



Rampage (The Singular Menace, 3)

By John Sandford, Michele Cook

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John Sandford and Michele Cook complete their *New York Times* bestselling thriller series in this explosive finale. Fans of James Dashner, Harlan Coben, and Suzanne Collins will love this nail-biting trilogy.

Shay Remby and her band of renegade activists have got the corrupt Singular Corporation on the run. Their exposé is finally working. Or is it?

Even as revelations about the human experimental subjects break in the news, Singular's employees are slithering out of sight. And then their CEO is killed in a plane crash... Was it a freak accident? Or a cover-up?

Shay's gang begins to see signs that there may be even more powerful figures than they knew managing events—publicly expressing outrage and mopping up the mess, but secretly gathering up their scientists and moving the operation further out of sight.

It will take nothing short of a rampage to stop the Singular menace for good...

Praise for *Uncaged*:

★ “A fabulous mix of outlandish hijinks, techno-noir, and teen cheek--LA style. Not to be missed.”--*Booklist*

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for the Singular Menace series:

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“Any reader looking for an action-packed thriller should pick this up.” —*Booklist*

About the Author

JOHN SANDFORD is the pseudonym of John Roswell Camp, an American author and journalist. Camp won the Pulitzer Prize in journalism in 1986. As John Sandford, he is the author of nearly forty novels, all of which have appeared on the *New York Times* Bestseller lists. You can read more about his work at JohnSandford.org.

MICHELE COOK is a former reporter specializing in crime and social justice. She and John met when they both worked at the St. Paul Pioneer Press. Michele is also a produced screenwriter. You can read more about this trilogy at TheSingularMenaceBooks.com.

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1

The ship was a dark shadow moving up the river, traveling slowly but steadily away from the scene of Fenfang’s murder.

Shay’s group was tracking it: her older brother, Odin, a computer hacker who’d precipitated the fight with Singular; Twist, the rich, thirtyish artist who ran a hotel for street kids and runaways and had helped Shay escape a pair of pimps on her second night in Hollywood; Cruz Perez, one of the teens at Twist’s hotel; and Danny Dill, a former hotel resident and now a marijuana grower from California’s north coast. Cade Holt, another teen living at the Twist Hotel, guided them through the night from a hideout in Northern California. Still aching from a beating delivered by Singular security people, he was talking to them through throwaway cell phones as he looked at satellite photos on Google Earth.

Twist was driving the Jeep, Odin in the passenger seat beside him, when Shay called in her plan. He had begun to point out all the crazy flaws when Shay hung up. Cursing, Twist filled in Cade, who relayed the news to Cruz, who was following in a Toyota truck, and Danny Dill, trailing him in a Volvo. Cade said, “If it’s an old freighter, it can’t be moving fast. It’s only been gone a few minutes. One or two miles an hour .?.?. it won’t be to the Antioch Bridge yet.”

“What’s the Antioch Bridge?” Twist asked.

“It’s a bridge across the channel—they’ll be heading right toward it,” Cade said. “Let me look it up.?.?. Ah, Wiki says it’s got a hundred and thirty-five feet of clearance, so they’ll be able to go under it. That looks like the best place for the pickup, if they really pull this off. A road goes right down to the river.”

“Get us there,” Twist said.

Cade guided them back through town. The tight convoy moved at the speed limit: they couldn’t afford to be stopped by the police. For one thing, the backseat of the Jeep was still wet with Fenfang’s blood. They’d rushed her to the hospital .?.?. too late.

Cade was calm enough, had been since the shooting. “You’ll be coming up to a left turn .?.?. past a marina .?.?. it’ll take you down to the water.”

Twist said, “Have cars Two and Three circulate; I’ll run down to the water and look around. Keep an eye out.”

Twist took the turn, passing an open gate and a private property—no trespassing sign, and he and Odin found themselves on a blacktop road crowded with vehicles. At the end of the road, well off to their left, they could see lights and hear music.

“That’s the party,” Twist said. “That’s the target.”

Twist turned the Jeep around, and Odin said, “This has to work. The Singular guys cannot get away.”

Odin and Fenfang had begun a romance a few days before the girl was killed. She’d died in Odin’s lap, and he was reeling from the shock, emotions roiling. But the idea of trapping Singular was focusing his mind.

Twist and Odin got out and looked downriver. “Is that it?” Odin asked.

“I think so.” There were moving lights coming their way, but slowly. “Gotta be sure, lots of ships going back and forth.?.?.?”

Twist got on the phone to Cade: “Tell cars Two and Three to head back, look for the ship. It looks from here like it’s a half mile away.?.?.?”

“Going now,” Danny said to Cade’s instruction. A minute later: “We got it. That’s it. It’s right on the shoreline. They’re turning, though. Jeez, I don’t know if it’s wide enough to turn here.”

“The river’s wide enough,” said Cade, who was looking at a satellite image. “If they get turned, they’ll be able to move faster.”

A minute later: “They’re turned—they made it,” Danny said. “They’re heading back up the river.?.?.?”

Cade warned Twist: “One, it’s coming right at you.”

“Got it,” said Twist.

Harmon boosted X through the hatch, then climbed out on the ship’s deck beside Shay. The Asian man followed. Harmon murmured to Shay, “You see those metal boxes bolted to the rail? The square ones?”

“Yeah?”

“They should have life rings in them. Get them. You’ll be exposed, so move slow. And listen. Soon as I finish with the gun, we’ll go over the side.”

“Gotta be at least fifty yards to the shore. Maybe more.”

“Not much choice,” Harmon said. “We’ll be okay with the rings .?.?. unless they shoot us, of course.”

“We’ll go off the far side of the boat, away from the shore. They’ll be looking the other way, if they’re looking at all.”

The Asian man chipped in: “This is very, very dangerous. Very.”

Harmon and Shay looked at him and said, simultaneously, “Yes.”

“I go also?”

Harmon shook his head. “It would be best if you stayed, because you speak good English. What we are going to do will bring many American police officers here. You can hide down this ladder until they arrive. Then you tell them everything that happened to you.”

“They will believe me?” he asked, and patted the knobs on his head. “And fix this?”

“Yes .?.?. we think so,” Shay said. She turned to Harmon. “You still have that Sharpie?”

He fumbled in a thigh pocket, found the pen, and handed it to her. Shay said to the Asian man, “I will write this on your arm so you can call me.?.?.?. Pull your sleeve up.”

He pulled his sleeve up, and she wrote a phone number on his arm above his elbow. “Don’t let anybody see this.”

He nodded.

“You’re Korean? Or Chinese, maybe?”

“My memories are confused, but I know them in Chinese.”

Shay nodded; it made sense. “Do you know how or where you were captured?”

“No. But I think I am a soldier. I see myself with a gun,” the man said.

From the deck, Harmon took the semi-automatic rifle out of the sling on his shoulder and called quietly, “If we’re gonna do this .?.?”

“You’re a brave man,” Shay said, touching the prisoner on the shoulder.

The man bowed and said, “Be lucky with this plan.”

“Yes,” Shay said with a thin smile. “We will need to be lucky.”

The man moved back down the ladder but paused on one of the rungs to watch the girl and the dog go to the gunslinger’s side.

“Party time,” Harmon said.

Colored lights were strung all along the pier, and a five-piece band was knocking out disco tunes. “Old people dancing,” Shay said.

“Hey! That’s ‘I Will Survive,’ 1980s finest,” Harmon said, peering through the night at the party.

“I wasn’t born yet, so I wouldn’t know,” Shay said.

Harmon grunted, “Get the rings.”

He jacked a round into the rifle’s chamber and began unscrewing the flash suppressor. He wanted the flashes to be seen, the brighter the better.

Shay crawled slowly across the deck—moving fast would catch the eye—to one of the rectangular metal boxes welded to the rail. The box opened with a simple thumbscrew: if a ring was needed, you wouldn’t want it to be hard to get at.

She turned the thumbscrew, popped the box: a thin white ring buoy was inside, with a short rope attached to it. She looked once toward the ship’s bridge, saw no one, pulled the ring out, and slid it back across the deck to Harmon. “I’ll get the other one.”

There was a similar rectangular box on the opposite rail. She crawled over to it, and Harmon, behind her, said, “We’re getting close.”

Shay pulled the ring out and moved back to him.

“Tie it to your belt,” Harmon said. He was tying the rope of the first ring to his own belt. “As soon as you’re in the water, take your jacket off and throw it over the ring. The white’s too visible.”

Shay tied the ring to her belt, took the cell phone out of her jeans pocket, and zipped it into a water-resistant chest pocket in her jacket.

“Here we go,” Harmon said. “I’m going to fire into the concrete abutment at the base of the bridge. Any ricochets will angle out into the water, but it’ll look like we’re shooting at them.”

Shay checked her knife in the sheath at her back, shoved her pistol into its holster, and got a good grip on both the life ring and X’s collar. Harmon braced his left hand on the rail, and faster than Shay could count: Bang-bang-bang-bang-bang .?.?

The gun held a thirty-shot magazine, and Harmon let it all go. Shay heard screaming from the party and half stood to look over the rail as Harmon slammed a second magazine into the gun tossing the first one overboard.

As he lifted the gun to his shoulder, they heard another gun, not far away, and several slugs banged off the shipping containers overhead.

Harmon said, “Sonofabitch, hold on.?.?.?” Moving in a crouch, he stepped to the corner of the pile of shipping containers and peeked toward the stern of the ship. Three stories up, silhouetted in a lit window at the ship’s control level, he saw a man with a rifle. He said, “Trying to push our heads down. He’ll see us if we go over the side.”

“So—”

Before Shay could ask the question, Harmon stepped from behind the container stack and fired a dozen shots at the control level. Glass shattered, a man cried out, and the ship began to drift. “Get ready to jump!” Harmon called. He fired a half-dozen more shots at the control level and then emptied the gun at a safe angle past the party onshore. The party had dissolved in chaos, people running, screaming, chairs tipping over, the band members abandoning their instruments and jumping down from the stage to run for cover.

Harmon heaved the rifle over the side and said, “Go! Go now!”

The water was a long way down, and dark and forbidding, but there was no choice. Shay got X’s paws on the rail, then squatted on the rail herself, and Harmon snarled, “Go!” and she launched herself and pulled X with her. X followed without resistance, over the rail and fifteen or twenty feet down into the murky water. She gasped a breath before she hit, went under, kicked back up. The water probably wasn’t too cold, if you were measuring with a thermometer, but it felt like ice, a shock, and her clothes tried to drag her under—her jeans and her sneakers.

Shay focused on pulling in the life ring and holding on to X. When she had the ring, she lifted it up over X’s head, and the dog put his paws on the inside of it, as though he’d done it before. She remembered Harmon’s direction about her jacket and pulled it off, threw it over the ring, and, wrapping it around X’s head, said, “Okay, boy, you’re okay.?.?.?”

The ship was nearly past them, and she looked for anyone tracking them from the outside rail, but it was difficult to see much of anything in the dark. A hand caught her shoulder, and she turned to Harmon, who sputtered and asked, “You okay?”

“Clothes want to pull me down,” she said. The ship was past them now, heading under the bridge.

“We’ll be hypothermic in five minutes, we gotta get moving toward shore. Kick. Like a sidestroke .?.?”

“Look at the ship! Look at the ship! It’s gonna hit the bridge!”

2

It didn’t sound like a car accident.

It sounded like the world’s biggest bass drum, and then there was a screeching, scraping howl as the ship’s metal hull bit into a concrete abutment under the bridge.

The sound seemed to go on forever, and they treaded water for a moment, then Harmon said, “Gotta swim, gotta swim.”

There was no current. Shay launched into a sidestroke so she could tow X along in the ring, but they’d gone less than a dozen yards when the dog ducked his head beneath the rim of the ring and swam away from them, directly toward shore. She lost sight of him and was now thinking about his robotic hind legs: would the electronics Singular had placed in his brain and body short out in water?

She shouted, “X, go faster, faster!”

Two minutes, three minutes. Harmon was right about hypothermia. He was pushing his ring next to hers, and he asked again, “How are you?”

“Cold .?.?.?,” she said, and her teeth chattered.

“I’m going to push down on my side of your ring. You push down your side, and when it’s under, heave yourself up on top of it, if you can.”

“Okay .?.?”

They both heaved, and Shay managed to crawl on top of the ring .?.? almost lost it sideways, but righted herself.

Harmon: “Now just a breaststroke .?.?”

“How are you?” Shay asked.

“I’ve got more bulk than you, so I won’t get hypothermic as fast.?.?.?. Keep paddling.?.?.?”

They heard X bark. Shay lifted her head and caught sight of what looked like a gray shadow, but he was on his feet, out of the water. She kicked harder. Two minutes later, Harmon’s feet touched bottom, and he said, “I’m walking.” Shay rolled off the ring, clambered up the rocky shore, and hugged her wet dog.

Shay called quietly, “Twist?”

There was no one to meet them.

Shay checked her jacket pocket. The phone inside seemed dry, and when she hit the switch, it lit up.

She called Twist. Before she could say anything, he asked, “Where are you? Are you hurt?”

“We’re under the bridge.?.?.?”

“We realized we’d be trapped if we came in too close. Head out toward the street. You gotta sneak past the marina, then across an access road, past a whole bunch of boats in a parking lot. There are a lot of people from the dance wandering around. If the cops show up before you get out, get in among the boats and keep moving toward the street. Call when you get there. We’re parked behind a building a couple of blocks away. That’s the best we could do. You gotta hurry; about a million cops are gonna be here in the next five minutes. Man, that ship hit the bridge, and now everybody in the world’s on the way.?.?.?”

“We’re coming.”

Harmon took Shay’s arm, said urgently, “Look!”

She turned back to the ship, saw a body hurtling toward the water, then another.

“Oh my God! They’re throwing people off!”

“No, no. I think they’re the Singular guys, getting off the ship,” Harmon said. “They know what’s about to happen. That means they’re gonna be right here with us. Let’s go.?.?.?”

They jogged out toward the street. Off to the side, they could hear people yelling for help: the partygoers.

There was enough ambient light to make good time, and Shay held on to her phone and kept X at her side. They ran past the marina, across the access road, and straight on. There were sirens, lots of them.

Users Review

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