

Last Flag Flying

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Two Navy lifers and the hapless sailor they escorted to prison reunite nearly 35 years later in this sequel to the underground classic *The Last Detail*, first published in 2005 and now rereleased alongside a film adaptation directed by Richard Linklater. The last time Billy “Bad-Ass” Buddusky (killed in the original 1970 novel but awkwardly resurrected here) saw his old mate Mule Mulhall, they were showing their young charge Larry Meadows an unforgettable time on the government’s dime in protest of his unfairly long sentence. Now, as the pathetic figure of Saddam Hussein gets captured on television three decades later, they once again embark on a road trip of a different kind: Larry has come to Billy’s bar in Norfolk, VA, to round up Mule, a preacher, so they can help Larry bury his son, a marine killed in Iraq under dubious circumstances. Despite personality clashes played for comedic effect, the irascible Billy and the sanctified Mule band together in their old age and mutual weariness of the war machine to complete their final mission. **VERDICT** Though more autumnal than *The Last Detail*, its countercultural spirit and rollicking humor shine through in this worthy sequel, a thematic cousin to Tim O’Brien’s later novels.

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