



To Iraq And Back

Jessica Scott

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My name is Jessica Scott. I am a soldier. I am a wife. I am a mother. This is my story. There are many like it but this one is mine.

In 2009, Army second lieutenant Jessica Scott deployed to Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn. It was a year of many firsts.

This is the first person journey through a combat tour in Iraq, through being a woman in the army and learning to be an officer in the unforgiving environment of a brigade combat team.

This is the journey of a writer, learning to find her voice. This is the journey of a mother, confronting the emotions of leaving her children. This is the story of an inexperienced lieutenant, growing into a leader. This is the journey as it happened, without commentary.

This is her blog. There are many blogs from the Iraq war, but this one is hers.

364 KB

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From Reader Review To Iraq And Back for online ebook

Peggy says

A blog about a Woman soldier sent to Iraq. Mostly a blog about continuing her writing while serving in Iraq. Very disappointed in this book.

Stephen Clynes says

Jessica is a soldier who writes a blog and her book is compiled from her blog posts between October 2008 and December 2009. She has a deployment for a year to Mosul in Iraq and this is an insight into her life.

I enjoyed reading To Iraq And Back because it was such a refreshing read for me. I am a pacifist and was totally against the illegal invasion of Iraq but I wanted to read her book with an open mind. What I found was a lovely tale from a very ordinary girl-next-door type of woman, who chose to serve in the US Army. That is Jessica's day job but she is not the aggressive, movie star, all action, guns blazing heroine. She is an ordinary soldier who has her specific job working in signals, she has a combat role but she is not front line. But Jessica is not a regular workplace blogger as she blogs about lots of things, not just her Army job. Jessica is also a wife, a mother to two young daughters and a romance writer seeking her first publication.

The content of her book is quite a split between Army life, being a mother and writing romance with a view to being published. This made for an enjoyable read as you got to know the whole person. You felt as though you were on tour with Jessica getting all the highlights by squeezing the year into the time it takes to read her book. I liked the structure of her book because the time-line was rigid and there was no going back in time which is one of my pet hates. I found it easy to indentify with Jessica and her personality really shines through her blog posts.

She was unable to give away any military secrets but was incredibly open about the process of writing romance novels. I was not expecting this and really enjoyed reading about her writing problems and her involvement with the Austin Romance Writers Association and others.

I liked how she wrote about her home, her marriage, her children and pets. Rather than being a hard faced soldier, this book let me see her as a normal person who has many interests outside of her day job. You get conditioned by many thriller novels that ALL soldiers are gun-ho and looking for a fight and are unquestioning about killing people. Her book showed the other, softer side of soldiers in support roles who are no different from blue collar workers around the world. What is refreshing is that these soldiers have a normal life with outside interests although they are serving in a combat zone,

I read To Iraq And Back with an open mind and am really pleased I had downloaded a copy. It was good to get a condensed view into a stranger's life. Jessica is not a bland woman, she has attitude which gave her blog a lovely bite. There were no graphic scenes of bombs or limbs hanging off but Jessica lived in fear of the spider! What I took away from her book was that workers around the world do what they are paid to do but regardless of their uniform, they have personal interests outside of work, just like everyone else. Although you may not agree with company policy or the actions of government agents, these workers are only doing their job but underneath the uniform, they are ordinary nice people. The US army had invaded Iraq and many people lost their lives but not every soldier had their finger on the trigger. Some soldiers were just doing their duty and outside of work are quite nice people. I found To Iraq And Back to be a good read and I will vote it 4 stars. Jessica is now a successful published author and her hobby has developed into paid

work. I am pleased that her perseverance has paid off, not just emotionally but in her bank account also.

Marianne says

Five stars for the book -- 21-stars salute for the author and our men and women serving in the armed forces ... thank you all for what you do for our country!!

I downloaded this book the day before the Pentagon announced that the combat ban for women in the military would end ... a rather unexpected event on my part. Interesting item to me was that even though women were not considered to be involved in combat, I sure wouldn't want to be in the location Ms. Scott was in -- it sounded as close to combat as one could get!! So with the chain of events regarding the combat issue, I was most anxious to read this book.

To Iraq and Back is the one-year blog that the author wrote during the time she was deployed to Iraq ... keep in mind, however, she left two small daughters with her mother in the States; she had to grapple with typical military bureaucracy; she continued to write her books and hoped to get published; and throughout it all remain cool and calm.

Fortunately, she did serve alongside her husband, also career Army.

I liked the style of her writing - the almost-daily blog idea was very convincing and I can imagine how it read at the time she was sending it to her friends back in the States during 2009. The reader gets a good idea of what it was like in Iraq, not so much regarding the war, but the day-to-day emotions of a woman in the military. What I did not like was her frequent use of so many military abbreviations and terms -- I didn't always know what they were and in several cases they were not explained. Never having been in any branch of the service, I don't know if I "missed out" on the significance of her comments. Except for that small tweak, I definitely recommend this book.

Pat says

To Iraq and Back.....by Jessica Scott

I was first introduced to Ms. Scott 's work when I read Because of You. I enjoy reading military romances, and she was a new author for me. I then read a review on The Romance Man's blog, the first romance novel he reviewed. I was totally amazed then to find out she was a Army officer, and her husband was deployed. I was impressed by her courage and dedication and so in awe of her bravery. Her second novel Until There Was You was just as enjoyable as her first.

I learned that she was creating a book of her blog posts she had written while she was deployed. I don't read non-fiction very often but felt I wanted to get to know this woman , who is an author of romance novels, a wife and mother, and a military officer about to head to combat. It is a journey that was interesting in so many ways.

She wrote of the everyday activities, relationships with the men and women around her, and a sadness I can only imagine from missing her children and their birthdays. There are no graphic details of conflict, but we feel the sense of loss and frustration when they lose one of their own. In my mind I can still see the flag draped casket she described.

In my opinion, this would be a "must read" for young women thinking of joining the military, and authors thinking about writing, or in the middle of writing a novel. For me, it was a look into a career and way of life that is totally foreign to me, and showing how gratifying it can be.

This was a very enjoyable read, and strengthened my respect for our young volunteer men and women who "Serve and protect". I recommend it highly.

Thank you for your dedication and service.

No compensation was offered or taken for this review.

Donna McBroom-Theriot says

To Iraq and Back is a journal written through out the one year deployment of Jessica Scott. She writes candidly about her time at war, her feelings as a woman in combat and a place of authority, a mother having to leave her two young children behind, and as a wife of an enlisted man.

Jessica Scott doesn't hold back on speaking her mind about what she is feeling. She spoke of her struggles on being a woman in the military, as well being a wife and mother. She wrote about being an officer and the daily trials she endured. She spoke candidly about her personality and her loyalty, and I wish I had marked the book page where she wrote about stupidity and people slacking on the job and not taking pride and responsibility in their work, because I actually saw myself in her reactions and responses, and her thoughts mirrored my own in most instances.

Jessica's story may have been written during wartime, but it didn't stop there. To Iraq and Back is a very personal story for Jessica. We, as civilians, often have no idea what goes through the mind of an enlisted person. Jessica wrote about standing at attention while flag draped coffins were loaded on to a transport plane. She was brutally honest in recording her anguish and confusion, and loyalty to her country and fellow combat soldiers. "Remember the fallen. They have names. I never really got it before...I never understood when I would see Vietnam Vets crying at a parade for the Fallen. I felt sad for them, but I didn't understand.

I didn't understand when I saw an old man at the officer's club wearing his Cav Stetson, just wanting to be around soldiers a little longer. I didn't understand why my Command Sergeant Major lost his mind on a soldier for not shaving. It wasn't about the beard. It was about wearing the uniform with pride, because in these colors, soldiers have died. I started to understand the day we took our first casualty in country. The day we lost a battalion commander and his crew. I started to understand the first day I stood in the Memorial Ceremony and Taps ripped part of my soul out. And I started to understand the day I stood on the tarmac and saluted a flag-draped coffin. It was the first...I walked into the chow hall today, acting like today was any other day. It was decorated in Red, White, and Blue. Alone at the front was a soldier's cross: a Kevlar helmet resting on a rifle, propped up in a pair of empty boots, a pair of dog tags hung around the rifle."

"Today (Memorial Day) I understand that it is not about the flag, or parades, or those of us who are still fighting. Today it is about our fallen brothers and sisters. The ones who gave all for something greater than themselves. Today I understand. And it hurts."

She writes about surrendering control over her children to her parents, and having panic attacks about something happening to her children while she is so far away. Jessica writes about how thankful she is that her mother is caring for her children and doing a great job, because as Jessica says, "trust me, my oldest could piss off the Pope."

She wove humor throughout her story, and in the end, writes of coming home after being away from her family and small children for a year; and the readjustment to "real" life back in the states.

Jessica writes likes she talks, and at times, the cussing (a habit she is striving to break) flows like volcano lava.

I have read and enjoyed several non-fiction books by Jessica Scott and found this book no less entertaining and well written. The stories are raw and full of emotion.

"Happiness is dreaming you're already back in Iraq from R&R only to wake up and discover you have ten days left in the States with your kids."

Clare O'Beara says

The blurb is somewhat misleading in that the book is a compilation of a woman blogging about having to leave her kids with her parents while she and her husband both serve a tour of duty. Throughout the tour we hear lots about missing the kids, the dust and dirt and filthy latrines, how much makeup it is right to wear (why wear any? You're a soldier) and the spats she has with officers above and staff below her. But nothing really about a soldier's tour of duty.

Being in a helicopter and learning to fire a heavy weapon are mentioned as throwaway lines. Okay, I can understand that military issues are confidential and would be edited out of a blog. But we get a reaction to a soldier's death, reflections on coffins going home and Veterans' Day, all without seeing any actual soldiering. This woman has done a hard job but she appears to be an admin worker in a signals base who talks mostly about using a Stairmaster to keep fit and having nothing to fill her time but writing romance novels and rewriting romance novels. For all the blog contains, it's a civilian secretary's diary in an embassy. To understand what life is like for mothers leaving their children for a year and going to this hardship, read it as there are lots of personal insights and lessons learned. Also lists of top ten things to bring on a tour, like which tablet gets the best reception and writing program, which moisturiser and washing powder. But if you want to know about the war in Iraq, read a novel.

Charlotte Lynn says

To Iraq and Back is a story of Second Lieutenant Jessica Scott as she is getting ready to be deployed to Iraq and her deployment to Iraq. It is a story of a mother, a writer, and a Lieutenant as she struggles through leaving her children, keeping up with her books and blog, and learning how to be a leader.

I learned so much from Jessica's writing. A sneak peak into what goes into being in the military and all that one has to give up and let go of. The grief of leaving her children even with the knowledge that her children will be in the capable hands of their grandmother. The anxiety of leading her fellow military mates during such a trying and scary time. Jessica managed to share all of this and not portray herself as not being perfect or above anyone else. She kept the story true to herself and her feelings.

The awe I felt for Jessica Scott humbled me. I take so much for granted in my life. Such as my kids, my freedom, the ability to go and do what I want whenever the mood strikes, and of course reading Jessica's other novels for fun. All I can say is Thank You. Thank You for your service. Thank You for my freedom. Thank You for sharing your story.

Everyone who enjoys their freedom and life should read To Iraq and Back. It is eye opening and inspiring. I fell very honored that I was asked to read and share this story.

Anthony Pignataro says

This is a fascinating war memoir unlike any I'd read before. It's a collection of blog posts the author—at the time a lieutenant in the U.S. Army—wrote during her year-long deployment to Iraq in 2009. While it lacks the intimacy of a diary (all the posts included here were written for public consumption, so there are no identifying details to anything she writes about) it nonetheless still offers something more personal than a traditional memoir. Like most people, Scott writes and thinks about different things at different times—her children and husband one day, the troubles of being a struggling romance novel writer the next, and the dangers of the war around her the day after that. It's an honest and valuable look into the mind of a woman trying to balance her army career, writing dreams and family while a war rages around her.

Paula Robinson says

It's been a long time since I read a non fiction novel that resonated so deeply with me. I love Jessica Scott's fictional works. She does military romance well, and I love how they hit me on the much deeper emotional level as a woman and former soldier. To Iraq and Back is very different, but it resonated with me as much as those other books.

This book is a compilation of the blogs Scott wrote during her deployment, and you can sense her fear, uncertainty, and any doubt she had. You also get to experience some of her days as a soldier, mother, and woman. Her straight-forward and no nonsense approach in her posts is refreshing. She tells it like it is, which enables a reader to connect more easily. Scott does not go into detail about the nature of her missions, which speaks to her character as an officer in the military. Her accounts, however, put a human face on the people wearing the uniform. They are just like you and me. They feel and have opinions, about any and everything. They are not faceless machines, carrying out orders without feeling and emotion. They miss their families and friends.

Scott's book hit me on several levels as a woman, a soldier and a writer. Her blog posts about missing her kids are heart-wrenching. Those about her interactions with other soldiers can be translated to any work relationship outside the military. And those about her path as a writer serve as a road map for new authors out there. To Iraq and Back is filled with many truisms and eye-opening experiences. It is a book I will need to go back to when I need a reality check. I give it five salutes.

Happy reading!

Peace and love,
Paula R

Philippa Lodge says

I downloaded Jessica Scott's first novel on a recommendation from... Smart Bitches or another review site.

Wait, let me go back and say that I'm pretty much a pacifist and a peacenik. Over the years, I have unbent from the rigid principles of adolescence and accepted that yes, we do need a military and, yes, that it offers a good career and training for the rest of life. The shooting and getting shot still unnerves me.

So anyway, I think I have learned more about the real people within the Army from Jessica Scott's books than I ever really learned from anyone else. And how did this review get to be about me?

I'll say that the two novels wowed me. Not only is this a segment of life I'm not very familiar with, but it came through as very real, populated by real, imperfect people. In some ways, the novels are a little too real - I've seen reviews complaining that some characters were left hanging and that they had expected the second published novel to be about those characters, not a new set of people. But even that came across as realistic - even when two people get their happy ending, not everyone around them is going to fall madly in love, too.

So this memoir made it all even more fascinating to me - the reality of a woman deployed in a war zone (even if she's lucky enough to be deployed there with her husband), the reality of a mom having to leave her kids behind for a whole year with only one visit in the middle (holy cow, I could NOT do that), the reality of things exploding nearby, of saluting a fallen comrade, of being reprimanded for being "mean" to other women soldiers (is it just me, or was there a lot of the author in *Until There Was You?*), of making mistakes and not quite knowing what to do, of being an author...

Well, that's our other point of commonality. I'm an unpublished author and watching as Ms. Scott gets her butt in the chair and her hands on the keyboard (the celebrated BICHOK) to channel everything into eleven novels in a year. Yes, she says that without cooking and shopping and cleaning and childcare, she had a lot of free time on her hands, but that's just amazing. And trying to find an agent and a publisher from overseas? Makes me realize I'm a huge slacker.

This memoir feels slightly incomplete. I'd like to know more about the fighting as it was happening around her. I know she was very careful to not publish things that would give away military secrets, but I could have used knowing a little more about how she felt about the danger.

SO that's my, long, rambling review. Really fascinating slice-of-life book. Oh, and she provided me with a PDF copy free in return for review. She's really nice, too! And before someone says the free copy influenced my review, all I can say is "maybe." But it's more like my fascination with her novels influenced my interest in the memoir and my review of it.

Liza says

I was given a copy of *To Iraq and Back* from the author with the promise of an honest review. I knew the book would be about Jessica's deployment to Iraq, I even had read some of her blog while she was deployed, but I had no idea how much the story would grab me.

My first thought is I have never said thank you enough to all the men and women who serve in our armed

services. I can't think of a harder job on earth than one where you go into battle to protect your country, family and friends knowing you might not come back. Jessica's story ripped me open completely. When she was talking about being away from her daughters, I could feel her pain. While I have family members in the Army (retired now), I really have never talked to them about their deployments much. Not sure if it is their choice or mine, so I liked having my eyes open from someone willing to share their frontline experience. Again makes me so grateful for all those who serve. Jessica also shares both her success and mistakes while in Iraq, as well as her feelings about loss while there. Add in her writing process, and her talking about her support system back home, and I was totally drawn into the story.

I've been a fan of Jessica Scott since I read her debut novel *Back to You* came out in 2011. *To Iraq and Back* is Jessica's story about her life and after reading it, I'm an even bigger fan. I actually met Jessica at RWA in Orlando in 2010 and she had her daughters with her. I'd "met" her on twitter and she was super nice to me when I went a little fan-girl upon meeting her in real life. The official release date for *To Iraq and Back* was December 10, 2012 and is available at Amazon in both print and digital formats. For more information about Jessica's books, check out her website.

Carolyn says

To Iraq And Back...Jessica Scott
Thank You For Serving!

I won a copy of *Iraq And Back* from the author in return for my honest review.

This book is written in blog form and reads like a journal entry. I was expecting an Autobiography, so, this was different for me, not quite what I expected. I wanted more information of her growing up, what made her decision to become a soldier, etc..

I commend Jessica for her courage for being a soldier, for being a strong mother who is able to go off to war and leave her children with her mother and father. She tells of missing her children through her deployment, her ups and down, losses, anger, and promotions. Plus Jessica gets deployed with her husband which makes her time serving somewhat easier to bear. Jessica is one gal who strikes a cord with me, she is a straight shooter, doesn't give up and doesn't back down. I can definitely relate and most times people like us are considered mean, hard, and just down-right bitches! She goes into detail how people relate to her on a every day basis.

In this book she tells of how to become a writer, her writing experience, and who along the way helped her. This will appeal to people who want to be writers. She also talks about being in the Army and the many facets of this job. This will appeal to whoever is interested in the armed forces. I'm a veterans wife so, this appealed to me greatly, only problem I seen is that she used a lot of abbreviations, if you are not familiar with the branches of services terms then you are lost. Jessica did a great job of talking about symptoms of PTSD. What can cause this disorder, what it's like to come back to the States, to your home and family and be able to overcome issues and just be a civilian again.

My favorite part of this book is: *The Flag is More than Colored Cloth*. You can see in your minds eye just what she is saying and with me it brought tears to my eyes! Respect the fallen and their families. Respect their privacy. Well written Jessica!

So, my opinion is just one of many, it's different but likeable. Pick it up and read it and see what you think.

The courage to be a soldier is one thing but to be a full time soldier raising 2 children, keeping up a house, and a wife. WOW! HOORAY Jessica! Thanks for letting us in to a difficult time of your life.....

Luisa Rivas says

Jessica Scot usually writes military romances but this time she wrote a book about her one-year deployment in Iraq. Jessica and her husband are career military, so they went together. The book was written in blog form and reads like a diary. Here you get to read about Jessica's work, the environment, working conditions, the horrible heat, etc. You get a sense of the routine and common stuff, but most important, you read about her feelings. I was very impressed by the sacrifice this mother made, leaving her two baby girls in order to work for her country. Yes, she left her daughters in the best hands possible, with her parents, and she had the miracle of technology and could have video chats with her babies every night, but it is a huge sacrifice nevertheless. While most of us go blithely living our lives and moaning about our troubles, there are people out there sacrificing a normal family life, in defense of our country, and ultimately, us. I got from the book a sense of respect for our country and the military, a responsibility for doing a job right. I am in awe of the guts it takes to go out there and expose yourself, not knowing if you'll make it back alive, it has finally sunk into me why we give thanks to soldiers whenever we see them, because they are defending our country at great personal cost.

Nicole says

A nice glimpse into the mind of a soldier, writer, mother, and wife. As someone who respects our military members and the sacrifices they, and their families, make, I found some of her thoughts reflected my mother in law's, who is retired Air Force. It's hard to be a woman. Even harder to be a woman in the military. Harder still to be a woman in charge. I applaud you, Jessica, for not only serving our country so proudly, but for speaking your mind and sharing your thoughts.

As for the writing tidbits, well, you've scared the hell out of me! I'm an inspiring writer, and honestly, all the no's and criticism is what makes me afraid to try harder. I applaud your bravery on that part also!

Natasha says

DNF 20%

I should have read the blurb before starting to read this book, but I usually don't so it's my fault that I didn't enjoy this one (and therefore refraining from rating the book).

Although I like what the book is about I don't like the writing style. This is a series of blog entries that contain discussions on lots of random stuff (including writing progress on the Author's other books) rather than only the topic I want to read about, i.e. the emotional journey of a mom & wife going to the war.
