

THE KILLER CARAVANS by Kurt Saxon copyright 1979

When the collapse comes, whether from a total economic breakdown or nuclear war, surviving city dwellers will scatter like their cockroaches when they turn on their kitchen lights. Millions not killed by the war, the fires, the rioting and the street battles, will take to the countrysides.

The roads leading out of the doomed cities will be hopelessly clogged with wrecked vehicles, looking like any foggy morning on the San Francisco freeways. As many city vermin as will be trapped in the jams, scads of that rubbish will make it to the main arteries from the cities to the smaller towns.

These will be the "lucky". The provident will have left before the chaos. But the lucky will get out by sheer luck, with little or no gear, no extra gas, probably a gun or two, a box of canned goods and a few bottles of booze they looted. But not meaningful survival gear.

Until they get to the nearest town, it will be dog-eat-dog. Every man for himself and let the devil take the hindmost. If they stop for an overturned car ahead, it will just be to search the passengers for any useful items and to siphon out any gas left in the car.

Finally, dozens of individual vehicles will reach the nearest town. In most cases, the townsmen will have the roads barricaded. They could not hope to accomodate hordes of improvident city types, so will, all too often, just block their way and turn them back at gunpoint.

This method is wrong and I'll explain why in my next editorial, "Roadblock". But at this time, I want to tell you what will happen as a result of total roadblocking, which will be common around most American towns.

You can easily imagine such roadblocks, made of cars strung across the road, bristling with guns held by determined townsmen. Signs reading, "Go Back or Get Shot!" or "Yankee Go Home!", and suchlike, will let the refugees grouping at the roadblocks know they are unwelcome.

Although, up to then, these refugees will have been individuals, they will now form into mobs. Being improvident and having no chance on their own, instant leaders will spring up before the roadblocks and offer the mobs their protection and guidance.

In times of catastrophe and confusion, the average person is too often willing to follow anyone who says he has an answer. Anyone with any sort of previous authority, or who will do the thinking for those unable to think, will find a ready-made army to go wherever he leads and do whatever he orders.

"Lucifer's Hammer" by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, describes two such leaders and many of their sub-leaders, all relatively unqualified in times of order. But when the comet came close to Earth, the most unlikely leadership was accepted, and like Jim Jones of Guyana, brought savagery and death to all their followers.

The two main leaders in "Lucifer's Hammer" were a black Army Sergeant and a white religious fanatic. It was an interracial group, made up mostly of a band of soldiers, black activists and white losers picked up on the line of march.

Food was scarce so cannibalism became, not only acceptable, but mandatory. The eating of human flesh was part of the initiation into the band. If one would not eat, he was eaten.

This was first ordered by the Sergeant, as an immediate alternative to starvation. It was later made a commandment by the

religious co-leader, as a sign of faith in the idea that they were God's chosen. Only the chosen would be blessed with victory over the surviving technologists who had brought God's wrath on a sinful world. And God would forgive their cannibalism and any other horrors committed while bringing His Kingdom into fruition.

His degenerate ravings are pretty much mirrored on TV by Billy Graham, Rex Humbard, Pat Robertson and Anal Roberts. The kind of people who swallow everything these perverts say, ended up swallowing human flesh, just as eagerly. So, like swarms of locusts, these cannibalistic fanatics proceed to ravage and destroy the only hope for a future civilization.

There will indeed be such leaders as Sergeant Hooker and the messianic Reverend Henry Armitage. There will also be bands made up of cults living inside or outside of cities. These cults will move out first and do what they will with the uninitiated or those who will not convert.

But the most common bands will be groups turned back from roadblocks. These, as well as the rest, will form Killer Caravans, pooling their resources. The leader, whether a politician, soldier or self-acknowledged messiah, will have a ready-made, media brain-washed band of killers to do his bidding.

His first act will be to kill off the uncooperative and anyone who can't see him as the rightful head. At first, the loudest will be followed. If this loudest doesn't keep the majority on his side, his position and/or his life will be in jeopardy.

Of course, if the loudest proves really incompetent another might kill him without fear of the majority. Also, the loudest might appoint a deputy or two, both to keep the malcontents in line and to keep one of the deputies from taking his place.

So with the leadership established, the malcontents killed off and their property confiscated by the group, the Killer Caravan is formed. It has its leaders, either military or charismatic, or both. It has its armed foragers and looters. It has its compliment of women and children as dependents.

But what it lacks is a direction, a place to go, a purpose. All it has as a social organism made up of improvident establishment hacks, urban workers and welfare loafers, is the collective will to survive.

With resources pooled and the unwilling either dead or driven off, the Killer Caravan forms up. It then moves back down the road to any promising side road giving access to a route around the restricted town.

The side road they choose might pass your home. With too little food to last, and nothing to lose, they will most certainly move against you. The Killer Caravan might number from 20 to 100 or more people.

Regardless of how much or how little you had stored away, the Killer Caravan would strip you of everything. Nor would they feel a need to spare your life. After commandeering your vehicles, weapons, total food supply, they would hardly expect you to feel anything but hatred for them. Giving in to them would be no guarantee that they'd let you and your family live.

First, they'd camp on your place until there was nothing left. There'd be no sense in believing they'd actually settle in on your property and share it with you and help you work it. They wouldn't be farmers, anyhow and since you'd have only one or two cash crops and a subsistence garden, such a mob would have no reason to take over your holdings on a long-term basis.

No, they'd camp on your place for a day or two and gather up everything you had that they wanted. After a short time, there

would not be enough to feed the band and they'd move on to the next farm, probably leaving you dead.

These are the kind of people the boondockers must prepare against. You should set up a communications network with your neighbors with walkie talkies. Chances are, the Killer Caravans would attack only one farm along their route at a time. This would give your neighbors a chance to meet at the first farm on their route so as to meet them in force.

Fighting Killer Caravans would be different from defending against lone refugees and their families. In the case of loners, you might be generous, set out food enough for them to get to the next area, and with a moderate show of force, save yourself from all-out attack.

But with Killer Caravans, you must show deadly force at once and keep it up until the survivors are discouraged into moving on. First, they will have no alternative to attacking you, as they will face chronic shortages which will halt their caravan without replenishment. Second, their morale will depend on victories. With the low morale of the members, the leaders might just as well pass out the poison.

Regardless of the numbers in a caravan, there is little likelihood that it would be made up of professionally trained ex-servicemen. Even so, if you can impede them, and inflict a high enough casualty rate, they will move on, even if they have to do so on foot.

The common conception of a Killer Caravan is of a well-organized, well-equipped, well-armed, disciplined unit. It is said that such caravans would sweep all before them. "Lucifer's Hammer" paints a picture of an almost overwhelming horde.

If such a group would take a few farms and stay put, they could start their own survival community. But the Killer Caravan would not have the quality of personnel to become a successful survival group. They would be vulnerable, relying mainly on the disunity and incompetence of farmers along their route.

I would have a ball eliminating a Killer Caravan. I would plant mines at the entrance to my farm. The POOR MAN'S JAMES BOND shows how to set them off electronically without wires. Of course, I would not have them armed, or even implanted until the collapse had actually occurred. But then I would implant and arm and when a caravan vehicle entered the gate into my property; pow!, there'd be a flaming wreck blocking the entrance.

I would also implant such mines behind trees, fences, outbuildings, etc.; wherever a caravaner might shoot from. Then blam, boom, splat; I'd have caravaners filling the air.

If I were stuck with a wooden house I'd install sprinklers along the roof. And under the eaves, I'd string garden hose with holes in it so the outside of the house would be drenched, in anticipation of firebombs. Of course, I'd have a gas generator to operate the well pump.

I'd cover my windows with chicken wire and open them all up; again in anticipation of firebombs and also bullets. (No need to get all the windows shot out.) This would be done if I had not had time to install metal shutters with rifle ports.

In each room would be a chair with a pillow or rolled blanket tied to the top of its back for a rifle rest. Each chair would be slightly back from the window, seat forward, as I wouldn't want the raiders to see any guns pointing out.

I'd rely on my 30-06 bolt action Remington 700 with the proper scope for the distance from the house to the road and nearest hiding places. Upon seeing the raider, I'd kneel behind a chair,

cushion the rifle on its back and shoot him in the right shoulder, if possible. (Anyone with the minimum of practice can hit a six by six inch target at 200 yards, almost every shot.)

You might think a clean kill would be better, but not when you're dealing with a Killer Caravan. A body is just one less mouth to feed. But a man with his main shoulder shot would be a useless drain on the food and medical supplies.

Also, in the heat of an action, the others would be far less apt to identify with a corpse than a mate screaming at them for help. Further, a few such injuries would cause the women to bitch and urge them to move on. Another thing about wounding a raider is that with the scarcity of medical supplies, his suffering and probable death would give his fellows a lot of food for thought. If it occurred to them that the object was to wound and maim, any number of them would be apt to vote to move on.

If, instead of moving on, they attacked in force, I'd shotgun them. Mine holds 11 shots and shoots as fast as I can pump it. Single ought Buck at 12 30 caliber pellets each round are quite effective at 100 yards. Hardly aiming, I can get three pellets in a one foot circle at that distance. That's the same as being shot with nine .30 caliber Carbine rounds. Really sets a man down.

I would never shoot a woman or a child, unless they were shooting at me. Dead wives and kids enrage the husbands and make them just as intent on revenge as on taking the position.

With dogs on the place to let me know if the attack took place at night, I would use a new tactic. I'd have already booby trapped the entrance with a mine and so would flee upwind from the caravan, carrying an electronic detonator. While they were making their plans, I'd open a half-dozen one-pound containers of sodium or potassium cyanide and place them strategically around the caravan so the wind would blow the gas their way. (See the PMJB for making cyanides.)

Then I'd pour in hydrochloric acid, going from one to the other, holding my breath and staying upwind. Then I'd run and let the generated hydrogen cyanide do its work. A few breaths of hydrogen cyanide causes death in about a minute and it takes only 100 parts per million of the gas in the atmosphere, even with protective clothing.

If it were a nearly windless night, I'd punch holes in the tops of the cans. One by one, I'd pour in the acid, cap the cans, and throw them into the group. Then I'd flee upwind and lurk around for a couple of hours until the Killer Caravan was no more and the gas had wafted away.

Of course, this would wipe out the women and kids. But I'd consider them doomed anyway. Even so, would you rather it had been you and yours? Just imagine if Rev. Jim Jones had led his 900 crazies against your homestead. Would you care what happened to any segment of that weird pack? If you would, you don't have a chance.