

SHADOWS ON THE PLAYGROUND

A tale of terrible tots and cannibal kids. Inspired by the movie *Cooties*.

PREMISE AND WORLD-BUILDING

A fungal zombie spore has leaked from Greystone, a blacksite research facility based in a remote part of Nova Scotia, Canada. The spores infect pre-pubescent children by air, but only infect adults by fluid contact (bites or needles, mostly). The spore has run rampant among the heroin-using bum city near the school. Infamous bum Joe-Ya-Know was Durwood's patient zero, and has undergone mutation into a monstrous fungal entity, exhibiting some control over the others that are infected. Due to the method of infection, zombie kids vastly outnumber zombie adults.

The zombies have rudimentary problem solving skills and some memories and remnants of their personalities. Kids have been calling in sick en masse, a couple teachers have too, and the majority of the remaining kids seem weird and out of it, but not quite alarmingly so.

If kids are zombies long enough (if they are visibly decomposing or fungifying: whites of their eyes turn gray, fingernails are cloudy and thick, growing crusty fungus on their skin), they'll eventually puke out a gray thing (looks like a liver with toothy tentacles) that looks alive. The zombie organ will slither at and attack *uninfected* adults: it is another way of spreading the spores.

School secretary/nurse and two other teachers (art/music and social studies) are killed ("missing") at the start of the game. The Principal has locked himself in his office, and is calling for help over the PA.

Kid patient zero(s) are anti-vaxxer/mommy blogger spawn Tracer and Bennifer Hemsly. Were in school looking *gross* yesterday, not there on game day. Most kids have been weird and quiet since Wednesday.

INTRO FOR PLAYERS

You're a teacher at Durwood Public Elementary, and it's been an odd week. The flu must be going around: more students call in sick every day, and a couple teachers have called off as well. The kids that are still coming to class are quiet and a little out of it. You figure they're just coming down with the flu, but you can't shake this sinking feeling that maybe it's something else. Something worse.

At the end of AM recess, just as you're about to leave the teachers lounge and walk your children back to class, you hear the Principal's voice over the P.A. Not his usual commanding tones, but hushed and urgent. A harsh whisper rather than an announcement. "Any available Durwood Elementary staff, please come to my office right now."

DURWOOD PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

School is on the edge of town. Parking lot is across the street. Back of school and back of the parking lot is dense forest (plus a river in the woods behind the school). Durwood, Maine is a rust belt style city, the area around the school is mostly abandoned since the steel mills shut down in the early 90s, and there are (accurate) rumors of a bum city in the woods around the school.

Elementary school used to be the high school, has an indoor pool building attached.

Basement: server room, fuses, boiler room, storage, **(locked) access to abandoned service tunnels**

Main floor: classrooms, office, cafeteria, gym

Second floor: couple more classrooms, library (w/media center), science lab, computer lab

Connected by two big flights of stairs, service elevator in back corner of building.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Science Teacher** PhD, was a successful scientist, lost that position due to a scandal, has a bad/secret habit
- **English Teacher** Recently divorced, secretly in love with gym teacher. GERMOPHOB
- **Math/Computers Teacher** YOUNG, wannabe army, carries gun, was banging the art/music teacher

QUESTIONS

Science Teacher

1. Before you resorted to teaching at a public elementary school in the middle of nowhere, you were an incredibly successful scientist, what destroyed your career?
2. What movie can quote all the best lines from?
3. Why do you prefer to be alone?
4. How did you stay sane when your career was falling apart?
5. What do you believe in that made you an outsider as a scientist and still does as a teacher?
6. What sport or other physical activity do you participate in on the weekends to blow off steam?
7. What disease have you been frightened of since childhood? Why?
8. Why do you always hide your left hand?
9. What really pisses you off about the Math/Computers teacher?
10. What bad habit do you indulge in throughout the day to cope? How do you keep it secret?
11. Which personal principle did you have to compromise during your career as a scientist?
12. You heard a lot of slamming, yelling and screaming next door in Floyd Johnson's social studies class this morning. Why didn't you do anything about it?
13. What is your name?

English Teacher

1. You like teaching, but you just sort of fell into it. What was your life like before teaching?
2. You've never had trouble getting dates. What physical feature do you attribute that to?
3. How did you get a reputation for being a germophobe?
4. How do you deal with the office politics that come with working in a school?
5. How are you making a little money on the side?
6. Your divorce was finalized nine months ago. Why did you leave your spouse and Hawaii for Durwood, Maine?
7. As rewarding as it can be working with kids, some days or even weeks are tough. What do you do to stay positive and focused?
8. In your spare time, you've started researching other careers. What's next for you after teaching?
9. What item do you always carry with you? Why?
10. Why do you keep your romantic feelings for Mr. Chambers a secret?
11. How did you rediscover your spirituality?
12. It's not unusual for kids this age to have accidents and messes; what's the most disgusting thing you've had to deal with while teaching? How did you handle it?

13. What is your name?

Math/Computers Teacher

1. Teaching math and computers is important work, but what passion did you have to abandon to pursue a career in education?
2. Why don't you trust the Science Teacher?
3. You love expanding young minds, but you also find children kind of disgusting. What is it about kids that revolts you?
4. Why do you make a point to dress professionally every day?
5. Why are math and computers so important?
6. What condition or injury kept you from joining the armed forces?
7. After months of mutual pining, you've been hooking up with Ms. Fletcher, the music/art teacher. Why are you keeping it a secret?
8. What did you do in college that your parents never forgave you for?
9. What's the hardest part of being the youngest teacher in the school?
10. When the going gets tough, what do you focus on to stay motivated?
11. What talent or skill do you have that no one expects?
12. Why do you keep a gun and six bullets locked in your desk drawer?
13. What is your name?

GAME START

Players are in the teachers lounge during AM recess. They have already escorted their quiet, dwindled classes, so here they can discuss their weird week/morning with each other. **Gym teacher Chambers** is there with his high black socks on. The bell rings for the kids to line up, but shortly after they hear **Principal Boehner** on the P.A.: "Any available Durwood Elementary staff, please come to my office right now." But instead of his usual commanding tones, it is a frightened whisper. Gym teacher Chambers will volunteer to pick up recess kids if players go to principal, and vice versa.

ROUGH POTENTIAL TIMELINE

- Recess/game start/spores/zombies "activate"/Players get a handle on what's happening
- Roaming horde in school/kids take control of playground and access to parking lot
- Mr. Chambers suggests action (save others/get to access tunnel)
- Saving the others
 - Lunchlady in cafeteria (grease fire+small horde)
 - Janitor on riding lawn mower (bite red herring!)
 - Librarian in library (she doesn't want to come, racist)
 - Principal in office (locked in, freaking out)
 - Uninfected kids in elevator (constantly moving, stopping, etc.)
 - Uninfected kids in utility closet
 - Crossing guard???
- Cop comes, gets eaten
- HORDE CHASE THRU SCHOOL
- Players encounter a puker/zombie liver—one of their rescues if possible.
- Hear about "riots" in town
- Buses never come
- Power goes out—Mr. Chambers turns
- Find the tunnel, kids chasing them

- Something weird (**Joe-Ya-Know** fungus-monster) in tunnel
- Confront the big kids in the parking lot
- Something (**Joe-Ya-Know**, other bum-fungus-zombies) comes out of the woods
- Escape from Durwood

NON PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Lucy (Mrs.) Jimenez--Lunch lady** barely speaks English, fluent Spanish. Heavysset but can move. Brings a butcher knife.
- **Clarence (Mr.) Lincoln--Janitor** old, half blind, half deaf, knows the building better than anyone, technical skills. Has keys to service tunnel, knows how to navigate it. Also has a lighter, flashlight and multi-tool.
- **Janice (Mrs.) Tomlinson--Librarian** useless old woman, frail, whiny, racist. Blames Lincoln and Jimenez for outbreak, accuses them of being bit. She might bring a yard stick.
- **Chaz (Mr.) Boehner--Principal** pretends to be a tough guy, total puss. Is freaking out, blames the outbreak on anti-vaxxers. Has a pocket knife. Basically Bill Paxton in *Aliens*.
- **Ted (Mr.) Chambers--Gym teacher** Sweet, soft-spoken, good at first aid, AND HAS BEEN BITTEN. Hides it with high, dark socks. Heavysset, but athletic. He doesn't have it on him, but he can do a lot of good with a first aid kit. One in the secretary's office, one in the gym.

DEAD NPCS

- **Tessa Roberts—School secretary/nurse** middle aged woman, mother of one of the students, gored by "sick" kids sent to the principals' office.
- **Floyd Johnson—Social studies teacher** killed during his class.
- **Denise Fletcher—Music/art teacher** Got *destroyed* at recess trying to stop "fights", was boning the math/computers teacher.
- **Travis or Mitchell Hicks—Crossing guard** Lovable loser stoner twins, early 20s. Used their identical appearance to split their shifts. Sell weed, play poker with Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Chambers the first and last Saturday night of the month.

ULTIMATE GOAL FOR PLAYERS

The situation is fucked beyond repair, the players need to get to a car and GTFO. Mr. Chambers (or someone) will tell them that the Janitor has told him about abandoned service tunnels that lead under the road and come out next to the parking lot. Need Janitor (or his keys) to access, Janitor also knows his way around these tunnels. Alternatively, they can wait for busses to arrive, but that is a dead end.

EVENTS, ENCOUNTERS, AND PROBLEMS

Playground, more like SLAYGROUND

The playground is between the school and the parking lot. Groups of kids corner single kids, then dogpile on them, and eventually start disemboweling them. Other zombie kids with bloodied faces just stare off at nothing, twitching. The art/music teacher tries to break up "fights" early on but is mauled horribly. A large number of kids will stay here, making travel to the parking lot impossible without serious injury or death.

Pulls: to maintain composure, get free of kids, try to free kids, avoid getting bit or scratched.

Rescuing the other staff

All other staff are in different parts of the building, and for whatever reasons do not answer Mr. Boehner's message.

- Mr. Boehner: locked in office, **freaking out. One or two kid zombies outside his door.**
- Lunch Lady: trapped in cafeteria—it is on (grease) fire. **Fire alarm goes off+sprinklers. She is fighting off kid zombies.**
- **Janitor: riding on lawn mower, sort of safe... until gas runs out. Fake bite!**
- Librarian: holed up in library, pretty safe on second floor **doesn't want to come with.**

Bum city

The bum city in the woods around the school is very real and very full of adult zombies. **Joe-Ya-Know** is the "brain" zombie: in the most advanced state of metamorphosis. Lots of used, tainted needles strewn around the ground, plus broken glass.

The Horde

Whenever we need to get people moving, a horde of first graders can come screaming around a corner.

Mr. Chambers

Mr. Chambers *will* turn at the worst possible moment (**POWER OUTAGE BAYBEE**). If he is questioned about his bite, he will insist that he's fine, and that it only seems to affect children. He's *kind of* right.

Phones/internet/etc.

Landlines will work the first time, but will not work later. Cell phones get no signal in the building, get *weak* signal in playground and on roof, decent signal in parking lot. Landlines will go out, which will inspire them to go to the server room and/or get help from the janitor Mr. Lincoln. On second attempt/later in game, they will find out that emergency vehicles are tied up downtown due to "mass riots."

Calling for help

As discussed, phones will work the first time. A single squad car will show up, and the cop will be quickly and gruesomely overwhelmed.

Rescuing uninfected kids

Mr. Chambers will suggest they look for uninfected children if none of the players do. There are some kids squeezed into the utility closet on the first floor, a bunch of untouched nerds in the library w/ librarian, and a group of kids riding the service elevator up and down, dodging zombies.

The parking lot

The big shitty fifth grader zombies will be hiding there, slashing tires and busting out windshields. Think "Stay out of the tall grass!" from Jurassic Park 2.

In the woods

Straight up balls to the wall nightmare: kids running around giggling in the dark/distance, kids in trees will drop onto our players, plus players have to deal with the river, uneven ground, brambles, and maybe even snakes or spiders.

Pool problems

If the players go to ride it out in the pool area, they will discover that the zombies don't quite swim. Instead they lurk around the bottom of the pool (couple kids already there). After a while though, the gray fungal ooze will start seeping into the pool.

Advanced students

In the afternoon, kids will start "advancing" their eyes and fingernails will be gray and cloudy, and the worst looking ones will puke up the "zombie liver." Possibly one of their rescues.