

# Into Darkness

An Apocalypse World Setting by Jwok

# What Happened

*It was about 50 years ago. At least, I think. I'm sure some fucker out there is keeping a record, but that fucker sure isn't me.*

*Anyways, about 50 years ago, the dark patches started popping up. People called it things, like "meteorological anomalies" or "solar apertures" or some shit. Later, they started calling it "judgment" or the "end of days", but that was later. First there were only a couple, then more. They started growing. Then people realized that the darkness could hurt them. That's when people started freaking out.*

*It's something in the darkness. Or some things. Or fuck, maybe just the darkness itself. Whatever. It fucks with you, messes with your head, takes you away and does horrible things to you. Sometimes you just die (lucky fuck). Sometimes it makes you do thing, hurt those you love or take away the things that make you human. Sometimes you get strung up, organs hanging out your ears and still beating heart pumping blood to your screaming eyes and tongue-less mouth.*

*People fell into chaos. The military was sent in, but they weren't ready. How could they be? Even if they were, it probably wouldn't have really mattered. The darkness kept spreading, gobbling up more and more of the world. Soon the days started to get shorter and the sun started to fade. People panicked – fucking and stabbing and killing each other just to get their hands on a flashlight or a lantern. They didn't even think about food – yet. It wasn't long before telephones and the Internet stopped working, and then people realized just how fucked we were.*

*So now we live by candlelight, afraid to venture beyond the dying campfires and the draining flashlight batteries that keep the darkness (and what's in it) at bay. But that's the fucked up part – the darkness isn't the most dangerous thing.*

*No, the real danger lies with your fellows; that weird skinny fuck who keeps biting his nails till they bleed; that creep ass priest who keeps offering confession for sexual favors; that gang down the road that makes you pay taxes for your charcoal and batteries; that big, angry looking dude who keeps staring at you whenever you clean out your rifle – these are the fuckers you need to worry about.*

*But I mean, we're alive at least. That's something right? Hope for a better future and all that shit. Wait, hold on a sec – this guys trying to lift my canned peaches – I gotta go beat this fucker's ass real quick...*

## Notes and Clarifications

- A Supernatural Darkness blankets the land.
- "Dawn" is brief time in which sun shines through thick grey clouds
- Night is the predominant time frame. The dark, or something in it, is trying to destroy you.

# Setting up for Play

To make this game go really well, you should do the following:

1. Buy and read Vincent Baker's [Apocalypse World](#)
2. Follow its instructions and play an awesome game

If you'd like a *little* more instruction for *this setting in particular*, try thinking about the following:

1. The darkness is scary in part because it is so uncontainable. Try to avoid making its actions or manifestations reliable or sensible.
2. Do however, make its actions horrible and (sorry) dark. Go after what the player characters love, and see what happens next.
3. Make sure to communicate the presence of the darkness as a *presence*. It is, even in its absence of substance, a pressing, *suffocating* force.
4. If people start going over to the darkness willingly, play with that. If they indulge the whisperings of the darkness, let them really rip a hole in the pretty picture everyone else is trying to make. If they start trying to poke their nose into the darkness, trying to figure it out, let them know, nice and hard, that the darkness is *not something that wants to be known*.
5. Use the ***Peripheral Darkness Rules*** on the next page as supplements to the game, not as the game's driving force. For more details on this, see instruction 1 at the top of this page.

# PERIPHERAL DARKNESS RULES

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## **LIGHT SOURCES**

- *Sprinting through the dark without a light source for a short distance:* light-3
- *A lit match, candle, or lighter:* light-2
- *A weak flashlight, or makeshift torch:* light-1
- *Some Christmas lights, a handful of light sticks, or a few small light bulbs:* light+0
- *Gas or kerosene lantern, strong flashlight, or well-made torch:* Light+1
- *Electric Lantern, flare, or heavy-duty flashlight:* Light+2
- *A large, bonfire-sized flame:* Light+3

Note: For any light source, take -1 to your roll for every 2 people you are trying to shelter in your light

## **DARKNESS MOVES:**

The following are moves regarding the darkness and it's effect on the human soul.

### ***Entering the Darkness***

Whenever you have to **enter the darkness**, roll+light source. On a 10+, you made it to your destination safely. On a 7-9, the darkness creeps in. The MC chooses 1

- *The experience leaves you shaken; -1 ongoing until the next dawn*
- *The darkness reshapes your path; you arrive later than you wanted to*
- *The path becomes rugged and dangerous; take 1 harm (ap)*
- *Whispers get in your head: the darkness takes 1 hold against you*

On a miss, all four, or something else terrible.

### ***Take Hold of Your Soul***

When the darkness has hold on you and wants to influence your actions, it can spend a hold and try to **take hold of your soul**. Roll+cool.

- On a 10+, you're fine, for now. The darkness loses its spend hold.
- On a 7-9, I tell you what to do. If you do it, mark experience. If you don't, you're acting under fire from brain weirdness.
- On a miss, you come to some time later; having done whatever the darkness wanted you to do.

## **CUSTOM CHARACTER MOVES:**

Any of these moves can be taken, in place of another advancement if need be.

***Weird, twisted mind:*** When the darkness tries to take hold of your soul, roll+weird instead of roll+cool to resist it.

***Get out of my FUCKING HEAD:*** When the darkness tries to take hold of your soul, roll+hard instead of roll+cool to resist it.

***The Pleasures of Sin:*** If you ever act *with* the darkness instead of against it, roll +hot. On a 10+, choose 2. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- *You get away clean – nobody knows it was you who did that horrible thing.*
- *You relish the experience utterly. Mark experience.*
- *The act leaves you feeling refreshed. Gain +1 ongoing until the next dawn.*

## **OTHER NOTES:**

The move "***Open your brain to the psychic maelstrom***" is now "***Stare into the Void,***" with all effects otherwise identical.

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# A Few thoughts

After playing a game using this setting mod, I realized a few things that should be clear at the start of play. First, this kind of game doesn't really work for drivers. This world is inherently claustrophobic, and it's just not a good fit for someone who thrives on freedom and escape. Second, as mentioned, this is a game in-part about claustrophobia. It's about sitting around the campfire, watching the fires slowly burn out, and hoping that you'll make it through the night. Make sure these expectations are clear when you start the game, as it is a distinct and not overly-optimistic mood for a game.

**Someone on the Apocalypse-World forums asked me  
"So what kind of threat is the darkness?"**

My answer was this:

*"I kind of left this one up in the air. I really liked the idea of the psychic maelstrom being a hostile entity or force, so this is me playing with that idea. I guess for me, the darkness is the threat of madness (the darkness taking hold of you), the power of isolation (being unable to travel safely), and (if you'll pardon me) our inborn fear of the dark.*

*Its also kind of like the threat in the Nightmare on Elm st movies - the overwhelming power of inevitability. Everybody has to sleep eventually, and much in the same vein, you can't keep out the darkness forever. Eventually, the firewood burns up, the batteries run out, and you're left alone in the dark."*

**I also didn't come up with this idea without inspiration.  
Other works that inspired me include:**

- The film "[Pitch Black](#)"
- The flash game "[Snow Drift](#)"
- The video game "[The Darkness](#)"
- The film "[Darkness Falls](#)"
- And the video game "[The Suffering](#)"

**What about Spotlights?**

If you're lucky enough to have this kind of help getting through the darkness, the person running rolls to *enter the darkness* at light+3, while the spotlight operator rolls+Hx to assist. Hope you don't run out of power...

**"I have thoughts/questions/comments for you"**

I'm on the Barf forth Apocalyptica forums. Message me there and I'd love to talk!