



To Those Who Have Borne The Battle

By Jane Horton

Two years ago on September 9, my beloved husband Chris was killed in Afghanistan.

As I mark this sad anniversary, my heart is with his brothers in arms. I never really knew what it would be like to see him come home, experience a homecoming ceremony, run into his arms and kiss his beautiful war-torn face, or feel his invisible wounds of war.

My husband never came home as a different person—I never had to maneuver my way around his new demeanor, personality, anxiety, and PTSD.

I never awoke to him crying or screaming, not knowing who he was anymore, or with haunting images of battle.

Chris never had to hold his closest friends during their last breath—he never came home to deal with that pain, hurt, confusion, disappointment, and guilt of being left on the battlefield and coming home with less than he went over with.

But you do.

Too many of you will have to spend the rest of your lives trying to wade your way through a normalcy that will always be anything but normal to a soldier who has experienced war. For too many of you, this world will never be normal to you, but rather a maze of doubt, guilt, regret, fear, and pain. As much as my heart hurts and longs for the man to whom I pledged my everything; my heart goes out to you.

My heart is for you—all of you.

I'm sorry you have been chosen to carry the burden of war, and I want you to know that I pray for you, I cry for you, and I care for you. The fallen are in a better place. You are the one that is left to wade through the mess, to try and process the images, the death and the guilt. It's not your fault.

Everyone has regrets; everyone has something they wish they could've done differently. But not everyone knows what it's like to be responsible for others' lives—especially when they really



have no control over the circumstances at hand. What has happened is done. You may have lost a battle buddy, a good friend, somebody with a beautiful wife and children at home. But you cannot carry that burden forever, so please don't let it destroy you.

My husband did not come home, and you did. We don't always know God's reasons why things happen on this earth, but I hope that you live the best life possible. You've been through hell and back, and you survived.

Thank God.

I hope that you live a prosperous and happy life, that you and your loved ones have many blessed years together and your children one day can hear your war stories, hold you with the high regard that you deserve, and that you can walk your daughters down the aisle, and teach your sons how to fish. The fallen would want nothing less either.

You can't carry the weight of the world; you only have two hands. A human being was only meant to carry so much, and I hope that one day you can be at peace with yourself. Always remembering, always honoring the dead, but living lives with honor, and protecting the home front they fought to protect overseas.

I don't know what it's like to lose one of my best friends or battle buddies. I don't know what it's like to have seen the hell that is called war. I will never pretend to know what you have gone through, but I want you to know that I can feel your pain, in the deepest depths of my soul, and I wish that you didn't have to carry it so deeply within your own.

Those who have given their lives are in a much better place than this, and you will see them again. Maybe one day we will find out that they were the lucky ones, and we are the ones that had to grieve, mourn, and carry the pain through this world.

The best way to honor the dead is not to be sad for the rest of your life, but to rejoice that such men lived, that you were able to know them and be with them in life.

Many of you witnessed their final hours of finest bravery, when you got to see what they were really made of and who they really were. Tell their stories, remember them, but don't feel guilty for being happy for life's pleasures.

There's a reason why you live—why you survived, and your time is not yet finished. The reason why men and women serve their country and are willing to give their lives is so that Americans and the world can continue to live the life that they do. Not so that their closest friends would live in a world of oppression or self-deprecation.

They fought to bring hope and freedom and liberty...

They fought for life...

And they fought for you.

To you, the veterans of the U.S. military: I love you, wish the best for you, and you are all my heroes.