

WHEN THE FOX CAME BACK



Photo taken by Annie Spratt
<https://unsplash.com/@anniespratt>

Time and History

This story takes place on earth, roughly 150 years from now in a post-apocalyptic future. The apocalypse, in this case, wasn't a single event, nor was it confined to a specific span of time. Rather it's a catch-all term for a concurrence of anthropogenic and natural disasters such as war, large earthquakes/tsunamis, disease, and climate change, that ended society as we know it. A large percentage of the earth's population died, and nature is still recovering. It's generally agreed upon that the apocalypse started around 50 years before the start of this story, and lasted for about ten years. I feel like this description might be super confusing, so just to make sure everyone is on the same page, here is a timeline I drew in paint:



Basically, only characters over the age of ± 50 will have memories of the time period they call "the apocalypse", and only characters over the age of ± 60 will have memories of the time before that. Since the apocalypse wasn't a single event, there are many different views and experiences of it. People might feel like it started earlier or lasted longer than the general

consensus would indicate, some might feel it is still going on, others might object to the use of the term altogether.

Since society as a whole collapsed as a result of all this, there is no institutionalized news or education. This means that characters do not know about everything that happened during the apocalypse, nor are they aware of all of its consequences. Their understanding of what happened is probably mostly based on their own experience and/or what the people who raised them might have told them. It also means characters won't know much about the state of the world outside of their own personal experiences and stories they've heard from others.



Photo taken by Wai Siew
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Geographical Setting

The characters live on an old farm in West or Central Europe. The specific country isn't important; the borders as we know them today don't exist anymore anyway. The characters all speak English, though many of them might have a different mother tongue.

The area around the farm is hilly, although there's nothing quite so high around you'd call it a mountain. The area was agricultural even before the apocalypse, and the few houses that are around are abandoned and mostly overgrown. There is an abandoned village roughly 20 kilometres away from the farm, but most of it burned down in a natural fire years ago. The land around the farm has mostly been overgrown with forest. Many of the paved roads are still usable, although obviously harder to traverse than before. Although there are some small rivers and small lakes nearby, the sea is far away.



Photo taken by Abigail Lynn
<https://unsplash.com/@shmabbss>

The Farm

The farm consists of a group of mostly old farm buildings and a few newer additions. There is a central courtyard of sorts, an open space surrounded on four sides by the living quarters and some of the workshops. There is also a large, shared dining/living room in one of the buildings there. There are between thirty and forty people living at the farm. There isn't enough space for everyone to have a separate bedroom, and most people sleep in a room with three to four people. A few might even sleep in their working space, if it's warm and dry enough. The farm community functions without money or barter; skills and resources are freely shared between residents.

Everyone gets up around five, give or take a few minutes. The first two hours are spent working, and at seven breakfast is served. Those who don't need to start working that early usually still help with feeding the animals or cleaning up. After a few hours of work, lunch is served at the common dining room. Dinner is around five, and it doubles as a meeting about any problems that might have come up during the day, and a moment for everyone to check in with each other. This is generally the routine, but as long as they do their part, everyone is totally free to sleep in, take a day off, and take free time during the day.

Farther from the main cluster of buildings are the barns and a greenhouse. There are sheep, goats, cows and chickens at the farm, probably at least one dog and cat as well. What crops are grown depends on what's in season, and some of the fields are simply used for growing grass to produce hay for the animals. The grounds are approximately 1.5 square kilometers, which is around 400 acres. I know that's a little abstract, so to make it more concrete, it

would take you about 15-20 minutes to walk from edge to edge. A little less than thirty years ago, one of the residents made an effort to build a wall surrounding the farm's land. Although it was completed, it's been neglected and over time parts of the wall have caved in.



Photo taken by Brianna Santellan
https://unsplash.com/@brianna_santellan

Craft and Technology

Since this story takes place 150 years in the future, technology has obviously made some big leaps. However, a lot of this progress was lost because of the apocalypse. Certain futuristic and current technologies might have been salvaged, if they were useful or if enough of them survived. Other things are probably lost to time, or at least aren't being used at the farm. For example, the people at the farm might use repurposed drones to water large fields or to quickly deliver things to people working at the edge of their land, but they probably wouldn't have much use for VR technology.

I've decided to leave what futuristic technologies might have survived the test of time a bit open. In either case, cool futuristic tech is not the focus of this story. You're welcome to invent things that might exist, although I would ask you to be frugal when doing so, as not to break the suspension of disbelief. If you're unsure whether something would be okay, please let me know.

After the apocalypse, a lot of stuff that was until then mass produced suddenly became much more scarce. This led to a great resurgence of many formerly antiquated crafts. Most people will be at least somewhat familiar with one or two crafts. They might have taught themselves, might have learned from a parent or guardian, or might have learned from

someone else at the farm. If the character is over ± 65 , they might have already practiced their craft before the apocalypse. Aside from their main job at the farm, your character might have other skills or interests. I don't think this is the ideal setting for someone to develop into a true homo universalis, but humans being humans it's very likely they're not solely interested in one specific field.



Photo taken by Clément Falize
<https://unsplash.com/@centelm>

Vibe

Although this is technically a post-apocalyptic story, it's not a dystopian one. It's not a story about the world as it shatters into pieces, but a story about picking those pieces back up and seeing how to fit them back together. For an idea of the vibe I'm going for, you can browse the pictures that come up when you google "cottagecore" or "solarpunk". Or if you get a chance to watch it, check out the documentary "The Biggest Little Farm". It's a big inspiration for this story, and a really nice film in its own right!

If you've read this document, please say so in the comments section of your character application! :)

Non-Player Characters

This list includes any named character, even if they were just mentioned once in an offhand comment. Feel free to elaborate on any of them! If you want to write about Bertrand, get in touch with me: he's the only character who I've got more specific ideas about.

	Annabelle	Ophelia's youngest sister.
	Artemis	Bex' mentee. Big ambitions, bit of an ego, but talented. Greek roots, but he only speaks a little Greek.
	Berk	Berk looks after the children during the day. He's got great standing with pretty much every parent or guardian at the farm. He can be a bit pedantic.
	Bertrand	One of the oldest people at the farm. He was there when it was founded. He lives in the attic of the main building and badly hurt his leg a few weeks before the start of the story. He's French.
	Bex	Bex is the farm's drone expert. Although generally friendly, they mostly keep to themselves and tend to be quiet. They're friends with some of the older people at the farm.

	Billy	Harold's mentor. Left the farm a while back.
	Carol	Carol is the farm's cook, and a natural leader. She's always busy and rarely takes time off. She has no patience for slackers, although it takes a lot to make her mad.
	Charles	Ophelia's oldest brother. He does woodwork.
	Damian	Ophelia's brother. Seems to have a crush on Miriam.
	James	Friends with Terrie and Harold.
	Joanie	Ruben and Martha's daughter.

	Jonah	One of the young helpers in the kitchen. Not sure what job he wants to do at the farm when he grows up. He's learning French from Bertrand.
	Martha	Carol's second hand in the kitchen. She knows a bit of first aid. Married to Ruben. Joanie's mom.
	Miriam	Takes care of the chickens and helps with the other animals. Kind and normally quiet girl.
	Murphy	Tomcat who lives in the greenhouse. Not very cuddly.
	Otto	Otto is one of the more experienced crop farmers, and he's in charge of almost anything to do with the crops. He's well liked, but can be kind of a hard-ass. He was good friends with Billy. Originally, he's from Germany, and his accent is clear when he speaks English.
	Rebecca	A young girl who's been learning to sew from Ophelia.

	Ruben	Soft-spoken man who works with the livestock on the farm. Has some medical knowledge, and is usually the one to take care of both animals and people who feel unwell. Married to Martha. Joanie's dad.
	Terrie	Works on the land with the crops. Friends with James and Harold.
	Tom	Does odd jobs around the farm and helps out wherever needed. His parents were from the Netherlands, and he speaks a little Dutch. He's a helpful guy, though he can come across a bit brash. Has a crude sense of humor.