

AOF Survey of the Apocalypse

Commission	Department of Futurity: Archive of Obsolete Feelings
Researcher(s)	The Archivist [true name: unknown]
Season/Year	Fourth season, 20XX [true date: variable]
Location	Scattered Lands [true location: variable]

Overview

Thank you for expressing interest in completing this survey conducted by the Archive of Obsolete Feelings (AOF), branch of the Department of Futurity. Our goal is to ensure the preservation and continuation of forms of expression that have been abandoned or rejected since the world changed: feelings that have no discernable place in the world we now inhabit.

Your responses will be compensated via resource trade—ex: a book, a cast iron pan, a packet of seeds, a new pair of boots, a song, an embrace, a ride across the river. Value will be approximated through collaborative means between you and the researcher(s).

Response Guidelines

- We deploy the word “apocalypse” broadly—please respond to the term however you see fit, in whatever way you envision and have experienced your own corner of this apocalypse.
- You can respond in paragraphs, full or half sentences, bullet points, sketches—in whatever way seems best to answer these questions. If you will be responding by hand, we will send you a guide on how to scan and return your responses.

To confirm your participation in the survey, please provide your name and location below. We thank you in advance for cooperating.

Name: Theo

Location: Marble Ruins (send resources to the Central Outpost)

Questions: Set 1

1. What have you packed in your bag to survive? What does your gear/kit look like? Do you carry any memorabilia or objects of personal significance?

Boots, cloak, knapsack, change of shirt and slacks, spare socks. Spell components in a side pouch (beetle carapace, crushed aventurine, pearl fragments, tube of honey, ink, spring silt, soot). Water sling. Fish jerky. Cat treats. Shortsword, vine-touched hilt. Nautilus whistle. Jomm's walking staff. In-progress map of the collected ruins.

2. Are you alone or with companions? Nonhuman familiars? Old voices? Imagined or remembered friends? Who do you reach for?

I've been traveling with Stub for a while. Can't say I would've made it this far without him. Maybe it's projection, but it's like he talks to me sometimes. Keeps me sane in the low nights with his sighs. I've gotten the occasional look from passersby who have never seen a Mire-touched cat, but who doesn't keep odd company these days? Whoever, whatever brings you slivers of comfort.

3. What landscape, physical and/or emotional, are you traveling through or situated in? Do you have a desired destination in mind? What carries your body?

No destination, for now. Simply wandering, encountering, helping, recording. Maybe someday Stub & I will settle in an outpost. For now, I need motion. I need the promise that this, whatever *this* is, will not be the resting ground of all things.

4. What is the one act or habit that roots you in this apocalypse? Are you able to afford any kind of daily routine or practice?

Preparing my spell rituals in the morning. As lucky as it is to be a perpetual wanderer, there is a necessity to ritual, of the thing one must prepare to avoid losing oneself. A little sigil drawn in the dirt, a few sprinklings of silt. Markers that the earth has known my footfall and will remember it, if only for the remainder of the day's light.

Questions: Set 2

5. How do you feel when you look outside the window, or tent, or shelter, today?

Lonely. Not a banishing loneliness, but a gentle nudge of distance between what I see as glimpses of... a kind of beauty? in a ruined world, and what others tend to see: cavernous mouths, horror-drawn shapes, an empire's glory now sundered.

6. How do you feel about yourself in the alternate universe where there was no apocalypse? *Jealous, betrayed... thankful?*

I don't know. I wasn't really anyone before the Mire. I'm not really anyone, now, but I feel as though my past was another's past. I didn't have family or many friends before. I didn't have much to lose. Now, I do. Is that such a terrible thing to say?

7. How do you feel about the mechanisms of this apocalypse, as it's played out? *Maybe you'd rather have had to brave another element, a different plague...?*

It feels a bit silly to wish for something else, doesn't it? I can only say that the Mire has changed, not destroyed, life... it's a different kind of life. I would still call it living. Towns, alliances, gifts. I won't discount the fear, but there's something important in the fact that people are still here, trying. I'd be careful about wishing it to be any other way.

8. How do you feel about the secrets you carry? How do you feel about the stars that have seen them, the winds that have heard them?

There is nothing left that I have to hide. When Jomm died, I left my secrets with them. The only thing I carry now is the wind that curls around my back.

9. How do you feel when you think about the "end" of this apocalypse, wherever that marker lies, when the next, less-defined period of existence begins?

It will be an end, like any other end. Perhaps I will be there. Perhaps I won't. I'm less preoccupied with the end, and more interested in what is happening in front of me, which is to say, the Mire flowers blooming after a long winter.

Questions: Set 3

10. What is the thing you wanted to say or do before the world changed?

I'd always wanted to open my own spell component shop. Perhaps that's what I'll do when, if, I settle. A storefront specializing in transmutation components—oh, that sounds lovely. So much foraging potential, there.

11. What songs do you remember from before? What songs have you returned to? Have their meanings changed? Would you sing these songs differently now?

There was a song... about frogs and sparrows. I can't remember the words. These days, only the melodies appear to me, and even those remain in fragments.

12. In this apocalypse, what mundane occasion do you miss? *A county fair? Going to the grocery store? Chatting with coworkers? Sleeping at the cinema? Watching life pass outside your window?*

Tavern talk. Sitting at the edge of a storm of conversation, and feeling, for a moment, like I was a part of it all.

13. Have you survived other apocalypses? The 2012 apocalypse? Middle school? What makes this apocalypse different from others?

If I have, I don't remember. Somehow my memories post-Mire seem more present, more vivid, and the ones before... well, they feel as though they're from a different past. Or someone else's memories entirely.

You may use this space to reflect on anything we have not brought up in the survey:

—If you have any Jorm seeds, I'd be grateful to have a few on hand.