



Samuel Meacham

ROAD RUNNERS

Dennis woke up with a gasp. He had a throbbing pain in the back of his head and all he could see was blinding white light. “Are you okay?” asked a familiar voice. Jeremiah was kneeling next to him on the ground. Mac was standing behind him with a face full of concern.

“What happened?” Dennis managed to croak after a fit of coughs.

“I’m so sorry,” responded Anna who Dennis just realized was sitting off to the side under a tall oak tree, looking guilty as her right hand tried to claw its way over to him. “I’m too much of a threat to you. You should just leave me here”

“No!” answered Mac with a tone that Dennis didn’t know he possessed. “We’re in this together, no matter what happens.”

“Yeah!” chimed in Jeremiah “We’re a team!” Mac tousled his hair. Dennis agreed, they should stick together. But that wouldn’t be possible if they didn’t keep moving. Dennis got to his feet and stumbled towards the pickup, which was miraculously still intact, minus the shattered window.

“Dennis where are you going?” Mac raced after him.

“I thought I would make sure that the radio is still...” he trailed off, opening the door to the still running truck and turning the knob.

“-where staff has developed a cure. They tried to explain to me all the medical mumbo jumbo but I didn’t understand a thing. All I know is that it works!” Petey Cultrain announced in his southern twang. *“Here with me is Dr. Penney Wilson to deliver a special message.”* A gasp came from behind them. Standing there, pale-faced, was Jeremiah.

“That’s my mom!” he cried. Mac shushed him as they strained to hear the woman’s voice on the radio.

“Please, if anyone is out there, if anyone has survived, if anyone can hear this, then please come. We have a cure. Come, and we can help you!”

“Where is it?” Dennis burst out shouting. This time it was Jeremiah who did the shushing.

“-our location is St. Mary Hospital, come as fast as possible, and please be careful.”

“Does anyone know where St. Mary Hospital is?” Mac asked as he looked at Jeremiah and Dennis.

“I do,” replied Anna who had apparently snuck up and was eavesdropping on their conversation. The boy’s faces went through a transition of disbelief, to hope, then finally settled on unease.

“This might not end well,” said Dennis, “but we have to try.” They all piled into the truck, except for Anna who insisted on sitting in the back with her arms and legs bound. As they were driving, Mac scoured the map of roads to find the hospital based on Anna’s directions. Meanwhile, Dennis was teaching Jeremiah how to sing Jeremiah Was a Bullfrog.

“Jeremiah Was a Bullfrog” they sang in unison, Dennis belting slightly off-pitch. “He was a good friend of mine.” Suddenly they heard a yelp from the bed of the pickup truck.

“What’s wrong?” asked Jeremiah with a worried look.

“I can feel it trying to take over me!” screamed Anna.

“Hold on!” Mac yelled back, “I can see the hospital.” A faint roar could be heard in the distance. Don’t worry about it, Dennis thought to himself, it’s probably nothing, keep driving. As they pulled into the gravel parking lot with a skid, the first zombies came. They swarmed through the trees, hundreds at a time. Suddenly Anna jumped out and began to run towards them with a glint in her eye. Dennis leaped from the driver’s seat and sprinted after her.

“Follow me, Jeremiah!” Mac shouted. Together they took off towards the hospital. A few seconds later they made it to the front doors, with Dennis (and Anna on his shoulders) close behind.

“Stop kicking me!” Dennis yelled at Anna.

“I can’t help it!” she replied. Mac grabbed the handle and pulled with all his might. Locked. The zombies were getting closer. Instead of a single roar, they could hear individual yells and screams of rage. The boys banged on the door, hope fading.

Anna finally spoke up. “Thanks for saving me, even if we didn’t last long.” Just then the doors burst open and they were ushered inside.

“Mommy!” exclaimed Jeremiah, running and jumping into her arms.

“I thought I lost you!” she cried.

“No, these nice men took care of me and brought me here,” he explained.

“Please, can you help our friend?” Mac asked, breaking up the mother-son moment. “She needs medical attention. She’s been infected.” Dr. Penney pulled out a long needle to inject the vaccine. Immediately Anna’s arms and legs stopped thrashing and she looked more human, the purple color fading from her limbs.

“We did it,” Mac breathed. “What do we do now?”

“Now, we save everyone else,” said Dennis.