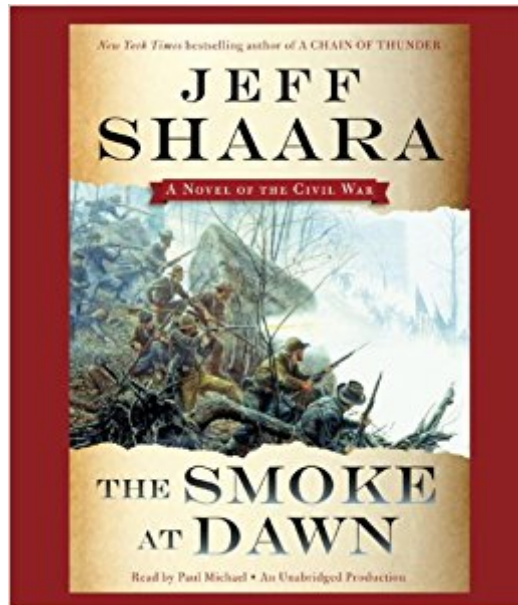




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The Smoke At Dawn: A Novel Of The Civil War (the Civil War In The West)



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER — Jeff Shaara returns to the Civil War terrain he knows so well, with the latest novel in the series that started with *A Blaze of Glory* and *A Chain of Thunder*. In *The Smoke at Dawn*, the last great push of the Army of the Cumberland sets the stage for a decisive confrontation at Chattanooga that could determine the outcome of the war. — Summer, 1863. The Federal triumph at Vicksburg has secured complete control of the Mississippi River from the Confederacy, cementing the reputation of Ulysses S. Grant. Farther east, the Federal army under the command of William Rosecrans captures the crucial rail hub at Chattanooga. But Rosecrans is careless, and while pursuing the Confederates, the Federal forces are routed in north Georgia at Chickamauga Creek. Retreating in a panic back to Chattanooga, Rosecrans is pursued by the Confederate forces under General Braxton Bragg. Penned up, with their supply lines severed, the Federal army seems doomed to the same kind of defeat that plagued the Confederates at Vicksburg. But a disgusted Abraham Lincoln has seen enough of General Rosecrans. Ulysses Grant is elevated to command of the entire theater of the war, and immediately replaces Rosecrans with General George Thomas. Grant gathers an enormous force, including armies commanded by Joseph Hooker and Grant's friend, William T. Sherman. Grant's mission is clear: Break the Confederate siege and destroy Bragg's army. — Meanwhile, Bragg wages war as much with his own subordinates as he does with the Federals, creating dissension and disharmony in the Southern ranks, erasing the Confederate army's superiority at exactly the wrong time. — Blending evocative historical detail with searing depictions of battle, Jeff Shaara immerses readers in the world of commanders and common soldiers, civilians and statesmen. From the Union side come the voices of Generals Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, and George Thomas — the vaunted — "Rock of Chickamauga" — as well as the young private Fritz — "Dutchie" — Bauer. From the Rebel ranks come Generals Bragg, Patrick Cleburne, and James Longstreet, as well as the legendary cavalry commander, Nathan Bedford Forrest. A tale of history played out on a human scale in the grand Shaara tradition, *The Smoke at Dawn* vividly recreates the climactic months of the war in the West, when the fate of a divided nation truly hangs in the balance. — Praise for *The Smoke at Dawn* — "Civil War history fiends will be riveted." — *Parade* — "A beautifully written novel . . . Shaara once again elevates history from mere rote fact to explosive and engaging drama." — *Bookreporter* — "Shaara's mastery of military tactics, his intimate grasp of history, and his ability to interweave several supporting narratives into a

cohesive and digestible whole . . . will appeal to a broad range of historical- and military-fiction fans. --Booklist --"Top-notch . . . As with the best historical war novels, knowing the ultimate outcome of the bitter fighting is not a bar to engagement. --Publishers Weekly

From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Shaara's third installment of a four-volume set, taking place in the often neglected western theater of the Civil War, continues to shine a light on a number of the grittiest campaigns and battles of that horrendous conflict. The dramatic events taking place around Chattanooga in the fall of 1863 are chronicled through the eyes of both historical and fictional characters involved in the planning and execution of a series of pivotal martial maneuvers. Under siege at Chattanooga, several Federal armies under the brilliant leadership of the recently promoted Ulysses S. Grant combine in an effort to break the Confederate stranglehold on their critical supply lines, as the fates of both the Union and the Confederacy hang in the balance. Shaara's mastery of military tactics, his intimate grasp of history, and his ability to interweave several supporting narratives into a cohesive and digestible whole as he revisits a catastrophic period in U.S. history will appeal to a broad range of historical- and military-fiction fans. --Margaret Flanagan --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

"Civil War history fiends will be riveted. --Parade --"The Smoke at

Dawn is a beautifully written novel about a battle usually ignored. The historical details and the personal examinations fuse perfectly with the raw power of the battle meshed hand-in-hand with the inner struggle of the men who determine the fates of others and of nations. Shaara once again elevates history from mere rote fact to explosive and engaging drama.

Bookreporter "Shaara's mastery of military tactics, his intimate grasp of history, and his ability to interweave several supporting narratives into a cohesive and digestible whole as he revisits a catastrophic period in U.S. history will appeal to a broad range of historical- and military-fiction fans."

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Huntington NewsFrom the Hardcover edition.

Another triumph from Jeff Shaara , this time featuring the Battle of Chattanooga , which was actually a siege followed by a campaignextending over 2 months during the latter part of 1863. The story begins after the union's Gen Rosecrans' severe defeat at Chickamauga by General Braxton Bragg and his retreat to a tenuous position in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Instead of attacking as was urged by most of his supporting generals, Bragg equivocated and waited for Rosecrans to collapse under a siege and a cut off of a union supply line. General Grant was called in to take over for Rosecrans, and immediately adopted a plan by his chief engineer General Smith to seize an island and open up a Tennessee River supply route, which saved Grant's army. The unsung hero of this campaign, aside from Smith, was union general George Thomas, known as the 'Rock of Chickamauga' who proposed one successful tactic after another. To Grant's credit, he followed most of Thomas' suggestions which plan ultimately led to the Union triumph. I found Shaara's latest effort one of his finest, and highlighting a battle seldom recounted which was crucial in ending all Confederate presence in Tennessee forever. Shaara demonstrates without directly saying so, that by 1863, the North was able to decisively 'out-general' the South at every turn beginning at Vicksburg and continuing until the end of the War. The South never really had an answer to Grant's grit and determination to win the War.

Shaara pere et fils have authored a number of historical novels, extending from early American

history to more contemporary wars. Jeff Shaara has written many such novels; his father famously authored "Killer Angels," with its subject the battle of Gettysburg. The work here focuses on the battle of Chattanooga, with the Union forces in a bad way after a devastating defeat at Chickamauga. As with the other novels by father and son, the action is seen through the eyes of several characters. In this work, the Confederate actors include Patrick Cleburne, a hard hitting division commander, and Braxton Bragg, an acerbic and misanthropic commanding general. For the Union side, the voices include Ulysses Grant, George Thomas (the "Rock of Chickamauga"), William Sherman, and an enlisted soldier, Fritz Bauer. The narrative takes us from the dreary siege and the discomfiture experienced by Union troops to Grant's arrival in Chattanooga to defeated general of the Army of the Tennessee, William Rosecrans, being replaced by Thomas, to Sherman's arrival. We are introduced to many characters on both sides. The work takes us through the various stages of the campaign--from opening the "Cracker Line" (probably underdone), to Grant's and Thomas' interactions (fairly accurately portrayed as "cool"), to the arrival of Sherman. On the Confederate side, we see the internecine conflict as Braxton Bragg finds it hard to get along with others. And this does lead me to note that Bragg was difficult, but in this novel, he is portrayed as almost mentally ill--and I am not sure that we can go that far in assessing him. His conflict with James Longstreet and Nathan Bedford Forrest and. . . . does ring true though. We see the gathering of Union forces to assault Confederate positions--at Lookout Mountain, Tunnel Hill, and Missionary Ridge. The details make for compelling reading. In sum, this is a fine historical novel of the Civil War, albeit somewhat clouded by what seems to me to be a unidimensional view of Braxton Bragg.

"Smoke" is an historical novel of the Civil War campaign around Chattanooga following the Union defeat at Chickamauga. As in most such novels, one has historical characters (among them, in this case, U.S. Grant and W.T. Sherman on the Union side, and B. Bragg, P. Cleburne, and N.B. Forrest on the Confederate side), and entirely fictional characters, built, to the extent the author can bring it off, around historical evidence. The Union forces eventually prevailed, partly by weight of numbers, partly by the wisdom and tenacity of Grant (Sherman, the general I most admire in all of history, has a bad day and learns a hard lesson at the hands of Cleburne), and partly through the folly and dyspeptic ill temper of Bragg. But of course, wars are not fought by generals and battles often turn on the sum of the individual qualities of initiative and courage of the men at the front, privates, noncoms, and junior officers. This fact tends not to shine through in straight historical accounts as it does in historical novels, simply because the historian cannot invent characters to tell stories that illustrate how those qualities played their own part in shaping the outcome. The battles that decided

the Chattanooga campaign involved more of this sort of "fighting man takes the battle out of the hands of the generals and wins it" twists than most, which makes it particularly important and valuable that these men be given names and faces and a story. Here, the central lower-ranking characters are very well drawn, their actions illustrate the kinds of things that might have happened and that would have made possible the kinds of extraordinary outcomes that history records for some of those battles. Spoiler alert: read no further if you don't like having your surprise endings stripped of their surprise..... Two key rank and file characters are literal, historical characters. They really did the amazing things they are said to have done, and there are diaries and medal awards to prove it.

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