



XCOM 2: Resurrection

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In the world of XCOM, the governments of Earth unite under threat of an alien invasion and form XCOM, an elite paramilitary organization tasked with repelling the extraterrestrial offensive and defending humanity. Woefully outgunned, XCOM's only hope is to outsmart and outmaneuver the enemy by turning the aliens' power against them. Making clever use of game elements, *XCOM 2: Resurrection* details the strategy and costs of war in a compelling narrative sure to delight sci-fi aficionados and fans of the game series.

XCOM 2: Resurrection Details

Date : Published November 10th 2015 by Insight Editions

ISBN : 9781608877126

Author : Greg Keyes

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Dystopia, Fiction, Games, Gaming

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From Reader Review XCOM 2: Resurrection for online ebook

Andrew says

If you love the XCOM games then this book is for you. Okay, it's not going to win an literary competitions but Keyes has a good pedigree. This is a decent story and an entertaining read so far as tie-in books go. It tells the story of a group of rebels fighting back against their alien overlords (Earth having lost the fight following the events depicted in XCOM Enemy Unknown and XCOM Enemy Within). We meet Dr Shen and Dr Vahlen (the chief engineer and chief scientist respectively) that were in the first game. The battle scenes are dealt with well and the feeling of being up against overwhelming odds comes across nicely. The book is there to wet appetites for the game and the characters end up discovering the Avenger, a downed alien cargo ship that they start to re-fit and forms a central part of XCOM 2. The book was good, the game is truly amazing. It's a strong combination!

Trike says

This novel bridges the 20-year gap between the video game XCOM: Enemy Unknown (which I highly recommend) and the sequel, which was released in February 2016.

It's quite well written, although it does sport a fair number of missing words, all of which are small, such as "to" and "be".

The story starts off well, but then it sort of meanders. I suspect this is because he couldn't reveal anything terribly important about the plot of the game, so he focused on the interpersonal relationships and the quest for the new base for XCOM.

The premise is that humanity got creamed during the invasion in X:EU, so they need to rebuild the resistance and find a new base for XCOM. (The premise is based on the fact that most players lost the game. I didn't, but that's what the data mining told the developers.) Which is fine, but it kind of comes at the cost of telling an epic story. Also, some things like the Contagion Zones are brought up but no answers are given. Again, probably because it's part of XCOM 2.

If you're familiar with the characters from the game then this will scratch some of those itches to see what happens to them in the ensuing decades. One of the things the game does well is get you attached to your characters as you train them and equip them... and then they get killed off. You can get around that aspect by constantly saving your progress (which is known as "save scumming" by gamers), but it kind of cheapens the experience. Once you get a handle on how the game is played, you can ensure that most of your soldiers survive, but if you're playing honestly you will lose some.

In the game there's a memorial to the lost soldiers, giving their names, combat history and which mission they lost their lives on. It's a nice touch, one that Keyes utilizes in this book, as well. You get attached to characters and then they get killed. It underscores the stakes here, fighting an enemy that has superior technology.

That said, there are odd lapses, such as the fact the XCOM soldiers move with relative impunity without fear of being seen by satellite. Space aliens ought to have satellites, seems to me. After all, XCOM has them in the game, and they're a key element to your strategy, so leaving them out of this story seems strange.

But it's a pleasant, quick read, if you're willing to overlook such things.

Paul says

XCOM only managed to shoot down two UFOs? Really? They deserved to get stomped.

Valerie says

This is a book I was very much looking forward to reading. I have loved the game series that goes with this book since I was a teenager. The book is very well written and I recommend it to anyone who enjoys sci fi space and alien books.

Melody says

XCOM: Enemy Unknown is my favourite video game and I have poured an embarrassing number of hours into it since its release. When they announced there would be a sequel released in November 2015, I was pumped.

Then they delayed it until February 2016.

In the meantime, they released this novel which bridges some of the story gap between the two games. The creators made the brilliant decision to base the sequel not on the ending player receives when they win the game, but to follow the scenario that XCOM was crushed by the aliens almost immediately. Twenty years later, XCOM is struggling to regain the earth from the alien clutches. It will be an uphill battle of scrambling for resources and fighting against enemies that outclass your soldiers in almost every way.

I love this idea. XCOM is one of those games that is meant to be hard. It's not quite as rough as Dark Souls 2 (which I gave up on), but people lose XCOM far more often than they win at it, myself included. I think the only other game I lose at more consistently without giving up is The Binding of Isaac, which is another game I wholeheartedly recommend for anyone with a dark sense of humour. A very dark sense of humour.

Greg Keyes' novel is a fun, quick read that I enjoyed. It picks up after the twenty years have passed but before XCOM is really on its feet again and ends just before where I assume the game will start. The story is simple and relies on your knowledge of the game to care about certain characters and the significance of seeing particular aliens, which is probably fair since no one will read this who isn't a fan already. I had trouble differentiating most of the characters since the book is overloaded with interchangeable red shirts. There is also a romance subplot that I didn't buy since I felt like they only fell in love because she was new and he was the main character.

The action sequences, on the other hand, were well done. The fire fights struck a strong balance between realism and staying true to the quirks of the gameplay and mechanics. I also enjoyed the use of familiar characters - well used and not over done.

The book doesn't spoil any major storylines from the upcoming game (I don't think anyway) and while the book wrapped up neatly, it still teased some disturbing things, like the Contagion, that better play a role in

the game.

So if you're like me and eagerly counting down the days (19) until the new game, grab this book to help tide you over.

Stew says

Good story that fills in the gap between the invasion and where you start in XCOM 2.

Good characters and depicts a world of 2 halves, the new cities and their false utopia and the decimated world where the rest of the population live in small settlements.

Constantly harassed by ADVENT troops, contraband is destroyed and people go missing.

Worth a read if you like the games!

Michael says

My previous experience with Greg Keyes has not been good unfortunately. I've read two of his books based on the Elder Scrolls universe and did not care for them at all. To me, it wasn't Elder Scrolls, it was simply a very odd fantasy universe.

So I was a little concerned when I picked up XCOM2: Resurrection which is supposed to serve as a kind of bridge between XCom:Enemy Unknown and Xcom2, the search for more why did I miss when I had a 98% chance game? I am very happy to say that Greg did a fine job of creating a book that does exactly what you should with the XCom atmosphere. A book filled with dread and a sliver of hope.

You might think well that doesn't sound like a good book. True, on the surface it doesn't and if it wasn't XCOM, then honestly I might steer away from it. But from somebody who spent hundreds of hours playing XCOM games, it's exactly what I was looking for. ADVENT always seems to be right around the corner regardless of how well the squad thinks they are hidden. People die, lots of them, the story never makes excuses and trudges on for the good fight. The mission comes first and any secondary story is just that...secondary.

Greg has done XCOM proud, the words and scenarios play out well. It leaves you wanting to grab XCOM 2 and play it until its bitter end. Any XCOM fan should be happy with how this turned out.

Cam Mcneil says

Some interesting moments but the fact it's a prequel to a video game seems to hamper it from having any sort of climax. I will say I did like how characters were from diverse backgrounds which like the video games gives it the feel of a global effort.

David says

Its as good a book. It has a lot more meaning if you read it after playing xcom: enemy unknown with

ironman mode on first. or impossible difficulty.

Matthew Ardill says

Fans of a certain age will remember the UFO: Enemy Unknown/X-COM series with a certain degree of fondness. Released in 1994 the original put you in control of a squad of X-Com operatives fighting to save the world from alien invasion combining a mix of turn based strategy, base building and resource management that proved addictive. Flash forward to 2012 that same generation were now making games and we got a reboot of the beloved franchise. The streamlined and refined XCOM felt familiar but lacked some of the depth of its source. This didn't stop it from being a hit with fans which led to the February 5th release of XCOM 2. The problem though, XCOM 2 takes place in a very different world from what I left behind at the end of my XCOM game Greg Keyes (Locus award winner and author of stories set both in the Skyrim and Babylon 5 settings as well as his own original series The Kingdoms of Thorne and Bone) was handed the task of bridging that gap. Be warned, proceeding much further will contain some spoilers. I've tried to keep things as vague as possible but read on at your own peril.

In the fiction of the upcoming game as well as the novel XCOM never made it past the opening salvos of the war. They were able to weather the first few battles but soon the Council started turning on them and they were blasted into oblivion. Scattered to the wind over the next 20 years humans were cowed by their alien benefactors moving into "New Cities", given gene treatments to help cure them of all their ills and found themselves living in apparent luxury. Those who didn't want to live as kept pets were allowed to remain free living in settlements but devoid of even the basic modern convenience this was a hard life full of disease and danger. All of this happens before the book even starts and is fairly well communicated in the opening chapters.

The book is framed by a prologue and an epilogue told from the perspective of Central Officer Bradford, a broken man he did not take the fall of XCOM or the loss of the Commander well and has been living off the grid. His prologue serves to give you the gist of the 20 years leading to the opening of the novel. From there it switches to the first of three parts telling the story of a young resistance fighter named Amar (or K.B. for short). Not entirely green Amar is still fairly new but very early on suffers the loss of a friend and has to come to terms with the shifting rolls in their squad. Amar is a fairly effective entry point to the story, he is worldly without being overbearing and innocent without being naïve. He introduces us to the world in more depth where we find out the resistance (or Natives as they refer to themselves) have been fighting a guerilla war. Much of this comes from the perspective of educating Lena a "New City Girl" whom they rescue from smugglers.

Over the course of the first part of the story (called Natives) we have an emotional journey where Lena and Amar come to terms with where they stand and the nature of the world all under the auspices of a secret mission for an operative of the resistance known as Sam. The motivations never seem forced and for a book based on a strategy video game (not exactly known for in depth world building) it is surprisingly lived in. My only minor qualm is you seem to have a fair amount of mobility in this post invasion world with different nationalities scattered across the globe. They do try and address this by making it clear the difficulty in traveling.

After a tense first part of the novel we star to see the formation of connective tissue between the old game, the book and the new game with Part 2 called The Elpis. Here we meet Doctor Shen and his daughter Lily. Doctor Shen served as the chief engineer during the first game and Lily is set to serve as the chief engineer in XCOM 2. They are living aboard a submarine named the Elpis (the ancient Greek word for the personification of hope) they are working to rebuild XCOM and with the information that Sam was able to

bring back they are well on their way to achieving that. Setting off for the far southern ocean the mostly uneventful journey allows Lena and Amar to form a bond beyond that of reluctant guide and New City Girl with an agenda. We eventually encounter another blast from the past Doctor Valen the lead scientist from the original XCOM. It's clear there's a bit of bad blood between the two doctors but that doesn't prevent them both from working together to retake the planet. How they plan to do it is with a massive downed alien vessel. Using Sam's data recovered from XCOM backups they pinpoint the location of the large ship and begin to prepare for a recovery mission. Unfortunately things go side ways and KB's squad loses not just their commander Thomas (a seasoned XCOM veteran), the island and their ride. This is where we see Amar start to come into his own, taking command of the squad he gets them to safety and the mission is back on track.

This brings us to part three, The Avenger. The squad journeys through the Indian subcontinent to begin operations restoring the massive downed Alien vessel. We are able to watch Ammar and Lena grow and assume new roles. Lena working as an assistant to Doctors Shen and Ammar as the new Commander of the XCOM squads. The progression of the characters feels neither forced nor artificial. Keyes does a good job of building realistic and believable motivations and none of the characters feel setup as victims or plot devices. During this third part of the book we move from a rather idyllic start to a rather dark ending but one with hope. A recurring theme throughout the book, there is always reason to push forward. Ammar's strengths are tested, not just physically but spiritually and emotionally. We see Lena's true devotion to her companions and we see humanity at its finest pulling through and working together.

We close with one of the most powerful wartime poems in history In Flanders Fields by John McCrae. The poem resonates with the rest of the story drawing together the sacrifice of the soldiers who fell before and the generation who stand behind them ready to shoulder their burden when the time comes. Closing with an epilogue bringing us back to Bradford who insists on simply being called Central and allusions to the opening moments of the new game.

A tight and powerful read, Keyes did a terrific job of fleshing out the world of the game and providing some guidance as to where the characters we knew from the prior entry were at the start of the new game. There are certainly mysteries left to puzzle out but one thing is hammered home, this is not a story of one man and one woman or one squad but the story of those who came before and those who will come after. This is communicated in a way that doesn't seem heavy handed or dogmatic in its presentation. My only complaint is at times Keyes (an anthropologist by education and a linguistics buff by hobby) uses language in ways that feel slightly slanted in the setting. Not entirely unbelievable but a little wooden and somewhat forced. This is fairly rare though and often the core of the characters carry you through without it being distracting.

For fans of military sci-fi or the XCOM series this is a must and I'm glad to have read it prior to the release of the new XCOM game.

Claire Blackshaw says

This was a really fun read. The first time I picked up a licensed novel like this, knowing it was licensed. Really enjoyed the characters, the pacing at times suffered from what I think was a need to fit all the bits in. Though it painted the wider world really nicely and the core characters had a great tale, though the ending felt abrupt.

Anthonia says

This book isn't exactly the best. This book has plenty of fragment sentence, grammar mistakes and the more time the author spends developing a character, the more you'll wish they didn't even start. Too many mistakes in this book not a good for XCOM fans.

Marcus says

Pretty straightforward story. I found it effective, enjoyable, and was impressed that the author works a lot of details into the book that make it feel reminiscent of XCOM's gameplay. Did a good job of stoking my anticipation before the PS4 release.

Amy says

Not the greatest book you'll ever read. I'll only recommend it to the most dedicated of XCOM fans. It was interesting watching all the blocks fall into place as a precursor to XCOM 2 but several of the characters are one-dimensional and sometimes the book contradicts itself.

It's a quick read and has the occasional twist that I didn't see coming. I like some of the characters enough to maybe include them in my next campaign. KB and Chitto are going to kick some X-ray arse.

Jason says

I learned about this novel by reading articles on the XCOM Wiki site. I was excited to read this, being a big fan of the games. I had previously read Greg Keyes two Elder Scrolls books ("The Infernal City", rated 2.8, and "Lord of Souls", rated 3.4) and was pleased with them, so I had high hopes for "Resurrection".

SUMMARY

The novel takes place around the year 2033 or 2034, approximately 20 years after the events of the first XCOM video game. Aliens conquered Earth through the use of collaborator governments (now known as ADVENT), and much of the planet's surface has been destroyed through warfare and a biological weapon known as the "Contagion". Though many people live in the "New Cities" founded by the alien rulers and controlled by ADVENT, others live in "settlements" outside of the law.

The story follows a resistance fighter, Amar Tan. His team rescues another member of the fragmented resistance who is trying to resurrect XCOM, Earth's defense force prior to the conquest. Amar and his teammates must fight against the odds to accomplish their goal, while also meeting legendary figures (veterans of the original XCOM). Amar must also decide whether to trust Lena, a woman from the New Cities who may or may not be an ADVENT agent sent to derail the resurrection of XCOM.

OVERALL: 3.4 out of 5

I really enjoyed this book, though I am not sure if anyone who isn't a fan of the XCOM games will like it (or even understand it). The description of Earth that has been conquered by aliens is really good, and the main character of Amar is a good one to follow (though he does follow the slightly predictable arc of learning responsibility and rising through the ranks).

I would love to see Keyes write more in this setting without the constraints of supporting the impending release of a game.

RATINGS BY CATEGORY

CHARACTERS: 4 out of 5

The characters in this book don't explode off the pages like comic characters, but feel authentic over time. They have doubts and fears, hopes and dreams, and they're committed to their work. As the lead character, Amar develops and progresses the most, and I enjoyed reading about him. Most of the others aren't developed as much, though Lena gets a lot of time too. Characters from the first game, such as Dr. Raymond Shen and Dr. Moira Vahlren, were written perfectly given their previous exposure in the first game.

PACE: 3 out of 5

The adventure in this book takes the characters on highs and lows, from isolated settlements to the advanced "New Cities". It never bogs down, though sometimes the writing felt clipped or jagged, usually when transitioning between a quiet scene and an action one.

STORY: 4 out of 5

I thought this book was going to cover the collapse of human governments under the conquest of ADVENT, but it actually takes place just before the second game begins. Most of the main storyline is about setting up that game, but it's what is happening between the cracks that really worked for me.

First and foremost, this is probably one of the most realistic depictions of a planetary conquest by an alien power that I have ever read. I first considered that question when I read "Dorsai!" by Gordon R. Dickson (rated it low though, 1.9), and the problems around a planetary invasion (logistics, pure numbers, etc.) have bothered me ever since. ADVENT presents a perfect collaborator vehicle for the aliens. The destruction of the old cities and the establishment of new ones (where employment is somewhat optional, food and rent is apparently free, and everything is pristine and pleasant) makes it perfect, and the author really captures this in the novel. He also describes what it is like outside of the New Cities where people still struggle to stay alive, and raids by ADVENT are a day-to-day occurrence.

DIALOGUE: 3 out of 5

The dialogue is well written, though there isn't anything that jumps off the page either. Characters revisited from the video games feel appropriate, and the tricky realms of romance and betrayal are never cheesy; I never felt like I was reading a soap opera (unlike some other modern, popular novels).

STYLE/TECHNICAL: 3 out of 5

Keyes writes in a clear manner, and I never had a problem following the chain of events or understanding where things were in relation to each other. I was probably helped by the video game, especially regarding the parts of the novel that take place in the Avenger (an alien UFO repurposed to XCOM's use).

I felt like some of the action was flat. People shoot, they throw grenades, they shout, but I never felt like I was in the middle of the action.