

If the world ends, I don't want to be left behind

EVERY ONCE in a while, when I was a kid, my father used to walk the family through whatever house we were living in at the time and talk about how we would get out in case of a fire. He showed us which windows had screens and which had none, and he'd make sure we could open the windows all the way and climb out. I think we were supposed to tie sheets together or something to get down from the second floor.

When we eventually moved into a bungalow, jumping out a window became less of a big deal, from a "distance to the ground" point of view. From a "your house appears to be burning to the ground" point of view, yes, I suppose, that would still have been a fairly big deal.

My father, you may have guessed, was in the military, and he was a Libra, so making plans for unpredictable eventualities came quite naturally to him.

And I am my father's daughter. I don't like being caught unprepared and I know from experience that, sometimes, uh, stuff happens. I have

DON'T GET ME STARTED



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my crank radio and my battery-powered lantern and my cans of beans in the basement. You know, in case there's a snowstorm or a hurricane or (as is sadly true in most of Nova Scotia) a teensy bit of wind, and the power goes out.

But, apparently, I am woefully underprepared. Perhaps you've seen the PSAs on TV: A fully geared-up firefighter enters a darkened home and nods grimly to the frightened group within. "Will you be ready to take care of your family for 72 hours in an emergency?" the voice of the Government of Canada intones. Apparently I will not, judging by the Emergency Prepa-

redness Guide I immediately ran and printed off (at getprepared.gc.ca) after seeing that commercial.

It's not that my preparations aren't good, it's that they're not nearly enough, and they're not for the right things. Public Safety Canada advises that in Nova Scotia, citizens are supposed to be prepared for floods, hazardous material spills, hurricanes, infectious disease outbreaks, landslides, power outages, storm surges, tsunamis and wildfires.

I think they also meant to put "alien invasions" on the list, because, apart from the usual preparations – which they suggest you keep in a wheeled suitcase in a closet by the door – they "recommend" that you pack a few extras: a change of clothing and a sleeping bag for each family member; garbage bags and toilet paper for personal sanitation; safety gloves; basic tools such as a hammer, pliers, wrench, screwdrivers, and fasteners; a small cooking stove and fuel; and, disturbingly, duct tape "to tape up windows, doors, air vents, etc."

Now, I don't know how you feel about all this, but I've read *The Road*

by Cormac McCarthy, and seriously, if the situation is that bad, I hope to get blown up or swept away or sucked into the spaceship with everybody else. I don't want to be the last one left wandering the blackened planet with my shopping cart, looking for unspoiled tins of tuna and loaded pistols.

But, hey, just in case that nightmare scenario does come to pass, the Emergency Preparedness Guide has kindly provided me with several convenient "non-perishable food recipe ideas." After all, who wouldn't be craving something sweet once the immediate crisis is over? With no irony whatsoever, the guide's Peanut Butter Balls recipe cheerfully advises, "This recipe can easily be doubled if you are feeding a crowd."

Or fending off cannibals. I guess it's up to you what you use them for. Just remember to make enough to last 72 hours. That's when help from the Government of Canada will officially arrive.

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