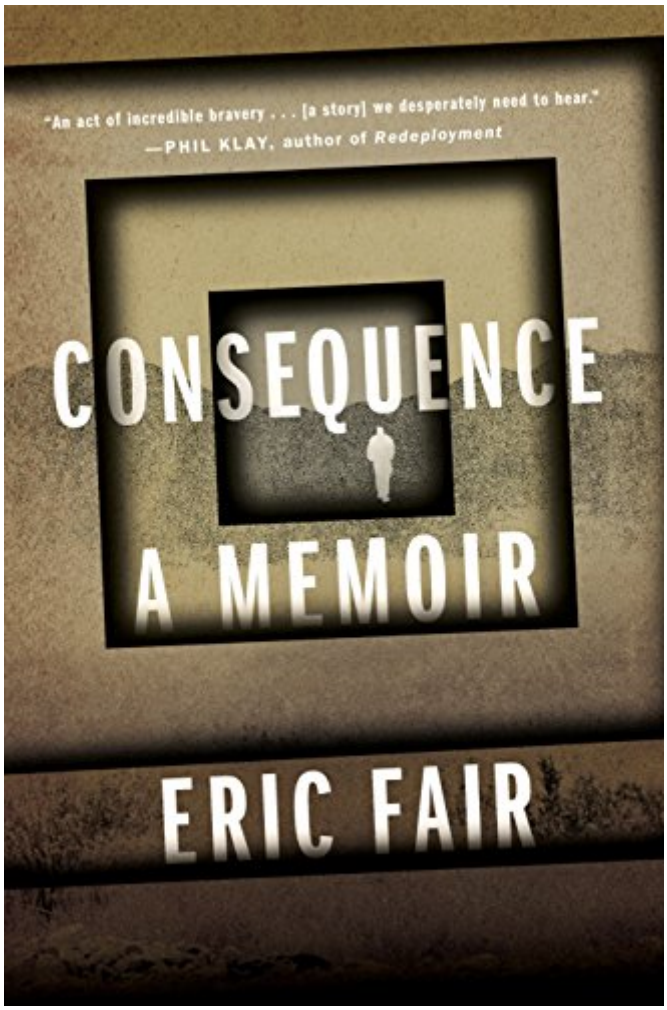
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Consequence: A Memoir



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Synopsis

A man questions everything--his faith, his morality, his country--as he recounts his experience as an interrogator in Iraq; an unprecedented memoir and "an act of incredible bravery" (Phil Klay)"Remarkable... Both an agonized confession and a chilling expose of one of the darkest interludes of the War on Terror. Only this kind of courage and honesty can bring America back to the democratic values that we are so rightfully proud of." --Sebastian JungerConsequence is the story of Eric Fair, a kid who grew up in the shadows of crumbling Bethlehem Steel plants nurturing a strong faith and a belief that he was called to serve his country. It is a story of a man who chases his own demons from Egypt, where he served as an Army translator, to a detention center in Iraq, to seminary at Princeton, and eventually, to a heart transplant ward at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2004, after several months as an interrogator with a private contractor in Iraq, Eric Fair’s nightmares take new forms: first, there had been the shrinking dreams; now the liquid dreams begin. By the time he leaves Iraq after that first deployment (he will return), Fair will have participated in or witnessed a variety of aggressive interrogation techniques including sleep deprivation, stress positions, diet manipulation, exposure, and isolation. Years later, his health and marriage crumbling, haunted by the role he played in what we now know as "enhanced interrogation," it is Fair’s desire to speak out that becomes a key to his survival. Spare and haunting, Eric Fair’s memoir is both a brave, unrelenting confession and a book that questions the very depths of who he, and we as a country, have become.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Eric Fair’s memoir, CONSEQUENCE, is a riveting and compelling read, but it is not a pleasant one. You will find yourself wincing repeatedly at his coldly matter-of-fact and unflinching descriptions of his experience as an interrogator in Iraq, working as a civilian contractor for the notorious CACI (Consolidated Analysis Center, Incorporated). Indeed the company was so secretive and unforthcoming that Fair and many of his co-workers didn’t even know what CACI stood for.CONSEQUENCE is so disturbing that it is a hard book to critique. Fair, who grew up a chubby, bullied kid in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, came from a staunchly Prsbyterian family, and religion played a pivotal role in his life. He was active in church youth groups and attended a Christian college for a year before transferring to Boston U. He then enlisted in the Army, where he learned Arabic at DLIFLC in Monterey, California. Then on to Airborne and Special Ops training and a tour in Egypt. A long way from the shy kid who was mercilessly bullied. He also drifted away from his religious roots. After the army he marries and joins the Bethlehem Police force, but after a few years he learned he had a rare heart defect, which effectively ended his law enforcement career. Then, leveraging his army training and language skills, he signs on with the infamous CACI and heads to Iraq to join a growing cadre of civilian contractors. He is, from the beginning, repulsed by what he witnesses in this job, and then, gradually finds himself becoming part of it all. Remember the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, where a handful of low-ranking military types took the fall for torture and mistreatment of prisoners? Well they were merely scapegoats. The orders came from much higher up, and the civilian contractors were in just as deep. Fair also does a stint as an analyst with the National Security Agency before a return trip to Iraq.But here’s the thing. I’m barely skimming the surface here with this summary. Fair recounts it all in a flat present-tense voice. It’s like a recitation of sins, a confession. Is there remorse? Yes. Regret? Yes. Shame? Oh, yes. In fact, Eric Fair is filled with shame and remorse, and, his life and marriage in shambles, he is trying desperately to find his way back to the man he once was. He studies scriptures with a friend, searching for solace. He finds in Maimonides that "the transgressor is required to engage with the aggrieved persons, actively seek their forgiveness ... The remedies are often described as lifelong pursuits." Fair’s

change of heart and search for forgiveness brought to mind Bernard Malamud’s character Frank Alpine in THE ASSISTANT. Except this is not fiction. This is a real person. And he is in real pain.In 2006 Fair published some newspaper op-ed pieces about his work as an interrogator that brought him thousands of email replies, many of them ugly hate-mails. He admits that his articles were not entirely forthcoming, saying: "I haven’t yet mustered the courage to confess ..."Over the next several years, there was a brief failed stint at Princeton Seminary, he became a father, underwent a heart transplant, and thought often of suicide. In this book, Fair has finally found the courage for a full confession."I am a torturer. I have not turned a corner or found my way back. I have not been redeemed. I have no right to expect that I ever will. But I am still obligated to try."Eric Fair is a tortured soul. He tells his story unflinchingly. He is guilty of terrible sins and he admits it. Scripture tells Fair that seeking forgiveness is a "lifelong pursuit." He is working on it.This is a memoir of war and its consequences. It will haunt you. Very highly recommended.- Tim Bazzett, author of the memoir, SOLDIER BOY: AT PLAY IN THE ASA

This book was quite a page turner and supports the idea that both the perpetrator and subject of violence and torture are vulnerable to post traumatic stress. The writer’s style, using first person, active voice and precise, unpretentious language, contributes to the "un-put-down-able" quality of the piece. One feels immersed in the world of horror and chaos in a way that is not experienced with other, similar works. While some passages are redacted, which is most unfortunate, the slow descent into hell and the irresistibility of the theater of operations for the traumatized soldier as well as the character changes that are taking place within him all the while makes this book an important read. As a narrative of traumatization it is an authentic and powerful. I would hope it eventually finds its way onto the list of NY Times bestsellers.

First, what I liked: In a straight-forward, unadorned manner, Fair depicts the good, the bad, and the ugly of Army training, police training, and--especially--contractor work in Iraq. This is an invaluable peek into the dishonesty and unbelievable disorganization that existed during our invasion of Iraq, and I now strongly question whether the military should be using contractors at all. It’s also a sad meditation on the too-easy misuse of power by those who are authorized and trained to use force on others. Secondly, this book reveals the emotionally and spiritually corrosive effect that war has on human beings. This is much more than a book about enhanced interrogation techniques; it’s about the madness of war and the madness it creates in those involved. The book is also, in a subtle way, about the hatred of the "other" that pervades our entire civilian culture--including the

church. I appreciated the religious journey Fair struggles to follow, and his realization that forgiveness comes through a long process of repentance and making amends, not through a magical reward for right belief. Now for what I did not like: incessant short and choppy sentences that are probably meant to give the impression of stripped down reportage and honesty, but which also reveal the author's stylistic and literary limitations. I'm sure many people will call this book courageously honest, and in many ways it is. But all memoirs lie, because all memoirs pick and choose in order to create a certain meaningful narrative. I suspect the lie that most pervades this book is the author's often missing decency. He seems intent to flagellate himself whenever possible. He comes across as a basically soft-hearted guy who nonetheless can't help but lie and hide and emotionally abuse those whom he loves while trying to please military authority figures and national honor and his own sense of purpose; and now he must expose what an incredible jerk he is as punishment for what he participated in. But that is also a kind of dishonesty. He should also stick up for himself and explain himself in more detailed ways. If he had been willing to write more introspectively, we would have come to know a more sympathetic person.

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