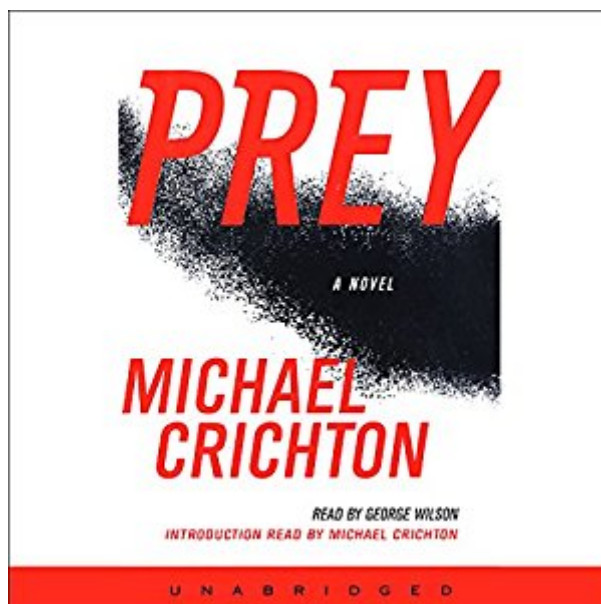


The book was found

Prey



Synopsis

In the Nevada desert, an experiment has gone horribly wrong. A cloud of nanoparticlesâ "micro-robotsâ "has escaped from the laboratory. This cloud is self-sustaining and self-reproducing. It is intelligent and learns from experience. For all practical purposes, it is alive. It has been programmed as a predator. It is evolving swiftly, becoming more deadly with each passing hour. Every attempt to destroy it has failed. And we are the prey. As fresh as today's headlines, Michael Crichton's most compelling novel yet tells the story of a mechanical plague and the desperate efforts of a handful of scientists to stop it. Drawing on up-to-the-minute scientific fact, Prey takes us into the emerging realms of nanotechnology and artificial distributed intelligenceâ "in a story of breathtaking suspense. Prey is a novel you can't put down. Because time is running out.

--This text refers to an alternate Audible Audio Edition edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Just as "Jurassic Park" was a cautionary tale for the dangers of tampering with the genetic code, so to is "Prey" a warning. This time, Michael Crichton has chosen to explore the potential and hazards of nanotechnology; the fashioning of robots at the molecular level. The power of these machines is that they are small enough to go anywhere, and their capabilities are limited only by human creativity. However, since they are so small, they need to be able to apply adaptive learning in order to accomplish their assigned tasks, and that's where the trouble starts. The novel begins with Jack Forman, stay at home dad, and long time, but currently unemployed software engineer, shopping for placemats. This touch of normalcy sets up an environment where Crichton can rapidly ratchet up

the tension, as an all-American home life turns distinctly scary. Moreover, Crichton has written the book in the first person, so the reader really has the opportunity to roam around Jack's head. As a result, Jack may be the best character Crichton has written to date. His emotions leap off the page, and his thought processes allow Crichton to seamlessly integrate necessary expository elements into the flow of the novel. Of course, Jack doesn't remain the house-husband for long. It turns out that there are problems at Xymos Corporation, where his wife is a vice-president. It seems that they've lost control of some of the nano-particle swarms that they were working on, and they need Jack to help bring them back into the fold. As it turns out, Jack wrote an early version of the software (which is based upon predator-prey relationships) that is being used as the brains behind the swarm.

First off, I'm a die-hard Michael Crichton fan...absolutely LOVE his stuff...however -- 'Prey' is definitely a 'formula' novel...most notably a Crichton formula novel which borrows extensively from previous works like 'Jurassic Park' & 'Timeline'. If you have read many of his other novels, this formula will become immediately apparent: Big corporation is messing with technology they don't fully understand nor appreciate, and in the process unleash something baaaaad. First it was the Dinosaurs when InGen toyed around with genetic manipulation where they shouldn't have...next we have a very similar company in 'Timeline' that wanted to send the elite on once-in-a-lifetime trips through time, using science again that was a bit beyond our control and now we have nanotechnology in 'Prey' that provides a frightening look at what *could* happen should this kind of near-future science fall into the hands of those who attempt to use it for all the wrong reasons. Just because Crichton is using his 'formula' here, that doesn't mean he doesn't provide us with some great cliff-hangers and genuine surprises along the way...his writing talent is far too refined to have forgotten how to pull a few strings with the readers. 'Prey' begins with poor Jack, a reluctant house-husband with a wife who has quickly become one of the powerhouse leaders at Xymos (you guessed it, the 'big corporation' that funds experiments that go horribly wrong). Her sudden and suspiciously odd actions make Jack begin to suspect that she (Julia) just might be having an affair. He pushes this thought away every time more and more evidence begins to mount that this is no longer a theory and more likely a fact.

In 'Prey,' Michael Crichton continues to stay at the forefront of scientific and technological issues to write a thriller. In 'Jurassic Park,' Crichton tackled genetic cloning, and this time around he addresses the field of nanotechnology. For the uninitiated, nanotechnology is a field of science

concerned with creating microscopic machines to carry out real world functions (which is probably a grossly inadequate description of the field). Jack Forman is an unemployed programmer. His area of specialty is agent based programming. When not searching for a new job, Jack stays at home while his wife, Julia, goes to work for a company involved in nanotechnology. In a sharp departure from past novels, Chrichton tells Jack's story in the first person, which is especially effective in the first half of the book. At the opening of the book, Jack begins to notice odd behavior in his wife. She has become blunt and short tempered with him and the kids. Jack begins to suspect an affair. The first third of the book is probably the best part. In addition to Julia's odd behavior, things start happening around the house. One night, Jack awakes to find his baby daughter screaming bloody murder while a rash breaks out across her body. After a trip to the emergency room, everything at home seems to be a little out of place. Then some minor electronics begin to fail around the house and Jack discovers a suspicious looking surge protector beneath the baby's crib. Chrichton is incredibly successful at establishing an eerie atmosphere in which the reader is just on the edge of comprehending what is going on. The book moves into its second phase when Julia is involved in a car crash. Jack suspects, for reasons you'll find adequately laid out in the book, that her new project is somehow involved.

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