



End of Days: A Novel

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Lydia Lozen Magruderâ€™the great-granddaughter of a female Apache war-shamanâ€™has seen visions of the End since childhood. She has constructed a massive ranch-fortress in the American Southwest, stocked with everything necessary to rebuild civilization.

Now her visions are coming true. John Stone, once a baseball star and now a famous gonzo journalist, stumbled across a plan to blast humanity back to the stone age. Then he vanished. Lydiaâ€™s only hope of tracking him down lies with her stubborn, globe-trotting daughter, Kate, Stoneâ€™s former lover.

Kate is about to step right into the plottersâ€™ crosshairs. Stone has been captured by a pair of twin Middle Eastern princesses, hell-bent on torturing him until he reveals all he knows.

Meanwhile, a Russian general obsessed with nuclear Armageddon has also disappeared...as have eight or more of his Russian subs, armed with nuclear-tipped missiles.

The world is armed for self-destruction.

Who will survive?

End of Days: A Novel Details

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From Reader Review End of Days: A Novel for online ebook

Denise says

2.0 out of 5 stars Finally done! I could barely make it to THE END of this book.

I'm a person who always feels compelled to see a book through to the end, regardless of how I'm feeling once I hit page 50; by that benchmark I usually know if I'm going to like it -- or not. I laboriously read my way to that page and knew I was doomed. I forced myself to finish this wordy tome, and words fail me as I try to convey my message to unsuspecting readers who might be tempted to snap this up because of a completely ludicrous set of blurbs proclaiming that this apocalyptic novel is the next great epic of nuclear annihilation. Really? I want to read whatever book those people read -- honestly, the excessive praise by "bestselling authors" and award winners stuns me and makes me question forever if they actually really ever read the books or if they just trade bon mots and write rave reviews for each other on some sort of exchange program?

Here's my review in a nutshell. Do not waste your time on this book unless you enjoy torturing yourself with visions of talking rats, cogent machines, thinking warheads, trash-talking characters who have no redeeming qualities, a heroine who requires you to suspend disbelief as she survives unbelievable peril (not to mention nuclear detonation, radiation fallout, and multiple surefire death scenarios) and an old woman reminiscent of a similar character in Stephen King's *The Stand* (a far superior novel). I didn't like any one in this novel and really didn't care if they survived or not.

Frankly, there's nothing redeeming this book from the dumpster -- I can't think of a single person I'd pass this one to. I love a good apocalyptic novel - but this wasn't one of those. Skip it!

Whitley says

What will the future bring? Well, if it brings anything like this, watch out! For me, *End of Days* was one of those books that sweeps me up and doesn't let me go. The best kind of read, as far as I'm concerned. A complex, richly satisfying plot and the kind of drive that makes a great thriller great.

Victoria says

I read about 300 books a year, and of those 300, usually it is only one or two each year that are so bad that I can't bring myself to finish them. This was one of those books for me this year. I tried to finish it, made it halfway through and the book so lost touch with reality and my waning interest that I just couldn't handle it anymore.

I mean, I knew that after the first 100 pages I was in trouble that in the eclectic cast of characters, the only one I could find myself even mildly curious about was a rat. Yes, a rat. There is a section from the P.O.V. of a large brown rat. Interestingly, this is the most sympathetic, human character of all.

The real mystery to me was how this book had gotten advanced praise from so many big name authors and

people... I feel like they read a different book than I did, because I couldn't see a kernel of truth to any of their praise. It didn't look like any of the quotes were from women, so maybe this is just one of those books that has fallen into the gender gap... Who knows? All I know is that I could not in good conscience recommend this to anyone. It's been a long time since I read a book that I loathed this much.

Jamie says

This is absolutely one of the worst books I've ever read. I'm not sure an editor ever touched it and can't figure out how this writer got a book deal out of this crap. The book is plagued by insignificant rambling that, if cut, would probably reduce the book by half. Did I mention that there are talking rats and missiles? Seriously. There are rats that talk and missiles that crack jokes just before they detonate in cities around the world. If you were expecting Tom Clancy here, you'll be disappointed to find what may turn out to be a 13-year-old boy behind this one. Save yourself. I wish I would have never come across this book.

Chris says

Meh.

Stephen says

I received this book through the Goodreads First Reads giveaway.

I truly did not know what to expect when I started *End of Days* two months ago. It had all of the praising statements from famous people that come with a good publisher's advertising dollars. What I did not know was that Tor/Forge was indulging one of their loyal employees by publishing his book.

The book starts off in a chaotic jumble of short scene after short scene. These short scenes served to introduce, then expand on, the stories of the many varied characters in the book. This chopped up style made the fairly boring early chapters even harder to read. It took me a very long time to get to the 1/2 way mark.

As this book progresses, it feels like it is going absolutely nowhere. Unbelievable characters, like a super-rat and sentient nuclear warheads, take the reader out of the apocalyptic fiction mode and plop them into Cartoon Network. So few of the characters did anything realistic; and most of the villains were, at-best, caricatures of movie and real life "bad-guys" so exaggerated to be comical.

One very specific gripe I have...lists that go on forever make me hate to read a book! This author was fond of listing every landmark, historical figure, political factoid, or trivia answer that he could think of for each location that comes up in the story. Not only that, but this tendency continued with each nuclear missile getting a chapter to describe it fulfilling its mission. What else? This OCD-esque need to share caused a lot of dialogue to get bogged down in either more lists or impromptu history lessons about information with little or no relevance to the plot.

If I had just read the last approximately 200 pages, I would have probably given this 3 or 3.5 stars. The final chapters were better paced, more interesting, and far less outrageously unbelievable.

It is really too bad that the execution of this story is so bad. I think the idea behind this story is very good. We could use a warning that nuclear war is still only a trigger finger away. However, I think a Public Service Announcement will be a better way to go...I don't want anyone else to subject themselves to this book.

Karen says

I knew the book was going to be bad just from the first couple of chapters. It opens with the protagonist, a female reporter coming out of her tent during azaan in Mecca (non Muslims are not allowed in Mecca, especially unaccompanied females). She was there to cover a story of a former soviet diplomat's conversion to Islam (wow! The author created 2 evil doers in one communist Muslim terrorist - the only thing missing is a zombie). After a few chapters I had to stop reading. Judging from the other reviews I can be thankful as it seems I was fortunate enough to miss out on the philosophical warheads and talking rats.

Enka-Candler Library says

I don't even know where to begin with this one. I picked it up, thinking "oh, I'll read a little standard end of the world story--you know, cheery stuff". It started sort of promising, but oh my...by the time I gave up around p. 250 I was ready to drop a nuke on it myself. Yes, we understand there's a pile of weapons and stuff to make weapons out there on the black market, that's what I thought I was in for, but when I hit the first chapter about the rats that were "aware" in some sort of freaky "Watership Down" kind of way, I lost it. Even worse, when the missiles and suitcase nukes were also "aware" and chatty, that was way over the top--even for me. Lots (and lots) of meaningless characters, sub-plots, tortures, volcanic eruptions, submarine stories, space-station stories, blowing up Graceland (yes, really), etc. Yes, I confess I skimmed the last couple of hundred pages or so, but I just wanted to see if any of it finally made sense. The answer is no.

--Leisa

Bill Mackela says

This book is not an easy read. There are a lot of things that will make you want to quit. I was about a third of the way through and I was thinking, "What the heck is going on? Am I going to keep reading or should I just give up now?" Why did I feel this way? Let me tell you.

This is a thick, large size paperback, with small type. I needed real good light to be able to read it easily. The kindle version with adjustable font size would be a great option.

The action takes place all over the globe, and is told from many different characters points of view, and some of those characters aren't even human. There is a large, intelligent rat, a computer in an orbiting space station, and a whole bunch of sentient nuclear devices, bombs, cruise missiles, etc. These bombs and missiles are talking and telling you what is going on. The computer is an advanced AI device, and won't talk to anyone. And a talking rat! Well that really made me wonder about this book.

Many of the human characters don't feel real at all. They are caricatures. Their mission is to tell Mr. Gleason's story of the future. And they do, sometimes it's more like a sermon or a documentary instead of a novel. Mr. Gleason wants to warn us about the impending Armageddon. He is using this piece of just-about-

fiction to drum it into our thick skulls.

OK, so you don't give up. You make it to the halfway point. Now the book begins to jell. You get used to the weird, non-human characters. You begin to get in the flow of the book, and then it's OK. Once you make it over the hump you can start to enjoy reading End of Days. The rest of the book is an exciting, fairly straight forward apocalyptic novel. Like any good near-future science fiction novel, most of the science has a ring of truth to it. The nuclear destruction of the planet and most of the human race isn't a pleasant idea to have to think about, but Mr. Gleason's hypothesis seems to be based in fact.

Mr. Gleason is a very skilled writer. He can really craft a sentence. I really did like the way he wrote. But this book is more than just a novel. This is a platform to warn us, maybe to make us get involved, to do something so that this novel, End of Days, isn't what our future holds for us, and our children and grandchildren.

Should you read this book? I don't know. If you can put in the work, plow through the weird style, and then digest what Mr. Gleason is saying, you will get something out of it. Not an easy read, but it ended up being worth the work to me. I give End of Days 4 Stars out of 5, and a Thumbs Up.

I received a copy of this book for free from Forge Books.

Rob Ballister says

Thank God it 19s fiction 26for now.

Robert Gleason's END OF DAYS is a chilling (and thankfully fictitious account) of the cataclysmic end of the world, and the resulting struggle for mankind's survival. It is interesting, shocking, violent, scary and entertaining all at the same time. It does however need more polish before I would categorize it as "good."

The old Soviet Union's nuclear weapons are available for the taking, either on the black market or just by stealing them from the hundreds of ungarded, unsecure storage sites throughout the world. Some fear that this will lead to a worldwide proliferation of nukes, and begin to prepare for Armageddon while trying to convince others that the end is coming. The doomsday prophecies come true when suitcase nuclear weapons are detonated at the same time as "Russian" subs begin launching nuclear cruise missiles at major cities all over the world. The rest of the world immediately begs the US to lead a response before it's too late, but the acting US president (much of the National Command Authority was killed when Washington DC was nuked) is weak and won't respond. Nuclear explosions continue to rock the world, and eventually the US military acts without authority and responds with nuclear strikes of its own. By the time it comes to light that the Russians were framed by a small middle-eastern country, the Motherland's major cities are already glowing with nuclear fallout. The world plunges into chaos.

In the United States, militias bond together for survival, as do large numbers of convicts now free from their incarceration (and who for some reason have been preparing for this very moment). Eventually their ranks grow to the tens of thousands, and they too have liberated nuclear weapons. It seems the killing isn't over.

Those are the books more chillingly believable parts. A number of of interesting story lines are developed, but probably one too many for a truly coherent story. In addition to a beautiful reporter who seems to be trying to get herself killed to prove her worth to her billionaire-Armageddonist mother, there is the white

supremacist, the Mexican gang leader, and a reborn Malcolm X. There are two generals, a space station, an AI presence that can see all, and several rats that seem to speak with each other as if they went to the Ivy League. Through in a pair of sex-crazed sisters who are insatiable both in their lust for sex and torture, and things start to get a little less "real."

Finally, the climax involves three heroes who were once on the NY Yankees as the team won six consecutive championships before they went their separate ways. One became a Pulitzer winning journalist; one a drug dealer serving three consecutive life sentences, and one an Air Force General. They meet up again just in time to prevent the bad guys from nuking mankind's best hope to rebuild. Now we are into pure entertainment.

Overall, it was an entertaining read, though a bit on the long-winded side at 490+ pages. There's plenty of foul language, sexuality, torture, violence, blood, animal cruelty, suffering and despair. There is also some dark humor, some likeable characters, and enough discussion of Armageddon to at least make you think about it.

Mark says

Had a chance to read an advance reading copy of Gleason's soon-to-be released novel. Very detailed, thoroughly researched. Also has some unexpected personifications of some of the end of days players. Really enjoyed, couldn't put it down.

Annmarie says

Read 50 pages, gave up. Booklist was on crack with their glowing review.

Trekscribbler says

END OF DAYS Is Little More than Gibberish On An Apocalyptic Scale

I pride myself on my ability to finish a book. When that doesn't happen – when, for whatever reason, I give up on a read, deciding my time is too precious to continue it – I struggle with the idea of penning a review. Is it fair, after all, to the work as a whole to cast some assessment on what I've read? While others have told me it isn't, I tend to believe otherwise, and here's my reason: if I didn't find a tome relevant or interesting or dynamic enough to compel my investment in it further, isn't that a consumer assessment worth sharing?

END OF DAYS is only the third book – in all of this lifetime – that I've failed to finish. (The other two shall remain nameless, but, if you're a follower of what I've penned, then you may already know what the other two are.) The first book? Well, the basic problem I had with that one was that it was (a) non-fiction and (b) the author wrote it from the perspective that meant it was all about him and not so much the subject matter. Eighty pages into his work, I knew more about him – who he liked, disliked, supported, and belittled – than I did the subject, and, given the fact that it was supposed to be a non-fiction science book, I realized it just wasn't for me. The second book? Oh, it was a H-U-G-E bestseller that essentially put that popular writer on

the map. He has a great career even today with a tremendous following. The problem I had with that book was that, halfway through, I reached a point where I honestly couldn't believe how stupid the main character was. That wouldn't have been so bad except for the fact that he was supposed to be a genius – graduated at the top of his college class – but everything he did was just so lame-brained backward, I just lost faith in the writer instead of the character.

This brings me to END OF DAYS.

Now, I'd read Robert Gleason's last work, WRATH OF GOD, and I loved it. It, as well, was an apocalyptic thriller of a decidedly sci-fi/fantasy variety, and, while I understood why so many critics dismissed it as a low-brow Michael Crichton knock-off, WRATH OF GOD totally hooked me. Sure, maybe the science was all a bit too fictional for some tastes (time travel, re-invigorating an extinct dinosaur species, etc.), but it was never intended to be a 'hard science' book. It was this great adventure of mankind's best heroes being plucked from beyond time in order to bring them into the future, given the task to build a force to defend the planet against a marauding enemy. Probably, WRATH OF GOD was as loved as it was hated, and, though there was some talk long ago about it being turned into a motion picture, nothing appears to have seriously come from that.

I came across END OF DAYS in the corner bookstore, and I wasn't even aware that Mr. Gleason had even released another book. The title promised that what was inside was "the greatest apocalyptic thriller since THE STAND." You're familiar with THE STAND, I hope? Stephen King's seminal work on the end of the world? If not, then I encourage you to pick it up and read it sometime this go around. While I'd agree with anyone who claimed it had its share of fluff, THE STAND really is King's highwater mark; it brings together character drama, horror, religion, and science in a way so few writers have ever accomplished. Given that END OF DAYS came from Gleason and appeared to be following the same vein, I couldn't pass it up.

I wish I had.

Officially, I called it quit at page 250 (out of 800) mostly because, at almost one-third of the way into the book, there appears to be absolutely no clear central unifying narrative. Rather, END OF DAYS appears as if it was intended to be a collection of shorter works, the only unifying element being that they take place (presumably) in the same time period. Oh, before you pish-posh over my casting stones at the work, I'm happy to say that there's something about missing suitcase nukes, renegade submarine commanders, a kidnapped author's last manuscript detailing how the world may end ... but then there's also a running adventure involving sentient, talking street rats (and bilge rats, no less!) who speak and talk and think and act the way grown men and women do; something about twin foreign sisters conspiring with their brother to bring about the apocalypse; and a non-too-clever reporter who thinks it's funny slipping a flask of whiskey into Mecca. And, at page 250, none of it even remotely appears to be heading ANYWHERE. Plus, every character – for reasons that clearly indicate Gleason probably could've used an editor – every character is given his or her own flashback (or, in some cases, series of flashbacks) right in the middle of the story so that it's never quite clear when or where these events have taken place. Lastly, there's yet another developing story involving white supremacy, defamed Major League baseball players, and American prisons that operate like Third World regimes.

Seriously, I don't believe I've read so much gibberish trapped within 250 pages (out of 800!!!), nor do I hope to ever again.

NOT RECOMMEND. END OF DAYS was a huge, huge, utter disappointment. I picked it up, hoping to yet again be transported vicariously to a grim world of tomorrow ... but, instead, I was reminded that sometimes

all hope is lost before we even imagine what the ending could be. Sorry, Bob. This apocalypse of yours just wasn't meant to be.

Shaun Thomas says

As far as post-apocalyptic dystopian novels are concerned, Robert Gleason's *End of Days* is unique mostly because it's *mid*-apocalyptic. Some of the blurbs on the jacket proclaim Gleason as the "Dante of our age," so it must have been worth reading. I'm not sure what kind of hyperbole inspired a comment like that, but I really hope it's sarcasm.

That isn't to say *End of Days* is bad! Far from it. Overall, I found the narrative engaging, the loose plot unique, and the sub-threads interesting. Gleason writes well enough, and his social commentary is fairly accurate, so it can easily contribute to a misleading sense of prescience. Unfortunately it's mostly empty and bizarre in a myriad of mutually conflicting ways.

Let's begin with those sub-threads I mentioned. There are several of them, and they're all essentially self-contained, though it's clear they'll eventually influence each other.

We have Sailor, a sentient rat who roams the world searching for relevance. Then there's the Magruders, a relatively wealthy family whose matriarch, Lydia, is exceptionally paranoid and has constructed a massive Citadel out in the desert. There's the John Stone, a reporter searching through the Middle East working on his groundbreaking exposé on the looming and basically inevitable nuclear war. We have the president and his cronies, most notably Jack Taylor, who gets to set the stage for most of the action as the curtain falls. There's Cool Breeze, a former baseball legend turned prison inmate due to an unfortunate temper. Of course, "Mad" Vlad Malokov acts as a foil to whip everyone up into a frenzy. There's Cassandra, a former nun turned infamous gospel diva, crusading in her own way to bring understanding. And we can't forget Thucydides, a newly emergent AI set in a space station, the better to chronicle the downfall of society. Most notably are the figurative and literal barrage of personified nuclear weapons, given "life" because of the spark of the universe each contains.

Did I forget anyone? Probably. There's the usual cast of supporting characters, of course, and other named elements that explore various facets of the emerging implications. But I hope the problem with this novel is obvious at this point. It's not that the novel tries to do too much with too many characters. It's that all of these things happen simultaneously, all of them have roughly equal weight, and any attachment to any of them is ephemeral at best. It's that the plots are disparate and confused, a work of short stories loosely stitched together and called a novel. But why?

Cassandra's songs are meant to inspire, but her admittedly tragic origins become washed out bellyaching. Yes, we know "Hiroshima's gone." Repeating this *ad infinitum* among her various scenes leaves her less of a touching inspiration, than an irritating emo teen. That Thucydides considers Cassandra humanity's soul is understandable, if an odd fixation as the world collapses around it. I thought the idea of Cassandra and Thucydides were both completely wasted because they were marginalized. The true tragedy of Cassandra isn't her horrifying past, but her flat characterization.

John's interactions with the Sin Sisters starts out terrifying. What will they do to him next? Will they ever let him go? Why did they even kidnap him? But it just goes on, and on. Gleason seems to take a sick pleasure in

narrating genital torture, since that seems to be the prevailing focus of their administrations. Oh, and one of the sisters is a doctor, so Stone becomes the proverbial Schrodinger's Cat. This also becomes tiresome and overplayed. Oh, they're torturing him again, and ranting crazily whilst doing so? Bummer.

But nobody does crazy ranting like Mad Vlad. He has a gleeful, almost suspicious knack for it. Gleason clearly did his homework, because he describes several mechanisms chemical, biological, and nuclear, which Vlad threatens to unleash, or justify the havoc he's supposedly unleashing. There's even a clever explanation for how incessant Vlad is about jerking Jack Taylor's chain. This too, is overdone however. Vlad calls Taylor and yells at him. Taylor blanches! Vlad calls Taylor and berates him. Taylor flinches! Vlad calls Taylor and gibbers mindlessly like a baboon for an hour. Taylor becomes aghast! Vlad calls Taylor and describes the painfully intricate minutia of a prostate exam. Taylor cries. It got so ridiculous, I started skimming these sections, because they were all the same.

But nothing broke my suspension of disbelief like Sailor the rat and his adventures, or the sentient nuclear devices. This isn't Redwall, so he's supposed to be an actual rat. But he's also much more. He's a hero, a leader, a philosopher, a giant, an explorer, a visionary, a sous chef, a rodeo clown, and everything in between. This starts irritating, but becomes outright ridiculous. Is there anything Sailor can't do? Nope. And I can say that because he basically survives several proximal nuclear strikes, in addition to outsmarting every human he encounters. Of course, his hopes and inspirations are equal to the various musings of the missiles and suitcase nukes as they *yearn* to fulfill their duty, and fretful anguish should they possibly fail. Oh, the trials and tribulations of spiritual WMDs, how I weep for their suffering.

All of these fragments are ultimately weakened by their reliance on the overriding narrative. I would have read a short story about Sailor. A sentient space station is a great concept. Cassandra would have been a much stronger character if she wasn't forced to whine about the looming holocaust. It's the little things like this that make the novel a weird read instead of a good one. Gleason seemingly tried to touch *every* genre simultaneously, and like any Jack of All Trades, he mastered none. This novel is good, but it absolutely does not live up to the hype. Keep that in mind, and you'll feel a lot better about reading it.

MJ says

Interesting premise--but I'm not going to tell you.

Waaaaaaaaaayyyyyyyyyy too many words. I finally started to speed read through the boring parts....not just one nuclear missile with thoughts but 75 missiles each with their own thoughts as they speed to their targets. Also some rather graphic torture scenes for me.
