

... and good riddance

Solitary challenges

It is impossible to be sure, how the players want to play their characters in the present. They may choose to start great projects, do things that will take years or they may be quite passive. These input are meant for use especially when the players are relatively passive, but the situations can also be fitted into the activities the characters set out on to give the actions an edge.

Foraging

Everybody needs food and other supplies. The characters each have the room which earlier housed 1.5 million people to roam, so they are not going to starve or run out of clean jeans for a long time, but a simple shopping trip may still lead to a lot of little adventures.

Scenes of decay

Everybody just left, so the average mall is going to offer scenes of decay of all kinds. Rotting carcasses at the butcher's shop or self liquefied stacks of cucumbers – it's enough to take a weak stomach of its dinner. As time goes by the decay may also spread to less organic things like wall posters getting ripped by the wind, parked cars showing signs of rust or the buildings beginning to look like ruins.

Epiphany

Suddenly the character stands in front of something, which seemed terribly important or inaccessible a few weeks ago. Tins of Beluga caviar and bottles of Gran Cru Champagne. The DVD she always wanted to see, but now there is no power for the machine. Possibly just a pre-fabricated dinner that serves 4!

Sound

Very much alone in the middle of a mall or at the deserted shopping street, there is a disturbing sound. Something the character does not recognize. It may be explained innocently after some tense searching or it may just disappear after some time and remain a mystery.

Company

You may get used to being alone, but you do not get over it. If companionship becomes the issue, you may use some these ideas.

Pet

The character may find a kitten or pick up a stray dog on the way. This could alleviate solitude, but it does not cure it. Eventually a character who has picked up a pet may find herself envying her own pet for being able to find companionship amongst its own species, or lose it to such a companion. Otherwise time or chance will at some time bereave the character of her companionship.

Signs

The character finds elaborate signs pointing towards another survivor: notes pinned on church doors, paint on the tarmac or messages on store fronts. When the signs are followed they lead to the den of another survivor, but it is evident, that this survivor left only a few days after the rest of the population.

Body

Somewhere on the way, in a parked car, on a garden porch, there is a body. A knife indicates that the person slit his own wrists and thereby took his own life. It is of course impossible to decide if he would have disappeared like everybody else or was actually left behind.

Identity

The isolation will challenge the identity of the characters, but it may also allow them to experiment with identity in ways that they have not done before.

Lifestyle

Typically you may tempt characters with the chance to adopt some of the trappings of another lifestyle, moving into a mansion, a church, a cinema or maybe a light house. Sandra may choose to visit a furrier or try on some haute couture. On the more weird side someone could decide to host a cocktail party where all the guests are card board models of movie stars.

Travel

If a character wants to travel, help her on her way, there I really no one to stop her. Almost everything else in this text can take place on the move. In addition to this there are some special types of challenges. The roads are full of accidents, since people have been taken away also when they were behind the wheel of their car. A bridge may be down or an Alp tunnel clogged with debris to force the traveler out of course. And the reward for all the travelling is at its best, a magnificent scenery or sight with no one to share it with.

The scales

For whom do you stay pretty? We don't always know, but in most cases it is for somebody else than yourself. Suddenly when the character passes a mirror after weeks of ignoring it there may be a surprise waiting. A beard may have grown, it may be time to collect the hair in the back of the neck for a pony tail, or maybe the character should just improve on her grooming. In far more serious instances the mirror may reveal signs of malnutrition, weight loss or unsound weight gain.

Existence

It is a prerequisite for the game that the characters cannot die before the final scene. This however does not mean that their existence cannot be threatened at earlier points in the story. Either they overcome these threats, or the rest of the story becomes more or less their life passing before their eyes. It is of course best, if dangers presented early on in the game are non lethal but hopefully scary.

Pack of dogs

Whoever removed the rest of humankind did not care to take neither cat- nor dogkind. But whereas the cats are merely a nuisance, the dogs can become rather dangerous since they hunt in packs. Packs of dogs

are best used to create minor hunts, force characters to go on detours or make them wait out a siege until hunger drives the pack out on more promising hunting. Another interpretation can be dogs which are actually begging for food, but look menacing.

Exposure

When you do not have heating getting cold and wet is a rather more serious problem than you are used to. Of course a character will be able to find several changes of dry clothing in any house they pass by, but if they lose their way or are caught way out in the open it may become scary. For Peter the problem of exposure combines well with the flash back "Ice" whereas it fits the flash back "Rain" for Sandra.

Sudden danger

A character may decide to climb a ladder to get up on a roof. Just after she gets up there, the ladder crashes to the ground. Had it happened a few seconds before she had been hanging on to the edge of the roof for dear life. Now she just has to figure out how to get down again. When there is no one to find you, no one to come when you cry for help, quite innocent situations can be both scary and dangerous. Accidentally locking oneself into a room can also be very scary.

Pain

A character does not have to take the slightest chance to feel the chill of danger. There are no doctors, not even the internet version. Ailments will go untreated and pains unexplained. By letting a character wake up one morning with unexplainable pangs of pain opens for insecurity and probably also activity. Even something as banal as a toothache can pose an interesting problem.