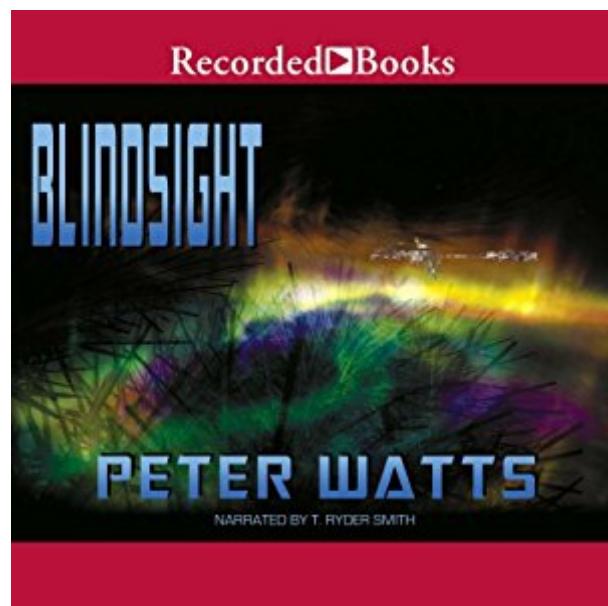


The book was found

Blindsight



Synopsis

Two months since sixty-five thousand alien objects clenched around the Earth like a luminous fist, screaming to the heavens as the atmosphere burned them to ash. Two months since that moment of brief, bright surveillance by agents unknown. Two months of silence, while a world holds its breath. Now some half-derelict space probe, sparking fitfully past Neptune's orbit, hears a whisper from the edge of the solar system: a faint signal sweeping the cosmos like a lighthouse beam. Whatever's out there isn't talking to us. It's talking to some distant star, perhaps. Or perhaps to something closer, something en route. So who do you send to force introductions on an intelligence with motives unknown, maybe unknowable? Who do you send to meet the alien when the alien doesn't want to meet? You send a linguist with multiple personalities, her brain surgically partitioned into separate, sentient processing cores. You send a biologist so radically interfaced with machinery that he sees x-rays and tastes ultrasound, so compromised by grafts and splices he no longer feels his own flesh. You send a pacifist warrior in the faint hope she won't be needed, and the fainter one she'll do any good if she is. You send a monster to command them all, an extinct hominid predator once called vampire, recalled from the grave with the voodoo of recombinant genetics and the blood of sociopaths. And you send a synthesist "an informational topologist with half his mind gone" as an interface between here and there, a conduit through which the Dead Center might hope to understand the Bleeding Edge. You send them all to the edge of interstellar space, praying you can trust such freaks and retrofits with the fate of a world. You fear they may be more alien than the thing they've been sent to find. But you'd give anything for that to be true, if you only knew what was waiting for them... --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Let's start with the cool factor, because that's what made me buy this the moment it came out. There's a protagonist with half his brain (the half that enabled empathy, apparently) removed, who makes his living reading other peoples' thoughts and intentions through close observation. Imagine a younger, colder, more focused Sherlock Holmes and then take away the drama queen tendencies, the social skills, and the cozy Victoriana; the part that's left might feel a bit like Siri. There are the intricately damaged altered-brain characters you might expect from Watts if you've read the rifters books. There's the space vampire who out-baddasses every other vampire I've ever encountered in a novel, and I know from vampire books. No gothy romantic hero here -- just a creature who has out-evolved you so thoroughly you can't even get your head around it. Now let's talk about the ideas. Blindsight takes on the evolutionary benefits of sociopathic behavior, and the ethics of torture, the puzzle of sentience, and what it means to intentionally develop a simulacrum of empathy and conscience (and whether it's worthwhile to do so). These ideas have been explored elsewhere, but I've never seen it done so well. Blindsight isn't *about* aliens or vampires or the future of technology. It's about us: our moral choices, our short cultural attention spans, the mental shortcuts we use so we can function, and what happens when our reach exceeds our evolutionary grasp. But I must digress, because it probably sounds like I'd be describing something dry and obvious and preachy. Didactic fiction drives me up the wall. Heavy-handed exposition and self-important authorial philosophizing will make me drop a book faster than anything but bad dialogue. This book is none of that.

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Blindsight

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