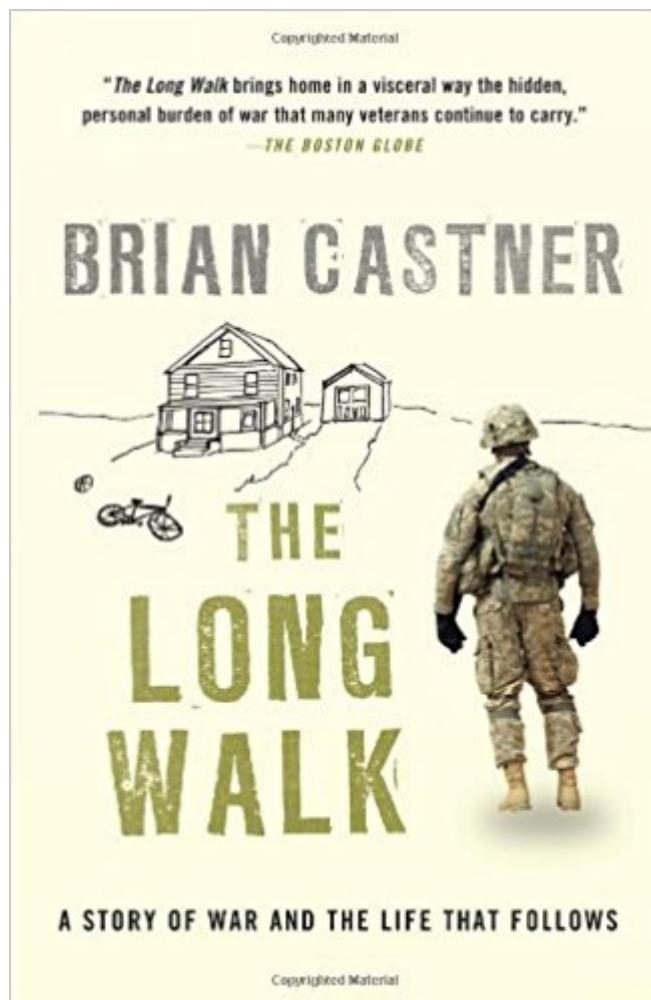


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The Long Walk: A Story Of War And The Life That Follows



Synopsis

Brian Castner served three tours of duty in the Middle East, two of them in Iraq as the head of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit. Whenever IEDs were discovered, he and his men would lead the way in either disarming the deadly devices or searching through rubble and remains for clues to the bomb-makers' identities. And when robots and other remote means failed, one technician would suit up and take the Long Walk to disarm the bomb by hand. This lethal game of cat and mouse was, and continues to be, the real war within America's wars in the Middle East. When Brian returned stateside to his wife and family, he entered an equally inexorable struggle against the enemy within, which he comes to call the "Crazy." This thrilling, heartbreaking, stunningly honest book alternates between two harrowing realities: the terror, excitement, and camaraderie of combat, and the lonely battle against the unshakeable fear, anxiety, and survivor guilt that he "like so many veterans" carries inside.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Anchor; Reprint edition (April 9, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307950875

ISBN-13: 978-0307950871

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (154 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #170,183 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #87 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military > Afghan & Iraq Wars > Iraq War #200 in Books > History > Military > Iraq War #317 in Books > History > Military > Intelligence & Espionage

Customer Reviews

I was of two minds when I read this book - there were times when I didn't like it, when I was like "gad, another, 'I'm crazy' memoir from the war," but I was equally impressed with author Brian Castner's raw, and earned, emotion. He does not back off the details, or take the easy way around any of his stories. There's a lot of pain here, and he gives it to the reader in full measure. It's got its flaws. I appreciate his difficulties in re-acclimating to the US, after his tour as an officer in charge of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit. But as a reader, I did not need Castner's constant "I'm Crazy" with a capital C to make his point. I got his point without that, and it felt overboard at times. But -

Castner's not a 'school-trained' writer or memoirist. What might be melodramatic from a writer with a creative writing degree began to seem, as I read, more honest and forthright from Castner - because maybe he doesn't know how else to say it, except with "Crazy" with a capital C. Is there some literary metaphor that would do as good a job? Maybe not. Castner's description of the EOD job itself is excellent. This is a real-life 'Hurt Locker,' minus the phony dramatics. On the ground, it's simply a grinding, dangerous job. This made me appreciate the training and attention to detail that the job obviously requires. He does an outstanding job defining and explaining Traumatic Brain Injury, and why it's a more common injury than I had previously considered. There are a few times when I think he took dramatic license a bit too far (he mentions unloading a chambered pistol round in a colonel's office - maybe it happened, but I've never heard of loaded weapons being carried inside a headquarters).

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