



Under a Tell-Tale Sky

R.E. McDermott

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The grid is down, the world is in flames, and FEMA is demanding his ship and cargo, but Captain Jordan Hughes isn't buying it.

When the lights go out, seemingly for good, Hughes quickly finds being stranded far from home on a ship with working generators and a cargo of ten million gallons of irreplaceable fuel isn't exactly a low profile position.

Faced with rising crew discontent, and surrounded by worsening violence ashore, things can't get much worse — until they do.

As the remains of the federal government become increasingly corrupt and self-serving, Hughes joins a ragtag band of sailors, farmers, preppers ex-Coast Guardsmen, and dissident soldiers in an effort to re-unite his crew with their families and use remaining resources to rebuild a devastated society.

Along the way they face a desperate and starving population, rampant violence from street gangs and escaped convicts, and powerful warlords created as an unintended consequence of the federal government's ill-advised use of mercenaries.

Under a Tell-Tale Sky Details

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From Reader Review Under a Tell-Tale Sky for online ebook

Martha says

This is a story that continues my post-apocalyptic reading/listening binge. It is a solid, entertaining addition. My rating 4.5.

A solar flare causes an EMP event that takes down the power grid across America and, presumably, the world. The story begins with the introduction of the crew of a cargo ship in North Carolina. After their station is attacked, some Coastguard members join with the ship with the goal of providing support in numbers. Crew members divide as the Captain decides to return to his home base in Texas. Several choose to travel north to their homes by other means. Some travel with more caution than others but they all face danger with the ship crew heading for more trouble than they can imagine.

Meanwhile the highest leaders in the land decide that there is no choice but to abandon most of the people to their own efforts. They make plans to get the power grid back up for their own benefit and control. They turn a blind eye to corruption, thieving and ravaging by tyrannical FEMA authorities as long as they get a piece of the spoils.

It doesn't take long for criminal and corrupt politicians to take advantage of the crisis. Will good people be able to join together to battle back the chaos and evil as they try to survive, much less think of recovering?

McDermott does a good job of setting up plausible scenarios. He develops a handful of strong characters (mostly men although there are a few brave women too) and provides family situations that provide motive to keep the characters moving towards home or safety. The top villains are also developed enough to be despicable and scary. I liked how each chapter is identified by location and date relative to the event. This helped me as a listener to keep track of where the action was and who was involved. Admittedly, the changing scenes allowed for temporary cliff hangers which kept me listening till it came back to the tense scenes so I could learn what happened.

There is plenty of action to make this a solid, entertaining post-apocalyptic story. I recommend this to those who like the genre. I will be getting book two to continue with the journey and battle for survival.

Audio Notes: Kevin Pierce is a go-to narrator for sci fi. He presents distinct voices, suitable energy and emotion and steady pacing. I am always glad to listen as his narration adds to the reading experience.

Gregoire says

Désolé mais non ! je me suis profondément ennuyé j'ai du sauter des pages entières sans que cela ne perturbe ma lecture ...

Aucun des personnages n'est vraiment différencié ; de ce fait on ne peut s'intéresser ni à leurs actions ni à leurs destinées

Pas d'originalité dans le traitement de cette apocalypse électrique sinon toujours la même rivalité entre les gangs mafieux, les politiciens égocentriques, qui s'érigent en dictateurs versus quelques militaires en bon

samaritain ou quelques héroïques citoyens particulièrement doués pour la survie qui essayent de sauver ce qu'ils peuvent

C'est souvent long (pourquoi décrire par ex toute une carte au lieu de souligner simplement les avantages du chemin emprunté ???)

Mon plus gros reproche cependant c'est l'absence de profondeur des personnages et l'abondance de clichés
Je ne lirai pas la ou les suites

Phil Cliffe says

As an ex cop, I was very familiar with the mantra that, within a one mile radius of every police station in the western world, you will find literally hundreds of your fellow countrymen and women willing to betray you, torture, and/or run concentration camps etc etc on behalf of any invading force or, sovereign government should there be a cataclysmic event of man made or natural origins. As such I have never been a fan of books/movies of the apocalyptic genre however good they may have been.....until now. I was utterly gripped by the spellbinding books by R.E. McDermott, 'Deadly Straits' and 'Deadly Crossing' and so I decided to give this book a try. Thrilling from start to finish, without any need for the over embellishment of violence, McDermott evokes the very satanic and malevolent atmosphere, and the human frailties that could take us all over at a moments notice. If nothing else, it should wake the reader up as to what happens when the beer goes warm, the internet is gone and you can only read a paperback in daylight hours. Bring on the next one!

Bradley West says

"Under a Tell-Tale Sky" is my co-favorite book in the last year or more. McDermott is taking real life thrillers to the next level, and his pacing and characters are sharper than ever. I didn't find the scenario described--an intense solar flare that zaps most of the world's electricity generation and transmission infrastructure--far-fetched. So no prospective reader should fear being dropped into a post-plague, Zombies-on-the-loose setting. Instead, we find many ordinary people coping with extraordinary stresses as they fight to survive and reunite with their families. The book runs many threads in parallel and the action is non-stop.

My only gripe is that the end was abrupt, with many loose ends begging for resolution. I guess I was fortunate to pick up the book only recently, as the successor just came out last week. I rushed to buy it, too, and look forward to reading it as well.

Scott says

"Believable Action Thriller on both land and sea..."

I want to start this review by saying it is difficult for me to rate this book as I flipped between three and four stars based on the day I was listening and where I was in the book. The book in its opening pages grabbed me and sucked me into story which I will say I did not regret listening. There were times of high action along with story tension which kept me engaged. With that said, there were also points in the story that I felt were slower or could have been removed with little impact to the overall story. These items may come up in future books in the series; they just seemed to not fit in as smoothly as other areas. Not that these lulls were boring,

more that they at times pulled me out of the story.

I can tell that the author has a deep knowledge of the subject matter used to tell his story, along with very good research, as there was never a time I did not believe what I was being told nor did I ever feel I had to take myself out of reality to believe something. The story was one that could take place today or tomorrow and every part of it could play out as it did in this book. I liked that the the story took place both on land (buildings, caves, wilderness, farms) and at sea (Navy, Coast Guard, tankers); which is the author's comfort zone based on the author's notes section.

I will say that I wish the "author's notes" chapter was at the beginning of the book instead of the end so I could have better understood where the author was coming from and why he was telling the story. It would have provided me with more background and I think I would have enjoyed the book even more than I did. I will say that because of just this one chapter being in the book, I have given the overall story a four star rating and not a 3 or 3.5 (if I was able to). This one chapter gives you some good items to think on and provides the author's motivation in writing the book. He call this story a "post apocalyptic" book, where I would say it is more a modern day disaster story with the potential of going fully post apocalyptic in future titles. This book is more like a technical thrillers such as DarkNet or Cyberstorm, and not what I would think of as a standard post apocalyptic message. No zombies yet; yeah

What would I have added or changed to make it more enjoyable to me? First, and I know this is only a preference item, I did not like the jumping around within a chapter to all different parts of the story; happening at the same time. I more enjoy linear chapters and like a more defined break (in the audio book); so shorter chapters instead of long ones with section breaks. Each chapter would be a scene instead of having multiple in a single chapter. Secondly I would have liked to have had more story around what was going on in the rest of the word and not only with the involved characters. We see some of this, bit often we are only given what is going on around our characters.

What about trucking, supplies (somewhat covered), and technology. Although the issue with the power grid was at the start of the book, I would have like to have had more information on how this rolled out and impacted the population. Maybe also a focus on Nuclear issues (protecting), and even some discussion on how people leverage other natural power sources such as solar, wind, etc. Not to go down the whole green message, but it would be interesting to see how those that have implemented this power may have a better chance during a disaster.

Even tho this is not a book I would have pick up and read if it was called a "post apocalyptic" story, but I very much enjoyed it and do not regret reading it.

I through the ending of the book was overall well done. It closed up some of the items that were outstanding, however one can easily see that additional books are going to be required to completely close all the open gaps.

In the audio version, I will say that I enjoyed the narrator most of the time. At times I found the reading to be monotone, while he was able to deliver the action scenes quite well. I did find it at times hard to keep track of the many different characters as the narrator did not have as many unique voices used and with the book jumping from scene to scene this was more difficult for me to follow at time than other books I have listened too.

I'm not sure if I can recall a specific point in the book that moved me. There were many action points along with times of conversation, but I'm not sure I was ever moved by one specific moment in the book.

Disclaimer: This book was provided to the reviewer by the author in exchange for leaving an unbiased review.

Jool says

If you are not already a doomsday prepper you will be when you finish this book. Massive solar explosions knock out all power grids throughout the globe and the world becomes chaos. This is a three book series and I have not read the next two yet.

The reason I knocked it down to 3 stars is that I found the discussions between politicians (in their luxurious bunkers) tedious and disgusting . It may be what comes of the world, but it bored me to Read their bull****. In spite of that this is fascinating and who knows how it would really play out??

Jeff Benham says

It is April 1, 2020, and a solar storm has knocked out transformers all over the world. No zombies or space aliens in this post-apocalyptic thriller. This is the first book in the series by this author and it starts out a little slow while he sets it all up and introductions are made. The natural thing to do, when a disaster such as this strikes, is to want to be with your family. You might get a little dizzy keeping track of all the main characters as they try to do this. Problem #1 is a corrupt President who wants complete control and has no problem eliminating those that would oppose this. Problem #2 is a group of inmates who escape from a maximum security prison and overpower the state and local police forces, who are stretched really thin. Then, of course, you get your gang bangers intent on taking control of their area and expanding. Lots of action to go around! I am glad I waited to read this because the action continues in Push Back, which is soon to be released.

Andrew says

Took a while to get into this book (as evidenced by the time span over which I read it) but once I got into it, it started grabbing my attention. Some of the plot segments still wallow for me, but those are basically the ones involving the "great perpetrators." I want to know there plans, but other than that, I don't need to be reminded what pond scum they really are - okay, I admit, even those segments are well written and not superfluous to the story...I just cringe when I read the dialogue and wish they were real folks that I could take out some anger on. The separate threads really start to take on more meaning as they first come together and then start to interweave. A very well written book, with good character development AND interaction. A very well written book with an absence of typos, bad word choices or bad grammar that are all too often found in books today. I agree with the author that it is nice to read stand alone books (though I seem to read a lot of series), but it's also nice to find a good author and a good plot that are not just shelved at the end of a book - so, I'll be reading book 2, probably in the not too distant future.

Neil Carstairs says

DNF at 57%. I had sort of liked it up to that point. The problem is that I had not connected with any of the main characters and when a pair of them spent another three pages (like others had several times) looking at a map and plotting a route from A to B I put my kindle down and never started up again.

William Bentrim says

Under a Tell-Tale Sky: Disruption Book 1 by R. E. McDermott

Redundancy is a fact of my life. I am prefacing this review with a previous preface. I am lucky enough to be an advanced reader for Bob. This simply means I got the book before it was published and devoured it with rapidity. I read the book, I received no compensation for writing it and I am giving it 5 STARS because it deserves it. Feel free to check my other reviews and you will note that I "calls them as I sees them", which means the star ratings are all over the place. So, in conclusion, this is a darn fine book and if you enjoy action and adventure, you should really buy it.

First off this is a scary book. Not "what goes bump in the night" scary but plausible scary. I recently read One Second After by William R. Forstchen and it detailed what occurred after a nuclear bomb generated nation wide EMP. McDermott provides a post-apocalyptic tale after some major solar flares.

McDermott's books provide a strong plot with excellent character development. I was chided by an author for my penchant for likeable characters. I would defend that in that Darth Vader was a very likeable villain. Likeability provides incentive to continue to see what happens to that character. Bob provides very likeable characters and in this book, those characters are dealing with some pretty despicable things.

This is the first in the series and it makes that clear in the title. If you are looking for closure, then buy the entire series. I enjoyed the book and would suggest to the author to get moving on the sequel.

I highly recommend it.

Body of work of R. E. McDermott

Web Site: <http://www.remcdermott.com/>

Terry Tyler says

3.5 stars

Downloaded on Kindle Unlimited

A strange one - I was attracted by the amount of good reviews, but found myself veering between 2 and 5 stars all the way through. A solar storm affects most of the world, and certainly all of North America. The book brings together related scenarios in various places in North Carolina, Texas, Virginia and along the Appalachian Trail, concerning the Government, coast guards, various other armed forces including FEMA, civilians, prisoners in a correctional facility, a black gang and others here and there, over the first 3 or 4 weeks of the crisis. A summing up:

What I liked:

It's obviously very well researched. From how boats work to the effects of a solar storm, to the likelihood of power being restored, to how quickly supplies might last, to how long certain resources would last and

survival techniques - it's all there. At no time did I feel that any practical area had been glossed over. The scenes in the White House and about the military leaders and FEMA. An unusual addition to a book of this genre, and a welcome one. I'm sure that in a situation such as this their attitude towards the general public would be every bit as callous as this, and worse. And I am sure that they would mislead the public every inch of the way, as they do in this book.

The feeling of growing danger and collapse. The building of suspense... all well done.

The idea of a black gang leader taking over a government building and appointing his crew as 'Minister for Food', etc, was very funny indeed.

The proofreading was generally good, apart from hundreds of backwards apostrophes at beginning of words, but I could live with those.

There are some good one-off scenes, dramatic page-turners.

I liked some of the survival stuff, which was most interesting; for instance, how a rogue government security guard survives with meagre supplies on the AT.

I wanted to know what was going to happen, in most of the scenarios, and generally; the storytelling itself is basically good.

What I wasn't so keen on:

Yes, it's very well researched ~ and I think every bit of that research is in the book. Often in dialogue, some of which is unrealistic and information heavy. Too much 'I need the reader to know that I know every single detail about this, so I shall put it all in this conversation'. Even when we don't need to know every single detail. Like, don't have one guy explain exactly to his mates exactly how he is going to get out of one tight spot. Just have them do it; people don't explain in such detail, when in desperate situations.

Far, far, far too many characters. By about 30% in I gave up trying to remember who everyone was, and just read the story, which was easy enough to do because so much of it is events and information about how the country would come to a standstill.

Because there are so many characters, there little room for character development. Only a few stood out (the rogue army a**holes, a survivalist called Levi, 'good guy' Luke), but too many were just 1D stereotypes (including the 'feisty' wife who keeps calling her husband by his first name and surname - arrgh!), or names on a page.

The dialogue is a bit cheesy at times, particularly the black gang; I think the author must have sat down with films like Straight Out of Compton and taken notes. It's actually quite amusing, I kind of liked it, but it reads like a parody.

Capital letters used for emphasis on words and shouting, throughout. Horrible. Coupled with the backwards apostrophes, this made me think the book hasn't seen a professional copy editor or proofreader.

Related to the superfluity of characters - I felt the author had tried to cram too much into one book. I could see why; all these points of view and different situations made the story complete, but I felt that some of the scenarios could have been chopped down to small, snappy one or two page chapters, rather than each one being written in detail.

The military/boat stuff was far too detailed and a bit boring. But that could just be me.

I did like it, though, or I wouldn't have read until the end, but it needs an edit. I think it's a book for people who are seriously interested in all the survival stuff, end of civilisation fanatics like me, who really want to know exactly how someone might navigate the route east by way of the AT, rather than those who just fancy an action adventure book. The novel ends at 87%, after which there are sample chapters of the next book in the series. I was surprised it ended where it did, but most of the scenarios had reached a reasonable pausing point. I will probably download the next book, because I want to see what happens to some of the characters, though others I lost interest in by the middle of the book.

Joe Mahoney says

This is a great story set in a world hit by a massive CME (solar flare). It is narrated by my favorite guy Kevin Pierce. I love his work. This is a really engaging story about a Cargo Capt and crew trying to get home with a fuel barge load with now a highly valuable cargo while avoiding the government and other to reunited with the families they normally leave behind for months at a time while at sea.

great story by a great a author that really comes alive with one of the best narrators in the business. I cannot recommend this enough. Get it today.

“This audiobook was given by the author, narrator, or publisher at no cost in exchange for an unbiased review via Audiobook Boom.”

Timothy says

I liked this book (enough to finish it), but I don't plan to read more in this series. I didn't find any of the characters and their motivations relatable, so I guess I feel a little apathetic to the story in general.

To the people considering picking this one up:

I'd recommend it - with the caveat that I read it through kindle unlimited, so the only thing this book cost me was a little time. I think if I cared about any of the characters I would've loved this series, but unfortunately it's not for me.

Luke says

A very good start to another TEOTWAWKI / SHTF series

UNDER A TELL-TALE SKY: DISRUPTION is one of the many (new) TEOTWAWKI / SHTF books available in ebook format. Unlike some of the ever-increasing crop in this genre, UNDER is well worth a look. While some readers may find the various threads of stories following different protagonists to be hard-to-follow, this reader had little difficulty keeping the various characters grounded in their respective storylines. If SHTF is a genre that you enjoy, I encourage you to try UNDER.

Shauna Yanke says

Truly enjoyable read

The author says this is his first 'grid down' book and , I must say, he did one hell of a good job. The plot is fast paced and the characters well developed. I did not put it down until the last page and will be immediately

picking up the second book. Just keep them coming!
