The nightingale of Mosul  
A nurse’s journey of service, struggle, and war  
Susan Luz and Marcus Brotherton  
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The Nightingale of Mosul is a poignant memoir about a life dedicated to service and to improving the health of others, set against the backdrop of the current Iraq war. From the Peace Corps to an inner-city school to a psychiatric hospital and finally in combat, Colonel Susan Luz has kept the well-being of others as her foremost priority. She has not swayed in her dedication or in her humanity, even in the face of personal injury, duress, or the most inhospitable settings. This is an inspiring read about a remarkable woman whose story provides a stirring reminder to those of us in the health professions about the true meaning of selfless service.

The book is a page-turner that begins when Luz receives the orders for overseas combat duty in Iraq, and it details her physical and mental preparation with appropriate guidance, making a positive contribution to the education of her nieces and nephews. It was during this period that she realized her dream to become an Army nurse and joined the reserve, this time receiving her father’s blessing and instruction to “make sure you always take care of the people under you.” Steeped in work, marriage was but a distant dream until she met George Luz, an aspiring actor who supported himself selling fire extinguishers. Mr. Luz shared her connection to the armed services, as the son and namesake of a member of the original World War II paratroop unit featured in Stephen Ambrose’s Band of Brothers. The relationship’s slow start led to a deep love and respect that has stood the test of time.

The final section, titled “The Nightingale Sings,” details Luz’s life in the war zone. From combating her own and her unit’s battle stress to enduring weather so extreme that eggs literally fried on the sidewalk, Luz’s vignettes serve as continuous reminders of both the fragility of life and the indomitable strength of the human spirit. The intensity of the US military surge in Iraq was matched by the surge in casualties. Luz earned a Bronze Star for her work in Iraq. On her first Veteran’s Day after returning home, she paid tribute to the fallen at their grave sites and heard a bird sing in the clear, brilliant tones of a nightingale.

Luz summarizes her beliefs as clearly as the nightingale’s song: “My aim always is to give myself to the people I meet, to serve others in wholeheartedness. Serving others has been my life’s priority, and the blessing has been mine. The more you give, the more you get.” She has been true to this mantra and to herself. Her story serves as a shining example of what it means to serve and is a must read for those who strive to heal.