



Clear and Present Danger

Tom Clancy

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Colombian drug lords, bored with Uncle Sam's hectoring, assassinate the head of the FBI. The message is clear: Bug off!

At what point do these druggies threaten national security? When can a nation act against its enemies? These are questions Jack Ryan must answer because someone has quietly stepped over the line.

Does anyone know who the real enemy is? How much action is too much? Which lines have been crossed? Ryan and his "dark side", a shadowy field officer known only as Mr. Clark, are charged with finding out. They expect danger from without... but the danger from within may be the greatest of all.

Clear and Present Danger Details

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From Reader Review Clear and Present Danger for online ebook

Jake says

This is the last Tom Clancy novel I absolutely loved. With this one, I felt like he was at peak performance, generating a focused, plausible storyline that could stand on its own, rather than just being an installment in an increasingly outlandish saga. *Clear and Present Danger* is a grand techno-thriller, and a fine outing for Jack Ryan, Clancy's all-American CIA analyst turned reluctant field operative. The story is lengthy, but moves at a brisk pace. There are a great mix of supporting characters, settings, and plot-developments.

As I said above, this was the last Clancy novel I completely enjoyed. After this one, he felt to me like he started trying to outdo himself. I lost interest after *Executive Orders*.

David Lucero says

I read this book after I saw the movie with Harrison Ford.

The President of the United States finds himself between a rock and a hard place. A prominent businessman and his family connected to him have been found murdered. Turns out they are victims of the drug cartels. With things getting out of hand, he wants something done, but politics and red tape prevent him from doing so. With the help of his security advisor, they devise a plan of using armed troops to take on the cartels in the heart of South American jungles. But is this legal?

Jack Ryan is a CIA Analyst who finds himself caught in the middle as he watches the FBI chief get himself killed along with a score of agents while trying to negotiate with Columbian officials over how to deal with the cartels.

Meanwhile, someone in the cartel plots to takeover the entire organization by having them fight each other. With American troops blowing up secret cartel sites in the jungle, people getting killed in the streets, and the President screaming for an end to this crisis, Jack finds himself in the crosshairs of the most dangerous situation imaginable.

I was glad the movie followed the book. Clancy was known for his detail, although most of his other books I chose not to read because they were simply too long. I certainly appreciate the research he did for this book. Action thriller fans will not be disappointed. The book is better than the movie, which is how it should be, and that's saying a lot considering the movie was top class!

C.T. Phipps says

Well, more like 4 1/2 stars but I'm being generous because this is my favorite of Tom Clancy's novels. I'm not a big fan of "Dad Fiction" in general but it's hard to deny the influence of the father of technothrillers in the modern day. He's a guy who also was a master of marketing and created, directly or indirectly, some of my favorite franchises like Rainbow Six, Ghost Recon, and Splinter Cell. Mind you, his contributions were

mostly an ethos but they had a massive effect and I intend to read all of his novels someday.

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER is notable for the fact it's a prediction of what turned into reality. Written in 1989, it was written when Pablo Escobar was an infamous drug lord but before he became an infamous narco-terrorist. It was also well before the United States would, under Bill Clinton, reinforce the Columbian military with massive amounts of money as well as equipment to fight the drug cartels protected by FARC. In short, turning the War on Drugs into a literal war. It would also predict the fact corrupt (?) officials in the United States would ally with shady individuals to combat these drug lords while said individuals were taking over the drug trade themselves.

The premise is the President of the United States (unnamed but implied to be George H.W. Bush) has decided to send U.S. Special Forces into Columbia to directly fight against the cartels. Ironically, it's due to a bunch of overzealous Coast Guard officials that the FBI manages to deal a much bigger blow to the cartels by confiscating half a billion dollars of their money. This results in Ernesto Escobedo (a stand in for Pablo) and his Cuban intelligence officer ally, Felix Cortez, conducting a terrorist attack against the United States. The Director of the FBI is killed and the initial plan to damage the cartels is drastically increased before it becomes public and the President pulls the plug. Pulling the plug ends up stranding a bunch of US Special Forces behind enemy lines, though, and it's up to Jack Ryan to extract them.

This is a surprisingly nuanced book by Tom and well before his stories became ridiculous jingoistic gung ho propaganda for the American Right. Despite Without Remorse depicting drug dealers as just shy of subhuman, this book generally depicts the War on Drugs as an ambiguous conflict. While its leaders are evil and they employ some vile people, it's shown the average Columbian involved in the drug trade is no more worse than anyone else. The attempt to combat the cartels with military force is also portrayed as ludicrous for a variety of reasons. In the novel, for example, one of the Special Forces operators points out blowing up a few processing plants will not put a dent in cartel operations while another instance has collateral damage they think is excessive for what amounts to criminal activity.

In real life, the War on Drugs has killed tens of thousands of people while doing almost nothing to actually reduce the amount of cocaine or other stimulants available to Americans. Many of the points made by Tom Clancy's fictional characters are spot-on and predict terrible real life errors in judgement. Tom is no bleeding heart but the fact he's a Right Wing conservative makes the ambivalence of the book to the conflict all the more interesting. It's one of the rare Tom Clancy books which imply there's no easy solution or magic bullet. At one point, Felix Cortez bluntly states America will never solve its drug problem because people want drugs so it's paying money against itself.

The book feels a bit naive in the post-9/11 world as the President authorizing a military incursion into an allies' territory is treated as a shocking overexertion of his authority. Not necessarily illegal, let alone an impeachable offense, but morally wrong. This is now a day when the power of the Executive to order drone strikes, Special Ops missions, and operate with impunity on allies soil is taken for granted. A major theme of the book is the difference between (as John Clark would say) "*****ing Armchair Military" like Admiral Cutter and the individuals on the ground who have to implement their orders.

Tom's usual assortment of good upstanding men are on display with all of them reading like Lawful Good paladins. You know, except when they go off script to do something shocking like hiring two hitmen to eliminate rapists in prison. Special Forces operative John Clark plays a much bigger role in this book than Jack Ryan, who is mostly irrelevant until the end of the book. John is a bit of a crazy character as he's an ex-Punisher style vigilante recruited by the CIA but the book portrays his backstory with a calm reasonableness. Sort of like, "hey, yeah, he killed like a hundred gangsters once but he's cool now."

The book's best character is Felix Cortez, ostensibly the book's antagonist but arguably an anti-villain. Yes, he's a would-be drug lord but he's a charming and engaging character throughout. Felix just wants to be a billionaire and would happily help the United States out with the War on Drugs if they'd just let him do his business quietly. The fact he seduces and drives to attempted suicide a character shows his actions have consequences. Even so, I actually felt bad for him at the end.

My favorite subplot of the book is Domingo "Ding" Chavez's walking narration of how he feels about going from a kid from an L.A. ghetto to someone fighting drug lords in Columbia. He's more nuanced than your typical middle aged white Clancy protagonist and gives a "boots on the ground" view of the operations being conducted. At one point he accidentally kills an innocent worker and has to deal with the fact that sort of thing will happen in combat. Cortez and he never meet but are more or less complete opposites in their worldview and causes. My second favorite plot is the tragic tale of Moira Wolfson, who Cortez runs a honey pot operation on that gets the director of the FBI killed. Her story is treated as a romance right up until Cortez utterly rips her life to shreds.

If you're ever going to read one of Tom Clancy's books, I'd argue this is probably the best one. It's relevant to the conflict currently wrecking much of South America and Central America. While the characters can be a little broad at times, there's enough big personalities and interesting subplots to keep the story entertaining for a thousand pages. It's also fascinating to see how a work of fiction can show how things go utterly off the rails in a government operation--and how tragically an author saw all of the potential pitfalls that the real US government fell into.

9/10

Jason Koivu says

There was a clear and present danger that I wasn't going to finish this.

I don't watch soap operas. I used to. I'd get home and General Hospital would be on (Mom was heavily invested in the Luke & Laura saga,) so I got stuck with it. Consequently I know a soap opera when I see one and *Clear and Present Danger* is a soap opera.

How so? It jumps from character to character, from scene to scene. Some of it's nearly as melodramatic as a soap, but I won't go that far in my analogy. Mainly the issue is in the episodic nature of the storytelling. The scenes are big-time ADHD in how they flitter back and forth.

This has an adverse affect on character development. In fact, it seems as if Clancy attempts to counter this with info dumps. Often he introduces a brand new character, who may not even be particularly important, with a mountainous info-dump... *This is Joe Schmoe. Joe was born in Eastbumfuq, IL, went to school at...* and a minute later Mr. Schmoe is dead. I know it's a writer's attempt to instill an instant reader-connection to the character so that his death means something, but it doesn't work for me. I don't give a shit if a thousand such Joe Schmoes die at the hands of the baddest of bad guys. Nice try, but perhaps the issue is that you're trying to pack too much stuff into an already chunky book. Emotional bonds take time to develop.

Okay, I've been too nasty those far. Let's look at Clancy's good points...

Action is his strong suit. He puts you right in it. Whether it's firing a gun from a helicopter or stalking an

enemy in the jungle, you're in the shit with the characters.

However, if you were to debate that his strongest point is his research and application of military technical details within his books, I would concede. Guns, ships, helicopters, military rank and decorum, wartime politics, spy craft, covert missions, etc etc etc phew-eee! This book grunts and oozes the stuff! I can see how military buffs, special ops fanatics, and "gun nuts" would go gah-gah over a book like this. We've all got our little fetishes and Clancy provides the porn for violent techies. (Before you start calling me a liberal, hippy, pussy, tree hugger or any of that shit, just shut the fuck up. I've owned guns since I was a kid.) I just don't get a woody over firearms anymore. I shot that load when I was pre-teen and moved on. But I guess if reading a Clancy novel satisfies the sort of person that gets off on that shit and it helps them get it out of their system, well then I'm glad these books exist.

Okay, back to the nasty...

Where the F is Jack Ryan? He's barely mentioned in the first half of the book and then when he does show up it's only to look around and ask, "what's going on?" And that is really his only purpose in the book, and it's purposeless. Sure, the main character fumbling about trying to figure out what's going on works great for murder mysteries, but that's because we the reader also don't know what's going on. We're finding out the truth with them. But here we already know what's going on because that's what's being related in the main story. That's the more interesting part! Every time Clancy cuts to Jack the book bogs right down into a full-on snorefest.

Like I said at the top, I almost didn't finish this. After about the midway point the whole freakin' thing turned into one of those snorefests for me. The writing was only adequate, the storytelling too jumpy, the spot-lighted details not my cup of tea. Perhaps if I spiked my tea with testosterone? Nah. I'd only end up inadvertently ripping the book in half out of sheer excitement.

Rating: 2.5 stars. I generously gave it three stars only because I'm in a good mood and GR's rating system is ridged.

* * * * *

(Note upon the author's death)

Seems like it's becoming a thing where if an author's book sits on my nightstand waiting to be read for more than a couple weeks, the author is doomed to die. Yikes.

Stephen says

4.0 to 4.5 stars. Excellent Tom Clancy novel in which Jack Ryan and the Mr. Clark take on the Columbian drug cartels. This was a terrific read from beginning to end and confirmed by opinion of Tom Clancy as a master of the political thriller.

M.L. says

Seven stars***** if I could. Exciting, big plot, some poetic justice due and received. A big plot where, the author knows everyone-they all have 'bios.' Many heroes and villains, John Clark being one of the main good guys, and my favorite, he walks the talk. The nice thing about 'discovering' Tom Clancy is his huge body of work, long involved novels. Looking forward to the next one. This is a favorite

Thomas Strömquist says

A Jack Ryan in which we see quite little of Jack Ryan. It's about the US war on Colombian drugs and it's quite long. And honestly, that's about all I can remember about this particular one. Because this was one that I did not re-read and I'm guessing that also says something. As a recommendation to anyone who hasn't and wants to experience the Jack Ryan series, I'd say stop at book 8. For the non-completist I would say read The Hunt for Red October, The Cardinal of the Kremlin & The Sum of All Fears.

Vichy says

Εξαιρετικ? λεπτομερε?ς περιγραφ?ς σε εξοπλισμ? και μιλιταριστικ? techincalities. Αν καταφ?ρει κ?ποιος να ξεπερ?σει με στωικ?τητα τις σελ?δες αυτ?ς αν δεν το ενδιαφ?ρουν ?πως εμ?να και καταφ?ρει να ξεχωρ?σει ον?ματα και θ?σεις, ποιος διευθυντ?ς, υποδιευθυντ?ς, σε CIA, FBI και δε θυμ?μαι καν πο? αλλο? μ?νει ?να εξαιρετικ? θρ?λερ δρ?σης, υπ?γειας ?ντριγκας, με εξιλεωτικ? τ?λος. Η ταιν?α που την ε?δα κι αυτ?ν κ?βει και αλλ?ζει πολλ? προ?γματα αλλ? παραμ?νει στην ουσ?α.

Igor Ljubuncic says

Just re-watched the movie last night, and I thought about the book. While Han Solo did pull off quite a few of Clancy's movies with great flair back in the early 90s, Clear and Present Danger notwithstanding, the book is still better. Mostly because it portrays Clark and Chavez in a more profound, emotional light than they are shown onscreen. As a techno thriller, it's relatively low on materiel details, but the action is still solid. It's also a beginning of The Fellowship of the Oval Ring, get it, get it, and we see the trio (Ryan included) in several books later on.

Overall, it's a decent read, so if you are into dramatized, Gung-ho books that mix politics with action with honest Republican values with a simple, carefree approach to resolving world troubles through luck and Chucknorrisness and heavy caliber guns, then this is pretty good entertainment. Don't expect tears or any soulwrenching chapters, though.

Now, can we limerick Clancy? Yes we can!
Anything can be limerickized. It's Rule 34d of the Internet.

When Chavez and Clark to Bogota flew
The ire of drug lords they drew

With the company's check
Ryan saved their neck
And so they became a damn good crew

Regardsomely yours,
Igor

Janet says

I must confess, I am on the Clancy jazz now. Clear and Present Danger the novel blows away C&PD the movie just like a Pave Low III helicopter firing miniguns on bad guys (scene from the book). Well perhaps not quite that dramatic as there are some fine correlations with the movie, yet there is so much more. The terrain is familiar to me as our heroes fly in and out of Eglin AFB, Hurlburt Field, and the Pensacola Naval Air Station....soaring out over the white sands and emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Having left the women and children at home (sigh of relief), a now mature and seasoned Jack Ryan choppers into danger with my new favorite character, Mr. Clark, to save Americans from clear and present dangers. The political intrigue is thick, it's an election year in this story too, and the stakes are high as in any election year, especially this one. Honor, service, a willingness to put Country first, these are the makings of a true National Hero, a leader of men. I am thankful for the Jack Ryans, (the Jack Bauers...anticipating the return of 24), and the John McCains of our Nation's government and military. And I am thankful that Tom Clancy has the intelligence (emphasis on a two-fold meaning here) to spell it all out for us.

Fred Shaw says

Review to follow

Asghar Abbas says

Oh, I love this one!

The movie too was fanfuckingtastic .

Michael says

I wanted to really like this book because I've heard such good things about it. Also, I like action and military stories, etc. So I went in very excited. But, I got a bit more than 200 pages into it when I just had to stop. I probably could have made it, had it not been for the massive amounts of swear words; specifically F-words. I really, REALLY hate swearing. Maybe it's the father in me, or the saint lurking somewhere within, but it just grates on me. I used to work in a factory making styrofoam, where people would swear like that, so "hearing" swear words like that again brings back some unpleasant memories. Furthermore, as a writer, I've always felt that a person who swears a great deal is not intelligent or creative enough to think of anything

better. Now, I know he probably is trying to reflect the real world, and the fact that soldiers mostly do use that kind of language. But in the story, EVERYONE, including Jack Ryan and the higher-ups, had the same dirty mouths. Maybe my circles are cleaner than others, but I know that not everyone swears. Quite unrealistic, and it heavily detracted from the story.

Otherwise, the story is intelligent and interesting, and very well researched. TOO well researched in many parts. The story is bogged down, when not riddled with F-words and other curses--with a lot of detail about military weapons, vehicles, military operations. Some detail makes it feel real, but sometimes Mr. Clancy goes on for pages and pages of endless details, until it seems almost pointless. Like many fantasy novels, he gives feasts of technical details when a small, conservative meal here and there would feel better.

These two things ruin the story for me; especially the swearing. Because of this, I'm getting rid of my Tom Clancy collection, and not reading anything else from him. I don't want my kids to be reading such things, so therefore I should be reading them; got to set an example, right. Anyway, I really feel that such filth brings a bad spirit into the home.

Nicole Chase says

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ME I FINISHED IT.

Next time, someone tell me to just watch the movie.

For the Pop Sugar Challenge, this was "a book you started but never finished."

Andrew Nettleman says

Tom Clancy never disappoints. I have decided to go back and go through the Jack Ryan series in the Chronological order of the story's events, rather than the order they were released and it is like I am getting to know an old friend all over again.

When Columbian Drug Lords assassinate the director of the FBI on the street of Bogota, the CIA and the president (without the knowledge of Acting CIA Intelligence Chief Ryan) decide to take extraordinary action.

Chavez, Ryan and Clark take center stage for portions of this book and whenever all three are featured at the same time you know you are in for a ride.
