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"They run everything, man! They've been running it all since before we even knew there were things to be run! They're the Illuminati, the Skulls, the Masons! They're all of 'em and then some, man! They're the secret society that runs the secret societies. We're all just pawns in their game. What's that? Yeah, of course they know I know... But I know that they know that I know. They'll never see me coming!"

–A concerned member of the intelligence community.

"Have you guys seen this?" Megan asks, holding her cell phone out toward us.

I sigh. "You know I wish you wouldn't look at your phone while we're playing," I say, peering over my Game Master's screen.

"I'm serious." She starts playing a video. It's a somewhat grainy image of a little grey alien speaking in...not English or any other language I recognize.

"I saw that during our last break," says Robert. "It's just viral marketing for a new movie or something. What's that one, Aliens in the Outfield?"

Madhavi and Marcos nod their heads in agreement. Megan sighs and sits back in her chair. "I don't know… people online are saying it's real, that it's, like, a warning or something."

"They can do a lot with CG these days," counters Madhavi.

"But people have seen saucers," says Megan.

"It's probably just part of the marketing campaign," I cut in. "Can we please get back to the game? I was just about to describe the death and destruction."

I clear my throat, and a car alarm goes off outside. Everyone jumps a little, but especially Megan. I sigh and shake my head.

"Someone will get it in a minute. Anyway…" I'm interrupted by the sound of a scream from next door. Now, everyone is up out of their chair. Madhavi and Rob go over to the window and peer out. Their faces go pale. I get up and join them, and my breath catches in my throat. There's an arm sticking out from under the neighbor's garage, laying in the driveway, all flesh seems to have been vaporized and all that remains are pale bones.

"Early Halloween prank…" I swallow.

Madhavi is on her phone, calling 911. She looks worried.

"All the circuits are busy...I think. Is that what this sound means?" She starts to hold the phone toward Rob, when I gasp. Something short just ran by between the houses.

Megan and Marcos crowd around the window to see what's happening, and Marcos screams at the sight of the arm. I clamp my hand over his mouth, but I'm too late. If there is anything out there, it heard us. Assuming it can hear.

I head into the kitchen to grab a knife. Not really sure how much help that's going to be, but it makes me feel better. As I'm pulling one out of the tray, the back door starts to sizzle and suddenly bursts into ash. A short, large-headed creature with big, almond-shaped eyes is staring at me, and it's pointing a smooth pistol at me. It has a tiny satellite dish where the barrel should be. I scream and dive out of the room as it pulls the trigger and the refrigerator disintegrates behind me.

Madhavi and Marcos bolt out the front door while Megan helps me up, and Robert is frantically trying everyone's phones, which were left sitting out on the table, with no luck. The rest of us run out the front door as the alien—I guess that's what it is—blasts the table.

"No—my books!" Robert cries out, and we have to practically drag him out the front door, just before another blast vaporizes it behind us.

"I told you!" shouts Megan.

"What the hell was that?" yells Marcos.

As we head toward the cars, a bright light shines down from above. Everyone freezes in panic for a moment, but then I realize I can't move.

As the others scream and grab at me, I start to float up in the air, toward the saucer waiting overhead. I crane my head up and see an opening, with more of the little grey aliens crowded around it, holding an array of wicked and horrible-looking instruments.

I wish I could say it's the last thing I ever see.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to ALIEN INVASION. 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. ALIEN INVASION is a roleplaying game in which you and your friends try to survive the end of the world and not get vaporized by aliens (a key aspect of survival, of course). Unlike in other games, the players won't be portraying 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 ALIEN INVASION, the players portray themselves trying to survive as aliens attack their town (and the rest of the world), running and fighting their way through familiar streets during a horrifying event. An easy-to-learn, flexible, and narrative-focused rule set propels the action along, keeping the focus on the story and the players' actions, without bogging things down in unnecessary bookkeeping.

If you've ever wondered how you and your friends would do during an alien invasion, keep reading and find out!

THE END OF THE WORLD?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ALIEN INVASION is the third in a series of roleplaying games called THE END OF THE WORLD. Each game in the series is a standalone play experience, but 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 book deals with aliens, obviously, and with how an extraterrestrial invasion of Earth might unfold. Other books cover different threats and, like this one, each explores multiple scenarios involving different takes on the threat.

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 players build a narrative by taking on the roles of characters in a fictionalized situation. A set of rules helps the players to determine the outcomes of the various actions they take and decisions they make (and hopefully helps them avoid the kinds of arguments you got into while playing pretend as a kid). 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.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

Each player in an RPG creates 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. Each PC has game characteristics that represent their relative strengths and weaknesses and determine their likelihood to succeed at various tasks. Most games would mention here that PCs have their own 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 mindset of a thousand-year-old elven warrior-mage.

Like the characters in any good horror movie, the PCs are not the first people to die. 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 take on 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. Plus, 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. The game's scenario is like a movie's story: it describes what is happening and the sorts of conflicts 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 includes five scenarios describing different ways aliens might bring about the end of the world as we know it. These scenarios include all the information the GM needs regarding what the aliens are, what sort of technology they have, and how they destroy, conquer, or enslave the world, but the GM needs to fill in the details about people and locations, since the game takes place wherever the players happen to be. In addition to these scenarios, GMs can come up with their own take on an alien invasion to really keep players on their toes.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME DIFFERENT?

The End of the World is different from other RPGs you might have played for a few reasons. Possibly the most unique aspect of the game is the nature of the Player Characters. Rather than creating 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 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 experiencing 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. There's no 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 rules 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 an alien—you want to shoot it, avoid getting zapped or eaten in return, and keep moving. If you get stuck in close with an alien, whether it be a Grey with a deadly heat ray or a giant ant with chompy mandibles, 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 from the strain of dealing with the events of the apocalypse and 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You'll need the following to play ᴀʟɪᴇɴ ɪɴᴠᴀsɪᴏɴ:

- ☻ This book (check!)
- ☻ At least two other people (preferably human).
- ☻ Three or four hours set aside to play (or more, if the world really has ended and you have lots of free time).
- ☻ A handful of six-sided dice of two different colors (or different sizes, as long as you can tell them apart).
- ☻ Some paper, pencils, and erasers (ink is a little too permanent for use on a character sheet).
- ☻ Snacks (preferably something humans, not aliens, like to eat).

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 aliens destroy all our satellites and your GPS device stops working.

Players use the same characters for all five scenarios—after all, they're just playing themselves. Each scenario presents a completely different take on an alien invasion, 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 somewhat similar challenge, 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 familiar with the idea of aliens and unearthly invaders. But they can't know all the details of the particular aliens they face. Figuring out how to defeat them while staying alive 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 is to be played first. ᴀʟɪᴇɴ ɪɴᴠᴀsɪᴏɴ includes five different, unrelated scenarios. These can be run in any order, so it's not necessary for the GM to read them all before the first play session. The first few pages of **Chapter III: Scenarios** provide an overview of the different scenarios and the types of aliens in each, which can help the GM decide which scenario to run first. Of course, it doesn't hurt to read them all first if the GM has time. One advantage to 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 players read **Chapter II: Running the Game** or **Chapter III: Scenarios**. A big part of the fun is figuring out the nature of the aliens the PCs are up against, 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?

ᴀʟɪᴇɴ ɪɴᴠᴀsɪᴏɴ 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 should absolutely not look at **Chapter II: Running the Game** or **Chapter III: Scenarios** (especially not at 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 aliens (or run away), and track the consequences of wounds and stress. It also explains how to create characters, including their characteristics, features, and equipment.

HUMAN AFFAIRS ARE NOT BEING WATCHED FROM THE TIMELESS WORLDS OF SPACE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It should go without saying that the events of ALIEN INVASION are fictitious. Aliens aren't real (or at least we haven't found them yet), and the world (probably) won't end because of them. This is a game, and it's purely meant for fun. Of course, the resemblance to real people, both living and extraterrestrial, is not a coincidence in this case, which can blur the lines in a way other games don't. Before playing, it's a good idea to talk with the other players about expectations for the game, to make sure no one is upset by events described during play. If some players aren't comfortable with detailed descriptions of people they know being vaporized by heat rays, leave it vague. If someone wants to play a more fictionalized version of themselves than the others, that's fine. The events of an alien invasion are pretty horrifying if taken literally, so don't be afraid to approach them in a lighthearted, even comical way, if that's what everyone prefers. The important thing is that everyone has fun, and the PCs all have at least a fighting chance.

CHAPTER II: RUNNING THE GAME

Chapter II is specifically for the GM. It includes plenty of useful advice on running ALIEN INVASION, including how to tailor the game to the players and town, pace the story and encounters, use the rules to enhance the story, and address questions and disputes about the rules (and situations not covered by the rules).

CHAPTER III: SCENARIOS

The final chapter presents five different scenarios in which aliens bring about the end of the world. The scenarios present different takes on the idea of an alien invasion—and what happens afterward. Each one features a different kind of alien, from giant ants, to little Greys, to spore-based Visages and more. The scenarios each include all the information the GM needs about the aliens, their technology, their weakness, and how things unfold once the invasion begins. Each scenario presents new surprises and challenges for players. Playing them all allows the players to see how different survival strategies work out and to explore different parts of their world during and after the apocalypse.

WHY ALIENS?

Why ALIEN INVASION? The idea of invaders from the stars has captivated humanity for well over a century, and hundreds of books, movies, and games have been created based on the idea. Everyone is familiar with at least a few of these stories and the tropes they contain, whether they be Martian tripods or pod people. This means that regardless of the specifics, players have at least some familiarity with the concept of an alien invasion.

On another level, the idea of an alien invasion represents our deepest fears about the other, and the dehumanizing effects of war. In the course of an alien invasion, neither side is "human" to the other, whether they see their opponents as beasts, grotesque monsters, or something else. All the horrors of battle are amplified when there is no shared humanity to fall back on. It's the ultimate expression of war: merciless violence that strips both sides of their inherent worth, of their very essence.

That sounds a little depressing, so here's a lighter take. Aliens have been done to death. All those hundreds of stories mentioned earlier? They've just about exhausted the topic. While it's certainly possible to put a new spin on the subject, aliens are almost comfortable in their familiarity. When someone mentions a "Grey" or a "body snatcher" or a "Reptilian," most people immediately know what to expect. This familiarity keeps things easier, allowing the GM to play around with familiar tropes in a new way, or just to let the players experience their favorite alien invasion stories for themselves.

And most importantly, because aliens are cool.