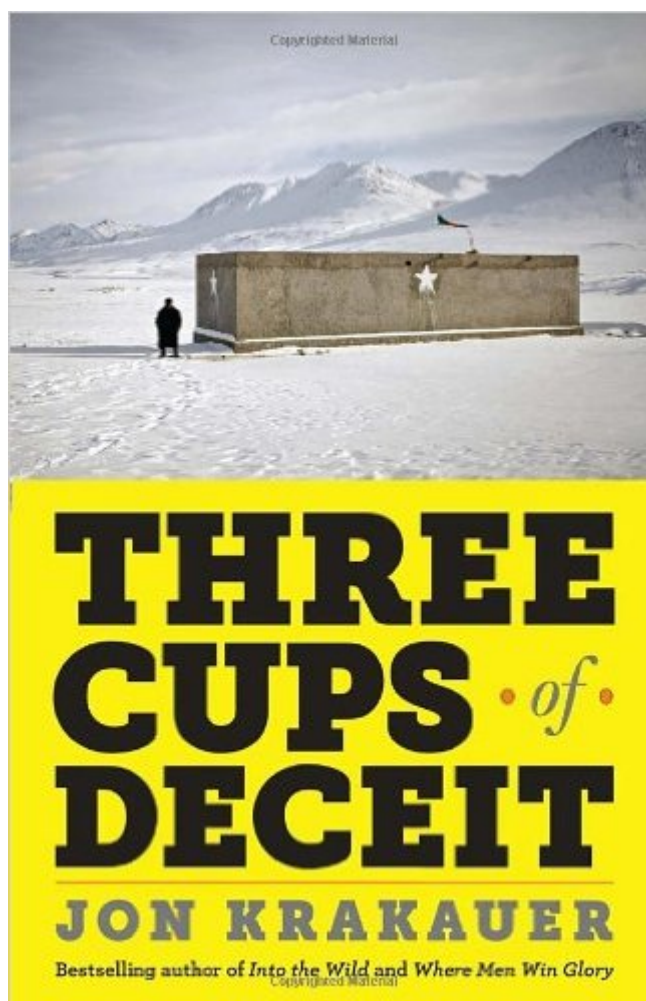


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# Three Cups Of Deceit: How Greg Mortenson, Humanitarian Hero, Lost His Way



## Synopsis

Greg Mortenson, the bestselling author of *Three Cups of Tea*, is a man who has built a global reputation as a selfless humanitarian and children's crusader, and he's been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. But, as Jon Krakauer demonstrates in this extensively researched and penetrating book, he is not all that he appears to be. Based on wide-ranging interviews with former employees, board members, and others who have intimate knowledge of Mortenson and his charity, the Central Asia Institute, *Three Cups of Deceit* uncovers multiple layers of deception behind Mortenson's public image. Was his crusade really inspired by a desire to repay the kindness of villagers who nursed him back to health when he became lost on his descent down K2? Was he abducted and held for eight days by the Taliban? Has his charity built all of the schools that he has claimed? This book is a passionately argued plea for the truth, and a tragic tale of good intentions gone very wrong. 100% of Jon Krakauer's proceeds from the sale of *Three Cups of Deceit* will be donated to the "Stop Girl Trafficking" project at the American Himalayan Foundation ([www.himalayan-foundation.org/live/project/stopgirltrafficking](http://www.himalayan-foundation.org/live/project/stopgirltrafficking)).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

.....as meticulous as Jon Krakauer is in detailing where Greg Mortenson's account of his work in Afghanistan and Pakistan is shot full of holes, it's still best to read *THREE CUPS OF DECEIT* in tandem with Mortenson's own response to Krakauer's charges (which is in an interview with

OUTSIDE magazine) and the response to Krakauer by Scott Darnsey, Mortenson's climbing partner back in the '90s when this all began (also in an interview with OUTSIDE). I suggest reading those as well NOT because they counteract the charge that Mortenson's story has problems---they don't really---but to have their perspective in addition to Krakauer's to then decide for yourself whether this was indeed a hustle by a shrewd con-man or a series of blunders made by a well-intentioned and dedicated man that ultimately undercut his achievements. I tend to be more convinced by Krakauer's reporting precisely because he does what Mortenson does not, namely SPECIFICALLY citing his sources. But even with the bloom off Mortenson's rose, I am not totally convinced that this was intended to be a hustle. Or, more accurately I suppose, I'd hate to have to come to that conclusion, though ultimately I may. There is a cautionary moral to be drawn from all this, though: If you're going to go high-profile in promoting an agenda, you'd BETTER be prepared to be scrutinized and accountable for all that you do---especially when using other people's money.

My mother passed three years ago. Why is this important to my review? Because my mother died suddenly of a brain tumor, after a life as a children's educator and advocate for abused children. She was so taken by Mortenson's tales in "Three Cups of Tea," that she left her life savings to his organization, CAI. She also set up a trust before she passed where friends and family could donate in her memory to Mortenson's cause. Upon hearing of Krakauer's essay, and the "60 Minutes" story, I began to research all I could. I've read Mortenson's response in "Outside" as well as that of his climbing partner, which do little to call into question Krakauer's expose. To me, this is an important story that rings very true. As someone who has met Mortenson, heard him speak and considered both sides, I'd give much more weight to Krakauer's essay than seems to be given by most of his die hard fans. I know if my mother were alive, she would be ashamed of Mortenson. She also wouldn't hold on vociferously to his story and would take being bilked standing up and ready to make it right. I intend to do so for her, and would urge those fans of Mortenson's to truly examine their motivations to defend him. This is a must read- not only for the sake of those who have been had, but for all who want a look at what happens when ego takes the lead on a nonprofit, and when someone is more comfortable with the person they wish to portray than the one they are. Mortenson should be ashamed.

In February, I embedded with the 101st Airborne division in Kandahar province to research a novel. I wound up writing my own Kindle Single, "Lost in Kandahar," about the obstacles our soldiers faced in fighting the Taliban. One reviewer wrote that that the piece offered a very different perspective on

Afghanistan than "Three Cups of Tea." Now, unfortunately, I understand why. In this thoroughly researched piece, Jon Krakauer exposes Greg Mortenson as a terrible charlatan. According to dozens of people who spoke to Krakauer, most of whom are quoted by name, Mortenson lied about the origins of his school-building project, lied about the number of schools he's built, lied about how much time he spends in Afghanistan, lied about his financial relationship with his charity, lied about how much he pays himself, lied about his "kidnapping" in 1996, and even lied about the fact that schools are mainly in relatively peaceful parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan. There are probably a few other lies I've forgotten. For his own ego and financial gain, Mortenson took advantage of the goodwill of donors in America and all over the world. As Krakauer points out, we are so desperate for good news out of Afghanistan that we latched onto Mortenson's story despite some of its obvious flaws (the Taliban didn't really exist in Pakistan in 1996, for example). Mortenson's efforts to defend himself at this point are pathetic, and if he is smart - and wants to avoid a criminal indictment - he will come clean and then slink away, never to be seen or heard again. And hopefully, the rest of us will be a little wiser the next time a Pied Piper comes along promising to solve the world's ills -- for just a few bucks down!

Lost in Kandahar (Kindle Single)

The quote in the title comes from a journalist writing in the Seattle Times. It's important to note that Krakauer was a supporter of Mortenson's, and this report only came to be after numerous other private communication (all documented here) was ignored. Krakauer builds a damaging, fact-based case while still acknowledging the good work that Mortenson has done. I wish it weren't so, but wishing something doesn't make it true. This report is well-documented, well-written, and sadly accurate.

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