

The Full World

The spring of the pandemic, when the world stops, when she's jobless and getting fat, living off savings, spending all day on *Twitter*, shouting into the void –

She makes the decision.

Googles – APOCALYPSE

Finds *InfographicGuideToDoomsdayThreats* –

Discovers a world full of doomsday preppers – American crazies, *ChurchoftheLatterDaySaints* – buying military-grade mylar pouches, kits packed with duct tape, food bars, air filtration masks. She researches *Intershelter – the igloo-shaped pleasure dome*, built to withstand godknowswhat and everythingelsebesides. People are stockpiling. The newnormal.

What keeps? Dried mixed fruit, three years. Tinned peaches, pears, carrots, two years. Tinned pineapple, three. Why three? What's special about pineapple?

SpaghettiOs. Three.

At night she dreams *duckandcover*. She dreams *mushroomclouds*. She remembers a poem she wrote at primary school about nuclear war and the teacher said – Write something *abitmorecheerful*. Been told that her whole life – Try being *abitmorecheerful*.

Well, *lookattheworldnow* –

If not the virus, the climate. If not the climate, the *LOONIESINCHARGE!*

KimJongUnTrumpJohnsonBolsonaro, illfittingsuits.

Madmen.

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What will she need?

Powerless tools. Yes. She has them – knives, hatchets, mallets, hammers, sickles, a manual drill that belonged to her grandfather (*mustbeahundredyearsoldnow*). A whetstone. No point having blunt knives.

Stuff to trade? She's not planning on trading. *She'llbehidingisall*.

Can't find a price list for the *iglooshapedpleasuredome*, nor any info on getting it from America to here.

Maybe go for some kind of dugout?

Here come the naysayers.

WhyGoingIntoanUndergroundBunkerMayNotBettheBestWaytoSurvivetheApocalypse.

Well *now* they tell her! Obvious really. Risk of suffocation, underground gasses, cold – try lighting a fire underground... Two kinds of ventilation needed – bring air in, let air out. Can't air go *inandout* the same way?

Currency – pre '65 American dimes, Gold, \$1300 an ounce. (She has *twoweddingrings* doesn't wear either). What's an ounce feel like? Otherstuff for currency – tampons, veg seeds, rizzlas, fags, vac-packedbaccy, airlineliquorbottles.

Ha! Who can get airline miniatures now?

Alcohol generally – disinfectant. Base for herbaltinctures.

Tinctures

American websites are *nuts*, of course. Written by nuts for other nuts.

She finds a UK article – more low-key. An ex-serviceman –

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People think preppers are *barkingorelitist*.

Barking.

Or elitist?

Which is she?

The prepper-ex-serviceman has a thermal imaging drone and a shelter in ruralWales. He utilises condoms:

makeshiftcanteens for water storage –

elasticbands for slingshot –

inflatable fishingbobbbers –

(Nothing about contraception.)

Box culverts. An alternative to *iglooshapedpleasuredome*.

There's nothingtobegained. *Nothing to be gained* from sinking this low. Whatever these people prep for, they're bound to miss the most *vitallyimportantthing*. And anyway, what's the point in surviving in a world that is *sofuckedup*?

Spring shudders into summer, *BlackLivesMatter statuesmustfall Churchillwasaracist* –

July heaves through August into September. The government – *fuckthegovernment sackBoris* – throws money at schools. Nurture Our Children – the latest *threewordslogan*. What the heck? She applies, gets a job. Primary kids. Five-year-olds. *Tutornotteacher* – no prepping to do. Big garden shed in the playground, near staffcarpark.

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Harley, Lola, Darcy, Aaliyah, Skylar, Mason, Mia, Jaxon. Five girls, three boys. *Nurturegroup*.

Her bubble.

Astonishingproximity. The smell and heat of small humans.

She calls her grown-up kids – Yes, I’m loving the job.

Dreams them back into babyhood when *holdingthem* could still *containthem*. Grieves for the grandkids she doesn’t yet have.

Last bit of her savings buysavan. A van! CrappyoldwhiteTransit. Anonymous. Staffroom joke.

WhitevanwomanHahaha!

Spends salary on alcohol. GlenfiddichMartellCointreauBombaySapphire. Man at the offy must think she’s a *problemdrinker*. Buys cans – peasbeanspotatoschickpeasspagettios. Buys tampons. Forty packs. Woman in Tesco does a doubletake. Paracetamol. Loads. *Onepackonly* from each of SainsburysLidlAldiBootsMorrisonTescoWaitroseSuperdrugandCo-op. *Repeatsnecessary*.

Readingglasses. All strengths. All sizes.

Dioralyte

Immodium

Antihistaminecream

Bic lighters

Campinggas

Batteries

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Blanketsoffebay. Socksandpants.

Buys so much stuff she sometimes forgets to eat.

Turmeric and baby powder – rub on your skin to stop radiation? *Seriously?*

Mushroom clouds.

Growyourown mushroom sets.

TrumpontheCampaignTrail anarchistagitators lowlifelooters

She ghosts through an echochamber –

gobacktoAfrica FascistShadowDeepState I'dvoteforcrapinmyseptictankbeforeI'dvoteBiden

She goes internet shopping, bulkbuys Mooncups, She-wees, wholesale bales of t-shirts and leggings, all sizes. Knitting wool. Needles. Old-fashioned nappypins.

Octobertime, PetsAtHome. Yes, the bunnies are cute. Yes, she'll take five. Three females, two males.

The girl gives her warnings – *Theydomultiply.*

Itsokay!lkeepthemseparate.

Maybefivefemales?

No.

A doe can produce fifty kittens a year. *Thirty-onedaysgestation.* (Each litter a clock.)

Allinthebackofmyvan. Yes. It's half full already! I know.

Neighbours must think she's barking.

Barking or elitist.

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She Googles the prepper-ex-serviceman, ruralNorthWales, gym instructor, *stillfurloughed*, shaved head and tats –

Evade, resist, extract – I'm not prepping for zombies – Made redundant from the army – on my own two feet, so get on with it. What you need to think is *what happens if the power goes off, or the water doesn't just come out of the tap?* People get desperate. Power goes down mainstream, you can't flush the toilet. I've prepped for all that stuff.

Effortlessly, she finds him on Facebook. Not in a relationship. *Perfecting his bushcraft.*

Wonders whether she'll slit his throat or appealtohisbetternature –

These days you can't rule out anything – that's the golden rule.

Rabbits run free in her front room. Shit everywhere. At school someone comments on the *smellofrodents.*

She dreams of herself as an empty space, an outline painted around her murdered body.

Calendar hits October.

tanksinBeijing InternetAccessisaHumanRight R-RateRising-LockdownatChristmas?

She buys foilpacked veg seeds. *Staysfreshforthreeyears.* She buys an old Singersewingmachine, spools of thread, linen twine, string, wire, elastic. More canned goods. Emergencydentalrepairkits gascanistersbatteries –

Sewing needles

Pencils.

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She Googles GeigerCounters.

trainstrike ProtestorsKilled anti-anti-fascistsbeatingpolicewithhomemadetruncheons –

SeeWhatYouMadeMeDoNow?

Gravedesecrations MyLifeMatters IndiaChinaBorderWars KeepAmericaGreat –

FAKENEWS!FAKENEWS! *Trumpcallsinthemilitary.*

Nobody stops him.

Marchforthestarving. SIXTHRICHESTCOUNTRY!

Racism is not a twowaystreet –

She buys turmeric and talcum powder. She buys heavy black drapes from a closing down theatre.

She buys paint, chalk, paper.

At school kids make pumpkin lanterns, hang them in windows.

She drives home past the Extinction Rebellion billboard –

IF NOT YOU, WHO?

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

(Notyetnotyetnotyet).

She phones her grown up children, aches to be with them, aches to warn them – duckandcover –

thebombsarecomingdown.

She buys duvets and pillows, soap and candles, more Bic lighters –

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November is febrile. Social media pulses and hurts, like a spot about to burst –

moreCoviddeathsincarehomes planeshotdownoverTunis Italianfascistsmarching

deadlystormsurgeinGoa JakartaEarthquakeThousandsKilled –

The world is raging.

Each morning in November, she catches the rabbits and slides their hutch under the boxes in the van. Everything is ready. She ropes the stack so it won't collapse, hangs a tablecloth curtain. In the space behind the boxes a cosy chamber, sheepskins, duvets, cushions, a battery lantern. Each night she comes home and gets the rabbits out again. Notyet. Notyet.

Brazildeathtollsrising Trumpdeathclock Bolsonaroinhiding NoMoreDemos ArmThePolice

It rains and rains and rains –

She goes on Rightmove, *SoldPrices*, *RuralFlintshire*, finds his plot of land, checks it against the landregistry, finds the planning application ('REFUSED' but he went ahead anyway).

It's the site of old mineworkings.

She smashes her iPhone, chucks it in the woodstove, listens to the hiss of volatile hydrocarbons. The plastic melts, convulses, foams; flames go pink, then green. She thinks *fireworks*. She thinks *atmospherictoxins*.

Then she smashes and burns her laptop. No track. No trace.

At school, the children cut elephant shapes from Fimo and paint them for Diwali, stick on crystals and sequins. She cuts eight silk ribbons to thread through the decorations.

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She says – Bring your lovely elephants, we're going to hang them in a special place.

In the lee of the shedclassroom, obscured from the mainschool, she lifts eight children into the van.

Look-chocolate helpyourselves –

socialbubble

With luck, it will be lunchtime before anyone clocks they are gone.

Driveliketheclappers

West out of Bristol, over the slack Severn, the mud far below seethes and hisses –

It's time – it's time – it's time –

No phone no satnav no worries. She's memorised the journey. A brain can be programmed.

AcceptNoMisgivings. She turns up the radio. Even through layers of supplies and equipment, even through wipers slashing the wetwindscreen, she can hear the children calling and crying.

Ohgodohgodohgodohgod what am I doing? What have I become?

Nothingcanbechanged until it is faced.

She thinks – what about the rabbit piss, smell of ammonia – what if the children are suffocating?

She thinks *OskarSchindler*. She thinks *JosefFritzl*.

Which is she? *SchindlerorFritzl?*

Barking or elitist?

Go north at Newport, on towards Pontypool, Abergavenny, Crickhowell –

Not much on the radio – a teacher missing, no mention of kids, don't want to panic anyone –

Talgarth, Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells –

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An appeal from the headteacher – Please, get in touch.

Newtown, Montgomery

Welshpool, Oswestry

Llangollen, Corwen, Derwen

Clocaenog –

Wet branches whack the Transit's wingmirrors. There's a fenced off track and a sign warning

DANGER FLOODED QUARRY.

It's guesswork from here, but she guesses well. All fifty-five years of her wholelonglife, she's been heading to this deadendtrack in Flintshire. She understands now.

But the *GRIEF* for her own children! The *GRIEF* for what's lost!

A life full of notknowing. A life full of hoping *everythingwillbeokay*.

GRIEF jam-packs her, chokes her, brim-fills her –

NO –

NO.

She is the outline of herself.

Empty.

It's five o'clock, ink-dark, raining. Silent in the back. The kids are sleeping or dead. Tears *streamdownherface*. She knocks on the door.

Floodlights surge.

The Full World

He's been prepping for years, but not for this, peering through the peephole, her wet face in the fisheye –

He never prepped for a lone woman turning up one teatime in November, in a *stateofdistress*, in the dark, in the rain. Lost? *Betws-y-Coed*? You're *miles* out the way, Love. What? Left your phone at home? Of course you can come in for a cup of tea.

It's a plain, low structure, built into the hillside, almost invisible. A tier of solar panels, ventilation outlets, chimney, rainwatercapturetanks, all more-or-less concealed by rock walls and vegetation.

Surprised you found me –

Blackoutcurtains

Parked 4x4 under camouflage netting

Guns on the walls instead of pictures, smell of weed, remains of a blunt, smouldering on a saucer.

Old fashioned vinyl on a record player. TV and radio off. Mobile phone on a coffee table.

Make yourself at home, Love. Take your coat off if you want.

He brings tea while she hangs it up.

She says – Maybe you could just show me on *GoogleMaps*, so I can get an idea.

Sure –

He sits down, picks up his phone, smokes-up again – Don't mind, do you?

Course not, it's your house.

He opens Maps, enters *Betws*, a green thread-vein of a road she'll never travel.

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She comes at him from behind, catches the phone as it flies. She's flabbergasted by her own strength and coordination. *Not known for either!* His hands grab out in shock, knock over the teas, he howls, gargles blood. She jumps back as he slumps to the floor. There's blood on the table, diluted by tea. Pink drips.

She works quickly. Into the phone's settings, changes the password, checks his Whatsapp, responds to a friend –

You know what, Mate? Think I'm going to go off-grid for a while, maybe a month or so, wait for the world to calm down a bit. The reply pings through. *Fair enough, Buddy. See you when I see you.*

She covers the body.

She opens the cellar. She's begun to think like him, so his systems are obvious. Down through the hatch in the cellar floor into the mineshaft below – even better than she imagined – seven levels of mineworkings, bolstered and propped, drylined chambers, storage heaters, weaponstockpile. A vast hoard of cans and packets. A cavernous space for horticulture, racks of solar-powered daylight LEDs, beds of marijuana, beefsteak tomatoes, courgettes, lettuce, spinach, chillies.

No internet down here, only CCTV on a widescreen monitor. In the lower levels, living quarters, space for the rabbits. A long tunnel to a plant room: incinerator, heat generator, rainwaterinletpipe, borehole, spring, toilet, bathroom. *He's thoughtofeverything.*

She takes the rabbits down into the bunker. Then the children. Makes everything cosy. Hot chocolate. Crisps and snacks. Pins in the wall for the Diwali elephants. *Gotosleepnow.*

She empties the Transit.

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Then she carries his weapons, from walls and the stockpile, dumps them in the van. Wraps his body in a rug, drags it and heaves it, cries with effort and pain.

Drives to the flooded quarry. Smashes the fence. Edges to the rim. Handbrake off. Jumps out.

Shoulder to it!

Prepper and weapons over the edge.

Tosses his phone in as an afterthought. *InternetRIP.*

She walks the two miles back to his house. It's starting to snow.

The first night she keeps in the cellar, just below the kitchen floorboards, listening for intruders, listening to the radio. In the day, she feeds the children, tries not to look into their eyes.

Second night they broadcast the parents' appeal on the news – Please bring them home – Tell us where they are – Tell us they're safe –

Third night the missing children are the fifth item, after *MoreCivilUnrestInUKCities*

USACovidDeathsReach6million *AssassinTargetsVladimirPutin*

FiftyThousandDisplacedinShenzenflood –

On the fourth night she realises she has forgotten books! How could she forget BOOKS? She was bound to miss the most *vitalyimportantthing*. No books. *NotevenTheBibleandShakespeare*. The prepper did all his reading online. And latterly, so did she.

She finds a martial arts magazine, wedged under a table leg. Line illustrations, words in Mandarin.

She quits the cellar, goes down in the bunker, securing the hatch against the outside world.

The fifth night she sits at the monitor, watching the snow drift and settle on CCTV.

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She feeds the children, cleans them in the shower. They seem calm.

She thinks *StockholmSyndrome*. She thinks *NataschaKampusch*. She thinks *stophinking*.

Tomorrow, she will begin their education, starting with the rabbits.

After four litters of kits (must be mid-March), she checks CCTV. Someone has nicked the prepper's 4x4. Also shot out the floodlights, ransacked the house. But the hatch is secure.

She thinks *circadianrhythm*. She turns off the cameras. *SaveEnergy*.

Another eight kittings. The children light candles, then place them in alcoves with the Diwali elephants.

Tentatively, she goes up to the cellar, winds up the radio.

There's nothing. No signal. Only the hollow outline of what was.

A smell of dead air.

Silence.

By whatever means, the world has emptied.

From now on, they will stay under.

*

The Full World

OldWoman said –

Always strongis defer to weakis. This your culcher. Old have learning, young have truth. Together makes wisdom.

I, Yali, was number one baby of seven genrayshon. I was littlis – one who oldis and strongis and Counsol and all others defer to.

I talked baby words, then real words, then eldis and others asked me – Can we go into TheWorld now?

I said – Yes.

I chose.

I came up life-tree from Aaliyah and Mason, all way up to seven genrayshon, and now, you, eight – my own baby – Haya. I wrote name Haya on wall. Top of tree.

Tomorrow I work cutting and gathering.

Today I work teaching TheStories to Haya.

TheStories come from earth and roots of tree. OldWoman is earth, and roots are TheRiginals.

Roots are Harley, Lola, Darcy, Aaliyah, Skylar, Mason, Mia and Jaxon. All here in TheWorld now come from TheRiginals.

TheRiginals lived in TheUnder, and their children lived in TheUnder, and their children lived in TheUnder until tree was six genrayshons high. All stories and names go up branches. Mummys and Daddys give stories to babies all way up to top. Now, we are seven. And you, baby Haya, eight genrayshon.

1) TheStory of rabbits.

The Full World

Some ways, rabbits same as humans. Some ways, rabbits are different. Both can be learners.

Rabbit ears shape like nife, human ears shape like cup, but same – ears for hearing. Eyes, teeth, head, body, legs – all same, humans and rabbits.

Back in olden days, when OldWoman just had TheRiginals, she got Skylar to choose rabbit.

Biggis one, Jaxon, said – Why Skylar choosing?

OldWoman said – Skylar is youngis. Always youngis before oldis. Always weakis before strongis.

Old have learners. Young have truth. Together makes wisdom.

This your culcher.

Skylar, littlis of TheRiginals, picked smallis rabbit.

OldWoman got rabbit by scruff, put two fingers round jaws. She pulled. Rabbit died. She put sharp blade under chin and slict down belly. Opened insides out.

OldWoman said – Look, see bumping heart? You got bumping heart. Feel here.

TheRiginals felt own hearts. She said, Look – these luns – where you breathe? And here, livers and kinsey make clean inside you, make bodypower like genrayter, gut like incinrayter. Parts are inside you too. This the woom, female parts for kits. Other rabbits got male parts. Where they mate. You all got these parts. When you big, you mate too. These bones, this meat? Your mussles too. Mussles to run, sit, eat and push out kits.

OldWoman cracked rabbit skull, took out brain. Look – this brain? Brain is mussle where rabbit thinks. She learns. She rembers. She knows. She feels things, like afraid, happy, hungry, sleepy. She feels loving and caring for babies. She has instint too. Instint is she knows without learning.

All these ways, rabbits same like you.

The Full World

Now.

See puff tail? Humans got no tails. Other things instead.

Humans have talking, singing, cooking, drawing, writing, dancing. Also growing plants, making-in-wood, skinning, loading incinrayter, loading genrayter, orgnising.

Humans have choosing and deciding. Biggis rabbit wants to mate littlis rabbit? Littlis rabbit must do it. Not same with humans.

No means no.

But rember – always weakis before strongis. Rabbit is weakis, human strongis.

We care of rabbits, clean rabbits, feed rabbits. Rabbits mate. Make new rabbits. Humans defer to rabbits.

We eat rabbits becos we in TheUnder, but one day, in TheWorld, let rabbits free. Eat other things.

OldWoman gave rabbit brain to Skylar, littlis of Riginals. Littlis ate rabbit brain.

2) TheStory of loving and fighting

OldWoman said to TheRiginals – All of you are loving. She painted line on wall. Flat shape of her body.

She said – See OldWoman is flat line? Did things in TheBefore that made too sad. OldWoman empty.

You not line. You full. Stay full. Be good. Each one love others. Care of others. Help others. Feed others. Sometimes ache in here – heart – of something gone. Sad okay. Crying okay. Shows you full in here – full bumping heart.

No special way to be boy or girl. All love each other. Be self.

The Full World

All can love all. Can be quiet and alone, but always others before self. No fighting. And always strongis defer to weakis. No means no.

This your culcher.

OldWoman showed pichers of kickbox and kungfu. TheRiginals tried and kicked other ones. Displin. Not hurting.

TheRiginals got big. OldWoman made Counsol of four girls, one boy. Boys had all power in TheBefore. Now, Counsol makes girls strong in orgnising. Take turns. Always girls biggis on counsol. But care of boys. Include boys. Listen boys. Counsol made timetable – clean rabbits, fill genrayter, water plants, tidy cushons. Take turns.

OldWoman said – Good. All do all jobs. All farmers, growers, cleaners, tiders, cooks, buchers, teachers, midwives, singers and dancers. All artiss and storytellers. All choosers and deciders. Take it in turn and turn.

Anyone fight? Counsol decides.

3) TheStory of Dvali

OldWoman told Dvali story, special party of light. TheRiginals brought sparkle cristle Elfunt Artefax to light in TheUnder. Solar rig and genrayter gave light in TheUnder too.

OldWoman told TheRiginals count rabbit kittings. Twelve kittings until nex Dvali.

OldWoman went to TheWorld, saw sad thing, told TheRiginals – Never go up, nor your children, nor their children until tree is six genrayshons high.

When number one of seven genrayshon talking, ask that one – can we go into TheWorld now?

The Full World

Number one say yes? Go out four kittings after Dvali. TheWorld will light, so light, by Sun. Wear blackhoods and blackglasses. Never look at Sun.

TheWorld goes black by itself at night. But TheWorld has Moon, and Moon is light too. Moon is big smile shape that fills and empties, same time as rabbit kitting, same time as girl bleeding. Same clock. In TheWorld, count Moons, not kittings. Eight Moons until Dvali and go back in TheUnder. World gets cold and dark. Make Dvali light in TheUnder.

OldWoman (dead), TheRiginals (dead), one, two, three, four genrayshons (dead), five and six (some dead, some living) didn't know what we, seven genrayshon, find in TheWorld.

Trees like our tree, but full, moving, colours, not just lines and names.

Rabbits like our rabbits, but wisdom, true and care for selves.

Big animals, name cow, hoss, goat and deer.

OldWoman drew lines of animals but TheWorld animals are full, look us and know with instint.

Sky full too. Full with still and moving. Shapes like fluff tails. Full with rainwater washing TheWorld clean. Full with skyanimals, name birs. Full with light. Sky not like TheUnder light. TheWorld got good light, with bumping heart, with love.

4) TheStory of nex and maybe

OldWoman said seven and eight genrayshon deciding nex and maybe.

In TheBefore, OtherRiginals went into OtherUnders. OtherRiginals maybe make genrayshons too.

Maybe seven eight go looking for Others. Maybe Others come looking for you.

Others maybe bring sad things. Others maybe not have your culcher. Others maybe not displin at kickbox and kungfu.

The Full World

Maybe stay safe in TheUnder. Maybe go looking.

What nex is your choosing, your deciding.

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