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REVIEW

DVD Review: *Deserter*

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During the Vietnam war thousands of young American men left their homes and their families behind and crossed the border into Canada to avoid being drafted into the United States army. Since none of them had as yet been conscripted into the army they weren't listed as deserters from the army and went into the books as draft dodgers — a very important distinction in the eyes of the law and the eyes of the public.

To the majority a deserter is a coward who has run away from his responsibilities. They have betrayed their country in a time of war and in most people's minds there can be no worse crime. To the majority there are only two reasons for you to desert your country's army; either you are a coward or you are an enemy of the state. That there could be another option isn't even conceivable to some people.

On the other side of the coin is the person who enlisted in the army because he or she couldn't see any other employment options on the horizon and the army offered a source of income. They also felt that serving their country was a way of doing something of at least some significance. Once in the armed forces they start hearing stories from people who have done tours of duty in Iraq; stories of running over children in tanks, shooting civilians, that over 60% of the Iraqi population don't want them there, and how so many returning soldiers are suffering from emotional and mental problems.

So if you were a young man like Ryan Johnson and have heard all these stories, and find out that your unit will be shipping out to Iraq in spite of being told you would only be based in the States when you enlisted, what would you do? Your options are limited; follow orders and go to Iraq; stay in the military and refuse to deploy and go to jail for at least a year; or desert and head to Canada.

I'm sure there are a great many people out there who will say he should either go to Iraq or pay the price for his refusal by going to jail and only a coward would take the third option. Yet think about what it would mean for a second if he decides to go to Canada. He can never come back to the United States and see his family and friends again. His government and a great many of his compatriots will consider him a traitor and a criminal, and if he were ever arrested he could very well face life imprisonment.



Ask yourself if you would be willing to do those things, take those risks, for your beliefs. Wouldn't it be safer just to play the game like you are supposed to and go to Iraq or be led off to jail meekly for refusing to deploy? Doesn't it take just as much courage to make the decision to desert as it does to blindly obey orders? Before answering that question wouldn't it be a good thing to get to know the reasons why a

leave (AWOL). He had enlisted in the armed forces because he didn't know what else to do in order to make a living to support his wife and raise a family. Quite a number of his friends had already done the same thing, although two had joined the navy instead of the army, for the same reasons.

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Richard Marcus is a long-haired Canadian iconoclast who writes reviews and opines on the world as he sees it at [Leap In The Dark](#) and [Epic India Magazine](#).

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