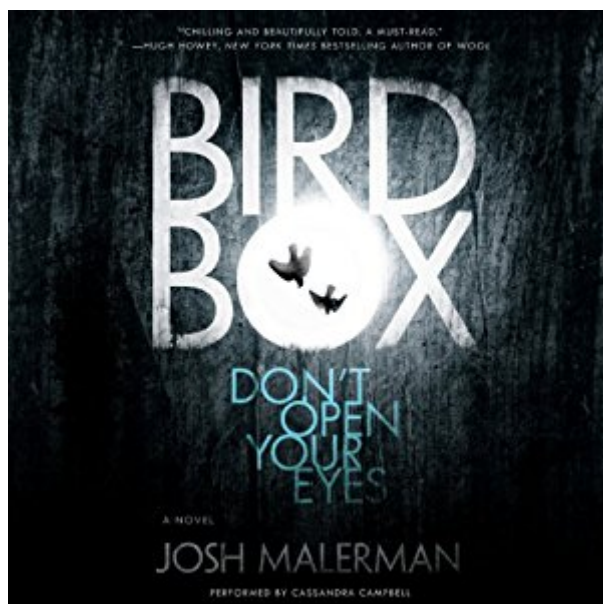


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Bird Box: A Novel



Synopsis

Something is out there.... Something terrifying that must not be seen. One glimpse and a person is driven to deadly violence. No one knows what it is or where it came from. Five years after it began, a handful of scattered survivors remain, including Malorie and her two young children. Living in an abandoned house near the river, Malorie has long dreamed of fleeing to a place where her family might be safe. But the journey ahead will be terrifying: 20 miles downriver in a rowboat blindfolded with nothing to rely on but Malorie's wits and the children's trained ears. One wrong choice and they will die. And something is following them. But is it man, animal, or monster? Engulfed in darkness, surrounded by sounds both familiar and frightening, Malorie embarks on a harrowing odyssey - a trip that takes her into an unseen world and back into the past, to the companions who once saved her. Under the guidance of the stalwart Tom, a motley group of strangers banded together against the unseen terror, creating order from the chaos. But when supplies ran low, they were forced to venture outside and confront the ultimate question: In a world gone mad, who can really be trusted? Interweaving past and present, Josh Malerman's breathtaking debut is a horrific and gripping snapshot of a world unraveled that will have you racing to the final page.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was recommended to me by a friend who apparently knows me better than I know myself. I don't usually read speculative fiction, as I generally like my trash a little more grounded in reality, which is to say, even the horrors of the night won't keep us all away from Facebook.

As such, post-apocalyptic stuff usually doesn't interest me. I mean, there are only so many ways to tell the story of how we have to rebuild civilization while protecting ourselves from whatever destroyed it, right? Bird Box is the same, but catchier. It opens with a woman named Malorie waking up and deciding that today is the day she will row twenty miles down a river, blindfolded, with her two young children, to try to reach other survivors. And that's when I said wait, hold up. Twenty miles to where? Why blindfolded? Survivors of what? And just like that, Josh Malerman got me. It all begins five years before, in the present day, somewhere in Russia. A couple of guys are in a car, the passenger asks the driver to pull over, then viciously and gruesomely murders him and kills himself. It's a weird anomaly, like the guy who ate the other guy's face in Florida a while back. Normally, a story like that would hit the news, then fade. But before long, there are many more such stories that all end the same way - with the perpetrator killing themselves before anyone can find out why. And as the events spread to the US, there are more and more paranoid theories, and fewer and fewer people to repeat them. The only constant is that the people who have been driven mad have opened their eyes outside. Malorie has just found out she is pregnant when she loses her sister, parents, and everyone else she has known.

Brief summary and review, no spoilers. This story has an interesting premise - what if human beings went crazy and committed murder/suicide simply by observing some mysterious "thing". In this story, it's unclear at the beginning whether it's some sort of alien creature or not, but humans around the world start committing suicide and murder in gruesome and horrible ways after witnessing "something" outside. The survival solution is for people to cover their windows and wear blindfolds whenever outside since the only protection seems to be to avoid seeing whatever is causing people to go insane. The main protagonist in the story is a young woman named Malorie who at the start of the novel, is living with her sister Shannon. Malorie finds out she is pregnant and knows she will be a single mother but that is the least of her problems as this crisis hits close to home. Malorie is able to find sanctuary at a home nearby where several people have banded together to survive. But we know early on that Malorie ends up alone with her two kids, and it seems terrible things have happened to the others. It is only at the end that we find out exactly what happened. The story is (usually) told in alternating chapters that veer between her time at the sanctuary while pregnant to a present day of sorts period over 4 years later as Malorie is trying to escape to some new sanctuary by taking her children by boat down a river; the whole while they are all blindfolded and facing dangers at every turn from all sorts of foes. It is only at the end that we find out what happened to her housemates and why she is heading down the river with her kids.

[spoilers ahead] I wanted to like Bird Box. I thought with such astonishingly high reviews on that it would definitely be a good book to listen to on a road trip with my dad. A while in (maybe 3-4 chapters), I paused and asked my dad a few questions since I'd obviously missed some key points. 1) Why exactly do these children not have names? Not even made-up ones? 2) How do ANY of these people know that their loved ones "saw" something just before dying? 3) I thought the book introduced this woman as intelligent. Is this the same woman? He told me I missed nothing, and that he had similar questions. I figured that the book HAD to have a fantastic ending. So many good reviews, right?! Nope. That's the only reason I came on to review. I trusted the reviews and was pretty underwhelmed. 1) The children had no names for absolutely no reason. "Names were a luxury." No they aren't. Try again. They were a device to create a tidy ending. 2) We find out that not even seeing the creatures through video will prevent their destructive power. Well how on earth did NO live television report ever capture one of these creatures, instantly maddening the entire viewing audience? Or at least, how was that not a mention of something that COULD happen? 3) Mallory is not the sharpest crayon in the box. But sure, she's got the "training kids" thing down pat. The most disappointing thing is never revealing what the creatures are. Are they extraterrestrial? Did they know what they were doing? Do they stay forever or leave? How do they enter the brain through humans perceiving light bouncing off them, not necessarily in-person?

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