Punctuated Equilibrium

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The Plot

A colony ship of 100,000 aliens has sets its sights on Earth. They invade today. Their plan is to cleanse the planet of human life, then make Earth their new home. A group of unlikely heroes from Washington DC witness and survive the initial stages of the attack. Their continued survival – and the fate of humanity itself – rests in their hands.

Important: Heroes begin with the **Edited Versions** of their character sheets, but all possess additional capabilities. These appear on the **Full Versions** of the character sheets. Heroes discover their hidden talents by (a) using them in a stressful situation, (b) really needing them, or (c) by trying to use them.

Each of the heroes has something important to contribute. Dr. Dwight Cooper has an intuitive grasp on Alien technology; Shady Manga an indomitable will to survive and avenge humanity; Larry Barnes a nose for danger; Sandra Bender the charisma to lead humanity back from the brink of destruction. More importantly, all four are fortuitously immune to the alien virus. In the course of the story, they will meet and try to survive the collapse of civilization. If they succeed, the next step is to prepare humanity for its first counter-attack.

The heroes don't realize it, but they are all connected by more than their DC addresses. Larry Barnes is the secret service agent assigned to protect the Bender family. Sandra Bender is secretly dating Shady Manga. Shady Manga desperately needs a dentist – and Dwight Cooper's office is always open.

The story begins with Shady Manga, who wakes at 6 AM with a horrible toothache, just an hour before the world's scientists detect the aliens' arrival. They share an eye-opening conversation about xenobiology in the lonely dentist office. If they do not become friends, at least they are on each others' radar. Meanwhile, Larry Barnes wakes up at 6:30 with horrible foreboding. At 7:30 AM, he receives orders to escort Senator Bender's family straight to the White House. If Sandra's paying attention, she'll want to get word to her secret boyfriend.

What happens next? That's up to the heroes. This is a "free style" adventure. Take full advantage of web resources for DC-area maps, installations, etc. Earlier groups have laid ambushes in the National Art Gallery, camped in the Pentagon, and turned the Israeli Embassy into a survivors' Mecca. The main events are initially outside the heroes' control, but as the story progresses, a creative group will manage to seize the initiative. Capturing and reprogramming a Hygiene Drone to deliver a nuclear weapon to the mothership is a popular option, but anything's possible. Punctuated Equilibrium could even be the first chapter in a full-blown post-apocalyptic campaign.

Timeline

Today, 7 AM – Alien ships sighted approaching Earth at near-light speed.

Today, 8 AM. The President – and every other leader on Earth – soon takes to the airwaves to calm the population and urge them to continue their daily lives. Workforce absenteeism is about 50%.

Today + 1 day – Alien drones fan out and attack every orbital satellite on Earth from 9 AM-1 PM EST. Cell phones, satellite TV, GPS, and many dependent technologies become useless. Panic spreads; runs on supermarkets, hardware stores, gun stores, etc. degenerate into widespread rioting around the world.

Today + 2 days – The U.S. military is called in to reinforce the National Guard's efforts to restore order.

Today + 3 days – Thousands of Alien Flu-spreading drones shoot down from the alien vessel into the Earth's major population centers. Flu-like symptoms quickly appear, filling hospitals.

Today + 4 days – 10% of the major urban populations are dead by morning. A mass exodus to the countryside begins before quarantines can be enforced. Another 10% of the urban population dies.

Today + 5 days – The President Bush and Vice President die of Alien Flu. Widespread outbreaks spread to every corner of the U.S. and all but the most isolated regions of the world.

Today + 6 days-13 days – Hell Week. American population falls to .1% of its May 27 level. Virtually every known public figure perishes.

Today + 14 days – DC is a ghost town. Roughly a thousand Hygiene Drones – 3' in diameter – descend on DC to prepare for the first alien landings – dissolving the dead, clearing wreckage, killing survivors.

Today + 1 Month – First alien transport lands with advance team of 100 aliens on the White House lawn. The rest continue orbiting.

The Characters

Non-Player Characters
Street Toughs
U.S. Infantry
Hygiene Drones
Alien Infantry

Player Characters:
Dr. Dwight Cooper
Agent Larry Barnes
Shady Manga
Sandra Bender

FULL VERSION

Dr. Dwight Cooper, Dentist, 75 points – played by Laurence Olivier

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+0	+8	+2	+3	+3	+0

Life	Life Lost	Heal
2		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+4 +0 flat-footed	+2

Reflex	Will
+2	+2

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+2	+2	+0	+0

Skills: Chase 4 (+7), Computers 1 (+9), Craft 2 [electronics] (+10), Disable Device 4 (+7), Drive 4 (+7), Knowledge 2 [alien technology] (+10), Knowledge 4 [technology] (+12), Knowledge 2 [xenobiology] (+10), Medicine 4 (+6), Profession 9 [dentist] (+11)

Feats: Diehard, Inventor, Luck 2, Niche [aliens], Transporter

Powers: Device 2 [syringe; easy to lose]: **Fatigue 4** (*Extras:* Cumulative; *Feats:* Sedation, Subtle; *Flaws:* 10 Charges); **Immunity** [alien flu]; **Mind Control 5** (*Extras:* Cumulative, Continuous; *Flaws*: Limited (-2) [alien tech only], Touch)

Complications: Few Friends, Lonely, Enemy [The Aliens]

Abilities 19 + Saves 10 + Combat 8 + Life 0 + Skills 10 + Feats 6 + Powers 22 = 75

FULL VERSION

Shady Manga (née Wayne Gross), Street Punk, 75 points–played by Kenny Johnson

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+2	+1	+0	+2	+3	+3

Life	Life Lost	Heal
3		☐ 2 Hours ☐ Hour ☐ ½ Hour ☐ 10 Min.

Toughness	Fortitude
+4	+3

Reflex	Will
+2	+0

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+2	+0	+0 +5 w/melee	+8

Skills: Chase 4 (+6), Climb 1 (+3), Disable Device 6 (+7), Lift 4 (+6), Plan 5 (+6), Stealth 8 (+10)

Feats: Charge, Diehard, Luck, Elusive Target, Endurance, Improved Critical, Improved Recover, Instant Up, Niche [streetwise], Power Attack, Survivor, Transport [motorcycle] Weapon Master

Powers: Immunity [alien flu]; **Regeneration 5** ["*I'm never giving up!*"]

Drawbacks: Poor

Complications: Enemy [The Aliens], Enraged by Dissin', Street Punk

Abilities 11 + Saves 13 + Combat 15 + Life 5 + Skills 8 + Feats 13 + Powers 11 – Drawbacks 1 = 75

FULL VERSION

Sandra Bender, Senator's Daughter, 75 points – played by Chloe Sevigny

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+0	+5	+4	+2	+0	+8

Life	Life Lost	Heal
2		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+4 +1 flat-footed	+0

Reflex	Will
+2	+2

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+1 +5 w/fencing	+1	+0 +4 w/fencing	+0/+10

Skills: Chase 4 (+6), Computers 1 (+6), Diplomacy 10 (+18), Knowledge 5 [politics] (+10), Sense Motive 4 (+8), Stealth 3 (+5)

Feats: Aim, Attractive, Blind-fight, Diehard, Inspire, Language 2 [French, Spanish], Power 5, Niche [U.S. government], Wealth 2, Well-Rounded

Powers: Boost 5 ["*Rise to the Occasion*"] (Life, Attack, or Strike; *Flaws:* Personal) ; **Device 2** [fencing sword; easy to lose]: **Strike 4** (*Extras:* Armor-Piercing), Improved Disarm, Quick Draw; **Immunity** [alien flu]

Complications: Enemy [The Aliens], Senatorial Legacy, Spoiled

Abilities 22 + Saves 9 + Combat 8 + Life 0 + Skills 8 + Feats 16 + Powers 12 = 75

FULL VERSION

Larry Barnes, Secret Service Agent, 75 points – played by John Malkovich

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+0	+3	+1	+3	+2	-1

Life	Life Lost	Heal
3		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+7 +5 flat-footed	+3

Reflex	Will
+3	+1

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+1 +5 w/range	+3	+0 +10 w/.45	+8

Skills: Chase 6 (+9), Investigate 5 (+3), Intimidate 5 (+4), Knowledge 2 [DC power elite] (+5), Knowledge 2 [Government facilities] (+5), Notice 10 (+11), Plan 5 (+8), Search 4 (+7), Stealth 3 (+6)

Feats: Diehard, Interpose, Master Plan

Powers: Device 3 [.45 Magnum; easy to lose]: **Shoot 10**; **Immunity** [alien flu]; **Super-Senses 4** [Danger Sense – self, others, immediate, distant]

Complications: Enemy [The Aliens], Tactless, Subject to Orders [Secret service]

Abilities 8 + Saves 19 + Combat 14 + Life 5 + Skills 12 + Feats 3 + Powers 14 = 75

Street Toughs

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+3	-2	-1	+1	+1	+0

Life	Life Lost	Heal
2		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+2	+0

Reflex	Will
+0	-1

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+0 +2 w/melee	+1	+0 +2 w/melee +5/handgun	+0

Skills: Chase 3 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+4)

Feats: None

Powers: Device 1 [handgun; easy to lose]: **Shoot 5**

Complications: Touchy, Violent

U.S. Infantry

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+2	+0	+0	+1	+2	+0

Life	Life Lost	Heal
3		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+5 +2 w/o M16	+2

Reflex	Will
+1	+0

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+3	+1	+0 +2 w/melee +3/M16	+4

Skills: Intimidate 6 (+6), Plan 3 (+3), Profession [soldier] 5 (+5), Run 4 (+6), Survival 3 (+3)

Feats: Aim, All-Out Attack, Defensive Attack, Favored Opponent [terrorists], Improved Grapple, Teamwork 3

Powers: Device 3 [M16; easy to lose]: **Blast 3** (*Extras:* Autofire), +3 Toughness

Complications: Horny, Patriotic, Subject to Orders

Hygiene Drones

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+10	+0	+3	+2	+4	+0

Life	Life Lost	Heal
4		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+10	+4

Reflex	Will
+1	+2

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+2	+2	+0 +10 w/melee	+8

Skills: Chore 15 (+19), Computers 5 (+5), Intimidate 6 (+6), Investigate 4 (+4), Lift 25 (+35), Memory 20 (+20), Notice 2 (+5), Search 10 (+10)

Feats: Aim, Fearless 2, Improved Sunder, Move-By Action, Routine Attack

Powers: Disintegration 7 (*Flaws*: 10 Activation); **Flight 6** (Base Move 50 mph/500 fpr); **Super-Senses** (X-ray Vision [blocked by 2+' of earth], Progression 4 [25x range]); **Quickness 3**

Drawbacks: Vulnerable to electrical attacks (x1.5 damage)

Complications: Obedient to Alien hierarchy

Alien Infantry

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+4	+2	+0	+2	+2	+0

Life	Life Lost	Heal
3		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+10 +0 w/o Force Field	+4

Reflex	Will
+2	+5

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+2	+4 +2 flat-footed	+0 +6 w/martial arts +13 w/laser gloves	+3

Skills: Acrobatics 3 (+5), Computers 5 (+7), Craft [electronics] 2 (+4), Intimidate 3 (+3), Notice 4 (+4), Stealth 3 (+5)

Feats: All-Out Attack, Equipment 2 [high-tech switchblade]: **Super-Senses 3** [Awareness (Technology), Danger Sense (self – immediate, distant)], Language [Alien], Luck

Powers: Device 5 [laser gloves; hard to lose]: **Blast 13** (*Flaws:* 10 Activation), Improved Sunder; **Device 3** [force field belt; easy to lose]: **Force Field 10**

Complications: Subject to orders of Alien hierarchy

EDITED VERSION

Dr. Dwight Cooper, Dentist, 75 points – played by Laurence Olivier

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+0	+8	+2	+3	+3	+0

Life	Life Lost	Heal
2		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+0	+0

Reflex	Will
+2	+2

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+2	+2	+0	+0

Skills: Computers 1 (+9), Craft 2 [electronics] (+10), Knowledge 4 [technology] (+12), Medicine 4 (+6), Profession 9 [dentist] (+11)

Feats: None

Powers: Device 2 [syringe; easy to lose]: **Fatigue 5** (*Extras:* Cumulative; *Feats:* Sedation, Subtle; *Flaws:* 10 Charges)

Complications: Few Friends, Lonely, Enemy [???]

Abilities 19 + Saves 4 + Combat 8 + Life 0 + Skills 6 + Feats 0 + Powers 6 + Mystery Points 32 = 75

EDITED VERSION

Shady Manga (née Wayne Gross), Street Punk, 75 points–played by Kenny Johnson

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+2	+1	+0	+2	+3	+3

Life	Life Lost	Heal
3		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+4	+3

Reflex	Will
+2	+0

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+2	+0	+0 +5 w/melee	+8

Skills: Chase 4 (+6), Climb 1 (+3), Disable Device 6 (+7), Lift 4 (+6), Plan 5 (+6), Stealth 8 (+10)

Feats: Charge, Elusive Target, Improved Critical, Instant Up, Niche [streetwise], Power Attack, Transport [motorcycle]

Powers: None

Drawbacks: Poor

Complications: Enemy [???], Enraged by Dissin', Street Punk

Abilities 11 + Saves 13 + Combat 15 + Life 5 + Skills 8 + Feats 7 + Powers 0 + Mystery Points 17 – Drawbacks 1 = 75

EDITED VERSION

Sandra Bender, Senator's Daughter, 75 points – played by Chloe Sevigny

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+0	+5	+4	+2	+0	+8

Life	Life Lost	Heal
2		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+0	+0

Reflex	Will
+0	+2

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+1 +5 w/fencing	+1	+0 +4 w/fencing	+0/+10

Skills: Computers 1 (+6), Diplomacy 2 (+10), Knowledge 5 [politics] (+10)

Feats: Attractive, Language 2 [French, Spanish], Niche [U.S. government], Wealth 2, Well-Rounded

Powers: Device 2 [fencing sword; easy to lose]: **Strike 4** (*Extras:* Armor-Piercing), Improved Disarm, Quick Draw

Complications: Enemy [???], Senatorial Legacy, Spoiled

Abilities 22 + Saves 2 + Combat 8 + Life 0 + Skills 2 + Feats 7 + Powers 7 + Mystery Points 27 = 75

EDITED VERSION

Larry Barnes, Secret Service Agent, 75 points – played by John Malkovich

Strength	Intelligence	Wisdom	Dexterity	Constitution	Charisma
+0	+3	+1	+3	+2	-1

Life	Life Lost	Heal
3		☐ Week ☐ 2 Day ☐ Day ☐ ½ Day

Toughness	Fortitude
+3	+3

Reflex	Will
+1	+1

Attack	Defense	Damage	Initiative
+1 +5 w/range	+3	+0 +10 w/.45	+8

Skills: Intimidate 2 (+1), Investigate 5 (+3), Knowledge 2 [DC power elite] (+5), Knowledge 2 [Government facilities] (+5), Notice 5 (+6), Search 4 (+7)

Feats: Interpose

Powers: Device 3 [.45 Magnum; easy to lose]: **Shoot 10**

Complications: Enemy [???], Tactless, Subject to Orders [Secret service]

Abilities 8 + Saves 11 + Combat 14 + Life 5 + Skills 5 + Feats 1 + Powers 9 + Mystery Points 22 = 75

The Props

The Mothership

Street Toughs

U.S. Infantry

Hygiene Drone

Landing Party Ship

Alien Infantry