

The Zombie Survival Guide

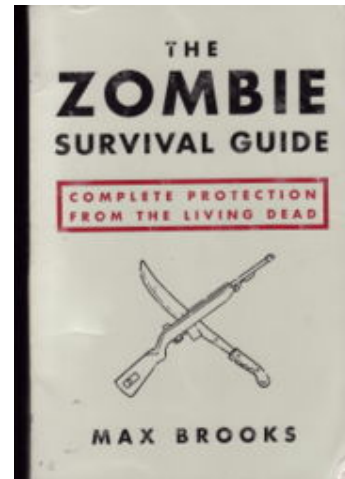
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The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection From the Living Dead, published in 2003, is a fictional satirical survival manual that deals with the potentiality of an undead attack. Its author, Max Brooks, lays out detailed plans for the average citizen to survive zombie uprisings of varying intensity.

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The Zombie Survival Guide: Complete Protection From the Living Dead



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Chapters

The book is divided up into seven separate chapters, plus an appendix.

Myths and Realities

This chapter lays down the specific ground rules that are referenced repeatedly in the book. The most important of these is the description of Solanum, the fictional virus that causes zombies, along with how it is spread, how to treat the infected, and why the zombie infection does not spread to non-human creatures.

The introductory chapter also outlines what abilities zombies have, the differences between real zombies and Voodoo zombies, and how to detect an outbreak in the media. Also listed are the four classes of zombie outbreaks, with Class 4 featuring a zombie apocalypse in which the undead reign as the dominant lifeform on the planet.

Weapons and Combat Techniques

The second chapter takes an exhaustive look at the myriad of weapons at the reader's disposal, and weighs them against the various threats that may be faced during an undead siege.

Weapon categories include m  le weapons, manual-powered ranged weapons (such as slingshots and crossbows), firearms, and explosives. Physical conditioning is also heavily stressed.

Brooks' suggestion for ideal personal armaments is an M1 Carbine semi-automatic rifle, a quality handgun with a mounted sight, and a machete. Shotguns and swords may also be used. He advises against fully automatic weapons because only one bullet is needed to bring down a zombie, and more than that would be a waste of ammunition.

On the Defensive

As the chapter's name suggests, this portion of *The Zombie Survival Guide* is focused on remaining stationary in an undead ambush. Relevant to only Class-1 or -2 outbreaks, advice is dispensed in regards to how the reader can fortify their home (either single- or two-story), as well as what equipment should be kept on hand. A number of non-residential locales, such as schools, shopping malls, and churches, are taken into consideration. Advice is dispensed on what activities to avoid in the makeshift fortification to ensure the undead are not attracted to its location.

For a Class-3 outbreak, a makeshift fortress is recommended. A list of potential buildings is given, along with instructions on fortifying such a position.

On the Run

Chapter four deals with avoiding the undead while simultaneously remaining mobile. In the author's own words, "Crossing an infected area is generally the most dangerous thing you can do. You will never be safe, never be secure. [...] you will know what it means to be prey."

Due to the lack of access to a base of operations, suggestions for food rations and equipment necessary are scaled back for the sake of mobility, which gains more importance in such a situation. Mental and physical training is suggested prior to a group of survivors leaving their safe house. As in the previous chapter, emphasis is placed on remaining invisible to ghouls, with combat ranking lower than complete avoidance.

Though most of the advice assumes the reader is preparing for a trek on foot, several vehicles are considered, such as sedans, SUVs, bicycles, and horses. Additional advice covers the various terrain types (see below) that the reader might encounter in their expedition, as well as specific sections dealing with aerial and aquatic modes of transportation.

Terrain types

The following terrain types are referenced throughout chapters four, five, and six.

- Forest
- Plains
- Fields
- Hills
- Swamps
- Tundra
- Desert
- Urban

On the Attack

While chapters three and four emphasized *avoiding* the undead, chapter five is specifically about engaging ghouls to ensure their destruction.

The first portion of this chapter outlines several rules to be followed to allow for a successful threat elimination. Also covered are weapons and transportation. As this chapter recommends that zombie destruction squads launch from a primary base of operations (presumably with a sizable supply cache), equipment requirements are much lower, and advice presented in the previous chapter in regards to vehicles (with the emphasis on stealth) is reversed to match the shift of priorities.

Additional advice is given for various anti-zombie strategies, as well as specifics for securing the various terrain types listed above. Extra advice is given for subaquatic undead eradication.

Living in an Undead World

Billed as a doomsday scenario, a Class-4 outbreak would see battle for humanity's survival shift in the zombies' favor. Advice for this section is adapted from previous sections; recommendations for surviving a siege is repeated, though altered for relevancy to the long-term entrenchment a Class-4 outbreak represents.

The Zombie Survival Guide recommends putting together a team *before* a zombie outbreak; by pooling resources, a group can construct and stock a more secure bunker and purchase more land further away from possible infestation zones. Aside from the physical conditioning mentioned in chapter four, additional preventive measures involve substantial reading and studying, primarily in form of other survival guides, but also in history (such as early European American colonists) and psychology; to round out a library, fictional survival stories (such as *Robinson Crusoe*) are also recommended.

Stealth is emphasized more in this chapter than in previous sections, with strict guidelines recommended to protect the reader both from the undead and from rogue humans who might prove untrustworthy. Once again, various terrain types are examined; the reader is recommended to build their fortress in the harshest conditions possible, to further reduce the risk of ghoul attack.

Recorded Attacks

The guide concludes with a fictional list of documented zombie encounters throughout history, ranging from mere anecdotes to full-blown infestations. Several entries run together, with a lone zombie "survivor" from one outbreak traveling a great distance to start another outbreak hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Not all of these connected entries are chronologically contiguous, however. Several entries relate anecdotes where the subject has run across a locale whose outbreak occurred dozens of years before their arrival; one minor outbreak was sparked by the thawing of a 415-year-old zombie.

The oldest entry is 60,000 BC, in Katanda, Central Africa, although the author expresses doubt to its validity. Instead, he presents evidence from 3000 BC in Hieraconpolis, Egypt as the first verifiable instance of a zombie outbreak. The most recent entry is 2002, Saint Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Appendix

The Appendix takes the form of a sample "Outbreak Journal", with the fictional author noting a covered-up zombie outbreak being seen on the local news. The following pages are blank entries, presumably for the reader to use as a basis for their own journal; their inclusion furthers the overall feel that the book is a survival guide to a real life-threatening possibility.

Cultural appeal

As a primarily niche-oriented piece of fiction, *The Zombie Survival Guide* appeals largely to two groups:

Humor fans

The book's humor is derived from its deadpan delivery and general style of parody of the survival books that were popular at the time it came out, like *Army Survival Manuals*. While examining the menace that zombies represent in great detail, from the biological makeup of a zombie to anti-zombie tactics in different strategic situations, the book never alludes to considering its subject as anything less than a real, plausible threat to mankind.

Throughout the book, unnamed "research" is cited as the backup for most arguments, though individual events (as listed in the **Recorded Attacks** chapter) are also cited where relevant. The reader is frequently warned that the advice is ignored at the reader's own peril, with the end result of "cold hands gripping your arm and dirty, worn teeth biting into your flesh" supposedly being a very real possibility.

Zombie fans

The book attempts to definitively state the rules for zombie-related canon. Clarified subjects include:

- How zombies are created
- Why exactly zombies can only be killed by damage done to the head
- Why zombies are unaffected by standard offensive tactics
- Why zombies qualify as "undead"

Presented facts are largely compatible with events and/or concepts seen in various zombie films, adding another level of authenticity for fans of the genre.

Solanum

The guide introduces the fictional virus "Solanum" (not to be confused with the plant) to explain the zombie outbreaks detailed in the book. The virus is said to be neither waterborne or airborne; the only way to become infected is through direct fluidic contact, in which context the virus is 100% communicable, with a 100% mortality rate. Although bites are most common, infection can be obtained through open wounds brushing against each other or being splattered with remains, usually after explosions. The guide also states that no one has recorded a test of sexual contact with a zombie but, as inferred from other cases, is a highly probable path of infection.

How it works

Solanum is described as traveling through the bloodstream, from the initial point of entry to the brain, where it uses the cells of the frontal lobe for replication, destroying them in the process. During this period, all bodily functions cease; by stopping the heart, the subject is rendered "dead." The brain remains alive, but dormant, while the virus mutates its cells into a completely new organ. The most critical trait of this new organ is its independence from oxygen. By removing the need for this all-important resource, the undead brain can utilize, but is no way dependent on, the complex support mechanism of the human body. Once this mutation is complete, this new organ reanimates the body into a form that bears little resemblance (physiologically speaking) to the original corpse. Some bodily functions remain constant, others operate in a modified capacity, and the remainder shut down completely. This new organism is a zombie, a member of the living dead.

(In reality, the blood-brain barrier might prevent a bloodborne infection from reaching the frontal lobes.)

Cross-species infection

The guide states that through numerous tests, Solanum has been proven fatal to all species; however, reanimation will only occur in humans. Infected animal carcasses are safe to handle after a few hours of death. Tests have also proven that infection through insect bites such as those from mosquitoes is not possible; insects are able to sense and reject the infected fluids.

Symptoms

- **Hour 1:** Pain and discoloration (brown-purple) of the infected area. Immediate clotting of the wound (provided the infection came from a wound).
- **Hour 5:** Fever (99-103° F), chills, slight dementia, vomiting, acute pains in the joints.
- **Hour 8:** Numbing of extremities and infected area, increased fever (103-106° F), increased dementia, loss of muscular coordination.
- **Hour 11:** Paralysis in the lower body, overall numbness, slowed heart rate.
- **Hour 16:** Coma
- **Hour 20:** Heart stops. Zero brain activity.
- **Hour 23:** Reanimation.

Critical response

Critical response to *The Zombie Survival Guide* has been largely positive.

The BBC rated the book a four out of five, saying "this is probably the best book specifically designated to combat the zombie threat." ^[1] On The Fourth Rail, a comic review website, the book received a "Mildly Recommended (5/10)" rating, citing the book as "[coming] off like serious advice, like getting a talking-to from your dad about the dangers of the undead." ^[2] On the online shopping comparison website Epinions.com, the book has a rating of four stars (out of five), with four reviews. ^[3]

References

- Brooks, M. *The Zombie Survival Guide*, Three Rivers Press, 2003. ISBN 1-4000-4962-8
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- ? "BBC - collective - Max Brooks - *Zombie Survival Guide*" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/collective/A7605434>) from the BBC
- ? "The Zombie Survival Guide" (<http://www.thefourthrail.com/reviews/snapjudgments/092903/zombiesurvivalguide.shtml>) on TheFourthRail.com
- ? "The Zombie Survival Guide" (http://www.epinions.com/The_Zombie_Survival_Guide_Complete_Protection_from_the_Living_Dead_by_Max_B) on Epinions.com

See also

- *World War Z*

External links

- The Zombie Survival Guide Website (<http://www.randomhouse.com/crown/zombiesurvivalguide/>)
- Washington Post interview with Max Brooks (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2003/10/26/DI2005033114558.html>)
- Daniel Robert Epstein of SuicideGirls interviews Max Brooks (<http://suicidegirls.com/words/Max+Brooks/>)

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