INSTRUCTIONS FOR AN UNSWALLOWED LIFE

1. When the shambling undead crest the hill do not run – your knees are shot and there are no puffs left in your inhaler.

2. Instead, with your whittling knife, sharpen brush handles and chair legs into jagged-tipped spikes to add to those barricading your garden.

3. While sharpening, relive the day when the walking dead were just a tweet with laughing-crying emojis; when the bristly store assistant said they didn't sell body armour that fit your plus-size measurements; when you phoned your parents only to have Dad joke you'd be three courses, and Mum enquire if you were *still* seeing your therapist.

4. Know in your bones that there's no good reason to return to your childhood bedroom – your body is your most precious love and home.

5. When a flesh marauder evades the barricade and heavy foots through your vegetable patch, pick up your sledgehammer. It's time to attack. Your warm, doughy stomach and delectable breasts will not be morsels for the braindead.

6. Remember to aim for the base of the skull. In this instance, the heart is redundant, and the head is most vulnerable.

7. Protect your body. You owe it much: the accessible comfort it and food provided when there was no other sort; the body clock that persists when you're lost amongst the shoulds and should nots of how to look, what to eat, and who to love.

8. Sidestep flailing arms and dodge gnashing teeth, and when you see maggots writhing in bloated flesh, summon your swallowed furies.

9. Do not blink.

10. Swing. SLAM. Repeat.

11. Later, once this wave of decomposition has passed, place rocks on the fallen's chests so they cannot rise and the earth can reclaim them.

12. Then sit by the window and watch the hill, and tell yourself over and over that you will not be small.