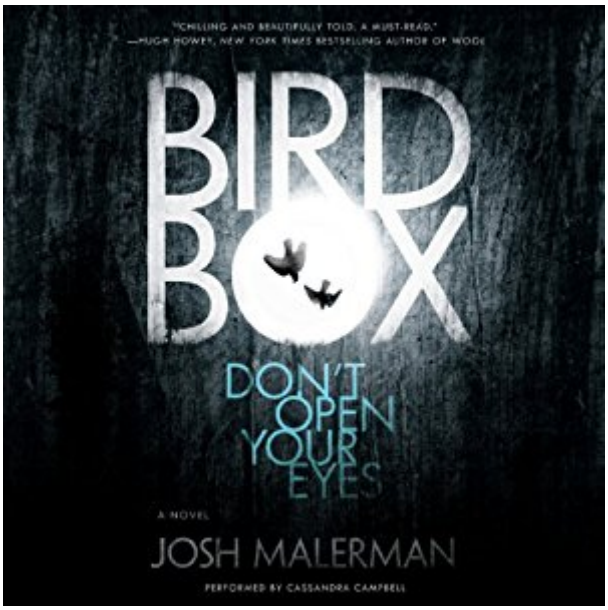
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Bird Box: A Novel



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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.

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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 donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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 wonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t keep

us all away from Facebook. As such, post-apocalyptic stuff usually doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t interest me. I mean, there are only so many ways to tell the story of ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“we have to rebuild civilization while protecting ourselves from whatever destroyed itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•, 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 thatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s when I said ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“wait, hold up. Twenty miles to where? Why blindfolded? Survivors of what?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• 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. ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a weird anomaly, like the guy who ate the other guyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢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. She finds a house with a few other survivors, and the grim vigil begins.The only way to describe Bird Box is as a whirlpool. We see Malorie of today, blindfolded with two small blindfolded children, navigating a river by sound alone, then we circle back to the house where she waits to give birth, then back to today. With every loop, the pace of the story picks up, and we are drawn more and more quickly to the center, the horrific night that the babies are born, and the fate of the others who were in the house. Simultaneously, there are fresh nightmares on the river in a number of flavors, including the creatures that have nearly destroyed humanity, a bad guy of the human variety, and even wolves.Bird Box was short and nasty in the best way. ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s like jalapeno fudge. It doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t sound that good, really. As I said, speculative, post-apocalyptic works usually turn me off. But hey, I do love chocolate, so I decided to try a bite. It was sweet and smooth, then BAM the heat kicked in. Totally different from what I usually enjoy, an unexpected jolt, but delicious nonetheless.The babies added a deeper level of emotion to the narrative. The fear and tension were unrelenting in both storylines, but seeing what Malorie went through to keep the little ones safe threw an element of heartbreak into the mix. It was actually harder for me to read how she trained them to always keep their eyes shut than to read the graphic murder/suicide passages.The prose is not poetic, but smooth, not descriptive, more statement of fact. I will admit, I initially wanted more description. I think I was spoiled by The Stand (uncut

version) where every nuance of the End of the World was spelled out in excruciating detail. With Bird Box, thereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s just one word - creatures - and we are left knowing exactly what Malorie knows, which isnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t much at all.In the end, itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s that leanness that is Bird BoxÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s strength and weakness. YouÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re thrown from one time period and situation to another, all of them breathlessly tense, until the final few pages. ThereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s no nice neat bow tying everything up. ThereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s no awkward explanation shoe-horned in. ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s less about the how and why, and more about the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“now what?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•.MalermanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s stripped-down prose is a perfect way to drive the narrative, but it doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t work as well when it comes to characters other than Malorie. Tom is the generic Calm Wise Leader. The other women are justÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| there, and with the exception of the bad guy(s) (no spoilers here!) the rest of men are interchangeable. We got a few sentences of backstory for some of them, but there isnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t enough to differentiate them from each other, or to generate any real emotion for the ones that are lost.Overall, Bird BoxÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s strengths far outweigh its weaknesses, and I look forward to seeing what Josh Malerman does in the future.The NerdÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Rating: FOUR HAPPY NEURONS

Bird Box by Josh Malerman, is a powerful, elegantly written story that absolutely enthralled me.The genius of this book is the fact that it focuses with sharp laser light on one singular story of survival, perseverance and terror.I loved the singular focus, because it was impossible to take my eyes off the page (this sentence is a reference to something you'll find interesting in a heartbeat here).Imagine that there's something in the world that causes utter insanity and homicidal mania in anyone who sees it. Where this thing came from, or why it exists does not matter. The facts of this story are that it DOES EXIST, and that if you open your eyes around it, you're lost forever.Given that intriguing scenario, there are a really interesting set of writing choices. First of all, the greatest temptation is to EXPLAIN and to explain what the heck is happening and why it is happening and allow the characters to make sense of it all.Wisely, Malerman entirely avoids that deceptively saccharine and simplistic choice. He doesn't explain. This is right in line with what I think about good fantasy and horror -- the best story comes from withholding everything you can. Never explain. Josh Malerman doesn't explain anything at all and his story is the more powerful for it.He just allows his story to unfold, and what a shocking, provocative and mind-rending story it is indeed.The story opens with Malorie and her two young children deciding to escape from the place she has been living for the past five years. Her very young children (who are almost never called anything else

than Boy and Girl) have been raised with every precaution of seeing anything that is outside, and with all the rules in place, she decides to leave. It is a very perilous journey, because she won't be able to see anything, and she has no idea what the world outside even looks like anymore!This terrifying journey is intercut with the past story of how the world got to this horrific pass and how she once had friends and that all fell apart.The way Malerman intercuts between the two storylines is masterfully done -- I've almost never seen it done better in any book.It is, in essence, a very simple story: survive.And because it is a story of survival, it is, in the end, what one might call a horror novel. But a profoundly well-written and intriguing horror novel that haunts one for months afterwards.I highly recommend BIRD BOX. It's a beautiful, terrible story.

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