

Is For
Good Men
To Do
Nothing

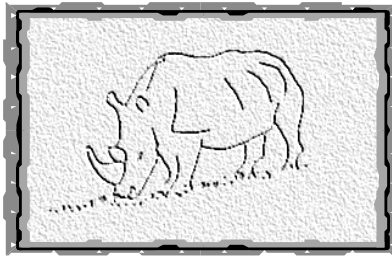
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Seeds of Freedom
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Excerpt from Chapter 6 of
Is For Good Men To do Nothing By Chris
Verrill



Men In Red

Upon leaving home in the United States, bound for my volunteer mission in the Afghan refugee camps in the frontier province of Pakistan, I took a pleasure-filled detour through the national parks of Tanzania.

While traveling between Serengeti and Ngorongoro, I visited the Maasai. I can't come all the way to East Africa and not tell you about the Maasai.

Maasai are the native indigenous people of this region. They are the East African equivalent of our Native Americans except they still live off the land just as they did generations ago. It's mostly subsistence farming with a spoonful of semi-modern commercial cattle and goat ranching thrown in for good measure. Or bad measure, if you're an anthropologist or environmentalist.

If you go to Serengeti, you can't miss the Maasai. The Maasai ranchers, along with their cattle, dot the roadside. Although they're not allowed to live in Serengeti proper, because it is a national park, they are allowed to live in Ngorongoro, because it is only designated a conservation area.

The Maasai are still living as if it is, I don't know, around 1600 perhaps; 400 years ago. An entire family lives in a hut about the size of an American bedroom. It is a grass hut. You can't stand upright in it. The walls are long sticks thatched together with the gaps filled with mud.

Most of the men standing along the side of the winding roads, tending their herds, wear bright crimson clothing. They look like walking candy canes without

the white stripes. If the cattle didn't make you spot the Maasai, their clothing sure would. Aside from being ranchers, they earn a living charging tourists exorbitant sums to take their picture.

The red signifies they are adults. Becoming an "adult" is a painful process, in my opinion. I wince just thinking about it. Before becoming an adult, young men have to wear all black and paint their faces white. The passage into adulthood is a six month stay in the wilderness with the elders to learn the ways of the Maasai.

Also, he gets circumcised.

These rights of passage are done only once every seven years, so men going through it are age 19 to 26. Can you imagine being 26 and getting circumcised? For the circumcision, aside from some acacia root, there is no anesthetic in the traditional Western sense. None. Ouch. I'd rather be lion food first.

All right, so supposing a young man, his voice an octave higher, survives that delightful ceremony. All is well and good. The next step is marriage. Maasai men can have up to ten wives. Most have four or five. What slackers.

Women however are allowed only one husband. In fact, if a man's friend comes to town, selling encyclopedia sets or Fuller Brushes or what have you, and the man isn't "using" one of his wives that night, it is perfectly acceptable to allow his traveling friend to sleep with her. That might seem fairly liberal, except the wife is not allowed to refuse.

You know, I'm respectful of other cultures, but that's plain wrong.

While in Ngorongoro I visited a Maasai village. Oh yes, I did. My guide chauffeured me up to the gates and the chief, resplendent in traditional red Maasai clothing, confidently walked out to negotiate a price with me. I paid him \$15 and he granted me entry and permission to take pictures and look around.

I felt like I invaded their privacy. Fifteen dollars is a tidy bundle of money to the Maasai, so they got more than a fair deal, but I felt extremely uncomfortable. I speed-walked through the one acre village in about three minutes. Trying to be gracious and humble—and to learn—but trying to get out, too. There are 94 Maasai who live here and the chief followed me for the entire three minutes.

Once we got near the crack in the fence from which I entered, and the chief realized I intended to vamoose, he insisted I enter one of the grass huts. This was someone's home. I didn't want to do this. But I wanted to learn. Moreover, the chief insisted. So, like an unwelcome guest, he led me in. As I said, the entire structure, was about 8' x 8'. I crouched because the very low ceiling prevented me from standing upright. He pointed to three "bedrooms" and these areas were smaller than an actual twin size bed. He pointed to a "kitchen" and it was three football sized scorched stones strategically placed in the center. All the while I am there, a woman stood silently in the doorway with three small crying children.

The hut, with no windows, let in virtually no light. It was almost completely dark. The chief insisted I take his picture. Well, he didn't really insist. He politely yet persistently suggested. Obviously, he eagerly wanted to have his picture taken. Maybe he wants to be famous back in my home town of Pacifica, California. He posed in the hut near the cooking stones and I obliged. If burning a frame of film meant I got out quicker, that's okay by me.

Unfortunately, in my haste to get out, I didn't duck enough. My head cracked the roof of the entryway and a baseball size clump of dirt fell off the hut leaving a

hole above the door. I felt horrible. The chief said it was okay. I thanked him, said “asante” (Swahili for “thank you”) to the woman and the children and beat a hasty retreat out of the village.

I was there a total of three minutes. Maybe five.

Chris Verrill is the author of the international travel biography Is For Good Men To Do Nothing, now available for order at your local bookstore or online at Amazon and over 200 other online booksellers.



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Publisher

Is For Good Men To Do Nothing is published by Seeds of Freedom and Xlibris in strategic partnership with Random House.

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About the Author

Do I really need an About the Author section? I mean, weren't you subjected to me enough in the book itself? Oh, so you didn't read the book. I see. Well, in that case, the author is an amazingly brilliant, devilishly handsome multimillionaire. I am a non-profit director, e-commerce pioneer, and global humanitarian. I was born in California in 1964 and graduated from UC Davis with a great degree that has nothing to do with international volunteerism. I'm single, never married, no kids, no pets, one dying plant. How else could I take off for a year long adventure? I don't know where I live, but in my heart, I will always call Pacifica home. On the back cover, that's me in the Khurasan Refugee Camp shaking hands with the little boy. I am available for lectures, panel discussions, and children's parties.



Summary

Is For Good Men To Do Nothing

Why Did September 11 Happen?

On September 11, 2001, like everyone, the author awoke to a different world. In addition to taking up a collection at his Rotary club meeting that morning, he

What motivated the terrorists?

decided he wanted to do more. What caused this tragedy? What motivated the terrorists? These questions

sent him on a journey. Not simply a physical journey to the Middle East and beyond, but a journey of discovery.

The Western world wrung its collective hands in response to a new survivalist fear of traveling following that fateful fall morning. Suicide bombers breathed their last in the West Bank. SARS contaminated the air. War ravaged Iraq. Or war

“Americans go home,”

said a university student in India.

“And take me with you.”

liberated Iraq, depending on your perspective. In as lighthearted a way as was possible under the circumstances, the author sets

out to explore these troubled hot spots and figure out why America continues to be sometimes loved and sometimes hated. Sometimes by the very same people. “Americans go home,” said a university student in India. “And take me with you.”

Is For Good Men To Do Nothing chronicles the author’s trek from the USA to Afghanistan, and 27 countries along the way, on a quest to try and figure out why this tragedy occurred; and maybe even do something about it. Along the way he is interrogated by Israeli security, enjoys the breathtaking views of Liechtenstein, stomachs the poverty of Ethiopia, gets abducted by an angry bus driver in Greece,

Interviews former Mujahedeen fighters in Afghanistan

meets with UN officials in New York and Geneva, gets his pocket picked in Rome, says goodbye to his aging grandfather on Maui, talks politics in Kuwait, visits the

last of the white rhinos in Tanzania, crosses from Pakistan into India in a motorcade under full military escort, and finally interviews former Mujahedeen fighters in Afghanistan. All the while trying to make a small difference in the world by creating a vocational education program to aid Afghan refugees. International politics with a human touch—and a human mission.

Praise for *Is For Good Men to do Nothing*

“A balanced reflection upon the events and the aftermath of September 11th and the Iraq conflict.”

—**Mark Sykes**

“Constructively critical of the Bush administration, Verrill doesn’t just complain, he suggests solutions.”

—**Jennifer Gusman**

“A natural ability to conjure up vivid images with the written word.”

—**Eric Jackson**

“This is just a tremendous read from a human chronicler of an historic venture and adventure who happens to be a Rotarian—that is, a humanitarian in the trenches—who decided that his personal life paled in comparison to what he might do in the real world after 9-11 in America. And then he went and did it. This book is a testimonial, a monument, a recognition of the power of a single person to make a change.”

—**Steve Wright**

“Instead of taking a walk in the woods, Chris Verrill travels to the world’s hot spots. He’s the next Bill Bryson.”

—**Linda Monden**

“Witty, colorful, always entertaining. It’s *The New Yorker* magazine meets *National Geographic*.”

—**Heidi Davis**

“*Is For Good Men To Do Nothing* will awaken the spirit of travel in all those who read it.”

—**Courtland Grove**

“From April to December I had a lot of time on my hands. But I still didn’t read this book. My spider hole lighting wasn’t very good.”

—**Saddam Hussein**