



Hesitation Kills: A Female Marine Officer's Combat Experience in Iraq

Jane Blair

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This riveting memoir is the first book written by a female Marine about the war in Iraq and one of the only books written by a woman who has experienced combat firsthand. Deploying to Iraq in 2003, Jane Blair's aerial reconnaissance unit was assigned to travel ahead of and alongside combat units throughout the initial phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Throughout her deployment, Jane kept a journal of her and her fellow lieutenants' combat experiences, which she draws on to convey the immediacy of life in the military, not just for a woman but for all Marines.

Jane's stories highlight the drama and chaos of wartime Iraq along with the day-to-day challenges every Marine faced: from spicing up a "pasta with alfredo sauce" military ration to trying to stay clean after weeks without a shower. She also copes with a bullying superior officer while trying to connect with local civilians who have long been viewed as "the enemy." She recounts the struggles specific to women, including learning how to be respected as a Marine rather than dismissed as "the weaker sex" and learns strategies from other officers in her unit how to effectively battle the prejudices of male Marines who don't believe women belong in uniform. And always, she fights the personal loneliness of being separated from her husband, balanced with the challenge and joy of stealing a private moment with him when, by chance, his unit is nearby.

Jane describes not only her experiences as a young lieutenant and as a woman but also those of her fellow Marines, whom she lauds as the true heroes of her story. Ultimately, she learns from her commanding officer, and her fellows in arms, what it truly means to be a leader, both in the military and in life. Weaving her story together with the experiences of the ordinary people of Iraq, this book offers compelling insights into the profound impact of the war on the lives of service members and civilians alike. Jane also weaves in the narrative her impressions of the Iraqis and draws the reader in to her changed perceptions and growing understanding of Muslims and Iraqis as a whole. Her unforgettable narrative bridges the gap between those who have experienced the Iraq War firsthand and those in America who could only follow its life-altering events from a distance.

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