

welcome

home security

JUST BECAUSE WE'VE GOT OUR HEADS IN OUR SOFAS doesn't mean they aren't filled with thoughts of trouble. There is no escaping the anxious, sorrowful times in which we find ourselves. Where do we turn for comfort when we fear the bombs are going to drop—again—in our own backyards? How does anyone sleep peacefully knowing our own bombs—with or without just cause—are tearing through other families' bedrooms and dining rooms and gardens, obliterating cribs and armchairs on the other side of the world?

We all want homeland security, and we will all have to figure out how to find it for ourselves, as it lies well beyond the reach of any government agency or political authority. Most of us, these days, need psychic rebuilding, to recapture the feeling that home is a place where we are safe. But how do we do that?

It is one thing to shore up our internal defenses; to be alert for danger; to wire our homes, padlock the doors, provision the cellar. There is an undeniable urge to stock up on the things we believe will keep danger at bay. That must be why miles of duct tape and plastic sheeting have recently been sold. But all we buy in that frame of mind is the illusion of control. There is no way to harness the fates; there is no way to guarantee that nothing bad will ever happen, that there are no demons at the door, that there are no monsters under the bed. I've begun to consider that dwelling in fear—and preparing for evil—is the wrong place to live. I didn't feel any more secure carrying home shopping bags from the hardware store; the more I thought about how to protect myself, the more afraid I became. So I began to pay attention to where I did feel the solace of home. Strangely, I found it in a store called Linens 'n Things.

It is a warehouse of a place that sells everything you could possibly want, and things you never knew you needed, to stock every room in your house. There are variations of these stores springing up all over the country: Gracious Home; Bed, Bath & Beyond. I got behind an enormous shopping cart and headed straight into the Bedroom Department, located just by the front door. That was strange, I thought, until I realized that when I come home at the end of the day, I usually head right for my bedroom, to change, to put away the day's gear, to rest my head a second. Sometimes just for the pleasure of glimpsing the well-made bed, with its promise of a good night ahead. So I cruised happily through stacks of cotton sheets and heavy duvet covers and, with the promise of spring in the air, piles of pastel cotton thermal blankets, my

favorite as a child, because of the way I could poke my fingers through the holes and stroke the fabric against my face. The Bathroom Department was right behind the bedroom displays; there were shelves full of shiny wastebaskets and toothbrush holders and cushiony bath mats.

Some of the stuff for sale was lovely; some was dreadful. But that didn't matter; what did was the *muchness* of it all, as if there could be no end to making a home. Such possibilities. Candles to light the garden path. Clothes to dress the dinner table. Covers to protect the appliances. I wheeled past Curtains, Carpets, Kitchens, and found myself in the gleaming, amber-toned Cleaning Department, and that was when it struck me. I was filling my cart with odds and ends for every department of my life: the departments of feeding, of bathing, of sleeping and dreaming. All the little bits and pieces I was collecting were to make my home more comfortable, more pleasing, more beautiful.

Of course, it isn't the things that make a home; what makes a home is the loving spirit in which those things are gathered. With every pillowcase and doormat I took off the shelves, I had little fantasies of the weary head that would nestle in the crook of my arm, the muddy feet that would need wiping at the kitchen door, the remains of the dinner that would be scraped into the wastebasket, the shared delight in the clear

lavender hues of a new blanket. The blessing of it washed over me: that I had a home to take care of, and people with whom to share it. I had the feeling of wanting, and trying, to make my home secure and restful and comforting. I was moved by the vibrant pulse of that effort. Suddenly the dread was gone. I had replaced it with hope. And I felt safe in my love for my home.



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