

‘The 5th Wave’ Crashes, Then Slowly Dissipates

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on January 22, 2016 - 7:51pm

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – Is there ever an end to the Young Adult Dystopia genre (“Hunger Games,” “Maze Runner,” etc.)? Or are we cursed with the end of the world every year, if it weren’t for those meddling kids? “The 5th Wave” is the latest adaptation, and if you haven’t read the source novel, good luck following it.

Yep, this is for fans of the book only, this time written by Rick Yancey, if that’s his real name. Instead of vampires or hunger or mazes, this time it’s space aliens (so obvious for the picking, good job Rick Y!). The numeric “wave” in the title refers to the step-by-step infiltration of the alien presence (1st, 2nd, etc.). At the 5th Wave, there is confrontation, and who better to confront those nasty invaders than a kid army and cute-as-a-button Chloë Grace Moretz. There is no subtlety in “The 5th Wave,” unless confusion is mistaken for subtlety. This is the type of film where the enemy is unknown, or it might be us! “To Serve Man” is a cookbook! Mostly there were glaring missing pieces, surely explained better in Rick Y’s book, and the inevitable “End of Part One” conclusion. Advice to Chloë - if you’re depending on Part Two, don’t buy that Mercedes yet.

The film begins with a gun-to-gun standoff between Cassie (Moretz) and a person she meets in an abandoned gas station. This begins the flashback, to when Cassie was a normal, non-gun toting high schooler, with a crush on dreamy Ben (Nick Robinson). This was before the alien invasion of earth by “the others.” The 1st Wave commences, an electromagnetic pulse that disables vehicles and cuts electric power. Cassie’s family eventually escapes to a refugee camp, and runs into a stern Colonel Vosch (Liev Schreiber, always welcome).



Evan (Alex Roe) Protects Cassie (Chloë Grace Moretz) in 'The 5th Wave'

Photo credit: Sony Pictures Releasing

The 2nd Wave is floods, the 3rd disease, and the 4th is the old aliens-that-look-like-humans trick. After losing her Mom in the 3rd Wave, and her Dad (Ron Livingston) in the 4th, Cassie joins the 5th as a rebel, searching for her brother Sammy (Zackary Arthur). Sam was kidnapped for the rebel kid army, which includes Ben, a goth girl named Ringer (Maika Monroe) and a plethora of kid soldiers. Eventually Cassie is aided in her journey by Evan (Alex Roe), who may or may not be who he is. IT'S A COOKBOOK!

I kid the kids. This had promise, as the early waves had a certain eeriness to them, in the we're-no-longer-in-control vibe, and the cast are all high-level performers. But man, did it slip off the rails, confusing loyalties and using metaphor inconsistently. It's one thing to have the aliens-as-humans device, done so well in other movies ("Invasion of the Body Snatchers" comes to mind), but it's another to not know what to do with it, or how to make it all effectively blend in the story. The tale becomes a mishmash at this point – once the 5th Wave begins – with little of it making sense.

The film clocks in at just under two hours, and judging by what was presented it's evident that a good 40 minutes were excised. Within those deleted scenes are no doubt some exposition that was key to understanding the second half of the film, especially the character of Evan. He looks like a GQ model (including a hilarious voyeur scene of him swimming shirtless) and for some reason becomes Cassie's guardian angel. But who or what he is, even with a "talking villain" style explanation, remains elusive to non-readers of the book.

This also seemed like a recruitment film for the National Rifle Association, there were guns-a-plenty. The scene where the kid soldiers are firing away at the range is disturbing, especially from the petite eight-year-old nicknamed "Teacup." They were supposedly rebelling against the aliens, but the motivation for the blood lust was incredibly forced. When Evan is shooting from an upper perch on a highway, the rifle looks exactly like the one Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly used. This also occurred in the last "Maze Runner," film, as a young girl had the LHO rifle. Is this some sort of agreed-upon cinematic conspiracy?



They're in the Army Now: Ben (Nick Robinson) and Cassie Are Recruited in 'The 5th Wave'
Photo credit: Sony Pictures Releasing

If the film hadn't deviated in the second half, it would have had more value. The special effects of the "waves" were appropriately creepy, and some of the metaphor was pretty chilling ("the others" is the name for the outsiders, and there is a direct Holocaust reference). The director – listed as "J Blakeson" (if that's his real name) – actually had an atmospheric style in the first half of the film, which was entirely dropped by that elusive second part. And who doesn't love the casting of Chloë, Ron Livingston, Liev Schreiber and Maria Bello (as a demented drill sergeant)? All the ingredients were there, except the missing ones.

What is "The 6th Wave"? Perhaps the aliens would be revealed as among us for years, and always elected to Congress, the Presidency and the Supreme Court. That's the only explanation I have for what is going on currently (hyyy-ooh). Now THAT's good metaphor, real name withheld.

"The 5th Wave" opens everywhere on January 29th. Featuring Chloe Grace Moretz, Nick Robinson, Ron Livingston, Liev Schreiber, Zackary Arthur, Alec Roe and Maika Monroe. Screenplay adapted by Susannah Grant, Akiva Goldsman and Jeff Pinkner. Directed by J Blakeson. Rated "PG-13" (Yet Chloë says the f-word!)



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [20]
Writer, Editorial Coordinator
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

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