

# —THE APOCALYPSE AIN'T SO BAD

by Jeff Strand

If you ask me, people are unnecessarily gloomy about the end of the world. And that starts with calling it “the end of the world.” It’s not like the planet exploded or cracked in half or melted or anything like that. The world itself is perfectly fine—it’s just that almost everybody is dead.

Here’s the thing: We all *know* that it was a devastating tragedy. Why keep bringing that up? Anybody you talk to, you literally can’t have more than fifteen seconds of conversation before they’ve gotta switch the topic to the apocalypse. I’m not suggesting that it isn’t a major news story; I’m just saying that it doesn’t have to be the *only* news story. Know what I’m saying? It’s been almost four months.

Believe me, I’ve got plenty to whine about. I’m pretty much on my own at this point. For a short while after humanity’s 99.7% demise, I was traveling with a woman named Cyndi. Unfortunately, I sort of botched the timing on bringing up the whole “Hey, we’ve gotta repopulate the earth!” topic, and I found myself surviving on my own.

Sure, the mutants are a problem. (And, yes, they’re mutants—it seems like some people want to call any non-verbal human with a messed-up face a “zombie”.) But they go down pretty quick with a shot to the head, and c’mon, who among us thought we’d get the chance to open fire on real people without it being a felony?

Now, some survivors did have to defend themselves against mutated friends and/or family, and there’s no question that it must’ve sucked. If you’re one of them, you have the right to be mopey. That’s not who I’m complaining about. It’s the folks who had to shoot three or four mutant strangers, yet are acting like they had to drown their own mother in a bathtub. Three words: Get. Over. It.

Would I rather the plague not have claimed billions of lives? Of course. You’d have to be a fool or a psychotic to feel otherwise. But are those billions of people going to get right back up and return to their normal routines? No. (Especially because they’re *not zombies!*) It happened, the streets are littered with corpses, so let’s make the best of it.

Take Disney World, for example. The rides aren’t working because there’s no electricity. But admit it, haven’t you always wanted to get out of the car in the Haunted Mansion and just take a look around on your own? I did that a couple of days ago, and it was an absolute blast. I even tore off a piece of the wallpaper as a souvenir. Could I have done that pre-apocalypse? No way! I would’ve been thrown out of the park. Hell, I even got to climb on the track of Space Mountain, and there were no lines anywhere. You don’t need some guy walking around in a Mickey Mouse costume to

have a good time.

Food is a trade-off. I won't lie to you--I miss steak. On the other hand, last week I brought home an entire shopping cart filled with candy. That sucker was overflowing, and I left plenty on the shelves.

I guess I just don't understand people who always have a negative attitude. Life in a post-apocalyptic world isn't anywhere near as bad as movies want you to believe. It's actually kind of fun. Now I'm going to head over to Barnes & Noble and pick out any book I want.

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I got bit by a mutant this morning. It was my fault; I should've been paying closer attention to my surroundings. Got me right on the arm. It hurt--oh, Christ, did it hurt. Still, my gun was within reach, and I've always been ambidextrous, so I took care of him before he was able to actually start chewing.

Infection is a concern, I'll admit, but it's not worth getting all bent out of shape over.

Trust me, I'm not taking a lackadaisical attitude toward the bite. I cleaned the wound (which did, unfortunately, break the skin) thoroughly with antiseptic, and then I covered it with a bandage. I cleaned it again every half hour after that. Yeah, it stung like crazy, but that means it's working, right? When life hands you lemons, you make lemonade, and even though the antiseptic burned worse than pouring lemon juice into the wound, I wasn't going to let it bum me out.

I knew a guy who got bit. You wouldn't believe how much he carried on, and how much of a "Pity me!" attitude he had about the whole thing. Know what he did? He said "I don't wanna become one of those things," shoved his revolver in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. Can you believe that? I mean, who kills himself over a mutant bite?

Me, I don't care if I become a shambling, oozing, moaning super-mutant, I'm not swallowing a bullet. That's the coward's way out. Screw that.

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Well, it's been five days, and the bite is almost completely healed. That's how it works. When you have an upbeat attitude, your body chemistry and immune system respond accordingly. Mind over mutant.

A lot of people would've just holed themselves up in their home or apartment after being bitten like that. Not me. Know what I was doing when the pain was at its worst? I was smashing up an abandoned Volkswagen with an aluminum baseball bat. That's not something I could do before the plague, and don't try to act all high and mighty and pretend that the idea isn't appealing. In this new world, boys can be boys, and I love it!

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I miss my family. There, I said it.

This feeling started while I was in a pottery store, breaking pottery. Though I was being cautious and staying out of the narrow aisles, I suddenly felt a hand grab my wrist and yank me away from the shelf. It was the nastiest-looking mutant