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Windfall: The Booming Business of Global Warming

By Mckenzie Funk



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Windfall: The Booming Business of Global Warming By Mckenzie Funk

A fascinating investigation into how people around the globe are cashing in on a warming world

McKenzie Funk has spent the last six years reporting around the world on how we are preparing for a warmer planet. Funk shows us that the best way to understand the catastrophe of global warming is to see it through the eyes of those who see it most clearly—as a market opportunity.

Global warming's physical impacts can be separated into three broad categories: melt, drought, and deluge. Funk travels to two dozen countries to profile entrepreneurial people who see in each of these forces a potential windfall.

The melt is a boon for newly arable, mineral-rich regions of the Arctic, such as Greenland—and for the surprising kings of the manmade snow trade, the Israelis. The process of desalination, vital to Israel's survival, can produce a snowlike by-product that alpine countries use to prolong their ski season.

Drought creates opportunities for private firefighters working for insurance companies in California as well as for fund managers backing south Sudanese warlords who control local farmland. As droughts raise food prices globally, there is no more precious asset.

The deluge—the rising seas, surging rivers, and superstorms that will threaten island nations and coastal cities—has been our most distant concern, but after Hurricane Sandy and failure after failure to cut global carbon emissions, it is not so distant. For Dutch architects designing floating cities and American scientists patenting hurricane defenses, the race is on. For low-lying countries like Bangladesh, the coming deluge presents an existential threat.

Funk visits the front lines of the melt, the drought, and the deluge to make a human accounting of the booming business of global warming. By letting climate change continue unchecked, we are choosing to adapt to a warming world. Containing the resulting surge will be big business; some will benefit, but much of the planet will suffer. McKenzie Funk has investigated both sides, and what he has found will shock us all.

To understand how the world is preparing to warm, *Windfall* follows the money.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of the Month, January 2014: In addition to having one of the cooler author names, Funk has written one of the more fascinating accounts of the coming economic impact of climate change. Rather than exploring the science or politics of an alarmingly warming world (a la *An Inconvenient Truth*), the author has focused exclusively on the economics and opportunism developing around climate change. The result is part eco-thriller, part adventure story, part investigative exposé. There's a wildly speculative and entrepreneurial game being played out there by some forward-thinking risk takers. Not a hand-wringer among them, these are the gamblers who see profit where others see doom. Impressively researched over six years, *Windfall* takes us to the front lines: to the deck of a Canadian battleship, where the author blasts a machine gun into the ice cap; to formerly frozen Siberian lands, which investors envision as future mega-farms; to the Sudan, Greenland, Wall Street, and beyond. Like a mashup of Michael Lewis and Mark Twain, Funk is an intrepid investigator and a lively, smart writer. From eco hedge funds to dam building to desalination plants, he shows how climate change is creating new opportunities and a potential boon for cowboy entrepreneurs. This is the rare book that's both important and highly readable. --Neal Thompson

Review

Honorable Mention for the Rachel Carson Environment Book Award

The Wall Street Journal:

"In *Windfall* McKenzie Funk, an intrepid American journalist, reports on the lesser-known victims and profiteers of climate change brings a dizzyingly abstruse phenomenon down to a more human scale. Mr. Funk leads us away from the rarefied air of Al Gore and his lethal PowerPoint slides, to mingle with the militiamen, inventors, politicians and activists trying to find their way through an era of turmoil."

The Associated Press:

"Funk has written a fun book humanizing the problems of climate change, focused on the colorful entrepreneurs who see in an increasingly inhospitable world golden opportunities."

Nature:

"This exposé of the powers and people that view global warming as an investment opportunity is darkly humorous and brilliantly researched. Journalist McKenzie Funk looks at the impacts deemed a windfall for 'climate capitalists': melting ice, drought, sea-level rise and superstorms. He reports far and wide, on the oil-rich far north, where nations jostle as the ice retreats; blaze-prone California and its burgeoning band of firebreak specialists; water-rich South Sudan, where large tracts of foreign-owned farmland could become a gold mine as other regions dry up; and beyond."

Men's Journal:

"The idea that, when it comes to climate change, the meaningful divide isn't between believers and doubters but winners and losers is at the heart of McKenzie Funk's immersive and startling *Windfall: The Booming Business of Global Warming*."

Mother Jones:

"Most writings on climate change are tedious or polemical. This fabulous book is neither. Journalist

McKenzie Funk travels the globe, mingling with the characters who are cashing in (or preparing to) on global warming: Wall Street land and water speculators, Greenland secessionists, Israeli snowmakers, Dutch seawall developers, geoengineering patent trolls, private firefighters, mosquito-abating scientists, Big Oil scenario planners, and African officials overseeing the first phase of a quixotic 4,7000-mile-long foliage barrier against the encroaching Sahara. Rather than waste our time on a settled question (duh, it's real!), Funk offers an up-close-and-personal glimpse of climate change's likely winners—and inevitable losers."

Wired:

"Some Like it Hot: Forget bitcoin—savvy investors bet on water....In his new book, *Windfall: The Booming Business of Global Warming*, McKenzie Funk investigates the profiteers cashing in on the planet's woes."

GQ:

"In *Windfall*, McKenzie Funk introduces us to people betting money on our dear planet's decimation. Spoiler: They're rich."

Outside Magazine:

"There have been plenty of books documenting the myriad ways that climate change will take us all down. McKenzie Funk takes a contrarian approach, reporting on the people—and, in the case of Greenland and Canada, countries—that are poised to profit handsomely from the coming chaos."

Scientific American:

"Funk's reporting brings him face-to-face with individuals who are investing in planetary crisis. Far from vilifying these opportunists, he attempts to see the warming world through their eyes. "

Canadian Business:

"The business of climate change is growing, in other words, at least somewhat because political action on climate change has so overwhelmingly failed."

Barnes & Noble:

"The bad news is that we're not cutting our carbon emissions. The 'good' news, according to McKenzie Funk's *Windfall* is that greedy banks and ambitious entrepreneurs are making billions of dollars on global warming. Much of these new frontiers of money-making derive from calculated bets on continued failure and warming, not on corrective measures. Funk's modern day muckraking lends new perspective and detail to mainstream media coverage and the ongoing debates about climate change. Definitely a conversation starter."

The New Yorker's Page-Turner:

"Funk's take on global-warming profiteering is as entertaining as it is disturbing."

Kirkus Reviews (STARRED):

"A shocking account of how governments and corporations are confronting the crises caused by global warming... A well-written, useful global profile emphasizing concrete solutions rather than ideological abstractions."

Publishers Weekly:

"For most of the planet, the specter of global warming is ominous, but as journalist Funk reveals in this startling book, there are those who view the Earth's dangerous meltdown as a golden

opportunity...Funk's original, forthright take on this little-discussed profit-taking trend in the climate change sweepstakes is very unsettling."

Eliza Griswold, author of *The Tenth Parallel*:

"Funk's talent shimmers from the pages of *Windfall*. Here is a brilliant young stylist at work, pushing the boundaries of investigative journalism and literary non-fiction. With grace, humor and hard-nosed reporting on the startling business of climate profiteering, he takes us along on a searing ride into the maw of the apocalypse."

Charles Graeber, author of *The Good Nurse*:

"Funk is a first-rate storyteller who packs adventure and humor in his journalist's bag, and delights in the absurd details of business as unusual. The result is a meticulously researched romp through the backrooms of the climate change industry, by turns thrilling and appalling, and ultimately rather important. There's money under the melting ice, and Funk follows it. Perhaps the only fun book on global climate change you'll ever read."

Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*:

"Smart, daring, and darkly funny, *Windfall* offers a new take on perhaps the world's most intractable problem. McKenzie Funk is a gifted storyteller."

Eric Klinenberg, author of *Heat Wave* and *Going Solo*:

"Climate change may well be humanity's greatest challenge, but here McKenzie Funk offers definitive evidence that it's also a great way to make a buck. *Windfall* is a gripping account of how banks, energy companies, engineers, and entrepreneurs have turned a global crisis into a golden opportunity, harvesting short-term profits while sowing the seeds of future ruin. It's an engaging, infuriating, and important story about the way the world works now, and about the reasons it may not work at all tomorrow."

Donovan Hohn, author of *Moby-Duck*:

"Exploring the profitable frontiers of climate change, Funk travels the globe like some sort of journalistic special agent, patrolling the melting Arctic on a Canadian battleship one minute, breakfasting with the son of a Sudanese warlord the next. His secret weapons: a highly sensitive irony detector and a satirist's eye for vanities and vices that Twain would have admired. The result is a wonder, a nonfiction eco-thriller that is disturbing, yes, revelatory, yes, but also a lot more fun than books about ecological catastrophe are supposed to be."

Jon Mooallem, author of *Wild Ones*:

"McKenzie Funk has traveled around a planet that's melting, flooding and drying out all at once to meet the peculiar characters who are making the biggest, amoral hedge of our time: finding the value and opportunity hidden in all this ecological upheaval. *Windfall* is a shocking and important book that reads, at times, like dystopian science fiction written by Michael Lewis. But this unrecognizable world is our world, of course. Funk argues that the people he meets merely see it more clearly than the rest of us do."

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

McKenzie Funk is a journalist whose work has appeared in *Harper's*, *National Geographic*, *Rolling Stone*, *Outside*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. A National Magazine Award and Livingston Award finalist and the winner of the Oakes Prize for Environmental Journalism, he was a Knight-Wallace Fellow at the University of Michigan, where he studied economics and systems thinking. He lives in Seattle with his wife and sons.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Jewell:

In this 21st century, people become competitive in each and every way. By being competitive now, people have to do something to make all of them survive, being in the middle of the crowded place and notice simply by surrounding. One thing that often many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. Sure, by reading a publication your ability to survive increases then having a chance to stand than other is high. For you personally who want to start reading any book, we give you that *Windfall: The Booming Business of Global Warming* book as nice and daily reading publication. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

Lauren Veach:

Reading a guide tends to be a new life style on this era globalization. With looking at you can get a lot of information that will give you benefit in your life. Along with book everyone in this world may share their idea. Textbooks can also inspire a lot of people. Plenty of authors can inspire their particular reader with their story or even their experience. Not only the storyplot that share in the books. But also they write about the information about something that you need illustration. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your sons or daughters, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors on earth always try to improve their skill in writing, they also do some investigation before they write for their book. One of them is this *Windfall: The Booming Business of Global Warming*.

Deandre Freeman:

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Lawrence Wilson:

Are you kind of occupied person, only have 10 or maybe 15 minute in your morning to upgrading your mind proficiency or thinking skill perhaps analytical thinking? Then you are receiving problem with the book than can satisfy your short space of time to read it because pretty much everything time you only find book that need more time to be study. Windfall: The Booming Business of Global Warming can be your answer since it can be read by you actually who have those short free time problems.

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