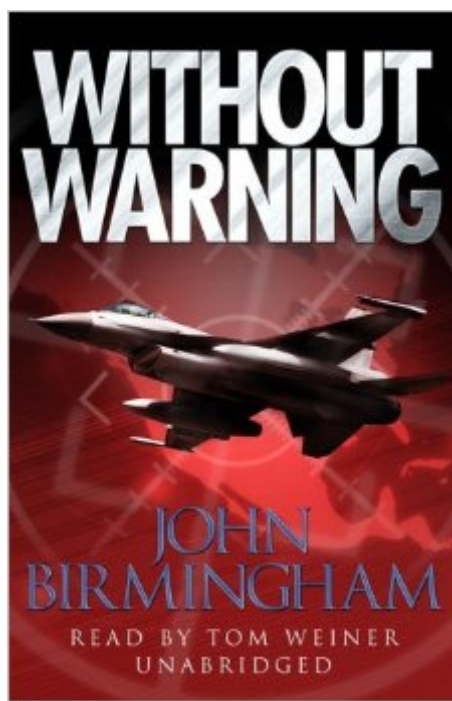


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Without Warning



Synopsis

Gritty, suspenseful, and thought-provoking, Birmingham's audacious geopolitical thriller asks what would happen to the world if America suddenly disappeared. On the eve of the U.S. invasion of Baghdad, as the world waits for war, a miles-high energy wave cordons a vast area from southern Canada to northern Mexico. In a moment, 99 percent of the U.S. population has been wiped from the face of the earth. To fill the vacuum, heroes rise to meet the unimaginable challenges of the city of Seattle: James Kipper, chief engineer of the city of Seattle and Caitlin Monroe are on the trail of a Muslim fanatic ready to take advantage of what becomes known as The Disappearance, while General Tusk Musso and Admiral James Ritchie try desperately to keep the peace in a world gone mad with fear.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In "Without Warning" John Birmingham once again presents us with a very real, very human, and very believable "alternate" world. This time, instead of 21st century battle fleets being thrown back through time to win World War Two, the premise of this tale is what would happen if the United States suddenly - and Without Warning - simply went away? In the blink of an eye, some unexplainable event causes every human being in the US (and in most of both Canada and Mexico) to simply cease to exist. The surviving Americans are stunned. The rest of world is either stunned or celebrating - at least for the moment. Then the real meat of the tale is served up - what would happen in the rest of the world if the biggest military power and the biggest economic power was

gone? Chaos, collapse, disorder, violence and suffering - among other things - is the answer. The detailing of which is where this book excels. And it's not just the detailing of the technical aspects - though there is that aplenty. Some have said that John Birmingham delivers up a "Clancy-esque" thriller. I disagree. It would have been too easy for Birmingham to have simply spewed reams of precise militaristic sounding facts and figures into page after page (after page) and call that fiction writing, as does Clancy. What John Birmingham has done instead is to strike a far better balance by keeping the tech-level present but not overwhelming while he sticks to telling his tale about the people involved. Not the machines, not the functioning of the machines but of what happens to the people in this scenario. That's what makes this tale engaging and keeps it compelling. There are no one dimensional characters in this tale and there's damn few two dimensional ones either.

John Birmingham has himself an interesting little premise. Rumor has it, one day while in Australia he overheard someone remark that the world would be a better place if the U.S. fell off the face of it. And that's basically where *Without Warning* starts. It's March 2003 and the U.S. is on the cusp of invading Iraq, when suddenly a strange energy field appears over most of the Continental U.S., vaporizing anything living within it. The only Americans to survive are those in the northwest corner around Seattle, plus those in Hawaii, Alaska, and anyone overseas--many of whom are military stationed in the Mid East for the impending war. So, America has fallen off the face of the earth--and now the world must really deal with what that means, economically, politically and socially. As I said, Birmingham has a very interesting premise. The strongest parts of his book were when he was really dealing with the repercussions of "The Disappearance"--how some Mid East countries close in on Israel and spark a small nuclear war, the political and religious riots in France and England, Venezuela making its move as a new power in South America. I wanted more about food riots, martial law, anarchy, who would fight who and side with who. I wanted to know what happened to Africa, China, Russia, Japan, India--countries we see very little of. Other than France and England, we really don't hear anything about the rest of Europe at all. Most of the speculation, which is what I sought in this book, took a backburner to the thriller-esque multi-character story lines. We followed a city engineer in Seattle (the best character by far), a marooned U.S. super-spy in France, a pair of sexy drug smuggler babes, an embedded Army Times reporter, a general in Cuba, a general in Hawaii, a shady lawyer, etc.

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