One of the growing movements in contemporary literary criticism is ecocriticism, which pays close attention to the ways that literary texts reflect and engage discussions about sustainability, climate change, human-animal relationships, and environmental justice. However, this paper explores an alternative means of relating fiction to future concerns: it asks how literature and other art forms can inspire readers and audiences to change their most basic personal habits, learn from fictionalized scenarios, and take precautionary action. Human existence profoundly connects to the natural, physical world, affecting it and being affected by it. Through analyzing James Howard Kunstler's novel *World Made by Hand* and the television series *The Walking Dead*, I consider the capability of average Americans to survive should an entirely plausible pandemic infectious disease or cataclysmic disaster eliminate electrical service, community connections, civil order, and other conveniences we take for granted. Most specifically, the paper examines the impact on medical options and suggests that cultivating certain plants today could be very important in such a scenario. Those people able to identify easily accessible, common Midwestern plants and possessing a working knowledge of their properties would have a significantly greater chance of surviving the kinds of increasingly plausible medical emergencies imagined by these narratives.