



Bird Box

Josh Malerman

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Bird Box

Josh Malerman

Bird Box Josh Malerman

Written with the narrative tension of *The Road* and the exquisite terror of classic Stephen King, *Bird Box* is a propulsive, edge-of-your-seat horror thriller, set in an apocalyptic near-future world—a masterpiece of suspense from the brilliantly imaginative Josh Malerman.

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, she has dreamed of fleeing to a place where they might be safe. Now, that the boy and girl are four, it is time to go. But the journey ahead will be terrifying: twenty miles downriver in a rowboat—blindfolded—with nothing to rely on but her 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 motely 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.

Bird Box Details

Date : Published February 10th 2015 by Ecco (first published March 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9780062259660

Author : Josh Malerman

Format : Paperback 262 pages

Genre : Horror, Fiction, Thriller, Science Fiction, Dystopia, Mystery, Apocalyptic, Post Apocalyptic

 [Download Bird Box ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Bird Box ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Bird Box Josh Malerman

From Reader Review Bird Box for online ebook

Norma * Traveling Sister says

Sister Read Review by Norma & Brenda

Holy Sh*tty Balls this was one heck of a creepy book!

5 creeped out Stars for Norma & 4 freaking out Stars for Brenda!
So for the purpose of this Sister Read it gets a combined rating of 4.5 Stars!

BIRD BOX by JOSH MALERMAN is a wonderfully creepy, scary, eerie, and downright terrifying tale that grabbed our attention right from the very start to the heart-pounding finish. This book was extremely hard to put down!

BIRD BOX made us both feel fearful of the unknown and we could definitely feel the eerie presence of the mysterious creatures in all of the surroundings while we were totally engrossed in this novel. We couldn't even imagine living and carrying on everyday life blindfolded or with our eyes closed.

To sum it all up it was an extremely entertaining, unsettling, interesting, and fast-paced read that left us both a little fearful of leaving the house without a blindfold. Highly recommend!!!

Review written and posted on our themed book blog Two Sisters Lost In A Coulee Reading.
<https://twosisterslostinacoulee.com>

Coulee: a term applied rather loosely to different landforms, all of which refer to a kind of valley.

Annet says

Wow, what a book! Seriously scary and creepy. You just have to keep reading to know how it ends. At least, I had to.... Who can think of such a story...

Suspension and creepiness from start to end, intriguing story. What's going on? What happened leading up to this situation? Will she and kids survive? Wew.... one h*ll of a story.

I say, this is also a seriously impressive case of woman power! Great, great, entertaining book.

AB: Looking back at my books in 2015, upgraded this one to five stars. Seriously, this book is a great read. Wew... creepy..

karen says

this is an incredibly original horror/psychological suspense novel that reminds us that with all great horror, the unseen is so much more terrifying than the seen. this is why japanese horror movies are so effective. they don't rely on graphic special effects to build the suspense, and the way they manipulate shadows, sounds, and background space creates an unparalleled atmosphere that leaves a more lasting, haunting impression than "crazy chainsaw-toting psychopath" splatter films. which, don't get me wrong, are also super-entertaining.

Bird Box takes place after an eerie phenomenon begins to occur on a global scale. starting in russia, moving

to alaska, and eventually making its way to "a nice suburb of Detroit" where our story picks up, people begin to see...something. no one knows what this "something" is, because once it has been seen, it drives people to madness and suicide, frequently with some homicides along the way. people begin boarding up their windows, blackening their windshields, and staying away from other people. there is no way of knowing what this "something" wants, where it came from, what form it takes, or what the future of humanity will be.

malorie is living in a house with two children, both only four years old. from the time of their birth, she has been training "boy" and "girl" to live in this new world, making them wear blindfolds outside and putting them through rigorous tests to train them until they have the preternatural hearing of bats. all this preparation is for the day they will finally leave the house and try to find others, to find a safer place to live.

the story is told in alternating chapters between malorie "now" and malorie at the beginning of the event, finding out she is pregnant just as the world begins to collapse. we don't learn much about the origin of the event, but we do get to witness how people respond to the experience, which for me and my survival bent is book-gold. this book does tension and people-thrown-into-isolated-community so, so well. *under the dome*, take notes.

how terrifying is it to not be able to see?? to hear a noise right behind you and not know what it is?? to leave a safe house to forage for food and not be certain you will ever find your way back?? to drive a car blindfolded through corpse-studded roads and not know if you will hit a pole or fall into a ditch?? to determine what is danger and what is just a leaf falling?

this is the best kind of building, creeping horror, and the writing is perfectly suited to the story. it is maddening at times when you want to be able to "see" what is happening, but you are at the mercy of the characters' limited vision. impeccably done.

and that attic scene?? holy shit - that was so freaking intense.

i still have a handful of minor questions (and one very major one) but they don't detract from my overall positive impression of the book. the premise alone gives it an edge over most horror novels, because it has been a long time since i have come across anything "new" in that genre, and you cannot beat the killer, page-turning suspense.

debut novel from a *musician*?? quit your day job, friend.

come to my blog!

Jeffrey Keeten says

**”Creatures...
infinity...
our minds have ceilings, Malorie...
these things...
they are beyond it...
higher than it...
out of reach...
out of--**

BUT HERE”

Whatever you do DON'T OPEN YOUR EYES!!

Malorie has just confirmed she is pregnant the very day that people begin killing themselves. News travels so fast now. Something can happen in Cairo. Someone can film it, load it to the internet, and within minutes of the event occurring someone in Des Moines is watching what happened. News, mostly tragic news, from around the world now impacts us instantaneously. The world, consequently, feels like a much more dangerous place than it did 50 years ago. So when this new phenomenon starts happening everyone knows about it very quickly. Terror escalates exponentially, and has reached a highly sustained level long before this catastrophe has contaminated the whole world.

”What kind of a man cowers when the end of the world comes? When his brothers are killing themselves, when the streets of suburban America are infested with murder...what kind of man hides behind blankets and blindfolds? The answer is MOST men. They were told they would go mad. So they go mad.”

It turns out everyone was right to be afraid.

There is something out there. If you see it... you go insane.

It goes through the world population like a pestilent storm. We have windows in our dwellings, in our work buildings, and in our schools because we **WATCH** the world. It only takes a moment, a need that can't be ignored, one parting of a curtain, for us to see one of these creatures, and become deranged.

We do violent things to ourselves. The lizard inside us meant to fight when flight is not an option turns inward.

To live, we must reside in darkness, shrouded by blindfolds, tucked in dwellings behind blanketed windows. It is maddening to have our world reduced to so little.

So what are these creatures and do they know what they do to us?

After Malorie's sister Shannon kills herself with a pair of scissors, Malorie is all alone. Some kook has been offering sanctuary at his house in newspaper ads when this manifestation first started to appear. Suddenly, with her changed circumstances, the kook becomes her best option.

The kook is dead, but the people he sheltered are still alive.

Tom and Jules are the alpha males who take chances, range the farthest away, blindfolded and with sticks to guide them, to find necessary supplies. Don is the weakest, the one that has found it hardest to adjust. He is also the most cynical.

”They'll eventually get us, Don said. There's no reason to think otherwise. It's end times, people. And if it's a matter of a creature our brains are incapable of comprehending, then we deserve it. I always assumed the end would come because of our own stupidity.”

For a few blissful months Malorie can feel reasonably safe nestled in the routine of this small group of survivors. Meanwhile her tummy is getting rounder.

Then Gary arrives. He whispers things to Don. Like any good charlatan he can pick the most vulnerable out of a crowd. He can sense their doubts before he ever hears them express them..

Gary thinks he is immune.

Which begs the question, if the bindings that keep our minds anchored in sanity have long been shorn away can the creatures do anymore damage?

There are two time lines at play in this book. One is during the few months when Malorie is with the sanctuary group. The other is four years later when she is raising two children that have never seen...well...anything beyond the cramped world of one house.

"The same colors. The same colors. The same colors for years. YEARS. Are you prepared? And what scares you more? The creatures or yourself, as the memories of a million sights and colors come flooding toward you? What scares you more?"

Josh Malerman does a fantastic job building the suspense, allowing the tension to stretch nerves to the breaking point. Information is opaque. He doesn't cheat and give the reader information before the characters figure something out. I kept thinking of the movie *Monsters* from 2010. There are monsters; and yet, we are not allowed to see them. We hear them. We see the reactions of the characters, and somehow the terror is more acute when our brain does not have a shape, an entity to project our fear onto. Our mounting terror is allowed to gallop unrestrained, and each of us conjures our own version of a terrifying specter.

"You add the details, she thinks. It's your idea of what they look like, and details are added to a body and a shape that you have no concept of. To a face that might have no face at all."

Malerman has created a dystopia that will play on all your fears and will stir up all your insecurities. You will question whether you can live in a world where one glimpse of a sun dappled street might cost you your life. Highly recommended for those that like books that will cost them some sleep.

As a companion volume read *Blindness* by Jose Saramago

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Shelby *trains flying monkeys* says

2.5 stars.

I would not last in the apocalyptic world set out in this book. My dad used to say I had nose problems because let's face it. I have to know what's going on. Walking around for 4 years with a blindfold on every time I went outside? Yeah, dead in less than 60 seconds.

Not this kind of blindfolded either.

This book doesn't give the reader many answers. I do know what the author was going for. The whole scary in the mind of the reader thing. The thing is I need some answers. I get all antsy and shit if I don't have them.

I don't like thinking of things that I don't know what is sneaking up on me.

I did finish the book. I will give it that. The writing sometimes did make my teeth grate together though. I think this author likes the apostrophe more than I do..and I ain't an author.

Would I recommend this book? Who knows. Several people like it.

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

Holy crap on a cracker, y'all! This book! Creepsville!!

Don't freaking go outside without your blindfold or you might open your eyes.

I must say, if I had to choose what apocalypse I would be in, I would pick the zombies because at least you can go outside and see them and kill them. Unless you're blind and then your up sh*t creek.

One day they start getting reports of people seeing things and then turning violent and killing people and themselves. And of course you start thinking, wth?

Malorie was with her sister when these events started happening and she also found out she was pregnant. Oh happy day!

Malorie ends up with some people in a house and they only go outside when they need to look for more food. They make sure they are blindfolded and stuff. Sometimes when you're out there you feel something touch you. Or is that your imagination.

Then of course you freak out some more. People, I would never exist for more than a second in this world!

I liked some of the people Malorie was living with and they were doing okay, until . . . that one day they let the wrong person in. . . sigh.

I mean you have a nice little set up with your dogs and birds and food and then, BAM! Anyhoo, none of that happens until later on during a very crazy night. That's all I'm saying.

Malorie lives in a house for 4 years. She raises children. Then what happens? Read the book and find out =)

MY BLOG: [Melissa Martin's Reading List](#)

Maciek says

Bird Box offers a well-known premise - the world as we know it suddenly coming to an end, and the few who survived trying to cope with the new reality - but with an interesting twist (certainly a desirable addition

to the formula which, much as I enjoy it, is now beginning to resemble a really dead horse). This is both a good, and a bad thing - and the book is also both these things, as it began well but ended up being disappointing.

The hook of *Bird Box* is, like in much post-apocalyptic fiction, The Event: a phenomenon which single-handedly destroys the old world order, and usually also depopulates most of the planet*. A typical example of The Event is the Pandemic - such as the flu outbreak in *The Stand*. The Cold War brought about the very real fear of a Nuclear Holocaust, when the possibility of nuclear powers annihilating one another and the world with them seemed very real. A great example of this is Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* - a moving novel, set in Australia after the nuclear world war which destroyed the northern hemisphere, and where the protagonists can only wait for the cloud of nuclear dust to reach the southern hemisphere and claim them too. There are other causes, of course, but these are easily the most popular.

**A relatively common variant of depopulation has most people not actually dying, but losing their humanity and turning into strange creatures hostile to humans. A classic example is the global pandemic turning all of humanity into vampires in Richard Matheson's great *I Am Legend*, whose protagonist - Robert Neville - is literally the last (hu)man on earth.*

Bird Box, although set in Michigan, begins with a series of events in eastern Russia - first reports of people inexplicably attacking others and murdering them, and taking their own lives afterwards. There seems to be no link between these events and people, except for one thing - all of them apparently saw something which affected them so badly that they completely lost their minds. Expectably, the phenomenon spreads across the Bering Strait and first reports from Alaska soon follow - and soon it's chaos and death everywhere.

We met the protagonist, Malorie, a young mother hiding with two small children in a house somewhere in the suburbs of Detroit. The children have never seen the outside world - Malorie has been training them for over four years to hear and understand many different sounds, and be able to orient themselves with only their hearing, because she will need their ears to help guide them all on a journey across the river, towards what she believes to be a safe haven. To survive they must tie blindfolds across their eyes and not look at the world, where something might be waiting - something which only a sight of is enough to drive a person to insanity and murder.

The novel alternates between the present day and Malorie leaving the house and rowing across the river, and flashback chapters which tell the story of how she came to be in the house with the children in the first place. She was pregnant when the chaos began to unfold, and through personal effort found solace with fellow survivors who barred their windows shut and covered them with carpets to block the insanity of the outside world. What follows is a typical societal microcosm - cabin fever, worry over dependence on shared resources, discussions on the nature of the horror. There's an existential question or two thrown into the mix, but it's all neither very deep or new - it's just another trope of this genre, its obligatory element.

I purposefully avoided reading anything about *Bird Box* prior to reading it, and while I appreciate the author's creative idea - being forced to retire your sight and have to move about a hostile world depending entirely on hearing, smell and touch is terrifying as we realize how we depend on one sense almost entirely on one sense and understand the feeling of being blind. The threat of a something so inexplicably horrifying that the mere sight of it is enough to turn anyone insane is reminiscent of Lovecraft and his creations. All the factors are there - so why the low rating?

To say it best, the novel simply didn't work for me *as a novel*. When I was a young boy I adored listening to radio theater - often when I was supposed to be asleep I'd smuggle my walkman in bed with me and put the earplugs in my ears, very late at night, to listen to the performance (to the big annoyance of my even younger brother, with whom I shared a room and who was just a kid who wanted to sleep). Being in the dark in a quiet house heightened my sense of hearing, and I could hear things I would otherwise be unable to notice.

This is why I think *Bird Box* would be a much better audio experience - especially when created specifically as a dramatization, with all the proper sound effects in their place. I would love to listen to a project like this - close my eyes and stop seeing, be unnerved, frightened and shocked by what I only could hear. It was especially interesting to learn that the author is a musician, someone who deals with and specializes in sound - just think of the possibilities!

But this is obviously not the case, and as soon the novelty of the idea wore down, it became obvious that the book will not be a compelling study of fear and how it is manifested, but rather a pretty standard horror story depending on shock and plenty of "boo!" moments, when we're constantly going to be told how something unbearably scary is just around the corner. But this jack won't pop up from its box; while Lovecraft created an entire universe around his Elder Gods, the things which are happening in the book are purposefully left almost entirely to the reader's imagination. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but in a novel based largely on the build up of suspense I found it to not be acceptable. I didn't demand a revelation, but I could take a few gospels - something to give momentum to my imagination, to let it spin. What I got was an ending which was too neatly tied, too ideal, too perfect; it felt like a cop out, an anticlimatic cheat. Perhaps I've been reading too much Cormier?

To sum up - while *Bird Box* is a book which shows promise, it unfortunately falls squarely into the box of those which didn't deliver. It's not a bad book, certainly not bad for a debut, but it marks more of the same territory - and we've been there and we've seen it before. For an intriguing novel which features creative and original take on blindness and its impact on human personality, please do check out Rupert Thomson's great and underrated *The Insult* - one of the eeriest and weirdest novels I've ever read, and one of my personal favorites.

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

Where the hell do I start with reviewing this book? Unlike nothing I've read in a long time this one is a stand out read like no other for me this year. I had wanted to read this for ages and so glad I finally did.

Emotions stirred reading this book I think covered them all, I noted how on edge I was constantly reading this novel. From early pages to the last I was fixated, addicted and full of tension, bordering on fear at times.

Something is out there, something terrifying that must not be seen. One glimpse of it, 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 remains, including Malorie and her two young children. Living in an abandoned house near the river, she has dreamed of fleeing to a place where they might be safe. Now that the boy and girl are four, it's time to go, but the journey ahead will be terrifying: twenty miles downriver in a rowboat--blindfolded--with nothing to rely on but her wits and the children's trained ears. One wrong choice and they will die. Something is following them all the while, but is it man, animal, or monster?

The book interweaves past and present and whilst both aspects are critical and important I have to admit to loving the "past" moments. The chill factor was high.

You cannot really say what this book is about which is why it's sheer genius. You don't know what they are all afraid of and fear of the unknown is often the worst type of fear at all.

What can lead human beings to cover their eyes permanently? What is it that people see that causes personal hell? Nobody can tell because if you see "it" you are no longer around to share what you saw.

Aspects of these book almost feel post-apocalyptic as survivors huddle together to try to survive. The dynamics between the survivors focused on in the book is brilliant and complex. Who do you trust? What would you do?

Scenes had my heart in my mouth, terror in my mind and tension in my body. It really was a book that genuinely scared me. Therefore I loved it! Brilliant and clever plot along with a mix if broken, damaged characters made for great reading.

But the main driver behind reading page after page?

Desperation to know what "it" was.

A truly stunning book in so many ways. How some rate this 1 or 2 stars stuns me. It really does. I can't recommend enough and I give it 5 big Booklover Catlady paw prints.

Don't uncover your eyes, no matter what you do, even better, get rid if your own eyes to be safe...

For more of my reviews see me at:

<https://www.facebook.com/BookloverCat...>

Follow me on Twitter! I talk back!

<https://www.twitter.com/promotethatbook>

Amalia Gavea says

"There are things out there that will hurt you."

Even though thrillers aren't among my favourite reads, this one had all the right ingredients. A mix of Dystopian Fiction with a healthy dose of Paranormal and two extremely interesting main characters. It was creepy and fascinating.

News of a series of completely abnormal action begin to reach the USA. In a contemporary world, violent deaths start from an area in Russia and escalate, spreading everywhere. What is it that makes these deaths horrifying? They take place without a reason. Everyday people, citizens of quiet towns, people like us start attacking others and kill them in terrifying ways. They attack family and friends. They know no boundaries and then they kill themselves. And the explanation can be found in a source that is even more terrifying than the deaths. Something they saw turned ordinary people into vicious murderers. What is it? Nobody knows. Are they creatures? Is it a virus? No matter the cause, the result is a world that is now empty, devoid of life and time. Everything we've ever known falls into darkness because to open your eyes means death.

"The world, the outdoors, is being shut down."

The story itself is the main reason I enjoyed *Bird Box* so much. Malorie, the main charcater, is a young mother of two unnamed children. They're just called Boy and Girl. They only know the house they were born into as their world. In this house, Malorie found a refuge four years ago, along with a few people who wanted to survive, each one having gone through a terrible loss. I don't know what kind of environment

could be more claustrophobic and nerve-wrecking. Is there anything more valuable than our sight? Imagine a world where we are forbidden to look outside, to look at a fellow human being, our own family...In this house, the characters toy with their lives. Each day, each passing moment. It is a fight for everything. To bring water into the house, to make sure every possible opening is covered. There is fear and there are questions that can't be answered. And I couldn't help but anticipate danger from every person we met. When would madness strike? Who could possibly have the weakest composure to jeopardize everyone's survival?

One of the things that prevent me from appreciating thrillers is the lack of developed characters and the cliché dialogue. This novel is different, in my opinion. Malorie is a really well-written character, one I could see as realistic and a leader, with her feet firmly on the ground. Her actions were fully justified. Everyone would have acted in the same way if we had been in her situation. I pray we never will....And Tom is a character I was interested in from his first appearance. Both the characters and the dialogue were really satisfying, in my opinion, and combined with the haunting prose they created an extremely memorable read.

I don't need to feel frightened in order to like a book. If the story is properly put together and the characters are interesting and as realistic as possible, I am satisfied. With *Bird Box*, I wasn't frightened per se but I felt anxious, nervous and, yes, there were a few moments when my blood froze a little. I found the concept creepy and the execution successful. You know there is danger out, in the open, but you don't know what it is. If you don't know what threatens you, how can you fight it? So, I don't think it can get scarier than that....

"And what scares you more? The creatures or yourself, as the memories of a million sights and colours come, flooding towards you? What scares you more?"

My reviews can also be found on <https://theopinionatedreaderblog.wordpress.com>

Jennifer Masterson says

4 1/2 stars but I'm rounding it to 5 for originality. I could not put this book down for the last 100 pages. If you like the Walking Dead, horror or just a good scary thriller than this is the book for you. I hope there is a sequel and a movie!

Mandy says

Wow! Just wow! Bird Box was amazing! This definitely lived up to the hype that everyone spoke of. I highly recommend this book if you want your mind to be twisted and turned in ways you can't imagine. Creepy, terrifying, horrid, and downright scary! Loved it! Would make an interesting movie.....

Raeleen Lemay says

(rating bumped from 4 up to 5 stars after thinking about it more)

A few days ago when I finished this book, initially I was pissed off and disappointed at the ending. It leaves a lot of questions unanswered, but upon a few days' reflection I've realized that it was the only realistic way

this could end. SO, if you are wary of reading this because you don't want an open ending, don't be! Malerman made the right choice in leaving some things unknown, because ultimately it works best for this type of story.

NOW, THE BOOK. This book was fantastic! The general idea is that there is an unknown force that causes people to become murderous and suicidal when they see it. Nobody knows if it's a race of strange creatures, or any other number of things, but they know that it's out there and it's killing people. This strikes so much fear in the entire population that most people stop leaving their houses, but when they do, they blindfold themselves to prevent themselves from seeing this strange enemy.

In the end, that blindness is what makes this book so terrifying.

Since the characters you're reading about are wandering around in this messed-up, apocalyptic world with only their senses of smell, touch, and hearing essentially, every little unexplainable noise or feeling is horrific. They never know if there could be something right next to them that is capable of killing them, and as a reader, neither do you! It was so scary! The way the book is written is really immersive, and you feel like you're right there along with Malorie, her children, and the rest of the gang.

Another thing that was great about this book was the non-linear timeline. Normally this type of storytelling gets a bit tiresome to me, because it can sometimes be difficult to keep track of what's going on. That was not the case with this book. It skips between a number of time points across a 4-year span, and it never became confusing somehow. I didn't even really realize how well done it was until after I finished the book. This method also added a lot of suspense to the story, and my heart was literally racing throughout most of the book.

So, if you couldn't tell, I really enjoyed this book. I highly recommend it for anybody who wants a really spooky thriller novel.

Trudi says

4.5 stars

Whoah. This is some really good shit. Color me very impressed. I'm not sure what I was expecting when I picked this one up, but it totally delivered on tension and suspense, a palpable dread, and a suffocating sense of doom.

Just as a launching off point I'm going to throw two pop culture references at you that I couldn't stop thinking about while reading this book. The first is the music video "Just" by Radiohead. Remember that's the one where there's this guy who just lies down in the street for no apparent reason and when this other guy starts screaming for a reason why he's done this and when the man finally tells him, everyone who is in earshot lies down too, as if whatever he's said is just too huge and overwhelming for the mind to process that the only human response is to collapse.

The second reference I'm going to throw at you is a Twilight Zone episode from the '80s called "Need to Know" where everyone starts going insane in this small town and it's eventually discovered that the source of the problem is not a physical disease, but an idea, a single short phrase, that is being passed from person to person by word of mouth. That horrible phrase is nothing more or less than the purpose and meaning of existence; the moral of the story being -- Knowledge we are not ready to receive will drive us mad.

I freaking love that Radiohead video and I was twelve years old when I saw that Twilight Zone episode and it scared the crap out of me (which is Trudi speak for I loved it). So in a lot of ways I was already primed to love this book where a mysterious pandemic plague is causing the "infected" to go on homicidal killing sprees before killing themselves. In the escalating chaos and confusion, the source of the infection is identified as having seen something the human mind cannot fathom, a creature that is so beyond our comprehension we are literally driven mad by it. But who is to know for sure, since no one has survived to confirm what it is that they saw.

Your only defence is to close your eyes, and keep them closed.

Humans hide in houses behind windows that are painted, covered with blankets or boarded up. They dare not venture outside for water or food unless they are blindfolded. If you thought surviving the end of days was tough with all of your faculties and sight, try doing it completely blind and feeling hunted and watched the entire time.

I love survival stories of all kinds: but an apocalypse scenario where the group must survive together is my favorite. And it's done so well here, I really can't stress that enough. The way the tension builds gradually as the unknowable threat outside the doors of the safe house becomes more menacing and tangible. How so much is implied rather than relying on big gushy scenes of gore and explicit violence. How the daily trek to the well blindfolded to get fresh water becomes an exercise in exquisite pulse-pounding suspense to unnerve the most steely-nerved of all readers.

Did you hear that? Sssshhhhh. I think it came from behind you. Whatever you do, don't open your eyes.

Readers who have a perpetual desire for answers and reasons may find the lack of explanation here troubling. I didn't. I was okay that we really don't know what the hell is going on and can only guess (and imagine our worst fears). If something like this ever goes down for real we'll be just as much in the dark as the characters in Bird Box discovering we are as much at the mercy of our ignorance and fear of the unknown as anything that may or may not be hunting us.

Kacey - Traveling Sister says

Hold on tight...this trip is going to blow your mind!

Horror is a genre that I normally avoid completely, but with the rave reviews from my GR friends for this book I felt I needed to step out and give it a try. And it was so incredibly good! Oh my God!

Malorie and her sister Shannon move in together in Detroit. Life immediately throws her a curve ball. Malorie learns she's pregnant from a brief encounter with someone she didn't know well, and thinks this is as bad as it gets. Not even close! Something is out there causing people from all over the world to take their own lives. One look at this unknown entity is all it takes. Soon the world around her goes silent. Has everyone succumbed to this strange phenomenon?

Malorie embarks on a journey to find a safe haven and any survivors.

What do you fear most, the known danger of man or the unknown?

Heart pounding, reading furiously.

This book actually scared the crap out of me! Yet like a moth to a flame I was drawn back. I was so

engrossed in this book I barely took a breath, was completely caught up in the action. My husband sitting next to me quietly reading (a tame David Baldacci novel) suddenly sneezed! He spent the next few minutes peeling me off the ceiling fan!

I don't know if I have ever felt so spent at the end of a book. I just had to sit quietly and digest the whole thing. Absolutely speechless and exhausted. I recommend to anyone that enjoys a horror / post-apocalyptic book. Even if you have never tried one...venture out over the edge a little! I am so glad I did!

Blindfolds off...take a breath...it will be OK...wait!! Did you hear that???

Will Byrnes says

Close your eyes and imagine the basso sound of voiceover icon Don LaFontaine intoning, "In a world gone mad..." and that is pretty much where *Bird Box* begins. Open your eyes and go mad. Kill others, yourself. Can you keep from peeking? For how long? In Josh Malerman's post-apocalyptic, eye-opening scare-cape, something happened. An invasion? Some natural phenomenon? No one is really certain. But what has become clear is that anyone who steps outside with their eyes open goes insane, not just gibbering or confused, but violently and destructively, homicidally mad.

In the near-future today of the story, Malorie is a young mother, with two small children in her charge. She has been training them for over four years, to hear, with a sensitivity and acuity more usually associated with flying mammals. They embark on a river journey to what she hopes is a safe haven, twenty miles away, blindfolded. Any noise could be someone, or *something* following them. She must rely on the skill she has rigorously drilled into the boy and girl every day to help guide them, and alert them to danger. And we must wonder if the destination she aims for will offer relief or some version of Mistah Kurtz.

Chapters alternate, mostly, between the river journey and Malorie's back story. We follow her from when *The Problem* began, seeing death and destruction in first a few isolated locations, then spreading everywhere, seeing loved ones succumb, then finding a place to live, a refuge, with others, and watch as they cope, or fail.

In horror stories, it helps to have an appealing hero. I am sure most of us have seen our share of splatter films in which the demise of each obnoxious teen is met with cheers rather than with dismay. The other sort is of the *Wait until Dark* variety, in which our heart goes out to the Audrey Hepburn character beset by dark forces. *Bird Box* is the latter type. Malorie is a very sympathetic character, an everywoman trying her best under ridiculous circumstances, more the Nancy Thompson (Heather Langenkamp) of *Nightmare On Elm Street* or the Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) of *Halloween*, than the Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) of *Alien*, but Malorie does what she must to survive and to prepare with patience and diligence to sally forth against the unknown.

Author image taken from Fearnnet.com

Malerman was bitten by the horror bug as an early teen:

My big introduction was *Twilight Zone: the Movie*, the first horror movie I ever saw. After that came *Saturday Shockers* and sneaking in whatever I could at a friend's house (*Faces of Death*, *Psycho... Blacula... Prom Night*.) I was also reading a lot. There's a great period of horror fiction history, before the novel-boom of the 70's spearheaded by *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Other*, and *The Exorcist*, in which the short story ruled the genre. That period is golden and

completely bursting with ideas. I read M.R. James, H.P. Lovecraft, Poe, Blackwood, Bierce, et al. When you first approach it, the genre, it feels infinite, but it's not. So, come high school, I was trying to write my own scary stories, weird poems, strange tales. (from *Detroit CBS Local news interview*)

He likes to write with horror movie soundtracks on. And he is a musical sort as well, singing and playing in the band *The High Strung*. In fact, fans of *Shameless*, on Showtime, have already been exposed to Malerman's work, as the writer and performer of that show's theme song.

The dynamics of the house-full of refugees in the back story will feel familiar. Who to let in, or not, concerns over sharing limited resources, discussions over what adventuresome risks might or might not be worth taking re looking toward the future, or in trying to learn more about the cause of their situation. One might be forgiven for seeing here a societal microcosm, but I do not really think this was what Malerman was on about. He does offer a bit of a larger, thematic view though, tied to the central image of the book, which definitely adds to the heft of the story. A wondering at more existential questions

She thinks of the house as one big box. She wants out of this box. Tom and Jules, outside, are still in *this* box. The entire globe is shut in. The world is confined to the same cardboard box that houses the birds outside. Malorie understands that Tom is looking for a way to open the lid. He's looking for a way out. But she wonders if there's not a second lid above this one, then a third above that.

Boxed in, she thinks. *Forever*.

You really want Malorie to reach safety with the children, but there is a gauntlet to be run, and there is no certainty that any of them will make it. The dangers are human, natural and eldritch, and I mean that in a very Lovecraftian way.

You will definitely not want to put *Bird Box* down once you pick it up. This is a very scary, and gripping novel. If you are reading on the train, you may miss your stop. If you are reading at bedtime, you will definitely miss a few winks, and might want to sleep with the lights on after you finish.

I think some horror authors are trying to scare you, but with me, I'm as scared as the reader is of the story. I've always been that way, since watching the *Twilight Zone* movie — watching *Firestarter* when my parents were out, or sneaking out to watch *A Nightmare on Elm Street* at a friend's house because I couldn't watch it at my house. That makes you doubly scared — of the movie, and of the possibility of Mom finding out. (from *Metrotimes interview*)

A generic problem I have with the book is that the dark elements here sometimes tend to step back when they have decided advantages, failing to make the most (or worst as the case may be) of their positions. It was not obvious to me that there was some point being made by these unexpected choices. Nevertheless, Malerman takes the notion of the unseen and pushes readers to create the scariest thing of all, that which lurks in the imagination.

It is not at all dangerous to see how much fun this book is. Usually it is considered a good thing to think outside the box, but in this case it is clearly a far, far better thing that Malerman has done his thinking *inside* one.

Posted - November 19, 2013

Publication date - May 13, 2014

Trade Paper edition - February 10, 2015

=====EXTRA STUFF

Interviews

Huffington Post
Detroit CBL Local News
Metro Times

JM on FB
The High Strung on FB
