

CHAPTER 15

THE CALMING EFFECT OF THE BOURBON AND THE exhaustion from the harrowing escape led Templeton to doze off for almost an hour. When he awoke, Lucky was at his side, wanting food and attention and a walk outside. There were still several hours of daylight left, and Templeton started making a list of everything he would need to make it back to Boulder. At the top of the list were food and water, some basic medicines, the gun, and lots of cash—a lifesaver given that all the electronic underpinnings of the cashless society had collapsed. He went to DeFazio's bedroom and opened the bottom drawer of her dresser. There it was, exactly as she had described—over five thousand in cash, mostly in hundreds. Before he left the bedroom, he stared at the top of her dresser, with all its perfume bottles and jewelry cases—the latter of which he was tempted to empty before realizing that gold would be even less useful than money soon. He felt in a way as if he were a thief who had invaded her privacy, but hadn't she offered all her things to him, more or less? He also imagined what it would have been like all these years had they lived together—him lying in bed and looking at her standing in front of the large mirror above the dresser, adjusting her hair and clothes and putting on her makeup and perfume. But he quickly blocked the thought—*way too painful*.

He assembled all the items in a few boxes. They would fill up the trunk and most of the back seat, but he still had room for Lucky's travel cage and several bags of dog food in the front

one. The car had almost a full tank of gas, but he additionally threw in a gasoline canister and siphon just in case. When he had packed and eaten most of the meat remaining from the previous night's grilling, leaving a few scraps to Lucky, there was little light left. So he decided to catch a few hours of sleep before setting off early the next morning. He didn't want to go near the city again, so he worked up a route that would take him southward to Springfield to catch the beltway going west before crossing the Potomac at McLean. If it seemed safe, he would pick up Interstate 270 off the beltway and continue onto Interstate 70 at Frederick. If all went well, he would be able to make it to Breezewood by early morning before heading due west on I-70, clear through to Denver.

His smartphone alarm awakened him at four in the morning, and he managed to heat up a cup of coffee and load everything quickly into the Lexus, including Lucky. Templeton tread carefully on the drive through Alexandria, warily dodging idled cars on the ghostly silent streets devoid of all light. With the Glock close at his side, he drove back to the beltway and headed southwest. Within forty-five minutes, he had turned back north and was crossing the Potomac into Maryland. There were still cars along the interstate, but the passing lane was mostly clear as most vehicles had been moved to the emergency lanes. He passed Frederick and Hagerstown with little sign of trouble, although he could make out an occasional hitchhiker lurking by the side of the road. As he climbed into the mountains and crossed into Pennsylvania just south of Breezewood, the first rays of light in the eastern sky were beginning to break over the valley below. He briefly thought about Carletta Jackson, a little more than an hour up the road at State College, wondering what would happen to her. *Probably the same thing that's going to happen to all of us now.*

At Breezewood, there was a long line of cars that had come to a crawl as motorists were leaving Interstate 70 and about to traverse the two-mile neon strip through the small rural town to get onto the Pennsylvania Turnpike heading west.

Breezewood had long been regarded as a classic tourist trap—a “polyp on the interstate system”¹⁸⁴ created in the mid-1960s when the newly laid Interstate 70 failed to completely merge with the older Pennsylvania Turnpike, on which Breezewood had long served as an exit. As he got closer to the end of the line, he could see some state troopers stopping cars and, beyond that point, a large congregation of stranded people with signs asking for rides to points west.

When his turn came, a burly trooper in his signature Mountie hat waved his hand and asked Templeton to roll down his window.

“Going west, sir?” the policeman asked, to which Templeton silently nodded.

“How far?” the trooper asked.

“Denver, hopefully.”

The trooper turned around to the crowd. “Anybody needing a ride to Denver?” he asked.

No one raised their hand, but a young man with a wife and toddler at his side said he needed to get to Vegas and that getting to Denver would be a big help. The policeman waved his hand, signaling them to step forward.

The trooper turned back to Templeton and motioned him to pull aside, where another officer was waiting to do a further check. When Templeton showed some reluctance, the officer addressed him sternly.

“I see you have a lot of food in this car, mister, and probably a lot more in the trunk. These people here are desperate to get home. I would help ’em out if I were you.”

Templeton heeded the threat and moved his car to the shoulder. The new officer asked him to get out of the car as several other officers started removing boxes of food from the back seat.

“Hey, don’t do that!” Templeton exclaimed. “I’m going to need all that food.”

184 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breezewood,_Pennsylvania.

"And so are all the people you see here," the trooper said. "Plus, this family that's going with you is going to need some room in the back for themselves and their stuff."

When Templeton again protested, the officer became angry and asked for his driver's license and car registration. When the officer saw the car was registered in DeFazio's name, he started bellowing to his fellow officers about a stolen car and how maybe "this guy needed to get an arrest lesson." Templeton became anxious as the other two troopers started searching the car and found some of DeFazio's cash in the glove compartment.

"Look, Officer, you don't understand. Jacqueline DeFazio's my close friend," he somewhat lied, "and she and I were attending a conference at NASA related to the magnetar that just erupted and is wreaking all this havoc." He paused before adding, "Dr. DeFazio went underground with a bunch of other top NASA officials immediately thereafter and gave me the keys to her car since she knew my plane would be grounded indefinitely." When the officer didn't seem impressed, Templeton pleaded, "Sir, I swear I'm not lying to you. I'm the scientist who first discovered the damn magnetar and warned everyone about it. Please let me get home to Colorado!"

The trooper turned to the other officers and started to chuckle. "Get a load of this, guys," he said amusedly as he examined Templeton's driver's license. "Professor Templeton here says he's the fucking genius scientist who predicted that damn star would explode on us. Can you believe the jagoff?"

The officers joined in the laughter, but they stopped when one of their sergeants spoke up. "Wait a second." He turned to Templeton and asked as he glanced at the license. "Are you really *the* Professor Templeton?"

When Templeton nodded, the sergeant added, "My brother's mentioned your name to me a few times. He's a bit of a survivalist and told me about your predictions and how you're sort of a legend in the survival community for warning everyone." Turning to the other policeman, who was now

quieted, he said, "Officer Schmidt, I believe the professor's telling the truth. Let him through as long as he's willing to take this family with him."

Trooper Schmidt seemed a little miffed but followed orders. "Okay, everyone back in." Then he offered a warning to Templeton. "You and your passengers had better not let your guard down, Professor. We're hearing from people there's trouble in various places along the interstate. In fact, we're told there's some bad stuff happening in the DC area. Did you encounter anything when you were there?"

"Not along the beltway, but I would avoid the city." Pointing to where the bullet grazed the back windshield at the Wilson Bridge, he added, "Gangs are all over the place there."

"Okay, we'll pass on your info."

It had all ended politely, but Templeton knew he had barely managed to dodge another dangerous situation, this time with a dubious officiality about it. He was never as afraid as when the gangbangers tried to rob him on the Fourteenth Street Bridge, but he was under no illusions either. *This would have been a shakedown just the same.*

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Once they left the checkpoint, Templeton and his riders stopped at a convenience store and filled up with gasoline. It was still available, although the price per gallon had climbed to over ten dollars and all transactions were being handled at the pumps in cash. It still hadn't registered with most owners that this was not the typical power outage that would be over in a few days—otherwise the price would have many times that and the pumps would have been heavily guarded. Templeton still had a lot of cash on him because he had stashed most of it in a place he figured no one would disturb—the bottom of Lucky's dog food bags. He knew most people had a real soft spot for canines. *They'd rob other people before they'd steal a dog's food.*

Once they got on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Templeton introduced himself to the young couple, who identified

themselves as Brandon Robison, his wife Sarah, and their little son Lucas. They had been visiting some relatives on the East Coast when their car suddenly died on the New Jersey Turnpike just past Trenton. Robison managed to place the car in neutral and pull over to the side of the road, but he couldn't get the car to start again. He noticed that at the exact same moment a whole bunch of other cars had suffered the same fate. No one knew what to do, so most everyone just sat around for a while or started walking back to Trenton, two miles to the north. Robison and his family began to follow the crowd, and it became clear as they were walking that a large mass of people was similarly stranded. They had little hope of staying anywhere nearby, so they tried Amtrak and the bus. But those, too, were shut down. The situation was becoming dire, and several people started trying to hitch rides, so Robison managed to find some cardboard and hang out a little sign for Las Vegas. A few cars that were still on the road passed them by, but it was starting to get dark, and so they decided to spend the entire night in the open by the side of the road. It was a dreadful night—everything was completely dark, Lucas and other children were crying, and both parents slept fitfully.

At the break of dawn, they were up to try their luck again. A motorist saw their toddler and took pity on them, but he said he could only get them as far as Harrisburg. Robison figured it would keep them moving west at least and decided to take a chance, but when they got to Harrisburg they were basically in the same position as before. Just off the exit, there was another large gathering of stranded motorists, with little resources, hoping to get to this place or that. But now there seemed to be even fewer cars than before on the road. So they waited once more until it was getting late in the afternoon. Finally, a couple in an old Volkswagen van approached and said they could take them as far as Bedford but that it would be better to drop them off at Breezewood where there would be a lot more slowed westbound traffic because of the exiting of the interstate. Robison and his family ended up walking from the

turnpike exit to the strip where there were rooms available, albeit without electricity, but since the price was exorbitant and the credit card and mobile phone payment systems were down they once again camped out with a large crowd in a motel parking lot.

Templeton asked the Robisons if they wanted some cans of food from the back, along with some of the water, and they gratefully accepted. They hadn't even made it to New Stanton and left the turnpike when all three of them were sound asleep—Robison snoring heavily in front and his wife and Lucas dozing in the back, along with Lucky in his cage, still alert but mercifully calm. Templeton drove alone with his thoughts as he ventured west on his journey through the heart of a suddenly dystopian America.

Templeton hoped he could make it to Indianapolis by sundown, with Columbus, Ohio, being the only other major city along the highway. He figured Columbus, an upscale urban area containing the state government and a major university, wouldn't be that dangerous, especially in the middle of the day. Indianapolis, on the other hand, posed a bit more uncertainty, given that twilight would be fast approaching when they would arrive.

When Robison awoke, he started asking Templeton some questions about the encounter in Breezewood, which he had overheard, but Templeton provided mostly cursory answers. Was he really the one who predicted the explosion of the magnetar? Yes. What had happened? In a nutshell, a burst of high-frequency ionizing radiation released by the powerful magnetar had made it past Earth's defenses that were weakened by the ongoing magnetic reversal. It then disrupted satellites, pulled down electrical grids, and fried sophisticated electronics around the world. How had he managed to keep his car operative? It had been parked underground, and one of the keys had been shielded in his friend's basement. How long would it take to get the power grid up and running? Probably

months to fully activate, but parts might be up sooner. What would happen in the meantime? Lots of trouble, no doubt.

Templeton was grateful that Robison hadn't asked what would happen in the long run. He would have had to lie to keep their hopes up. The destruction of the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere would allow ultraviolet light to hang around for decades, and each new solar flare and coronal ejection and gamma burst from elsewhere in the galaxy would keep the protective layer from regenerating. Eventually, photosynthesis would collapse, plankton would die, plants would die, and much of the world's fauna—including humans—would die along with them.

As Templeton had surmised, passing through Columbus proved to be relatively safe and easy, although there were a few more police vehicles on the interstate, intermixed with disabled cars and stranded people desperately waving their signs. Templeton grew tired, so at the first rest stop after Columbus, they got out from the car one by one, making sure it was tended to at all times. Lucky hadn't had a break since New Stanton, four hours earlier, so Templeton put him on his leash. The young family was able to use the restrooms and to freshen up with some soap Templeton had brought along. The soft drink machines still worked, so Templeton bought a can for each of them, and then they were on their way again, this time with Robison driving. Robison's wife asked if she could take Lucky out of his cage and put him on her lap, and that move seemed to calm both her and the dog. In fact, it wasn't long before both Templeton and Lucky began to fall asleep and lightly snore.

Templeton awoke after an hour, but he let Robison continue to drive until they reached the outskirts of Indianapolis. As they neared downtown, Templeton saw that a checkpoint had been set up and a long line of exiting cars was routed into a large staging area where yet another stranded mass of humanity had congregated. In contrast to Breezewood, however, this setting was much more organized, with food and water tables set up by emergency personnel. When he got to the

front of the line, a local policeman noticed that there was still one seat open in Templeton's car.

"Sir, we have hundreds, if not thousands, of stranded people here. If you're going west, we have people who could fill that seat of yours to make it home. Where are you headed?"

"Denver. Actually, Boulder, just up the road from Denver."

"Pull over to the parking lot. We may have someone who's headed your way."

The word went out; and a family of four, two adults and two preteens, stepped forward. The policeman saw that a single seat wouldn't do them any good. But Robison stepped out and asked if anyone was going to Vegas; if so, he and his family could transfer cars and the family of four could hook up with Templeton. Surprisingly, there was a half-loaded car with two seats open going to Los Angeles that agreed to stop by Vegas on the way. After Robison's wife agreed to let Lucas rest on her lap all the way to Vegas, his family said their goodbyes to Templeton. Just before switching cars, Templeton offered Robison a few more cans of food before leaving, which the latter readily accepted.

To make room for the new family, the rest of the back seat was emptied, and much of the remaining food was given over to the temporary food bank that had been set up. Before leaving, Templeton again walked Lucky, after which the new passengers filed in. There was no room for Lucky's cage anymore, but that problem was solved when the mom and kids in the back seat offered to alternately host him on their laps.

Templeton went several blocks before finding another gas station, but this time there was a long line of cars waiting to fill up, and the gas was even more expensive than before—over twenty-five dollars a gallon. When he pulled out his wallet, the middle-aged African American clerk told him he was lucky because the pumps were almost empty. He asked where Templeton was headed, and when the latter said west to Denver, the clerk threw out a word of caution.

"We're getting reports there's a lot of trouble in and around St. Louis, so I'd stay away from there, boss."

"What about I-270, north of the city?"

"That's just as bad. Ferguson's nearby, and crowds are milling around parts of the interstate. Some folks have been stopped and robbed by armed bands along the freeway, and there've been some racial incidents as well." He paused before adding, "If I were you, I'd head up I-74 to Davenport and then follow I-80 west. It's a bit out of your way, but it'll be a lot safer."

"Thanks," Templeton replied.

"And one more thing," the clerk added. "Things seem pretty calm right now, but I wouldn't chance it around here either. It's starting to get dark, and there are hardly any lights anywhere, so I'd get on the road right away. If you have to stop, do it at a rest stop on the interstate."

"Thanks again," Templeton said before slipping the clerk a fifty-dollar bill, which he knew wouldn't even buy a candy bar the next day.

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Templeton resumed driving as the exhausted family quickly fell asleep. He made relatively good time during the early part of the night, intersecting Interstate 80 west of Davenport before midnight. Templeton was worried though. He still had a lot of cash on him, but he couldn't depend on stations being open as each hour passed. At that point, he decided to start the siphoning. Wherever it was safe, he pulled up beside abandoned cars and attempted to pry open their gas tank doors and twist off the caps if they were manually accessible. He would use the siphon to fill up the two-gallon spare canister and then empty the gas from the container into the Lexus's own tank, repeating the process several times until the fuel gauge registered full.

Templeton drove another couple of hours until the father, who had introduced himself as Aaron Brown, awakened.

Templeton then traded places with Brown, falling fast asleep on the passenger side. About five in the morning, Templeton woke abruptly when Brown swerved into the emergency lane to avoid a small dark car that was stranded in the right lane, and he drank the last of his coffee from the flask and took over the driving once more. An hour later, they passed Omaha, where they exited at a rest stop—this one devoid of snacks and sodas, although the water fountain was still working. At daybreak, he pulled over to a couple of stranded cars that fortunately still had some gas in their tanks, which he siphoned off quickly to fill his own. He calculated that they would hopefully have enough fuel to make it to Denver with optimal driving, given that the Lexus's fuel tank capacity was over fifteen gallons and they were getting close to thirty miles to the gallon on the interstate. He began to relax, knowing that Denver was an easy seven-hour drive from that point on.

No one had done a lot of talking up till then, although the mother had been periodically intervening to control the preteens' fussing. Now, however, Brown began to open up about the catastrophe that had befallen his family. He evidently ran an insurance office in Aurora and had tried to get to Pittsburgh over the weekend to attend his younger brother's wedding that Saturday evening. He had decided to drive, partly to save money but also because his two children were still at an age where any absences from school wouldn't be an issue. They were approaching the junction of Interstates 70 and 79 when the shitstorm hit and the car's engine and electronics suddenly went dead. He didn't realize what had happened at first, thinking maybe it was something with his car alone, but then he noticed all the other dead cars on the road. He tried to call his brother, but the cell service was also down. He thought about having his family hitch a ride the rest of the way to Pittsburgh, but there were only a few cars speeding down the road, and all those seemed full of passengers. As darkness grew, he knew it was likely that they'd be stranded the whole night, but missing the wedding was the

least of his concerns at that point. At some point, he managed a conversation with some other motorists who recommended he do what they were going to do—forget all else and get home. So at the break of dawn, they removed their suitcases and the few snacks and drinks they had left in the car and crossed over the median strip, searching for rides going west. Eventually, an older model pickup slowed and put all of Brown's family and their belongings in the bed. The man and his partner were headed to Chicago, so he told them he'd best leave them off in Indianapolis. They arrived there only two hours before Templeton stopped off with the young family from Vegas.

"You're lucky," Templeton said, "since a lot of those people waiting there—and there'll be more in the coming days—won't make it home for days, at best." What he refrained from mentioning was that making it home hardly constituted luck, given the societal collapse that was inevitable.

"So where do you live in Denver?" Brown asked Templeton.

"I'm actually heading to Boulder, but I'll be passing right by Aurora and can drop you off at your house."

"Geez, that's fantastic," Brown exclaimed before starting to ask Templeton a barrage of questions. "So what were you doing in the East?"

"Oh, primarily visiting a woman friend." He paused and added, "I was planning to fly back to Boulder the very same day the electromagnetic pulse hit."

"You mean this shit was all because of an EMP?"

"I believe so. Did anyone tell you a powerful magnetar erupted nearby in our galaxy, sending a massive surge of cosmic radiation our way?"

"That's pretty crazy. No, I never heard anything about it," Brown said.

Then Brown had a bit of an epiphany. "I hope you don't mind, but I noticed you had a lot of food and water in the car, not to mention a siphon." Suspiciously, he looked at Templeton and said, "You indicated you were caught off guard by the

EMP, but why did you make so many preparations? And how did you even get the car to begin with?"

Templeton was a little taken aback at Brown's perspicacity. "Yes, you're very observant, Aaron," he said with a slight smile. "My friend in DC happens to be Dr. Jacqueline DeFazio, head of NASA's Space Life Sciences Directorate. She'd been stockpiling food and water for months, but when the cosmic surge hit she was instructed to go to a large underground facility along with other top NASA brass. Since she knew all the flights out of DC and everywhere else would be cancelled, she told me to take some of her stockpile and her Lexus and her dog to help make it home." He reached for the glove compartment. "Check out the car registration in her name. Without going into the details, the fact that the Lexus was in her name almost got me arrested at a stop in Pennsylvania."

Brown stared at the registration receipt for a few seconds before turning red. "Goddammit, so NASA knew this was going to occur all along. Why didn't they tell the rest of us so we could prepare for it? Just like the friggin' government!"

Templeton waited for a moment before responding. "Your reaction is exactly why NASA *didn't* tell the public—it feared mass panic would ensue. But what if there was no magnetar burst? NASA's credibility would have been shot."

"NASA's credibility with me was shot a long time ago!" Brown exclaimed. "I never believed Armstrong ever came close to the moon, and the fact we've never gone back only proves it."

Templeton smiled and nodded. "I tend to agree with you."

After Brown cooled off a bit, he stared at Templeton again. "So Jacqueline your girlfriend never even bothered to tell *you* about this magnetar."

Templeton smiled. "She didn't need to. I was the one who predicted all along that it would erupt in this very year."

Brown was gobsmacked. "So are you an astrophysicist or something like that?"

"I am, though I'm retired. That's one of the reasons I was visiting Jackie in the first place—to consult with all the top

honchos in the government—including, if you can believe it, the president and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.” After a pause to let his words sink in, Templeton confessed to Brown about DeFazio, “I’m sorry, but I lied a bit to you, Aaron. Jackie’s not really my partner, although she was a long time ago and we talked seriously about getting together again. In fact, for most of our scientific lives, she and I were at odds with each other.”

“Why’s that?”

“Because I pissed NASA off in a couple of papers, one proving that we didn’t go to the moon because of the strength of the Van Allen magnetic belts surrounding Earth. They normally provide the shield against all this cosmic crap, but they’re down now because we’re in the middle of a magnetic reversal. But back in the sixties during Apollo, the Van Allen belts were still in place and would have proven deadly to the astronauts.”

Brown started to become more animated. “Yeah, now I remember reading about you in an article about the moon hoax.” He turned his head to the back seat. “Monica, kids, we’re traveling with a famous scientist. Can you believe he predicted all this mess we’re in?” Monica seemed intrigued, but the kids were nonplussed and quickly returned to their previous cavorting.

Brown started to pepper Templeton with questions about astrophysics, moon conspiracies, and even some other governmental conspiracies. About an hour past Lincoln, the questions stopped as Brown again dozed off to sleep. Morning had broken, and they were surrounded by the vast expanse of the American Great Plains, with wheat fields and sagebrush spreading out as far as the eye could see. Templeton turned south onto Interstate 76 in Eastern Colorado, and when they crossed the South Platte River at Fort Morgan in early afternoon, the soaring snowcapped peaks of the Rockies transformed their view. The interstate was largely abandoned, except for the occasional car moving in the opposite direction and a few stranded cars parked in the emergency lane,

mostly without their passengers. Looking out over the vast sagebrush landscape, Templeton began to wonder if even the lush portions of Earth would soon begin to look like it once photosynthesis halted and the trees began to die.

To improve his mood, he started to hum a John Denver tune, one of his favorites. He was pleasantly surprised when Brown's wife, with a sweet voice, began to join in from the back; and even the kids were soon singing. It was a sunny day, they were almost home, and their spirits were lifting. Soon Templeton had turned south onto the E-470 toll road, skirting the city to the east. But the empty light had just come on, and Templeton started to worry if he could make it back home, let alone Aurora. He had hoped to avoid siphoning in broad daylight, but he decided to risk it if only for a couple of gallons. He tried the first two stranded cars, but their fuel tanks had already been drained. He finally lucked out with the third car and was able to transfer about four gallons quickly while only a couple of cars—and no police cruisers, fortunately—passed by.

The Browns' house was a modern two-story on Parkview Place, less than a mile and a half from the intersection of Interstate 70 and E-470. It was framed by two large hawthorn trees in its front yard that were full of crimson blossoms. When they parked in the driveway, everyone quickly jumped out, even Lucky. The second car was safely parked in the garage, but the garage door opener was nonfunctional due to the power outage. Templeton hoped that Brown wouldn't try to start his car right away or even their appliances while he was still in the driveway. *When they find them not working, it'll ruin their homecoming for sure.*

After a minute or so, Brown came out and waved the all clear—evidently, nothing had been looted while they were gone. Templeton then rounded up Lucky and prepared to drive off, but not before offering Brown and his family one of the three remaining boxes of food and a hundred in cash, which they gratefully accepted.

Templeton returned to Interstate 70 and headed west for eight miles before veering northwest onto Interstate 270, which turned into Route 36 north of downtown and led all the way to Boulder. He was amazed at how little traffic was about given the Mile High City's rush hour would normally have been underway. Unlike Indianapolis, there were no checkpoints, but he had avoided the heart of downtown where he knew there would be large crowds of desperate people just as in the other cities. He arrived in Boulder in the late afternoon, exiting at Baseline Road and skirting the university section of town to arrive at his house in the foothills off Flagstaff Road. He had tried to find a fast-food place open, but they were now all shuttered.

Things seemed fairly normal as he entered his house, and he noticed the interior lights still worked when he turned on the switch at the door. That meant the solar panels—all eight of them that he had bought in 2010 with state and federal rebates—were still pumping out decent power. As long as there was reasonable sun, he could normally provide all the electricity he needed aside from his air conditioning unit; and much of the time, he would have excess power to sell to Xcel, the local utility. He had even invested in a stack of solar batteries to allow limited electric power during solar dead time. His furnace, however, ran on natural gas; and it stopped working when the national power grid failed. That was the big conundrum—the natural gas delivery system with all its pumps and compressors and control stations required the grid, but the electric grid now depended to a great extent on natural gas flows.¹⁸⁵ It was all a dangerous, almost hopeless standoff.

Since the furnace was off and the house was cold, despite the sunny late-April day, he decided to make a fire in the fireplace. While the house was warming, he decided to bring the rest of the food and water and other essentials from the car after manually opening the garage door and parking it

185 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/peterdetwiler/2012/11/06/weve-seen-the-electric-grid-at-its-worst-how-about-the-gas-network/#608ae2793cef>.

alongside the jeep that was still there but, as he found out the next day, unable to be started. By the time he had everything retrieved and Lucky was settled in, it was dark and the eeriness of it all began to set in. Looking out his large window in the family room, his view of University Hill and the campus normally showed a glittering array of lights through the strands of piñon pine in his sloping backyard. But now there were only a few small luminous sources, and the University of Colorado campus couldn't even be made out in the suffocating darkness.

It finally hit him now that the stress and anxiety and even exhilaration of the trip were wearing off. *He had made it home, but to what? And for what?*



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