

The Disaster Gypsies



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Chatting with notorious war criminal Charles Taylor on the lawn of his presidential mansion as ostriches and armed teenagers strut in the background; landing in snow-covered Afghanistan weeks after the fall of the Taliban and trying to make sense of a country shattered by years of war; being held at gunpoint by young soldiers amid the tragedy of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda; standing in the middle of a violent riot in the streets of Kathmandu; having hushed conversations with the widows of Europe's largest massacre since World War II - these are all scenes from "The Disaster Gypsies", a compelling personal memoir by a relief worker and conflict specialist who has worked on the ground in a host of war-torn countries. Initially deployed as part of a humanitarian relief team in Rwanda almost by accident, the author has experienced the tragedies of Rwanda, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Liberia over a span of ten years. Rich with poignant human stories, "The Disaster Gypsies" captures the reality of modern war with an immediacy and compassion that puts the reader in the front seat. The author approaches his story from a unique perspective, having worked both in the upper echelons of the U.S. government and in some of the world's most dangerous places. Moving from face-to-face encounters with warlords to quiet moments with the victims of horrific violence, he gives readers a behind-the-scenes tour of a world most of us can barely imagine. He argues that civil wars are often dismissed by westerners as

tribal, ethnic, or regional disputes, when in reality such violence is fundamentally part of the human condition. He contends that people in the West continue to view war as something that is outside of themselves and profoundly foreign in its nature, even as they send troops to Iraq.

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