

Drifting

This is a plug-in scenario intended to take place when a piece of Yithian technology is used improperly, Quachil Uttaus is displeased, or the shit is already hitting the global fan anyway. Ideally, the player characters are all gathered in a densely populated urban environment (a high-rise is perfect), away from major sources of food, water and medicine. For descriptive purposes it is assumed the event occurs in daytime.

All PCs suddenly experience a sinking feeling, followed by a sense of increasing physical sluggishness over five seconds. Total full-body paralysis sets in just as they lose their balance and drop toward the floor. Weirdly, the paralysis actually suspends their bodies in mid-air. Everyone and everything in an area about 200 yards from side to side is similarly affected.

In one PC's locked perspective, the Sun accelerates and streaks down to the horizon in seconds. This rapid dusk is followed by another day, again lasting only seconds, and the one after that is faster than a heartbeat. The Sun gradually becomes a throbbing arc across the sky, undulating as seasons pass, while picking up speed. If any PCs have a direct line of sight to structures outside the affected area, some of these take on strange new forms under inhuman powers. The rest suddenly crumble, like yesterday's sand castles in the full blast of a hurricane. For one very final instant, the Sun's wide band of light vibrates through twisted lattices of rebar.

The PCs are among the first to regain consciousness after blacking out. They have dry mouths and headaches, but are not injured. The air they breathe is thin and stagnant, smelling of death and salt. The swollen Sun is perched unmoving on an alien horizon, to what was once the north. Looking directly at it will barely hurt the eyes, except by occasional blasts of unfiltered UV radiation, yet its red light feels warm enough, while the long shadows that dominate the transported neighborhood are very cold. The stars are out to the south, but the constellations are hardly recognizable, and there is no moon. Not many people will understand or believe that the Earth is in a permanent tidal lock.

Concrete foundations around the PCs have thin cracks. Some metal frames are warped and a handful of windows broken, as if by an earthquake. There is no cell phone reception, power or running water, because further away, the effects of the event are very different. Every man-made thing outside the neighborhood has turned completely to dust, which no longer shifts. It takes some digging to uncover formless lumps of copper covered by inches of crumbling verdigris, in mass graves of unbelievable size. Every surface with a line of sight to the dying star is covered by papery lichens. In the distance lay ruins from fast-forwarded eons following the annihilation of humankind. The only people here are the PCs and everyone who happened to be present in the transported neighborhood.

Running this scenario requires a tight focus on the role of the PCs as Delta Green agents. Their weapons, authoritative posturing and mental fortitude put them in a unique position to rule a world with no clouds and nothing to drink, except what's in the neighborhood. Supplies there will last everybody 48 hours with rationing. Only the PCs can soften or escape the inevitable collapse that follows panic and fighting over limited resources. No matter where they turn, someone or something will always fall apart behind them. Here are just a few other faces in the crowd:

Barney Phillips

34, 6' 4" (193 cm) and 278 lb (126 kg), Caucasian, with a feces-colored demi-mullet. An "engineer" who quickly assumes command of a large group of men to dig a well. Barney and his two friends (Bill the sadist and high-strung Mitch, who knows Barney is a plumber) will go around demanding food from everyone else, reserving it for the diggers and guarding this supply with improvised weapons. Barney quickly discovers a love of absolute power, and when money loses all value, he will take sex.

Kay Boyle

50, 5' 3" (160 cm) and 110 lb (55 kg), mulatto, gray hair in a bun. A homeless schizophrenic who assumes the Chinese have bombed the city, or else supports whatever bullshit cover story the PCs come up with. Kay happens to be hiding the only handgun in the known world, apart from what the PCs may have had with them. Having already experienced the crap chute to cannibalism one night in 1993, she will eventually mumble "Enough, enough" and lavish a bullet on herself.

Robin "Bin" Miles

20, 6' 0" (183 cm) and 171 lb (78 kg), Caucasian, red punkish do. Robin is the brains of her relationship with boyfriend Lennie Walters, a C-list celebrity thrillseeker. They set off to explore the waste, in the direction of whatever river was closest. That river is completely dry and Robin's pale skin is blistered by direct exposure to UV light, but she discovers that watering the dark non-terrene lichens in the waste will immediately give them lurid colors. Lennie eats a patch and is digested. Rapidly sprouted thorns make vomiting ineffective.

Ren Griffin

41, 5' 9" (175 cm) and 202 lb (92 kg), part-Japanese, balding without mercy. Current owner of the Hyoryu Bar & Grill, having by far the largest store of food and alcohol in the transported neighborhood. Ren is also very intelligent, but an idealist. He is the one who suggests elections for an "emergency government", organized and monitored by his mostly-Chinese expat buddies (old Dewei, expressionless Hsin and two half-Vietnamese hoodlums, Danny and Bill). Ren is willing to share the food evenly, but his people skills are limited. Without commerce, he grows more and more paranoid.

Nicholas "Nicky" Crampton

8, 3' 9" (114 cm), 57 lb (26 kg), Caucasian, dirty blond curls. Unlike the other orphans who wander screaming for the first hour or so, Nicholas stays put. Adorable and incapable of understanding a scientific explanation, he will convince the other kids to demand an explanation on the personal level, which is to say that someone suspicious has been bad and needs to be punished so that everything goes back to normal. He's seen one solution in his grandfather's books: Burning the guilty at the stake.

The Monsters

Aside from whatever Mythos standbys the Keeper wants to include, the tunnels beneath the waste are populated primarily by "the arachnid denizens of earth's last age" mentioned in The Shadow Out of Time. Human flesh is actually toxic to them, and only the big ones are hard to kill as individuals, but they subsist in vast numbers, use Mythos magic (Grasp of Cthulhu, Parting Sands, Wandering Soul) and will gladly drag people miles underground to irrigate their fungal farms with water extracted from human fluids.

The farms are part of a fortress erected by Yithian-possessed coleopterans. Those Yithians are long gone, but have left archives and functional devices behind. Built for the appendages of beetles, these devices can be studied to reverse the disaster and send the neighborhood back to the present. This meddling will release a Hound of Tindalos and cannot bring anyone back to life, but the PCs will probably want to cross that bridge when they get there. As they study the artifacts, they learn that

"there would be races after them, clinging pathetically to the cold planet and burrowing to its horror-filled core, before the utter end."