



# THE FALLEN SOLDIER

## JOCKO WILLINK

I am the fallen soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine.

Remember me.

I am the one that held the line. Sometimes I volunteered. Sometimes I went because I was told to go.

But when the nation called...I answered.

In order to serve, I left behind the family, friends, and freedom that so many take for granted. Over time, I used different weapons: a sword, a musket, a bayonet, a rifle, a machine gun. Often, I marched into battle on foot. Other times, I rode to battle on horseback or in wagons; sometimes on trains; later, in tanks or Jeeps or Humvees.

In early wars, my ships were made of wood and powered by the wind. Later, they were made of steel and powered by diesel fuel or the atom. I even took to the air and mastered the sky in planes, helicopters, and jets. The machines of war evolved and changed with the times. But remember that it was always me—the warrior—that had to fight our nation's enemies.

I fought at Lexington and Concord as our nation was born.

I crossed the Delaware on Christmas Day in 1776.

In the Civil War, I fought with my brothers—and against my brothers—at Gettysburg and Shiloh and Bull Run. I learned that we must never again divide.

In World War I, I marched on the Marne and held the line at Belleau Wood. “The war to end all wars,” they called it. I just called it “hell.”

In World War II, I fought everywhere: the beaches of Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, the hell of Guadalcanal. I stood against tyranny and kept darkness from consuming the world. In Korea, I landed at Inchon and broke out of the Chosin Reservoir. They called it “the forgotten war”—but I never forgot.

In Vietnam, I fought in the Mekong Delta, at Khe Sanh and Hamburger Hill. Some say my country wavered. But I did not waiver. Ever.

In the recent past, I have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. In Baghdad, Fallujah, and Ramadi.

In Kunar, Helmand, and Kandahar.

As technology advanced, I used night vision goggles and global positioning systems and drones and lasers and thermal optics.

But it was still me, a human being, that did the work. It was me that patrolled up the mountains or across the desert or through the streets. It was me that suffered in merciless heat and bitter cold. It was me that went out, night after night, to confront our nation's enemies and confront evil face-to-face.

It was me. Remember me. I was a warrior.

But also remember that I was not only a warrior. Remember also that I was a son, a brother, a father. I was a daughter, a sister, a mother. I was a person—like you, a real person—with hopes and dreams for the future. I wanted to have children. I wanted to see my son score a touchdown or shoot the winning basket. I wanted to walk my daughter down the aisle. I wanted to kiss my wife again. When I told her I would be with her until the end, I meant it. When I told my children I would always be there for them, I meant it.

But I gave all that away.

All of it.

On that distant battlefield, amongst the fear and the fire and the bullets. Or in the sky above enemy territory filled with flak. Or on the unforgiving sea, where we fought against the enemy and against the depths of the abyss. There, in those awful places, I held the line.

I did not waiver and I did not hesitate. I, the soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine. I stood my ground and sacrificed my life—my future, my hopes, my dreams. I sacrificed everything—for you.

This Memorial Day, remember me—the fallen warrior. And remember me not for my sake, but for yours. Remember what I sacrificed so you can truly appreciate the incredible treasures you have: Life. Liberty. The pursuit of happiness.

You have the joys of life—the joys that I gave up so that you can relish in them: a cool wind in the air...the gentle spring grass on your bare feet...the warm summer sun on your face.

Family. Friends. And freedom. Never forget where it all came from. It came from sacrifice—the supreme sacrifice.

Live a life that honors us, the fallen heroes.

Remember us. And make every day...Memorial Day.