

The reset. AKA a boy and his cheetah.



The reset:

In march, we began to hear of the new “Bovine flu” out of North Korea. By December almost a billion people were dead. On Monday you catch it, on Tuesday they bury you, they say. it’s not exactly true, but close. There have been survivors, but it’s 80% fatal give or take. The vaccine is only 75% effective, and even it kills people 15% of the time, I seem to be one of the lucky 25% that are immune, it seems if you grew up around cows, you got conferred immunity by a virus we never even knew existed because IT was harmless. Too late to make a vaccine for it now, pretty much everyone who could, is dead. Which brings us here, five years later. While goods, weapons and tools are still out there in decent quantity, most of the food spoiled the second winter in the frozen warehouses, we still have power most of the time, but they only turn the water on once a week for an hour because of all the burst pipes, we had squads going around for a while turning off the utilities to “dead houses” but that petered out with the second wave. Its not so bad, I’ve got what I need I suppose, I

have this three wheeled utility bicycle I scavenged from a factory, my AR-15, some soldier is always willing to lose a clip of ammo for a bag of weed or a handful of gold jewelry or silver coins I got for nothing in a “dead house” or grew in my school bus hothouse. Cigarettes however are a problem, they’re not making them anymore, but cigars turn up fairly frequently at the local markets, that’s where I’m going now, to get my monthly allotment of rice, beans, flour, meal and cheese, and on occasion, a few cans of corned beef. If I’m really lucky, they’ll have ketchup, mayo and mustard packets! I haven’t seen hot sauce since year two except that foul stuff they guy in the next town makes, it’s pretty much just pureed hot peppers, onion, garlic and vinegar mixed up and marketed in a quart jar. Well, here I come up on the check point, time to show I’m still alive, get my temperature taken and my nose swabbed, then they’ll give me a mask and gloves and let me in to collect my groceries. The Sargent knows me. “You looking for ammo?” he asks covertly. “I got rifle, pistol, and shotgun this month!”

Unusual. Ordinarily its only rifle ammo he’s got. “I’ll take a box of each!” I tell him. “What you got homes?” he asks. “A bottle of unopened opiate pain killers, 15 MG each, 50 count. Or a couple of fourteen karat gold necklaces with what I’m assuming are diamonds, could be zirconia, how would I know? Pick one.” He grinned a moment, “I’ll throw in either two boxes of nine millimeter or three boxes of twelve gauge number four riot shot for all!” Done deal! We shake, I collect, and I go on. I must be early, there’s not many in line, that means I might get stuff they run out of fast! “Uncle Spam” [What we call what’s left of the government because early on, most of the meat was Spam or something like it.] did not disappoint! I got a pound of dry milk, a couple of packs of tortillas, actual bottles of condiments And a box of mixed, dried fruit and corn cereal and... oh my god! Actual hot sauce! Somewhere, out there, factories were up and running again! My little three wheeler was loaded, but I had one more truck to visit, they gave me a case of cola, no idea who made it or where, it was a plain, white box merely stenciled “cola” a case of water, a pound of rolled oats, [something to trade, I’m allergic!] a pound of corn grits and a ten pack of toilet paper. As I made to leave, some guy in a doctor coat gave me a bag which had a bottle of

aspirin, sanitary wipes, a box of band-aids, antacid tablets, antidiarrheal medicine and cough drops. With that, I head home. Life is good today!

With the world as quiet as it is, I tend to notice more things, like the herd of deer grazing in the former mayor's yard that barely notice my passing. Once we figured out he was gone and his staff were dead, we looted the shit out of that place for weeks! That guy ate and drank stuff we "flyover people" never saw in stores around here or heard of at all! I got several pairs of boots and a case of scotch out of there, and an extra nice man's mink coat! Very warm, but I look like a New Orleans pimp wearing it. I had to laugh, the deer figured out we were gone, so now they're taking over our stuff! I then saw the most amazing thing I've seen since the cow flu took us out! A pair of Cheetahs were stalking the herd! Someone must have turned out the Atlanta zoo or they came from a private breeder. I watched transfixed as they moved in slowly, then ZAP! It was like the deer saw them but had no idea they were dangerous, their bad. They will know better next encounter. I stood watching as the cheetahs drug their prey to the top of the mayor's touring van and had lunch, four plump cheetah cubs emerged from the hedges and joined their parents in the meal, I'll come back in a bit, big cats mainly eat only the soft parts, I might get some steaks out of the encounter. I wondered briefly what else had been freed from the zoo as I went on my way. Further on, I saw a red package lying in the road, I stopped and picked it up, it was an empty cigarette pack, and by the date, it was post flu! Someone was making cigarettes again! I inhaled the sweet, musky scent deeply and wished there had been one, even a broken one left! Then I wondered who the litterbug was? Someone in the military or the medical relief probably. I gave it another sniff and went on my way. When I got home. I stashed my food and ammo and filled a cooler with ice and returned to where the cheetahs had made their kill. The haunches and ribs were mostly untouched, I finished gutting the doe and began skinning it when I heard a sniffing noise behind me, I turned to see a runt cheetah cub staring at me, NOT GOOD! Mommy and daddy were still around here somewhere! I retreated to the top of the mayor's van and held fast, I had heard cheetahs were not very

aggressive, I hoped they weren't anyway, I'd hate to have to fight one! I sat there staring at the cub, it stood staring at me, then the meat, I saw it's hind foot was swollen. I pitched it a morsel, it nosed it briefly and began to eat ravenously, the poor kid couldn't climb up here to feed with his family, I mused. I pitched him a bit more and waited. No mama and papa cheetah returned. I stored the meat and decided to snoop around in the mayor's campaign van, I found a nice 44 magnum revolver and extra ammo, three bottles of whiskey, a fleece blanket and a pack of rubbers. I turned to find the cub, still sitting there. It occurred to me he couldn't keep up and was abandoned. Poor kid, law of the wild. I walked up to him, he made to try to move away, but he ended up in a heap. He slowly turned and looked at me, his big red eyes full of fear and began to kind of mew. YIKES! If ma cheetah can hear him, she'll be right back! I jumped in the mayor's van for safety, but after a long few minutes, nothing happened, no ma cheetah. I got back out and scooped up the spotted cub in the blanket and took him home with me. I put on some heavy gloves and examined the bawling, hissing lump of spotted fur, somehow a hunk of rusted wire had become embedded in his left rear foot. I took a pair of pliers and jerked it out, he squalled briefly and lay still as I massaged the infection out of the open wound, when no more of the stinking, green filth could be produced, I rubbed in some antibiotic cream and popped a penicillin tablet down his throat.

Afterwards, I made some warm milk and dipped his nose in it, it lasted all of two minutes. My new "pet" was starving! After his little belly was puffed out, I bandaged his foot and set about the process of getting what I discovered was actually "HER" used to me. I folded my new blanket in my lap and plopped her in it and read until they cut the power back at midnight.

Breakfast was deer steak, dehydrated eggs and pancakes with honey. I gave my new pet a large pancake and had a good laugh as she wrestled it and growled while biting chunks out of it, afterward, she perched atop my easy chair and just sat there with her chest puffed out like any house cat. It dawned on me she was going to need a lot of meat if she was going to grow up healthy. she's still wary of me, but tolerates being petted a bit, but she realizes I'm the guy with the

food! I mused as I shouldered my old 30-06 to do a bit of deer hunting, I had four boxes of ammo left, then it would be a wall hanger. I doubted anything but military ammo being produced again in the near future if ever again. I poured my pet a bowl of water and cut her a hunk of meat before I left and proceeded on my way back to where I'd found her and the deer herd.

I got there around 9:00 to find no deer, so I decided to poke around the mansion a bit before trying to track them, maybe they would come back? There was plenty of grass and that Olympic sized pool out back full of decent water. After a search of the pantry and kitchen that yielded only a few cans of spoiled food and a large, heavy meat cleaver we looters somehow missed, I proceeded to the cellar, its steel door still locked tight even after what seemed to be several determined attempts to break in. I puzzled over it a moment, somewhere there MIGHT be a key to it, if not, perhaps my new 44 magnum might force the lock? Whatever was there, it was valuable enough to lock up! I proceeded up to the upper level to the old man's offices. The place was pretty trashed, but the only thing stolen was the contents of his liquor cabinet, I laughed to myself. I tried the desk drawers. Locked! But not for much longer, I mused as I stuck my skinning knife into the simple lock and wiggled it, pop, I was in! I looked over what my work had brought me. A folder full of emergency evacuation orders, a few pictures, some useful pens and pencils, the big man's personal stamp, two speed loaders full of 44 ammo, no doubt for the pistol I found the day before, and well, well. A ring of keys! One must fit that locked door! Then, as I rummaged, I noticed some numbers written in indelible ink on the bottom of the drawer, I dumped it on the desk, half a box of 44 ammo fell out, I pocketed it as I read the numbers, at first they made no sense, clearly not a phone number! L-32 R-18 L-24 R-10 L-64... A safe combination! I looked around, no safe. Maybe behind one of the wall paintings still hanging?

I removed them to see, nope! No safe here, I looked up at myself at the still intact, floor length mirror, on impulse, I gave it a tug and it swung away from the wall! There it was! After a moment of screwing with the combination, the heavy steel door opened to me and I was in! I beheld my treasure greedily, Another 44 magnum, several boxes

of ammo for it, a 45 automatic, more ammo, a locked box, who knew what was in it? I'd try the keys later. a stack of folders with continuity of government files, one sealed folder had photos of two people having sex, I thought the man involved looked familiar, it was his political rival Schneider! The girl looked a bit young and likely NOT his wife! I pitched it to the side, both were likely dead now. I opened the bottom half and had to set down in the floor! A pristine hunting rifle, synthetic stocked and in stainless, an FAL type rifle and ten magazines, a satin nickel or stainless steel over and under shotgun,

A 22 rifle, some kind of small bore pump shotgun, maybe a 28 gauge? Too big for a 410, too small for a 20, a top of the line AR-15 and an AR-10 in match configuration, and a 12 gauge combat shotgun, stacks of magazines and military styled cans full of ammo, all hunting variety! One was clearly marked 30-06! I'd be days moving my prizes home, but HOME was where they were going! I loaded as much as I could carry onto my bike, strapped in with bungee cords, and just as I started to leave, a young buck came from the wood-line, I sighted in with my new FAL and popped it right through the heart! Today was a very good day!

When I got home, I cleaned my new arsenal of blood and dressed my deer and put the ribs on a quart of kraut and potatoes to simmer over night, my new pet gorged herself on liver and lungs, later. I fiddled with the locked box I'd found, one of the keys on the ring fit it and it popped open, inside was a cowboy styled 45 revolver with pearl grips and a box of ammunition, I lifted the lid to the lower compartment to find it full of one ounce gold bars, a test tube full of diamonds, and a stack of old-cash, all hundreds. Not bad, they still had sixty percent of their value toward trade in for the new bills with the gold and silver stripes, I had scavenged myself a fortune!

The next day, I finished moving my treasure home and began to concentrate on what might open that basement door, and what might be inside! Just then my new pet took the occasion to poop in the floor and it dawned on me she might not be house breakable being wild! Around dawn, I was headed back to the Mayor's mansion to see what

treasure I might get in the basement. It took a while to find the right key, but find it I did, and into the Stygian blackness I went! On impulse, I flipped the light switch, obediently they came on, much to my surprise! Storage batteries, I mused. They in themselves would be invaluable IF I could move them! I looked around my surroundings, I was in some kind of air lock? What the hell? Then it dawned on me, I was in a fallout bunker! I turned the lock and went inside.

The first thing to greet me was the stench of something long dead, make that four somethings. On the bunk beds lay three mummified corpses, a fourth lay sprawled in the floor wearing a pin striped business suit, our late mayor and his family I mused. I covered their faces and moved him to his wife's side. "Sorry boss, the living need your stuff a lot more than you right now." I said aloud. I felt bad for him, he seemed like a nice guy. The next compartment was a sort of armory, one side held four M-16's, four riot guns, four pistols, two sniper rifles based on the M-14 and four Ingram submachine guns with silencers, and thousands of rounds of ammo for all! The opposite wall held several space suit-like excursion suits. "Proof to 800 Rads per hour for six hours." the tag read. I noted there was a case of hand grenades and another of Claymore mines stuck in the corner as I entered the second compartment. I beheld crate upon crate of CD stored food and water, most seemed to be dated a year before the cow flu killed half the world, behind me was a gas range and cooking utensils, very little seemed used, they must have been infected already when they entered their bunker I surmised. It would take weeks to move this stuff I mused as I entered the living area. A nice Plasma TV greeted me, along with a movie and music library to make a Hollywood producer jealous! I continued on to the storage area where I saw several steel drums of "Long term storage fuel, type A" whatever that meant, several dry automotive batteries, blue plastic jugs of acid for the same, a solar battery charger and a regular plug in type. This place has power...it has fuel, I need a car, the gears in my head ground to life as I turned to search the body of our late mayor, sure enough! He had the keys to his tour van on him!

It took all day to charge the battery out of the outlet, I busied myself with filling the tank of his van with fuel and making three trips on my bicycle running stuff, the guns and part of the ammo first, then cases of food and some medical supplies. Around dark, I tested the motor to make sure it hadn't locked up, and I installed the battery.

It still took a week to move all the stuff in the shelter, even with a tour bus to haul it all in, I'd go in around dawn, load up, then drive at night to hide my activities, on occasion I would see a house with a light inside, which meant someone alive! Fortunately my van was quiet and I traveled with fog lights only, and I parked the van out behind my house, I can't have someone stealing my stuff I stole! Anyway, and at last, when I finished, I lay the mayor and his family to rest out back of his mansion next to the flower garden out of respect, he did set me up for life after all!

It was an uneventful and somewhat warmer than normal winter, my pet cheetah, that I eventually named "Princess" had grown quite a bit and I had begun taking her hunting with me, it was on one such trip I met my new neighbors...

I stood there looking at it, it stood there looking at me. Princess had went down to her belly and begun to growl softly. "What the hell am I seeing?!" I thought. "Is it a Bigfoot?" Then it dawned on me I was looking at at least a 400 pound gorilla! It just stood there, glaring at me from about thirty feet up the road, three or four more crossed the road behind him, stopping momentarily to look at us. We stood there a few moments longer, when his family had passed, he snarled at us and thumped his chest briefly before he too wandered into the brush, a warning, leave us alone, we'll leave you alone! I watched them disappear over the hill a few hundred yards away and waited a bit longer before we continued on our way, we'd gone all of a hundred yards before I heard the scream, it was human and in terror! Now anyone with any survival sense would have kept on walking in a world like ours has become, nobody ever accused me of having good sense however, and I bolted in the direction the scream came from.



As I entered the clearing, I saw a circle of at least twenty dogs and coyote/wolf cross breeds gathered at the base of an oak tree, snapping and howling at someone clinging to the lower branches for dear life! I unshouldered my M-16 and took aim at the biggest mutt there, hoping if I dropped him, the rest would run, Oh, they ran alright, right at me! Wolfyote/dog mixes have no fear of man whatsoever it would seem! And by the time they were maybe twenty yards away, I'd flipped the selector and gone to spray and pray mode! As the bolt locked back, I brought up my MAC-9-11 and pumped lead into the last ones! Just then Princess broke cover and had the lead mutt by the throat, thrashing it like a rag doll, after a moment I heard a wet snap as she crushed its neck! I strolled up to the tree like I was on an afternoon walk, at its base lay one of the new M-16A7 SPR rifles. It was thoroughly jammed, the magazine had failed and puked the receiver full of ammo. I held it up to the person in the tree. "Is this piece of junk yours?" I laughed. I choked on my laugh as the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen dropped from the tree to stand before me! "Well ain't you something cracker! My white knight in shiny black leather armor and Rambo all rolled into one! And what might your name be mighty whitey? You gonna' give me my rifle back now ain't you?" I passed it to her. "I'm Thomas Lee, what's your name

Miss?" I said as I handed her one of my extra magazines. "I AM Private first class Monique Le Vay, the howling voodoo queen of the Louisiana national guard! And I rightly thank you for saving my black ass from them dogs! And I thought my drill sergeant was a biter!" She laughed. I looked her over. "Not to sound ignorant Miss, but you don't quite look black." I said. She scowled bitterly. "Oh, that again. My mamma was a Mississippi queen, my daddy was a rich Indian transfer student. When he dumped her and went back home, Ma put a death spell on his ass and he was dead in a week! Terrorists in Mumbai blew his sorry ass up!" She grinned. "DAMN baby girl, remind me not to piss you or her off!" I laughed. "You hungry Miss? I got good food and warm places to crash, I got booze and weed too if you're inclined!" I said covertly. "Might get those scratches cleaned up too, was you bit?" I asked. "Well hell daddy! You a man of all seasons ain't you? Nah, I wasn't bit, so you can lead on to the feed and the weed hero!" she purred.

I rummaged through my clothes and found a decent shirt to replace her ripped up one and my medical kit to dress her injuries. "You can change out and clean those scratches while I tend dinner Monique." I told her as I handed her the kit. She got a strange look in her eye and shucked out of her shirt right in front of me! "Hang around a bit old uncle Tom, I got a few scratches I can't reach that feel pretty bad I'm sure I can't reach I might need help with." she grinned. My gods she was beautiful! I sat down and opened the kit myself and broke out the iodine solution and gauze, I dabbed some antiseptic on the gauze and began to work on the wicked scratches on her back and shoulders. "What we having for dinner anyway Tom?" she asked. I chuckled. "Would you believe slow cooked barbecue deer ribs in sauce, potatoes and kraut with corn bread and collards and chocolate and peanut butter pudding." She grinned broadly "Daaamn homeboy! If we hadn't just met, I'd be thinking you was trying to get me to fall in love or something!" She exclaimed. She blinked her eyes slowly and erotically inches from my face. "You keep on playing your cards right big man, I just might!" And with that, gave me a light kiss on the lips!

“Dinner will be a few more minutes Monique.” I said. “Care to share a bong hit or two?” I asked as I pulled out the glass pipe and stuffed the bowl. “Ooh daddy! Now we talking! But where do you get weed out here?” She asked slyly. “I grow it out back in my school bus greenhouse, ain’t like they’re sparing any cops to look for it lately, I baby my plants, this bud is as good as you can get in any city!” I laughed as I lit the bowl and passed it to her. “I got the food off the heat, so by the time we start to peak, it’ll be perfect eating temperature!” I took a good hit and passed it to her. “Damn honky, where you been all my life? And why you got to be at least twice my age?” She scowled. “If’n you had some menthol smokes, you’d be damn near perfect!” she giggled. I got up and went to my storage room and returned with two green cartons I’d gotten from the supplies in the mayoral shelter and handed them to her. “OH MY GOD!” She squealed! “No no no no! You can’t be this damn perfect! Why can’t you be black too?” she giggled as she lit a cigarette out of the bong bowl and inhaled deeply. “Please tell me you don’t need Viagra or you’re gay! YOU ain’t gay is you?” She said looking genuinely worried. “Not needed any pills in a while and no, I’m not gay, and if I was, I think you might just turn me!” I chuckled. The weed had kicked in and we both started laughing like idiots for a few minutes, then she got serious and pushed me into the couch hard! “No, seriously daddy, where have you been all of my life?”. She snarled. It kind of freaked me out! “I’ve been right here since I was nineteen, just hanging around. I watched the Covid come and go, watched the second civil war peter out, the big crash, then I saw the world end. Really, my life has been pretty boring, I picked up some skills and kept my head down, and I made it this far.” I told her. “And you done set yourself up like a king huh? A whole kingdom of one! So where’s your queen king?” she laughed. Damn buzzkill! “I don’t know, I think I just got ripped off and cheated on one too many times and I gave up trying a long time ago.” I sighed. “Really, I got nothing nobody wants until now there’s nobody to want it!” I laughed dryly. She leaned in close enough I could see the pores in her skin! “Until now hero, get ready to have your scepter polished KING!” She laughed as she undid my belt!

Some time around 3 AM I woke up, we were sleeping spoon fashioned. I caressed her shoulder and kissed her cheek. "Was I any good? I'm out of practice." I whispered. She rolled over into me and cuddled briefly. "It wasn't what you did but how you did it hero. I'm not used to getting much respect from my men, black folks can be just as mean and bigoted as you honk...Uh, WHITE folks can! One day I get a boyfriend, next day he's coming out of the neighbor's apartment, either that or I just never see them again! I was starting to think my booty stinks! So then I join up with the national guard and I gets men AND women all over me, but the same old story, so when my Captain bends me over his desk, I got to thinking, "Girl, this life just ain't where its at! You ain't no party ho!" So I grabbed my gear and my rifle and went AWOL on them, hell, I wonder if they even know I'm gone! Anyway, then you come along and its like I know you for years! I don't give a damn what nature made you whitey, I like you just fine!" She whispered. "You know, we never did eat dinner, I'm getting hungry!" We laughed quietly together a moment. "I'll get up and get on it babe!" I told her as I pulled on my pants, I'll call you when its warmed up!" We feasted and joked until sometime around dawn, princess was gnawing a pile of soft bones, the kraut always softened them up to where you could just snap them like a dry corn pone. "Hey Monique, you feel like going on a raid with me today? we're going to have to get you a bicycle from that factory, uncle Spam is going to give out free goodies tomorrow." I told her. "Hon, I ain't going nowhere near that place! My ID will show I'm AWOL, I'm not into getting shot! BESIDES, Why not use that fancy van you got out back? We could carry half the place off in it!" She mused. "Because people will wonder where I found gas and how much I got! People don't like it when they think you got it better than them!" I said Sadly. "Ain't that the truth big Old Tom, ain't it the truth! Everybody used to be saying it was THE MAN keeping us down, but the man is dead and gone and ain't nothing changed! Its why I got my ass out of New Orleans as fast as I could go! I mean there's free stuff just laying everywhere and people still be shooting each over it just to get a little bit more!" she sighed. "Yeah...Well we still need to get you a bike so you'll be mobile babe, it's not far. When the fog burns off, we'll head out." Just then Princess alerted to something outside and made

an odd “chirp” sound and headed out the cat door at a trot! “Uh-oh!” I thought, I passed Monique the 45 I kept between the couch cushions and grabbed the riot gun out of the corner. “We’ve got guests babe, I know they can see the fire smoke, so its not scavengers! I’m hoping its just somebody passing by or begging and not a smash and grab gang!” Just then I heard Princess chirp again followed by a kind of whistle and she came in the cat door, right behind her was **ANOTHER CHEETAH!** It was a young male, he took scant notice of us and followed Princess right to the pile of ribs and began to chow down. “What we going to do Thomas?!” rasped Monique! “Just let it play out and be ready, he acts like he’s been around people before, maybe a zoo or circus cat? I’m going to open the door, don’t get between him and it, he needs to see he has a way out if something spooks him!” I whispered back. Just then Princess hopped on the couch between us and made that odd noise again and started to purr. The male cheetah came over and sniffed us, he had a bright blue collar on his neck. On impulse, I reached out and rubbed his head gently, he responded by licking my hand and nuzzling me. “He’s right friendly Monique, lets see his collar.” I said as I undid it, he backed up and immediately began to rub his neck on the coffee table and purr, the collar had a steel tag, it read:

Atlanta big cat rescue. If found call blah blah, reward for return, blah blah, my name is Duke.

“Well hello Duke! Welcome to my castle. I trust your intent with my daughter is gentlemanly?” Princess snorted and Monique laughed out loud! “I don’t think Princess’s intent is lady like yo! Just saying.” she giggled. Duke and Princess curled up in the floor in front of us purring. “Looks like we might have us another hunting partner Monique, if he stays with us. Lets gear up and go get you that bicycle, we might get some meat on the way, there’s a park between here and there!” I chuckled. “You might want to pass around the heavy guns hon, remember them wolf-dog-things are out there too!” Monique cautioned.

We got to the industrial park around noon, Princess and Duke trotted along behind is sniffing the air cautiously. I nudged Monique. "If you see them go to ground, hunker down, something's up!" I told her. She nodded. "Better than a pit bull huh babe? I wonder what else they good for? Besides table scraps I mean." She giggled. I slid the bay door up and looked things over, it had been a year, maybe more since I'd been here, nobody had been here since. It was then I saw the outdoor fork lift, it had road tires and ran on propane, practically every factory in town stored propane to run the things. I got up into the cab and turned they key, it actually offered to start! But no. I looked over the shop. A propane powered electric welder, it had a crank starter. I pulled an industrial battery charger over to it and plugged it into the power socket and hooked it to the fork lift battery, after turning the gas on the welder on, I gave it a jerk and it fired right up! "And just how's all this going to get me a bicycle Thomas?" growled Monique? "Why ride a bike when you can have a tank babe? we'll armor this bad boy up, ditch the forks and put that basket on it, and shit... we can loot wherever we please within range! It seats two and its got heat and air, the only thing we got to decide is what color to paint it? It won't be a thing to hook up extra fuel tanks, might get a hundred miles out of it!" I told her grinning, and hell. there's ten thousand gallons of fuel out back in those big tanks, maybe more already in that rack of fuel jugs!" I grinned. "Paint that bitch up purple and baby blue and put us in a nice stereo and I'm in daddy!" she giggled. "But while that battery does its thing, lets hunt me a bike!" Well on the way, we found the break room and helped ourselves to some chips, the candy bars had a funky look to them and probably poisonous, the sodas likewise tasted funny, but drinkable, we raided the break room storage cabinet and found a fortune in toilet paper and disinfectants and cases of chips, sodas and jerky! We loaded it all down in a push cart and left it for later and headed for the other tool crib. "Well shit daddy! how'd you miss that fine ass little bike?!" Cooed Monique, pointing at the metallic purple quad with the propane adapted motor. "The one I got was just sitting over there, I didn't have to break no locks to get at it, I just grabbed it and split. This tool crib has a master lock I doubt we could shoot off! Monica grinned wickedly. "Get your ass out of the way and let this New Orleans gang

banger bitch do what she does daddy!" Purred Monique as she pulled out a worn leather wallet full of lock picks, within thirty seconds it was open! "I'm losing my touch, I should have had it open in half the damn time!" She fumed as we slid the gate to one side. As we rounded the corner, there they were! Four brand new propane powered pickups just sitting there. We looked at each other and grinned like cheetahs eating liver! "Aw screw them bikes and that fork lift thing, we riding high and in style dad, lets charge us some batteries!" Laughed Monique!

Sarge eyed me suspiciously as I pulled up to the check point for my monthly allotment of food. "Where the hell did you get the gas for this ride? LET ALONE THE RIDE?!" He said gaping at my truck. "I found a propane conversion kit at the local swap shop and I studied up on brewing methane, but really, right now its on propane, lots of propane out there you know? I had a dozen tanks myself." I grinned at him. "Yeah right, you know looting is still illegal right? If I thought you'd stole this thing, I'd have to confiscate it!" He growled. "Oh, but I have my papers right here!" I grinned, handing him a stack of old cash, all hundreds. "I need a favor, I got another mouth to feed but she won't come in, she's an illegal alien and she thinks we still deport folks like her. I need double rations." I said as I shined a ten ounce gold bar in the early dawn sunlight. Sarge scowled and fiddled with some papers and handed them to me and snatched the gold bar. I'll hook you up this time, have your senorita fill them out and bring them back next month or you won't get any more extras, be sure to fill out the part that says she's an invalid." He said. "Not buying any ammo this month?" He asked. "Nah, been pretty quiet, had a pack of dogs or coyotes come by, but they left quick enough." I laughed. Sarge nodded. "Just show those papers at the trucks when you load up or you won't get any extra...you got any more of these gold bars? I have a private who's lost two rifles already because he's a damned retard, one more and I can kick him out. Really, you'd be doing me a favor..." he sighed. "I handed him another gold bar, "If he loses his load out of ammo too, I'm in!" I grinned. "He will, I'm sure of it!" The Sergeant grinned back, see me here about dark. Now get in there, there's a line forming." He laughed.

Around dark, I slid into the checkpoint quietly on my bike, Sarge met me and waved me into the shadows and dropped a full back pack into my carry box as well as a rifle and full gear belt, including a pistol! “the dumb son of a bitch lost his whole load out of gear, he’s on his way back to Alabama in the morning!” Sarge snickered quietly. “Now get out of here, we’re closing shop for this month, bring more gold, I think I got all kinds of stuff you’d like to have!” He chuckled wickedly.

I pulled into my place well after dark, Monique already had a fire going in my wood stove, Princess and Duke were cuddled up on the couch purring away, I smelled food cooking. “Dinner is almost done old Tom, I ain’t no cook like you, but I do OK, we got breaded deer tenderloin, gravy, grits, biscuits, and dandelion greens! Uh, where did you get that gear Tom? You didn’t roll a soldier did you?” she gasped. “Nah, I bought it! Rifle and all! I figure the guns and ammo were worth that gold bar, there’s a med kit and MREs in here too, and some other stuff, anyway. I figured we could use it. Wanna look after dinner?” I laughed.

Dinner was great, Monique actually was a great cook, afterwards we smoked a bowl and snooped in the pack, in addition to the usual soldier gear, he had a decent hunting knife and a hatchet, a multi-tool, flashlight, and the secret to private “Alabama’s” greatness, a hundred Dexedrine tablets! “The joker was speeding his titties off!” Laughed Monique! She picked up a uniform shirt and looked at the name tag:

“Willis” I knew a private Willis, that poor Alabama boy couldn’t stick his finger up his butt with both hands, help and a road map!” She chuckled. “Alabama you say? That was where the sarge said he was from!” I laughed. “Sarge said he kept losing his equipment!” I said. “That be him! he’d lose his head if it wasn’t bolted on!!” Monique laughed hysterically! “He’s been bounced from unit to unit since he joined up! I heard he was section eight from the army, wonder why the guard took him?” She mused as she took off her shirt. “You feel up to a little fun old man? My booty needs attention and you the only man here!” She giggled.

Spring came early, Monique and I will be having our kid sometime in the fall, about the same time as Princess and duke have theirs, they'll grow up together watching the deer and zebra graze and the monkeys fight the squirrels for nuts, they're saying we'll have a radio station up on the east coast by then, maybe television too! Time to raid a store or two before then, I want a hundred inch Plasma monitor!

The end.