



How I Became a Teenage Survivalist

Julie L. Casey

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Bracken is a typical teenage boy, more interested in the angles of the girl's exposed back teasing him from the seat ahead of him than in anything the geometry teacher could present. His life is filled with school, video games, and thoughts of girls, not necessarily in that order. Life just flows along uneventfully and unacknowledged, like the electricity that courses through the power lines — until PF (Power Failure) Day. On PF Day, the sun strikes Bracken's world with an unseen surge of electromagnetic fury, which cripples power stations and burns transformers to crispy nuggets of regret.

No one in Bracken's world had ever thought about how much they depended on electrical power, but now, without it, they are plunged into survival mode. Bracken soon realizes how lucky he is to live on a farm in the Midwest. What seemed like a dull and backwards life before is now the greatest chance for survival in what seems like a powerless world. Food, water, and heat are readily available, although hard work is required to make use of them. Bracken and his family must learn to survive like their ancestors, who settled their land.

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From Reader Review How I Became a Teenage Survivalist for online ebook

Marc Franco says

I'm hooked. It is one of the best I've read recently. The pace is perfect, the plot interesting, and the narration fluid. The narrator is a teenage boy who comes across as such. I can't imagine anyone will really find fault with this book. It inventive or entertaining which is awesome. The author need not strive for more.

Laurie says

How I Became Teenage Survivalist

by

Julie L. Casey

Bracken is a sixteen-year-old Midwest boy preoccupied with the normal teenage concerns. The background hum of his world revolves around farm life at home with his parents, school, the normal one-upmanship between him and his older brother Alex, his annoyance with his younger brother Calvin, and the inch of skin playing peek-a-boo between Silky Henderson's belt line and shirt each time the girl leans forward.

But all that changes drastically when a series of explosions rock the area, throwing the school into immediate lockdown while fires and smoke rise in the town. They are told that "PF Day," or Power Failure Day, is the result of a huge solar storm, effectively catapulting residents back to an era before electricity.

Somewhat secluded, Bracken's town and family have no idea of the expanse of the problems, so they hunker down and rely of the skills of their grandparents and the bounty their farming community can provide. Services are out, including schools, so Bracken's mother encourages him to keep a journal chronicling the effects of PF Day and their efforts to carry on life. How I Became a Teenage Survivalist is Bracken's journal.

From the backcover:

Bracken is a typical teenage boy, more interested in the angles of the girl's exposed back teasing him from the seat ahead of him than in anything the geometry teacher could present. His life is filled with school, video games, and thoughts of girls, not necessarily in that order. Life just flows along uneventfully and unacknowledged, like the electricity that courses through the power lines — until PF (Power Failure) Day. On PF Day, the sun strikes Bracken's world with an unseen surge of electromagnetic fury, which cripples power stations and burns transformers to crispy nuggets of regret.

No one in Bracken's world had ever thought about how much they depended on electrical power, but now,

without it, they are plunged into survival mode. Without electricity there is no communication, no modern conveniences, and soon, no modern means of transportation, as the reserves of refined gasoline run dry. Worse still is the failure of the water and sewer systems, the impossibility of getting food and supplies to people living in cities, and the deaths of millions of people from starvation, disease, and lack of medical care.

Bracken soon realizes how lucky he is to live on a farm in the Midwest. What seemed like a dull and backwards life before is now the greatest chance for survival in what seems like a powerless world. Food, water, and heat are readily available, although hard work is required to make use of them. Bracken and his family must learn to survive like their ancestors, who settled their land. Told in the first person, Bracken tells the story of how they not only survive, but how PF Day actually makes their lives better and more satisfying.

Told in first-person, we are in Bracken's head. Ms. Casey paints her young hero as a naïve, emotionally young innocent, whose primary concerns are the absence of a social life and lack of entertainment, but from the first day we begin to see both the agonies and the quiet blessings the power failure causes as families unify, brothers "man-up," and pull together to address family needs and challenges.

As time passes with little technical advance, word of the expanse of the disaster arrives. Bracken and his family's preparation move from concerns over providing food, to defense, preparing for medical emergencies, and the need to prepare for a future without power.

Julie L. Casey has done an exquisite job showcasing the scope and challenges of such a disaster, and the creative solutions her characters employ make this a fascinating read. Readers interested in emergency preparedness will appreciate Casey's inclusion of links and websites for further information on solar storms and survival.

I struggled with investing in Bracken's character initially. While his choices and actions portray him as dependable and mature, things change when we are "in his head." His side-bar conversations occasionally drift into silliness more attributable to a middle school-er, and I found his preoccupation with make-out sessions tedious and distracting. But Casey wisely allows him to grow and develop throughout the book, so hang on. By the middle of the book he emerges as a confident, tender, responsible, balanced young hero.

Readers take a leap of faith as they enter a new world constructed by an author. Casey's book is worthy of a reader's trust. She has done her research, and she delivers a creative read that will keep you turning pages, and have you questioning what you would do if you had to become a survivalist.

How I Became A Teenage Survivalist is available on Amazon. It boasts two trailers. You can find them at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgEMb...> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoVrB...>

Cathy Caldwell says

I've decided that I need to learn to ride horses and shoot guns as these are the skills needed to survive the loss of our modern technology! I picked up this book because I know the author, Julie Casey, and I was eager to see her book. I enjoyed the story, though it did get bogged down in places. Glad I'm not still living in the "big city". Maybe I'll survive!

Kassilem says

This was an interesting book. I've heard people talk about what would happen if we didn't have computers or phones anymore. My family and I joke about it sometimes when I have to ask questions like "How do you use a pay phone". On the bigger scale in my anthropology classes we talked about who would survive if all power failed. Let me tell you, not very many. We've become too dependent on technology and energy use. Most people wouldn't know the first thing about surviving without power. That's the big issue this book is centered around - what do you do without power. How do you live? Overall I thought it was a fairly simple book. The family lived in the country so the problems you would see in big cities were only hinted at. There was an optimistic view to the whole book which I wasn't particularly expecting. There was plenty of juvenile teenage romance, but there was also some interesting ideas about things you can make to get by. There is the idea here that a family does not have to be entirely helpless in a situation like this. There are other ways to do this; you just have to find them. You also have to have the right kind of materials as well. This family seemed to find everything they needed, which could most definitely be possible in the country. The book certainly intrigued me, and gave me a slight interest towards expanding my knowledge on survival mechanisms. The chances of this happening for real are low, but it is a fact that our sun is approaching/in a period of high turbulence. Scientists say that there may be a peaking in activity around 2013. Well the year is already half over but I know our world is changing dramatically. Something will happen sooner or later, whether this or something else. Anyways, the book helped peak my interest higher. I'm more into epic stories, but this one was small; a quick read. I'd recommend it to anyone interested in reading about survival without power.

Leila says

This book has eluded me for months. Even with greatly expanded borrowing privileges--thanks to new "circuit" library policies--I can't get my hands on it without buying it. As I have a thank-the-gods-there-are-libraries! book budget, I'm giving up for now.

Judy Pierce says

How Would Your family cope if there suddenly was no electricity – not just for a few days but for months? What do you do when the conveniences we all take for granted are suddenly unusable ? Julie Casey has written a provocative book about one family's efforts to survive when the unthinkable happens. Realizing that his family is fortunate to live in the countryside instead of in a crowded city, Bracken's thoughts turn from girls to ingenious ways to helping his family survive. From fighting off a group of marauders to developing new ways to cope without electricity, Bracken and his family give new meaning to self sufficiency and becoming a true community. Casey has written a thought-provoking read that young adults are sure to enjoy.

Jackie says

Bracken, a typical 16-year-old boy, with the typical teen-angst and growing pains, experiences a drastic change in his way of life when a solar super storm changes life as he knew it on his family's farm somewhere in the Midwest United States. It becomes a throwback to a simple life before electricity and modern conveniences. Bracken and his family 're-learn' to literally live off the land...butchering their own meat, exclusively growing their own fruits and vegetables, pumping their own water from a well, and rigging up crude power to run the household. The government isn't much help, or at least they don't know about any help, as the urban places are in much dire need of assistance than those who can fend for themselves.

Bracken's parents are wise and they insist the three boys, Alex, Bracken, and Calvin continue their education and are homeschooled. His mom suggests that Bracken keep a journal to chronicle the events preceding and following this major catastrophe. Hence, *How I Became a Teenage Survivalist*, a lengthy diary of the trials, tribulations, and the pure joy of living off the land and returning to a simple life as our forefathers once knew. The grandparents seem to come alive and are rejuvenated reliving these simpler times.

The only real problems are groups of marauders who are in desperate need of food and housing, apparently those who have come from the large cities with no means to produce food and shelter without electricity and modern tools. Bracken and his family learn to protect their land, yet they sympathize with urban troubles.

Written in a young adult's vernacular and touching upon the things that still matter most to a teenager, this book gives us food for thought. Just how would we survive a major catastrophe in these times? Are our resources and reserves adequate enough to sustain us? Julie Casey delves into this issue with forethought and knowledge, as this science fiction survival story focuses in on one family's fight to carry on.

Thank you to LibraryThing, Julie L. Casey, and Pants of Fire Press for this ARC.

Patricia Vanasse says

“Bracken is a typical teenage boy, more interested in the angles of the girl’s exposed back teasing him from the seat ahead of him than in anything the geometry teacher could present. His life is filled with school, video games, and thoughts of girls, not necessarily in that order. Life just flows along uneventfully and unacknowledged, like the electricity that courses through the power lines — until PF (Power Failure) Day.”

Finally a book written from the perspective of a boy. Bracken, a 16 year old, is like every other teen from the digital age. But what happens when there’s no more electricity and the survival of his family depends on him? Bracken has to adjust to a life without the modern conveniences that we often take for granted. Julie Casey has written an amazing and realistic scenario to how our lives would be like if one day we wake up and there’s no electricity. How would you survive if you have to live in ingenious ways?

This book will take you through an amazing journey. Definitely an eye-opener!

I would recommend this book for all ages. Teenagers boy would definitely enjoy the ride!

Kami Larsen says

I got this as an early reviewer book. It is o w of the worst I've read recently. The pace is terrible, the plot

simple, and the narration extreme monotonous. The narrator is a teenage boy who comes across as dull and boring. I can't imagine anyone will really find it inventive or entertaining which is sad as the author clearly was striving for more.

Monica Strang says

What an intriguing book! *How I Became A Teenage Survivalist* is told as journal passages by a 15 year old boy named Bracken sharing the experiences of his family when the power goes out throughout the world. That means no video games, cars, or even a washing machine! (Poor Bracken's mom and her laundry troubles. As a mother, I guess I related to her a lot.) Once they realize the power isn't coming back on, they discover how to survive without it. I learned so much from this book, like how create solar heaters, and how to make a solar light bulb from a water bottle! I could really picture Bracken telling his story, and could see any teenage boy not only relating to Bracken and his experiences, but also learning a thing or two about how to survive without electricity.

Julie says

Postapocalyptic tale of the world after a solar flare takes out the power grid. This one differs in that it's also a coming of age story told first person by a 16 year old boy. It kept me interested, though things seemed a bit rosy for this family, who lives on a farm in the country. Still, good characters and possibly just realistic enough.

Moze (SmartFolksRead) says

Bracken is a typical 16 year old living on a farm with his family in the Midwest when disaster strikes the nation. "A solar super storm" as the scientists call it hits the United States and with its exit takes all the electricity with it. Facing life without electricity and all of the conveniences that come with it such as gas for cars, heating, and being able to run health care machines, Bracken's family steps up to the challenge and learn how to not only survive, but prosper without electricity.

Bracken's parents are strong leaders and even in times of extreme crisis put their children first. Bracken's mom is in charge of all the wash, cooking, and cleaning and she also homeschools her three sons so that they do not fall behind when they have to return to school. His father finds that he enjoys life with no electricity and does hours of research in order to learn new ways to help his family prosper and keep their 100+ acre farm operational. The grandparents are actually excited by the lack of electricity as it reminds them of a simpler time in their childhood.

The only major problems that the family faces personally are groups of marauders that prowl around stealing from others because they are unable to provide for themselves. They do not face the problems that others do with keeping warm in the harsh Midwestern winters or the elderly being unable to get the medication or oxygen that they need.

Casey's writing was amazing and made me believe in Bracken and the growth that he goes through throughout the novel. The character were refreshing and I loved the family dynamic. I could tell the author did a good bit of research before writing the novel and putting in time to learn about topics properly is always something I appreciate. A quick read that took I had done before lunch at school, *How I Became a Teenage Survivalist* is well worth picking up and giving a try.

Anne Seebach says

This is one of the better 'youth fiction' stories I've read in a long time. I really enjoyed the (dare I say) wholesome feel of the narration, characterised by the guileless sixteen-year-old Bracken relating his own and his family's experiences in a world unexpectedly bereft of electricity-based power and communications. Bracken and his family faced some definite challenges, but overall experienced a rather gentler and definitely more positive adjustment to the new conditions than many others. The family came across as educated, intelligent farming people, who dealt with difficult circumstances in a practical manner, but also with empathy and humour. Bracken was also aware of and able to empathise with unequivocally more tragic experiences outside his own circle, which I think introduced some potentially more difficult themes to the younger reader, without the dark, gritty realism it might have had if written for adults. The story itself is a very relevant contemporary eco/science fiction theme for young readers. While some adult readers may find it a little tame (especially the romance), I think many young teens will both enjoy the story, and be interested enough to follow-up the various links to science and eco technology e-articles. I'm pretty sure I would have been smitten if I'd read this book at 14 or so. Love the brief nod to the zombie survival guide btw!

Emily♥ says

I grew up on a farm in the middle of the country surrounded by rice fields and cattle pastures. Living off the land has always just been a way of life to me. I'm always surprised when I see people from, like Portland or San Francisco, who have just discovered growing gardens for food, like it was their idea or something. Nope, it's been around forever. We've just become so spoiled to grocery stores and supermarkets.

I love the open space of the country. It's real freedom.

Anyways, this book was a breath of fresh air. I hate to think about any of this actually happening, but the hard reality is that it probably could.

It felt like an episode of Doomsday Preppers, except not so extreme and a lot more rational. (Let's face it; some of those people are damn fools.) I hope that my family could live a somewhat normal life if something like this were to happen.

I liked stepping into Bracken's mind. He was very blunt about everything, and I definitely didn't have to imagine as to what he was thinking about. I loved his family. So sweet!

Whitney Grady says

This is a book I could not put down! It was so full of interesting ideas about survival but still had a storyline so relatable that I could imagine life in Bracken's world. It is a super read you don't want to miss!
