



Weather
Journal

by Culex Pipiens

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There aren't many of us left.

We dismissed the early reports... well actually my mom and dad along with billions of others dismissed the early reports.

The weather was somehow different. It rained a bit more. We had large outbreaks of tornadoes. The hurricanes seemed to be a bit stronger and perhaps occurring a little more often. Wind blew a bit harder. The snow was either deeper or nearly non-existent from year to year.

So called experts argued about climate change versus natural planetary and solar cycles. Very few cared about what to do, just what to blame or whose fault it was.

I was seven. Old enough to pick up on the concern and realize that things were bad but not old enough to remember anything from before. Not old enough to know it once wasn't like this.

My parents practiced prepping. They had food and water put away and lots of heirloom seeds to grow more food plus filters to treat just about any source of water. We had a room nearly filled with supplies and bathroom items and equipment. In the garage they had a safe with a dozen guns and boxes and boxes of bullets.

They also had a cabin in the country near the woods where we sometimes camped out. We called it bugging off or something. In the neighboring cabins there were other people who also practiced prepping. Mom and Dad frequently referred to the others as 'the group'.

All I remember from those early days was the other kids to play with. We called everyone who wasn't our parents, aunt or uncle. Uncle Jim. Uncle Mike. Aunt Cindy. On and on. They took turns watching us kids while the rest took their guns off into the woods.

Once our vacation or bugging off practice session ended we'd head back home. Each year we'd go to the cabin maybe two or three times. Usually it was well planned out but sometimes Mom or Dad would come home all upset and we would pack up really quick and head up there without any warning.

As the years wore on the weather just kept getting worse. The storms were more frequent and more severe. Hail storms sometimes destroyed the plants in our garden and even our basement got flooded a few times. When I was ten the town just a few miles away from us ceased to exist when a violent storm spawned multiple tornadoes which wiped it off the map.

As I moved into the early teen years I became much more aware of what was happening. The prices of food soared as the storms destroyed crops on a massive scale. The insurance companies stopped covering storm damage. Only the very wealthy could afford to fix homes damaged by the storms.

The rest of us? We either patched up the house the best we could or frequently people got tossed out of their severely damaged homes when the government condemned them as too damaged to live in. The banks took no pity and the people were expected to still pay off the mortgage on a home they could no longer live in.

Bankruptcy filings soared to levels that dwarfed the 2008 housing bubble. As businesses were destroyed by the weather even more people lost their jobs.

For awhile the government stepped in with low interest loans and outright giving away money in an effort to help people get back on their feet. It didn't work. It wasn't enough.

The people demanded more.

We still bugged out and now I understood what triggered our episodes. Just paying attention to the news allowed me to get pretty good at predicting when they might call for a bug out. The other kids and I had matured to the point that we were included in many of the group's responsibilities. We even got to go off in the woods and shoot the guns too.

The end seemed to happen about the time I turned sixteen. For years now, lack of rain and widespread droughts for most of the year followed by intense record levels of rain fall in a short period of time resulted in crop loss on a level that had never been recorded even during the dust bowl nearly a century earlier. Land was either under water or bone dry all across the country and the world too. We were not alone in suffering due to the weather.

Year after year food was getting more and more expensive to the point you needed an upper middle class income just to afford staples, let alone luxuries like meat. Hunting had wiped out most of the wildlife and grains were too precious for human food to bother with feeding them to livestock anymore. The grasslands? Now mostly barren dusty plains.

Shortly after my sixteenth birthday the collapse of the governments started. In a mere couple of weeks almost all of them fell. They were broke from years of trying to bail out the people from the weather and food reserves were gone. When the first couple over in Europe fell we immediately bugged out and met up with the group. The difference is that we took all of our supplies with us this time. We weren't going to be returning to our suburban home.

At the cabin by the woods, well, I guess calling them woods was no longer accurate. Most of the trees were dead with just a few shrubs still trying to grow on the ground.

We put up a green house that was kept in storage, as did the others and we tried growing our own food instead of using our stored supplies. Over the first year, the storms blew down many of the dead trees and two of the green houses were destroyed. Each of the cabins used solar panels for power and many of those were damaged by the storms too.

Our water supply lasted for awhile but eventually the well started running dry. We rigged up rain collection systems but the lack of rain frequently left us on severe rationing of water. We only got clean when the infrequent storm came by and it was safe enough to be outside in it.

Half way to nineteen we had invaders. People were coming to take what little we had. At least that's what Mark said. He and about half the parents and some of the older kids my age headed off with their guns. To this day we still don't know what happened as they were never heard from again. No gun shots were ever heard, no invaders ever showed up. They just disappeared. Both of my parents were in this group.

Summers temperatures were now averaging between 110 and 120 with winters frequently 20 to 30 below zero. Fall and spring were almost non existent. For months it was over 100 and then in just a few weeks highs less than zero were normal for the next five months.

We occasionally plugged in a ham radio and listened to reports from around the world. Estimates indicated 90% of the population was dead, mostly due to starvation, and for those left there still were not enough resources to go around.

I might have been eighteen and now orphaned but I knew how to take care of myself. With just me, the stored supplies provided me with at least ten years of food although water was always an issue. Most of the others in the group were now in a similar situation. After the invader incident wiped out about half of our numbers the food supplies would now last twice as long.

By the time I was twenty I was pregnant. Yeah, that was stupid. He told me it was our responsibility to repopulate the planet and he cared for me. Once I was certain I was pregnant and told him he stopped coming around.

Maybe it was diet, or lack of, or all the work necessary just to survive, but whatever the cause, I suffered a miscarriage at about four months. Thankfully our group still

had a doctor and two nurses and they helped me through this difficult emotional and physical time.

Around the time I turned twenty one we decided that for long term survival we would have to go scavenge. There had to be stores, businesses and warehouses just full of stuff we could use. How wrong we were.

Apparently others had the same idea and did their scavenging at least a few years earlier. Ranging hundreds of miles in all directions netted us less then a truck load of stuff, very little of it food or water.

While I had just turned twenty two, I looked nearly forty. All of us were aged well beyond our years. The few parents still around were mostly in their forties but looked like they were in their late sixties.

All the years of violent weather coupled with extensive drought had turned the world into mostly one giant desert. The sand and dirt storms frequently swept the land and scoured everything in their path. Our green houses were almost all destroyed. We cannibalized the broken ones to keep the couple still standing in functioning condition but water was still a problem. I can't remember the last time the sky was blue instead of hazy brown.

Well, next month I turn thirty. I'm still alive as is Gregg, the guy that got me pregnant years ago, Mary Jo, Johnathon and Jenny. We're all living in one cabin now and our pooled food resources are going to last at most one more year. All the rest either died or disappeared over the last eight years.

It has been a few years since we last heard anyone on the ham radio and we hold out no hope for humanity. The planet has turned against us and in another year I don't know how we can hope to survive.

So hungry.

We've been on quarter rations trying to make the food last but we're down to literally the final crumbs now.

If anyone is still out there and finds this journal, know that we tried but the planet changed just too much. It has become inhospitable to humans and we're just a left over aberration soon to be corrected.

Christine set her pen and notebook on the end table. She rose from the bed and looked in on the others. Gregg and Jenny had passed on a few weeks back and were sealed in body bags still resting on their bed and Mary Jo and Johnathon were pretty much bed ridden now themselves since they were so weak from hunger.

She slowly put on a heavy trench coat and goggles and wrapped any exposed skin on her head with a scarf. Pulling on heavy but well worn boots she grabbed a walking stick and headed off among the worn stubs that were once majestic tree trunks. Feebly trudging along with no destination in mind, as the wind swirled the dust around her, she never looked back.