



Blood, Soil & Frozen TV Dinners

Part 2

by Matthew Dougal

As the sun set and twilight brought a low fog creeping across the city, they piled into the Tacoma with as many frozen dinners as they could carry.

Tanner rode in back. Lauren was up front, AR at the ready, while Blake drove, M1A by his side and his Glock taped to the dash. Katie was at Tanner's side, curled up below the window and hidden from view, and Tanner watched over her with his own Glock and a borrowed Remington 870. They were all a little jumpy. He and Lauren had wanted to maintain a shoot-on-sight policy. Blake had been more cautious. According to Swanson, there would be plenty of people collaborating with the aliens. Lights out, engine low, and hopefully they could slip right on by.

No one knew what to expect—Tanner suspected they were all terrified. He certainly was. Even Blake had swapped out his flag bandana for a more understated camo print. He had stashed the red, white and blue fabric in the bed of the truck with the rest of their gear.

They pulled out into streets Tanner knew, but didn't. He had driven them every day, on the way to work, to Katie's school, to church, to the mall. The streets were as familiar as a cold Coke, yet now, in some important way, they were... different. As they left the Hole and drove through the suburb he couldn't quite put his finger on it, but once Blake reached the main street and turned past the bars and shops and take-out joints, it hit him.

The streets were dead. The cars were gone. The steady flow of traffic, of people living their lives, had stopped. The parking lot in front of the drug store was empty; so was the one behind the bar. The convenience store, normally ticking over with a steady stream of customers buying cigarettes and beer, was dark behind its windows. Unintelligible graffiti in some alien script covered the ads for energy drinks, an expression of mindless violence across someone's hard work.

A light rain had started, misting around them and adding to the dreariness. A billboard loomed overhead, the lights that illuminated the Colgate-bright smiles of the models now permanently dark. Tanner was glad—the gloom

obscured the flame-scarred destruction streaking the toothpaste company's perfect white message.

“Disgusting,” Blake spat. He looked like he wanted to say more but pulled up short, shocked at the sudden sound of his own voice. His eyes focused back on the road and he fell into uneasy silence. The truck continued its crawl down the deserted street, barely clocking 20 miles an hour. Even at that speed, the low growl of the engine seemed unbearably loud as it reverberated among the carcasses of commerce and ricocheted down abandoned side streets.

They kept driving, and nothing kept happening. It was torturous. Every minute of unbroken inactivity twisted the crank on the tension in the car, until the unceasing hum of the engine began to seep into Tanner's brain. Every muscle in his arms and legs, primed and waiting and ready to spring, began to tremble, and his eyes focused and unfocused on nothing at all. His frantic heartbeat messed with his breathing, a powerful panicked thud that matched the rumble of the pistons.

Overall, he was relieved when the road curved and they entered a strip of restaurants to see signs of life among the debris littered across the street in the distance.

It wasn't immediately clear through the gloom what was happening. Blake slowed the truck, now rolling along at barely more than walking pace, and they crept closer. The scene was illuminated by the flickering light of small fires and backlit by a pair of enormous floodlights, creating a glowing aura in the surrounding mist. Images began to resolve, ghostly figures flitting in and out of view and the harsh geometric shapes—not of debris, but of hastily manufactured barricades—throwing long shadows that lanced through the air around them as they approached.

All eyes were fixed on the barricades as they pulled within shouting distance, and Tanner nearly pissed himself when someone knocked on his window. He yelped, Blake swore, and Lauren's weapon x-rayed Tanner's head and pointed at the intruder. Tanner followed her lead and jerked his gun up to aim in the general direction of the window and for ten, twenty heartbeats nothing moved. Then another knock, and Blake hissed at them: "Put those

things away you idiots, we're the good guys here. Whatever side that guy is on, so are we."

Tanner slowly lowered the gun, then the window.

"Hey folks, no cars through here."

The man was clad head to toe in black—black jeans, black hoodie, black gloves, black bandana covering his face, black curly hair running with rain-water. No wonder they hadn't seen him. The stranger spotted their guns.

"Oh, nothing like that," he added, catching the nervous energy in the truck, "You're a bit late to the party. No trouble 'round here, this area's been cleaned out for days." He chuckled, sending a shiver through Tanner.

"Some folks messed up the cop shop a while back, it was a bit of a fight. Streets were all blocked up anyway, so we set up a little kitchen here. Been feeding some folks. Symbolic, like, new world in the ruin of the old and all that."

The smile fell from his face as he took in the scene in the truck.

"Everything alright? Is she okay?"

He gestured at Katie, curled up and quivering silently beside Tanner. Tanner opened his mouth to respond, but Blake was quicker.

“Sure, probably just spooked by that fucking mask. Look, we don’t mean to bother you people. Just heading east, trying to cross the river. We’ll go around you and your little kitchen.”

If the man took issue with Blake’s tone, it didn’t show.

“Bridge is a no-go, I’m afraid. Pigs blew the cables as they pulled out, some of it collapsed. It’s way too unstable to cross.” He scratched at his temple. “What d’you want out that way, anyway? There’s dangerous people out there, not exactly safe for... families.”

“We’re heading for, uh, Hood River,” Tanner spoke up, “Taking supplies out to the girl’s grandparents.”

“Indians,” Blake chimed in, “they need the help.” He winked at Tanner.

The stranger turned to Blake and met his eyes, holding his gaze for an unnerving moment. Then he seemed to resolve some internal discussion, relaxing his shoulders. “Well, you might be able to get across up St. Johns, last I

heard the bridge was still intact. There's some folks in the park up there, you can ask them."

"St. Johns? That's the wrong fucking way!"

"A bridge is a bridge. It's that or swim, champ."

"Can you at least call the, uh, your boss? Tell him you checked us out, ask if we can get across?"

The man smiled, but something hardened behind his eyes.

"My boss? Sure, sure. Look, I think it's time you moved on. Head on up there and tell 'em what you told me, they'll let you out. There's a bunch of poor Indians waiting for their dinner."

There was something strange about the way the man said "Indians," but he patted the hood of the truck and turned away, waving them down a side street away from the barricade. As Blake slowly drove off, Tanner collapsed back into his seat and quickly rolled up the window. His underarms were cold with sweat, and he relaxed muscles he hadn't known were clenched.

Blake took the turn the stranger indicated, muttering that if he heard anyone say "folks" again he would hit them. Tanner stared out the window at the

“little kitchen” as they passed. There must have been a couple hundred people, milling around a dozen or so small fires. They were all loosely centered around a large tent directly in front of the scorched skeleton of the precinct. Laughter and music drifted through the open window, and Tanner closed it. He didn’t think he could see any aliens, but it was difficult to tell in the dark.

“Collaborators. Must be a ration station or something,” he muttered, mostly to himself.

Lauren heard him. “No, this has been going on much longer than that, it just wasn’t so out in the open. Swanson warned us about it. He said they lure hungry people in with food.”

“Yeah,” cut in Blake, “this is how they recruit ‘em. Set up a kitchen, give ‘em food, homeless and crackheads and queers, mostly. Drugs too, probably, and spewing their propaganda. That guy was probably one of the junkies. Sure as shit looked like it, you see the way he stared at me?”

Tanner shuddered. A junkie. He had an overwhelming urge to wash his hands. He remembered the way the man had talked about the police station, his manic laugh in the face of such violence, and glanced back at the

quickly fading light. And saw a small figure, tottering at the edge of the firelight. A child.

“Disgusting,” he said out loud.

“Yeah, disgusting. It’s like Earl said,” Blake continued, “they been feeding people right under our fucking noses.”

They drove on toward the bridge. The streets were more cluttered here, both with people and the remnants of the riots, and they could only manage a slow pace as they picked their way through the destruction. Blake had to swerve to the wrong side of the road to avoid a group of people carrying trash bags, picking through the rubble.

“Looking for something to eat,” he grunted, and locked the doors.

Signs of violence were everywhere. Tanner’s chest tightened as they drove past the law firm where he had started his career—the job that had brought him to the city after he finished college, working for his father’s best friend and learning his profession. Inside the shattered windows it was nothing but a shell, the desks overturned and the computers gone. No one would be working there any more.

The destruction was completely random. Violence for its own sake. Beside the firm was a pawn shop, covered in graffiti and looted. Next to that, a Vietnamese restaurant, completely unharmed except for ‘Delicious, 5 stars’ sprayed on the pavement outside. Across the road was an untouched convenience store and a bookshop with its doors wide open, light flooding out and people crowding the entrance. A donut shop and an Apple store destroyed, a mechanic and a bar looking like they had simply closed for the night. There was absolutely no pattern or reason to it.

They saw a Fred Meyers with every window broken, the front door jammed open with a twisted shopping cart. A movement caught Tanner’s eye and he saw someone leaving from a side door, carrying a huge bag of stolen food. He hoped Blake didn’t see—he might do something stupid, and Tanner didn’t want to stop. It wasn’t safe.

They made it a few more blocks when Lauren gasped and grabbed Blake’s arm, making him brake. She gestured across the intersection to a KFC. Half the building had collapsed in what must have been an enormous fire; the half that still stood had been savagely attacked. She pointed to the entrance with

a shaking finger. Someone—or something—had toppled the giant bucket sign and sent it crashing through the ceiling of the kitchen. Above the door, someone had scrawled a message in red spray paint:

FUCK YOU SANDERS

OUR SECRET SPICES NOW

There were more barricades set up near the bridge. Where the others had been makeshift, marking a boundary, these were more serious. They were to stop people getting through. Blake slowed before they got too close to the blockade, which they could now see was lined by shapes that very much suggested people. On both sides of the road the land fell away into darkness, sloping down to become a park that ran beneath the bridge.

The park itself, a rare green space normally dotted with dog walkers and children, was transformed. The once-quiet lawns were a mass of tents and makeshift structures, stages and bars and sound systems, the proud trees now decked out with effigies and lights. Fires burned everywhere, and the distant space was carpeted with a swarming mass of humanity, undulating to a throbbing cacophony of noise.

“This doesn’t look good,” said Blake. He pulled over, a hundred yards or so short of the bridge.

“That guy said they would let us through,” said Tanner, “if we stick to our story.”

“He was a junkie,” scoffed Lauren.

“But he thought we were working with them,” said Tanner, “he had no reason to lie to us.”

“I guess it’s worth a try. Anyway, they ain’t gonna try anything against this much firepower.” Blake grunted. “Too late to change our minds now. They’ve seen us.”

He nodded at the barricade, where two shapes had detached from the mass. They moved toward the Tacoma, and Blake responded by flicking the lights to high beam and heading to meet them. As Blake swung back out into the road the beams cut through the darkness to illuminate the figures, throwing wild shadows from the two shapes until the truck steadied course and they coalesced into recognisable forms. One was a large man, white, with a nose ring and a loosely-tied blond ponytail. He was wearing a plaid shirt and

carrying a large rifle. The other—Tanner’s throat caught—the other looked like one of the aliens.

“Shit,” said Blake, as the headlights picked out at least half a dozen more shapes along the barricade, several with big guns visible. “Fuck.” He stopped the truck and rolled down the window, then cursed again and threw open the door.

“I’ll be fucked if I’m gonna sit here and be pulled over like some criminal. Tanner, you’re with me—let’s go meet them man to man.”

Tanner scabbled for the door handle and chased after Blake, half-skipping to catch up. They pulled up a few paces before colliding with the approaching party. The blond man stepped forward.

“How’s it going, dude?” he said.

“We need to get to Hood River,” said Blake, “we’re trying—”

“Yeah, we heard.” The man cut him off. “Bridge is closed to traffic, unfortunately. You wanna cross, you’ll have to walk.”

Blake bristled. “Are you joking? We need to bring all this stuff. It’s... important,” he objected. “You can’t just keep people here!”

“We could,” said the blond man, calmly. He sounded confident in his assertion. Looking at the line of men—and women, Tanner realized—standing along the barricade, he agreed.

“But we’re not,” the man continued. “You can go wherever you want. Take your shit, cross the bridge. Some folks have organized buses up the river, they’ll take you. But the truck stays.”

“But that’s my fucking truck!” Blake squealed. The man’s eyebrows shot up and Tanner laid a hand on Blake’s shoulder, squeezing it and hoping he got the message. The stranger paused, then sighed.

“Look, I’m sorry dude. I love my truck, too. But there was an attack at another camp last night by these so-called freedom fighters,” he grimaced. “Militia wackjobs, really. Word is they are gathering across the river, and we can’t risk weapons and vehicles falling into the wrong hands. Especially not an arsenal like you folks got here.”

The alien stepped forward and, much to Tanner’s surprise, spoke in perfect American English.

“Don’t worry, it’ll be here when you get back. We’ll take real good care of it for you. They will appreciate the help guarding the buses and I’m sure they’ll be more than happy to help you move these... important supplies.”

They signaled to the group at the barricade and two more figures made their way into the light of the truck’s high beams. The first was a slim Black man in fatigues, wearing a red beret at a jaunty angle and carrying a AR-style rifle in one hand. The other was a woman, tall and imposing. She wore a leather jacket over a long black dress, which was slit to the thigh to reveal hints of slim, bare legs that stretched from the pavement to the heavens. Tanner blinked rapidly and swallowed. He had always had a soft spot for long legs in thigh-slit dresses.

As they came closer the man nodded at Tanner and Blake, but he was not what held their attention. The woman with the legs from God was also rocking a luxurious mustache that would have put Teddy Roosevelt to shame. As Tanner’s eyes bulged, she caught his gaze and winked.

“Hello, boys. I’m Sunshine, they/them. I’ll be with you on the bus.”

Tanner didn't know how to react. A fuzzy memory bounced around in the back of his head.

“An investigation on college campuses found that increasing numbers of American citizens are using pronouns.” Earl's bewildered face frowned, then puckered. “These ‘theys’ and ‘thems’ are making a mockery of the American tradition, seeking to spread their insidious ideology among good, hard-working citizens, brainwashing young Americans into adopting these ‘pronouns.’ What's next, people identifying a different age? A different race? We need to speak out against this perverse trend and most importantly, keep them away from our children.”

That was it. These were the pronouns Swanson had warned them about. He gripped his gun and glanced at Blake, trying to get his mental footing.

Blake looked shocked, too, but quickly pulled himself together. He threw Tanner a sly look, one that hinted at an idea. “Give us a minute,” he snapped, and pulled away from Tanner, back to the truck. When they were both inside he turned on the occupants with a spark in his eyes.

“They must be talking about my boys, alive and kicking,” the old grin was back, his excitement barely contained. “Must have set up in the woods. We’ll head over and find ‘em. Maybe they got word from Earl. If they’re here, and they’re fighting, maybe we don’t have to go all the way to Boise after all.”

“What’s going on?” Lauren looked confused.

“We’re leaving the truck. Grab the shit, cross the bridge, hijack their fucking commie-wagon and strike out east. Either we find them in Baker, or our boys find us first.”

Tanner was still coming to grips with the situation. “What about... them?” he said.

“Who?”

“They... them. In the dress, with the pronouns!”

“And what are they going to do, stop us? You ever tried to fight wearing something like that? No. The four of us, across the bridge, grab the bus, easy.”

“Katie’s not hijacking any bus. She’s eight, for God’s sake. Maybe she and Lauren should stay here...”

“You stay here with Katie,” Lauren snapped, cutting Tanner off. “If you think it’s safer, if you’re looking for safer, you take her for a nice walk in the park down there. I’ll be with my husband, taking my country back from these freaks.”

“I know you want to keep Katie safe,” Blake added, almost apologetically, “but you saw what it’s like out there. You heard Swanson’s warnings. These aren’t people, they’re animals, aliens. She’s your baby fuckin’ girl, man. You do what you’re at peace with, but my wife sure as shit ain’t staying here to get felt up by some dick in a dress.”

Tanner looked at Lauren. “But she’s just a kid! What if she gets hurt.”

“What if she gets hurt here? So you look after her. Be a man,” Lauren spat back.

Blake clapped Tanner on the shoulder and held his gaze. “It’s do or die time, soldier. Let’s get the fuck outta here, hook up with the resistance, then bring back the fury of God and freedom and the USA to take back this city and liberate my God damn truck!”

Tanner looked at Katie, curled up in the footwell, and wanted to object. He wanted to take her somewhere safe, back to the Hole, where it was warm and they could hide from the aliens and the bad people and they had all the food they could need and they could wait for this all to be over.

But the fire in his belly wouldn't let him. He knew Blake was right, he knew that he should be ashamed of his moments of weakness. He saw Lauren gripping her rifle and staring at Blake with faith and devotion in her eyes and he knew that was the kind of man he wanted to be. Tanner breathed a silent promise to keep Katie safe, no matter the cost.

“Let's do it.”

Blake pulled the truck up to the group of guards and they all piled out, Tanner standing straight and feeling tall, Blake's words ringing in his ears.

It's do or die time.

Two of the barricade guards came over to help them unload while the others stood around and watched, their mustachioed escort who made Tanner's skin crawl and the large blond man. Traitor. They stripped off the tray cover-

ing and began shifting gear, Blake and blondie up above handing packages down to everyone else. Tanner heard the guards muttering to each other.

“Holy shit, that’s a lot of firepower.”

The blond man snorted. “And a lot of nasty-ass TV dinners. Important supplies, my ass.”

Sunshine shrugged. “Folks eat what they eat. Not everyone lives in a Whole Foods and learned to make Tom Yum on their gap year,” they rebuked him.

The man grimaced and scratched his jaw. “Yeah, right. That was unfair of me. Well, Thai cooking workshop tomorrow and I’ll make a big pot, so at least folks here don’t have to eat that frozen stuff... unless they want to.”

They busied themselves unloading, bundling food and weapons into bags or tying them together for ease of carrying. Tanner was tying the straps of his backpack and settling it on his back when he heard a curse from the back of the truck. He glanced up, and, frozen in time, watched the next few seconds helplessly.

The blond man had pulled out one of the last few satchels, the one containing all their spare clothes. He was standing upright, arms held out, nose ring

quivering in silent outrage. In his left hand he had Blake's flag bandana; in his right, Blake's spare jacket, rebel flag patch sitting proudly on the shoulder.

Blake reacted fastest. He dropped the food he was holding, raised his Glock, and with a vengeful crack the blond ponytail exploded in a spray of red.

The man in the beret raised his rifle and fired two shots into Blake's chest, sending him flying from the tray. A scream burst from Lauren as she reached for her gun, but the alien matched the sound and met her with a powerful tackle, sending both of them crashing into a pile of frozen hamburgers. Sunshine reached out and grabbed Tanner's arm.

Time snapped back into motion for Tanner. He instinctively pulled away and shook his arm free of the grasping fingers. Stepping back, he spun and swung his fist in a wild roundhouse. It connected with Sunshine's jaw as they overbalanced toward him. Tanner watched them collapse in a heap. His gaze danced over the chaos unfolding around him, frantically searching for Katie. There. Tanner picked her up and ran.

They plunged off the road and into the darkness. There was only one thought in his mind: get Katie across that bridge. She was sobbing, shaking in

his grasp, and Tanner made what he hoped were comforting shushing noises as he ran. He knew this park—there was a staircase inside one of the support towers that rose from the park to the bridge overhead. That was his way out. Holding Katie tightly, breath ragged, he ran toward the orgy of light and noise pulsating below.

The two escapees burst into the mass of people. Tanner looked around, eyes darting, taking in the madness and trying to get his bearings. The sensory assault was overwhelming, but he slowly made out patterns in the polyrhythmic press. What had looked from above like a continuous swell of humanity was actually a hundred, a thousand separate groups and camps and parties. People flowed freely between them, groups forming and merging and coming apart in a chaotic, everchanging anarchy. A makeshift stage to his left throbbed with bass, colliding with the bone-jarring screams and guitars of a group of punks. Tanner found himself surrounded by ecstatic dancers, while a group almost under his feet sat staring into a campfire, oblivious to the rest of the world. He crashed through their doped-out reverie and bounced off two men, locked in a hungry embrace.

Tanner recoiled and turned away, shielding Katie with his body, searching desperately for the tower that would lead him out of this nightmare. Lights flashed, blinding, creating a sort of slideshow of horror as Tanner scanned the crowd. There. He found it. His escape from this festival of the damned. He soldiered on, caught up in a whirl of half-naked dancers, men, women, and everyone else, mindless of the frigid air as they span and writhed in rapture.

Tanner spotted an exit, an island of calm, and dove for it. He exploded from the throng, gasping for air, and breathed in the relative silence. Collecting himself, he was faced with rows of bodies, still, staring at something unseen up ahead, the very air trembling with collective anticipation.

A voice shattered his uneasy reprieve, loud and bombastic and dripping with drama.

“And now, my darlings, it is time for these fuckers to do what I do best—go down!”

Tanner dashed through the crowd as they roared and surged into motion, and caught a glimpse of the scene ahead: two lines of people, straining on thick ropes, as a woman in lingerie and feathers pranced like a princess of hell

before them. The ropes led upwards, where they were tied around the necks of two enormous metal figures.

Lewis and Clark.

Tanner broke into a full sprint, shouldering bodies aside. He was almost there. Up ahead, rising from the chaos, was his stairway to the heavens. His legs trembled and his breath came in ragged sobs, but he couldn't slow down. Not when he was so close. He tore out of the crowd and into the comforting darkness of the spaces in between. His hysterical panic began to subside. One foot in front of the other. Keep running. They were going to make it.

As he neared the tower a figure came into view at the base, looming from the shadows of the doorway, staring into the blackness beyond. A stocky, muscled figure wearing fatigues and a plate carrier. It couldn't be...

“Blake! Blake, thank God.”

Tears welled in Tanner's eyes as he reached his friend. Lauren was nowhere to be seen, but right now Tanner couldn't think about her. He had survived, and he had brought Katie through. His heartbeat was still frantic, but from exertion rather than fear. They were here. He, Katie, and Blake. Emo-

tionally exhausted, physically spent, battered and terrified, but alive. They were going to be okay. He reached out to his friend.

Blake turned—No, not Blake. A thick black beard engulfed the shadowy face, momentarily lit by the glowing ember of a huge cigar. The eyes were deep-set and dark, the skin weathered, wrinkled, brown. The face of an illegal alien.

Tanner's throat betrayed him. He squeaked, and nothing more would come out. His knees wobbled and threatened to give way, his feet froze in place. He wavered. He whimpered.

Puffing on the cigar, the alien took in his terrified face and the little girl slung over his shoulder. He gestured toward the doorway and blew out an enormous plume of smoke.

“Go, gringo.”

It was well past midnight when Katie ran into the side of a tent, fell on her bottom, and started crying. They had crossed the bridge, left the highway, and headed for the safety of the forest. Since then they had been wandering among the trees for hours, directionless, driven by fear, then by hope, then

exhausted aimlessness. Tanner wasn't going anywhere except away from that park. He had briefly entertained the image of finding a group of militia, sitting around a fire, eating and laughing and, maybe, swapping stories with their old friend Blake. That was hours ago. Visions were fleeting in the fever dream of the forest. Since then, they had walked because they didn't know what else to do.

Tanner stumbled over to Katie and collapsed beside her, holding her close and hushing her. He felt like crying too.

A flashlight clicked on inside the tent and a dreadlocked head poked out of the flap.

“Hey, there's someone here!”

Rustling erupted from all around and more faces appeared.

“Wasn't someone keeping watch?”

“I thought you were.”

“Doesn't matter, doesn't matter. Someone's crying.”

“You folks okay?”

Tanner and Katie were soon surrounded by a small group of people. He looked up at them.

“Are you the militia?”

“No, don’t worry. You’re safe here. We’re friends.”

“Although I guess we are a militia if you think about it. Sort of.”

“Shh, don’t confuse the poor people. They’re terrified.”

“Sorry. No, no militia. Someone get them a blanket and something to drink.”

Minutes later, Tanner and Katie were wrapped in sleeping bags, sipping on hot cocoa. It was scalding and familiar and Tanner felt the tension of the past day fading, leaving bone-deep exhaustion in its place.

“Are you okay? What happened?”

“Thank you. We were... we just need to sleep.”

“And you? What’s your name? Are you alright?”

Katie looked at her dad, then stared up from her tin mug.

“I’m Katie. I’m scared.”

“You’re safe now. We’ll help you. Look, we’ll get you somewhere to sleep.”

The first face they had seen rummaged around in a tent and brought out a bag.

“Lucky we have a spare tent. I’ll just put it up, won’t be a second.”

The tent was almost up by the time Tanner and Katie finished their drinks, and they got up and walked over, sleeping bags over their shoulders, holding hands.

“Hey, thanks,” Tanner said. “I would have helped but I don’t really know how. Never had much call for camping. I am, uh, was a lawyer,” he glanced around, “not criminal, uh... intellectual property. Copyright.”

“No problem, of course. Here, it’s not hard. I’m just clipping the...”

“This isn’t the time for camping lessons, Jacob. Anyway, you’ll scare the man, sharing information for free like that. They’ve been through enough already.”

“Sorry, yeah. Look, slide in. Take these sleeping mats. It’ll do for tonight, I’ll teach you tomorrow.”

Tanner and Katie squeezed into the tent, sleeping bags huddled together on the cold, hard ground, and slept.

More from Strangers

We release audio versions of each of these featured zines, as well as interviews and other behind the scenes content, through our podcast Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness, so we hope you'll check it out! Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness is a collectively run anarchist publisher. We put out books, zines, and podcasts, which you can find at tangledwilderness.org. At the moment, this includes: **Live Like the World is Dying**, your podcast for what feels like the end times; **Anarcho-Geek Power Hour**, for people who love movies and hate cops; and **Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness**. Thanks for reading!



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