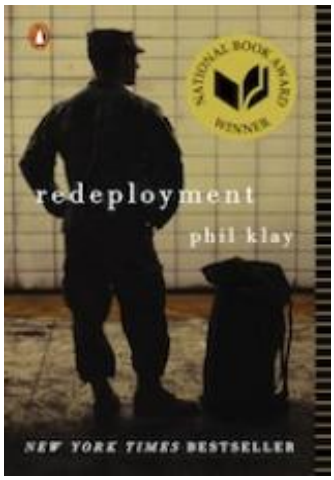
Redeployment

by Phil Klay



About the Book

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.

Discussion Guide

1. What does the title, ?Redeployment,? mean in the context of the first story in the collection?

2. Have you or anyone close to you ever served in the military? If so, did Klay?s stories resonate with your and/or their experience?

3. In ?Unless It?s a Sucking Chest Wound,? the narrator refers to ?the idea of Iraq all my civilian friends imagine when they say the word, an Iraq filled with honor and violence? (p. 238). What was your ?idea of Iraq? before you read the book? Did the book confirm or change your view?

4. Klay?s book is a moving and satisfying read, but also extremely emotionally challenging. Which parts did you find the most difficult? What was your favorite story?

5. The narrator of ?Bodies? tells the story of a Marine who had burned to death clutching a small rock in each hand. He describes it as ?the worst burn case we ever had. Worst not in charring or loss of body parts, just worst? (p. 69). Why?

6. If you were to describe Klay?s writing in three words, what would they be?

7. The stories in REDEPLOYMENT often include military terms that might have been unfamiliar to you prior to reading the book. If so, what effect did this language have on you?

8. In ?Psychological Operations,? why does Waguih describe to his father the profanities he used against Laith al-Tawhid (p. 210)? Why does he tell Zara?

9. Reading a collection of short stories is a very different experience than reading a novel. How did you approach the book? What enjoyment do story collections provide that longer works (novels and nonfiction) do not?

10. Look at the last paragraph of the last story in the book. How is this an effective end to the entire collection?

Author Bio

Phil Klay is a veteran of the US Marine Corps. His short story collection REDEPLOYMENT won the 2014 National Book Award for Fiction and the National Book Critics? Circle John Leonard Prize for best debut work in any genre, and was selected as one of the 10 Best Books of 2014 by *The New York Times*. His nonfiction work won the George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize for Journalism, Arts & Letters in the category of Cultural & Historical Criticism in 2018. His writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker* and the Brookings Institution?s *Brookings Essay* series. He currently teaches fiction at Fairfield University.

Critical Praise

?[Klay captures] on an intimate scale the ways in which the war in Iraq evoked a unique array of emotion, predicament and heartbreak. In Klay?s hands, Iraq comes across not merely as a theater of war but as a laboratory of the human

condition in extremis. REDEPLOYMENT is hilarious, biting, whipsawing and sad. It?s the best thing written so far on what the war did to people?s souls.?

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