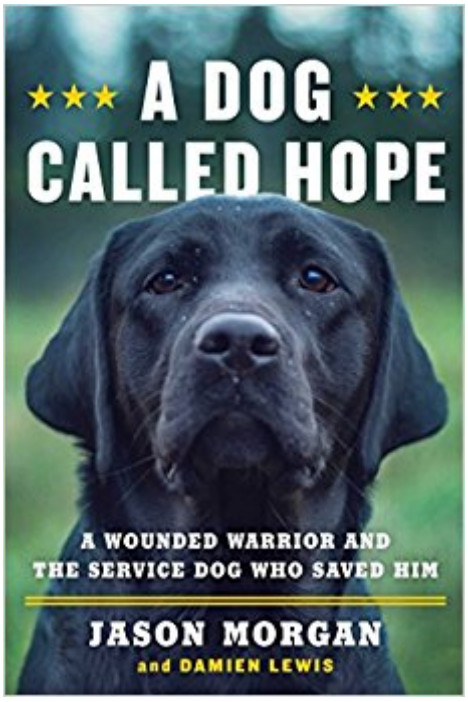
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A Dog Called Hope: A Wounded Warrior And The Service Dog Who Saved Him



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Synopsis

Lone Survivor meets Marley & Me in this inspiring buddy memoir of an extraordinary service dog whose enduring love brought a wounded soldier back to life.A decade ago, Special Forces warrior Jason Morgan parachuted into the Central American jungle on an anti-narcotics raid. HeÃ¢â ¬â„¢d served with the famous Night Stalkers on countless such missions. This one turned out very different. Months later, he regained consciousness in a US military hospital, with no memory of how heÃ¢â ¬â„¢d gotten there. The first words he heard were from his surgeon telling him he would never walk again. The determined soldier responded: Ã¢â ¬Å“Sir, yes, I will.Ã¢â ¬Â• After multiple surgeries, unbearable chronic pain, and numerous setbacks, Morgan was finally making progress when his wife left him and their three young sons. He was a single father confined to a wheelchair and tortured by his pain. At this very dark, very low point, Morgan found light: Napal, the black Labrador who would change his life forever. A Dog Called Hope is the incredible story of a remarkable service dog who brought a devastated warrior back from the brink. It is the story of one funny, lovable dogÃ¢â ¬â„¢s power to heal a family and teach a wounded man how to be a true father. It is the story of an amazing dog with boundless loyalty who built bridges between his wheelchair-bound battle buddy and the rest of able-bodied humankind. It is the story of how one very special dog gave a manÃ¢â ¬â„¢s life true meaning. Humorous, intensely moving, and uplifting, Jason and NapalÃ¢â ¬â„¢s heartwarming tale will brighten any day and lift every heart.

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Customer Reviews

Originally from Texas, Jason Morgan served as an Air Force Weather Specialist with the 10th Combat Weather Squadron, a Special Forces unit, before joining the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), more commonly known as the Night Stalkers. He now works to raise the profile of service dog availability for wounded warriors and others, campaigns for disability awareness, competes in a variety of Paralympics sports, speaks at veteran events, and raises three teenage boys.Damien Lewis is a lifelong dog lover and award-winning writer who has spent twenty years reporting from war, disaster, and conflict zones for the BBC and other global news organizations. He is the bestselling author of more than twenty books, including several acclaimed memoirs about military working dogsÃ¢â ¬â •Sergeant Rex, ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s All About Treo, Judy, and The Dog Who Could Fly.

A Dog Called Hope 2> The air was slick with moisture yet burning hot all at the same time. As I waited for the C-130 Hercules transport aircraft to fire up its giant turbines, I ran my eye along the column of brother warriors lined up on this sunbaked tropical runwayÃ¢â ¬â •each American, like me, dressed in unmarked combat fatigues. For a mission such as this, you never wear a mark of unit or rank or anything that might betray your identity, just in case things go wrong. If taken prisoner, you donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t want anything on your person that might distinguish you as being particularly special. Like my fellow warriors, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d sanitized myself completely, removing all patches from my clothing and not carrying a single piece of ID or family memento, anything that might link me to my nationality or my unit. Carrying even a photo of my wife and three infant boys was a strict no-no. Such precautions had to be taken utterly seriously when involved in this kind of war against this kind of an adversary. We were in Ecuador, training that countryÃ¢â ¬â„¢s special forces to fight FARCÃ¢â ¬â •the Revolutionary Armed Forces of ColombiaÃ¢â ¬â •a notorious rebel group that finances its operations from kidnap and ransom, illegal mining, and most of all, drugs. FARCÃ¢â ¬â„¢s narcotics-smuggling network stretches from the South American jungle as far north as the USA and east across the Atlantic into Europe. With an income of some $300 million a year and tens of thousands of armed fighters under its command, FARC is a well-armed battle-hardened force constrained by none of the normal rules of war. They have gained a reputation for horrific brutality and are the last people youÃ¢â ¬â„¢d ever want to mess with. I checked my watch. We were twenty minutes to getting airborne. I glanced at my two jump buddies, Will and TravisÃ¢â ¬â •their sleeves rolled up, shirts unbuttoned at the neckÃ¢â ¬â •looking easy and relaxed. Hailing from the Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), a renowned U.S. Army special forces unit, they looked like they were stepping out for a practice jump over Florida and not

heading into a jungle full of the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s foremost narco-rebels. It was the late 1990s, and the SOARÃ¢â ¬â •also known as the 160th, the Night StalkersÃ¢â ¬â •had taken casualties on previous missions here. What we were stepping into was a deadly serious business. But for Will and Travis it was just another day of doing what they loved. And, truth be told, it was getting to feel that way for me, too. Since I was an Air Force Special Operations guy, it had taken a good while for the SOAR to come to accept me. The competition between army and air force is merciless, and weÃ¢â ¬â„¢d never want it any other way, since the intense rivalry serves to sharpen both arms of the military, but IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d been with the SOAR for months now and I was getting to feel like very much one of the boys. We were here working with the Ecuadorian special forcesÃ¢â ¬â •the 9th Special Forces Brigade, better known as PATRIAÃ¢â ¬â •to combat FARC and put a stop to the illegal drugs trade. But practically speaking, we could never train these guys if our remit only ever kept us in the rear with the gear. The only way to do it properly was to go out into the field alongside them. Though the Ecuadorians were lined up with us, they were a long way from being sanitized. Each wore the distinctive PATRIA badge on his left sleeve, a skull flanked by daggers with a cobra twined through its empty eye sockets. The way they saw it, if they were captured by FARC, theyÃ¢â ¬â„¢d face a horrific death anyway, so why bother disguising what unit they were from? The enmity between the narco-rebels and the armed forces here ran very deep, and neither side was inclined to show much mercy. We were about to fly north into the remote and lawless Cordillera Central, a spine of jungle-clad mountains snaking into neighboring Colombia. Intelligence reports suggested that FARC was using the rivers there to traffic drugs from the heart of the rain forest to the outside world, with America as their likely end destination. The PATRIA boys planned to stake out one of those rivers, put a stop to any narcotics operations, and take prisoners from whom further intelligence could be garnered to help break the drug-trafficking network. Our role was to train them to prosecute these kinds of missions more effectively, and this was the type of tasking that we could wholeheartedly believe in. We were fighting the good fight against entirely the right kind of enemy, and despite their lack of experience and expertise (or maybe because of it), weÃ¢â ¬â„¢d grown close to the PATRIA guys. They were ideal trainees, like the proverbial sponges, ready to suck up all that we could throw at them. And boy, did they have a lot to learn. From behind me, I heard a high-pitched whine as the starter motors on the Hercules fired up the aircraftÃ¢â ¬â„¢s engines. Gradually, the massive hook-bladed propellers spooled up to speed, the avgasÃ¢â ¬â •aviation fuelÃ¢â ¬â •burning fierce and heady in the hot sludgy air. As I turned to mount up the aircraft, Jim offered me a high five. Ã¢â ¬Å“Looks like weÃ¢â ¬â„¢re on! Way to go, Goshman!Ã¢â ¬Â• My SOAR teammates called me Goshman because I never cussed much, and especially not around

my parents or anyone in authority. That was just the way my folks had raised me. The most I ever managed was a Ã¢â ¬Å“gosh.Ã¢â ¬Â• Hence the nickname. But that hadnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t stopped the 16oth from making me one of their own. Recently, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d been pulled aside by our unit commander. HeÃ¢â ¬â„¢d told me that since I was serving with the SOAR, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d get to wear the Night Stalkers flash as well as my Air Force Special Operations Badge. I had the Night Stalkers badge on my right shoulder and my Air Force Special Operations badge on my left chest pocket. It was highly unusual to wear both, and I felt hugely honored to do so. We mounted up the aircraft; I pulled on my helmet and fastened the strap beneath my chin, settling into the fold-down canvas seat. We took to the skies. The aircraft executed a short climb, then thundered low and fast across the treetops, keeping below any radar. Going low also reduced the threat of ground fire because youÃ¢â ¬â„¢d flash past in a matter of seconds and be gone. I was seated in the planeÃ¢â ¬â„¢s tail section, next to a massive heap of rucksacks secured to the floor by netting. Through the partially open ramp, I could see the jungle speeding by. It felt close enough almost to reach out and touch the highest treetops. The pilot sure knew his stuff. If he had taken the Hercules any lower, its propellers would have been shaving the topmost branches. We sped onward across the carpet of green, the wind noise and the throbbing roar of the turbines killing the chance of any chat. Now and again there was a break in the forest canopy, marking a river, a narrow trail, or a jungle village. But 99 percent of what we were flying over was pure wilderness. As with so many previous flights, I bore a special responsibility for getting this one airborne. I just hoped and prayed that IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d called it right this time. As I gazed out over the jungle, I reflected on what had brought me to this positionÃ¢â ¬â •an air force guy embedded within an elite army unit. I hailed from a tiny, little-known outfitÃ¢â ¬â •the 10th Combat Weather Squadron, part of Air Force Special Operations Command. The 10th was a seventy-two-strong unit when I was a part of it. Only sixty of us were jump-trained and mission-qualified and thus able to undertake the kind of task I was now on. Combat weathermen do pretty much what youÃ¢â ¬â„¢d guess: We draw up the weather picture for combat operations. As such, we need to be first in on any mission, predicting the weather at the targetÃ¢â ¬â •and above the target, if itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s an airborne missionÃ¢â ¬â •and helping determine if it can go ahead. Air Force Weather School is one of the hardest military courses there is. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s not just predicting when itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s going to be partly cloudy so folks can better plan their barbecues. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s about anticipating what type of cloud formations will be present at what altitudes, what the visibility will be for aircraft heading through those clouds, and when exactly theyÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll hit the heart of a thunderstorm. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s learning how a hailstone forms with concentric rings, like a tree, and what makes it burst out the top of a cloud like popcorn and

plummet to earth in a dark curtain of ice. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s getting to know local weather, and predicting when storms may occur, and what the conditions will be like when they do. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s working out how to read the weather in order to make snap decisions on the ground. Mission-critical decisions. When I went through weather school, we started as sixteen, and only three from our original class made it all the way. We had to score 80 percent or higher on all tests to move to the next section. Weather school took about a year, with over fifteen hundred hours of classroom instruction. Combat weathermen have to pass Air Force Special Operations selection and combat weather school. Having done so, I felt as if IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d truly made it. My first assignment with the 10th Combat Weather was on attachment to the armyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s 3rd Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Life was goodÃ Â .Ã Â .Ã Â . apart from one thing. My jobÃ¢â ¬â •briefing pilots on weather conditionsÃ¢â ¬â •didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t really do it for me. I stuck at it for about two years, until word went around that the SOAR was seeking volunteers. When you have guys going deep behind enemy lines, as the SOAR do, itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s vital that they know what weatherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s coming. Only air force guys can become combat weathermen. The SOAR is an iconic regiment, and my commander personally asked me if IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d be willing to join them. I talked it through with my wife, Carla. SheÃ¢â ¬â„¢d always been supportive of everything IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d ever done, but for once she asked me not to follow my dream. We both knew that operations with the SOAR were dangerous. Carla told me that she had a dark premonition, a really bad feeling, about this one. She had a sense that something terrible was going to happen to me if I transferred to the SOAR. But my commander stressed how much they needed me, and I sure wanted to go. In due course I transferred from Fort Bragg to Hunter Army Airfield, the headquarters of the 3rd Battalion of the 160th Night Stalkers, and moved my family up there, too. Carla and I had three boys under the age of four, so ours was one busy household. We purchased a modest one-story house with a wraparound porch, room enough for the boys to bounce around in. At Hunter I was introduced to the Ã¢â ¬Å“Skiff,Ã¢â ¬Â• a hyper-secure underground vault protected by a series of massive code-activated doors. The Skiff was the nerve center of SOAR operations, and it was from there that I would study the weather as it affected their missions around the world. I threw myself into my new task, striving to prove that an air force guy could be as good as any army man. I was at the front of all the training runs. I had to be. If I slipped back, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d get all the usual abuse about being a Ã¢â ¬Å“pansy-assed air force guy.Ã¢â ¬Â• And, like many a Morgan before me, I thrilled to the challenge. I grew to feel at home among these army aviators. Despite CarlaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s warnings, I thrived. I worked my weather data like a magician. I conjured statistics to predict how storms would impact visibility or communications, or how wind speeds at the different altitudes of a

parachute jump might enable a squad of paratroopers to hit a landing zone pretty much simultaneously. I sought current and tidal data so we could do airborne insertions into water: I knew that if the current was more than one mile an hour, our guys would not be able to make headway against it while swimming. If we aimed to hit a beach, I needed to know the high- and low-tide times so I could advise on the best time of landing. Because sound travels more clearly through water than air, in damp, humid conditions I had to warn our guys that the enemy would hear us coming from much farther away. I tried to use the weather to best advantage, while warning how it might hinder operations. After prolonged rain, a river might be rendered too hazardous to cross, making our planned exit from a target unworkable. If it was a sniper mission, I needed to predict how crosswinds might hamper the shot. If it was a night operation, I needed to know what lunar illumination we should expect. There might well be a full moon, but if there was heavy cloud cover, little light would filter through. Conversely, there might be too much light, causing human forms to cast shadowsÃ¢â ¬â •making us visible and vulnerable to ambush. If I ever felt the weather picture made a mission look undoable, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d make that known to my commanders. My final callÃ¢â ¬â •the weather callÃ¢â ¬â •would be made four to six hours ahead of the mission start time, which was just what IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d done today, here in Ecuador. For weeks prior to the mission, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d studied the local weather patterns. Our area of operations sat right on the equatorial trough, a tropical storm corridor running along the equator. Weatherwise, it was a hugely volatile region. IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d already inserted two combat weather guys around a hundred kilometers east of our target. As the weather blew in from that direction, they would be our eyes and ears, warning us of whatever was coming. Trained climatic observers, theyÃ¢â ¬â„¢d transmit key data: wind direction and speed, air temperature, cloud types and height, and dew point. The dew point is the temperature at which the air becomes saturated with moisture, so fog or rain will form, impacting on visibility. TheyÃ¢â ¬â„¢d warn us if cumulus cloud was incoming, since it tends to build rapidly into violent tropical storms. It was largely by using their data that IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d been able to green-light todayÃ¢â ¬â„¢s mission. But once we were on the ground, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d carry on monitoring the weather every step of the way. Stuffed into my rucksack were the specialist tools of my trade, chiefly a portable combat weather laptop via which I could acquire my own data on the weather above us or download stats from the Skiff. The area we were flying into was heavily mountainous. We had hundreds of millions of dollarsÃ¢â ¬â„¢ worth of equipment in the air with us, plus several dozen men-at-arms. There were thunderstorms every day over the Cordillera Central, and a bad downdraft could cause an aircraft to fall out of the sky or scatter injured parachutists across a wide swath of terrain. That was why I bore such a heavy responsibility for the present mission. By now, the SOAR

guys had pretty much come to trust my decisions. A while back weÃ¢â ¬â„¢d been on a training exercise in Kentucky. IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d been on the ground with an advance force of SOAR operators, preparing to call in the main drop. But the area had been hit by a series of tornadoes, and for a while it had looked like the exercise was a no-go. Then a narrow weather window had opened and IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d called the aircraft in. WeÃ¢â ¬â„¢d driven out to mark the landing zone so the parachutists would know exactly where to put down. We were halfway to the LZ when the heavens openedÃ¢â ¬â •massive hailstones. The inbound aircraft were close now, and unless I called it off, we risked having parachutists jumping out of the skies into a hellish hailstorm. As the hailstones had pounded onto the roof of our vehicle, IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d felt the SOAR guys staring at me and known what they were thinking: How the hell did he get it so wrong? No doubt about it, I was sweating it big-time. But I stuck with my gut instinct. The weather window was coming. The jump remained on. Sure enough, the hail had stopped, weÃ¢â ¬â„¢d gotten the parachutists in, and the last set of boots had barely hit the ground when the weather window closed again. It had all been down to some good judgment, coupled with a great deal of luck and split-second timing. On the drive out, the SOAR guys told me they were amazed at what IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d just done. Ã¢â ¬Å“Shoot, weÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll believe anything you say now.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“Goshman, you tell us youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re God, you got it.Ã¢â ¬Â• But I knew for sure that I wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t God. And on this mission into the Cordillera CentralÃ¢â ¬â •as with every one before itÃ¢â ¬â •I was praying that IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d called the weather right. IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d brought with me a small disposable camera, and I asked my buddy Travis to take a photo of me perched at the aircraftÃ¢â ¬â„¢s open ramp, my hand on my M4 assault rifle and my eyes gazing out over the rolling green canopy of jungle. It was the summer of 1999, and I looked young, full of spunk, and unstoppable, like I was ready to take on the world. Shortly after that photo was taken, we piled off the C-130Ã¢â ¬â„¢s open ramp, a string of sticklike figures tumbling into the void. We made a low-level jump, an elite-forces parachuting technique that enables you to get fast and unseen onto the target. We landed in a wide forest clearing thick with dense waist-high jungle grass. It was midmorning by now, and out in the open it was furnace-hot. Within seconds my combats were plastered to my body and drenched with sweat. But the big upside was this: Not a shot had been fired at us, and there was zero sign that FARC had detected our presence. WeÃ¢â ¬â„¢d just inserted a covert force of elite operators into their very backyard. And, a massive bonus for me personally, the weather had held real good. I gathered in my camouflaged silk chute, feeling unbeatable. Invincible, even. I loved what I did. I thrilled to the intellectual rigor of the combat weathermanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s craft, plus I welcomed the physical challenge and the buzz of jumping into missions with the SOAR. I was in the prime of my life and the fittest

and the most highly trained and capable IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d ever been. We cached our chutes, putting them in a specific place so we could return and retrieve them later. Then we began the long trek toward our end destination: a fast and angry river that snaked and boiled through the jungle. If our intelligence was accurate, the narco-traffickers would be heading downstream using open boats stuffed with bales of drugs and gunmen. All we had to do was to lie undiscovered in the thick bush and wait. But for months after this mission, that would be my last conscious memoryÃ¢â ¬â •trekking through the thick, suffocating jungle. The next thing I knew, I was in a military hospital fighting for my life with zero idea how IÃ¢â ¬â„¢d even gotten there.

This story really was difficult to put down. Well told true story that everyone should read to understand what young people risk for us on a daily basis in the US Military. I'll not forget S Sargent Morgan, Nepal and Rue!

I cried and laughed while reading this book. I enjoy books with an uplifting story and this story is very uplifting and inspiring. The excellent work of the trainer's world wide in training dogs to assist with the every day life for people with disabilities needs to recognised. And this book makes you aware that these and many more organisations are out there. Everybody needs a dog like Napal. ÃƒÂ Ã Å¸Ã ËœÃ â ¬ÃƒÂ Ã Å¸Ã ËœÃ â

One of the best books I've ever read! I have it in my Kindle so I'll have it forever! Laughed, cried, and related so much to the animal itself as my husband & I owned black labs and they are so incredibly smart. One of them, rescued from pound, knew when my blood sugars were too low and would let me know even when I was asleep. He wasn't trained to do this as far as I know. The dog in this book made such an incredible difference in the life of this family. I applaud this organization and learned so much. Kudos to Jason Morgan and his bravery and service to our country which continues on.

A wonderful story of a wounded warrior who finds physical, mental, and emotional salvation through his service dog. Learned much about the role these dogs play and the hard-working volunteers who train them.

Having had the honor and pleasure on meeting Jason,Napal, and Rue on several occasions as a puppy raiser in Texas and knowing Jackie the ultimate CCI recruiter, I loved hearing the complete

story of Napal and Jason. Extremely well written to keep your interest. A must read for everyone. God bless you Napal.

Absolutely one of the best books I've read. Sad but worth reading. It gives us all hope that our vets have the best companions that they deserve. A dog has so much healing love to give. I admire all that raise these puppy's to give them back as companion animals.

Great story for those who love dogs and respect the military

excellent book for all the dog lovers out there!!

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