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Dear Pastor John

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DEAR PASTOR JOHN

by

Aloe Corry

Dear Pastor John,

The very fact that I am in a position to write this to you should alert you to the problem. At a time like this—or at the time it should be—I wouldn't count on finding a functioning post office; in fact, I wouldn't expect any form of communication to be reliable. However, here I am, sitting at my table writing this and quite sure that it will reach you.

This morning I woke up, jumped out of bed, and threw open the window. I was in a state—I don't mind telling you. I was ready for anything. Except for what I saw next. Outside it was sunny and cloudless. It was quite early, and all down the block children were leaving for school with their mothers running after them, carrying lunchboxes. I saw Mr. Blake stepping off the curb on the way to catch the bus to work. Normally on a day like this, I would be doing something similar. Getting ready for the day, thinking about the vacuuming to be done or what I needed to get at the grocery store. Instead, I was in the window, geared up in my survival suit. I had put it on yesterday evening, just in case, because I thought that things might get started a little earlier than expected. I spent a

I figured I was extra prepared. I had the waterproof matches, the water-filtering straws, respirators and Kevlar suits with reinforced American civilization—

dystopian fan fiction with teens struggling to survive in post-apocalyptic worlds, and all those novels about the collapse of broadcast and everything else I could get my hands on—old copies of National Geographic Ben had lying around the house, Sunday to Sunday. I read all the books you mentioned in your but I wanted to be prepared. I made sure to do everything right. I did all the calculations, followed your radio station faithfully. I mean, I thought that suit was expensive and uncomfortable, damp, waterproof and fireproof suit you advise us all to buy.

Anyway, at the time I was still thinking that something was bound to happen. All dressed up, with nowhere to go. Me, in that stupid company started sending threats Ben made me promise to do it. electricity bill this morning. I held out for a few weeks, but once the sure I would be done with. Wouldn't you know, I had to pay the for dinner, paying the bills. All those mundane things that I was ing Ben a call at the office and asking if he was having people over washing the dishes from last night, catching my show on TV, give go up in smoke? I was too antispy to do the chores I would usually do some time. How was I supposed to know when everything would obvious. It was just another sunny day. Sure, I kept my hopes up for hot in my gear, you might ask—why the complaint? Why, that's On such a lovely day, despite the fact that I was getting a little few minutes. In fact, as it turned out, I was just a little over-dressed. couch because he couldn't handle me kicking off the sheets every sway night, as you might imagine, and Ben went and slept on the

knee joints, those tiny freeze-dried packets of food stacked up and tucked away into suitcases. My bathtub had been cleaned and filled with water for hours—I had to make Ben use the shower we have down in the basement. He didn't take it too well. He wasn't enthusiastic about anything, truth be told. But I knew that come tomorrow I would be able to show them all. Ben, the stuffy people he works with in the office, Mary Robinson next door with her Birkin bags and Prada heels. She has a gigantic dog that her awful son drags all over the neighborhood. It has some sort of pedigree. I couldn't convince Ben to get anything more than a few fighter fish, and then he wouldn't even come out to the backyard to bury them with me when they died a few weeks later.

I can hear them all now, laughing at me. Me, shut up in the house all day, making calls to warn everyone, checking the news and waiting for it to happen. I had told them so, told them all for months. It wasn't my fault that they wouldn't prepare themselves seriously or take advantage of the great sales I found on your website and at Sportsman's Outdoor Warehouse. I was so ready, for once in my life, so ready to be right. After that astrology disaster, the phrenology business, rock crystals strewn around the house that did nothing to improve the feng shui or harmonize Ben and me at all—the essential oil tinctures that made him sneeze and the holotropic breathwork that made me pass out a couple of times and made his mother go into cardiac arrest. I tried to tell them that it was just because our chakras weren't aligned, but no one listened.

Anyway, all that had to stop about six months ago when the paper cut on my finger got so infected that Ben dragged me to the hospital before I could even try my latest remedy. The doctors thought about

amputation, but instead they just stuffed me full of antibiotics, and I kept telling them—you won't solve anything with those pesticides you're feeding me that you call modern medicine—and then my finger healed in a week, and it turned out that they were right, not me. About all of it. I was the one who was wrong. And this time, after listening to your broadcasts for so many months and feeling so good about being prepared, I just wanted to show them all. Make Ben wait by his office phone for me to call and let him know that everything was okay, that I put all of his electronics into the waterproof case just in case the floods decided to come down our street and would he please come home early because the subway system was going to shut down in the coming chaos?

I waited the whole day, tuning into your broadcast and checking, rechecking the suitcases to make sure that everything was ready. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. It could have been something small, a little economic meltdown or something, you know? An earthquake? Something that I could use to justify that bill I just got for that indestructible and inflatable tent you recommended.

I know that if I were to tune into your broadcast now, you would be saying to all of us over the radio, wasn't that a good thing, isn't it a miracle that we have all been spared, brothers and sisters. Anything to try and gain face. I understand. I've been through that sort of thing before. But this is what I want to know, Pastor John: if the world isn't ending anytime soon, what am I supposed to do next?