

# **INVISIBLE STORM**

A SOLDIER'S MEMOIR  
OF POLITICS AND PTSD

**JASON KANDER**



MARINER BOOKS

*Boston New York*

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FIRST EDITION

Designed by Chloe Foster

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for.

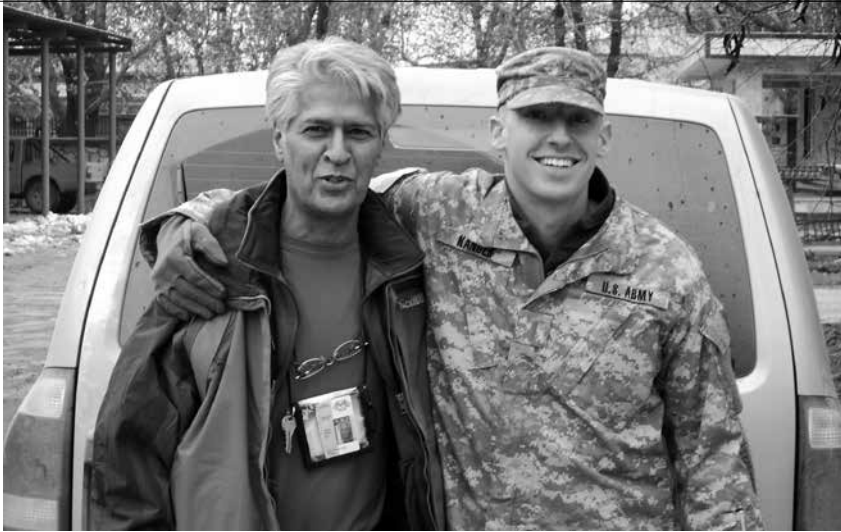
ISBN 978-0-358-65896-2

22 23 24 25 26 LSC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Diana and I fell in love in high school and got married at twenty-two. We called ourselves Team Kander because our goal was to change the world together.

*All photos are courtesy of the author unless otherwise noted.*



Each time my translator Salam and I ventured off the base to collect information about corruption or espionage, we risked walking into a trap. Salam's knowledge made me a better intelligence officer and his savvy helped keep us safe.



My job in Afghanistan sometimes called for me to wear street clothes instead of a uniform, which made me feel like a cowboy. Almost eleven years later, a clinical social worker at the VA would finally convince me that being practically alone for hours at a time in the most dangerous place on earth, with no one knowing where I was and no one backing me up as I met secretly with people who might want to kill me, counted as trauma.



While serving in the legislature, I continued to serve in the army, including three years as a platoon trainer for the Army Officer Candidate School. Though my army service was only part-time, I saw myself primarily as a soldier who happened to have other jobs too.



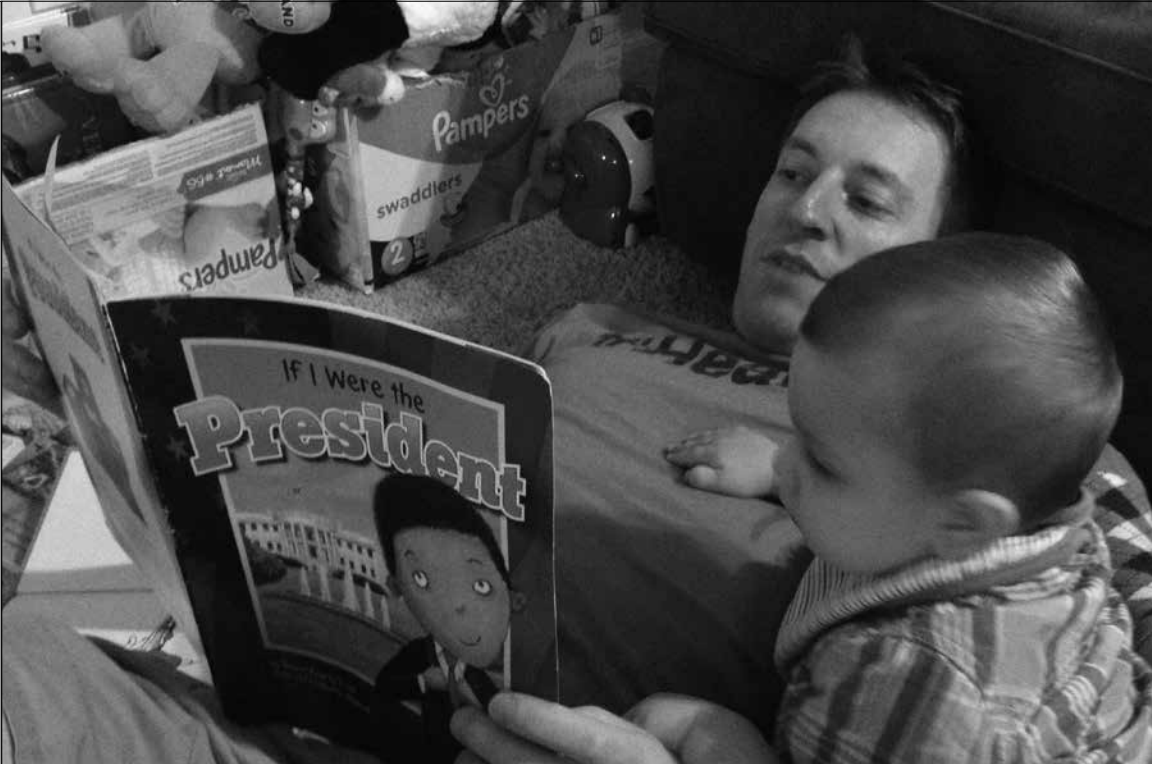
I loved the army. Unlike civilian life, military life made sense to me. After my request to return to Afghanistan was denied, I made the difficult decision not to serve beyond my commitment. Leaving the army felt like losing the only part of myself that I actually liked.



Abe Rakov ran my campaign for secretary of state in 2012, and over the decade that followed, he ran pretty much everything I did in politics. A great friend, Abe always saved me a seat facing the doors.



When election night 2012 ended in victory, I didn't feel joy. Instead, I felt relief from the sense of impending death I'd experienced all evening. Years later, in therapy at the VA, I would learn about the connection between my trauma and my need to feel in control.



After our son, True, was born, I struggled to be emotionally present with him and with Diana, a situation that fueled my sense of self-loathing. Meanwhile, my paranoia and hypervigilance were worsening, and I became convinced that my entire family was in constant danger.

## 2020 HOPEFULS OBAMA HAS MET WITH:

				
SANDERS	WARREN	BIDEN	PATRICK	BOOKER
				
LANDRIEU	GARCETTI	BUTTIGIEG	KANDER	HOLDER

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In early 2018, President Barack Obama summoned me for a private one-on-one meeting. When the press uncovered this list, a lot of major political donors began to take my potential candidacy seriously.





I grew a beard so that people would be less likely to recognize me in public. For several months, I attended weekly sessions at the VA, did my therapy homework, and gradually regained the ability to be emotionally present with Diana and True.



Diana developed secondary PTSD from living with me all those years, and she got therapy as well. We also got Talia, who wasn't a PTSD service dog but rather a dog with PTSD. Diana had to train her to relax and cuddle.



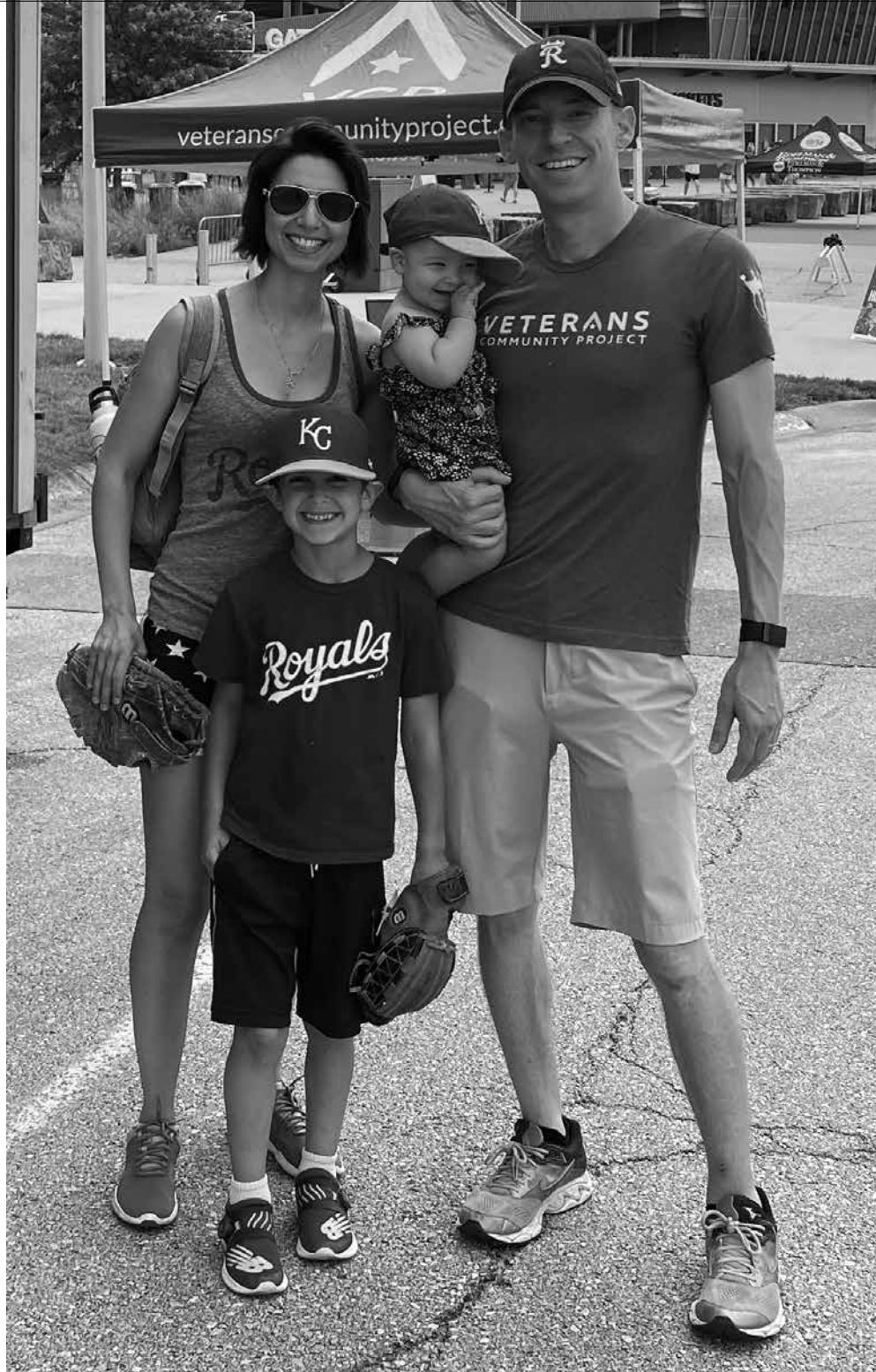
True showing *Angry Birds* to my grandfather and my dad. My therapist at the VA taught me how to “feel the feelings,” and gradually the numbness and other symptoms faded. That gave me the chance to spend meaningful time with my grandfather before he passed away a couple of months after I started getting help.



All those years of neglecting my mental health left me in constant physical pain. Now fitness is central to my mental health regimen.



My career used to be the only thing that quieted the chaos in my mind, so I put it before everything else. Today coaching True's Little League team is one of my highest priorities.



Team Kander: Diana, True, Bella, and Jason.