top of us." Jessica says. We pause in the freezing cold to stare at it. Taking it all in. I'm not sure why we were both drawn to it but here we are.

"What do you think caused it to crash?" She asks.

"I have no idea. Did you hear that sound? That loud clank?"

"I did. What do you think it was?"

"No clue, I heard it and looked up, next thing I knew it went straight down into the house." I say. Puffballs of steam blow out of my mouth when I speak that can barely be seen.

"What if they did it on purpose?" She asks.

"Who? The special forces unit?"

"Yeah. To try to cause chaos, you know, to try to instigate a massacre or something." She says.

"I don't know. I don't think they'd kill their own men. Maybe they would. I don't know. I was hoping it wasn't one of our guys that did it. I hope it was just a freak accident or something. Bad maintenance. A part that broke out of nowhere or something." I say.

"How would any of our people have done that? Why would they do it while it was directly flying right over us?" She asks.

"I don't know. A drone? Like flown up into the rotors blades?"

"Can a drone take down a chopper?" She asks. I just shrug. We turn around from the burned pile of rubble and head back into the camp grabbing the heater from the welcome tent. Christmas lights, candles, small bonfires, and the big bonfire light our way through. The Christmas lights remind me that it's going to be Christmas soon. We'll still be out here most likely. What will that be like? This is going to be the most interesting Christmas I've ever had that's for sure. I can't remember exactly what day it is. I'll have to check my calendar tomorrow. It's so cold we head straight to the tipi so we can get the heater going and crawl under the covers. The camp is lively despite the weather. There's not a whole lot to do out here so people like to spend time with one another and enjoy the simple things.

Eventually the center camps will be full of tents again but for now people are still enjoying their evening. We get to the tipi, get the heater on, get a bowl of water set for Mage, and get under the covers. We lay on our sides and I hold her as we listen to the drumming, the music flowing on top of it, all the peoples' voices, and all the other sounds that mash together and get blown around by the wind rippling off the tipi. It's a clear night so I don't think it's going to snow anymore. We're both exhausted. I can feel her soothed by my presence which is how she makes me feel too. In these moments where we are together, for some strange reason, it all feels worth it, and everything feels right. It could be a delusion. It could be love drugging me into a hypnotic trance. I don't care what it is. Some things just feel right. So right.

We twitch a little bit as we fall deeper into the dream state. Our breaths slow. The glowing oscillations within my consciousness reappear and become dominant. I know what that means. How many thousands of times have we been over this now? I relax every muscle in my body. I let go of every little physical aspect of my being. I stop myself from thinking about anything other than this present moment. Jessica in my arms. Our breaths entwined. The hypnagogic cloud glowing in the darkness oscillating back and forth. Lime green. Irrescent indigo. Back and forth. Slower. Deeper down. Until I vanish.

What day is it now? I wake just before sunrise. I haven't gotten any writing done in a while. I grab my notebook, a pen, and I sit up to write. What is this, day ten? I think? I should have kept better track. I won't be able to cover everything up until yesterday between now and when Jessica wakes up but I'll at least get some done. The camp is mostly quiet. I can hear soft murmurings of early awakeners getting their coffees, teas, and fires going but it's barely audible. Only when the wind drifts just right can I hear anything. I can't even hear Jessica breathing. She sleeps without making a sound. I write and I keep writing until my hand hurts and then I write

some more. Eventually Jessica wakes up and I put the pen and the notebook down. We spend a little time together before getting out of bed, putting our clothes on, and heading out into the cold snowy morning. I squint my eyes in pain from the reflecting light off of the snow. Jessica slips her sunglasses on. We walk with the heater to the welcome tent overlooking yesterday's tragedy across the street to get some coffee going after brushing our teeth.

It's a really mellow morning. No one shows up since it's so early and this has already gone on so long I would not be surprised if the whole town hasn't already showed up and is already camping here with us. It's been ten days. Or at least I think it has been. How many people left are even out there? I wonder how many people died. Hopefully not a lot. Hopefully none. I have no idea. Jessica and I drink our coffee until Shanna shows up to take over with the rest of the welcome crew.

"We might be done here soon. I don't know. How many people are really still out there do you think? After this long? I think it's been ten days. At some point people are going to stop showing up. They're either going to be fine on their own or dead, right?" I say to Shanna. She just shrugs and takes a sip of her coffee.

"We'll be here greetin' 'til no one shows up no more." She says.

"Well all right then." I say.

I have my usual Bitcoin meetings today which I'll be doing until no one shows up to them anymore. I'll be onboarding everyone from the military who defected yesterday as well as everyone else who hasn't yet. Jessica says she's going to hang with Shanna and help her out today. I leave them to do their thing and head to center camp well before the scheduled meeting time. I see Grant hanging out with some of his buddies so I go up to him. He tells me he wants to take over the gym and says they're about to go over and bust it open.

"Won't that piss off the cops?" I ask.

"They can't do shit. Besides we won't mess up anything in there. It's just for shelter in case anyone needs it. They probably won't even know we're in there anyway. When was the last time you even saw one drive by?" He asks.

"Good point. Go for it then." He pats me on the shoulder and he gets up with a crew of his people to head over there. The tents moved to the center camps are all starting to be moved back toward the outskirts now as people wake up. I sit with a group of people who are drinking coffee or tea watching two people play chess. I watch the game with one eye and the group of ex-soldiers with my other while I wait for my meeting. I charge my phone with one of the generators and just kick back. The guys get the door to the gym open somehow by the looks of it. I have no idea how they even did it. I'm not sure if any of them even has any tools but it's hard to tell from this far away.

"Check mate." The winner says. An old Colonal Sanders looking man grinning underneath his whitish mustache. The loser, a teenager in a black hoody and baseball cap gets up frustrated and walks off into the camp. The group of defectors are walking back. Looks like

their mission was a success. They tell everyone whose present at center camp the gym is now open if anyone needs it. The door is unlocked. I don't ask how they did it I just thank them for doing it. I'm sure it will be useful for when the weather gets really bad again which it's bound to.

The camp feels normalish again. Like things may be ossifying in a way. I can still feel yesterday resonating through time into today, into right now, but there's no danger like there was, there's just a long drawn out winter day. I should get some writing done but it's almost time for the meeting. People are starting to show up and there's still a good amount of them. When it's time for the meeting I basically do a repeat of what I told Grant last night by the fire. He's here today in the crowd along with everyone else who defected. I really emphasize the economic warfare aspect of what we're doing and how this is our only chance at beating them and if we don't take this opportunity to fight back peacefully with Bitcoin now we risk them completely crushing us into submission with their totalitarian Great Reset plans. They all get it. I answer their questions. I show them how to use it. They back up their seeds and know to keep them safe. I give them all Bitcoin. Then I do it again another two times throughout the day eating sunflower seeds and drinking water during the small amount of time I have off in between. So far so good. All seems to be going according to the plan.

Before supper I hang with Jessica and Shanna. They say less people showed up today but still some people did. I have to wonder though what were they doing for ten days? Did they have ten days worth of food? Were they starving but ventured out after so long? Ten days without power is a long time. Maybe people just didn't see the signs in time and it took them this long to find us. I'd think by now, with all the commotion we've caused, with the tanks and trucks rolling in, with the chopper crashing and the house fire, people would know we were here, but you never know. It's a small town but it still covers a good amount of area. We have to be finally reaching max capacity. There's no way any remaining stragglers in town yesterday didn't hear the chopper flying low and the explosion that it caused when it hit the house. I was deaf for the entire day and still kind of am. Anyone would have come down here to check out what was going on. Especially if they had been holed up in their house or apartment for so long. I know I would have. Well, I was already out here on day one.

So this is the peak. Now it begins to wane and the next phase of the plan begins. Soon I'll be onboarding the last of the newcomers. Soon I'll have the entire town onboarded and with a deep understanding of what we're doing and why we're doing it. We have the foundation laid. We have the theory set. Now it's almost time to put it into practice. We will survive here together until the power comes back on. Then when it comes on we initialize the next phase. Bitcoin Camp officially becomes Bitcoin Town. We make it happen. We spread the word. Then hopefully it catches on in the rest of the state. Then the rest of the country. Then the rest of the world.

Ten days turns into eleven. Eleven into twelve. Twelve into thirteen. Christmas falls on the two week mark. There's snow on the ground but the sky is clear. People are wearing their Santa hats. A bunch of people brought their Christmas trees to the camp. A lot of them are already dried up and dead. They put them in a pile and burn them in a giant bonfire. Friends and families give gifts around the fire. The kitchens are serving hot cocoa. One of them serves egg nog. Some people shelter from the cold in the gym but lots are still outside hanging out.

We haven't had any further trouble from any police or military presence. No one has driven by. No choppers have flown over. I also haven't seen any drones. I catch myself watching the road often as if I'm expecting them to show up at any moment. I keep looking up as to spot one of their drones looking down on me. I don't know what to think of it. Wouldn't they want to come after us even harder now? Are they planning to? Why haven't they yet?

I talk with Grant about this almost every day and he says not to worry about it. I want to believe him but it's hard for me to after everything we've been through already. A part of me feels like the battle has only just begun. They wouldn't give up this easily, would they? The only reason I can think for why they haven't sent more troops down here is they're afraid of losing even more of their numbers like Grant says. I have no way of knowing so I try not to worry about it too much. I want to be prepared for anything and everything though to the best of my abilities.

Jessica knows I don't like gifts so she doesn't give me anything. She says she got us a bottle of wine for later. I don't see why not. I haven't thought about alcohol once since the first night we were together and if there was ever a time to indulge it's now. I don't hold any meetings today. We've almost got the whole town onboarded anyway. If there are any stragglers left at this point I can get to them tomorrow or over the next couple days. We should be in the home stretch of this manufactured crisis though. Their simulations called for three weeks. It's almost been three weeks. It's almost time for us to move to the next phase of the plan. Are we going to be able to pull this off? God I hope so. This may be our only chance.

As night falls on the camp once again the entire place is lit up with Christmas lights connected to peoples' generators or ones their neighbors are using. There's this unmistakable feeling that something special is happening despite the harsh conditions we are all enduring out here. They wanted us dead so we threw a giant party and had Christmas together. That's basically the gist of it. And we came up with a plan to beat them. That's what they get for overstepping like they did. At some point people see your totalitarian tip toe and with the right tools and the right support within their communities they have the courage to say no and fight back. So that's exactly what we did.

While sitting with Jessica by the bonfire of Christmas trees under the glow of the half-moon it strikes me as so absurd we had to even live through this. They actually thought this would work. They thought we would all fall in line and not fight back. They thought we'd all just accept being their branded slaves just like that. Now look at us all. They've given us a new reason to live. They've reinforced our conviction towards survival. They've made the very act of thriving into a defiant act. So how could we not? What can they even do at this point? They sent in the

cops. They sent in the national guard. They sent in their special forces. What can they even do now that our town is beginning to operate outside of their control? I don't think anyone fully understands the ramifications this is going to have. I don't think even I do.

This is the start of a new world where the people can finally have their power back. If we can make it work here then it can be made to work anywhere. These people in this town are not the most technology minded people around but it doesn't matter. If there's one thing they understand its freedom. One by one over a long period of time freedoms were lost in this country. They attacked us economically. They attacked our freedom of speech. They attacked our gun rights. They attacked our minds with propaganda. They attacked our futures with taxes. A little here a little there until before you knew it you were completely surrounded and couldn't imagine that there was a way out. We have a way out now. We have bored that tunnel and breached the surface. The dawn of a new era is coming. It's here.

Freedoms were always taken away under the guise of an emergency. I remember the Patriot Act being passed after 9/11. The name, of course, being the antithesis of what it really was, but how could you vote against it since it was named what it was? Not to mention how the twin towers never had insurance up until one month before the owner took out a billion dollar insurance policy and made out like a bandit but that's a story for another day. And don't get me started on tower 7. Or the video footage of the "plane" hitting the pentagon. They always needed a crisis to move forward with their totalitarian tip toe. Anyone paying attention has known this for decades. It's the same play over and over just with a different scapegoat.

It would seem old and tired if it wasn't a direct threat to my life. To think I even have to take any of this seriously still boggles my mind. Why can't I just go live in a cabin and let all of these retards kill each other off? They basically forced me to get the entire town to opt out as a way to fight back. I didn't want this. I wanted to be left alone. That's all I wanted. But no, you had to shut my power off, you had to threaten my life, and you pissed me the fuck off. Now look at us. Dancing around a Christmas tree fire drinking wine and egg nog under the moon with a plan of action for when you try to cattle herd us into your fake reset. You stupid motherfuckers! Too arrogant and drunk on power in your castle towers to see what's coming.

Maybe it won't stop here. Maybe we're meant to do more than just opt out. I don't know. Let's see what happens. We may encounter some resistance with outside forces we do commerce and trading with who haven't adopted a Bitcoin standard yet but we'll do our best to boycott them and find people who will accept our freedom money. Things may be rough for a little while but we can handle it. We've spent two weeks outside in the cold. We've gone up against the police and military. Come what may. We'll be ready for whatever challenges try to stand in our way. There will be an incentive to opt out and to be free from the burden of the false sense of safety from their totalitarian system of control. People will look back and wonder what happened and we'll be there to show them there's a way out.

Mark my words, when all is said and done, when our town is back up and running and everybody has opted out, when our trade partners have opted out, when our state has opted out, and when our country has opted out, there will be nothing else left to do except find you and make you pay for what you tried to do to us. Sure, we may be all about non-violence. I believe in

peace. But not when you threaten someone's life. That's a whole different story. When someone makes a credible threat to your life you have every right to put a stop to them. They desperately want everyone to be so brainwashed they can't even see them threatening our lives. I am not one of those people. I see it clear as the half-moon shining down upon me by this bonfire right now. I will never forget what you tried to do to us here and you will never be forgiven.

There will be no bunker deep underground enough. There will be no super yacht far enough out to sea. There will be nowhere on this earth where we won't be able to find you. Your security forces will have no allegiances to you once the money spigot gets turned off from the hyperinflationary collapse of fiat we all know is coming. What reserves you have left will be limited and we, us meager townsfolk, will be on a level playing field with you. You'll look back on your past as you grow closer to death each day wondering how you could have been so stupid as not to see this coming. If we don't find you first you'll die alone paranoid with fear surrounded by glistening relics of the old world you couldn't preserve even if you wanted to. It's our world now. You'll be made to pay for what you tried to do to us one way or another.

I never thought I'd be thinking the things I'm thinking now but you forced me to. You could have just left us all alone but instead your eugenicist egos compelled you to try and wipe us off the face of the earth so there'd be less of us for you control and those who were left would be easier to manipulate with your transhumanist experiments. You're everything that's wrong with whatever we are. Not us. You could have just left us alone. Now I'll stop at nothing until I find you.

My thoughts run wild sitting by the fire with Jessica and everybody else on Christmas. I hold her hand in my pocket. I see her smile. We drink wine and laugh chatting with other people at the fire. I see the people naturally living in the moment in blatant defiance of their failed great reset. They wanted us holed up in our houses starving desperate pleading with them to give us our lives back under whatever conditions they deemed necessary. Instead we forged a new way forward thanks to Satoshi Nakamoto. Thanks Satoshi, whoever you were, wherever you may be. We wouldn't have been able to do any of this without you. You were a genius a thousand times greater than I will ever be. I'm just someone that wants to be free. That's what USA is supposed to be all about. I won't stop until our people are free again. That day is coming despite their desperate and pathetic attempts to stop us and destroy what's left of this great country. I can feel it and everybody here knows it.

"This is the best Christmas ever." Jessica says as we sit by the bonfire.

"I think so too. I haven't had this much fun since I was a kid." I say.

"This is something else though. What we've done. What we're going to do." She says.

"I feel it. I was just thinking the same thing."

"It feels like we're going to make it." She says.

"Of course we are. They stand no chance. The American people aren't going to let go of their freedom that easily. We've had enough. We're all so sick and tired of the bullshit they've

tried to shove down our throats more and more all of our lives. Look at all these people. They get it. If they all get it then we can get everyone to get it too. The fight's not over. It's only just begun." I say.

"Yeah, I never thought I'd be involved in something like this, but it feels right. It feels like we're making an impact. I can't imagine doing anything else at this point." She says.

"That's it. That's the paradox. They think they can just corner us and force us all into their prison system of technocratic control. They don't realize they've made a monster out of us all who will stop at nothing to live our lives free and in peace and will take them down in the process. You can only push us so far before we fight back. We're fighting back. And we're going to win."

"I know, I've never felt like fighting back, always just kept my head down, went along with everything, not really questioning it, just sort of accepting things were the way they were, even though I knew shit was a little fucked up. But this. What they tried to do to us. It's too much. It's just too much. Even I can see that." She says as we gaze into the fire being kicked up by the wind. People keep adding more of their dead Christmas trees to it renewing the intensity of the blaze.

"Yeah. That's exactly it. We have no choice now. They forced it upon us." I say.

"I never thought I'd enjoy seeing so many dead Christmas trees burned. It's quite fitting if you think about it." She says with her eyes on the fire.

"They can kill our Christmas trees but they can't kill us if we all work together and fight their fire with our fire." I say.

"Their fire with our fire. I like that. Our fire smells better than theirs anyway."

"Their fire smells like bodies and burning plastic. Ours is rich in pinene and the holy spirit." I say. She just gives me a funny look. I shrug playfully.

The night eventually starts winding down. More people retire to their tents or the gym where they have their camps set up. We finish off the wine and say goodnight to everyone we were sharing the evening with. They keep piling on more dead Christmas trees and howling at the moon. We walk through the snow under the stars to the tipi to spend another night together listening to the sounds of the camp riding in on the wind before drifting off to sleep.

Today marks what I believe is the start of the third week without power. It's also new years day. The camp's spirits are still high but there's an anticipatory mood present. There was another celebration last night where the last of the Christmas trees were burned. Some people are definitely sick of being outside but the gratitude of life and communal connection balances out the harshness of it all. We have long since abandoned the welcome tents. By now everyone from town has showed up days ago, is still holed up in their prepper bunkers, or they're dead. I'm sitting in my camping chair around what's left of the fire with Jessica, Amanda, and Shanna drinking coffee.

"What's going to happen when the power comes back on and we're locked out of our bank accounts? What if I want to buy a house from someone in town and don't have enough Bitcoin?" Shanna asks me.

"I've thought about that. What I've given everyone should be enough to get started with the basics just to get the circular economy going. But for something like a house, I'll basically be your bank, lend you the funds, we can come to an agreement, write up the terms, so yeah that's how that will work."

"What if we can't buy Bitcoin because we can't access our accounts?" Amanda asks me.

"That's the thing. That's how they're going to coerce everyone into using their new tyrannical system and complying with their totalitarian great reset. Because of situations like this. Most people aren't going to question it. They want their money so they're going to comply. If when the power comes back on they force us into complying to get our old accounts then we have to make a choice. Are we going to comply or are we going to leave it behind so we can move forward opting out with a Bitcoin standard? I know what I'm doing. I will not be complying. Not even to get what's in my account. I was going to use that money to buy some land off grid. But it's dead to me now. I don't expect to get it back. I don't expect everyone to make that choice but you should at least consider it. Or maybe you comply just enough to get access, move your funds into land, Bitcoin if they let you, and then walk away. People will have to decide what's right for them. Long term compliance with the new system is technocratic slavery though and will lead to the end of our society and our country. We have to do our best to persuade everyone against going down that route and I think we've done a fairly good job here with that. The real work begins when the power comes back on though." I say.

"That makes sense. I want nothing to do with it. The whole thing can just fuck off." Amanda says.

"That's how I feel." Jessica says.

"Same." I say.

"It's been three weeks, so it should be any day now, right?" Shanna asks.

"Yeah hopefully. That's what they were simulating to happen so I won't be surprised. They're usually pretty spot on with that kind of thing." I say.

"So what about real estate? Normally I deal with people getting loans from banks. How's it going to work now?" Jessica asks.

"The banks are irrelevant. Bitcoin is the bank now. If people need loans I can do that. If they want to buy or sell the house it should be done using Bitcoin. Either they acquire it themselves or through someone who will lend it to them like me. You have the terms all written up, you can even put the funds on an opendime, and you can just hand over the opendime once the funds are proven to be there. Done." I say.

"Okay. You're going to have to show me what you're talking about. You really think this is going to catch on?"

"Don't worry I will. And yes, it has to catch on. We don't have any other options. It's liberty or death. Either we figure out how to get our town running on Bitcoin or we become slaves to the Great Reset. The Great Reset isn't great, it's an anti-human scam and it's a whole bunch of fucking bullshit, and we will not succumb to it! Things might be slow going at first but then it will start catching on. Slowly at first then all at once. Remember that. We're still in the slowly phase. Soon everything will be moving faster than we ever could have imagined. We have the foundation laid. Now to make it work. I believe we can do it. We've come this far." I say.

"What about me? I usually just give people rides. My app won't be accepting Bitcoin, will they? So how's that going to work?" Shanna asks.

"We petition them to do so, which they probably won't, while building our own app that does exactly that. Until then you can just do it old school taxi style. Advertise. Accept BTC on chain and with lightning direct from people who need rides and cut out the middle man. Business might be slower but you'll make up for it with the long term appreciation of the underlying. Bitcoin going up. Business will be slower anyway for a while with the total devastation of society which they just did anyway." I say.

"Aight. I get that. Yeah true that." She says.

"What about you Amanda? You got anything on your mind?" I ask.

"Not really, I do catering, so that's easy, either they pay in freedom money or they can fuck off." She says.

"I like your attitude." I tell her. She smiles a little and sips the coffee from behind the foggy steam.

"Thanks."

As we're sitting here talking drinking our coffees I am startled to the point I almost spill my coffee all over myself. Something just exploded. I look up and I see a shower of sparks from

across the street near where the chopper went down on top of the house. The camp lets out a collective gasp then goes quiet for a brief moment as the realization begins to hit.

"A transformer just exploded." I say.

"Does that mean the power's back on?" Jessica asks.

"I don't know, maybe, I don't know how else it would have enough juice to explode after all this time unless the power was back on." I say.

By now the camp has caught on to the significance of the explosion we just heard and they're starting to cheer and exclaim loudly things like "Yes!" and "Finally!" People start getting up from their camps and heading over to see what all the commotion is about. There's a massive wave of people moving from center camp and the inner and outskirts of the camp to the road. Some people are running they are so excited. All four of us get up and walk with them to see if the power is really back on.

"How are we even going to know?" Shanna asks.

"Our apartment is just down the road, if we can't see anything, we can just head there." I say.

We get to the snow slushy road and people are wandering around looking for any sign they can use to tell its back on. The houses nearby are all locked and we don't know who lives in them or if they're here with us. I pick up the bull horn and decide to make a quick announcement.

"People of this great town who have endured the harsh weather for three long weeks in search of community, survival, and freedom--- rejoice if the power is back on! But remember, we have only just begun. As we integrate back into the town this is the hard part. This is where the real work begins. Everything we've learned here at camp must now be put into practice and made to work in the real world. It is going to be a long and hard process but do not lose sight of the prize. The rewards will be great. When all is said and done we will have true freedom to show for our efforts. Freedom is worth fighting for and it's up to each and every one of you to make this work. Now let us go and start the next chapter, next phase of our plan. Go out with your peaceful weapon for opting out and light the way for everyone to follow. Let us make an example for our state, for our country, and for the world to follow and let us watch the dominos fall one by one. Now go, let us retake our town, let us take back our freedom, let us restore this country to the glory it deserves. We'll meet back here every Sunday from here on out rain or shine to regroup and help one another with whatever we need. From here on out this is Bitcoin Town and you are all sovereign individuals."

People cheer and clap and yell and hoot and howl. The camp is losing their minds celebrating what could finally be the end of the outage. Some people stand around looking lost. Others start packing up without confirmation. Just the transformer blowing up in a fireworks of sparks was enough to convince them. There are people running up and down the street looking for some indication. That's when we see it. The lights on at the school. It's over. After three long

weeks it's over. Jessica hugs me and I see Mage looking up at us wagging his tail. We don't waste any time. We start packing everything we brought in. People bid their farewells and their see you soon. People walk up to me with last minute questions. Marshall and Jean say they're getting the mesh network set up today so the town can have their own internet network in case the local ISP tries to pull some bullshit on us. Johnny says he's going fishing and gives me a wink.

I want to say goodbye to Little Lightning and thank him for his generosity before Jess and I head back into town. I tell her to hold on a moment I'll be right back. I make my way through the crowd tearing down the cold snow patched camp. People stop to thank me, to offer me things, to ask me questions, I oblige. It takes me much longer than expected to get to center camp due to the chaos but that's okay. I don't mind. The power's back on. We did it. We made it. I'm excited to move on and start the next phase. I walk through center camp and head out to the far side of the camp where the tipis are where I'm expecting to find Little Lightning and his crew of people getting ready to leave to head back to their land but I'm confused by what I see. The tipis were just right here not that long ago. Jessica and I slept in them last night. It's probably not even high noon yet. And yet they're gone. They're not only gone but there's no trace they were even here.

I look around mystified and dumbfounded. How did they tear down the tipis and move them out of here that fast? How did they know the power was going to be back on? It just happened. There's no way they could have just found out and then torn them down in the time it took me to walk over here. Did they just plan on leaving this morning after we woke up? Is this just an instance of serendipity? I don't know what it is but it's strange. Little Lightning, wherever you are, I'll miss you, even though I barely knew you, and I thank you for everything.

There's no point in standing here. They're gone. I walk back through the camp stopping and talking to people along the way back to the car. Again it takes much longer than it normally would. The tents are coming down. The kitchens are being disassembled. Totes and crates are being carried off. There are burn pits being tended to. Trash being collected. There are people even hanging around still who look like they're in no hurry of leaving. Waiting for the rush to die down before they make their journey back into town.

A part of me can't believe it's finally over and right on the day that I was expecting it to likely happen. They're so predictable. They don't even try to go against their plans and simulations. On new year's day too. They had to pick something symbolic, didn't they? They just go along with the script down to the letter. It's almost kind of funny but it's not, it's just too evil and insane to be funny. I walk through the slushy snow and the mud through the camp toward the road. Jessica is all packed up and Mage is in the back seat on the car looking out the window at me like he's pumped for a road trip back home.

"You ready?" I ask.

"Ready when you are." She says.

"Let's do it." I say and climb into the passenger seat. She gets in and fires up the engine and the heater. It doesn't immediately kick on but when it does it feels phenomenal.

"This feels so weird." She says.

"What does?"

"Everything. I feel like I'm in a spaceship."

"Drive the spaceship to my apartment then drive it to your house."

"Okay, but then what?"

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves." I say. She pulls out into the road slowly. There are people everywhere. They make way for us and we get through and head down one of the side streets away from the camp.

"I know, but what do we do next?" She asks.

"We do whatever we want." I say. She half laughs and smiles.

"That's not what I mean." She says.

"Let's assess the situation. Find out just how fucked we all are. Settle in. Then spend the week going around to all the major stores and making sure they're on board with opting out. Just a gentle reminder. I want to make sure the owners and managers are people who were at my meetings and I've already onboarded. I did speak with a lot of them but I want to make sure we get everyone on board and help them get set up with whatever they need. Some of this stuff is technical and they will need further guidance. It's going to be a lot of work but luckily it's a small town. We'll monitor the community message board for questions and issues helping people with whatever they need there. When Sunday rolls around we'll go back to the camp and have a meeting with everyone who wants to meetup and see how everything's going. Address any issues people are having. Then take it from there. What do you say?"

"I think that sounds good. You're the man with the plan."

"Alright then."

It all looks like a ghost town. There's no one anywhere. We haven't seen a single car yet or anyone outside. The only other living creatures we can see are the black birds hanging out on the telephone poles or rummaging through the slushy grass. We pull up to the apartment and I get out and grab some stuff out of the back. We put it in the dead silent apartment and flick the light switches on just to make extra sure it's really happening. I lock the door on the way out and we head to her house. Don't think I'll be needing that apartment anymore but I'll deal with that later. It's going to take so long for things to even remotely resemble any form of normalcy. We may never get a sense of normality again and that's okay. If what we had before was normal then I'm fine if that's not something we ever see again.

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The first day back is somewhat of a culture shock. I try to get in touch with family but the phone still isn't working. I try to connect to internet from the cell network but it's not working either. Jess and I eat canned meat heated up on the stove and sunflower seeds which I still have a lot of. Sometime after sundown I check to see if there are any networks to connect to and I see our camps internet show up. Marshall and Jean must have set up the antenna relays. I connect to it and it works. Parts of the internet that were previously offline start to come back online. I still want to see what happens when the cell network comes back online and what kind of restrictions they will try to impose on it.

We both admit it feels strange being alone in a house when we were surrounded by so many people for so long but it's also kind of nice. The heater is going. Mage is happy and laying in his bed. This is what we were waiting for. There's still a lot of work to be done but it's nice to take a break. I wonder how my family, who I tried to warn about this, is doing but I have no way of knowing right now. All I can do is wait.

So we wait, enjoying each other's company and loving embrace, until morning comes around. We get ready and have our coffee and talk about what we're going to do. Is it too early to start making the rounds? Probably. But we'll do it anyway. We check up on the community message board and see how it's going. We make a thread outlining our plan for the week and answer anyone's questions that have been posted. Looks like their phones are still not working either but they're still able to use the internet.

Jess and I get in the car and head towards downtown. We take down the signs we posted three weeks earlier. We decide to make some new signs when we get home reminding people of the next phase of the mission. Everyone should be up to speed by now but let's make extra sure just in case there are any stragglers. I get an idea as we drive to the first major grocery store. The water tower with the town's name on it. We're going to repaint it: Bitcoin Town.

The grocery store isn't open but the manager is there and he lets us in. She says she's dealing with a logistical nightmare and doesn't know when she'll be able to reopen as she can't make any calls. She also doesn't know how she's going to accept BTC as payment. That's easy I tell her. That's why we're going around making sure everyone is ready. I get a BTCPayServer set up for her and write up a plan of action on how she will be able to enable point of sale for both on chain and lightning payments. I tell her if she has any questions to email me or post on the message board.

Jess and I do this for the rest of the day going to store to store all dealing with the same types of issues. We assure them it's going to be okay and guide them on how we're going to execute the plan. Only one of the stores we go to already has it all set up and ready to go. They're just waiting on inventory to be able to reopen. We're making progress.

Cell service comes back online after night falls. I make some calls to family. They don't pick up. Maybe it hasn't turned on where they are yet. I make it a habit to call them once every hour until it gets too late. I'll call them again tomorrow and I hope they pick up. I make a post on the message board seeing if anyone wants to fill the painting job. Someone has the tools and can

get it done tomorrow. I tell them to meet me at the tower at 9 am and they agree. I turn off the camp relay internet and test out the cellular network. It still doesn't work.

I also write up a basic tutorial on how a business can have their own BTCPayServer and point of sale setup and post it to the message board. I went over this briefly in my meetings but it's helpful for people to have something they can reference now that we're at the implementation stage and people may not have been able to take notes or remember all the details.

I cherish every moment spent with Jessica knowing at any moment it can all be taken away. There isn't enough time in the day for it. Soon morning rolls around again and I have my meeting at the tower. The man, John, is ready to go with his truck, paint, and tools. I tell him to make it say Bitcoin Town and I'll pay him when he's done. He gives me his public address and I shake his hand. I head back to the house to make some new signs. I think for a minute on what they should say and then get to work.

WELCOME TO BITCOIN TOWN

WE ONLY USE FREEDOM MONEY BTC

SOON THE WHOLE TOWN WILL BE OPERATING ON

A BITCOIN STANDARD

PLEASE SEE (COMMUNITY URL HERE) FOR MORE INFORMATION

FIRST OUR TOWN, THEN OUR STATE, THEN OUR COUNTRY

THEN THE WORLD

<3

There. That ought to do it. I make another one. Then another one. I use all the cardboard and wood scraps I can find laying around. There are twenty three of them when I'm done. We head into town to place them at every major intersection or anywhere there would be a lot of traffic. Anywhere people are going to see it. I make a post on the forum to see if anyone has the ability to make more professional signs but these will do for now. It's overcast, cold, and there's a small amount of snow still on the ground. The signs aren't the most weather proof but they'll do for now.

As we go around door to door to all the businesses in town seeing if they need help with anything I finally get hold of my sister. I am so grateful to hear her voice but I'm somewhat astonished to as well. She says she's worried about our parents. I am too. I ask her how she survived. She says it was only because one of her friends had a decent ration of emergency supplies. She went over there after the power was out after two days and they took her in. She says without them she probably wouldn't have made it. Hearing this brings tears to my eyes. It's just as bad as I imagined. She says she still doesn't have internet. I warn her about what they'll try to make her do to get it back. She says she doesn't have a choice. She's not as set up as we

are. I tell her to come out here if she can. If things get bad, if she feels like things aren't right, if they're clamping down too hard, please make your way out here. She says okay, we say I love you, and hang up for now.

I test the cell internet and it still isn't working. It's almost sundown by this point. Jess and I have hit probably a dozen businesses already today. We drive by the water tower and I see it. BITCOIN TOWN. It looks flawless and professional. A gigantic pale green water tower with bold black lettering. I send John his payment right there on the spot. We retire to the house for another meal of canned meat and sunflower seeds then do it all over again tomorrow and the next day. We've got our routine down. We're making good progress. A lot of the businesses have already started their implementation but the ones who haven't we're happy to help. Some have even already opened their doors for business again fully operational under a Bitcoin standard. So far we haven't received any push back from anyone who's not on board. We haven't spoken with anyone from the city or county but even if they were opposed there isn't anything they can do at this point. They'll have to cave or else the town will operate completely independent from them and then they'll have a completely different set of problems on their hands.

That may be what ends up happening. Are we taking over? I don't know. I mean we could. That wasn't exactly my intention but I'm also not necessarily opposed to it. We'll have to see what happens I guess. We're taking over economically for sure. But politically? That wasn't the plan but maybe it's a natural byproduct of what we're doing. A second order effect I hadn't fully considered. How are they going to react when they see we renamed the town? How are they going to adapt their tax collection plans when they realize no one is using their shitty government cuck bucks any longer?

There are only two options at this point. They cave and adapt to the majority or we phase them out entirely. I'm leaning toward the latter I think that makes the most sense. Pretty soon I guess I'll have to go speak with the mayor and the people from the county and let them know what's going on. I don't think any of them were at my meetings at the camp. If they were they didn't tell me who they were and no one pointed them out to me. I've become an ambassador. The ambassador of Bitcoin Town.

We've separated money from the state with Bitcoin. We need to keep going and separate the state from society entirely. Does that mean we become the state? I don't want to become the state. What purpose do they even serve at this point? Especially after everything that just happened and what they did to us. Maybe one of our people will take the lead on this. I can figure out all of this opting out into a better system stuff but working out the politics of all of this is going to take a team effort for sure. It hasn't been fully figured out yet. I have a million thoughts in my head right now and they all started coming to me at once. I'll make a post in the community message board about this and address everyone on this topic at the meeting at the camp on Sunday which is tomorrow.

The day turns to night. Another night turns into another night with no word from my parents. I try not to make a big deal about it in front of Jessica. Someone responds to the post about making signs saying they can do the job. We work out a deal and they send me their payment address. I tell them to get in touch with me when they're done. We have dinner and

write some more on the message board about how we're going to deal with the town politically moving forward and reminding everyone of the meeting at the park tomorrow. We play a few games of chess before going to sleep in each other's warm loving arms.

Over morning coffee I notice the cellular internet has come back online. I turn off wifi and open up my browser to test it out and that's when I see it. A prompt I've never seen before. It's asking me to scan my face or iris if I wish to proceed. We saw this coming from a mile away.

"Jessica, check your phone." I say holding up the phone so she can see it.

She tests the network on hers and gets the same prompt even though it's with a different type of phone and carrier.

"Same thing. Face or iris scan." She says.

"Looks like we won't be using this shit." I say.

"Nope." She puts her phone face down on the table.

"Let me try something." I say. I open up a VPN app and connect to another country then I open up the browser and hit refresh. It still doesn't work. I don't understand why it wouldn't. It's the same prompt that I just got with the VPN turned off. How is that possible? It's like the phone is somehow injecting it into the browser page but the wifi from the mesh network still works perfectly fine.

"Nevermind. Still doesn't work. Good thing we have our own network setup otherwise we'd be fucked." I say.

"You knew this would happen. It's just like you said." She says.

"Yeah I guess. It's just crazy to see."

"It is. We should head down to the park. Mage is getting antsy. You ready?"

"For sure. Let's go."

We don't have anything special planned for the meeting. We're just bringing ourselves and our camping chairs. I have my thoughts that I've had ruminating for the past few days. The circus tents are still set up. The heaters are already going by the time we get there. A few kitchens have already set up as well. It's lightly snowing outside but nothing major. Just little white specks swirling around falling from the sky leaving a light layer on the ground outside the tent. People are gathering and talking. When more people show up I'll address them about how we're going to deal with the local government now that we've taken over the monetary system.

Before the kitchens start serving I get everyone to gather around in a circle and just start rambling about what I've been thinking about.

"It recently occurred to me that there is still an elected mayor and city council of this town. I have not spoken with them personally. I don't believe they were here for our meetings or

camping with us. I don't know where they currently are or how to contact them. We have to decide on how we're going to interface with the existing power dynamic from here on out. We've taken over their monetary system and have made them almost irrelevant. I'll let you all decide from here how you want to handle this. I'm just the economics guy. I know how to opt out and all that. Politically I'm not your guy. So let's hash this out." I say speaking up loudly for everyone to hear me.

"You're the mayor now!" Someone shouts and everybody cheers. I laugh and shake my head.

"No, I am not the mayor now. If anything we don't need a mayor anymore. The way I see it is we have two options. We try to persuade them to join us and if that fails we have to phase them out entirely and take a decentralized approach. What do you think?" I say.

"They're not going to listen to us!" Someone yells out. People shout in agreement. I motion for them to settle down.

"Shouldn't we try though? Wouldn't that be the best approach? Trying to persuade them to join us rather than taking them over?" I say.

"We're not taking them over, we're moving past them!" Someone says. People respond enthusiastically.

"You might be right. This is not my area of expertise. This should be up to the people, right? I mean you did all elect them. So shouldn't we hold an election or something?" I say.

"An election for what? We got everything we need amongst ourselves, don't we?" Someone says. People cheer and clap in agreement.

"Well maybe that's it. What if we had an election on how we were going to deal with this? Rather than voting for a mayor or city council, we vote for what we think is the best way to move forward. Options could include voting for new members of government normally, having no government at all and privatizing everything locally, or what, what are the other options?" I say.

"There aint no other options David. I'm voting for them to kick rocks!" Someone yells out from the crowd. Everyone roars with cheers and claps.

"Does anyone have any other ideas for options? Or is that it? Proceed normally or proceed without them?" I ask.

"Let's have the vote right here right now." Someone calls out. By the sounds of it everybody agrees.

"But not everyone is here right now. We can't do that." I say.

"Show your hands." Someone says from the crowd. "Who wants to vote the old way, and who wants to vote them out: Old way. *No one raises their hand* Vote them out. *Everyone raises their hand and erupts in loud support*.

"Okay. So we have a preliminary vote. We're making progress. Still it needs to be official. We need everyone in town to vote and we need it done in a simple verifiable way. We'll work on that this week. And we'll continue discussing this over the coming week and see if we can come up with any better ideas. In the meantime let's try to get in touch with the mayor and the city council as well and see if they're willing to join us or not just so we know where they stand." I say.

"Fuck 'em! They tried to kill us!" Someone yells out. The crowd erupts in roars and cheers and claps. They're even more defiant than I am. I'm trying to be as diplomatic as possible but they're not having it. There's revolution in the air and there's nothing I can do about it. Besides they do have a point. They're fed up. They're done with the system in its entirety. It's time for something new. What that new something will be, I don't know, but it's coming, and it's up to us to make it happen.

"Anarchy! It's time!" Someone yells out and the crowd erupts in support. The energy from them all is intoxicating. It's out of my hands really. It seems pretty clear what they want.

I step down from the crate and head back to sit with Jess. The crowd is all fired up buzzing with chatter on how we all move forward and the kitchens are getting ready to serve. I spot Johnny just outside of the tent grilling and get up to say hi and see what he thinks about all of this. As I get closer I can smell the trout on the grill and it's heavenly.

"What do you think Johnny?" I ask him.

"Think of what?"

"What we were just talking about." I say.

"I don't think too much of it." He says.

"It's meaningless isn't? The concept of government at this point. Or am I being naive?"

"No, yer not naive, I think yer spot on. I can't think of nothin' better myself. What good did they ever do for us? We gotta respect the law of the land the best we can but even I can see the times they are a changin'. Don't think they'll take too kindly to that though." He says.

"I know. But what choice do they have?" I ask.

"Same choice as always. We may have the economic warfare down but they have the warfare part of it. They come at us again things may not play out like last time." He says.

"I agree. I think that's why we need to move fast and get as many towns and cities doing what we're doing so we're no longer the primary target." I say.

"That's the key." He says pulling some trout off the grill. He hands me two filets on a paper plate. One for myself and one for Jessica I assume.

"Thanks, this looks so delicious." I say.

"Don't mention it. Say, before you go, somethin' I wanted to run by ya. Boy, this is probly gonna piss you right the fuck off, but oh well." He says meandering with his words a bit.

"What are you talking about?" I ask holding the hot trout filets breathing in their mouthwatering smell. My stomach starts growling.

"You know those donations you got?" He asks.

"You mean the ones to get the circular economy in town going?" I ask. He nods, looks away, and spits in the muddy grass.

"You know who sent ya that?" He asks.

"No idea. That's kinda the point isn't it. Anonymous donations from people who believed in the cause. That's the beauty of Bitcoin." I say not really thinking much of it.

"Well I know who did." He tells me after a pause.

"How do you know?" I ask.

"Because I sent 'em."

"What? You? You sent them? All of them?" I ask shocked and surprised. That was an enormously substantial sum. I was not expecting him of all people to be the sole anonymous donor of all of the UTXO's. This whole time I thought it was some early adopter whales or something.

"Yeah I sent 'em. I ran it through a mixer first." He says and looks down at his boots with his wrinkly wolf gray eyes.

"Well damn, thank you, I don't know what to say, without you we couldn't have done it." I tell him gratefully. I extend my hand I'm not holding the trout with so I can shake his.

"It just wasn't mine. It was Klaus Schwab's."