

What Bizarre Existence Is This

Reversed Zombie Survival Horror RPG

By Reid "Reidzilla" San Filippo

*Something happened and you died. Then you woke up... changed...
PCs are zombies who have a good portion of their faculties still intact. They must survive in a world where they are hunted by the living.
They must fight the *HUNGER* that grows inside them or risk losing what mind/soul they have left.*

Inspired by this [short story](#).

System

- System uses some form of bidding or auction
- Every character must have different base stats
- Teamwork is a core component of the game, with the party's power through teamwork being markedly greater than the sum of its parts.

Setting

- Humans are the enemy.

Phrases

- Dead come back + Stars are fading = *At the beginning of the end of the world, the **dead come back** as a sign that the **stars are fading** and our days are numbered.*

Images



- Zombies (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/29489874@N05/3530120999>)



- Apocalypse (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/29489874@N05/3542711063>)

TOC

WHAT HAPPENED

It all started about two months ago.

With no warning, the weather began to go crazy. At first, meteorologists said that the freak lightning and hail storms were just uncharacteristic flukes in the otherwise normal weather patterns. It didn't take long for professionals and novices alike to see this was not true. News reports were flooding the internet about strange and dangerous weather patterns developing all over the globe, with no signs of stopping. Within weeks, torrential storms of hail, lightning, and dirty ashen snow were nearly daily occurrences throughout the world.

As if that was not bad enough, the strange new weather patterns also led to a massive increase in Global Electromagnetic Interference (GEI). This led to a drastic reduction in cellular reception and broadcast signal quality. Considering how much of the world's populous had converted over to cellular, broadcast, or internet based communications, a crisis was emerging.

The rural areas of the planet had another crises to deal with. The new weather patterns had produced a strange effect on the botanical wildlife. Vines, creepers, and weeds began growing at exponential rates. Also, many species that had been merely toxically unpleasant were mutating to be exceptionally lethal to humans.

After a few weeks, plans of action were being implemented to endure the now hostile elements and prevent smaller communities from being engulfed by the botanical eruption.

With nearly all communities now being on a constant alert due to the multiple crises, word of the outbreak spread nearly as fast the infection did. Medical science was baffled as there seemed no rhyme or reason to the sickness as it appeared to strike at random. It infected some in an area while leaving the others untouched. Regardless, those that caught the mysterious plague died of it. According to compiled statistics, over 35% of the world's population died in the few weeks since the beginning of the epidemic.

You were one of them.

“THERE IS PEACE AND SERENITY IN THE LIGHT . . .”

The disease had a very quick onset to death interval, so your suffering was mercifully short. You weren't really conscious for most of it anyway. Just some memories of unbearable heat, nagging pain, and suffocation. It was a relief when it ended.

What came next was just like the stuff you'd hear on those hyped up “near death experience” programs. A bright white light, blinding but not uncomfortable or scary. A tunnel leading somewhere that you slowly floated through. Then, there was the person (or thing, you could not really tell) at the end of the tunnel. You remember there being a conversation or, at least, you remember tiny slivers of what might have been a conversation. Heck, you're not even sure you clearly remember meeting anything at the end of the tunnel. Anyways, that bright blinding light came back and slowly faded to black.

That's when you woke up.

RUDE AWAKENINGS

Well, your eyes were open at least. Then came the moment of panic as you realized you weren't breathing. The first breath came only with a monumental effort. The next few came easier. You felt numb all over, inside and out. Despite a great deal of stiffness, you made your arms respond, pulled the sheet that had been thrown over you off, and sat up. You were in a room just like the one they examined dead bodies in on those CSI shows. As you slowly took in your surroundings, you realized you weren't breathing again. Another wave of panic or two later and you grasped that you naturally stopped breathing anytime you were not concentrating on doing so; and it did not seem to hurt or bother you physically at all. That's when it finally sank in...

...“I'm still dead!”

THE DETAILS AND ENTRAILS OF THE MODERN ZOMBIE

This section covers everything a newly awakened zombie needs to be aware of before play begins.

THE BASICS

Firstly, you're *dead* so you do not need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe to keep your newly risen body functioning... sort of. You'll need to eat to recover from damage and to decelerate decomposition, but that will be covered later.

Next, your body is just not what it was when you were alive. You've lost a lot of your sensitivity, making you a bit slow, stiff, and clumsy. Also, your brains seem a bit sluggish as well. Kind of like the light bulb is still on but is glowing a bit dimmer than it used to. As such, you aren't quite the multitasker you used to be. To accomplish complex tasks you will probably need to work together with some of your zombified companions, known as your Brood. On the positive side, you are now more durable than any living creature could ever be. As long as your nervous system is relatively intact, you'll keep on ticking. Plus, as long as you are still moving, you can recover from your wounds without any medical aid. Again, more on this particular topic later.

NOT ALL ZOMBIES ARE CREATED EQUAL

Just like not everyone who died from the virus rose from the dead, not everyone who came back are the same "type" of zombie. Only a small portion are like you; being able to think and act of their own free will. The others either woke nearly mindless or somehow became that way. They act only on the basest of survival instincts.

Shamblers are those zombies that are fully controlled by Lethargy. They shuffle around aimlessly and barely make any effort to accomplish anything, even when threatened or overcome by Hunger.

Ferals are just the opposite as they are raging maniacs controlled solely by their Hunger. If it moves, they'll sprint after it. If it turns out to be living, they'll kill it and eat it, not necessarily in that order.

ZOMBIE GASTRONOMY 101

Well... there is just no other way to put this. You were meant to eat the flesh of the living. No... no... it doesn't have to be human flesh but there are dangers to dining exclusively on the flesh of animals and it has nothing to do with cholesterol or saturated fats. Also, it has to be fresh. Any corpse over an hour old has lost most of its usefulness to you. Eating such will fulfill your Hunger but not do anything else.

If you choose to, you can eat any normal human food you wish but your diminished sense of taste will leave it a very unsatisfactory experience. Plus, it will be of no use to your undead body nor gratify your growing Hunger. In fact, gorging yourself on such useless material can actually increase your Hunger.

HUNGER

Even when you are not damaged or slipping into decomposition, you will always feel a desire to feed. This is known as your Hunger. If left unsatisfied, it will grow and temporarily gain control of you. <<insert game mechanic here>> If overcome by Hunger, you temporarily lose all control and seek out living flesh at all costs, with no regard for your safety.

Taking excessive damage, critical failures, and the simple passage of time can increase your Hunger rating.

DECOMPOSITION AND MAINTENANCE

While you don't need to eat to "stay alive", your bodily tissues will slowly break down, and eating can delay this process. For every three days that you do not feed on at least 10lbs of fresh meat, you must permanently cross off one damage box on your person due to decay. This type of damage can never be recovered.

GLUTTONOUS RECOVERY

Due to your strange new physiology, you can recover from damage by devouring the flesh of the living. For every 5 minutes spent feasting on a fresh corpse, you heal one box of damage. You can't heal more than 12 boxes of damage from any one corpse. This will, of course, be divided up if a group of zombies is feeding on the same corpse.

ZOMBIE PSYCHOLOGY 101

One of the nice things about being dead is it is harder to get worked up about things as you are fully aware that the world is coming to an end. Yes...you read that right. Somewhere in your cold brain you have a few slivers of memory from the conversation with the "Glowing Tunnel Person." While intelligent zombies remember differing bits of the conversation, all of them remember the part about the fact that the world is winding down to some sort of "End of Days." Not that it is going to happen all that soon but, in general, the world has got a hundred years and change before "IT" happens. So, being that you are technically immortal, require little sustenance or maintenance, feel almost no pain, and know for a fact that the "End is Nigh" it is hard to get stressed over the little things like it was when you were alive.

LETHARGY

The unfortunate side of being dead and aware of the end is you no longer have that "zest for life" you once did. In fact, this is so true that inactivity can be downright dangerous, as long periods of it can lead to you temporarily being overcome by a torpor-like state, similar to a Shambler.

<<insert game mechanic here>>

THE MOB MENTALITY

Another odd aspect of zombie existence is that you have a compelling tendency to want to "go with the flow"; even more so than Humans are prone to do. Anytime you are in a crowd of zombies, intelligent or otherwise, the GM may call for check against stopping what you want to do and joining the crowd in their activity.

MOTIVATION

What truly sets you apart from the majority of the other risen dead is that you are still self-aware. You have the ability to choose how you think and act; but more than that, you have the drive to act for reasons other than basic survival. Motivation is very important as it helps you overcome failure, Lethargy, and Hunger. It also, aids you to avoid being overwhelmed by Mob mentality or even to control it.

<<insert examples here>>

ZOMBIE SOCIOLOGY 101

First off, the living will likely not react well upon seeing you. Your presence will typically send them into a full on "fight or flight" response, usually tempered by how well armed they are. This is not without reason as being in the presence of the living for extended periods of time will quickly raise your Hunger. Kind of like walking into a house where someone just baked cookies. Even if you are full, you still want one.

UMM . . . COULD YOU REPEAT THAT, MISTER?

To make matters worse, most living folk will not understand you when you speak, though you'll be able to understand them just fine; the exception being zombies with the attribute of Communication.

SEX ED

Forget everything you remember from High School Health class, you won't need it any more. No zombie of any type has a sex drive, sorry.

Oh, and while we're on the topic of reproduction, zombies do not beget more zombies. Unlike in those cheesy Romero films, no wound you cause to a living person will infect them. If they did not catch the sickness during the initial wave, they are immune. Of course, that begs the question of why and how new batches of zombies seem to crop up, doesn't it?

HOW THE DICE FALL

Task resolution uses a pool of six sided dice created by adding together the attributes the brood is using to accomplish their task. The object is generate a set of matching numbers equal to or exceeding the difficulty number.

DIFFICULTY NUMBERS

Average - a set of 2 matching numbers

Difficult - a set of 3 matching numbers

Challenging - a set of 4 matching numbers

Foolish - a set of 5 matching numbers

Hopeless - a set of 6 matching numbers

Situational modifiers may be applied to a Task check by the GM. Such modifiers will either increase or decrease the total number of dice rolled for the check.

Obtaining a result one or more difficulties higher than necessary is considered an Exceptional Success. Obtaining a result with two or more sets at the required difficulty is also considered an Exceptional Success.

EXCEPTIONAL SUCCESSES

DOING THINGS AND RESOLVING CONFLICT

CHARACTER GENERATION

For this game, character generation is absolutely a group activity. All of the players for a particular campaign should be present, if possible. They must consider Three important factors: Character Concept, Campaign Location, and Preferred Motivations.

CHARACTER CONCEPT

Have the players think of what kind of ordinary person their character was before they died. While they will no longer be the humans they once were, their former lives will greatly influence the choices they will make in play. It will also give a starting point to consider which Attributes will be most desirable and formulate the beginnings of each character's possible motivations.

CAMPAIGN LOCATION

The players must discuss which major metropolitan area all of the character's died in. The base setting of this game assumes that all of the characters will have awakened in the same abandoned medical facility, thus forming a bond due to experiencing their first steps of unlife together.

PREFERRED MOTIVATIONS

Next, the players should talk about what motivations they would like to have in the story, over and above general survival. Some will be personal to individual characters but others will have a large effect on the brood

and the feel of the campaign. As such, it will be very important for the group to have some sort of consensus about what they *want* to do. If the majority of the players would rather have motivations based on personal survival and self-discovery, it will cause a lot of strife for one character to be completely focused on the goal of "death to humanity." Of course, if the players would like to focus on teetering between "kill and eat" and "we are not monsters" then having dichotomous motivations among the party would be key.

THE ATTRIBUTE AUCTION

The first step to creating a fresh brood of zombies is to determine who has which attributes. Meaning that, as the undead, each individual zombie will not have all of the attributes that a living person does. Apparently, dying is bad for your health and tends to leave you missing important bits. Don't worry though. With a little strategy, the brood as a whole should have at least the capabilities of several living people. And besides, you're nigh immortal, painless heralds of the apocalypse! What more could you want?

Each player will need to look over the list of available attributes and keep an eye peeled for ones that they feel most fit their character's concept. Or, just which ones seem coolest.

THE ATTRIBUTES

- Aggression** - the positive application of negative emotion towards your goal.
- Athletics** - being able to move quickly and precisely without tripping over yourself.
- Awareness** - the ability to perceive the world around you, before it is too late.
- Cleverness** - adapting to unusual circumstances and taking advantage of them.
- Comprehension** - being able to learn new things and absorb new information.
- Communication** - the ability to converse freely with the living and influence the walking dead.
- Education** - whether by college degrees or hundreds of hours of Discovery Channel, you know things.

Finesse	- being able to perform tasks requiring fine motor skills.
Focus	- the ability to stay on task and avoid distractions.
Stature	- sometime size DOES matter and, as a plus, you can reach the top shelf.
Strength	- raw physical might, and lots of it.
Technology	- geek comes in many flavors, you bought an assortment.
Toughness	- some people are just put together better than others.

Next, each player will need 30 tokens to use for character creation. These can be glass beads, pennies, dice, shell casings, or any other small, handy items available in abundance. It needs to be said that any tokens a player has left over after the attribute auction are NOT wasted. They can be used to purchase Cool Stuff. Also, should a player run out of tokens mid auction, they may borrow more tokens, to a maximum of 5, to use in the auction. Afterwards, they will have to pay back the negative balance by acquiring Uncool Stuff.

THE AUCTION

The GM will put each of the attributes, one at a time, up for auction. The order of the auctions can be determined randomly or any other way deemed enjoyable. The number of players that can win each individual auction varies by how many total players there are.

of Players

- 2-3 - only one character may have any one attribute.
- 4-5 - up to two characters may have any one attribute.
- 6+ - up to three characters may have any one attribute.

As each attribute is put up, all of the players will secretly put a number of tokens into a closed fist as their bid, a "blind bid". It is perfectly legal to bid zero. Once all of the players are holding out a closed fist, all bids are revealed. The person who bid the most gets to list the attribute on their character sheet. Then, the second highest bid wins if there are 4-5 players and the third highest wins if there are 6 or more players. Any ties are resolved by additional blind bids.

It is most certainly possible for one character to have more attributes than another. No one said unlife was fair. The only limit is that no character can have more than eight attributes. If a character get an eighth attribute mid auction, then that character's player must bow out of any further bidding.

If the GM is going to allow someone to join the game mid campaign, they should keep track of how much each Attribute is purchased for. This will allow them to use the **Late Sleeper** optional rule in **Appendix A**.

ATTRIBUTE RATINGS

Once the auction is complete, a 1d3+1 is rolled for each Attribute acquired to determine its rating. Tokens may be spent to raise these ratings on a one-to-one basis, with a maximum Attribute rating of 4.

ATTRIBUTE KNACKS

GETTING MOTIVATED

COOL & UNCOOL STUFF

THE CURRENT STATE OF THINGS

A FORECAST OF DOOM

TECHNOLOGICAL BREAKDOWN

A GROWING DREAD

THE GRAVE MASTER'S SECTION

APPENDIX A: OPTIONAL RULES

Late Sleeper: ADDING ADDITIONAL PLAYERS ONCE THE CAMPAIGN HAS ALREADY STARTED.

APPENDIX Z: USEFUL CRAP FOR USE DURING PLAY

Insert Character sheet, summaries, charts, graphs, and other interesting but semi-useless stuff here.

Attributes & Knacks

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Character Name: _____

Concept: _____

Motivations

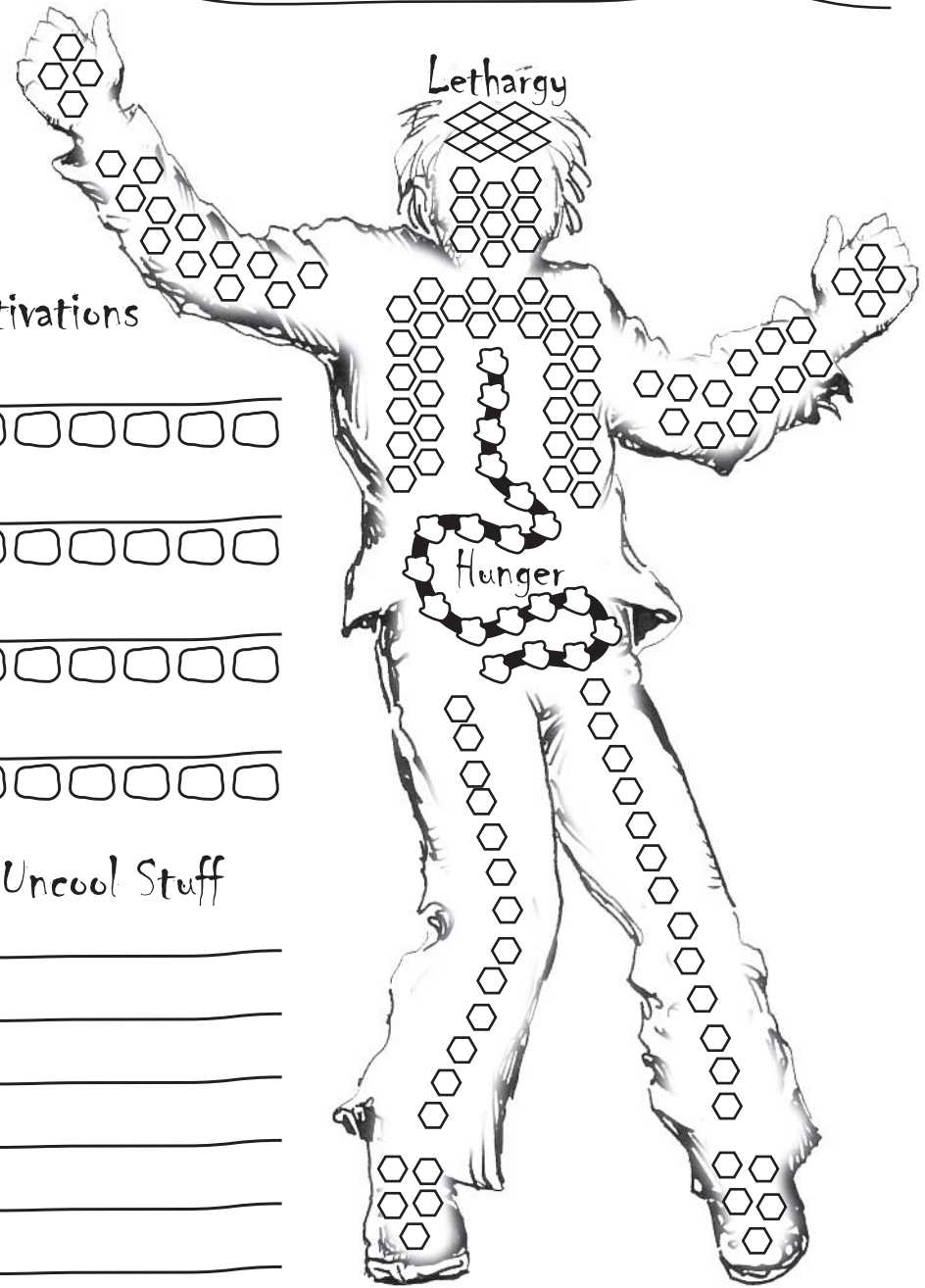
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Cool / Uncool Stuff



WHAT BIZARRE EXISTANCE IS THIS