



War of the Bloods in My Veins: A Street Soldier's March Toward Redemption

DaShaun "Jiwe" Morris

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By turns harrowing, moving, and ultimately redemptive, this is a war story -- a war that rages out of control on the streets of the United States, claiming the lives of our loved ones and neighbors. In this memoir, complete with child soldiers, unspeakable violence, and eventual salvation, we witness the journey of an East Coast member of the notorious Bloods gang coming to terms with the lost boy he was and the transformation into the man he wants to become.

Unlike the child warriors of Mozambique and Sierra Leone, gang members and the wars they wage are the United States' homegrown nightmare. Lacking protection, support, or any alternatives, Dashaun Morris is forced into battle for the first time at age eleven, in the streets of Phoenix, when a friend's older brothers put him in a car filled with 40s and weed smoke, put a gun in his hands, then make him point it at the men on the corner and squeeze the trigger. The targets are Crips, of course, and, as Morris writes, "In the darkness of the streets, my childhood is murdered.... I am reborn -- a gangster."

In this haunting, violent memoir, Morris takes us through an American childhood turned grotesquely inside out. In the fourth grade, he loses his first friend in a drive-by shooting. By high school he is the man, a champion on the football field by day and a reputable banger on his 'hood turf by night.

Living the life of a gang banger, Morris does it all -- drug dealing, jacking, and continuing the aimless war with rival gang members -- almost opening fire one night on a close friend, a cheerleader, as she hangs out with young men he mistakes for Crips.

He eventually makes it to college on a football scholarship, but on the verge of being drafted by the NFL, Morris can't escape his gang-banging mentality and gets caught up in crimes that snatch away all future hopes. Sitting in a prison cell, he anticipates the birth of his first child while counting the friends he's buried.

War of the Bloods in My Veins is part of Morris's redemption, a cry to his brothers that gang life is mental illness. It is a rare and brutally honest look into the relentless storm of abandonment, violence, crime, death, and the endless rush toward the complete and utter self-annihilation that plagues the lives of the young "soldiers" who die every day in our streets.

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