



Gone For Soldiers

By Jeff Shaara

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With his acclaimed New York Times bestsellers Gods and Generals and The Last Full Measure, Jeff Shaara expanded upon his father's Pulitzer Prize-winning Civil War classic, The Killer Angels--ushering the reader through the poignant drama of this most bloody chapter in our history. Now, in Gone for Soldiers, Jeff Shaara carries us back fifteen years before that momentous conflict, when the Civil War's most familiar names are fighting for another cause, junior officers marching under the same flag in an unfamiliar land, experiencing combat for the first time in the Mexican-American War.

In March 1847, the U.S. Navy delivers eight thousand soldiers on the beaches of Vera Cruz. They are led by the army's commanding general, Winfield Scott, a heroic veteran of the War of 1812, short tempered, vain, and nostalgic for the glories of his youth. At his right hand is Robert E. Lee, a forty-year-old engineer, a dignified, serious man who has never seen combat.

Scott leads his troops against the imperious Mexican dictator, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana. Obsessed with glory and his place in history, Santa Ana arrogantly underestimates the will and the heart of Scott and his army. As the Americans fight their way inland, both sides understand that the inevitable final conflict will come at the gates and fortified walls of the ancient capital, Mexico City.

Cut off from communication and their only supply line, the Americans learn about their enemy and themselves, as young men witness for the first time the horror of war. While Scott must weigh his own place in history, fighting what many consider a bully's war, Lee the engineer becomes Lee the hero, the one man in Scott's command whose extraordinary destiny as a soldier is clear.

In vivid, brilliant prose that illuminates the dark psychology of soldiers and their commanders trapped behind enemy lines, Jeff Shaara brings to life the haunted personalities and magnificent backdrop, the familiar characters, the stunning triumphs and soul-crushing defeats of this fascinating, long-forgotten war. Gone for Soldiers is an extraordinary achievement that will remain with you long after the final page is turned.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Having chronicled the Civil War in *Gods and Generals* and *The Last Full Measure*, Jeff Shaara casts his eye on the earlier proving ground of the Mexican War in his third novel, *Gone for Soldiers*. Although it secured the Southwest for a nation emboldened by Manifest Destiny, this two-year conflict has nearly faded into oblivion, eclipsed by the subsequent domestic dispute a dozen years later. Shaara's hallmarks--the deliberations of leaders and the brutal facts of battle--illuminate his engaging diversion into an oft-overlooked struggle in which men who would come to oppose one another fought under a single flag.

The veteran major-general Winfield Scott and an upstart Robert E. Lee anchor *Gone for Soldiers*. Headstrong, brilliant, and generally distrustful of his less able subordinates, Scott leads the U.S. troops slowly and inevitably toward Mexico City, imparting martial lessons along the way. "The worst consequence of fighting a war is not if you lose, Mr. Lee," he sighs. "The worst thing you can do is win badly." Lee distinguishes himself throughout the campaign, his meticulous scouting and shrewd inferences winning both Scott's admiration and the jealousy of officers whose ambition surpasses their experience. Lee, too, frequently assesses his place in the hierarchy, but he--like Scott--remains more bemused than seduced by the glitter of fame.

This sympathy between the two men grows as Lee observes Scott embroiled in the distracting politics of war: officers salivating for promotion, enemies more preoccupied with saving face than lives, distant legislators issuing directives. If *Gone for Soldiers* occasionally bogs down during its many lengthy battle scenes, unexpected and delightful small touches arise nearly as often--the "capture" of Mexican leader Santa Anna's wooden leg or the chance encounter between Lee and a young Ulysses S. Grant. Duty-bound and humble, Lee cultivates a perpetual stoicism. "Now we're out here in some place God may not want us to be. It's hard to believe He is happy watching us fight a war," he muses, a sobering coda to the grim calculations of victory. --*Ben Guterson*

From Publishers Weekly

Shaara's latest historical novel abandons the Civil War era of his two previous works, *Gods and Generals* and *The Last Full Measure*, which completed a trilogy begun by his father with the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Killer Angels*. Striving this time to reimagine the Mexican-American War of 1847, Shaara paints a respectable if uneven group portrait of the men who fought south of the border. Gen. Winfield Scott--accompanied by future Confederacy leaders Robert E. Lee, George Pickett and Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson, and soon-to-be Union Army Gen. Ulysses S. Grant--lands at the port of Vera Cruz, intent on piercing straight through to the heart of Mexico and defeating General Santa Anna. Shaara is at his best when describing the all-too-real horrors of hand-to-hand combat, enveloping the reader in the sounds, smells and realities of battlefield carnage. "Now, when a man dies by your side, you don't expect the man who replaces him to survive either, you don't even want to learn his name. And now, when you march into the guns, you accept that this time it might be you, as if it's already decided." The author sometimes tries to hard to distinguish his characters by their traits, interjecting superfluous details verging on caricature, such as Scott's distaste for veal. "Try never to eat the stuff... Horrible, barbaric. Baby cows." However, a scene describing the delayed hanging of a group of American deserters so that they may watch and cheer the raising of the Stars and Stripes over the castle of Chapultepec is gripping and all too believable. Though the stilted, "in the mind of the soldier" narrative becomes a wearisome contrivance at times, the action scenes are fluid and compelling. 15-city author tour; Random House Large Print, BDD Audio. (May)

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From Library Journal

This is Shaara's successful prequel to his father Michael's Pulitzer Prize-winning Civil War novel, *The Killer Angels*. Many of the same characters inhabit its pages but before their allegiances have been fatally strained by the tensions of an impending Civil War. The protagonists are Gen. Winfield Scott, who created our first modern army, and young engineer Robert E. Lee, being tested for the first time as soldier and leader in the little-known Mexican War. Add Stonewall Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, Jeb Stuart, Joe Johnston, Beauregarde, Mexican general Santa Anna what a cast of characters! The book is simply wonderful, populated with eminently human heroes who are called upon to perform Herculean tasks in a war muddied beyond redemption by the ambitions of back-home and battlefield politicians. Like Patrick Rambaud's *The Battle* (LJ 5/1/00) this is first-rate military historical fiction. Well worth reading.

-DDavid Keymer, *California State Univ., Stanislaus, CA*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Carlos Wesley:

The feeling that you get from *Gone For Soldiers* is a more deep you digging the information that hide within the words the more you get serious about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to understand but *Gone For Soldiers* giving you thrill feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their point in certain way that can be understood through anyone who read it because the author of this publication is well-known enough. This book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. So it is easy to understand then can go along, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this specific *Gone For Soldiers* instantly.

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