



Powerless

Tim Washburn

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Nothing Can Prepare You. . .

It strikes without warning. A massive geomagnetic solar storm that destroys every power grid in the northern hemisphere. North America is without lights, electricity, phones, and navigation systems. In one week, the human race is flung back to the Dark Ages.

Nothing Can Save You. . .

In Boulder, Colorado, weather technicians watch in horror as civilization collapses around them. Planes are falling out of the skies. Cars are dead. Pandemonium and terror grip the Northern Hemisphere. As nuclear reactors across North America face inevitable meltdowns, the U.S. President remains powerless in a heavily guarded White House. From London to Boston to Anchorage, there is no food, no water, no hope. It's every man for himself. . .and it will only get worse.

Survival Is Everything.

Only one man--army veteran Zeke Marshall--is prepared to handle a nightmare like this. But when he tries to reunite with his family in Dallas--across a lawless terrain as deadly as any battlefield--he discovers there are worse things in life than war. And there are terrible and unthinkable things he'll have to do to survive. . .

Powerless Details

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Author : Tim Washburn

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From Reader Review Powerless for online ebook

Braelyn says

This was a decent, albeit a little trashy, quick read.

An unprecedented coronal mass ejection sends plasma hurtling towards Earth to wreak havoc on the majority of the world's electrical grids. The premise was exciting and I think Washburn did a great job balancing the science talk with layman's terms for people like me who are certainly not experts. Also, I'm a sucker for disaster stories and I appreciated the side storyline of global relations that distinguished this novel from many others.

My only real gripe with this book was the very shallow and superficial female character development. I can't think of a single character who was not almost immediate sexualized by the men around her, except for one department head who was very clearly called out as a lesbian. Even the President of the U.S. during a major, worldwide crisis takes the time for a nooner with his wife and tells her how good her ass looks in her jeans... Maybe it's realistic, but it was annoying to me.

Christy says

I just discovered Tim Washburn and this fast page turning book feed my twisted love of apocalypse books and movies. Everything about this book from the storyline to the characters to of course referencing my home state, kept me immersed from the beginning to the very last sentence. The story slaps you right in the face with what could very well happen with our reliability on electric devices. Throwing a military conflict in the mix is icing on the cake. A world plunged into darkness quickly finds out what it takes for survival. But unlike other doomsday novels the warning that it was to happen potentially saved many. Life went on and somewhat turned back to some type of normalcy within 3 years. Although much was lost, the perseverance of those left behind give the story a all is not lost feel. Mankind will triumph in all situations.

Glen says

A massive solar flare kills all electronics on earth. As civilization quickly collapses, one survivalist was ready. He braves bandits and assorted other obstacles to find his family.

Not bad, but not one of the best of the genre.

Brandon says

Powerless wasn't anything spectacular as far as grid-down type books go, but it wasn't bad, either. The fact it was written in present tense was a little awkward, but other than that it was well-written. Nothing really unexpected happened throughout the book, it was pretty predictable. Nonetheless, it kind of worked out the way you'd hope it would, so it's hard to get upset about it. I debated giving it three stars, but, unlike many

stories it wasn't entirely unrealistic and the characters weren't constantly annoying me, so... four stars.

Marie says

An edge of your seat thrill ride! You will be powerless in being able to put this book down from page one.

I was given an advance copy by the publisher and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Jess Sohn says

People get really, really hungry and crazy during two weeks without power. And obliterating Iran is somehow a priority during a global power outage.

This is a mediocre book for people who want their fearful stereotypes and paranoias and isolationist survivalist mentalities confirmed. It's basically a Michael Bay movie in book form.

Drew Reinhardt says

It seemed to cover too many plot lines and not spend enough time on the good plots lines. Not a horrible book, but not the best.

Penny Marks says

It has been a very long time since I have read a thriller that scared me so much. That is one reason I believe everyone should read it. I enjoyed reading this book so much that I read it straight through. I couldn't put it down.

This book will make you think about how much our society is so dependent on electricity in our everyday lives. We get up everyday taking for granted the world around us. Everyone gets out of bed, takes a shower, eats breakfast, watches some news on a TV, checks their cell phones and computers for emails from loved ones or work. What would happen if one day you got up and you weren't able to do any of these normal everyday things? Would you be prepared or would you be lost and helpless?

This book takes you through the lives of different people from scientists to the everyday joe's living in rural America. It shows how each of them is able to or not able to live in a world turned upside down when we no longer have electricity. I loved how the author gave us all of these different story lines and the different struggles and triumphs of our society as a whole including how our government would deal with the situation.

I received this ARC from NetGalley for an honest review.

Beth says

This was an exciting story that me turning the pages although I found the writing a bit stilted and lacking depth.

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

Review: POWERLESS by Tim Washburn

I collect stories about EMP's and power grid/infrastructure failure, because that is a very real possibility. If not by an electromagnetic pulse weapon wielded by a hostile foreign power with a bad attitude, then due to Solar flares or the Sun's coronal mass ejections--it can happen, and the consequences would be catastrophic. You need only read Tim Washburn's excellent and terrifyingly vivid POWERLESS to find out exactly how tremendous. POWERLESS frightened me; it's a thriller, yes; powerful in family drama, agreed. But foundationally, POWERLESS is realistic, bringing-it-home Horror.

Jody says

I enjoyed this book. I liked the short chapters and how the story bounced back and forth between different characters and storylines. Occasionally I was bothered by the book being written in present tense, but it wasn't overwhelmingly distracting. The entire premise is pretty creepy and makes you wonder just what **WOULD** happen if the world lost electricity. Although the book only has a few sexual scenarios, there is one fairly explicit sex scene. I only mention it because it seemed out of place with the rest of the writing style and book content.

Mandy says

I won this book in a giveaway from the publisher.

This was our Thanksgiving Day read. The husband and I (Ok, mainly the husband) read this book aloud to each other all day. We started in the afternoon and finished at 2 am. Success!!

Confession time: I am *such* a sucker for bad disaster movies. Make that terrible disaster movies. The worse, the better. Remember The Day After Tomorrow? Yeah, that movie is my jam. What's a better T-Day read than a giant earth changing disaster book??

This book is about a solar coronal mass ejection. When describing the premise of the book to the husband I said, "Some big kind of solar flare creates a disaster." The husband replied, "Oh, like the Carrington event." Apparently, that's a real thing. Yeah. He may know stuff about science and space and politics, but I can achieve perfect winged liquid eyeliner lines in under thirty seconds and play an E-chord on the ukulele. We all have our areas of expertise. ;-)

Aaaannnnnywaaaay, I really like how each chapter is just a short vignette. The constantly changing stories and points of views really works when reading the book aloud. It definitely keeps the story moving forward at a nice pace. This is probably my favorite thing about the book. Very Dumas-esque.

The story follows two weather technicians in Boulder, CO, one of the technician's parents in NY, a family in OK/Dallas, and the President in DC. There's also some stupid Iran invading Israel sub-plot that I could have 100% done without.

I was definitely hoping for more widespread stories of survival. As it is, the stories are pretty limited. But, because there are so few stories, it's easier to remain interested in the survival of the people.

The book is divided up into three sections: pre-disaster, during the disaster, and three years after the disaster. The issue is that each section decreases in length. That means there is more of the book devoted to pre-disaster than to during the disaster. The three years after the disaster section is no more than an epilogue. Half of the book is pre-disaster.

That's just too much for me. I want the bulk of my disaster book to actually BE about the disaster. I want the survival. I want the struggle. I want every gruesome detail about cannibalism. Unlike Jamestown, there were no cannibals in this story. There's also no cannibalism in the British Navy and by none, I mean there's a certain amount.

Emily Ross says

Before I read this book I never would have thought of a widespread power outage as a disaster scenario. But in *Powerless* a massive geomagnetic solar storm wipes out power and brings the United States and most of the world to its knees in a matter of hours.

Tim Washburn gives us the impact of this disaster from many points of view including the perspective of rich and powerful folks like the president, city dwellers who are ill-equipped to survive without cell phones, grocery stores and water, and from the perspective of country dwellers whose knowledge of things like hunting and guns gives them a leg up on survival. But even in rural America there is the ever present threat of desperate people who will do anything to survive. My favorite character was Zeke, a veteran, who lives in rural Oklahoma. Before the disaster he made beautiful polished wooden tables, and was struggling with grief over his late wife. This disaster both tests his survival skills and helps him to move forward from his loss. *Powerless* was not only a page-turning compelling novel, I also learned a lot about how much modern life depends on things that could vanish in an instant. A frightening and fascinating read!

Ronando says

When I saw the title of this book and what it was about, I immediately purchased it so I could get a clear picture of what life would be like if Earth was hit with a massive Coronal Mass Ejections (CME). **In moments this book was scaring the shit out of me.**

Powerless, by Tim Washburn, did not disappoint. It's a very realistic depiction of what it would look like if the sun spit out a massive solar storm with CMEs that would knock out our satellites, transformers and electrical grid system. The entire Northern Hemisphere gets hit and within a very short period of time, life as we know it changes.

I've done a some reading on the subject and virtually every horrific event I've come across is mentioned by Washburn in *Powerless*. In a nutshell, this is what will happen.

* This massive solar storm will take place some day. It is what the sun does. It may not happen in our lifetime, but we know that it's not science fiction. It merely comes down to how well mankind prepares for the situation. It has already happened in 1859, (The Carrington Event) and it happened in 1989 in Quebec where people lost power for 9 hours.

The Earth protects us with it's own magnetic field, the **magnetosphere**. During a strong solar storm, the blast strips part of the Earth's magnetic field back, compressing it, leaving very little remaining shield to protect us.

* The **SOHO ACE satellite** with a chronograph on board has telescopes that monitor the sun's atmosphere. SOHO sees CMEs lifting off the sun, heading towards Earth and monitors the solar wind; magnetic field strength and magnetic orientation which are essential in predicting the strength of impact...but, it ACE only designed for research and is soon reaching the end of it's life. ??

* Despite the size of the storm, there's no way to know if it's damaging until we know the storm's polarity. Like a magnet, the storm has a North or Southward polarity. The ACE satellite can tell which way it's oriented. Until the storm hits ACE, there's no way of knowing the potential damage of a solar storm. If the field is Southward, that is considered bad.

* The units of measurement of the severity of the storm is in nanoteslas. The storm of 1859 is estimated to be about 200 nanotesla. Anything bigger than that will be a royal shit storm.

* Most CMEs bounce off the magnetosphere. But if they're big enough they can push through. Remember, the stronger the solar storm, the more compromised our magnetosphere becomes.

* **The storm will hit in three stages:** not all at once. **1) The first part is the Solar Flare**, which moves way ahead of the CME. Moving close to the speed of light, it will take about 8 minutes to hit Earth.

* Jets are in danger as **x-rays within the flare can wipe out radio communications** as well as knocking out engines while the jets are in flight.

* **2) The Radiation Storm:** It is just 8 minutes after the Solar Flare. It causes more serious problems as radiation streams into the upper atmosphere, frying electronics with high energy protons. On the surface of the planet, we are protected by the combined forces of the magnetosphere and atmosphere. But astronauts that are outside the atmosphere and magnetosphere are at risk. They have only a few minutes to get to safety or they will get hit with a high dose of radiation. ??

* GPS satellites will be hit with the solar radiation, as circuits are overloaded and signals become bent, rendering GPS useless. Though inconvenient for car drivers, it will be lethal for airplane pilots. The solar radiation will wreck havoc up until the CME hits Earth.

* **3)The CME hits:** It's a billion ton electrified gas cloud traveling at over 2,000 miles per second. It's the final stage, carrying a massive solar magnetic field with it. It's basically a solar hammer that impacts the Earth's magnetic field that will rip apart our electronic grid and destroy transformers, turning them into melted slag. The main problem is there's no way to determine how fast the CME is traveling. We can't track the CME, we can only guess.

* In preparation for the storm, emergency planners will attempt to shut down the local electrical grid to keep the electronics from being damaged, causing a deliberate blackout. If the power is not shut down, the worst case scenario is that transformers can blow, which takes months to a couple years to replace even just one.

* **Transformers:** Shutting down a power station “could” save the transformers attached to it. Normally, power stations send high voltage electricity to transformers that convert it into low voltage electricity for consumers. The US has about 2,000 large transformers throughout the country. They will be the critical vulnerable points during the solar storm.

* Around the world, there are tens of thousand of transformers that are equally at risk. We currently have the capability (not in the US) to create 70 - 100 transformers per year. A power station takes about an hour to shut down.

* **Aurora Borealis:** The Aurora is normally seen at the North and South poles. During a severe solar storm, the Aurora will be able to be seen all the way down to the equator. It will be visible on the dark side of the Earth as billions and billions of highly charged particles smash into the oxygen and nitrogen atoms of the atmosphere. As the particles collide, they release a burst of undulating light 100 miles high. The further towards the equator the Aurora Borealis can be seen, the larger the solar storm is pummeling the Earth.

* Without intentional blackouts, transformers will blow and power will be lost. Emergency services will not be able to help all the people stranded in elevators.

* The supply of food and water will eventually run out.

* Water and sewage treatment plants will fail, increasing likelihood of diseases, which will then affect the water supply.

* There will be a continuing cycle of deterioration. The population of sick will increase while the ability to provide care will decrease since the hospitals will cease to operate.

* Diseases like typhoid, cholera and hepatitis and dysentery will be quick to return.

* Transformers across the world will blow and burn while back up generators kick into effect (like at hospitals), but only as long as the fuel lasts, which is generally 3 days to a month depending on each location.

* It's possible that only 200 transformers could be destroyed, but it would still take 2 years to replace them as newly produced transformers will go to the highest bidder. This means it could take up to a decade for the poorest countries to get back up on their feet. Unfortunately, production facilities need power and raw resources to build the damn things; chicken egg scenario.

* After the solar storm: As the blackout continues, the death toll will rise.

If this kind of stuff interests you, then get *Powerless*. It doesn't disappoint. The only reason why I gave it 3 stars is, technical facts aside, the relationship aspects of the book just seemed like a guy's version of a Harlequin Romance novel. It wasn't bad, it just seemed rather cheap romancy type. But, it wasn't much of a distraction because I specifically bought it to see what type of world Washburn envisioned.

I think Washburn nailed it there.

If you want to read more about CMEs, here are some links for you to chomp on. And oh, I suggest you put together a survival pack, not just for CMEs, but for real world events. If you don't even have a flashlight, extra batteries, extra food and water on hand then you're just begging to be a hapless victim. I'm not a survivalist, and I don't even have my own survival pack, but I am definitely stating on one soon.

- Smithsonian: What Damage Caused by Massive Solar Storm
 - National Geographic: Solar Flare: What If Biggest Known Sun Storm Hit Today?
 - The difference between EMP & CME
 - US Dept. of Energy PDF
 - How to protect your home from solar storms
 - Nasa: Protecting the Power Grid
 - FOX New June 2015
 - ScienceCasts: Carrington-class CME Narrowly Misses Earth, April 2014
 - Nasa: Near Miss: The Solar Superstorm of July 2012
 - The solar storm of 2012 that almost sent us back to a post-apocalyptic Stone Age
-

Nanksy says

I found this in a dollar store and picked it up for a quick read.

Surprise!.

The book is written by a young man from small town Oklahoma. He does the thing I like best from authors, he writes about what he knows.

The story is interesting, not attempting to cover all possibilities, but sticking to a small number of scenarios. Washburn picks a select group of characters who find themselves in a world without electrical power, not for a few minutes, but for the foreseeable future.

Except for a small few, the characters have no warning and have made no preparation. The exceptions have no time to prepare since they are involved in trying to prevent or mitigate the consequences of a massive power loss.

It isn't a terrorist assault that brings multiple nations to their knees, it is Mother Nature.

A massive solar storm destroys the entire electrical grid in the Northern Hemisphere and slightly south of the equator. Washburn does not go into detail as to who is and is not affected. The United States, Mexico, Canada and great Britain are sent back, not to the dark ages as the blurb on the cover proclaims, but to the nineteenth century, with a total loss of electricity.

It is an under equipped nineteenth century admittedly. People do not have the tools and conveniences that nineteenth century homes would have been supplied with and there is no way to get them. Homes do not

have items such as fireplaces, lanterns, or axes and saws. It is a pretty realistic picture. How many of us have enough supplies to last even a week without Walmart, or Home Depot.

Machines and communications systems, along with the knowledge of the last two centuries are still available, with no power to use them. A limited number of people in Great Britain, Israel, and the United States, among others represented in the book, still have adequate food, water, security and the ability to continue to communicate with each other. The government in Washington D C continues to operate. The President is able to direct some recovery and humanitarian aid to the country and control the Military scattered around the world.

That does not matter at all to the other characters who Washburn brings to life. They have no knowledge of what is going on even a few miles away from their homes. They have to find a way to save themselves and their immediate circle from death by thirst, hunger, or predation.

Washburn has written a story that is believable and stays within closely chosen limits. He is not attempting to make an overreaching study of world events. He creates a few sympathetic characters and tells their story.

His biggest accomplishment is leaving you with the questions, "What would I do if I found myself in a world where the normal sources of supply were gone.? Would I be able to survive and protect my loved ones in a catastrophe that lasted , not a week, but years? What if there was no one from the government or any agency to help me? What if everyone else was in the same shape and some were worse off than I, do I help them or do I take care of my own and let them die? Who can I trust?"

Washburn created characters that I found myself caring about. My favorite was Zeke, who can be described as the major character, "Hero" of the story. There were other's, Ruth, who is his sister, and her husband and children, the two scientists who first discovered the impending storm, and a very sympathetic physician who gives everything he has to save the sick and injured under impossible conditions.

The only "flaw", and it may be one only to me, is the manner in which the people in the story choose to interact with the people outside of their own doors. However the story only covers the period of, approximately, one month. So... I won't elaborate as that is too much of the story for a review.

I read the book in a matter of hours. It was engrossing and easy to read. I think this is a first for the author and I predict he will have more and better stories for us in the future.
