



The Living and the Dead: War, Friendship, and the Battles that Never End

Brian Mockenhaupt

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"The worst feeling," Sergeant Tom Whorl scribbles in a small spiral notebook, surrounded by nameless enemies in a strange and hostile landscape, "is not knowing when your last step will be. That's what takes a toll on your brain." With those simple words, a courageous man fighting a war that many would just as soon forget about captures the gut-wrenching day-to-day, life-and-death struggles and triumphs of the men of Patrol Base Dakota. Their story happens to unfold at a Marine encampment in southern Afghanistan, but it could be the story of young American soldiers in any war, trying to do the job when doing the job might mean, at any second, losing your life—or watching your best friend lose his.

In "The Living and the Dead," acclaimed journalist and Iraq War veteran Brian Mockenhaupt relates the grippingly true story of three close friends—Tom, Ian, and Jimmy—and the reality of how twenty-first-century combat plays out in the lives of those who fight it. How walking through the Afghan countryside means patrolling for cleverly hidden explosives that can instantly tear a man in half. How the families back home live in dread of the men in gray cars showing up at their front door with news too grim to imagine. How the consequences of a split-second decision can replay over and over in a soldier's mind and haunt him for the rest of his days. How those who sign up to do democracy's dirty work somehow manage to endure the unendurable.

"The Living and the Dead" is a powerfully moving and timelessly compelling account of bravery, friendship, struggle, and sacrifice in the face of unimaginable tests. It is an unforgettable tale of battles that continue to rage long after the final shot has been fired.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Mockenhaupt is a contributing editor at "Esquire" and "Reader's Digest" and is the nonfiction editor at the "Journal of Military Experience." He writes regularly for "The Atlantic" and "Outside." His work has also appeared in "The New York Times Magazine" and "Chicago" magazine. He served two tours in Iraq as an infantryman with the 10th Mountain Division. Since leaving the U.S. Army in 2005, he has written extensively on military and veteran affairs, reporting from Afghanistan and Iraq, hometowns, and hospitals.

PRAISE FOR "THE LIVING AND THE DEAD"

"Mockenhaupt brings [the battlefield] experience to life. His writing is vivid—he has a deep familiarity with military life, owing to his service in Iraq, and an excellent narrative sense—and he lets his stories tell themselves." —Barton Swaim, The Wall Street Journal

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