



Love My Rifle More than You: Young and Female in the U.S. Army

Kayla Williams, Michael E. Staub

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A brutal and honest account of being a woman among men in the United States Army.

"A woman soldier has to toughen herself up" writes Kayla Williams in this fiercely honest account of what it's like to be part of the female 15% of today's Army. "Not just for the enemy, for battle, for death. I mean to toughen herself to spend months awash in a sea of nervy, hyped-up guys...."


By turns irreverent, vulnerable, angry, and humane, Williams describes what it's like for a young woman to be surrounded by an ocean of testosterone, respected for her skills and qualifications, but treated variously as a soldier, a sister, a mother, a bitch, and a slut.

During her five years of service—including a year of deployment to Iraq during and after the invasion—Williams and her female peers navigate both extreme physical danger and emotional minefields. As a specialist in Military Intelligence, fluent in Arabic language skills, Williams finds herself at the forefront of the troops' interaction with local people. Brave and patriotic, with a strong sense of duty to her country and her fellow soldiers, she is unafraid to level complaints and criticism against the inefficiencies and errors of the military—sketching a blunt portrait, inspired by Ayn Rand, of the U.S. Army as "a vast communist institution."

Taking us from Baghdad to Mosul to a remote mountainous outpost on the Syrian border, Williams demonstrates a keen eye for the complexity of the U.S. military's evolving and ultimately deteriorating relations with the Iraqis. Before she leaves the country, she witnesses death up close and sees soldiers cross the line in the handling of prisoners.

Through it all—the violence, boredom, and fear as well as the light-hearted moments of humor, comradere, and flirtation—Kayla Williams brings home with vivid intensity and empathy what it is like for a woman soldier to serve her country today. 8 pages of photographs.

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