



Soft Spots: A Marine's Memoir of Combat and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Clint Van Winkle

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A powerful, haunting, provocative memoir of a Marine in Iraq—and his struggle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in a system trying to hide the damage done

Marine Sergeant Clint Van Winkle flew to war on Valentine's Day 2003. His battalion was among the first wave of troops that crossed into Iraq, and his first combat experience was the battle of Nasiriyah, followed by patrols throughout the country, house to house searches, and operations in the dangerous Baghdad slums.

But after two tours of duty, certain images would not leave his memory—a fragmented mental movie of shooting a little girl; of scavenging parts from a destroyed, blood-spattered tank; of obliterating several Iraqi men hidden behind an ancient wall; and of mistakenly stepping on a "soft spot," the remains of a Marine killed in combat. After his return home, Van Winkle sought help at a Veterans Administration facility, and so began a maddening journey through an indifferent system that promises to care for veterans, but in fact abandons many of them.

From riveting scenes of combat violence, to the gallows humor of soldiers fighting a war that seems to make no sense, to moments of tenderness in a civilian life ravaged by flashbacks, rage, and doubt, *Soft Spots* reveals the mind of a soldier like no other recent memoir of the war that has consumed America.

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