

Purple Heart

Patricia McCormick

Reviewed by: Rachel Johnson, 42

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star you Are! Charity

www.bethestaryouare.org

18-year-old Matt Duffy is a private in the military. He has suffered traumatic brain injury from being near a rocket propelled grenade that was shot at him. When he wakes in the hospital in the "Green Zone" he cannot remember what happened and he cannot remember what simple words or phrases mean. He is honored with the Purple Heart, but he does not know why. While in the hospital he is evaluated by Megan Finnerty. Matt keeps having memories of an Iraqi kid he had befriended being killed and he thinks he did it. Although he can only remember pieces of what happened, it is determined that because of his brain injury he would not be reliable to answer questions about the event.

All Matt wants is to return to his unit. On the day he thought he would be questioned; an officer of higher rank tells him how the event will be told, and he is cleared to go back to his unit. This did not sit well with him because he felt he had done something wrong. He returns to his unit and notices that he is being avoided by Justin, who is one of his best friends and was with him on the day of the event. One day while his unit is on patrol they are attacked, two members of Matt's unit are killed. Justin is shot and while Matt is helping him, he confesses to being the one who shot the Iraqi kid. Matt also learns that the kid was working for the enemy and that is why his friend had shot him.

I appreciate this book because it highlights the work done by our Armed Forces and how much is given up for Americans. Purple Heart is a sad but realistic story. One of the saddest things about this story is the effects traumatic events can have on the mind. I had a tough time reading about the loss of young individuals due to war. I enjoyed how descriptive Patricia McCormick's writing is. She showed how soldiers deal with everyday life, what they do to pass time, how they handle their fears and the close bonds they build with each other. The scenery is truly brought to life. She touches on some grave issues like "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and how it pertains to military cover-ups, also collateral damage and how it pertains to civilian casualties. The story does include some strong language, violence, death, drinking, drugs, and the use of tobacco. I would recommend this book as a buy for mature readers ages 16+. I think readers will appreciate it as much as I did.

Recommended Titles

Search and Destroy, by Dean Hughes

Shadow on the Mountain, by Margi Preus

The Bone Feud, by Wynne McLaughlin