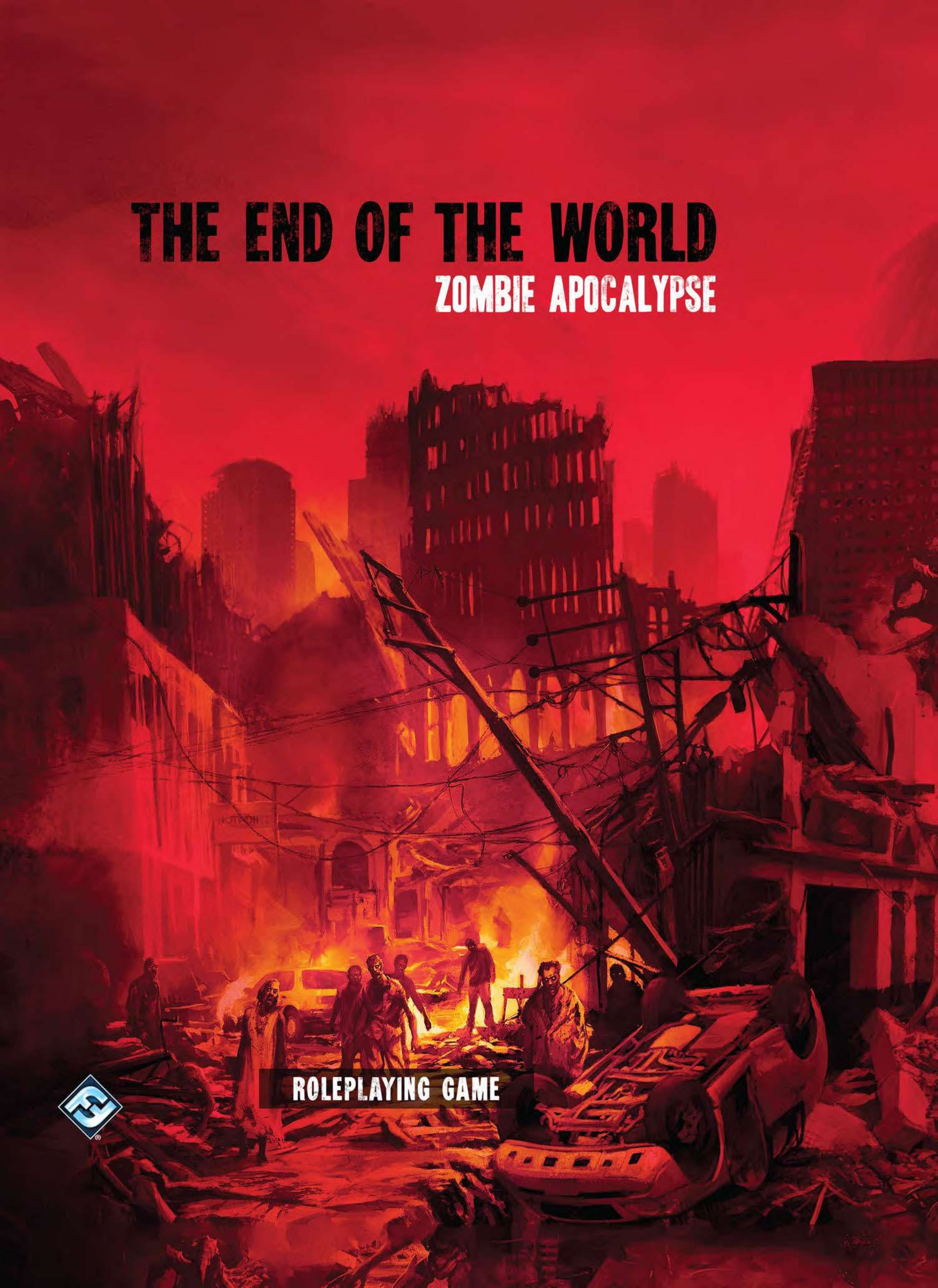
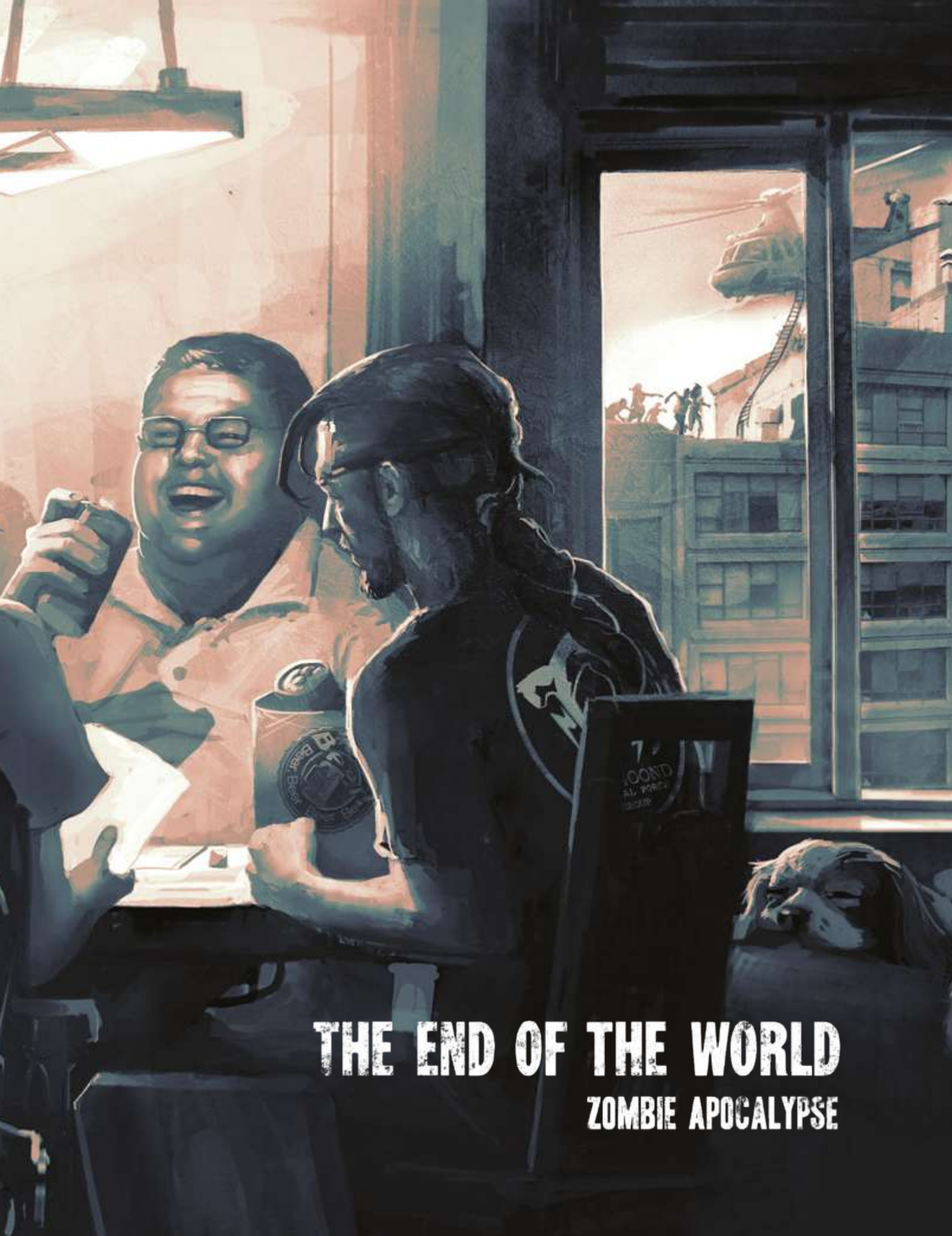
THE END OF THE WORLD

ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE



ROLEPLAYING GAME


THE END OF THE WORLD
ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

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www.FantasyFlightGames.com

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 6

Introduction 10
What Is an RPG? 10
Getting Started 12
What's in This Book? 12
Why Zombies? 13

PLAYING THE GAME 14

Performing Tasks 17
The Test 18
Opposed Tests 20
Creating Characters 21
Step 1: Determine Characteristics 21
Step 2: Choose Features 22
Step 3: Record Equipment 23
Step 4: Record Traumas 23
The Character Sheet 24
Categories 24
Features 25
Positive Features 25
Negative Features 26
Equipment and Supplies 27
Gear 27
Weapons 28
Armor 29
Stress, Death, and Traumas 30
Stress 30
Death 31
Traumas 32
Conflict 34
Timing 34
Tasks 35

RUNNING THE GAME 38

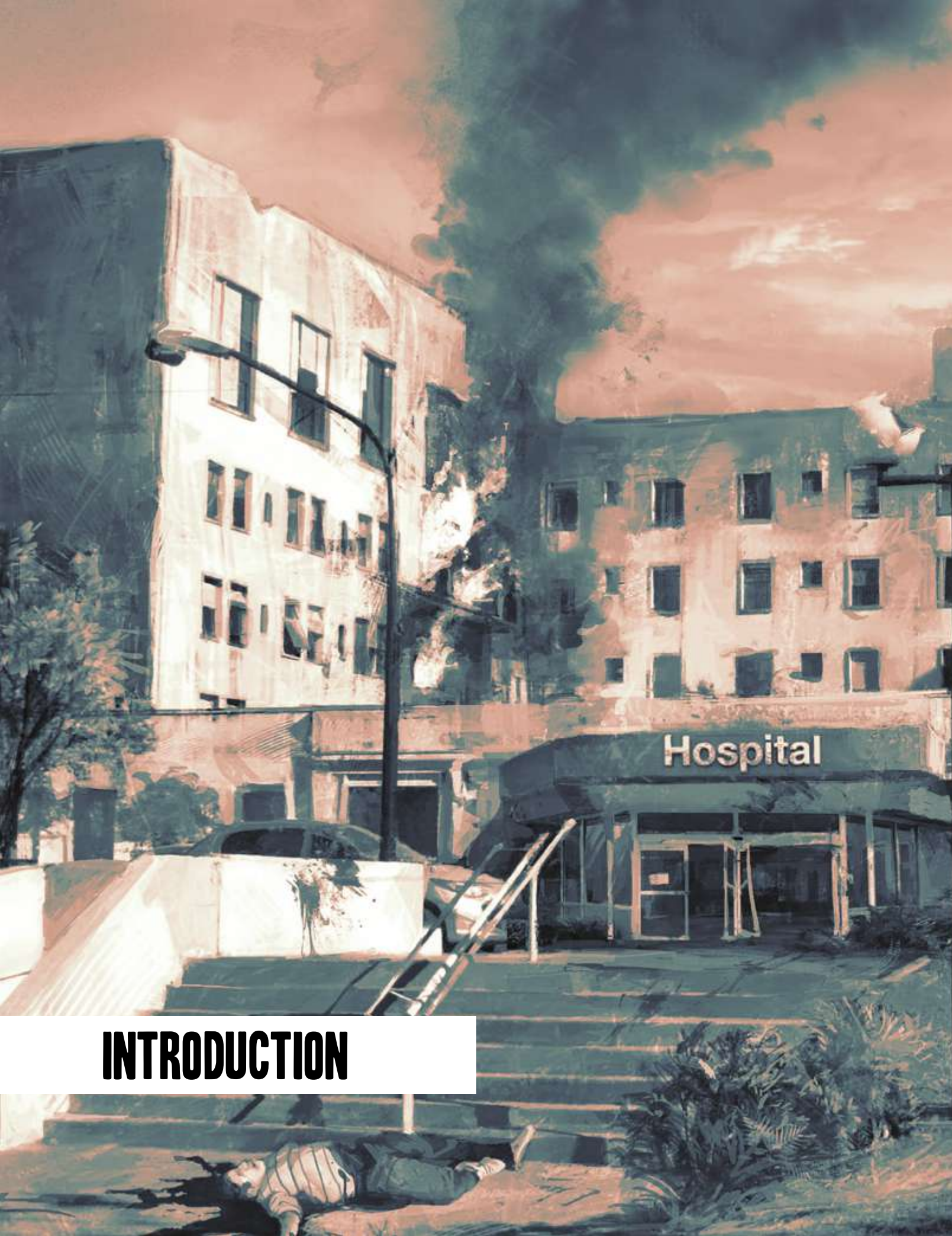
Story Structure 41
Encounters 41
Narrative 42
Running Tests 44
When to Add Positive Dice 44
When to Add Negative Dice 44
Determining Results 45
Managing NPCs 46
NPC Profiles 46
The Campaign 47
Campaign Length 47
Advancing Characters 47

SCENARIOS 48

Night of the Meteor (Apocalypse) 52
The Experience 54
The Truth 55
Timeline 58
Night of the Meteor (Post-Apocalypse) 64
One World, under E.D.E.N. 65
No Room in Hell (Apocalypse) 70
The Experience 72
The Truth 74
Timeline 76
No Room in Hell (Post-Apocalypse) 82
The Dead Own the Earth 83
Pandemic (Apocalypse) 88
The Experience 90
The Truth 92
Timeline 94
Pandemic (Post-Apocalypse) 100
The United States of Nothing 102
It Ends with a Whisper (Apocalypse) 106
The Experience 108
The Truth 110
Timeline 113
It Ends with a Whisper (Post-Apocalypse) 118
So Much for Modern Life 119
Under the Skin (Apocalypse) 124
The Experience 126
The Truth 128
Timeline 130
Under the Skin (Post-Apocalypse) 136
Some Sort of Contingency Plan 137
The Cost of Survival 138

Index 142

Character Sheet 144



INTRODUCTION

"Shoot it in the head—that works in the movies!"

–A survivor who is more right than he knows

I'll tell you what, Jed, I can't for the life of me figure out why days like this always happen on Fridays. I mean, I get it, sure, people want to cut loose because it's the weekend, but why do they have to get out of their heads and ruin it for everyone else? I mean, he freaking attacked the delivery guy! Right in the street. It's nuts. Whatever. I'm home and you haven't destroyed the place—have you boy? Good boy!—and everyone's headed over to play. Oh! and Woody's bringing the pizza.

Why are you looking at me like that? What? Yeah, he attacked Steve. You know Steve. The delivery driver; he gave you that biscuit last week. Anyway, yeah, I'm at the shop, just got the lights on and the doors unlocked and there's Steve with our latest shipment. Mostly the usual stuff, that new RPG and a few other things, that new card game that Milla wanted. Steve and I chatted for a while, nothing major. He was telling me about that chemical spill on the south side. Sounds like we might just have to write off the river entirely.

Hey, do you remember what kind of pizza Woody said he was bringing? Of course you don't, it all just smells like people food to you anyway. Man, I could eat!

So anyway, Steve heads back to his truck and I start diving into the new inventory, when WHAM! Out of nowhere, this guy tackles him. Steve is freaking out! He's doing his best to get this guy off of him, but the dude is nuts! He's thrashing and snapping at him. Seriously! Snapping at Steve like he's trying to freaking bite him!

Don't give me that look! Yeah, of course I helped him. No one else was around, so I bolt out and try to haul this dude off of Steve. He must have been drunk or high or something. Either way, I was barely able to get ahold of him to get him on the ground. He didn't even seem to notice me. He was really going after Steve!

I don't know if I could have held him very long, but lucky for us, some cops drove by and Steve flagged them down. The cops were able to get the psycho cuffed. He wasn't saying a single thing I could understand the whole time. Just growled and snapped. Freaking nutjobs!

One of the cops said that this was the third time they'd gotten a report of this sort of thing. She said they had gotten a warning from their lieutenant that morning that something like this might happen. New drugs on the street or something. Who knows. Anyway, so one of them takes the dude away, and the other takes a look at Steve. Fortunately, the dude was more crazy than dangerous, but they called up an ambulance and took Steve to the hospital, just in case.

Okay, where are those guys? I need to get some pizza in me. Seriously, I'm freaking starving.

So, after all that went down, I went back inside, and I mean, what else was I going to do but go back to work? But as soon as I got inside, I noticed that crazy dude scratched up my arm but good. Seriously, it hurt like hell. Wasn't so bad as to need stitches or anything, but still, like hell.

I finished unboxing the order, and even got a few hours to look through that new RPG and get things ready for the session tonight. I thought I had made it through the day without any more insanity but then I'm headed home and I see, like, eight cop cars flying down the street, and like half a dozen accidents on the highway. What is going on today? Honestly, why Fridays?

And my arm is killing me, and I think I'm coming down with a fever, and I'm freaking starving! What the hell! Where are those guys? And where's Woody with that pizza? If I don't get something to eat, I might literally die!

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **Zombie Apocalypse**. 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. **Zombie Apocalypse** is a roleplaying game in which you and your friends try to survive the end of the world while you avoid being eaten by zombies (a key aspect of survival, of course). Unlike other games, **Zombie Apocalypse** 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 **Zombie Apocalypse**, the players portray themselves trying to survive, running and fighting their way through familiar streets as zombies invade their town during a horrifying event. An easy-to-learn, flexible, and narrative-focused rules set propels the action, 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 survive the zombie 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 build 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?

Zombie Apocalypse is the first 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 first book deals with, obviously, zombies and how a zombie plague might happen. 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 thousand-year-old elven warrior-mage.

Like the characters in any good horror movie, the PCs are not the first people to die in **Zombie Apocalypse**. 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 zombies might bring about the end of the world. These scenarios include all the information the GM needs regarding what the zombies are, what they do, and how their activities destroy 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 zombie apocalypse 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 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 a zombie—you want to shoot or bash it in the head and keep moving. If you get stuck in close with a zombie, 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 zombie 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 (or appropriately putrid) 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 zombies, and even the zombie apocalypse. But they don't immediately know what kind of zombies they face. Figuring out how to kill them and avoid becoming one 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. **Zombie Apocalypse** 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 types of zombies 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 zombies their 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?

Zombie Apocalypse 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 zombies (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 **Zombie Apocalypse**, 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 zombies bring about the end of the world. The scenarios present different takes on the idea of the zombie apocalypse—and what happens after. Each one features a different kind of zombie, from the familiar slow zombies, to fast zombies, to voodoo zombies, and zombies with even stranger origins. The scenarios each include all the information the GM needs about how the zombies are created, how they can be killed, and how things escalate once they first appear. 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

What Do You Need to Play?

You'll need the following to play **Zombie Apocalypse**:

- This book (check!)
- At least two other people (preferably living).
- 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 (raw meat, though thematically appropriate, is not recommended).

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.