

## SURVIVALIST FICTION



### THE WINDS OF CHANGE:

#### The Girl and the Ninja

*by Old Bear*

The following short stories are for entertainment purposes only. The stories are purposely out of chronological order. You can read any story in any order you would like. Any resemblance to real people, living or dead, is coincidence. I am not a good enough writer to have planned it.

#### The Girl and the Ninja

Ellen looked out of the kitchen window of her parent's house and stared into the drizzling Oregon rain. "At 23 I ought to be on my own, or even married," she thought with some despair. She sometimes wondered why she was "different." The other young girls never seemed to have a worry in their heads. Even her own parents could not picture the world ever changing, unless it was to get better and better. Three years before, while working on her Associate of Arts degree in computer science, Ellen had first heard about a possible computer problem, that might occur at the end of the century. Most of her professors, while agreeing that the problem did exist, did not think it was anything to worry about, but one rather young professor had talked with her at some length about it and he was convinced that how much damage the problem might cause was totally unknown. "We have never done anything like this before," he said. "We are almost totally dependant on computers, in all aspects of our lives. If they should suddenly shut down, or start to give false data, the outcome is unimaginable."

Ellen had wondered what was being done about the problem and had not been much reassured. "The problem is that each segment of the government has its own computers, each business has its own, and the codes are almost all different. Secondly, nobody seems to know about the problem except some computer programmers, so very little is being done. The problem can be fixed. It would cost, but it can be fixed, providing people wake up in time for the work to be done before Jan. 2000," he had said.

Now it was three years later and the problem was in all the news. Now it even had its own cute name, "y2-k", and some people were publicly stating that we had waited too long to begin work on the problem. "Computer Science" had

turned out to be mostly a course on how to be a modern secretary, using the computer instead of a typewriter, but Ellen had learned about the internet, how to search effectively for information, and even the best way to set up internet advertising. All things a good little secretary should know. Upon getting her "degree" she was able to find employment at last. By working just a little harder than need be, she was able to find time to "surf" the internet for short periods. Her main area of interest was the possible computer glitch that appeared to be coming. It was not long before she found a web site hosted by some doctor, where she found out more than she had even wanted to know about y2-k. Ellen had gone through all the "stages." Denial, anger and finally acceptance.

Unlike some, she felt the need to do something to prepare, because the bottom line was that nobody seemed to really know how bad it might be. When she had approached her father, a retired building contractor and good father, but with all the imagination of a bulldozer blade, he had taken the time to explain that it was all "hype" because people had gotten along just fine without computers in the past and would do so again. None of Ellen's arguments could reach him, in his tight smugness. Ellen's mother looked to her husband for answers about the world, so was no help. Of Ellen's two younger brothers the oldest, Johnny, simply was not interested in anything other than girls and cars. Needing someone to talk to more than anything else, Ellen turned to her fifteen-year-old brother Steve, and found a more than sympathetic ear. When she outlined the problem and possible results his response was "Mad Max! Awesome!". Steve then showed her his "survival gear" which consisted of a black "Ninja" outfit, several knives, a crossbow and some other items that Ellen did not at that time recognize. "This is the best defense there is," he told her. "Totally silent."

Ellen was not convinced and found a used pump twelve gauge shotgun that she could afford. At least Ellen now had an ally, if a bit weird, in her preparations. Together they looked for and found places to stash food, water and other supplies around their parent's house. Ellen just hoped nobody decided to try to go into the "crawl space" under their house. Because of her "limited budget", and wanting to store food that she and her family could not mind eating, Ellen searched the grocery stores for "two for the price of one" sales and general good bargains. She got high calorie foods whenever possible, like Chili, beef stew, canned meats, plus powdered milk, mashed potato mix, peanut butter, Crisco, table salt, hard candy and as much as she could afford and find space to store.

Storing gasoline proved to be a problem until Steve came up with the idea of burying it in the back yard. Waiting until all were asleep in their house, they would sneak into the back yard and carefully dig a hole, saving the sod on plastic sheets and putting the dirt in plastic five gallon buckets. The extra dirt Steve would carry off in these buckets and dispose of. Ellen never knew where he took it and did not ask. Once the container of gas, with the correct amount of "Sta-bil" added, was set deeply in the hole, they filled it in, packed it down and replaced the sod. Her father wondered about the brown patches in the lawn, but with extra fertilizer and water the grass came back.

For lighting, if the power went off, they chose inexpensive kerosene lamps their local Wal-Mart carried. At first they had been buying the little bottles of lamp oil, but discovered from one "survival" forum that diesel fuel would also work and was MUCH cheaper. They soon heard about "off road" diesel that at 78 cents a gallon, became also the heating fuel to be used in their "kerosene" heater, that Ellen had bought and was now hidden safely under the house. At the price of diesel, they found themselves in the back yard again, hiding more fuel. Around this time, fire extinguishers began "magically" appearing in various places around their home. One suddenly appeared under the kitchen sink, several in the garage, and there seemed to be one in almost every closet in the house. The smoke detectors in every room also went almost unnoticed by her parents. When her father did comment, Ellen's "I saw an article about fire at work and it seemed a good idea." Brought a shrug and he put the matter out of his mind. "Ellen was always a strange child," he thought.

During this time Steve had been working on additions to their armament. By working odd jobs around the neighborhood after school he earned the money needed for these things. The cost was little because according to Steve "Ninjas traditionally made their own weapons and gear."

One day Ellen came home from work to find Steve cutting some 3/4 inch thin wall conduit into various lengths. Having seen some of his wilder ideas, Ellen was ready for about anything. "What ya doing squirt?" She asked. Steve looked up and said "Making a blowgun. Silent death."

Ellen was not convinced. "There are "blowguns" for sale already, so why go through all the work of building one" Ellen wanted to know.

Steve rolled his eyes and his voice took on that "Explaining things to my dumb sister" tone. "Those things are toys. They are all right for kids to practice in the house with, but I want real power and penetration and you can only get that by making it for yourself."

"So what is the difference between what you can buy and the thing you are making?" Ellen asked.

"Almost all the store-bought blowguns use darts with a little plastic ball on the end or a plastic cone. None of these fit the tube or barrel very tightly, so a lot of air goes around them, also the darts themselves are too light." Steve returned. "Here, I will show you," said Steve as he took a homemade dart out of a drawer. He then placed a Reader's Digest upright against his bed pillow, and stepping across the room, placed the dart in the piece of pipe. "Look. It won't fall out if I tip it down and shake it, like the store-bought darts will do. That means I can keep it loaded." Steve said. Filling his lungs with air, Steve placed his mouth over the end of the tube and blew. There was a soft "Pop" and then a thunk. Steve went to the bed and retrieved the Reader's Digest. The dart had penetrated the small book and about one half inch of the point showed on the other side.

Ellen WAS impressed in spite of herself. Many of Steve's projects did not yield tangible results, as far as Ellen could tell. This one did show promise however. While Ellen did not share Steve's thinking that the blowgun would be a good defense tool, in Ellen's mind many small animals fell to its accurate and more important quiet darts.

Steve twisted and pulled until he had the dart free. "Let me see that," said Ellen. "Why it's just a nail!" she exclaimed and could see the sudden hurt expression on Steve's face.

"It was a nail. Now it is a blowgun dart," said Steve sullenly.

"OK. I am sorry. I was just surprised that it was made from a nail." Ellen said, wanting to smooth her brother's ruffled feathers. "How did you get this cone on the end?" Ellen wondered.

"Here. I will show you. It is easier than trying to explain." Steve said. He took a 16 penny nail that had the point area flattened by hammering. This flat area had been filed to shape and sharpened. Ellen noted that barbs had been added, making it look wicked and, for a nail, dangerous. Steve then took a piece of black

visquene plastic and cut out a 2 inch square. He then made a cut from one edge to the center of this square. With a twisting action he slid one part of the square over of the other, making a cone shape. The sharpened nail was then forced through the center of the cone and strong black thread was wrapped around the end of the cone and the nail. Steve then took his blowgun and sat the unfinished dart inside. With scissors Steve cut off all of the plastic that protruded from the pipe. He then removed the finished dart for Ellen to inspect.

"That's all it takes to make them?" she exclaimed. "No wonder you didn't want to spend money to buy them."

"These are much better," Steve said. "Look. The cone is flexible and fits the blowgun. When you blow, the pressure forces the cone tighter against the barrel, so you don't lose any power. The weight of the nail gives it enough weight to really penetrate!" With that, Steve placed a cardboard box on his bed and fired the just made dart at it. Again the slight "popping" sound and only the black cone shown from the box. "Here. You try it," Steve said as he loaded and handed the blowgun to Ellen.

Her first try was a dismal failure. The dart barely reached Steve's bed and had a trajectory like a rainbow. "You are doing it wrong," said Steve. "You have to blow out your air, all at once." He had her watch him again, as he made penetrating the Reader's Digest look rather easy. This time Ellen's dart had enough power, but stuck in the plaster board above Steve's bed. "That is great Sis! Now lets work on accuracy."

Ellen later learned that Steve kept a small can of spackle under his bed, just in case of accidents like her's. Ellen surprised herself by soon being able to not only hit the Reader's Digest, but drive the dart almost through. She had to admit that her little brother was smart, at least part of the time.

While Ellen spent most of her free time trying to learn as much "survival" related material as possible, Steve continued his pursuit of "ninja knowledge". Ellen and Steve religiously hunted out yard sales, local flea markets and thrift stores to find survival supplies they could afford. Ellen found two pairs of good sturdy boots, in almost new condition, for a few dollars each. Steve found a set of Roller Blades that fit him for \$4.00 and several used skillsaw blades for a quarter a piece. Ellen had learned to not question Steve's buying strange things, but simply could not see a practical use for roller blades and skillsaw blades. When she mentioned it,

Steve told her the saw blades could be made into "shower cans". At least that is how it sounded to Ellen. At a small, run down, flea market, they bought an old, but in good shape, axe, for \$3.00, and an old hack saw that seemed much stronger than the newer ones. They added these to their growing stash, along with the hammers, saws, metal files, spare hack saw blades, strike anywhere matches, crow bar, and used bolt cutters, that they had already gathered. It was getting harder to find places to hide things around their parents' house. Steve told her about the method of "hiding in plain sight". After a little cleaning and repainting the axe and hack saw went next to her father's tools, where they were not noticed.

A few days later Steve showed Ellen what he had made out of the saw blades. "These are 'Shurikens,'" Steve said. They were about four inch square, hollowed to make points at the four corners and sharp! Steve claimed that he had made them "right under old Henderson's (his metal shop teacher) nose. Steve was still rubbing them on a sharpening stone to make them almost razor sharp. "What are these for ?" asked Ellen. Steve took a cardboard box and set it on his bed, this being the longest distance he could find in his room, and threw the square thing, not at all hard at the box. It sunk deeply into the box and had it been thrown with any force at all would have gone through both sides.

"It is like a throwing knife, that can't help but stick," Steve said. As Ellen studied the "Shuriken" she saw why it would stick every time. All anyone needed to do was practice accuracy and maybe power. Ellen thought these were interesting, but not nearly as practical as the blowgun for taking small game. Steve tried to explain that these were a defense weapon, but mostly used to distract an enemy. Ellen felt that they certainly would "distract" someone.

As time passed, under Steve's insistence, they found an abandoned building where they could practice with the weapons Steve had made. Ellen practiced too, mostly to make her brother happy, but to also evaluate the things he had made, for future use. She was surprised to learn that once she got past some bad mental programming, she was able to use these things pretty well. The blowgun was extremely easy to learn to shoot with surprising accuracy, once she learned how to get power from her lungs. The "Shurikens" were easy to make stick in the wooden target, a door, but it took time to gain accuracy to the point that Steve felt comfortable with her use of them.

Steve had used roller blades before, but had outgrown the boots. It took little practice to be comfortable on his new ones. Being fifteen and a "wannabe" Ninja, Steve worked to get all the possible use from the new roller blades. Besides being able to travel faster on pavement than he could on foot, Steve learned that he could also run on his tip toes, to cross lawns and places too uneven or soft to roller blade. Steve did most of his roller blading late at night, when he claimed it was safer, because he could see the car head lights and the cars could not suddenly speed around a corner toward him. Of course Steve liked to dress in black for these nightly jaunts.

Around this time, some punks had started harassing the neighborhood. They would drive through late at night, throw beer bottles at houses, knock over trash cans and drive through people's lawns. Nothing too bad, but aggravating. On one of his roller blading outings Steve saw the punks driving through a neighbor's yard. Picking up a rock, Steve set off in pursuit. He gained on them, by "running" across two lawns and by roller blading at top speed, pulled alongside the driver's side window, which was tinted dark. Wanting to get their attention, Steve threw the rock at the driver's window and was pleasantly surprised when the glass exploded into a thousand tiny fragments. The driver of course looked to see what had happened and was startled to see a very tall human figure, all in black, only feet away from him, seemingly gliding easily beside his car, which was moving at over 30 miles per hour. Steve's almost 6 foot frame loomed much larger, due to the height of the roller blades. Not only the driver, but the other punks gave a frightened yelp and the car swerved away from the partition that they now felt must be that of "death" itself. With the gas pedal glued to the floor the punk's car left the neighborhood, loudly and often sideways, never to return. (Many segments are based on true stories, past, present and future.)

On one of his less adventurous roller blade trips, Steve found a treasure trove of five gallon plastic buckets behind a bakery. Steve was all for "liberating" the buckets, but Ellen insisted on asking the owners, and was rewarded by being told they could have "all they wanted" of the sticky buckets. The next night, they went in Ellen's car to get some of the free buckets. As they started to get in Steve said "Hey Sis, Look at what I did," pointing to the front door frame of her car. "I drilled a small hole and screwed a short flat piece of metal to the frame so that it can be slid over the interior light button, to keep the interior light from coming on when you open the door."

"Why would you want that, and stop messing with my car," said Ellen.

"In case we need to get out of the car without the light coming on," Steve said "You can just slide the metal tab to the side and the light works fine."

Ellen looked her car over and said "OK . But don't go changing things on my car without asking me. I don't want any rocket launchers mounted under the fenders." Seeing the expression on Steve's face Ellen said "NO rocket launchers anywhere on my car! I have to drive this thing to work. So help me Steve, if you mess with my car without my permission I will kill you!"

As they approached the rear of the bakery Ellen noticed how dark it was. "I guess we will have to get used to the dark, if y2-k is bad," she thought. "Perhaps there is a higher power that protects fools and hero's. The two having so much in common."

Steve was dressed in his "urban ninja" outfit. This consisted of black pants, black long sleeve turtle neck shirt, plain brown cotton gloves and a black ski mask that he usually kept in his back pocket. He had sewn a strip of black cloth along the outside of his right thigh to hold a short blowgun, with six darts in a holder on his belt. Steve had talked Ellen into wearing a pouch with two shurikens on her belt, in the small of her back.

Steve was again "playing ninja", insisting on keeping his head down so there would appear to only be one person in the car. With the interior light switched off, Steve explained how he wanted Ellen to get out her car door, but hold it open while he "rolled" out and lay next to the car. She could then close her door. All Ellen, who was tired from her job, wanted to do was get a few buckets and go home. It was often easier to go along with her brother than it was to argue with him.

She pulled alongside of the stack of plastic buckets and shut off the car. She opened the door as far as it would go and stepped slightly away, to give Steve room. Once he was out she closed the door and went to work. The buckets were indeed sticky from the cake frosting that had been shipped in them. At least it would be easy to clean with hot water Ellen thought. Engrossed in her work, Ellen did not at first notice that Steve was not helping her, or more importantly, hear the approach of the two men. Suddenly Ellen "felt" danger and looked up from the buckets she was separating to see a strange man standing on each side of her, only about five feet away. Ellen felt the need to swallow, but her mouth

was suddenly dry. The men appeared to be in their early twenties and wore the same kind of jacket. Ellen thought that she recognized it as belonging to one of the gangs that had sprung up around the area. One of the men produced, with a fluid movement, a wicked looking knife. Ellen wiped her damp palms on her pants and took a step backwards, so that she could watch both men at once. "Hey Baby. Let's you and us go for a ride," one of the men taunted. "Forget them buckets. We will show you what a good time is," the other one said.

Ellen shook her head and managing to speak in a more or less normal voice answered "No thank you. I have to be getting home now."

"I SAID, let's go for a ride," the man repeated, this time with more command in his voice. "Come on Baby. You cooperate and we won't hurt you none. " "You gonna like it, once we start." The other said.

By now Ellen was really scared. "This can't be happening!" she thought. "This is a good neighborhood and this is America and I am a good girl." But it was happening. Both men edged closer to Ellen, cutting off any avenues of escape. The man holding the knife screamed. Ellen in her heightened state of tension jumped and her hand, almost as if it had a mind of its own, went to the small of her back. The knife wielder dropped his knife and both hands went to his face, where a black cone could barely be seen in the subdued light, protruding from his left eye socket. "Take it out!" "Take it out!" he screamed.

Remembering the wicked barbs, Ellen knew that "it" would not be coming out easily. Suddenly Ellen was aware that her right hand was moving away from her back and forward, in an underhand throwing motion, and for the first time in her sheltered life, Ellen threw razor sharp steel at another human being. She threw it as hard as she could. The shuriken seemed to slide from her hand and into the stomach of the punk. It sunk in at least half of its length and the punk's mouth opened as if to scream, but no sound came from his throat. Ellen almost jumped out of her skin as a hand grasped her shoulder. The figure dressed in black jerked her and said "Let's get out of here Sis!" and shoved her toward the car.

The punk that had taken up collecting shurikens growled "You \*\*\*\*\*s! I am going to blow your damn heads off!" and reached in his jacket pocket. Steve took two fast steps and kicked the man in the stomach, directly over the imbedded shuriken, forcing it deeply inside and out of sight. This time when the man's

mouth opened he did scream. Ellen had the door open and was starting the car already. As Steve jumped into the car, Ellen roared away.

"Stop the car, Sis," Steve said. Ellen looked at him with eyes that did not seem to see him. "STOP THE CAR!" he yelled and recognition came into her eyes and she did stop. Steve told her to wait right there and ran back down the alley. He found the man with the shuriken laying on his side with his legs down up. Steve felt the man's jacket pockets and took the short barreled revolver that he found there. He then moved quickly to the other man, still standing with his hands cupped around his eye. "Here. Let me help you," said Steve as he grasped the end of the dart. With a sudden strong jerk, Steve had the dart and the man spun around in circles of pain, emitting a high-pitched scream that sounded a lot like a woman. Steve raced back to Ellen's car and she was all too ready to speed away. Ellen wanted to go directly to the police station, but Steve talked her out of it. Instead they went home. When Steve explained that they had maimed one man and probably killed another, Ellen saw the wisdom in not dialing 911.

When Steve pulled the dart out of his pocket, Ellen took one quick look and fled to the bathroom and retched her insides out. The flattened head of the dart had probably hit bone and bent over, forming a hook. Ellen would never think of Steve's "Ninja toys" in the same way again and it seemed to her that her "Little Brother" was in some way changed from that time on.