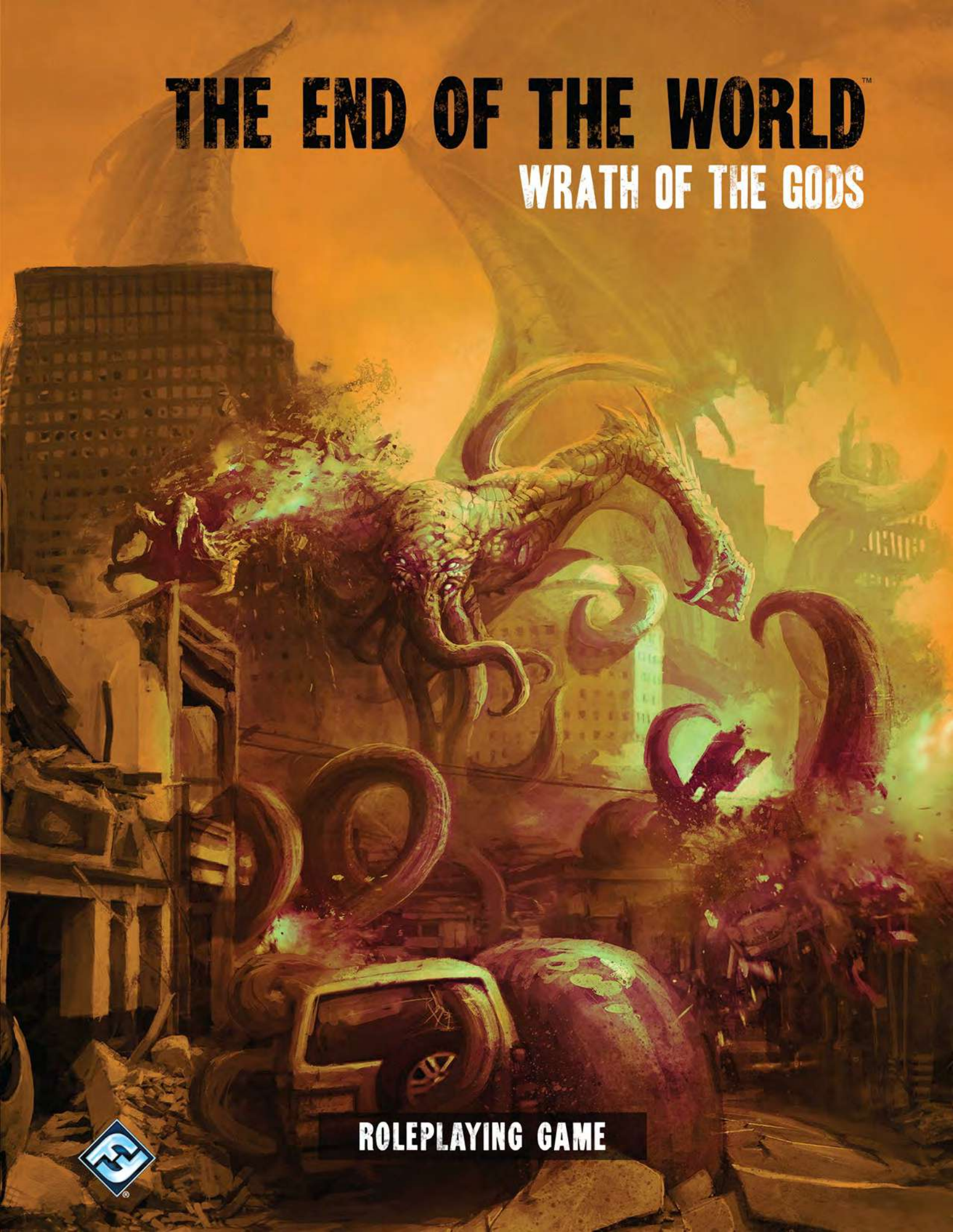
THE END OF THE WORLD™

WRATH OF THE GODS



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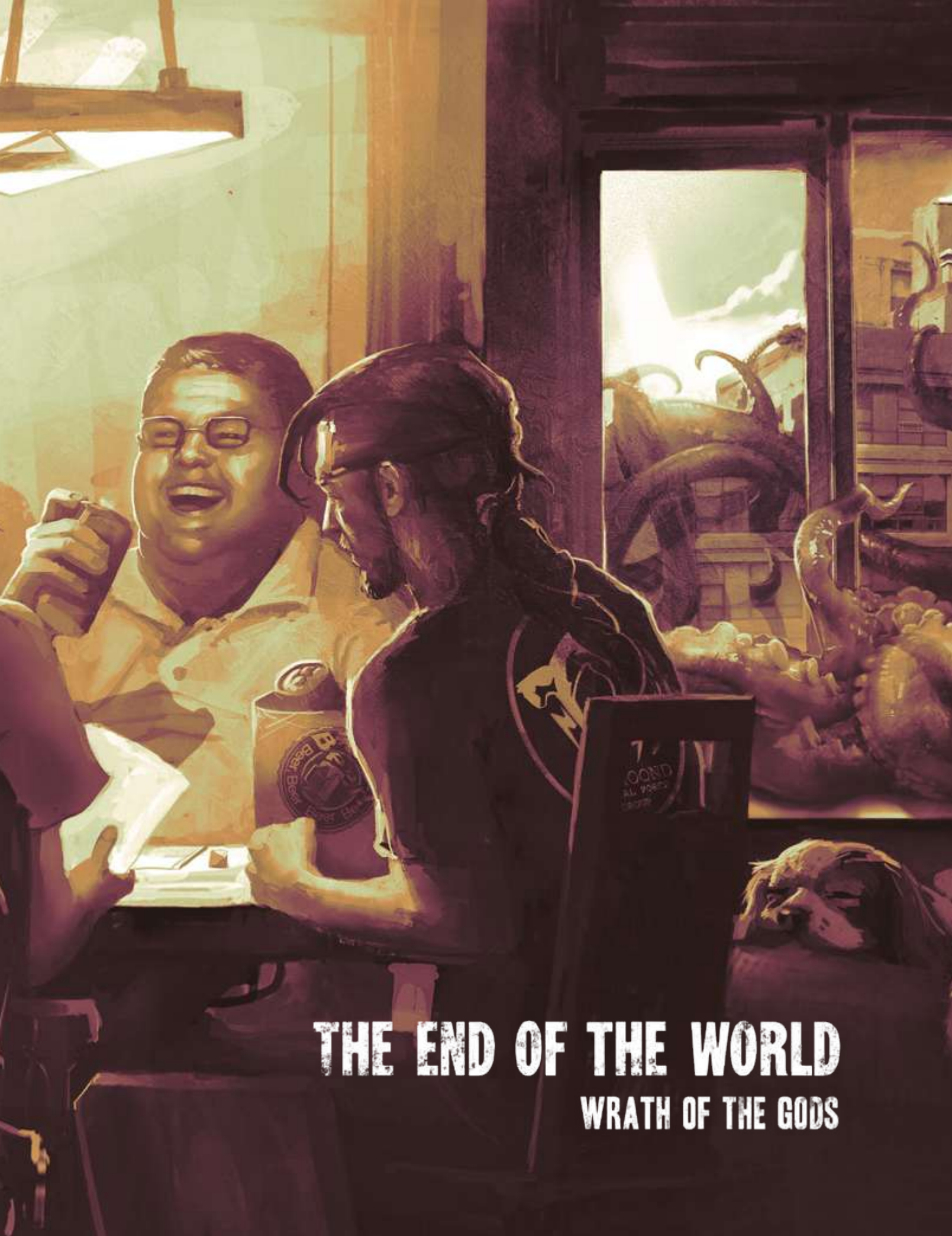

THE END OF THE WORLD

WRATH OF THE GODS

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www.FantasyFlightGames.com

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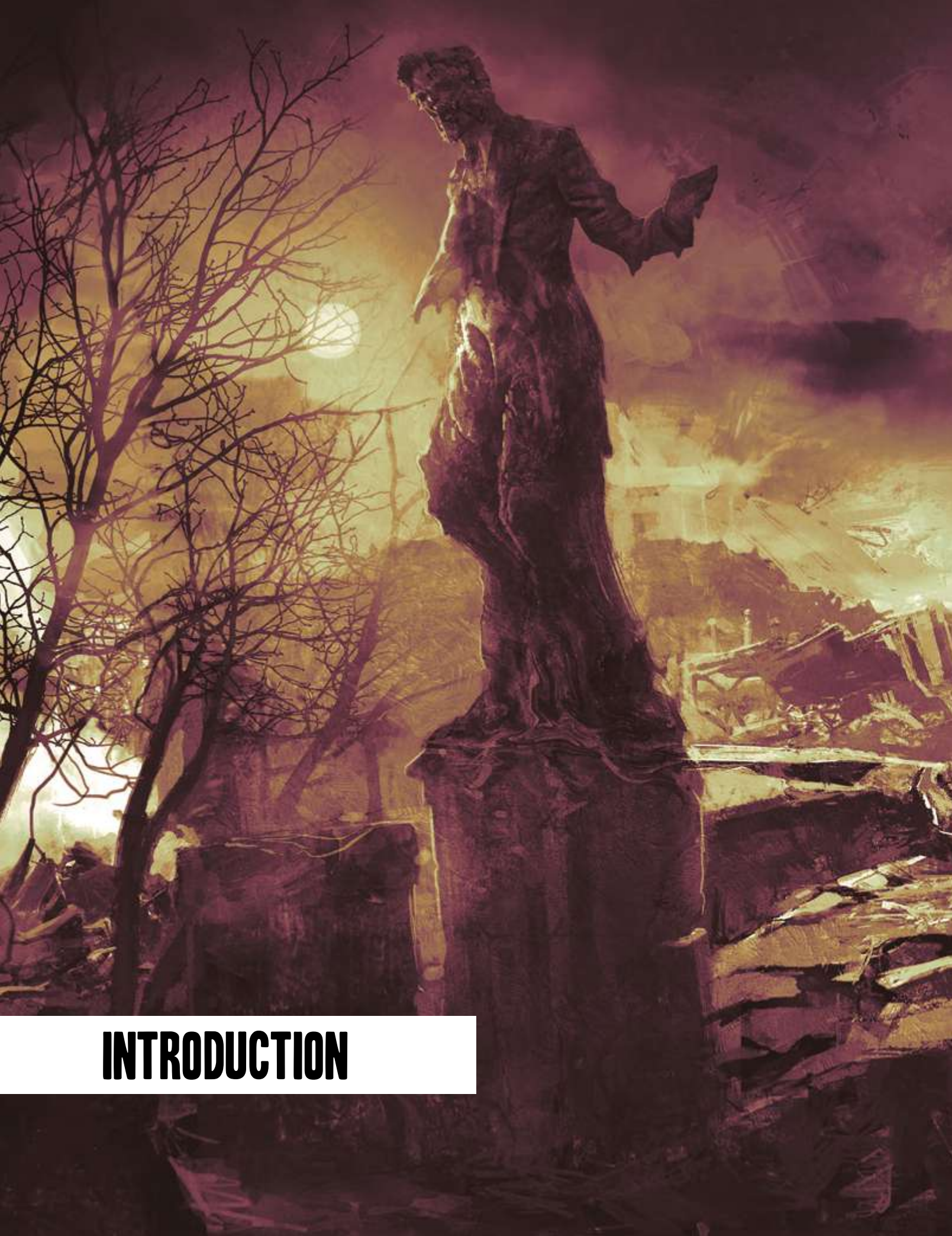
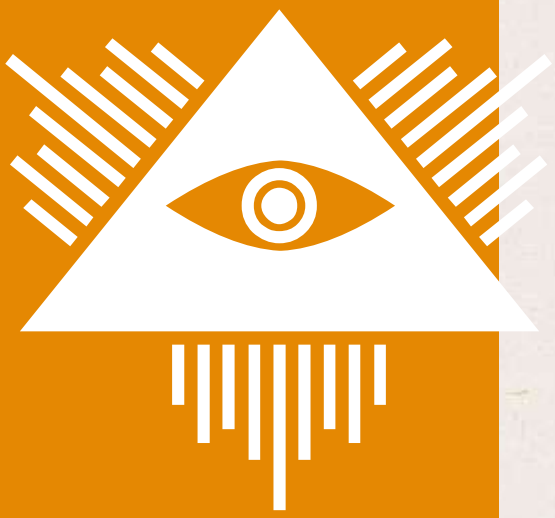


INTRODUCTION



"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him."

–Revelation of John 6:8

We get pretty into it when we're gaming. No cellphones at the table—that's one of our rules. So, we didn't exactly notice how dark it had gotten outside. Like, really dark.

"Guys, it's, like, really dark outside," says Nate. He's the perceptive one of the group.

"Yeah... it's called night," says Laura, rolling some dice. She's the sarcastic one.

"No, I mean... where's the moon?" Nate stands up and moves to the window, peering out. "Is it... snowing?"

I let Laura know that her roll is a success and then call a five-minute break. After all, we've been gaming all night. The pizza ran out hours ago, and the chips are getting to dangerously low levels. Danny shakes an empty chip bag, as if he knows what I'm thinking.

"I think it's past Nate's bedtime," says Laura, grinning. "He's losing it. It doesn't snow in the middle of June." The smile falls from her face as she steps up to the window and sees that it is, in fact, snowing.

We all gather by the windows, peering out into the gloom. Nate's right: it's the darkest night I've ever seen, but the streetlights catch falling snow. Maybe a foot in the last few hours.

Suddenly there's a flash, and it's like I'm in a dream. A really vivid dream. I'm no longer in my living room, but on the street a few houses down. I see my house, and the front door is broken to pieces. I hear heavy footsteps behind me—really heavy. I don't want to know, but I turn anyway. And I see it, illuminated by the streetlight. Over ten feet tall, mottled skin, a misshapen, twisted face. I'm frozen in terror as it brings a club down toward my skull, and then everything goes black.

I snap out of it and look around. From the looks on their faces, I know it wasn't just me who had some sort of vision. A vision of my own death. We're all silent for a few minutes. Everyone is in shock. Danny's eyes are moist; Laura is trembling.

"Wait. Did—did that just happen to you guys, too?" Nate, the perceptive one.

"Oh my God, I'm going to die," Maria gasps. More silence.

"But not anytime soon, right?" says Nate. The lucky bastard.

I shake my head, trying to clear it, and then I see something big. Moving between my neighbors' backyards. Something big, and hunched, and ugly. It had been there a moment ago, but I thought it was part of the house, or its shadow.

Danny stumbles back into the table, spilling dice on the floor.

Across the street, the neighbor's car suddenly flips through the air, end over end, smashing into a car parked on the curb. We can just barely see the monster in the shadows of the streetlight, but we can hear its roar all too clearly.

We all back away from the window, mouths hanging open in fear. Danny turns and bolts through the kitchen to the back door. Maria screams his name, I think, and he stops. But not because of her. He backs slowly away from the door, staring at the window. There's a face, watching him through the glass. A dead face, dried and shriveled, two red points of light shining.

The knob turns, but it's locked. Danny keeps backing away, but the glass shatters and wood splinters as a battle axe cleaves through the door. Danny screams and runs back toward the front, and we all scramble for the door. I unlock it and throw it open, and we spill out into the snow as the dead thing hacks the back door apart and lumbers into the house.

"What the hell was that?" Laura screams as we shut the door behind us. "A freaking zombie?"

"What kind of zombie uses an axe?" observes Nate. "Nah, it has to be a wight, or a draugr, or something."

Shivering, we crunch through the snow to my car. I reach in my pocket—and realize the keys are back in the house. I look back just as the front door of the house splinters, an axe hacking through it from within.

"Oh, no," I say. Everyone looks at me, faces falling.

"Run," I say. And we do.

After a block, I look back at my house. The front door has been smashed in. I don't see any sign of the undead warrior. Then, I hear heavy footsteps in the snow behind me, and cavernous breathing. I don't want to, but I turn and look up at it. It raises its club, and as it brings it down toward me, I wonder if this is irony. Then I don't think anything at all.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **Wrath of the Gods**. By picking up this book, you've doomed yourself and everyone you know to a horrible end. But don't worry—it's all in good fun. **Wrath of the Gods** is a roleplaying game in which you and your friends try to survive the end of the world at the hands of gods, monsters, and Mother Nature herself. Unlike other games, **Wrath of the Gods** has players portray not mighty heroes or dangerous outlaws, but themselves! Likewise, the locations and other characters they encounter during the game are largely based on people and places they know in real life. So, in a game of **Wrath of the Gods**, the players portray themselves trying to survive, running and fighting their way through familiar streets as supernatural nightmares topple the world around them. An easy-to-learn, flexible, and narrative-focused rule set propels the action, keeping the focus on the story and on the players' actions without bogging things down in unnecessary bookkeeping.

If you've ever wondered how you and your friends would survive the apocalypse, keep reading and find out!

WHAT IS AN RPG?

Although millions of words have been spent debating the answer to that question (mostly on Internet forums), for our purposes a roleplaying game, or RPG, is a shared storytelling experience in which a group of players builds a narrative by taking on the roles of characters in a fictionalized situation. A set of rules helps the players to determine the success of their various actions and decisions (and hopefully helps them avoid the kinds of arguments they got into while playing pretend as kids). In addition to rules and a setting, an RPG has three key elements: some players (three to five is usually a good number), a Game Master, and a scenario.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

THE END OF THE WORLD?

Wrath of the Gods is the second in a series of roleplaying games called **The End of the World**. Each game in the series presents a stand-alone play experience, but together they share a set of simple, narrative rules and the titular theme. Each book in the series explores a different, exciting way the world of humans might come to an end. This second book deals with deities, gods, monsters, and other beings and events out of myth, legend, and religions from around the world. Subsequent books will cover different threats, and like this one, each will explore multiple scenarios involving various takes on the danger.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

In an RPG, most players create a Player Character, also known as a PC, to control during the game. The PCs are the protagonists of the story and the players' primary means by which to influence its events. PCs each have a set of numbers, called characteristics, that represent their relative strengths and weaknesses, and determine their likelihood to succeed at a given task. Most games would mention at this point that PCs are given their own fictional backstories and motivations, but in **The End of the World**, the PCs are based on the players themselves! Obviously, getting into the head of, well, yourself should come more naturally than contemplating the mind-set of a century-old dwarven warrior-priest.

Like the characters in any good horror movie, the PCs are not the first people to die in **Wrath of the Gods**. But they also might not all survive. It *is* the end of the world, after all.

THE GAME MASTER

One person in the group must assume the vaunted mantle of Game Master, or GM, rather than create a Player Character. Although the GM is taking part in the game, we make a distinction between the GM and players, because the GM is running the game and not just playing it. The GM describes the world, narrates the story, presents obstacles and challenges for the PCs, and portrays all the story's other characters (known as Non-Player Characters, or NPCs). The GM is also responsible for applying the rules of the game and making a decision when a question about the rules arises.

Being the GM comes with more responsibility, but it can also be very rewarding. Further, in this game, it means you get to describe all kinds of horrible things happening to your friends without it being "weird."

SCENARIOS

Obviously, a roleplaying game isn't going to be very exciting if the PCs don't do anything. And while PCs do have a tendency to cause trouble, it's generally best if the GM is prepared with some sort of situation with which to challenge them. A game scenario is like a movie's story: it describes what is happening and the sorts of problems and enemies facing the protagonists. While other games often feature adventures in which the PCs attempt to achieve some noteworthy goal, this is not the focus of **The End of the World**. Instead, the PCs are simply trying to survive to see another day.

This book features five scenarios describing different ways gods and beings of myth and legend might bring about the end of the world. These scenarios include all the information the GM needs regarding what those beings are, what they do, and how their arrival destroys the world, but the GM needs to fill in the details about people and places, since the game takes place wherever the players happen to be. In addition to these scenarios, GMs can come up with their own takes on the fury of the gods to really keep players on their toes.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME DIFFERENT?

The End of the World is different from other RPGs you may have played for a few reasons. Possibly the most unique aspect of the game is the nature of the Player Characters. Rather than being heroic (or anti-heroic) characters with special skills and abilities based on a sci-fi or fantasy setting or a genre of fiction, the PCs in **The End of the World** are actually based on the players. In effect, the PCs are not only the players' avatars in the game world: they *are* the players, or at least fictionalized versions. And the game world isn't a far-off land or alternate universe: it's wherever the players really live. The events of the game unfold in the players' town or city, with the GM describing the destruction wrought by the apocalypse.

Because of its theme, **The End of the World** is intended for shorter, more defined play experiences than many RPGs, which often assume long-running campaigns or sweeping story arcs. Depending on your group's preferences and play style, you could wrap up an apocalyptic scenario over the course of two or three sessions, or even a single night. Of course, the game can go on for as long as it needs to, and it could last much longer if everyone enjoys living through the apocalypse and the following years in detail—and the PCs live that long.

Whereas RPGs often focus on some goal or mission, be it saving the world from supervillains or just acquiring a lot of treasure, **The End of the World** is really about putting the PCs in a difficult situation and seeing how they deal with it. They're not going to be stopping the apocalypse—the PCs are regular people, and the best they can hope for is to be among the few to survive.

The End of the World features a fast, narrative rule set to keep the players engaged and the story moving. While tactical, detailed combat works great for some games, that's not the focus here. You don't want to get into a protracted back-and-forth fight with a draugr—you want to shoot or bash it in the head and keep moving. If you get stuck in close with a troll, you've probably already lost.

The same goes for the other actions PCs might attempt. We know more or less what we're capable of, so with PCs representing the players, a quick roll is all it takes to determine whether they succeed at a task and what the outcome is. Also, PCs in this game aren't powerful heroes: they can't be hit with swords and bullets and lose some arbitrary life points, with no other effects. PCs get worn down, not just from injuries in fights, but also from the stress and strain of dealing with the events of the apocalypse and even with their fellow survivors. The cumulative effects of stress and trauma help to reinforce the grim reality of being there when the world ends, and they have a significant impact on the ongoing story. PCs with a lot of injuries or stress might decide it's better to hole up and wait for help rather than try to make it to some other destination.

Players use the same characters for all five scenarios—after all, they're playing themselves. Each scenario presents a different take on the apocalypse, making for five very different game experiences. In effect, each scenario hits the reset button and changes reality. This puts the players in the unusual situation of experiencing a

similar situation, but with different details. This keeps things fresh without requiring the players to learn new rules or a new setting, or even to create new characters. Of course, the PCs, like the players, are going to be familiar with the idea of beings out of myth and legend, and even the end of the world as presented in those stories. But they don't immediately know what kind of story they find themselves in. Figuring out what gods are wreaking havoc on the world and seeking a way to avoid it presents a great opportunity for players to use their own knowledge of the genre without "cheating."

Getting Started

We know you're anxious to start playing, but first things first. The Game Master—probably whoever bought this book—needs to become familiar with its contents. In particular, the GM should read **Chapter I: Playing the Game** and **Chapter II: Running the Game** (for obvious reasons). In addition, the GM should completely read whichever scenario will be played first. **Wrath of the Gods** includes five different, unrelated scenarios. These can be played in any order, so it's not necessary for the GM to read them all before the first game session. The first few pages of **Chapter III: Scenarios** provide an overview of the different scenarios and the myths and legends presented in each, which can help the GM decide which one to play first. Of course, it doesn't hurt to read them all first if the GM has time; one advantage of this is that bits and pieces from different scenarios can be mixed and matched if the GM wishes.

The GM should be familiar with the rules but doesn't have to memorize them before playing. It's not a bad idea for the players to read the rules as well, but it's not necessary. By no means, though, should the players read **Chapter II: Running the Game** or **Chapter III: Scenarios**. A big part of the players' fun is figuring out what kind of apocalypse their PCs are going to experience, and looking at the scenarios would ruin that. So, if you're a player, do not read the scenarios! That would spoil everything. If you're the GM, read the scenarios all you want.

What's in This Book?

Wrath of the Gods is divided into three chapters. (It also includes lots of pictures so you don't get bored.) The GM should become familiar with the whole book, or at least the rules and the first scenario to be run, but players absolutely should not look at **Chapter II: Running the Game** or **Chapter III: Scenarios** (especially not the scenarios).

Chapter I: Playing the Game

This chapter describes the rules and core mechanics of the game, including everything the players and GM need to know to resolve actions, fight monsters (or run away), and track the consequences of wounds and stress. It also explains how to create characters, including their characteristics, features, and equipment.

Chapter II: Running the Game

The second chapter is specifically for the GM. It includes plenty of useful advice on running **Wrath of the Gods**, including how to tailor the game to your players and town, pace the story and encounters, use the rules to enhance the story, and adjudicate rules questions (and anything not covered by the rules).

Chapter III: The Scenarios

The final chapter presents five different scenarios in which gods and monsters of legend bring about the end of the world. The scenarios present different takes on the idea of the end of the world as we know it—and what happens after. Each one features a different collection of myths and legends, from the return of the Mayan feathered snake-god Quetzalcoatl, to the Norse Ragnarök, to the Revelation of John, to the esoteric modern mythologies first created by H. P. Lovecraft. The scenarios each include all the information the GM needs about the stories that inspired them, what beings and creatures are involved in the apocalypse, and how things escalate

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

What Do You Need to Play?

You'll need the following to play **Wrath of the Gods**:

- This book (check!).
- At least two other people (NO gods allowed).
- Three or four hours set aside to play (or more, if the world really has ended and you have the time).
- A handful of six-sided dice of two different colors (or sizes, as long as you can tell them apart).
- Some paper, pencils, and erasers (ink is a bit too permanent on the character sheet).
- Snacks (mead, though thematically appropriate for one of the scenarios, is only allowed if you are of legal drinking age).

Snazzy-looking character sheets and other play aids are not necessary, but they sure are fun. You can photocopy them from the back of this book or download them from the Fantasy Flight Games website (www.FantasyFlightGames.com). Maps of your town are available at your nearest convenience store. Although not necessary to play this game, a map will be very handy when the world actually does end and your GPS device stops working.