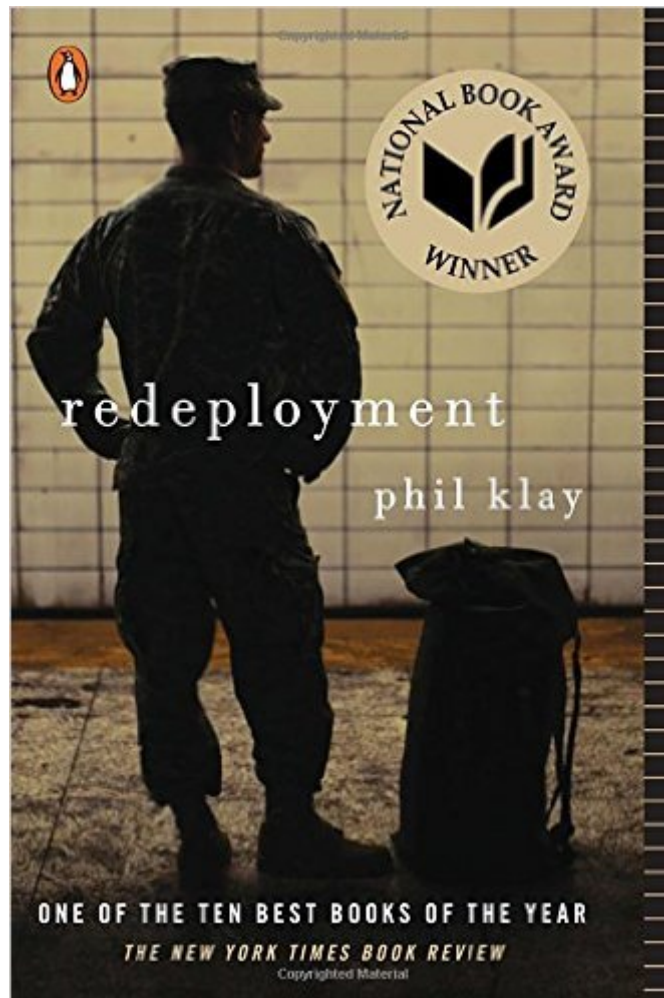


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Redeployment



Synopsis

Winner of the 2014 National Book Award for Fiction • Winner of the John Leonard First Book Prize • Selected as one of the best books of the year by The New York Times Book Review, Time, Newsweek, The Washington Post Book World, and more Phil Klay's *Redeployment* takes readers to the frontlines of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, asking us to understand what happened there, and what happened to the soldiers who returned. Interwoven with themes of brutality and faith, guilt and fear, helplessness and survival, the characters in these stories struggle to make meaning out of chaos. In "Redeployment", a soldier who has had to shoot dogs because they were eating human corpses must learn what it is like to return to domestic life in suburbia, surrounded by people "who have no idea where Fallujah is, where three members of your platoon died." In "After Action Report", a Lance Corporal seeks expiation for a killing he didn't commit, in order that his best friend will be unburdened. A Mortuary Affairs Marine tells about his experiences collecting remains of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers both. A chaplain sees his understanding of Christianity, and his ability to provide solace through religion, tested by the actions of a ferocious Colonel. And in the darkly comic "Money as a Weapons System", a young Foreign Service Officer is given the absurd task of helping Iraqis improve their lives by teaching them to play baseball. These stories reveal the intricate combination of monotony, bureaucracy, comradeship and violence that make up a soldier's daily life at war, and the isolation, remorse, and despair that can accompany a soldier's homecoming. *Redeployment* is poised to become a classic in the tradition of war writing. Across nations and continents, Klay sets in devastating relief the two worlds a soldier inhabits: one of extremes and one of loss. Written with a hard-eyed realism and stunning emotional depth, this work marks Phil Klay as one of the most talented new voices of his generation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

You won't find any sappy sentimentality or off-putting macho muscle flexing in Phil Klay's REDEPLOYMENT, a collection of twelve stories that all deal with combatants and veterans of the Iraq war. Nope. These stories are about as real and honest as anything you'll find being written these days about how the crucible of this war has affected the young men and women who were part of it, and, who have been irrevocably changed by it. While there is not a false note to be found in any of these tales, the one that I found perhaps most affecting was "Prayer in the Furnace," told by a Catholic priest, a Marine Corps chaplain whose own faith is severely tested as he struggles to give aid to Marines severely traumatized physically, emotionally and spiritually by repeated combat tours. Men whose brains have been buffeted by blasts from IEDs and whose consciences are deadened and wracked by unspeakable atrocities witnessed - and committed - on a near-daily basis. The chaplain's role in a combat unit seems sadly marginalized, however, and although he turns for guidance to the writings of St John of the Cross and Augustine, in the end he feels frustrated, powerless and ashamed. (This story in particular I felt could be the basis for an equally powerful novel.) There are also stories here of veterans trying to adjust, to assimilate back into civilian life; and struggling, feeling set apart, different. A former JAG officer who never saw combat, but did the paperwork, now a law student ready to enter a high-paying career, still feeling "more like a Marine out of the Corps than I'd felt while in it ... to everyone I met, I was 'the Marine."

Phil Klay's Redeployment is a collection of stories prompted by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Redeployment is also the title of the lead story, which was also the lead in an earlier collection rooted in the same conflicts and titled Fire and Forget. Redeployment the story is simply brilliant. The experience of coming home after seven months in combat is described in a way that enables the reader to almost accomplish the impossible: experience this awkwardly joyful process as the Marines actually experience it. The story deftly avoids the maudlin tears-of-joy theme that would have been convenient and easy to exploit as Marines are reunited with their families and loved ones. Instead, Klay gives us a realistic mix of humor, jubilation, sadness, humiliation, desperation, and the vague but soon-to-pass discomfort that comes from being reunited with those closest to us who have become, for the short term, a bit unfamiliar. Things like kissing your wife or hugging your

child are not quite as automatically easy and taken for granted as they were seven months before. In most instances, things will return quickly to normal, but for now even the once intimately familiar takes a little getting accustomed to. When I reviewed *Fire and Forget*, I noted that the story *Redeployment* is one of very few works of fiction that, at special places, made me turn away, wince, and feel like crying. The way Klay melds military training with love for an old friend that has suffered long enough is mesmerizing. Cold steel, hot lead, a serene wooded area, and the instantaneous termination of pain perfectly define the end of a relationship characterized by real love. It's something you can't imagine until you've read it.

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