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WAR



Synopsis

In his breakout bestseller, *The Perfect Storm*, Sebastian Junger created "a wild ride that brilliantly captures the awesome power of the raging sea and the often futile attempts of humans to withstand it" (Los Angeles Times Book Review). Now, Junger turns his brilliant and empathetic eye to the reality of combat--the fear, the honor, and the trust among men in an extreme situation whose survival depends on their absolute commitment to one another. His on-the-ground account follows a single platoon through a 15-month tour of duty in the most dangerous outpost in Afghanistan's Korengal Valley. Through the experiences of these young men at war, he shows what it means to fight, to serve, and to face down mortal danger on a daily basis.

Book Information

File Size: 1605 KB

Print Length: 295 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: B00BDKEWRI

Publisher: Twelve; 1 edition (April 23, 2010)

Publication Date: May 11, 2010

Language: English

ASIN: B0035II95C

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #29,378 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #16 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Military & Wars > Branches > Army #18 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Military History > Afghan War #19 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Military & Wars > Afghan & Iraq Wars > Afghan War

Customer Reviews

Sebastian Junger is the well-known author of *The Perfect Storm* and *A Death in Belmont*. He is also a world-class war correspondent with over a decade of experience. This book is the product of five months spent embedded with a platoon in U.S. 2nd Battalion in the Korengal valley, Afghanistan. For five months, Junger existed like a regular soldier in the U.S. army: He ate MREs, went on patrol,

took cover when the bullets started to fly. As Junger likes to explain in the book, he was the target of the same bullets as the other men in the platoon, and he had the same responsibility to Army rules. Even one broken minor rule risked lives. Junger remained vigilant, won the companionship of these soldiers, and garnered enough of their trust to record their thoughts and beliefs about what it's like to be in combat. That's what this book is about. The war in Afghanistan happened to be just a convenient location to do field research. At one particular scary moment, Junger was in a Hummer that got hit by a roadside bomb. The bomb exploded under the engine block, ten feet away. The blast shook Junger's emotions for days. Needless to say, this book was almost never written. Good thing it was. Junger provides excellent war correspondence, describing combat as a first-hand observer. Junger's prose remains apolitical, his goal to show the reader what it's like to be in battle, not make a political statement. The book is broken into three sections: "Fear," "Killing," and "Love."

There aren't many books that really tell the reader what it means to be in battle. Those that have been there don't feel comfortable trying to explain it to those that haven't. As more than one combat veteran has told me, "you just wouldn't understand." Most reporters, even those embedded in a war, haven't really experienced what it means to be an active participant in battle- trying to kill someone before he kills you. There are some very good books about what it's like to be in the middle of a war, like Bernard Fall's *Hell in a Very Small Place*; Fall was a French reporter who was there at the siege of Dien Bien Phu. But even though Fall could describe what it felt like to survive the incessant shelling and attack on the base, he wasn't a combatant. He was still a reporter, an observer. Sebastian Junger is a writer of rare skill who can paint a frighteningly real picture of places few of us would ever think of going. His first book, *The Perfect Storm*, gave readers a taste of what it would be like to be on a doomed fishing boat in the North Atlantic, at home, at the mercy of the sea. In *War*, he takes the reader to an Army outpost in Afghanistan, where Junger and filmmaker Tim Hetherington spent five months over the course of a year and a half with a platoon of young soldiers, fighting a war that we've all read about, but that few of us can imagine. This isn't the tourist war reporting we're used to, where the embedded reporter rides along at the rear of an armored column; Junger puts himself in a situation where he runs all the risks of the soldiers he's reporting on, including getting blown up by an IED that is detonated under the Humvee he's riding in.

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