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## Book Review: Until Tuesday: A Wounded Warrior and the Golden Retriever Who Saved Him

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**Book Review*****Until Tuesday: A Wounded Warrior and the Golden Retriever Who Saved Him***

Montalván, Luis Carlos  
2011  
New York: Hyperion  
288 pages  
Hardcover: \$22.99  
ISBN-13: 978-1401310752

The book, *Until Tuesday*, has been described as heartwarming, inspirational, and thought provoking, yet delivers the harsh realities of how war changes those who experience it. The book illustrates how, through the use of discipline and awareness, one can work toward achieving their personal best after the pain and damaging effects of trauma. Luis Montalván, the book's author and an Iraq War veteran who earned two Bronze Stars, the Purple Heart, and the Combat Action Badge, gives a soldier's perspective of war and shares a journey of raw perseverance towards recovery from psychological and physical wounds left from war. The journey is shared with the saving grace of his service dog, Tuesday. Montalván's autobiography helps readers better understand the condition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Clinically diagnosed with PTSD, Montalván describes the classic symptoms of hypervigilance, lack of sleep, nightmares, and feeling detached and isolated. Across the country in cities and suburbs, and in the most rural communities, veterans are quietly suffering from symptoms of PTSD. These veterans are reluctant to come forward and who feel little hope for recovery. By sharing his own physical and psychological responses from combat exposure, Montalván's creates awareness among fellow veterans that may help them identify and validate their own symptoms. Through work with therapy, self-reflection, and with the help of Tuesday, Montalván's story illustrates that a better quality of life can be gained by veterans who are challenged with the condition of PTSD.

The book begins by telling of Montalván's beloved Tuesday and his unique training and development at East Coast Assistance Dogs<sup>1</sup> (ECAD) and Puppies Behind Bars. ECAD is a nonprofit organization that trains dogs for the disabled, and Puppies Behind Bars is a program that pairs wounded war veterans with service dogs. Meeting Tuesday was the beginning of Montalván's journey in gaining a newfound sense of control from the intrusive symptoms of PTSD. Tuesday's presence helped lessen the intensity of Montalván's hypervigilance, and helped with biological effects, allowing Montalván to become more comfortable in social and public settings. Montalván and Tuesday's relationship helps Montalván overcome emotional numbness, and offers him better quality of sleep—the opposite of PTSD symptoms.

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<sup>1</sup>The name was changed to Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities (ECAD). This nonprofit organization currently trains dogs at five residential centers in the New York area. For more information visit <http://ecad1.org>

Captain Montalván's story of military service and experience in combat helps the reader understand how PTSD can manifest itself from exposure to combat. A reflection of Montalván's combat service in Al-Waleed, Iraq, is shared in chapters four through seven. Deployment is described as being a time of living in constant fear of danger. His unit's mission in Al-Waleed was to prevent arms and insurgents from crossing into Iraq from Syria. It was successful and Montalván became a target for this reason. His worst fear came true when he was ambushed and physically attacked. The damage from the attack left Montalván with three cracked vertebrae and a traumatic brain injury. Upholding the military values of duty and a sense of cohesion with comrades, Montalván refused to seek medical attention beyond a MEDEVAC and several days of treatment at a Forward Surgical Team (FST). Despite excruciating pain, Montalván returned to duty in Al-Waleed four days after his attack. Alertness turned hypervigilant, and sleepless nights resulted in exhaustion. The assault would haunt Montalván for many years to follow.

In 2004, the unit returned to Colorado. The return offered Montalván rest and reflection. In Colorado he began recognizing patterns in behavior with anxiety, hypervigilance, and experienced nightmares. Montalván loved the military and was reluctant to self-report mental health issues as it might have jeopardized his career. Characteristics that embody a soldier had become a part of his DNA. Like most soldiers who leave the war zone, Montalván could not adjust to civilian life. Not only had he adapted to military culture, but the completion of the mission outweighed a sense of security and relaxation. When duty called to return to Iraq, he was conflicted but reported to duty. The second tour was much different than the first. Montalván began to question the mission and his mental and physical condition worsened. On September 11, 2007, Montalván was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army.

Chapters 8 through 12 share more of the bonding relationship between Montalván and Tuesday and how they learned to work with one another. Though meeting Tuesday was a turning point towards recovery, Montalván's journey ahead would prove challenging. Desperate for relief from nightmares, flashbacks, and anxiety, Montalván remedied with the help from alcohol. By so candidly sharing his struggles for relief from PTSD symptoms, Montalván helps by validating readers' similar physical and psychological responses left from combat and ways of coping. Chapters 13 through 15 further describe the intrusiveness of PTSD and addresses stigma associated with mental illness. Montalván's father knew his son had changed as a result of war and in one brief moment prompted by fear, demanded, "You're not going to be another broken soldier" (p. 139). His father's words minimized the struggles with the psychological wounds of war and caused Montalván to feel great pain losing his father's respect. Misunderstanding the condition of PTSD reinforces shame and guilt—preventing those in need to connect with mental health services and causes those struggling to feel alone.

Chapters 15 through 20 discuss issues of discrimination that disabled veterans with service dogs encounter. It reminds us that disabled veterans face reintegration challenges of isolation and alienation into society. The reader gains a better understanding of the stressors of returning veterans. Montalván points out that continuous quality care is critical for healing and recovery. He credits the help of a therapist, his service dog Tuesday, and the support of family and friends with his progress. It would have been helpful for health providers if Montalván would have provided his perspective with how to better reach clients.

Before a veteran can begin a regimen of health care that addresses mental health issues, the conditions first need to be identified. With a large number of veterans returning home from multiple deployments, and who have been identified as having a higher risk for mental and physical injuries, it is crucial that service providers recognize potential health risks. Many combat veteran Reservists and National Guard members are coming home to rural communities miles away from Veterans' Affairs Health Care Systems. The logistics emphasizes the need for outreach and awareness among healthcare providers. Social workers who provide service to health care systems, child and family systems, and mental health systems need to understand veterans' mental health risks and connect veterans with needed services. Not only are veterans empowered and validated by reading Montalván's book, but social workers and others can gain valuable military cultural competence that will aid them in understanding the world from which a veteran operates. Montalván challenges veterans to become an agent of change against the symptoms of PTSD. This can be accomplished through education, professional help, and by creating a network of support.

### **Reviewer's Information**

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