

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: Calla Norman

Location: North.

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?

I didn't have much time to acquire what I might call a "true" camping bag - because at the time of departure I assumed camping was going to be my future from now on. But I was luckier than most - my Osprey Farpoint 40 bag from my backpacking-through-Europe days serves me better than the rolling suitcase I saw some poor soul dragging along I-94. In 2019, when this was last used, my backpack held enough clothes for a weekend trip, my dob kit, my journal, and my laptop, and maybe the souvenirs I picked up in Budapest or Munich. Now, there's not much use for a change of clothes, so I just have a few pieces for varying kinds of weather (and usually drape my parka over the back when it's too hot). The journal stays, although I gave up my usual Moleskine for whatever scraps of paper I've been able to find. I miss the shelf back home lined with my uniform journals spanning the years, imagining my current journal - a flimsy and now battered piece of swag I found at the university's abandoned career center - next to them makes me laugh.

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

I always thought I wanted to live in isolation. Now, I'm not sure. I brought the dog, not because I wanted to, but she's big, and black, and could drag me down a mountain in the pursuit of a morsel of food. I figured if anything her presence might deter any one who wanted to harm us. At first, I tied her to me so she wouldn't run, but for some reason even in the apocalypse she has somewhere she needs to be more so than I, and when I could no longer stand the tugging I let her loose and hoped for the best. Sometimes she runs off into the woods when she wants to, and I keep walking figuring she's not too far. She always comes back, with a little less hunger in her eyes.

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?

I'm not entirely sure where I am, but my guess is somewhere in Michigan. I keep going north, not knowing what I'm going to do when I hit the lake. Is the Mackinac bridge still standing? I'm holding out hope that the Upper Peninsula is largely still untouched, and just maybe that cabin is still empty. What's carrying me is the possibility of building a sap

evaporator, the luxury of expending energy and valuable resources to tap trees and make syrup.

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?

5. Please use the space below (or, if elsewhere, please specify) to draw/sketch something you've seen in this apocalypse. It does not need to be "realistic."

Questions: Set 2

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

I feel like I really want a breakfast sandwich.

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

8. 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...?

I feel like a plague would have been so much easier. We already survived several - why couldn't we just stay inside making banana bread the rest of our lives? This one, though. Having to be wary of everything in your surroundings, putting in trust that brushing a leaf won't kill you in two months. In the same way, it's not too different from how I spent most of my life before, going through life perhaps a bit blindly, hoping that the wrong choice isn't around the corner.

9. 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?

10. 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?

I'm hoping I won't be around by then, that the cabin will be abandoned not because I left but because I found somewhere better to be. I hope it's different than how it was. I can't define what "better" than it was might be, but I can only hope that there continues to be sweetness.

Questions: Set 3

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

I'll be honest I just really wanted to see fucking Taylor Swift in concert.

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

God, I miss recorded music so much. When I passed through Grand Rapids, I almost considered looting a record player, even though I know it's ridiculous to even think of carrying one all the way up to the cabin. If I can even get electricity up there. Solar panels would take precedence, of course. The song "World Falls" by Indigo Girls pops into my head at least once a day. It's a good walking song, the tempo makes my steps bounce ever so slightly more. Amy Ray sings, "This world falls on me, with dreams of immortality/Everywhere I turn, all the beauty just keeps shaking me." Well, I definitely do not want to be immortal, even before the apocalypse. When I pictured this song before, it was always in a desert environment, with the world falling being the vast, empty sky above you. Now, walking through the forest, when I sing the song in my head, I imagine the trees benevolently crushing me.

13. 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?*

You know what I miss? A drive-thru. Part of it is I miss driving, but also do you remember when getting food was so easy? You could be blasted out of your mind in the back seat, some poor friend in the driver's trying to decipher three unintelligible orders, and still end up with a bag of delicious grease. Culver's cheese curds, you guys. But also it's the passing interaction with people, the small level of anonymity that comes from ordering and receiving from your vehicle than just going in. I miss balancing fries between my legs as I pull out of the restaurant, off somewhere new.

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

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