



When Johnny Doesn't Come Marching Home, A Mothers Story of the Price for Freedom

Rhonda Winfield

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What happens when your Marine won't be coming home with the division? What happens when you receive that all too dreaded next of kin notification? How does a mother lay to rest her child? How does a nation become deserving of such a sacrifice? This is the story of one mother who had to come to terms with the reality that her son was tragically killed, far from home, far from her, while trying to protect the freedoms of the American people and give liberty to those of another nation that had never known it before. LCPL Jason C. Redifer, age 19, was on the final patrol of his mission. He was just days from the loving fold of his family. He had spoken with his mother only two hours before the horrible incident that claimed his life. "I could tell by his voice...that he was tired and weary. Jason had been transformed during his six months there and every phone call made it more obvious. He tried to be himself and say all the "old Jason" kind of things but there was a haunt in his voice. He had emailed a photo home of himself and in his eyes there was a cold vacancy. They were not the soft, brown, teddy bear eyes that he left with. They were dark, black windows into a soul that was forever tattooed by evil. I made no pretense. I knew that Jason was not coming home to us the same person that left. I also knew that however Jason came home, we would be sure to give him everything he needed, most of which ws the love that we all had for him. "We never had the chance. Just hours after our conversation, I was met in my friveway by two U.S. Marines in dress blues." "That was when the cannonbal fired. I don't know what direction it came from but it hit me squearely in my middle, somewhere just below my breasts and above my hips. It was an enormous hole and as I struggled to grab some breath, I spoke out in a low, gutteral sound that was somewhere between a question and a command. The sound was so foreign to me and I just assumed that was because of the hole in my being." "I remember thrusting myself forward at this moment, unable to ignore the wheezing hole in myself any longer. All of my life was spining forward out of me, my wound raw and gapping and sucking wind. I throbbed with pain. I felt myself spin with dizziness. The nausea swept over me and bleackness danced around inside my head." This is my story. This is Jason's story. This is the story of a family steeped in pride for their country and those that serve to protect her. This is my rise, my fall, my life. other titles from Caisson Press include: *Fallujah, With Honor, First Battalion, Eighth Marine's Role in Operation Phantom Fury. *I Am My Brother's Keeper, Journal of a Gunny in Iraq. *An Nasiriyah, The Fight for the Bridges.

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