

political thriller tv shows

political thriller tv shows have captivated audiences worldwide by blending intricate plots, suspense, and real-world political intrigue. These series offer a gripping exploration of power dynamics, conspiracies, and the often murky intersection between government and personal ambition. From the tense negotiations behind closed doors to high-stakes espionage, political thrillers keep viewers on the edge of their seats. This article delves into the defining characteristics of political thriller tv shows, highlights some of the most acclaimed series in the genre, and examines their impact on popular culture. Additionally, it explores the evolution of political thrillers on television and the elements that contribute to their enduring appeal. For enthusiasts and newcomers alike, understanding these facets provides a comprehensive insight into why political thrillers remain a dominant force in modern television entertainment. The following sections will cover the genre's key features, notable examples, and audience reception.

- Defining Characteristics of Political Thriller TV Shows
- Notable Political Thriller TV Shows
- The Evolution of Political Thriller Television
- Audience Appeal and Cultural Impact
- Key Elements That Make Political Thriller TV Shows Compelling

Defining Characteristics of Political Thriller TV Shows

Political thriller tv shows are a distinct genre that combines elements of suspense, drama, and political intrigue. These series typically focus on the machinations of political figures, government institutions, and intelligence agencies. The narratives often revolve around conspiracies, power struggles, and the ethical dilemmas faced by those in positions of authority. Unlike traditional thrillers, political thrillers emphasize the complexity of political systems and the nuanced interplay between public and private interests. Themes such as corruption, espionage, and ideological conflict are common, providing a realistic yet dramatized portrayal of political life. These shows also tend to incorporate real-world events or plausible scenarios, enhancing their relevance and tension.

Core Themes in Political Thrillers

The core themes in political thriller tv shows frequently include:

- **Power and Corruption:** Exploration of how power can corrupt individuals and institutions.
- **Espionage and Intelligence:** Spycraft and covert operations often drive the plot.
- **Conspiracy and Deception:** Hidden agendas and secret plots create suspense.

- **Ethical Dilemmas:** Characters face moral conflicts between personal beliefs and political obligations.
- **Political Conflict:** Struggles between rival factions, parties, or ideologies.

Typical Settings and Characters

Political thriller tv shows are commonly set in locations such as government offices, intelligence agencies, courtrooms, and international diplomatic arenas. Characters include politicians, spies, journalists, activists, and law enforcement officials. The interplay between these roles adds layers to the narrative, highlighting the complexity of political environments. Protagonists often grapple with internal and external conflicts that test their loyalty, integrity, and survival instincts.

Notable Political Thriller TV Shows

Several political thriller tv shows have set industry standards by combining compelling storytelling with topical themes. These series have received critical acclaim and cultivated dedicated fanbases, influencing both viewers and future productions within the genre.

House of Cards

“House of Cards” is widely regarded as a groundbreaking political thriller tv show. It centers on the ruthless politician Frank Underwood and his calculated rise to power in Washington, D.C. The series explores themes of manipulation, betrayal, and ambition, offering a dark and cynical view of American politics. Its intricate plotting and complex characters have made it a benchmark for political drama.

The West Wing

Although more optimistic in tone, “The West Wing” incorporates elements of political suspense and ethical challenges faced by the U.S. President and his staff. The show provides a behind-the-scenes look at the executive branch of the government, blending idealism with the realities of political decision-making. It remains influential for its intelligent writing and character development.

Homeland

“Homeland” combines espionage with political thriller elements, focusing on national security and counterterrorism. The series delves into issues of trust, loyalty, and mental health, framed by the geopolitical tensions of the post-9/11 world. Its gripping narrative and complex protagonist have earned it numerous awards and critical praise.

Other Significant Titles

- *24* – Known for its real-time format and intense political scenarios.
- *Designated Survivor* – Explores unexpected leadership and governmental crisis management.
- *Madam Secretary* – Focuses on diplomacy, international relations, and domestic politics.
- *Scandal* – Highlights political scandal and crisis management within the White House.
- *Bodyguard* – British series blending political intrigue with personal drama.

The Evolution of Political Thriller Television

The political thriller genre on television has evolved significantly over the decades, adapting to changing political climates, audience preferences, and technological advancements. Early political dramas laid the groundwork by dramatizing government affairs, but contemporary series have intensified the suspense and complexity to reflect modern realities.

From Classic Political Dramas to Modern Thrillers

In the mid-20th century, political narratives often focused on idealistic portrayals of governance and democracy. As societal trust in institutions fluctuated during events such as the Watergate scandal and the Cold War, political thrillers adopted a darker, more skeptical tone. This shift introduced elements of conspiracy and moral ambiguity that define the genre today.

Impact of Streaming Platforms

The rise of streaming services has expanded the creative freedom and audience reach for political thriller tv shows. Platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime have produced high-quality original content that pushes boundaries in storytelling and character development. This accessibility has increased global interest in political thrillers, allowing diverse perspectives and complex narratives to flourish.

Audience Appeal and Cultural Impact

Political thriller tv shows resonate with audiences due to their timely themes, suspenseful storytelling, and reflection of real-world issues. These series engage viewers by exploring the often-hidden mechanisms of power and governance, provoking thought and discussion about current political environments.

Why Audiences Are Drawn to Political Thrillers

Several factors contribute to the popularity of political thriller tv shows:

1. **Suspense and Intrigue:** The unpredictable plot twists keep audiences engaged.
2. **Relatability:** Stories often mirror real political events or concerns, making them relevant.
3. **Complex Characters:** Multi-dimensional characters with conflicting motives attract viewers.
4. **Educational Value:** Provides insight into political processes and international relations.
5. **Emotional Engagement:** High stakes create emotional investment in outcomes.

Cultural Influence and Representation

Political thriller tv shows have influenced public perception of politics and governance, sometimes shaping opinions on real-world events. They also contribute to cultural discourse by highlighting issues such as corruption, civil rights, and global conflicts. Representation of diverse political viewpoints and characters within these shows fosters a broader understanding of societal complexities.

Key Elements That Make Political Thriller TV Shows Compelling

Several key elements are essential for crafting successful political thriller tv shows. These components work together to create an immersive and captivating viewing experience.

Strong Writing and Plot Development

Well-crafted scripts with intricate plotting and believable dialogue are fundamental. Political thrillers rely on layered storylines that build tension and reveal secrets gradually, maintaining suspense throughout the series.

Complex Characters and Moral Ambiguity

Characters in political thrillers are often morally complex, with conflicting loyalties and personal flaws. This ambiguity adds depth and realism, encouraging viewers to question motivations and anticipate character decisions.

Realistic Political Context

Incorporating accurate political, social, and historical contexts enhances credibility. This realism allows audiences to connect with the narrative and understand the stakes involved.

Atmosphere and Pacing

A tense atmosphere supported by carefully controlled pacing is crucial. Political thriller tv shows balance moments of high action with quieter, strategic scenes to emphasize drama and character development.

Use of Symbolism and Themes

Symbolism and recurring themes enrich the narrative, offering deeper commentary on issues such as power, justice, and freedom. These elements invite viewers to engage critically with the material beyond surface-level entertainment.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are some of the most popular political thriller TV shows currently streaming?

Some of the most popular political thriller TV shows currently streaming include 'House of Cards,' 'Homeland,' 'Designated Survivor,' 'The Night Agent,' and 'Bodyguard.' These shows combine suspense, political intrigue, and complex characters.

What elements typically define a political thriller TV show?

Political thriller TV shows typically feature high-stakes government or political scenarios, espionage, conspiracy, power struggles, and moral ambiguity. They often involve characters such as politicians, spies, journalists, and law enforcement.

How do political thriller TV shows reflect real-world political issues?

Political thriller TV shows often draw inspiration from current events, scandals, and international relations, providing a dramatized exploration of political corruption, terrorism, election interference, and espionage, which can resonate with contemporary audiences.

Which political thriller TV shows have received critical acclaim for their storytelling and performances?

'Homeland' and 'House of Cards' have received critical acclaim for their intense storytelling and strong performances, particularly by Claire Danes and Kevin Spacey, respectively. 'The Americans'

is also highly praised for its nuanced portrayal of espionage during the Cold War.

Are there any new political thriller TV shows to look out for in 2024?

In 2024, viewers are anticipating new political thriller series such as 'The Consultant' on Amazon Prime and 'Red Election' on Netflix, both promising fresh takes on political intrigue and suspense.

How do political thriller TV shows differ from traditional crime or spy dramas?

While traditional crime or spy dramas focus primarily on criminal investigations or espionage, political thriller TV shows emphasize the intersection of politics and power, often exploring governmental institutions, policy decisions, and the impact of political actions on society.

Additional Resources

1. The Manchurian Candidate

This classic political thriller by Richard Condon delves into the dark world of brainwashing and political conspiracy. The story follows a former prisoner of war who is manipulated into becoming an unwitting assassin in a plot to overthrow the U.S. government. Its intense narrative and psychological suspense have inspired numerous adaptations and remain a touchstone for political intrigue in fiction.

2. House of Cards

Written by Michael Dobbs, this novel explores the ruthless ambition of a British politician determined to climb the ranks of power. Through cunning manipulation, backstabbing, and strategic maneuvering, the protagonist navigates the treacherous world of Westminster politics. The book's sharp portrayal of political machinations provided the foundation for the acclaimed television series.

3. Advise and Consent

Allen Drury's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel presents a gripping tale of Senate confirmation hearings fraught with deception and moral dilemmas. The story exposes the complex interplay of personal ambition, political pressure, and ethical challenges within the U.S. government. Its detailed depiction of Washington politics offers a compelling look at power struggles behind closed doors.

4. Red Sparrow

Jason Matthews, a former CIA operative, crafts a thrilling espionage story centered on a Russian intelligence officer turned double agent. The book blends political intrigue with international espionage, highlighting the dangerous game of spies in the modern world. Its intricate plot and authentic details create a vivid backdrop for a tense political thriller.

5. The Night Manager

John le Carré's novel follows a former British soldier who becomes embroiled in an undercover operation to take down an international arms dealer. The story combines elements of political corruption, espionage, and moral ambiguity, making it a gripping read for fans of political thrillers. Le Carré's signature style of nuanced characters and intricate plotting shines throughout.

6. *American Assassin*

Vince Flynn's fast-paced novel introduces Mitch Rapp, a CIA operative tasked with preventing terrorist threats against the United States. The book delves into covert operations and the high-stakes world of counterterrorism. Its blend of action and political intrigue makes it a standout in the genre.

7. *The President is Missing*

Co-written by Bill Clinton and James Patterson, this novel features a U.S. president who disappears amid a national security crisis. The story combines political drama with a suspenseful thriller narrative, exploring themes of leadership, loyalty, and crisis management. Its insider perspective offers a unique take on the pressures faced by those in power.

8. *Body of Lies*

David Ignatius' novel centers on a CIA operative working in the Middle East to thwart terrorist plots. The story exposes the complexities of intelligence work and the blurred lines between allies and enemies. Its realistic portrayal of modern espionage and political strategy makes it a compelling political thriller.

9. *Scandal*

Though originally a television show, "Scandal" has inspired novelizations and companion books that delve deeper into the world of political crises and personal secrets. The narrative revolves around a crisis management firm handling scandals that could topple Washington's elite. The blend of fast-paced drama and political maneuvering captivates readers interested in the darker side of politics.

Political Thriller Tv Shows

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political thriller tv shows: The 100 Greatest American TV Shows of All Time Claudia Morgan, From the golden age of television to the modern streaming era, American television has produced some of the most iconic, groundbreaking, and beloved shows of all time. In this definitive guide, discover the 100 greatest American TV series that have captivated audiences, pushed creative boundaries, and left an indelible mark on the medium. This comprehensive volume takes readers on a journey through the small screen's most seminal moments. From the sharp social commentary of *The Wire* to the addictive family drama of *This Is Us*, the gut-wrenching tension of *Breaking Bad* to the uproarious laughter of *Seinfeld*, each entry provides an in-depth analysis of the show's cultural significance, critical reception, and lasting legacy. Whether you're revisiting old favorites or discovering new classics, this book celebrates the enduring power of the small screen and the indelible mark American television has left on our culture.

political thriller tv shows: The 200 Greatest British TV Shows of All Time Claudia Morgan, Journey through the illustrious history of British television in *The 200 Greatest British TV Shows of All Time*. From the timeless humor of *Fawlty Towers* to the groundbreaking mystery of *Sherlock*, and from the cultural phenomenon of *Doctor Who* to the gripping drama of *Broadchurch*, this book celebrates the finest that British TV has to offer. Each chapter delves into the heart of a

beloved show, offering insights into its creation, its impact, and its place in British cultural history. Whether you're a lifelong fan or a newcomer to British TV, this collection is a must-read, offering a rich tapestry of genres, eras, and stories that have captivated audiences around the world. Uncover the stories behind the screen, the characters that became icons, and the episodes that left a mark on the history of television. With 200 chapters, each dedicated to a different show, this guide is the ultimate guide to the shows that have defined British television and continue to inspire new generations of viewers.

political thriller tv shows: The Political Thriller in Contemporary American Cinema

Krešimir Bobaš, 2025-06-30 The Political Thriller in Contemporary American Cinema examines how political thriller films (de)construct and reflect the sociopolitical realities of the second half of the twentieth century, as well as the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The book highlights the convergence between the cinematic narrative, its underlying political discourse, and the audience's perception of it. Through a critical lens, it analyzes how contemporary films utilize characterization, narrative, and suspense to examine topics of governance, malfeasance, and power dynamics. By referring to films such as *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, and *Snowden*, this book traces the evolution of the political thriller, questioning how its narratives mirror issues such as covert operations, the erosion of democracy, and governmental surveillance. In turn, the conspiratorial and underlying paranoid nature of these films serves as a reflection of societal anxieties and a metaphorization of the levers of power in America's modern-day democracy. Consequently, this book serves as a contribution to the growing body of research on political cinema and the way it simultaneously reflects and shapes political life through its role as a sociocultural phenomenon. In doing so, it invites readers to further delve into the exploration of these films, which represent complex commentaries on the structures of corporations, media, and the military that are predominant in contemporary American society and cinema.

political thriller tv shows: The 100 Greatest Superhero Films and TV Shows

Zachary Ingle, David M. Sutera, 2022-02-15 A fascinating exploration of the most significant superhero films and television shows in history, from the classic serial *Adventures of Captain Marvel* to the Disney+ hit show *WandaVision*. In *The 100 Greatest Superhero Films and TV Shows*, Zachary Ingle and David M. Sutera celebrate over eighty years of superhero cinema and television. Featuring blockbusters such as *Black Panther* and *The Dark Knight*, Ingle and Sutera also include lesser-known yet critically acclaimed shows like *The Boys*, cult films such as *The Toxic Avenger*, and foreign series like *Astro Boy* to provide a well-rounded perspective of the genre. All one hundred selections are evaluated based on qualities such as plot and character development, adherence to the original source materials, technological innovations, and social impact. The entries cover both live-action and animated films and TV series, and almost a third of the entries are not associated with Marvel or DC—a testament to the genre's variety in its eighty-year history. *The 100 Greatest Superhero Films and TV Shows* includes an analysis of the superhero's evolution and its relevance to the feminist movement, auteur theory, convergence culture, critical race theory, and more. Featuring more than 80 photographs alongside the authors' selections, the diverse entries are sure to inspire debate and entertain all fans of superhero movies and television shows.

political thriller tv shows: History and Story in the American Political Thriller Film

Pablo Castrillo Maortua, 2023-08-29 In this book, Pablo Castrillo Maortua analyzes the emergence of the political thriller in Hollywood at a time of angst and turmoil in the United States. The Cold War, the nuclear age, domestic and international scandals, and an increasingly deceitful political culture catalyzed a filmmaking current that would gradually develop its own narrative form and aesthetics into a new genre. Castrillo Maortua explores the dramatic identity and design of the American political thriller, tracking the close correlation between the evolution of the genre and the history of the United States from the Cuban Missile Crisis to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the ensuing War on Terror. Ultimately, the author demonstrates how the American political thriller defies Hollywood conventions and cultural presuppositions with an entertaining yet critical view of the state of politics. Scholars of film studies, screenwriting, and genre theory will find this book of particular

interest.

political thriller tv shows: The "Disguised" Political Film in Contemporary Hollywood Betty Kaklamanidou, 2018-04-19 With strict guidelines on methodology and time frame -- films produced after September 2001, and a socio-semiotic theoretical framework -- Betty Kaklamanidou unpacks the problematic terms and ideas that go along with defining a new genre. Kaklamanidou considers a different sub-genre per chapter, placing each group of films in their socio-historical context to reach conclusions about the production of political films in millennial Hollywood. In shifting the terms of the debate, *The Disguised Political Film in Contemporary Hollywood* offers a fresh, new approach to the subject of the political film. The political film is not a clearly delineated object but rather an elusive one and resistant to clear boundaries. So, what is a political film? Can *The Hunger Games* (2012) belong to the same category as *Lincoln* (2012)? Is *Jarhead* (2005) a political movie simply because it is set during the Gulf War but with no reference to the motives of the conflict and/or American and Arab relations, and thus in the same group of war films such as *The Three Kings* (1999), another narrative that focuses on the same military conflict but includes direct commentary to governmental and military strategies? Are historical films by definition political since the majority deals with significant events and/or people in a specific socio-cultural landscape?

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political thriller tv shows: Contemporary British Television Crime Drama Ruth McElroy, 2016-10-14 *Contemporary British Television Crime Drama* examines one of the medium's most popular genres and places it within its historical and industrial context. The television crime drama has proved itself capable of numerous generic reinventions and continues to enjoy some of the highest viewing figures. Crime drama offers audiences stories of right and wrong, moral authority asserted and resisted, and professionals and criminals, doing so in ways that are often highly entertaining, innovative, and thought provoking. In examining the appeal of this highly dynamic genre, this volume explores how it responds not only to changing social debates on crime and policing, but also to processes of hybridization within the television industry itself. Contributors, many of whom are leading figures in UK television studies, analyse popular series such as *Broadchurch*, *Between the Lines*, *Foyle's War*, *Poirot*, *Prime Suspect*, *Sherlock* and *Wallander*. Essays examine the main characteristics of television crime drama production, including the nature of trans-Atlantic franchises and literary and transnational adaptations. Adopting a range of feminist, historical, aesthetic and industrial approaches, they offer incisive interrogations that provide readers with a rich understanding of the allure of crime drama to both viewers and commissioners.

political thriller tv shows: Indie TV James Lyons, Yannis Tzioumakis, 2023-03-27 This edited collection is the first book to offer a wide-ranging examination of the interface between American independent film and a converged television landscape that consists of terrestrial broadcasters, cable networks and streaming providers, in which independent film and television intersect in complex, multifaceted and creative ways. The book covers the long history of continuities and connections between the two sectors, as seen in the activities of PBS, HBO or Sundance. It considers the movement of filmmakers between indie film and TV such as Steven Soderbergh, Rian Johnson, the Duplass brothers, Joe Swanberg, Lynn Shelton and Gregg Araki; details the confluence of aesthetic and thematic elements seen in shows such as *Girls*, *Breaking Bad*, *Master of None*, or *Glow*; points to a shared interest in regional sensibilities evident in shows like *One Mississippi* or *Fargo*; and makes the case for documentaries and web series as significant entities in this domain. Collectively, the book builds a compelling picture of indie TV as a significant feature of US screen entertainment in the 21st Century. This interdisciplinary landmark volume will be a go-to reference for students and scholars of Television Studies, Film Studies and Media Studies.

political thriller tv shows: Politics and Politicians in Contemporary US Television Betty Kaklamanidou, Margaret Tally, 2016-10-04 Bringing together well-established scholars of media, political science, sociology, and film to investigate the representation of Washington politics on U.S. television from the mid-2000s to the present, this volume offers stimulating perspectives on the status of representations of contemporary US politics, the role of government and the machinations and intrigue often associated with politicians and governmental institutions. The authors help to locate these representations both in the context of the history of earlier television shows that portrayed the political culture of Washington as well as within the current political culture transpiring both inside and outside of The Beltway. With close attention to issues of gender, race and class and offering studies from contemporary quality television, including popular programmes such as *The West Wing*, *Veep*, *House of Cards*, *The Americans*, *The Good Wife* and *Scandal*, the authors examine the ways in which televisual representations reveal changing attitudes towards Washington culture, shedding light on the role of the media in framing the public's changing perception of politics and politicians. Exploring the new era in which television finds itself, with new production practices and the possible emergence of a new 'political genre' emerging, *Politics and Politicians in Contemporary U.S. Television* also considers the 'humanizing' of political characters on television, asking what that representation of politicians as human beings says about the national political culture. A fascinating study that sits at the intersection of politics and television, this book will appeal to scholars of popular culture, sociology, cultural and media studies.

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authors focus on such topics as the influence of ideology, the impact of geopolitics, the use of rhetoric, soft power, educational encounters and exchanges, immigration, gender, race, identity, literature, television, movies, music, and the press. Cultural factors are, as the authors demonstrate, enormously significant in affecting how Chinese and Americans think about and approach each other, both as individuals and at the state level.

political thriller tv shows: The Business of Television Ken Basin, 2024-09-19 In this expanded and updated second edition, esteemed television executive and Harvard lecturer Ken Basin offers a comprehensive and readable overview of the business, financial, and legal structure of the U.S. television industry, as well as its deal-making norms. The Business of Television explores the basic structure and recent history of the television and streaming business, rights and talent negotiations, intellectual property, backend deals, licensing, international production, and much more. This expanded and updated second edition also features an in-depth exploration of the evolution of the streaming business, offers valuable new insights about negotiation, reflects the historic impacts of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic and 2023 WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes, addresses the intersection of artificial intelligence technology and intellectual property law, and provides a greater breadth and depth of technical material about a wide variety of common television deals. The book also includes breakdowns after each chapter summarizing major deal terms and points of negotiation, a significantly expanded glossary, an extensive list of referenced articles and cases, and a wealth of real-world examples to help readers put the material into context. Written for a diverse audience of working or aspiring creative professionals, executives, agents, managers, lawyers, and students, The Business of Television is the definitive reference guide for the ever-changing television industry.

political thriller tv shows: Working Backwards Colin Bryar, Bill Carr, 2021-02-09 Working Backwards is an insider's breakdown of Amazon's approach to culture, leadership, and best practices from two long-time Amazon executives—with lessons and techniques you can apply to your own company, and career, right now. In Working Backwards, two long-serving Amazon executives reveal the principles and practices that have driven the success of one of the most extraordinary companies the world has ever known. With twenty-seven years of Amazon experience between them—much of it during the period of unmatched innovation that created products and services including Kindle, Amazon Prime, Amazon Studios, and Amazon Web Services—Bryar and Carr offer unprecedented access to the Amazon way as it was developed and proven to be repeatable, scalable, and adaptable. With keen analysis and practical steps for applying it at your own company—no matter the size—the authors illuminate how Amazon's fourteen leadership principles inform decision-making at all levels of the company. With a focus on customer obsession, long-term thinking, eagerness to invent, and operational excellence, Amazon's ground-level practices ensure these characteristics are translated into action and flow through all aspects of the business. Working Backwards is both a practical guidebook and the story of how the company grew to become so successful. It is filled with the authors' in-the-room recollections of what "Being Amazonian" is like and how their time at the company affected their personal and professional lives. They demonstrate that success on Amazon's scale is not achieved by the genius of any single leader, but rather through commitment to and execution of a set of well-defined, rigorously-executed principles and practices—shared here for the very first time. Whatever your talent, career or organization might be, find out how you can put Working Backwards to work for you.

political thriller tv shows: Something Fierce Carmen Aguirre, 2014-03-25 #1 NATIONAL BESTSELLER (The Globe and Mail) A Globe and Mail Best Book [2011] A Quill & Quire Book of the Year [2011] A National Post Best Book [2011] A BBC Radio Book of the Week [October 2011] One of the CBC's 15 Memoirs by Canadian Women Worth Reading [2015] Six-year-old Carmen Aguirre fled to Canada with her family following General Augusto Pinochet's violent 1973 coup in Chile. Five years later, when her mother and stepfather returned to South America as Chilean resistance members, Carmen and her sister went with them, quickly assuming double lives of their own. At 18, Carmen became a militant herself, plunging further into a world of terror, paranoia and euphoria.

Something Fierce takes the reader inside war-ridden Peru, dictator-ruled Bolivia, post-Malvinas Argentina and Pinochet's Chile in the eventful decade between 1979 and 1989. Dramatic, suspenseful and darkly comic, it is a rare first-hand account of revolutionary life and a passionate argument against forgetting.

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