

The '5th Wave' delivers an assault of silly hokum

Written by By Glenn Kay For the Sun
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Rating: « out of 4 Stars

Running Time: 112 min.

Ridiculous. Sorry, but that's the overwhelming feeling from the latest "Young Adult" novel adaptation to hit cinemas. Despite the efforts of a solid cast, *The 5th Wave* can't withstand the screenplay's barrage of disaster tropes, teen romance film clichés and, well, encounters with aliens. It creates an increasingly absurd environment completely at odds with the serious tone. By the final act, it comes across as far more funny than exciting.

As the film begins, aliens have arrived, decimating the population through a series of "waves". First, it's an electro-magnetic pulse, crashing cars and sending planes plummeting to the earth. Then, a series of earthquakes, followed by tidal waves. And then the Avian flu. The fourth wave itself is a little hazy, but rest assured the few survivors know that the fifth will likely involve a proper invasion and be the most devastating of all.

Told from the perspective of Cassie (Chloë Grace Moretz), the story follows the teenager and her brother Sam (Zackary Arthur), struggling to survive the aftermath. For the saddened young woman, a glimmer of hope arrives in the form of Colonel Vosch (Liev Schreiber) and the US Army, who arrive to begin shipping youngsters to safety 80 miles away. But when Cassie gets separated from her sibling, she begins a single-minded quest to find the corps and reunite with him.

With no vehicles operating, you'd think she'd find a bike to get herself there quickly. However,

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she undergoes the journey by trudging slowly on foot. Along the way Cassie encounters a mysterious youth named Evan (Alex Roe) who eventually joins up with her. While her brother is recruited into a moody, rag-tag military operation that is being taught to fight the alien menace (for some reason a lot of it involves hand to hand combat training), the protagonist starts to develop feelings for her compatriot... by watching him chop wood and later, seeing him bathe in a nearby lake.

If this already sounds incredibly silly, it is. The initial disaster sequences are zippy and provide some impressive spectacle. But these moments comes across as modest drama compared to what follows in the second half. Events become increasingly ludicrous as certain characters are revealed to be secret agents and we learn the true motivations of the villains. Let's just say it's a needlessly complicated plot in comparison with their previous and more effective strikes.

Even worse, the filmmakers wedge a love triangle into the plotline, resulting in a preposterous climax. Leads break from the action to profess their emotions and pontificate to others on the unstoppable power of love and hope (of course, that doesn't stop some of them from fighting back in a more violent manner). There's one particular conversation during the climax that so awkwardly juxtaposes exposition, romantic feelings and a blunt explanation for a military assault that it resulted in laughs from the preview audience.

Honestly, there's little the performers can do about it. These are all decent actors, but as written their characters are one note. Cassie is so driven in her quest that she ends up too simply drawn. What's worse is that the film is clearly intended as the first in a lengthy series. So as viewers, you won't get anything in the way of resolution by the close (or even the specific details as to why the planet is being invaded). And it's all being played with such a straight face that the tale ultimately collapses into complete silliness.

As it reaches its unbelievable heights, *The 5th Wave* does become kind of amusing, but never in the manner intended. One assumes that the filmmakers would like us to endure a 6th or 7th wave of attacks from the alien "Others", but it's hard to see viewers wanting to endure any more hokum than what they've already been subjected to.