

Anybody Home?

Michael J. Seidlinger

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In Michael J. Seidlinger's chilling novel *Anybody Home?*, a quiet suburban home is the stage for a terrifying invasion.

In this surreal version of modern life, home invasions are watched with glee behind closed doors. Here, an unnamed director who takes glee in his criminality works with a cabal of invaders to recount one such victorious invasion of a family home. Each member of the family is flawed, and the crew uses secrets about them that were picked up during the recon element of their invasion to ratchet up the tension.

Throughout the book, the director guides the invaders, assigning everyone numbered roles to ensure their anonymity. The narration comes in the form of these instructions; it is directed most at the lead invader. In the process, the audience, too, becomes complicit in the crime: people watch on hidden cameras as the invaders take their positions throughout the house.

The ultimate footage follows from beginning to end: as the director's crew selects the house, canvases it, and enacts their thorough but flexible plan. Studio heads bid for the rights to this footage, knowing it will feed a cult-like following. The members of the crew are ciphers, and the scenes are sparse—so much so that, when specific details are shared, they are jarring. Sensory information about the crew's performance is withheld for shock value, but snippets of it—as when the invaders allow the stench of dead creature to permeate the target house—are shared, and are visceral. The result is an intimate, compelling story—one that revels in the discomfort caused by its blow-by-blow of a violent act.

Anybody Home? is an immersive novel that deconstructs home invasions for sport, resulting in addictive commentary on the horror genre itself.

JOHN M. MURRAY (July / August 2022)

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