

I am a city girl at heart. I've never milked a cow – never wanted to. I was shocked when I attended my first “pig pickin’” after my husband and

I moved to North Carolina from Boston. I had to **avert** my eyes from the huge pig, skin and head still on, splayed open across an oil drum that had been sawed in half lengthwise and fitted with hinges so it opened and closed. This, I later learned, was called a “pig cooker.” Part of the pig’s insides were chopped up in a pan beside it and referred to as “barbecue.” Seeing all of this did not improve my appetite.

“*Y’all in thuh country now, gul,*” the host told me happily, apparently thrilled to be the one to indoctrinate me into country living.

When, at 8 months pregnant, I volunteered to chaperone my son’s strawberry-picking field trip, the other mothers looked at me strangely. I thought strawberries grew on tall bushes, not low to the ground. All that squatting sent me into early labor.

You should keep these incidents in mind in order to understand my attitude when I heard a “huge hurricane” was headed toward our town. I thought back to the snowstorms forecast during my days growing up in Philadelphia. The “20 inches” predicted by the weatherman never seemed to **materialize**.

The local newspaper ran a long checklist of things townspeople should get to prepare for the hurricane. My neighbor, Wayne, aware that I was new to town, made a point of giving me a copy of the list. I took a **cursory** glance and thought nothing more of it.

While my neighbors were running around taping their windows, buying fresh batteries, and prepping their generators, I was, quite **literally**, sitting in my glass house playing with the kids on the floor.

The rains started at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. To my amazement, this was exactly what the weatherman had predicted.

These were no ordinary rains, either. From my glass living room, I could no longer see the front lawn or the trees. The rain was as thick as a *woolen curtain*. By nightfall, my husband’s car had begun to float out of the driveway. The water started insidiously creeping up our front steps, overturning potted plants and benches in its wake.

“This is unbelievable!” I yelled. I reached for the phone to dial Wayne. He had been born and raised in these parts; surely he would know what to do.

“Wayne,” I said worriedly into the receiver. “The water is coming up our front steps. It’s almost to our door!”

“Ours, too,” he said, quite calmly, I thought, given the circumstances.

“What should I do?”

“Put out your sandbags. It will keep the water out as long as it doesn’t get too high.”

“Sandbags?”

“You didn’t get any?” he asked in disbelief. “They were on the list.”

No, I hadn’t.