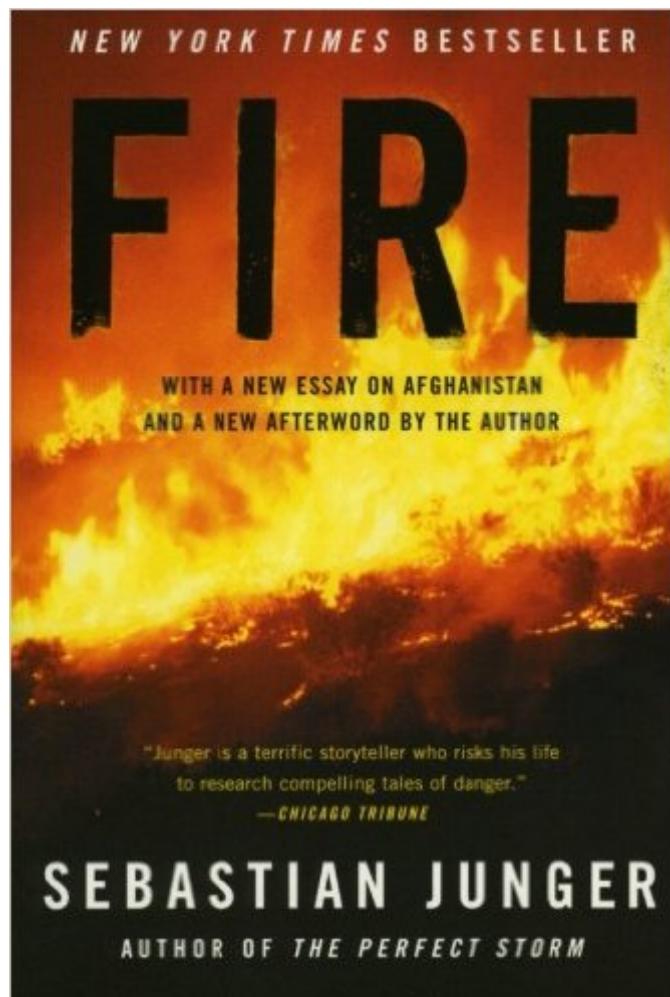


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# Fire



## **Synopsis**

A riveting collection of literary journalism by the bestselling author of *The Perfect Storm*, capped off brilliantly by a new Afterword and a timely essay about war-torn Afghanistan -- a superb eyewitness report about the Taliban's defeat in Kabul -- new to book form. Sebastian Junger has made a specialty of bringing to life the drama of nature and human nature. Few writers have been to so many disparate and desperate corners of the globe. Fewer still have met the standard of great journalism more consistently. None has provided more starkly memorable evocations of extreme events. From the murderous mechanics of the diamond trade in Sierra Leone, to an inferno forest fire burning out of control in the steep canyons of Idaho, to the forensics of genocide in Kosovo, this collection of Junger's reporting will take readers to places they need to know about but wouldn't dream of going on their own. In his company we travel to these places, pass through frightening checkpoints, actual and psychological, and come face-to-face with the truth.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

For any author attempting to satisfy readers after delivering a book as widely celebrated as, "The Perfect Storm", the task is almost impossible. This is the task that Sebastian Junger faced when presenting his second book to readers. The 10 stories he collects here will be familiar to many as the majority appeared in magazine form prior to being collected between these covers. With his first book he demonstrated how well he could place a reader in the midst of a tale. His writing was detailed, authentic; he gave readers a vicarious experience of feeling they were close to, if not on The Andrea Gale. He wrote what he felt he needed to write to tell the story. These are essentially

magazine articles, and as such are confined to the space they were allotted. The stories are well written and have the effect, intended or not, of becoming bits of autobiographical sketches of the author. I enjoyed this aspect, and it raised my general enjoyment of the collection. The amount of knowledge a reader may possess on a given topic will also determine how interesting the stories will be to a given person. With all the information that we are receiving daily about Afghanistan, his story, "A Lion In Winter", may have less impact than it might have had if the nightmare of September 11 had not happened. I am not suggesting the story is poorly done; rather its informative value may have been overtaken by current events. These stories will also take you to the sites of forest fires, to Kosovo and the author's first person accounts of the evil he witnessed, to The Caribbean, and to Sierra Leone. Most of these articles have themes and endings that make the fate of The Andrea Gale much less graphic and unsettling.

I happened across Sebastian Junger's latest while wildfires are raging near Sydney, India and Pakistan are heating up the Kashmir conflict, and the conflict in Afghanistan is still swirling toward an uncertain conclusion. Junger's second book manages to touch on all these current headlines, making you want to find out what he's working on \*now\*, just to be forewarned. "Fire" is a collection of short essays, most published over the last ten years as magazine articles. That's an easy slam-dunk after a big hit like "The Perfect Storm". "Fire" is not Junger's next big thing, but it's certainly worthwhile if you were unaware of his other writings. My favorite in this collection is "Colter's Way", inspired by an Old West figure famous for pushing his luck in Blackfeet territory. Junger relates Colter's exploits to the current fascination with extreme sports and adventure travel. Basically, modern life is safe but dull, so people turn dangerous pastimes to feel more alive, Junger says. Junger promptly lets the air out of the modern adventure's tires: "because it's not necessary, it's not heroic", he says, however "brave" it can be. As in "The Perfect Storm", Junger's levelheaded approach to danger is a nice contrast to Jon Krakauer's "Into Thin Air" and its ilk, which seem to emphasize the pathological aspects of life at the extreme. "Storms happen" would be Junger's motto, versus Krakauer's annoying "why am I up on Everest" hand-wringing. The last piece in the book, "The Lion in Winter" is an account of Junger's interview with the late anti-Taliban leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud.

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