



## The Zero

By Jess Walter  
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### About the Author

#### Author Biography

Jess Walter is the author of four novels and one nonfiction book. *The Zero*, was a finalist for the National Book Award and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize and winner of the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award. His previous book, *Citizen Vince*, was a finalist for the ITW Thriller of the Year and the winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Novel. Walter has also been a finalist for the PEN Center West Literary nonfiction Award and the Pulitzer Prize for spot news journalism. His essays, short fiction, poetry, criticism, and journalism have been widely published, and he was co-author of Christopher Darden's bestseller, *In Contempt*. He [Walter] also writes screenplays and appeared in one independent movie in which he displayed the full range of his acting skill by growing a mustache. Raised in a family of failed cattle ranchers, Walter lives in his hometown of Spokane, Washington, with his wife, Anne, and his three children.

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#### A Conversation with Jess Walter

Jess Walter discussed *The Zero* with Amy Grace Loyd, literary editor at *Playboy*.

**Amy Grace Loyd:** In arguably the most visualized event in American history, the attacks of 9/11, what's left for the writer? And for the fiction writer in particular?

**Jess Walter:** It's exactly the pervasiveness of those images-jets dissolving into buildings, people dangling from skyscrapers-and their power within our collective subconscious that makes them such vital subjects for fiction. We all witnessed the same event, but we didn't see the same thing. Where some people saw leadership, others saw opportunism; where some saw victims, others saw heroes; where some saw a crime, others saw an act of war. Fiction's freedom allows us to rearrange and reorder, to synthesize, satirize, and make thematic connections between disparate images and movements.

The closest parallel might be the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the televised shooting a few days later of Lee Harvey Oswald. Most Americans can probably close their eyes and still see the Secret Service agents chasing the limousine, see Oswald doubled over, as if cradling the bullet. And yet no moment in our history has created more speculation, more paranoia, more conspiracy theories. Ask five people what they saw and they'll describe the same moment. But ask what Kennedy's death meant and you'll get five very different answers.

Sometimes I think fiction writers are the only ones who can make sense of what has happened to us since 9/11. We were attacked by religious zealots hoping to start a war in the Middle East and we responded by starting a war in the Middle East. We have blindly traded civil rights and privacy for the illusion of security. We have responded to an increasingly serious world by becoming surreally superficial. We live in a world that could only have been dreamed up by Graham Greene and Franz Kafka on a weekend bender, with George Orwell along to write slogans.

**A:G:L:** What particular access did you have not only to the event but to its aftermath that might give you a vantage that other novelists who've written about 9/11 did not have?

**J.W.:** I was at Ground Zero on a writing assignment, and had fly-on-the-wall access to a broad swath of public officials, cops, rescue

workers, firefighters, and ordinary people trying to deal with the horror and tragedy. Real people inform the novel but it's not about them. It's satire about us, about the collective post-traumatic stress that we've suffered and the way we've retreated into a cocoon lined with real-estate listings and 401K updates while truly frightening measures are undertaken on our behalf. From the first day I began writing I knew this wouldn't be a 9/11 novel. It's more of a 9/12 novel.

**A.G.L.:** You recently won the Edgar Award for your novel *Citizen Vince*. You are a literary writer but have used genre to frame/structure your work. Are you doing that here?

**J.W.:** I think suspense should be like any other color on a writer's palette. I suppose I'm in the minority but I think it's crazy for "literary fiction" to divorce itself from stories that are suspenseful, and assign anything with cops or spies or criminals to some genre ghetto. As one of the characters in *The Zero* says, "History has become a thriller plot." When the newspapers every day are filled with stories of surveillance, torture, and suicide bombings, I don't think it's in the novelist's best interest to ignore these things or make them mere backdrops to some domestic story about middle-aged rich people coming to terms with their mortality. ("The parties that season were especially grim.")

**A.G.L.:** There's a lot of hilarious satire here (the officials in this story will be recognizable to some) as well as Kafkaesque fragmentation and almost dream-like sequences; but there are also acute realistic descriptions, and throughout you manage to remain empathetic and affectionate toward your characters. Was that balance important to you?

**J.W.:** That was certainly what I hoped to achieve, the dizzying balance between the real and the surreal, between vivid description and dreamy inexactitude that I first experienced at Ground Zero. I wanted the reader to feel the same way the characters do, especially Remy and April. And they, in turn, had to be real enough to register that what happened wasn't just surreal, but truly awful. The best indication I have that this balance might've worked is how many people ask me if the agency Remy works for, the Department of Documentation, is real.

**A.G.L.:** Your protagonist, a cop called upon to join a special investigative team, is a complicated hero: he's losing his eyesight and has gaps in his memory, often blocking out his own bad acts. How are you playing with our notion of a hero and with his and the reader's complicity in events surrounding 9/11?

**J.W.:** There was a real conflation of hero and victim in the wake of 9/11, in our perverse desire to create a triumphant myth out of pure tragedy. I wanted Brian Remy to be an unwilling hero, blinded in every way, to his own acts and to the motivations of others. Most of all, though, I wanted him to feel what I think most of us feel: confused and frightened, a helpless man of the very best intentions.

As for complicity, I don't personally subscribe to the belief that we were in any way to blame for the attacks of 9/11, that American policy somehow led to a terrorist response. I think that's insane. These were irrational and criminal attacks, entirely unprovoked.

Our complicity begins with our country's reaction to that attack and our failure, in my opinion, to debate the response honestly. The war in Iraq, the abuse of detainees, electronic eavesdropping, Guantanamo Bay — these things were all done on our behalf and they may turn out in the end to have created more terrorists. The way espionage and law enforcement have worked in American history, it could be decades before we begin to tabulate the price we paid to feel this phony sense of security.

**A.G.L.:** What do you think 9/11 failed to teach us?

**J.W.:** I doubt the terrorists saw 9/11 as a teaching opportunity. And we're not really a culture geared to anything as humble as "learning." But I was disappointed in how quickly everyone wanted to get back to normal. It was as if we watched terrorism on TV for a while, then got bored and turned back to *American Idol*.

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## About the Book

### *The Zero Journals*

I keep a writing journal full of notes and observations that often find their way into my novels. In these journals I record the reflexive highs and lows that most writers suffer, alternating between thinking a piece of work is brilliant and that it is unreadable, mood swings so drastic they seem like the diary of a man living on the coast who has no understanding of tides ("The water is disappearing!" "My God, it's a flood!").

More than anything I've ever written, *The Zero* took shape from these journal entries, as I struggled to find a narrative shape for an allegorical satire about the aftermath of 9/11, about what I described to myself in September 2003 as like "collective insanity, a post-traumatic break from reality." What follows are just a few excerpts from the six writing journals I kept over the four-plus years that I worked on *The Zero*, beginning with notes from my first trip to Ground Zero (September 17-23, 2001), and including a trip back to the site two years later. I lost one journal, which is the reason for the big gap in 2002 and 2003. Also, I've tried to weed out the endless notes about characters and ideas and the thousands of story dead ends I first tested in my journals. So this represents a fraction of the entries that deal with *The Zero*.

As I thumbed back through these notes, I was surprised, and not just by my bad penmanship and the many working titles I had for the book (*Six Days After* and *Eight Days After* and *Days After* and *Dry White Rain* and *White Rain*). I was also shocked to find that so many elements -- the paper, the character of Remy, and most of all, the feel of the book, of a fractured and sorrowful reality -- were there from the very beginning.

9-11-01: Oh God.

9-18-01: [From Ground Zero] Rubber burned off wheels. Twisted and melted metal. Rivets popped, girders bent and curled . . . No big pieces . . . dust, rubble . . . orange body bags . . . Dogs smelling for remains . . . Miles of cable and wire. Frustration. Expect to see

someone alive. But not there . . . so quiet. A moonscape . . . Across 6-story mounds of rubble. Quiet, listening for tapping. Quiet. Scorched cars picked up and stacked 3 deep.

[INSERT IMAGE: "October 2001 scan.jpg"]

10-1-01: I am empty.

The ash is composed  
of glass and concrete and drywall  
and the stuff of two hundred  
storeys of commerce  
which is  
of course  
everything,  
except the paper  
which was blown in all directions, cast aside. The  
paper rained all over the city  
Even in Brooklyn.  
Oh well.

10-5-01: Saw a sign: God Bless America. New Furniture Arriving Every Day.

10-18-01: A New York book about the paper? He drives across the country. NY people did what they do-celebrated their uniqueness, fought and stole and wrote and sold and held press conferences and one-man plays and sold photos and analyzed their response and the response to the response-the biggest ant hill in the world, epic scurry and flight.

1-20-02: He comes to the hole to replace the paper that rained on every part of the city, pooling in corners and alleys.

4-12-02: The end of such a book must be sorrow and fatigue-a reckoning, a breath before action, an inevitability.

4-21-02: This is about our inability to register events. We want simple narratives; we don't want our presumptions messed with . . . We all suffer from this malady, this affliction and this is what I want to name.

7-16-03: Woman fakes her death? NY business people in for . . . what? Gaps in my thoughts, now -- in my confidence, in my life. Where am I going? Who am I?

8-24-03: What do you do? Where do you go? Faith moves too in patterns like weather. Everything moves like weather, fronts and storms -- things pass.

9-5-03: The names, the world-all pointing toward a specific symbolic meaning and yet, like Kafka, I think pain and meaning are general. Vast . . . Character. He is trying to connect with these places-why?

9-6-03: [In New York] . . . the profound and the mundane . . . wakes up in a panic in his hotel room.

9-8-03: [At the James Q. Wilson lecture at the Manhattan Institute for Public Policy] . . . Four times as many people die in suicide attacks as other forms of terrorism . . . False that money and education will "cure" terrorism . . . Terrorism increased as [middle east] economy improved. [Terrorism can't be eradicated] by arresting the perpetrators but by eliminating the cause. But what if the perpetrators are the cause?

9-9-03: [At Ground Zero] Jesus, it's gone! They took it all away. It's just another construction site now, a parking lot for a business park. Something is wrong . . . Flags on fencing and . . . it's like we've suffered some collective insanity, some post-traumatic break from reality.

9-19-03: BLAM. A man's face. In the background, sirens. "Mr. ---? Mr. ---? . . . lying on his side, big hole in his head. "Mr.---?" He dully answers the door. "I was cleaning my gun."

Psychiatrist: So what do you feel your life is missing?

(Man): Specifically?

Psychiatrist: Yes.

(Man): Life.

11-23-03: Iraq . . . we've flushed our freedoms to 'defend our freedoms.' We've given up that great thing we were to protect its name.

11-25-03: Started today on Eight Days After / A Dry White Rain . . . the biggest story I know . . . we aren't even supposed to think the wrong thing . . . White Rain, the fullness of America. Where is she, the sister . . . She's seeing a married guy. She's 31. Remy sees his dead brother's kid . . . the kid tells the truth. Amazingly precocious kid . . . fascinated by the detail.

11-30-03: Distraction, National distraction. We've let it get away from us. There was a moment of purity, of clarity. Sorrow and tragedy are lessons and we ignored them. The honor of sorrow, of sadness, of redemption. This is what we forgot . . . Where are we going? What do these flags have to do with it?

12-3-03: Remy finds a dayplanner . . . "What do you do?" "Tours." "What's it like?" "People describe it as a moonscape. Or hell." "Both

places they've never been." "Yeah."

12-13-03: Are we fighting [in Iraq] for an economic system? Is that all we have left?

7-7-04: Starts with Remy. He goes to work for this guy. Putting paper back. Woman escaped with the paper. Must gather her, too.  
WWVD -- What Would Vonnegut Do?

7-22-04: Days After: The ground beneath my feet. Concrete . . . The verticality of NY. But what happens when it becomes a horizontal city. The ground has every imprint ever put on it . . . registers every footfall, every streetfight, kiss, dog piss, stickball, car wreck, footrace, stroll, fish sale, mugging, panhandle, con game, speech, cracked sidewalk bike ride. Just keep digging because the ground is ten storeys down now.

Move past cold war irony and sarcasm to . . . what?

8-19-04: Eight Days After: . . . need to connect that idiocy to us. Celine, maybe, is a better comparison than either Vonnegut or Heller. Absurdity-in the face of absurdity.

10-20-04: Browning-"Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things/the honest thief, the tender murderer/the superstitious atheist." . . . Remy was sitting in the lobby of a Best Western. He knew it was a BW because he could see the sign turning. The skyline was no help to him . . . Was he staying at this hotel?

11-13-04: There is a Japanese word that translates roughly to mean Aware. This is the feeling that life is both wonderful and awful . . .

11-18-04: . . . those emotional moments between characters . . . With Guterak and Edgar mostly. End of the play he wants to go see his kid. Damn it he wants to. [But] Next scene he's in bed with girl. Then surveillance. Bomb threat. How quickly we forgot and how stupidly we remembered.

11-19-04: Sent [my agent] Warren and [my editor] Cal 25,000 words of White Rain today. Exhausted. I think it might be great. I'm about to send Remy to Kansas City.

12-8-04: If this [book] is nothing more than a flash of awareness about our mortality is that really profundity, or is it a selfishness, a glimmer, nothing more. Joyce [wanted to write] about a man hit by a streetcar, suddenly his every action has deeper meaning. Then he wanted to take away the streetcar. What if, instead, you took away the MAN? Just streetcars barreling down roads. Luck. Chance. Raw fucking deal. That's what the world looks like, streetcars barreling down roads.

12-13-04: Days pass. Faith returns. Lost day today. . . . Randomness, cruelty of moment and-time settled for Remy. But why? Flushing out terrorist? Engineering them? Who are we chasing? Which side are we on? Are there sides?

12-27-04: Longest gap in a while. Remy's gaps like my journal, gaps in the measurement of life, not in the life. The novel is a measurement of that life . . .

1-5-05: Just sitting here while White Rain moves in that lurching way toward, what . . . Remy's death? Blindness? -It's one thing to deny our vulnerability, quite another to deny our culpability.-

1-7-05: The challenge with White Rain is to make the story move given the narrator's inability to track . . . What exactly am I trying to do? Describe the way we are . . . trading liberty for security, demanding our own propaganda. Party to our own deception. The propaganda of distraction, of triviality. Endless process of moment, overcoming, forgetting, nostalgia. A nostalgia factory.

1-17-05: Tough day. Stopped believing in some of the new book. Fearful that I haven't done enough, that I can't write this book . . . all of which might be okay because who knows if I'll even get a contract . . .

1-21-05: We have chosen to forget. We have chosen to be a party to our propaganda. We are all living half our national lives, allowing some side of ourselves to do the dirty work.

2-18-05: There was a moment when we realized this hadn't happened to US. That WE were okay.

2-26-05: Hunter S. Thompson committed suicide -- so sad. And yet . . . I'm amazed that he could DO that-that he could think about it and just decide -- I AM DONE. That's the thing I can't imagine -- the plane plummeting, the heart stopping, brain sparking and fritzing, finally going out -- and what is the thing that is so sacred, so valuable -- which minute, breath, thought is this all for? We've lost our isolation . . . innocence.

3-6-05: I realized what I need White Rain to do -- Answer who is doing this? The Life behind the Life -- the prisoner behind the wall. Torture. To have a war without all the TV and sacrifice that is usually accompanying a war. To take away rights without ever letting people in on the fact that they had them.

3-8-05: The first test of history is that it make sense, which is the first problem, too, that it doesn't make sense. We imagine a world governed by rules that we do not really abide while the truth is all sex and power and the nightmares of children.

3-20-05: Haunting displays of airbrush artistry.

4-5-05: Had the dream again last night where I'm guilty of some horrible crime and I'm not sure if I did it or imagined it -- woke with that in my subconscious and I couldn't shake it, couldn't seem to get my arms around whether it had happened or not.

4-6-05: Saul Bellow died yesterday.

4-11-05: Remy's getting used to the oddness, but what is out there? Blood on his clothes? Or his hands? Can't get it out . . . No. His shoes. That's chilling -- blood on his shoes!

4-12-05: There is infinite hope-but not for us-Kafka. We watch American Idol. Brad and Jen. The Dow.

4-16-05: Part II Everything Fades. Scenes-eyes getting better. Odd, barely keeping it in domesticity. [Remy] comes to believe that April is still in love with her husband. Blood on his shoes. Drumbeat behind him rising. The Boss' company. Paul falling apart. Remy thinking he's better and then-- BAM.

4-17-05: What if the great 9/11 book comes not from there, but from here, one of those fuzzy places that doesn't exist to them, just lakes of light from the air. Just stay with it.

4-17-05: Everything fades. We go back to where it was before, but the colors are different. Everything is washed out, the way they do memories in Hollywood. Everything fades. The people mostly. They fade . . . Rushdie says terrorism is murder. Plain. Simple.

4-23-05: White Rain-"What was it like before?" That is the important question. No one remembers. Maybe it was different.

No, it was just like this.

Capitalist culture eats everything, even this.

4-25-05: "There is infinite hope -- but not for us." Remy is in a coffee shop.

4-28-05: Herzog (Bellow): . . . "I'm not even greatly impressed with my own tortured heart. It begins to seem another waste of time."

5-1-05: On my way to San Francisco . . . So, White Rain . . . Skipping like a stone . . . Ship wakes like chalk scratches on the slate surface of the bay. The city like transistors, rectangles. Gray and white, reflecting bits.

5-4-05: Alone in a city again . . . San Francisco, the people tumble down hills, to the creases, Market and the Wharf -- always a homeless willing to show you to your bar and hotel . . . a union of homeless. This. Is. What. I. Do. . . . The only response to an insane act is to act in kind.

5-7-05: We have buried what happened, the way it rent a hole in our fabric -- we go on, blithely, because it is the only thing we know to do. We move the furniture around, cover up the hole -- but it's still there, a long tear in who we are.

Maybe Remy is a good man . . .

He counts the stairs  
and steps between rooms  
waiting for that day  
when blindness  
comes.

5-10-05: The path is through the characters, always through the characters. That quality of living a transparency, animated by the looks of others. And you wonder, do I exist when I'm alone? There is infinite hope. There is infinite hope. There is . . . There is. With Kafka, the government bears down on the individual. Now -- it is us. We are culpable.

5-12-05: Part II is about real estate. All about the land beneath the . . . trade center, beneath every house.

5-21-05: 45,000 words.

5-22-05: Almost no sleep. Self-absorption, fatigue, impatience . . . clouds piled at the ends of the horizon great stacks and piles, thick and black rising to blinding whiteness . . . it's not all in Remy's mind, not exactly, but he'd allowed himself to not question it, to allow it to be somewhere else. Blood on his shoes . . . Real estate! April is in real estate!

5-26-05: (New Title) *The Zero*. Go into the future. Time screaming by. Picks up son . . . All he's been through. *The Zero*. So when Remy goes to *The Zero* and when the war starts, it's a surprise that it's gone, that we're in Iraq. The speed with which the country moves on, digests even this.

6-7-05: Remy goes across country. To S.F. Streaks and floaters out of control -- he can barely see-and then the explosion and he's strewn. . . . March: I'm here. We're all here.

6-12-05: Translucence in the writing. Make Remy more connected, who he is, let the story guide you, not the other way. What this is about-steel and brick, drywall and sprinkler heads--

It's like a self-defeating army, a suicide army. . . . You can't win this way. Use them to defeat themselves -- to create the enemy themselves -- to respond by creating a real war. Wars are declared. Like intentions.

7-15-05: Remy is *The Zero*.

7-18-05: Nice up here in my office, cool and surrounded by books, by my work. *The Zero* . . . Never been so unsure of a book before.

8-8-05: A national disorientation. We call things what they're not -- everything is an invention. Peter Jennings died two days ago of lung cancer . . .

8-11-05: Got to 60,000 words of *The Zero*. . . . No one knows where the people went. They just disappeared. Pressure and then dissolved. Cells. Chunks. Fragments, bits, dust. Mr. Selios doesn't know what happened to March. This is the worst part. April longs for one of those voicemail messages . . . and now this war, more young people missing limbs.

8-19-05: Read with Sherman [Alexie] tonight. We were funny. . . . A good point, not to get down on America too much, to remember humor. Vonnegut's humor and humanism combine, a good example, love your characters, even the villain. Even The Boss.

9-7-05: This novel, with its disorientation and jerking point of view is tough to work on for that reason -- I'm off balance so much of the time . . . Combed through 75,000 words yesterday . . . The odd helplessness of being complicit in this delusional policy and world view. We make four mistakes at once, every possible mistake, mutually exclusive mistake, contradicting mistakes -- and the whole universe of fuckups and fallaparts.

9-12-05: Rolling on *The Zero* -- nearing 80,000 words, turning back on itself . . . getting around to the climax, that sense of no matter what we do we're fucked.

10-30-05: *The Zero* -- This national condition, a kind of slipped consciousness, the ones who do the best are the ones who had it before, who had slipping ethics, or whose brains worked this way before, drifting in and out of reality. Remy moving inexorably.

11-15-05: It was us. We tortured. We bombed. We waged war. We reacted with fear, and fear, God, is the worst thing. . . . The most destructive thing in the universe.

12-3-05: Glorious goddamn morning. Wrote the ending yesterday. Think it's getting better. Also had a vision for what it is. . . . It tries, and that's all you can ask of it. Let them sell it. That's their problem now. Tom Waits on the stereo. Coffee gurgling. Snow frosted trees. Cool air.

1-12-06 (rewriting): We create our enemies. It's all in there . . .

1-22-06: Don't know if I can finish . . . here I am-a week or so away from when I'm supposed to get it in and I don't even know what it's supposed to do.

2-8-06: Done. Finished with an exhausting collapse, sick for a month, office disgusting. Everything collapsed at the end, any energy I had went to writing. And the book? Today, it's good.

2-10-06: Taking one more pass. Meanwhile, Bush says the terrorist' aim is to weaken governments, so they can foment civil war and create a situation in which they can take over. No greater ally than Bush.

2-24-06: So I sit here in my sun-lit living room, staring through windows smudged by little fingers, staring out at the late winter sky, all of this so real, so un-literary, not the shadow of a great day or the representation of it -- but a day, a goddamn great day. *The Zero* is away.

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## Read On

### Author's Picks: Grim Inspiration

These are a few of the books I read, re-read, or reconsidered over the years as I was working on *The Zero*. There are nods to some of these books in the novel, for instance, the names of all the doctors (Dr. Destouches is the real name of Celine; Dr. Rieux is the protagonist of Camus's *The Plague*; Dr. Huld is the lawyer in Kafka's *The Trial*). Many of these books are social satires, some are allegories, others are stories of fractured or distorted consciousness. A few are nonfiction. Like any writer, I am also indebted to countless other books (including several about Islam) and interviews and movies and magazine articles and newspaper stories and conversations and nightmares, but this I suppose, is a start:

*The Secret Agent*, Joseph Conrad

*Hunger*, Knut Hamsen

*Catch-22*, Joseph Heller

*One to Count Cadence*, James Crumley

*The White Album*, Joan Didion

*Being There*, Jerzy Kosinski

*Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut

*Concrete Island*, J.G. Ballard

*The Trial*, Franz Kafka

*The Plague*, Albert Camus

*Journey to the End of the Night*, Louis-Ferdinand Celine

*White Noise*, Don DeLillo

*Time's Arrow*, Martin Amis

*Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance*, Richard Powers

*The Music of Chance*, Paul Auster

*Bel Canto*, Ann Patchett

*Cloud Atlas*, David Mitchell

*102 Minutes: The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers*, Kevin Flynn and Jim Dwyer.

*American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center*, William Langewiesche

*Step Across the Line*, Salman Rushdie

I didn't read any novels about 9/11 prior to finishing *The Zero*, but since then I have read three that I greatly admire:

*A Disorder Peculiar to the Country*, Ken Kalfus

*Falling Man*, Don DeLillo

*Saturday*, Ian McEwan

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## Have You Read?

### Citizen Vince

[cover image available on DAM at ISBN: 0060989297]

Winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Novel, *Citizen Vince* is an irresistible tale about the price of freedom and the mystery of salvation – a darkly hilarious and unexpectedly profound book by a writer of boundless talent.

Eight days before the 1980 presidential election, Vince Camden wakes up at 1:59 A.M. in a quiet house in Spokane, Washington. Pocketing his stash of stolen credit cards, he drops by an all-night poker game before heading to his witness-protection job dusting crullers at Donut Make You Hungry. This is the sum of Vince's new life: donuts and forged credit cards – not to mention a neurotic hooker girlfriend.

But when a familiar face shows up in town, Vince realizes that his sordid past is still close behind him. During the next unforgettable week, on the run from Spokane to New York, Vince Camden will negotiate a maze of obsessive cops, eager politicians, and assorted mobsters, only to find that redemption might just exist – of all places – in the voting booth. Sharp and refreshing, *Citizen Vince* is the story of a charming crook chasing the biggest score of his life: a second chance.

"This terrific book – is smart, funny, dark and moving and Jess Walter is clearly a writer to watch." –Nick Hornby, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

"It's been a long time since I read a book as compulsively, indeed greedily, as I read *Citizen Vince*." –Richard Russo, author of *Empire Falls*

### Over Tumbled Graves

[cover image on DAM at ISBN: 0060988673]

Rich with the darkly muted colors of the Pacific Northwest skies, *Over Tumbled Graves* established Jess Walter as a novelist of extraordinary emotional depth and dimension. During a routine drug bust, Spokane detective Caroline Mabry finds herself on a narrow bridge over white-water falls in the center of town, face-to-face with a brutal murderer. Within hours, the body of a young prostitute is found along the riverbank nearby. What follows is a novel that confronts our fascination with pathology and murder and stares it down: As Caroline and her cynical partner, Alan Dupree, are thrown headlong into the search for a serial murderer who communicates by killing women, they uncover some hard truths about their profession ... and each other.

"Exceptional ... transcends the mystery of crime and takes a courageous look at an even more profound mystery-the mystery of what it takes to continue living. Totally absorbing." –Ursula Hegi

"Riveting. ... Without ever taking the easy way out, the book explores the battle of good vs. evil on very human terms." –*Washington Post Book World*

**Land of the Blind**

ISBN: 0060989289

In this fiendishly clever and darkly funny novel, Jess Walter speaks deeply to the bonds and compromises we make as children - and the fatal errors we can make at any moment in our lives.

While working the weekend night shift, Caroline Mabry, a weary Spokane police detective, encounters a seemingly unstable but charming derelict. "I'd like to confess," he proclaims. But he insists on writing out his confession in longhand. In the forty-eight hours that follow, the stranger admits to not just a crime, but an entire life: a wry and haunting tale of poverty and politics, of obsession and revenge. And as he writes, Caroline pushes herself to near collapse, racing against the clock to investigate not merely a murder, but the story of two men's darkly intertwined lives.

"Intelligently written, bittersweet and thoroughly absorbing ... an affecting meditation on friendship and the price of betrayal." -*Seattle Times*

**Ruby Ridge: The Truth and Tragedy of the Randy Weaver Family**

ISBN: 006000794X

What went wrong at Ruby Ridge? Why was Randy Weaver's son fatally shot in the back? How could the FBI justify shooting a woman as she held her infant child? Why were the Weavers given a \$3.1 million settlement by the U.S. Government? Was there an FBI cover-up and how high did it go?

Ruby Ridge answers the critical questions that cut to the heart of the most explosive issues in the United States today.

The Weaver Family took to the woods to escape what they believed was a sinful world on the brink of Armageddon. But Randy Weaver's indictment on a firearms violation escalated into a deadly shootout at his northern Idaho cabin. Before it was over, a federal marshal, Weaver's wife and his only son were dead.

In this edition, featuring exclusive interviews with key figures on both sides, Pulitzer Prize finalist Jess Walter objectively reconstructs all the riveting events surrounding this controversial case.

"A stunning job of reporting." -*New York Times Book Review*

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