

NOTES

Wars may often be started by older men; however, it is the youth that must ultimately serve and fight in them. *Forgotten* is the story of a young war vet, returning from Iraq, whose life is forever altered after an unforeseen tragedy took place during a tour of duty. This first-person short story should be performed by a male and may be entered in either Prose Interpretation or Dramatic Interpretation. Due to the mature subject matter, be 100% honest in the portrayal of this young soldier. His age and mental stability are choices to be made by the performer. The drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer when to turn the pages in his manuscript. This is an outstanding selection for the performer looking for challenging, mature, and relevant material!

Sometimes I'm standing on my corner saying my lines, "Got a dollar for a down payment on a bag of chips?" One of my favorites is, "I'm gonna be honest. I want a beer." That one works sometimes. A construction guy, who thought that was the funniest thing a bum ever said to him, bought me a six pack. A bum. I've always hated that name—bum. I'm not a bum. I'm a vet. I'm jobless, homeless, and oh yeah, I'm forgotten.



This is my sign "War Vet—Any help is appreciated." There are so many people that don't believe in the homeless anymore. They say, "I'm not giving anything to the homeless." I heard about a guy that was faking being homeless. In reality, he was really rich and drove a new Mercedes. Maybe I need to go sit on his corner sometime. It's crazy. I don't know of any man, woman or child out here who would choose to fake this life, always sleeping with one eye open to make sure that someone doesn't steal your basket of stuff. I am a true believer in one man's trash being another man's treasure. Look at the stuff I've got. I've got a pair of shoes. The only thing wrong with them is that the soles are falling off. Hey, that's like new for me. I got a bag of chips that are stale, but they still taste good. I got a radio that works! It's just old and outdated—thrown away and forgotten. But that's what we do; we throw out things just because we think they're useless. Then we forget about them. These are my treasures, the only things that I own. When I wasn't on the street, I would pass by homeless people on the corner or under the bridge. I would wonder how

the hell they got there? I mean, when you have everything, you never think about how it is that some people have nothing. So you wanna hear? You wanna know how I went from school, a job—a *life*—to this?



When I was eleven years old, I came home from school every day and saw my dad sit at the television and watch coverage on the Gulf War. He drank. That's all he did was drink, and he told me, "Son, if you want to make me proud, fight for your country. Maybe by the time you're old enough to join they'll take better care of their vets. Take better care of you than they took care of us." He was in Vietnam. He wasn't drafted, but he was one of the first to sign up. Tour after tour, metals, awards. My mother told me these stories, so that I could get to know the person he was before the war. She said Dad came back different. Couldn't sleep; cold sweats; tremors at night. Then one night, Mom woke up with Dad on top of her with a knife at her throat. He said that he knew she was a spy, and spies must die. After that night, I never saw him again.



The only thing that I knew was that I wanted to make my dad proud of me. So I signed up. I was one of the first to go to Iraq. I wish you could understand how it was over there. Never being able to sleep; rarely being able to shower. Not being able to trust people, and no place, no matter how long you're there, no place is really home. It's weird, right? I dedicated my life to a job that in the end didn't dedicate itself to me. For those of you out there who think that the military takes care of its own, you're so damn wrong. The military will take care of itself first, last and always.



See, they told me that I needed to take some time off. They said I needed to get away from the front lines and "come back to reality." That was what my Commander said to me, *back to reality*. Didn't he get it? That was the only reality I knew. The fight! How could they take that away from me? They didn't understand. After my mother took me away from my father, all I wanted to do was fight. I didn't understand the real problem. The problem was that I didn't care who or what I was fighting. In war, the targets are clear, right? But when you're over there for too long, the targets get blurry. The visions that were once very clear are now not so clear. They've become forgotten.

My Commander was right. I needed to go home. I needed to walk into