

The Grocery Store

A universal scenario for a zombie apocalypse setting rpg.

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How this scenario is outlined:

This scenario is a rough outline of a few areas in a small portion of a city. The areas are described loosely with some detail but not fleshed out completely. Since the intent of this scenario is universal, statistics are purposely not provided.

Your duties as a GM:

Warning: this is not a “pick it up and run it” type of scenario. What you have instead is the skeletal outline of a few scenes that could make up a good gaming session. If you are interested in letting your players enjoy this setting, then it is up to you to fill in the details of the scenario. Specifically the creatures will need to be given statistics. Further, you will need to make a number of decisions to fill in the details of each area to make this barebones scenario complete.

The layout:

Each area is described in a flowchart-style fashion with general ideas provided.

Descriptive text that can be used to set the scene is displayed in a box.

GM: GM decision points are prefaced by a bold GM heading.

Zombie Draw decisions impact the time before the appearance of zombies and are italicized.

The setup:

The characters are survivors of a zombie apocalypse. The reasons for this outbreak are up to you the GM. Food and medical supplies are running low in the character’s compound. Whether by use of the local phone book or by scouting party (either decide or have the players decide, it matters little) the characters learn of a grocery store with a pharmacy not far from their current location.

Play begins when the characters round the corner at mid-day and the grocery store comes into view.

Some things to consider:

As this is a zombie setting, time should be of the essence in all things. Minutes squandered by the players should affect the situation for their characters. Inform the players that, while no zombies may be present in the scene currently, the clock is always ticking and they could appear at any moment. This should be considered a snatch and grab operation. Survival depends on speed and secrecy; making yourself or your position known to the zombies is a bad idea. Easy ways of doing this includes making loud noises (car horns, breaking glass, and gunshots are good examples) and fires or lights at night.

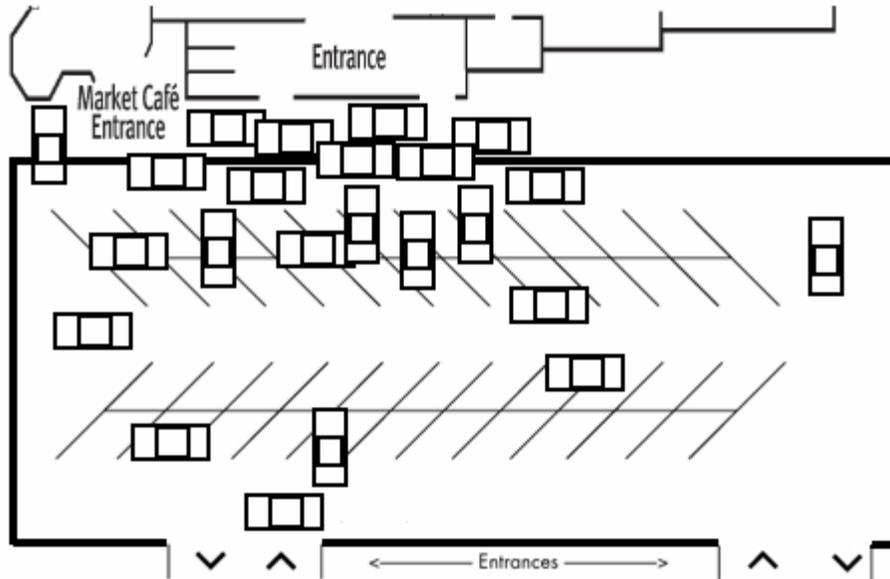
GM: If at any time something in this scenario doesn’t fit with your game, change it. If you think something is missing and should be added, do so. If something doesn’t belong and you think it should be removed, then by all means remove it. This is your game.

GM: Before play begins, you need to determine the overall genre of the setting and how difficult the zombies are to defeat. For example, can zombies only be “killed” by damage to the brain and brainstem or will sufficient damage to the body render a zombie defeated?

GM: You should decide how long the characters have before their actions bring zombies to the scene. This timeframe will likely be adjusted *by zombie draw decisions* made by the players but you should have a general idea before beginning play.

A good rule of thumb will depend on a number of factors; here are some things to consider:

- The nature of the group - are they well armed and capable of defeating zombies?
- The style of play - are you running a horror game or a pulpier one?
- How prevalent are zombies in the setting?
- Any other factor that could influence the population density and quickness of draw to the zombie populace.



The Parking Lot

You've driven to the parking lot of a grocery store to procure food and possibly medicine for your survival camp. As the outbreak became an epidemic, people tried to riot and steal as much as they could. General unrest broke out followed by martial law. As a result of this chaos, cars line the area of the lot nearest the store. You will have to make your way on foot.

If the players decide to drive around:

- They will not see any zombie activity in the store or parking lot.
- They will notice a parking garage across the street. The entrance is blocked off with cars and it is dark inside. Anyone wishing to go to the top will need to do so on foot.
- They will not see any easier entry into the store than the front doors.
- They will notice that some of the windows are broken out and the main doors are partially propped open by some means that is hidden from view.

If the players decide to leave someone to watch the car make note of who that person is.

If the players decide to leave the car running, ask them how much gas is in the tank.

If the players decide to head to the top of the parking garage, amend the next scene by having them meet at least some of the zombies part way. If they continue, have them also find the police cruiser described in the next scene. If they make it to the top, have them find the mother and child.

Any gunshots, breaking glass, or car alarms are zombie draws. Leaving the car running is a Zombie Draw.

GM: Navigating the field of cars is relatively easy so long as a character isn't being chased by zombies. Decide if some sort of skill roll is required. Decide how damaging a sprained ankle is to survival.

GM: Decide the likelihood of setting off a car alarm by crawling across it. *Car alarms are zombie draws.*

GM: If the players decide to ransack some cars for items, determine what is inside. Also, determine how long that activity might take and finally, determine the possibility of setting off a car alarm – *which is a zombie draw.*

The parking lot is empty of threats. The door to the grocery store is held open by an overturned mangled shopping cart.

Once the characters that are heading into the grocery store get at least half way across the cars in the parking lot, describe the next scene.



The Parking Garage

Catty-corner to the grocery store parking lot sits a five level parking garage with cars blocking the entrance. The chaos of the epidemic obviously took its toll here as many vehicles nearby appear to have been burned. Many areas on all levels of the garage are hidden in darkness from the noon-day sun. Who knows what horrors wait in the shadows. From the top level a shout rings out, "Help! Hey! Help! Please help us!" A woman holding a small child is waving frantically and screaming to get your attention. From three levels down you see sluggish, shambling movement. It is obvious that her shouting has alerted zombies to her presence.

GM: Stat out the woman and her child.

GM: Decide how many zombies are in the parking structure and stat them out.

GM: Decide how many of these zombies have been alerted to her presence.

GM: Decide if and then how many zombies have been alerted to the character's presence.

GM: Stat out the gear in the police cruiser.

GM: Determine how much of an anchor (if any) the woman and child will be.

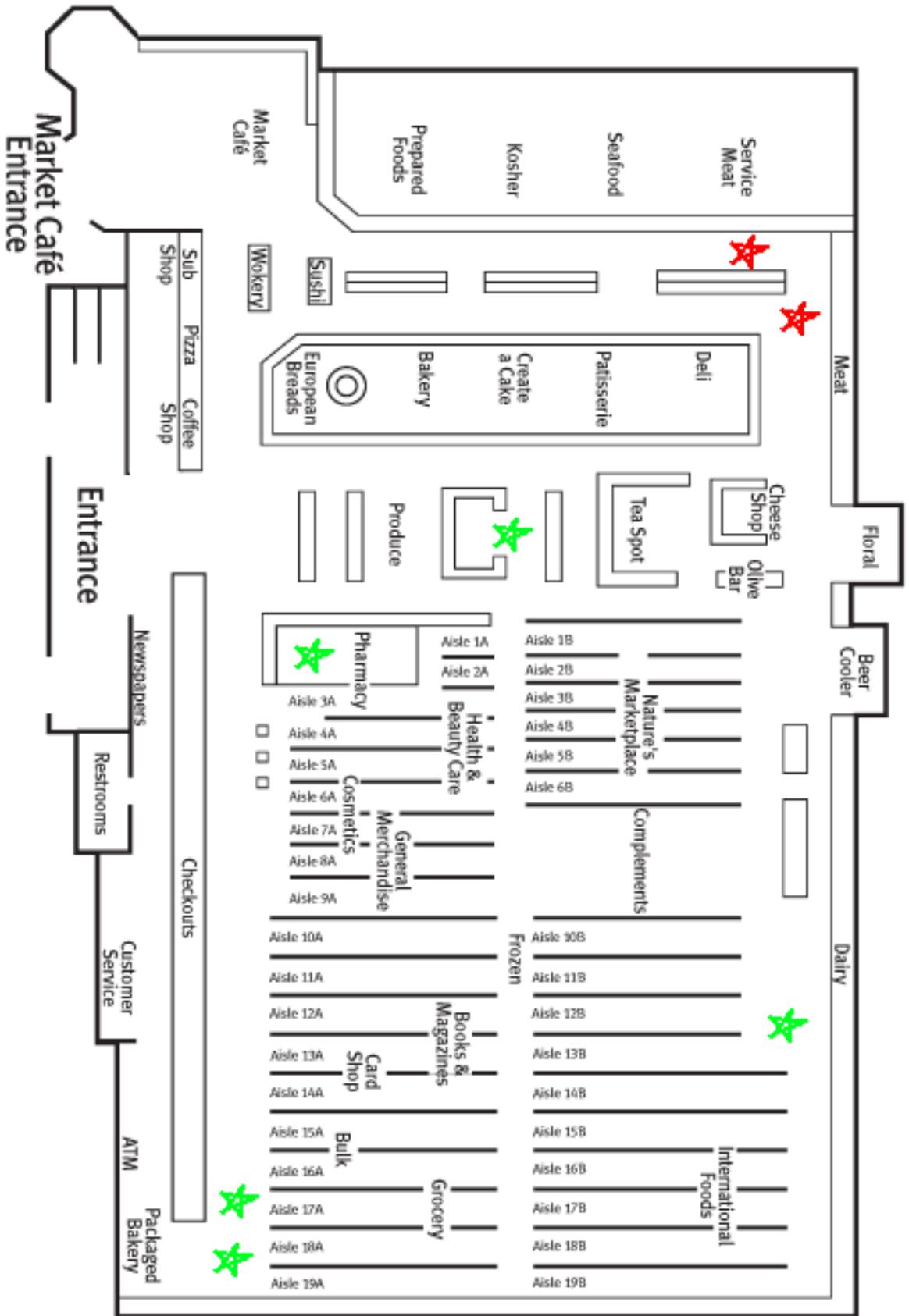
If the players decide to leave her she will continue to shout, then scream as the zombies overtake her and her child. *The woman's shouting is a zombie draw.*

If the players decide to assist her:

- They will need to enter the parking lot and make their way to the top.
- They will find a police cruiser along the way with the mangled body of a police officer hanging out the driver's side door. He has a loaded sidearm (semi-automatic pistol) in his holster, a smaller revolver pistol in an ankle holster as well as a flashlight and a nightstick. In the car, between the seats, is a loaded riot shotgun. In the trunk and glove compartment is ammunition and extra batteries.

GM: If the players decide to ransack some cars for items, determine what is inside. Also determine how long that activity might take and finally, determine the possibility of setting off a car alarm – *which is a zombie draw.*

Once this scene is complete, continue to the grocery store.



The Store

The interior of the store is like all grocery stores; except for the fact that the place appears deserted and the smell of rotting food fills the air. Somewhere in the far left corner of the store, near what appears to be the meat section, comes the sounds of something eating.

The store is purposefully left very vague. This allows you, the GM, to flesh it out as you see fit. Some things to consider:

- How bad was the looting in the store?
- How long has the store been left to the elements, the heat and insects?
- Is the power still on? Perhaps by a generator in the basement?
- Is there a basement? Where are the doors to the loading areas? (These areas were left out of the discussion but could be added.)

GM: Note that not all stores stock specific items in the same grouping. What might seem logical to one person isn't always logical to another. Keep this in mind when determining time spent acquiring items.

GM: Decide how many zombies are in the store, stat them and place them. Good locations are identified by the green stars spread throughout the right-hand side of the store..

GM: Decide how many zombie dogs are in the store, stat them and place them. Good locations are identified by the two red stars next to the meat area. IF you would prefer to have zombie-ism only affect humans, then make these creatures zombies instead.

GM: Decide what medicines are still present in the pharmacy and how long it will take to find them. Specifically, determine if the more potent items such as narcotics are still present and what security still prevents their access.

GM: Decide how much edible food or potable water is still available and how long it will take to gather it.

Players should be encouraged to identify items they would like to try to gather. Do not immediately inform the players if an item is present or not. Instead, let them spend as much time in the store as they are willing to search for items that may or may not be present. What items they recover will depend on both their availability and the time willing to locate them.

Some factors to consider when determining the possible presence of items:

- How swiftly the zombie apocalypse occurred. The faster the situation, the more likely items will be present.
- How long it has been since the apocalyptic event occurred. The longer the timeframe, the more likely things spoiled, ransacked by other survivors, or were destroyed by wandering zombies.
- How likely other survivors were. The more survivors, the more likely a grocery store with a pharmacy would be ransacked.

GM: During play, decide if any items not previously considered, but desired by the players are present and how long it will take to locate and gather them.

Gunshots are zombie draws Breaking glass is a zombie draw.

Though not necessarily a direct zombie draw, if the characters stay too long, zombies will begin to wander into the parking lot.

The Parking Lot – Take 2

Their item gathering activities complete, the characters will need to make their way into the parking lot to return to their compound with the goods.

GM: If the players decided to leave the engine running, did it have enough fuel for the time spent inside the store and the trip back to the character's base? Did it *draw any zombies*?

GM: Navigating the field of cars is relatively easy so long as a character isn't being chased by zombies. Decide if some sort of skill roll is required. Decide how damaging a sprained ankle is to survival.

GM: Decide the likelihood of setting off a car alarm by crawling across it. *Car alarms are zombie draws.*

GM: It's a good idea to have at least one or two zombies enter the scene at this point. Some possible setups for this scene:

- If the characters all went inside, have a zombie or two at their car. More should be across the street and slowly heading to the vehicle.
- If one or more characters stayed behind, then have a few zombies round the corners and come into view as soon as the rest of the characters exit the grocery store.
- If the players had an easy time with the obstacles, toss a pack of zombie dogs at them as they head to the car.
- If the players had a hard time with the obstacles, perhaps, in perfect trope form, have them get the car loaded and speed away at the last possible moment.

If no zombies are immediately present, players may decide that now is the time to ransack the cars.

GM: If the players decide to ransack some cars for items, determine what is inside. Also, determine how long that activity might take and finally, determine the possibility of setting off a car alarm – *which is a zombie draw.*

GM: Determine how many zombies are present, stat them and determine their starting locations.

Remember that car alarms, running vehicle motors as well as gunshots are zombie draws.

Things to keep in mind:

- Remember that a loaded character will move slower and with less agility which may be especially important as the field of cars is traversed.
- Loading the car may take some time, especially if two new passengers are part of the group now. Of course that's if characters didn't die in the process of obtaining stuff.

If the players survive with all their objectives met and even manage to save the woman and her child, they should be commended for surviving so well.