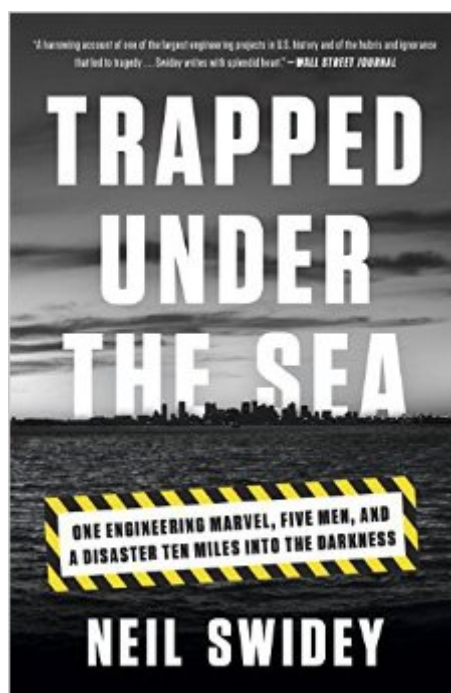


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Trapped Under The Sea: One Engineering Marvel, Five Men, And A Disaster Ten Miles Into The Darkness



Synopsis

The harrowing story of five men who were sent into a dark, airless, miles-long tunnel, hundreds of feet below the ocean, to do a nearly impossible jobâ”with deadly results. A quarter-century ago, Boston had the dirtiest harbor in America. The city had been dumping sewage into it for generations, coating the seafloor with a layer of black mayonnaise. Fisheries collapsed, wildlife fled, and locals referred to floating tampon applicators as beach whistles. In the 1990s, work began on a state-of-the-art treatment plant and a 10-mile-long tunnelâ”its endpoint stretching farther from civilization than the earthâ”s deepest ocean trenchâ”to carry waste out of the harbor. With this impressive feat of engineering, Boston was poised to show the country how to rebound from environmental ruin. But when bad decisions and clashing corporations endangered the project, a team of commercial divers was sent on a perilous mission to rescue the stymied cleanup effort. Five divers went in; not all of them came out alive. Drawing on hundreds of interviews and thousands of documents collected over five years of reporting, award-winning writer Neil Swidey takes us deep into the lives of the divers, engineers, politicians, lawyers, and investigators involved in the tragedy and its aftermath, creating a taut, action-packed narrative. The climax comes just after the hard-partying DJ Gillis and his friend Billy Juse trade assignments as they head into the tunnel, sentencing one of them to death. An intimate portrait of the wreckage left in the wake of lives lost, the bookâ”which Dennis Lehane calls "extraordinary" and compares with *The Perfect Storm*â”is also a morality tale. What is the true cost of these large-scale construction projects, as designers and builders, emboldened by new technology and pressured to address a growing populationâ”s rapacious needs, push the limits of the possible? This is a story about human riskâ”how it is calculated, discounted, and transferredâ”and the institutional failures that can lead to catastrophe. Suspenseful yet humane, *Trapped Under the Sea* reminds us that behind every bridge, tower, and tunnelâ”behind the infrastructure that makes modern life possibleâ”lies unsung bravery and extraordinary sacrifice. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

This book is so expertly researched, impressively detailed, and captivatingly written that it appealed to my logical, ethical and emotional sides. Though I knew absolutely nothing about waste treatment plants, engineering projects or big corporations going into this, I didn't have trouble following because everything was clearly explained. The prologue jumps right to the moment where all hell breaks loose in the underwater tunnel, then the narrative shifts to the Boston Harbor pollution mess, the construction of the waste treatment plant, the major players involved, and the increasingly unnerving setbacks that cropped up while finalizing the tunnel, which leads back to where the prologue left off. The final third of the book recounts the investigation, legal battles, and the struggles of the surviving divers to put the underwater tunnel nightmare behind them. This compelling read reveals the massive amount of planning, money, effort and time involved in huge "engineering marvels," and it exposes the risks that may be taken toward the end of projects where time and money pressures, as well as dangerous complacency, can lead to shortcuts and carelessness. It's heartbreaking and infuriating that completely avoidable deaths occurred during the final stage of the Boston Harbor's waste treatment plant's construction because the people in charge became negligent and rash. This book certainly changed my perception of industrial structures (not only do they cost a lot in terms of money, but also sometimes in terms of lives), and I'll definitely be more apt to stand up for my safety if I've ever asked to do something I have doubts about at work. Highly recommended for anyone interested in history, non-fiction, engineering, or sea related disasters.

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