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On Fire: A Personal Account of Life and Death and Choices

Larry Brown

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On January 6, 1990, after seventeen years on the job, award-winning novelist Larry Brown quit the Oxford, Mississippi, Fire Department. With three published books to his credit and a fourth nearly finished, he made the risky decision to try life as a full-time writer. *On Fire*, his first work of nonfiction, looks back on his life as a full-time firefighter. Unflinching accounts of daily trauma--from the blistering heat of burning trailer homes to the crunch of broken glass at crash scenes--catapult readers into the hard reality that has driven Larry Brown.

As firefighter and fireman-turned-author, as husband and hunter, and as father and son, Brown offers insights into the choices men face pursuing their life's work. And, in the forthright style we expect from Larry Brown, his diary builds incrementally and forcefully to the explanation of how one man who regularly confronted death began to burn with the desire to write about life.

On Fire is a book in which an extraordinarily gifted writer looks back and reflects on the violence of his life as a fireman. Thoreau said it one way: "However mean your life is, meet it and live it." Larry Brown says it another:

You have to meet the thing, is what it is . . . and for the firefighter it is fire. It has to be faced and defeated so that you prove to yourself that you meet the measure of the job. You cannot turn your back on it, as much as you would like to be in cooler air.

"Larry Brown has an ear for the way people talk, an eye for their habits and manners, a heart for the frailties and foibles, and a love for their struggles and triumphs. His fireman's diary is a wonderful book." —John Grisham, author of *The Firm* and *The Client*

"Larry Brown is never romantic about danger and . . . in this book he goes through his life with the same meticulous attention with which Thoreau circled the woods around Walden Pond." —*The New York Times Book Review.*

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