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## The Scout

It's been raining for two days. Not a down pour or cold, just a steady drizzle. I went to sleep with the sound of rain falling on the tarp over my head.

Before night fall I had camped on a brush covered knoll in the middle what once was farm land. Three hundred and sixty field of view for a good mile in all directions. My escape route was just behind me. A drainage ditch that I could crawl to unseen. Of course the ditch would also be a good way for someone to sneak up on me, that's why I had placed my last two Rat traps there. Trip wire tied to the cheese trip plate. Any pull on the trip wire would release the spring arm and instead of catching a rat the spring arm would strike a twelve gauge shotgun shell. A very loud and effective alarm system. Most folks I know need a change of underwear when surprised by a close shotgun blast. A Dakota fire hole had kept my fire from being seen and the rain covered any smoke. Now that I was dry I decided tomorrow it would be a good day to stay put and out of the rain.

I woke to the same pitter patter of rain on the tarp. Yep today it wouldn't hurt for me to just sit still and watch. I had used up what dry firewood I could find last night, this morning would be a cold breakfast. Two hand scoops of oats in a drinking cup of water along with the last of my raisins. The cup I was careful to set aside to wait for the oats soak up the water. The water I had retrieved from the collapsable bucket I had hung on an edge of the tarp that was over my head and keeping my camp dry. When I had set the tarp up I had purposely hung it so there would be a valley leading to the bucket. I didn't need water but experience told me not to pass up "free" safe rain water.

As I went about with my routine camp chores I let my mind wander. Now some might question, in this time and age, if that was the smart thing to do? I've been in this survival game for a long time. I'm still aware of my surroundings, a movement or sound brings me instantly alert. My wife found it amazing that all she would have to do is quietly talk or touch me and I'd be instantly awake from a sound sleep.

Wife. Hadn't thought of her in a long time. I was a Junior in High school working as a stock boy after school at Meyer's Drug Store. As was my habit I'd nod at the Pharmacist to let him know I had arrived. Then on my way to the back room to clock in I'd look at the restaurant manager to see if there was anything she needed. That's when I saw a new waitress walking away from me! Five foot four? Long brown hair to the middle of her back. A little hipish, I liked the way they wiggled when she walked. I stood frozen until she turned around. Not bad looking, not bad looking at all. I made a beeline to the time clock to find her time card, Elaine Hartman. Me being an introvert and shy and all it only took me a year to ask her out for our first date. We soon became a steady couple. I was in head over heels. I'd be graduating from high school this summer, she being a year younger had another year to go. That would give me a year to find a steady job, a place to live before I proposed marriage to her.

It was a Sunday afternoon and we had seen a movie. I could tell something was off because Eliane seemed preoccupied about something. When I asked her about it she'd smile and said I was imagining things. Well I learned I wasn't. I was dropping her off at her parents house. I was leaning in for a kiss. She pulled away and that's when she told me that she didn't love me any more. I stood there like an idiot waiting for the punch line. There wasn't any joke, she meant it. On my way home I had to pull over I was crying so hard I couldn't see to drive.

I remember it was a few weeks later I went to talk it out with her, she said it was only a few days after she broke up with me. Her parents said she was out on a date. I said I'll wait and sat down in their living room. It was past eleven that night when I heard a car pull up. Soon after the car left Elaine came running into the house. Before I could get a word out she threw her arms around my neck and said it was all a mistake and it was only me that she loved.

I got that steady job, found an apartment and she said yes. Wedding invitations were mailed when she talked about calling off the wedding. Then she decided she just had cold feet and the wedding was still on. Yes we were young and foolish but we were in love. Or so I thought.

It would have been our fifth wedding anniversary. I just received another promotion at work and thought we'd go out to eat to celebrate. That's when I learned the Elaine's definition of "love" wasn't the same as my definition. On the table she had left a note telling me that she was leaving me to be with her old high school boyfriend (the one she'd been with while I had been waiting in her parents house to talk to her). Found out later she had been seeing him from day one. She soured me on the female species. I threw myself into work as a way deal with the depression.

Rain was coming down a bit harder. Breakfast was over. I added to the water flowing down the drainage ditch by emptying my bladder. Pistol and rifle stripped, cleaned and resembled. They really didn't need it but I believed in being prepared. The motto "Be Prepared" came to mind and brought back another memory I hadn't thought about in a long time.

My mom's brother, my Uncle Bill had stopped in at our house. He was starting a Boy Scout troop and the organizational meeting was going to be at the First Methodist Church in town. I was bouncing up and down as any twelve year old would do in excitement. I looked at dad with pleading eyes. Not only would scouting be fun but something perhaps dad would do with me? I could see the word "no" forming on Dad's lips as he looked towards mom. To my shock and utter delight Dad said we'd be at the meeting. Scouts is where I gave into the lure of the outdoors and being prepared, or in today's terms, a Prepper. I stayed in the Scouts until the need to work to pay for my car became a higher priority. But the prepping part I never quit.

A nice sized Buck was slowing working his way across the field. Unusual for a Buck to be alone, without any Does. I was careful not to have tunnel vision on the Buck and to ignore the rest of the fields. Could be the Buck is just looking for a territory of his own and hasn't established a harem yet? Tempted to take the Buck but it would be too far to carry all that meat back to the nearest settlement.

Prepping? Folks as blind as bats. Living from pay check to paycheck. Credit card debts just so they could have the latest smart phone. Loans for cars and house. I did without for years to be debt free. I was working in the city at the time. I had an old farm just across the State line with three rented stocked storage units along my escape routes out from the City. I was about ready to “pull the trigger” by quitting my job and move to the farm permanently when the Outsider was elected President instead of her. I figured his election gave me at least four more years to build up a bigger financial cushion and to finished the water windmill at the farm.

While I living in the city I used my spare time during the week to try and get folks to prepare. The restaurant on my block said they would let me have their meeting room rent free if a minimum of twenty people ordered a meal. Printed and posted notices of my meeting and meal at the restaurant with my cell number. Six couples and one woman came. One couple left when they found out the meal wasn’t free. Another couple stayed after my presentation to ask more questions. Restaurant handed me a bill for three hundred dollars for the room. Too much money on my part for maybe two converts.

I tried again with the meeting was at a bar (free meeting room with no limitations). A different type of people came this time with one more in attendance than last time. Three men stayed to talk after the meeting. My hope quickly turned to wariness when their questions where more about; Where do I store my prep supplies? What type of firearms do I have? Where do I live? This isn’t working I thought. I gave up. That is until I got a call from a Reverend Moran.

Reverend Moran had a problem. And when he saw my Prepping posters he thought perhaps I could be the solution. His Church had hosted a Boy Scout troop for...well just about forever. But because of the recent “permissiveness” at the Boy Scout national level the church denomination could no longer be the host for their Troop. A member of his congregation offered a heated warehouse for the Troop to meet at. Moran’s Bishop strongly advise that Moran remove himself as Troop Leader. That’s where I come in. Would I be willing to be the Assistant Scout Leader and learn the ropes (pun intended) and then become the Troop Leader?

I don’t know nothing about children! I was in the Scouts and Assistant Leader would not be too bad but the Leader! The time Dad and I had in

Scouts was a pivotal time in my life. And I could use the same tactic the Socialists had been using in this Country's schools. If I could come for an interview, just so the Church knew they were entrusting their Troop to a like minded person? I said "yes" before I could change my mind. And that's where most of my free time has been going to, to Boy Scout Troop 49.

We'd meet the second and fourth Saturday of every month. Second Saturday was devoted to in house instruction and learning. The fourth Saturday We'd head out to the country. Arranging affordable transportation was a bit of a problem. Getting adult chaperons was easy, I just had to ask Reverend Moran and presto members of his congregation would appear. During the summers we'd have a week long campout at my farm. Except they didn't know it was my farm, told them it belonged to someone I knew...which was true.

For lunch I had had some venison jerky. Whoever had made it knew what they were doing. Spiced just right. For supper a hot meal would be nice. Jerky cut up in small bits and that carrot I had found yesterday. Thrown in a pot of boiling water to make a soup. Pretty sure I had a few of those restaurant paper packets of salt and pepper in a tin. Sounded good. IF I could find enough dry fire wood, perhaps down by the ditch? The rain was slowing, rain or no rain I will be heading out in the morning.

Scouts was hoot! The boys were eager to learn and I was able to (in most cases) gently replace their Socialist learning with a prepping leaning. If it stays with them to adulthood, only time will tell.

It's morning. Rain stopped during the night. From the sunrise it looks like it going to be a nice day. I have three more areas I want to scout out before returning. I'm the lead scout for three communities. Each community doesn't know about the other two, I want to keep it that way. I know what each community wants, and more important to me, needs.

The largest community had twenty-three members. Their leaders were bullies.

The second community numbered fourteen. Leader was a dictator but a fair one. They were grateful for any thing he could find. Any ammunition

he found went to this group. He had a feeling that they would need it if the larger group learned of their existence.

The third and last community he scouted for was the smallest. A hodgepodge of people that happen to meet on their way to find safety. Their camp was further away from the other two. The longest travel time for him but he didn't mind. Their location was safe but unfortunately not the best for growing food. He was surprised they had survived this long. They wouldn't if the coming winter was as severe as last winter. He decided he would tell them of the location of salt he had found and show them how to use it to preserve meat.

He had been looking for a water source when he saw the house. Large two story house looking house. The vines that had grown over the vinyl siding and overgrown trees had done a good job of camouflaging the house. Any hope this house hadn't been looted would be a false hope. Too much time had elapsed but then...he had been surprised before. He entered the house through the broken front porch window with pistol in hand. He took off his backpack and placed it in what was once the guest closet. Surprisingly the closet door still shut. The only foot prints he saw in the dust on the floor belonged to small rodents. Never less the end of the barrel of his handgun entered every room as he checked out the house. The main floor and the second floor were free of any threats and anything of value had been salvaged long ago. That left the worst for last. The basement.

He hated basements. True he often found overlooked goodies in basements. Basements were too easy to be trapped in and there was that time he found the female dog with her litter. Or more accurately she found him. She attacked before he even knew she was there. His second shot was all luck. She went down without a yelp. The puppies eyes weren't open yet. He didn't enjoy doing what needed to be done with the puppies. They would have all starve without their nursing mother.

He retrieved his backpack from the closet before heading down the basement stairs. Basement had been finished but down the carpet squished under his boots. He pulled his Shemagh up over his nose. Where there was damp there was mold and the last he need is to get breath mold into his lungs. Recliners facing the biggest wide screen TV he had ever seen. A bar over in the corner, no liquor. From the dust on the

bar shelves it had been take all long gone. It was back in the furnace room he found the gold mine. The water heater was still full of water. He'd have to filter and boil it before using it. House had a real fire place on the main floor and there was plenty of wood furniture for a fire to boil the water. The real gold was the five - fifty pound bags of water softener salt stacked beside the softener. Their label read "Crystal Solar Salt. 99.6% Pure". He's seen a whole group get sick (and the weak died) because they used salt recovered from a water softener. Unknown to them the salt had chemical additives added to deal with rust and to form the pellets. The solar salt was a fantastic find.

He had waited until the rising sun had dried out the tarp before taking it down, folding and tying it to the top of his backpack. He carefully unarmed his rat traps before unconsciously following the drainage ditch to the west towards the smallest community.

It was an uneventful four day trip. The hordes had long died off. Nature was in the process of balancing back before man's interference. The remaining four legged predators were no longer starving and usually steered clear of man. Still the odds weren't in your favor if you let your guard down.

Like the simple small spring fed pond he had found. Nothing tasted better then a cool drink of fresh water on a hot dusty day. He was bringing a handful of water to his lips when he noticed the carcass of the dead bird. Then the pale yellow grass by the pond's overflow when the rest of the grass around the pond was green. He let the water drain from his cupped hands as he peered into the depths of the water. There he saw it! Using a rope from his pack he managed to snag it by a post and carefully drag it up and out of the water. A car battery. Why or how the battery had ended up in a spring feed pond in the middle of nowhere he would never know. Gradually the sulfuric acid had poisoned the water. He left the battery in plain sight as warning to any future thirsty travelers.

"Hello the camp!" He shouted. He knew they didn't keep a guard during the day and they knew him on sight. But he hadn't lived this long by taking unnecessary changes.

“Mister O’Donald! Remember me? I was in your Scout Troop! Mom! Mom! This is the man I was telling you about! He’s the one that taught me all that stuff that helped us get here! MOM!

Her name was Rebeca. She had joint custody of her son Johnathan. Ex loved the city life and she the country. Happen to be Johnathan’s weekend with her in the country when the Schumer Hit The Fan. They’ve been traveling aimlessly from one near death experience to another until they stumbled into this group a month ago. She was clean, barefoot, wearing blue jeans in fairly good condition considering and a plaid shirt. Her blonde hair was cut short (as was now the custom, short hair help keep head lice in check). Her height was just under his six foot. As she walked away to get them some cold well water he noticed her hour glass figure.

He thought to himself, “Perhaps not all women are witches.”

The End