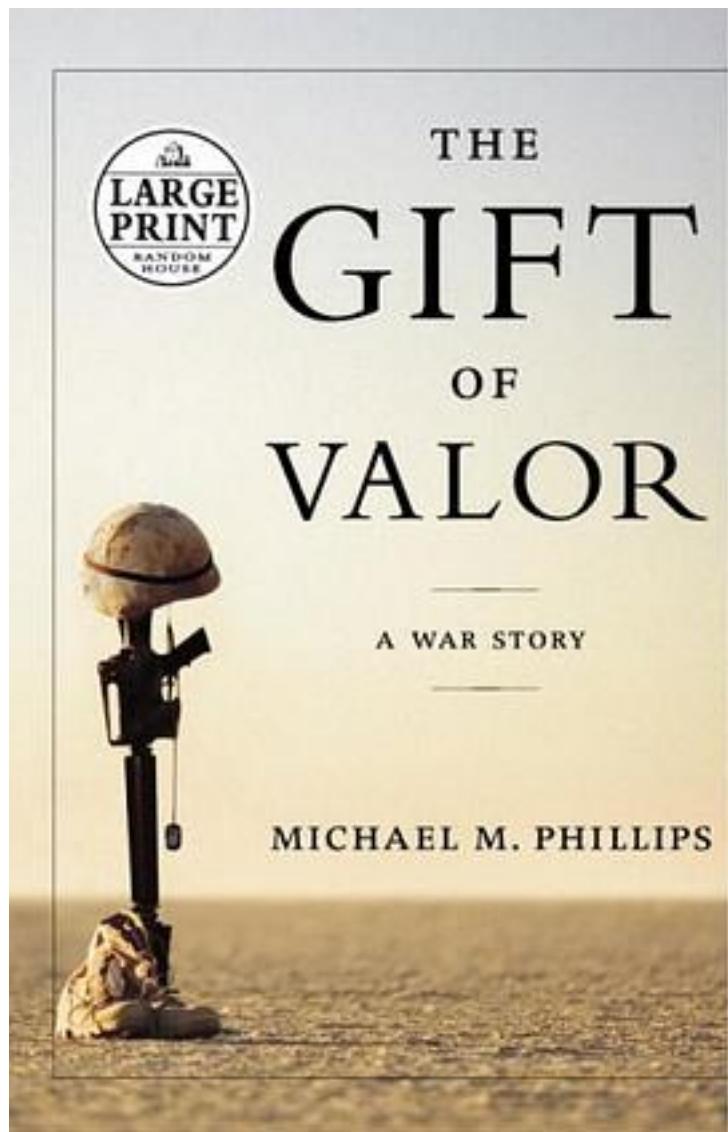


The Gift of Valor



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出版者:Bantam Dell Pub Group

出版时间:2006-5

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780767920384

Every day ordinary young Americans are fighting and dying in Iraq, with the same bravery, honor, and sense of duty that have distinguished American troops throughout history. One of these is Jason Dunham, a twenty-two-year-old Marine corporal from the one-stoplight town of Scio, New York, whose stunning story reporter Michael M. Phillips discovered while he was embedded with a Marine infantry battalion in the Iraqi desert. Corporal Dunham was on patrol near the Syrian border, on April 14, 2004, when a black-clad Iraqi leaped out of a car and grabbed him around his neck. Fighting hand-to-hand in the dirt, Dunham saw his attacker drop a grenade and made the instantaneous decision to place his own helmet over the explosive in the hope of containing the blast and protecting his men. When the smoke cleared, Dunham's helmet was in shreds, and the corporal lay face down in his own blood. The Marines beside him were seriously wounded. Dunham was subsequently nominated for the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for military valor.

Phillips' s minute-by-minute chronicle of the chaotic fighting that raged throughout the area and culminated in Dunham' s injury provides a grunt' s-eye view of war as it' s being fought today—fear, confusion, bravery, and suffering set against a brotherhood forged in combat. His account of Dunham' s eight-day journey home and of his parents' heartrending reunion with their son powerfully illustrates the cold brutality of war and the fragile humanity of those who fight it. Dunham leaves an indelible mark upon all who know his story, from the doctors and nurses who treat him, to the readers of the original Wall Street Journal article that told of his singular act of valor.

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