

SGT. MEAT

Version 44.0

by

Jonny Lewis

As told to, by:

MICHAEL MEATH

(former U.S. Army medic in Iraq)

A NOTE ON ETHNICITY OF CHARACTERS:

Mainly, I leave it to casting.

Except: Sgt. Walker is African-American, as a subtle indication of his possible life experience as it relates to the scene. Darrow is white.

Latest script available at:  
[JonnyLewis.com/scripts](http://JonnyLewis.com/scripts)

[jonnytheactor@gmail.com](mailto:jonnytheactor@gmail.com)

1-323-286-3999

(Note: I live in Moscow,  
10 hours later than PST.)

SUPER: A TRUE STORY

1 INT. U.S. ARMY DISCHARGE PROCESSING OFFICE - KUWAIT - DAY 1

SUPER: AUGUST 2004 - KUWAIT

SUPER: MEDIC SGT. MIKE MEATH HAS COMPLETED HIS TOUR OF DUTY IN IRAQ.

SGT. MIKE MEATH (31, 5'6", muscular, weary; above his name tape, a caduceus marks him as a medic) enters the Discharge Processing Office. He greets the admin officer, CAPTAIN STIMPSON (female, 40s, bored).

MEATH  
Reporting for PTSD screening,  
Ma'am.

Captain Stimpson slaps a stack of papers four inches thick on the desk, and downs the last of her coffee.

CAPTAIN STIMPSON  
Fill these out. I'm going to lunch.

Meath looks at the clock on the wall: 12:00 noon exactly.

MEATH  
What if I finish before you get  
back?

CAPTAIN STIMPSON  
(chuckles)  
Right. You can work on them tonight  
and bring them back tomorrow  
afternoon. We'll send you for  
further processing when you get  
stateside.

MEATH  
What?!

CAPTAIN STIMPSON  
Unless you answer "No" to Question  
Number 4.

MEATH  
What's Question 4?

Stimpson points to Question #4.

MEATH (CONT'D)

(reads)

"While in the field, did you ever  
fire your weapon?"

Meath laughs out loud.

MEATH (CONT'D)

I was in country for damn near a  
year.

CAPTAIN STIMPSON

Did you ever fire your weapon?

MEATH

I went on like, I dunno, *dozens* of  
missions.

CAPTAIN STIMPSON

(slightly irritated)

Did you fire your weapon, Sergeant  
Meath?

MEATH

Seriously?

Meath stares at her, incredulous. She reaches into a lower  
desk drawer, grabs her purse, sets it on the desk as a sign  
of her imminent departure, and stares back at him.

2

INT. MALL - SPORTS STORE - DAY

2

SUPER: "FOUR YEARS EARLIER: APRIL 2000, CUMBERLAND MALL,  
MARIETTA, GEORGIA."

Meath browses a rack of shirts. Across the rack, an ARMY  
RECRUITER (35, chiseled physique, full dress uniform) catches  
his eye.

RECRUITER

(like the TV commercial)

"Be all you can be."

Meath isn't sure how to respond. The recruiter grins.

RECRUITER (CONT'D)

I just love saying that.

MEATH

It's a great slogan.

RECRUITER

You don't sound like Georgia.

MEATH  
Michigan. Came here for  
chiropractic school.

RECRUITER  
You look pretty fit. Football?

MEATH  
Team captain. Had to give it up in  
college to make time to study.

RECRUITER  
Would you be interested in the  
military?

MEATH  
I'm not too old?

RECRUITER  
How old are you?

MEATH  
Twenty-seven.

RECRUITER  
Nope. You got some college debt?

MEATH  
Hah! I have to give 'em twelve  
grand right now just to get my  
degree.

RECRUITER  
Pffft! We pay up to sixty-five.

MEATH  
Still won't cover my student loans.

RECRUITER  
It'll help.

MEATH  
Yeah.

RECRUITER  
You get twenty grand just for  
signing.

MEATH  
Cool. Do you have a card?

The recruiter hands him the card he had ready the whole time.

RECRUITER  
Come see me tomorrow.

MEATH  
Sure. Thanks, man.

Meath gives a playful salute and they part.

3

EXT. FORT SILL - TRAINING GROUNDS - DAY

3

SUPER: NOVEMBER 2000 - FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA - BASIC TRAINING

A MONTAGE OF MEATH IN BASIC TRAINING:

— SOLDIERS RUNNING IN FORMATION

Boots pound the dirt in the early morning fog. A DRILL SERGEANT shouts the cadence.

— OBSTACLE COURSE

A recruit struggles to climb a rope. Another one slips in the mud, face-first, as Meath pushes past him.

— RIFLE DRILLS

Recruits stand in a straight line, rifles aimed. BANG! BANG! A few flinch. Meath is calm. The DRILL SERGEANT growls.

— LIVE-FIRE EXERCISES

Gunfire echoes. Meath and other soldiers crawl under barbed wire as EXPLOSIONS shake the ground.

— THE FINAL RUCK MARCH

Exhausted recruits trudge forward through mud, carrying heavy packs. Meath looks stronger than most.

END MONTAGE

4

EXT. - FIELD - DAY

4

SUPER: DECEMBER 2000

The sky is overcast. Ten soldiers--including Meath, and JESSUP, 27, tall and thin--dig foxholes, under the command of SGT. MAJOR TRAVERS (40, big-chested). Suddenly lightning strikes the ground with a sound like an explosion. Six soldiers are knocked down, including Meath. JACKSON, gawky, with a Southern accent, instantly pops to his feet.

It starts to rain as the other soldiers slowly get up.  
Jackson spins around, left, then right, then left.

JACKSON

God struck me, man! He *struck* me!

He starts running wildly back and forth, looking over his  
shoulder like he's afraid God is going to strike him again.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

I done wrong, and God *struck* me! We  
gotta repent! God is *watchin'*!

SGT. MAJOR TRAVERS

Somebody tackle that asshole!

The stunned soldiers don't move.

SGT. MAJOR TRAVERS (CONT'D)

Knock him down, for chrissakes!

Meath runs at Jackson, takes him down with a perfect tackle.

JESSUP

Nice tackle!

MEATH

(a touch of pride)

Strong safety in high school. Still  
got it!

SGT. MAJOR TRAVERS

Well, what are you standing around  
for? God's not going to strike  
anyone else. If He does I'll  
consider myself lucky. Get back to  
digging.

The soldiers get back to digging, now in a pouring rain.

SGT. MAJOR TRAVERS (CONT'D)

Meath! Take Jackson to the post  
hospital and get him checked out.

Meath takes the wild-eyed Jackson and leads him away.

JACKSON

(mumbling)

He struck me, Meath.

After a few steps, Jackson stops in his tracks and looks up  
at the sky in wonder.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
 (with a big smile)  
 He *struck* me...but He didn't take  
 me.

MEATH  
 (kind smile, brief  
 chuckle)  
 Yeah. Come on, Jackson.

Meath takes Jackson by the arm and they move forward again,  
 with Jackson still looking up at the sky, eyes wide.

5 INT. BARRACKS - DAY

5

Meath and Jessup sit on Meath's (lower) bunk, playing gin  
 rummy. Jessup points to the insignia on Meath's chest.

JESSUP  
 I see you're E4, so, college?

MEATH  
 (touches the insignia)  
 Yeah. Plus chiropractic school.  
 You're E3, so no college?

JESSUP  
 One more semester and I'd have a  
 highly valuable degree, in "Theatah  
 Ahts." But I ran out of money,  
 so... And you--you're gonna be a  
 medic.

MEATH  
 Yeah, it makes sense. Except I  
 don't like the smell of blood.

Jessup bursts out laughing.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
 I don't mind *seeing* it, but, that  
 iron smell, ugh!

They both chuckle. Sgt. Major Travers blusters through the  
 doorway.

SGT. MAJOR TRAVERS  
 Alright troops, I have your  
 assignments! Put your dicks back in  
 your pants and listen up!

JESSUP  
(quietly, to Meath)  
I would love to go to Germany.

MEATH  
They've got a lot of cute girls in  
Korea.

6

EXT. BARRACKS - EVENING

6

SUPER: APRIL 2001 - FORT RILEY, KANSAS

Meath and Jessup walk toward an old, shabby barracks, paint  
flaking from the siding.

JESSUP  
Ya know, I considered medic  
training--then thought, "People's  
lives at stake? Nah."

MEATH  
It's cool. You get to be a hero,  
without having to shoot people.

JESSUP  
It's the Army, Meath. Shooting  
people is part of the job  
description.

Meath checks the number stenciled beside the door.

MEATH  
B-15. That's us.

JESSUP  
Bingo.

7

INT. BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

7

Inside is worse: cracked windows, peeling paint, ceiling  
tiles sagging like wet cardboard. Meath and Jessup slide  
their duffels under a double bunk. Meath flops onto the  
bottom bunk as Jessup leans his forearm on the top bunk.

MEATH  
We don't need to go to another  
country to find cute girls.

JESSUP  
Yeah. Kansas is alright.



MEATH

When are we going to NTC?

A wet ceiling tile crashes onto Jessup's arm. He looks at it, then up at the ceiling.

JESSUP

Not soon enough.

8

EXT. - ARMY NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER - MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

SUPER: FEBRUARY 2002 - MOJAVE DESERT, ARMY NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

Humvees and trucks are lined up. Troops stand in loose formation as LT. RANDALL (tall, glasses) reads out vehicle assignments.

LT. RANDALL

Today's vehicle assignments. Let's have some fun in the desert! Jessup...you're driving Meath in "HQ-194."

Meath stares in awe at the size of the 5-ton medic truck with a Red Cross on the door.

MEATH

Awesome! We got a Monster Truck!

LT. RANDALL

(to Jessup)

Fire it up, take Sgt. Meath for a ride.

JESSUP

(happily)

Yes, Sir!

Jessup and Meath climb into the big medic truck. Jessup starts it up, shifts into gear. It lurches forward 6 feet and dies. Jessup tries to restart it, three times, but it's dead.

MEATH

Quit screwing around, Jessup.

JESSUP

I'm not. This monster truck ain't movin'.

MEATH

Shit.

9

EXT. MESS HALL - DAY

9

"GONZO" (Gonzalez, 21, energetic) and PARSONS (22, thick-bodied) sit down across from Meath and Jessup.

MEATH

Done for the day?

PARSONS

Truck crapped out.

JESSUP

Ours went six feet, then died.

GONZO

Lucky SOBs! We had to walk back four miles!

MEATH

It's not luck, it's messed up. What if this happens in wartime?

PARSONS

(trying to convince himself)

I'm sure it won't.

Parsons glances at the others in hope that his remark has reassured them. It hasn't.

10

INT. - TWO-PERSON TENT - DAY

10

Meath lies on his sleeping bag, reading a worn copy of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Jessup sits on his duffel, reading *Waiting for Godot*. Jessup pulls a cigarette pack from his pocket. Meath notices, gives Jessup a look, and Jessup puts the cigs back in his pocket.

MEATH

Hey, what kinda name is Jessup?

JESSUP

English. "Meath"?

MEATH

Irish.

JESSUP

(good Irish accent)

"Will ya be havin' another beer, Private Meat?"

MEATH  
 (as much Italian as Irish)  
 Yay, I will be having one if you  
 donna mind.

Jessup, then Meath, laugh at the terrible accent.

JESSUP  
 (Irish again)  
 That's how they'd say it in  
 Ireland: "Private Michael Meat, at  
 your service."

MEATH  
 It's Meath.

JESSUP  
 (Irish)  
 Nah, I believe it's "Meat" you are.

MEATH  
 No, it's "Meat" I am not.

11 EXT. MOTOR POOL - DAY

11

Lt. Randall addresses the lined up platoon, as he finishes  
 passing out vehicle number slips.

LT. RANDALL  
 Check your slip. Some of you have  
 new vehicles today. Find 'em, mount  
 up, and be ready to roll in five!

GONZO comes up to Meath.

GONZO  
 Hey, Meat, what vehicle did you  
 get?

MEATH  
 It's "Meath."  
 (checks his slip)  
 I'm in a "577."

Jessup's already in the driver's seat of the low, boxy,  
 armored M577 VEHICLE.

LT. RANDALL  
 Jessup's waitin' on you, Meat!

MEATH  
 Sir, it's "Meath," Sir.

But Lieutenant Randall has already moved on. Meath shakes his head, walks over to the M577 and climbs in next to Jessup.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Thank God it's not the Monster Truck!

Jessup smiles, starts it up. The convoy rolls out.

12

EXT. DESERT - LATER

12

The convoy halts.

MEATH

What's up?

JESSUP

No idea.

After a moment, the convoy rolls again. Jessup tries the starter: nothing. Retries: still nothing. He radios it in.

JESSUP (CONT'D)

(on radio)

Lieutenant Randall, we're stalled out back here. Can you hold up a second?

LT. RANDALL (O.S.)

No can do. Try a restart.

JESSUP

Already tried.

LT. RANDALL (O.S.)

Alright, we'll pick you up. Sit tight.

Randall's vehicle pulls up.

LT. RANDALL (CONT'D)

Jessup, with me.

Jessup climbs out. Meath follows.

LT. RANDALL (CONT'D)

Not you, Meat. That's a \$200,000 vehicle--can't just leave it in the middle of nowhere. You're the TC. You stay.

Jessup looks at Meath and shrugs. Randall, HIS DRIVER, and Jessup drive off, leaving Meath alone.

13 INT./EXT. DESERT - SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY / NIGHT 13

— Meath reads "A Farewell to Arms" inside the powerless vehicle.  
— Night: Coyotes howl. Back ramp-door won't close. He climbs onto the roof, stares at a million stars.  
— Morning, he jogs a slow circle around the vehicle for exercise.  
— Another night, more coyotes. Meath relaxes and smiles into sleep.

14 EXT. DESERT - DAY 14

Meath sits on his vehicle reading Hemingway again. A lone vehicle approaches. PRIVATE OWENS (trim, friendly) gets out.

PRIVATE OWENS  
Need some help?

MEATH  
Yeah, two days ago. Now I just want a shower.

PRIVATE OWENS  
Hop in.

They roll off.

MEATH  
My L.T. finally remembered.

PRIVATE OWENS  
"L.T."? No, I was just on exercise and saw you out here not movin'.

MEATH  
(ironic)  
"No man left behind."

15 INT. BARRACKS - DAY 15

Meath enters. PARSONS and GONZO approach him.

PARSONS  
Meat, where the hell were you?  
We've been bustin' our asses day and night.

GONZO  
He went AWOL.  
(to Meath)  
Good thing you came back, Meat.

MEAT  
 Vehicle broke down.  
 (relishing it)  
 I slept for two days. Just bad  
 luck.

GONZO  
 You got the best bad luck I ever  
 seen.

Meath shrugs, smiles.

16 INT. - MECHANIC'S GARAGE - DAY

16

Meat enters the mechanic's garage, spots "the Monster Truck."  
 The CIVILIAN MECHANIC (50, burly, bearded) is just stepping  
 into the driver's seat.

MEATH  
 How's it coming?

CIVILIAN MECHANIC  
 She's all yours. Fixed for now, but  
 I wouldn't trust her in battle.

The mechanic starts the truck, and the headlights start  
 flashing and sputtering.

CIVILIAN MECHANIC (CONT'D)  
 You might wanna come back tomorrow.

MEATH  
 Nah, you just keep it right here. I  
 do not want this thing following me  
 back to Kansas.

CIVILIAN MECHANIC  
 Sorry, but sooner or later, it's  
 gonna.

17 EXT. MESS HALL - DAY

17

SUPER: MARCH 2002 - BACK AT FT. RILEY

Meath and Jessup are sitting across from Gonzo and Parsons,  
 having just finished their meal. Jessup lights up a  
 cigarette. A small group of soldiers is passing by--sunburned  
 and unshaven. They are RETURNEES from the United Nations  
 Protection Force in Bosnia.

MEATH

Jessup, look at those guys. They look tough.

JESSUP

Right, 'cause we're not.

MEATH

I didn't mean that.

JESSUP

(chuckling)

I did.

(now serious)

Those guys are what you call "battle-hardened."

PARSONS

Gonzo looks like that on any given Sunday morning.

Gonzo laughs and tries to smack Parsons in the face, but Parsons dodges it.

MEATH

I want that look. I wanna have been somewhere, done somethin'.

Meath spots a particularly grizzled, tired, unshaven RETURNEE.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Hey! Hey, Sarge!

RETURNEE stops, looks at Meath.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Sergeant, hey, where're you guys back from?

RETURNEE

Bosnia.

MEATH

My buddy says you guys are "battle-hardened."

RETURNEE

(grins)

Yeah.

The Returnee turns to walk away.

MEATH  
(urgently)  
Sergeant, your vehicles...

The Returnee turns to face Meath.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
Our vehicles here, they're for  
shit. Always breakin' down. And I'm  
just worried--concerned--that our  
vehicles, if we go overseas--

RETURNEE  
They gave us brand new vehicles in  
Bosnia. Top notch. Now if you'll  
excuse me, I gotta go take a shit.

Returnee walks away.

MEATH  
(to Jessup)  
Cool! Brand new vehicles!

Jessup exhales smoke from his cigarette.

JESSUP  
That's a relief.

MEATH  
(musing)  
"Battle hardened." Yeah.

18 INT. BARRACKS - EVENING

18

Jessup is on his bunk reading a MAXIM magazine. Gonzo and some other soldiers are getting dressed in civilian clothes. A CD player is blasting Warren Zevon: "I'll Sleep When I'm Dead." Jessup nods in time with the music. Gonzo sings along.

GONZO  
"Saturday night I like to raise a  
little harm.  
I'll sleep when I'm dead, hey!"

Meath enters.

GONZO (CONT'D)  
Hey, Meat! We're goin' to the city  
to pick up some girls. You in?

MEATH  
Nah, I'm good.



GONZO

Funeral detail tomorrow. No P.T.

MEATH

No P.T., but I'm still gonna knock out my two miles. Look, be smart, alright? Some of those girls are just lookin' to get married.

GONZO

Then I can get family housing--away from these moldy showers and backed-up toilets.

JESSUP

Solid reason to tie the knot.

GONZO

Well, she's gotta be pretty.

JESSUP

Of course.

MEATH

Have fun!

GONZO

We will!

MEATH

Stay outa the strip clubs!

Gonzo is already out the door. The song ends and the CD player stops. Meath shakes his head, pulls his Bible from a box under the bed, and drops onto his bunk.

19

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

19

Meath sleeps. His phone vibrates on the floor. Meath groans, rolls over, and picks it up.

MEATH

What? No, I'm not driving all the way out there to pick up your drunk asses. Take a cab.

(beat)

All of it? You just got paid! None of you has any money left?

(beat, sighs)

Alright, alright.

He hangs up and sits for a moment on the edge of the bed, then reaches for his clothes to get dressed.

20

EXT. CEMETERY PARKING AREA - EARLY MORNING

20

A white military van jerks to a stop. SERGEANT MAJOR MANELLI (42, barrel-chested, blustery) steps out from the front passenger seat. He leans against the van door, takes a breath, then exhales slowly. The side door slides open and seven HUNGOVER SOLDIERS emerge. Gonzo jumps out and stumbles forward quickly, proud of not falling, then slows, stops, and frowns. The other six riflemen follow, sluggish and unsteady, shirts untucked, some dragging their ceremonial rifles behind them. Gonzo turns and rushes back to the van. Meath, still seated inside with PRIVATE WILKINS (21, earnest), grabs Gonzo's rifle from the floor and hands it to him. Gonzo takes it, turns, and nearly collides with another soldier who comes back to retrieve his cap. Meath and Wilkins step out and start picking up litter. The riflemen gather in a loose line. Manelli straightens himself up.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI

(irritated)

Thirty minutes, gentlemen. Just stay upright, for thirty minutes.

As if in response, GONZO vomits. Manelli exhales sharply. Meath and Wilkins are picking up litter, putting it in trash bags.

WILKINS

I don't see why we can't shoot. I stayed sober last night.

MEATH

So did I. But we're short. Six tall soldiers and one "mini"--it looks jagged.

WILKINS

Not fair.

21

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

21

A modest group of MOURNERS stands beneath a flag at half-mast. The casket rests near a folding podium. FOUR SOLDIERS are now slumped behind a massive "rich family monument," just tall enough to mostly hide them from the mourners. GONZO groans, leans over--and vomits on PRIVATE HARRISON's boots. HARRISON, passed out, doesn't react. A few yards away, Meath and Wilkins lean against the van. Sgt. Major Manelli surveys the mess. Only three riflemen are still standing.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI

Jesus. Meath! Wilkins! Go grab rifles from those bums.

Meath and Wilkins share a look, then smile and head over toward their slumped comrades.

22 EXT. CEMETERY - A MOMENT LATER

22

The line has five soldiers now for the "21-gun salute," including Meath and Wilkins. All heads are at the same height.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI  
Ready... Aim...

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL Meath and Wilkins are standing on a wide flat gravestone to raise their height.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)  
Fire!

Three sharp reports echo: BANG! BANG! BANG! Meath and Wilkins discreetly shared a satisfied smile.

23 EXT. MILITARY BASE - COMPANY FORMATION AREA - MORNING

23

SUPER: SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 - 0900 HOURS

About 40 soldiers stand at rigid attention in three sharp rows. A BRIEFING OFFICER steps forward, voice intense.

BRIEFING OFFICER  
At 0846 this morning, a commercial airliner struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. A second plane hit the South Tower shortly after. This is not an accident. The United States is under attack. We don't have all the details yet, but this is real. Get your gear together to be ready for possible deployment within two hours.

The soldiers exchange looks: this is serious.

24 EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

24

SUPER: MARCH 2002

Meath is giving a chiropractic adjustment to Parsons. Sgt. Major Manelli struts out from the rear of the barracks.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI  
Which one of you jerk-off's is  
shirking his latrine duty?! They're  
a shit swamp!

WILKINS  
That would be Smith, Sir, but he's  
at the aid station, sick.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI  
(glaring)  
Fine! Then you other jerk-offs are  
shirking your duty to fill-in for  
Smith!

Three soldiers close to the sergeant quickly scramble toward  
the latrines to clean them.

JESSUP  
That reminds me, you've got  
Sergeant school coming up.

MEATH  
Next week.

25

INT. SERGEANT SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

25

SUPER: APRIL 2002, SERGEANT SCHOOL, CAMP ASHLAND, NEBRASKA

Meath enters to find SGT. KELLER (trim female, 40, thin hard  
face) behind a desk. SGT. PRICE (rosy-cheeked male, 30)  
stands next to her desk, and a half step behind.

MEATH  
You wanted to see me, Ma'am?

SGT. KELLER  
(sharply)  
Specialist Meath, you're a pussy.

Meath is taken aback, but tries not to show it.

SGT. PRICE  
(low)  
Too soft-spoken.

SGT. KELLER  
If you're gonna be a sergeant, you  
can't sound like you're asking  
permission.

She snaps her fingers. Sgt. Price steps forward and hands  
Meath a sheet of paper.

SGT. KELLER (CONT'D)  
Voice Exercise #1. Twenty minutes a  
day, fifteen days.

Meath starts to read it.

MEATH  
Yelling at a--

SGT. KELLER  
(barking)  
*Disss-missed!*

Meath quickly salutes and exits.

26

EXT. TRAINING FIELD - DAY

26

Meath stands with his back to a barracks building, unfolds a  
piece of paper. He reads aloud, somewhat haltingly.

MEATH  
This exercise will bolster your  
confidence and enhance your  
leadership skills. Do it twenty  
minutes each day, for fifteen days.

He looks up and addresses himself to someone off-screen--  
checking the paper in between sentences.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
(loud, but unconvincing)  
You are a disgrace to this unit!

Not good enough. Now, with more emotion:

MEATH (CONT'D)  
Stand at attention when I'm talking  
to you!

He lowers the page slightly. Then he straightens, deepens his  
voice, and barks with more force.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
WIPE that look off your face!

The camera shifts--revealing he's yelling at a large TREE.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
Are you deaf, dumb, or just slow?!  
I didn't ask for excuses--I gave an  
order!

On a roll now, this next order improvised, with full power.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
MOVE IT, LARD-ASS!

A squirrel scrambles away. Meath stares at the tree, all pumped up, looking like he has just won a fight. A satisfied smile crosses his face. A PASSING LIEUTENANT gives Meath a thumbs-up.

PASSING LIEUTENANT  
(serious)  
Well done.

Meath beams proudly.

27

INT. SERGEANT SCHOOL - BOARD ROOM - DAY

27

SUPER: FOUR WEEKS LATER

Meath stands at attention in front of a long table. FOUR NCOs sit behind it, including Sgt. Keller and Sgt. Price. On the wall is a banner of the 1st Infantry Division (a.k.a. "The Big Red One") with a big red "1" in an olive green shield on a black background.

SGT. KELLER  
Specialist Meath--what's your first General Order?

MEATH  
Ma'am, my first General Order is: I will guard everything within the limits of my post and quit my post only when properly relieved, Ma'am!

SGT. KELLER  
What is the motto of the 1st Infantry Division?

MEATH  
"No Mission Too Difficult, No Sacrifice Too Great. Duty First," Ma'am!

A beat.

SGT. PRICE  
Specialist Meath, sing the song of the First Infantry Division.

Meath begins to sing--enthusiastically, and very much off-key. The sound grates on everyone's ears.

MEATH

Toast of the Army, Favorite Son!  
Hail to the brave Big Red One!  
Always the first to thirst for a  
fight.  
No foe shall challenge our right to  
victory.

SGT. KELLER

Enough!

MEATH

I know the whole song.

SGT. KELLER

I'm sure you do. But please don't  
sing it.

SGT. PRICE

(softly)

Ever again.

SGT. KELLER

Congratulations, Sergeant Meath!  
Disss-missed!

Meath smiles, so happy he barely registers the comments on  
his singing.

28

INT. AID STATION - DAY

28

SUPER: MAY 2002 - BACK AT FT. RILEY, KANSAS

A stripped-down clinic: cots, IV stands, boxes of bandages  
and medicine on the shelves. Meath stands by the desk. Jessup  
works at a computer. Three other soldiers stand more or less  
at attention. BLACKBURN (22, bad attitude) slouches against a  
wall, arms folded.

MEATH

I'm gonna work on some procedures.  
Blackburn, I need you to log in  
each soldier who comes in.

BLACKBURN

Nah, I ain't gonna do that.

Meath raises an eyebrow.

BLACKBURN (CONT'D)

You ain't gonna do nothing anyways,  
Meat.

A beat. Meath's eyes harden.

MEATH

Step outside, Specialist.

Blackburn steps outside and leans lazily against the far wall. Meath closes the door hard--not quite a slam, but sharp.

29 HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

29

MEATH

Don't tell me you're not gonna do it! You E-4 mafia guys are a bunch of lazy-ass pieces of shit! Lemme tell you, I ain't no pushover anymore, and when I say you are gonna do something, you ARE gonna do it, and you are gonna do it NOW! Do you understand me, you E-4 piece of shit?!

30 INT. AID STATION - CONTINUOUS

30

The soldiers freeze. Meath's voice blasts through the door, every word clear, relentless. Soldiers exchange uneasy looks. After a minute, small movements--shifting chairs, adjusting papers--but still tuned to the tirade. Halfway through, Jessup eases open the window shutter on the door, takes a peek.

31 INT. - HALLWAY - JESSUP'S POV

31

Blackburn is pressed against the far wall, posture rigid, face red, clearly shaken.

JESSUP

(in a low voice)

Whoa.

Jessup lets the shutter swing shut, glances at the clock on the wall, lights up a cigarette. The yelling rolls on. A soldier comes down the hallway toward the aid station door, sees the rant, turns back the other way. Inside the aid station, everyone is motionless. Finally, the rant stops. The door opens. Blackburn enters--serious, posture straight. He picks up a clipboard, posts himself by the door, pen in hand, stands at attention. Meath remains in the hallway.



32 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

32

Jessup steps quietly out into the hall. Meath's face is red and he is breathing a little heavily, but calming down. Jessup closes the door.

JESSUP

Nice rant, Meat. About 25 minutes too long, though.

MEATH

(realizing)

Aw, shit. That's not good.

(deep breath, exhales)

That's not me.

33 EXT. RIFLE RANGE - DAY

33

SUPER: OCTOBER 2002

A row of SOLDIERS kneel and fire downrange. RANGE OFFICERS shout half-heartedly. MEATH and JESSUP sit behind the line on worn bleachers, bored, earplugs in but hanging loose.

MEATH

Thought we'd be over there by now.  
It's been more than a year since 9/11.

JESSUP

Afghanistan?

MEATH

Duh.

JESSUP

Only 10th Mountain and Airborne went.

MEATH

I told the recruiter I wanted Airborne. Or Special Forces.

JESSUP

But you're not, are ya?

MEATH

There was a paperwork issue. He said I could switch after Basic.

JESSUP

But ya didn't, did ya?

MEATH  
Yeah, well... he, uh...

JESSUP  
Lied?

MEATH  
That's not the official Army term  
for it, but, yeah.

JESSUP  
Cheer up. Maybe they'll send us to  
Iraq to find those weapons of mass  
destruction.

MEATH  
That'd be cool.

A shell casing rolls to a stop by Meath's boot. He picks it  
up like it's a good luck charm.

34

EXT. PARADE FIELD - DAY

34

SUPER: JULY 2003

Soldiers stand in formation under a gray sky. The COMMANDER  
(50, square jaw, tanned face) steps forward, his voice  
booming.

COMMANDER  
Men--we have been called to war!  
This is a two-way range. Not  
everyone will come back. Our  
country needs us, and God will  
protect us!

Silence for four seconds. Then one soldier pounds his chest,  
and in an instant it spreads like wildfire. The formation  
erupts--CHEERS, HOWLS, CHEST-POUNDING. Meath joins in. Jessup  
pounds his chest, but slowly, without enthusiasm. The  
Commander smiles proudly.

JESSUP  
(to Meath)  
Which is it?

MEATH  
What?!

JESSUP  
I'm not coming back, or God will  
protect me?

Meath can't hear the question, shrugs it off, hoots, and goes back to pounding his chest. Jessup's hands fall to his side, as he stares straight ahead.

35

EXT. DESERT STAGING AREA - MORNING

35

SUPER: AUGUST 2003 - KANSAS GRASSLAND

A stretch of prairie with sparse grass that passes for a desert. A group of forty SOLDIERS stand in front of the trucks that delivered them. Most carry map cases and canteens; a few already have compasses out. Sgt. Major Manelli paces in front of them.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI

Desert navigation. This is not an actual desert, but it is close enough.

He gestures to a folding table where a stack of sealed coordinate cards sits, next to a pile of topographic maps, protractors, and pace-count beads. He picks up a laminated punch card and a metal orienteering punch on a lanyard.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)

At your destination, you will find a stake in the ground with one of these attached. Use it to punch your card. Each punch has a different shape.

He presses the punch into a box on the card. A star-shaped hole appears.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)

That's your proof you made it. No punch, no credit.

A MEDIC TEAM idles nearby with a 4x4 UTILITY VEHICLE with a canvas roof and coolers of water.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)

It's already ninety-seven degrees. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate.

He steps aside and begins calling names.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)

Davis... Meath... Johnson...

Meath scoots to the table, grabs his coordinate card, a topo map, a compass, and his blank punch card.

He peeks at the coordinates, orients the map quickly against the sun, and enthusiastically strides off into the desert.

36 EXT. DESERT - DAY

36

Meath trudges over a rise, compass in hand. He looks at it, then at the map. He turns the map sideways, then upside down, then right side up again.

MEATH

Fuckin' Jessup would know which way to go.

He looks for the sun, but it's straight overhead--no help. He picks a direction at random and walks.

37 EXT. DESERT - LATER

37

Something catches Meath's eye near a rock in the sand. A TARANTULA emerges. Meath crouches, and the tarantula rears up on its hind legs, fangs bared. Meath yelps, stumbles back, jumps up, and runs off in a new direction.

38 EXT. DESERT STAGING AREA - AFTERNOON

38

Thirty-two SOLDIERS sit or lie down in rows, next to or on their gear. Meath arrives with a smile to rejoin them. Three SOLDIERS carry a SEMICONSCIOUS SOLDIER toward the 4x4 - one at the feet, two at the arms.

LIEUTENANT

(not yelling, but loud)  
We've been waiting on you, Meat.

MEATH

Oh, yeah, I had a little run-in with a tarantula. Then I realize, "Hey, I've got an M-16."

The expected laughs don't come. Then he notices the man being carried away.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Heat stroke. Yeah, gotta watch out for that.

LIEUTENANT

He's number seven, Meat. All thanks to you.

Several soldiers shoot Meath dirty looks as they get to their feet, but he doesn't notice.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

Mount up!

MEATH

(to Jessup)

I *thought* there were more of us  
when we started.

Jessup rolls his eyes, but Meath doesn't notice.

39

EXT. MILITARY BASE - DAWN

39

SUPER: SEPTEMBER 2003 - FT. RILEY

Fog clings to the ground as soldiers sit silently in formation. Each has two duffle bags, a rucksack, and a rifle; some have machine guns or grenade launchers. Some of the soldiers have WIVES AND CHILDREN waiting with them. A SIX-YEAR-OLD GIRL in a pink sunhat plays with her father-soldier's M-16. A white charter bus idles nearby. Jessup smokes a cigarette. Meath gives a chiropractic neck adjustment to a SOLDIER WITH A STIFF NECK.

STIFF NECK

Awesome. Thanks.

Meath gives the soldier a casual thumbs up and the soldier walks away.

JESSUP

Well, this is it.

MEATH

(eager)

Instructor from medic training went  
with the invasion in March--got his  
Combat Medic Badge, *plus* a Bronze  
Star *with Valor*.

JESSUP

You know "with valor" is shorthand  
for "almost got killed."

MEATH

But didn't.

Behind Meath, PRIVATE DARROW (24, red hair, pimple-faced)  
mutters:

DARROW

About time we got some revenge for  
9/11.

Sgt. Major Manelli steps forward in front of the formation.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI

First platoon--board the buses!

The soldiers stand up and head solemnly to the buses. Meath  
adjusts his load, falls in beside Jessup. They climb aboard.

40

EXT. KANSAS CITY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - TARMAC - DAY

40

SUPER: KANSAS CITY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

A couple hundred soldiers wait behind a low metal cordon in  
front of a WORLD AIRWAYS DC-10. Mobile stairs haven't been  
rolled up yet. Jessup faces camera. Meath stands opposite  
him, his back to the camera.

JESSUP

I see you got your smallpox  
vaccination.

MEATH

Yeah. The nurse says, "You might  
get a sore arm, maybe a little rash  
or fever." I thought she meant a  
rash on my *arm*.

A crew rolls the stairs up to the plane. Sergeant Major  
Manelli unlatches the cordon.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI

Let's go! Move it!

Meath turns toward the stairs.

JESSUP

(chuckling)

You look like a leper.

We see Meath's face--half covered in pustules. They walk  
toward the plane.

41

EXT./INT. WORLD AIRWAYS DC-10 - CONTINUOUS

41

The soldiers climb the rickety stairs and enter the aging  
aircraft. Two hundred soldiers fight for space, weighed down  
with duffel bags, rucks, and weapons.

42

INT. WORLD AIRWAYS DC-10 - DAY

42

Three seats. A soldier sits in the window seat, with the other two seats empty. Private Jackson sets his helmet on the aisle seat and turns to put gear in the overhead bin. Private Darrow flips the helmet into the aisle and unloads all his gear into the middle seat as he drops into the aisle seat.

DARROW

Hah!

JACKSON

Darrow, you jerk.

Darrow just grins at Jackson, then digs a protein bar out of his rucksack and chews it, looking out the window. Meath settles into a window seat, Jessup takes the middle, and a third soldier takes the aisle seat.

MEATH

We are flying World Airways, why?

JESSUP

Air Force planes are more for  
equipment and supply.

MEATH

I'm gonna watch a movie.

A FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT stands in the front of the cabin with an indulgent grin.

JESSUP

What a cutie. You should say "Hi."

Meath shoots him a look.

JESSUP (CONT'D)

"My name is Mike. Do you date  
lepers?"

MEATH

Maybe she does, you don't know.  
Maybe she has a kind heart.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome  
aboard this charter flight. For the  
safety of all passengers, federal  
regulations strictly prohibit any  
weapons on board, including  
firearms, knives, and other sharp  
objects.

GONZO  
 (holding up a grenade  
 launcher)  
 Does a grenade launcher count?

PARSONS  
 (raising a machine gun)  
 If he keeps his grenade launcher, I  
 get to keep my SAW.

GONZO  
 No, maybe she's right. Maybe we  
 should leave our weapons at home.

PARSONS  
 Somebody could get hurt.

The soldiers break into laughter. The flight attendant  
 chuckles too, then continues.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
 Any unauthorized weapons must be  
 declared and properly stowed prior  
 to takeoff. Failure to comply with  
 these regulations may result in  
 serious penalties.

GONZO  
 My mom said I could bring it, so  
 it's authorized.

PARSONS  
 "Serious penalties."

GONZO  
 Yeah--like sending us to Iraq!

More laughter.

43

INT. WORLD AIRWAYS DC-10 - MOMENTS LATER

43

The overstuffed plane groans as it hurtles down the runway--  
 heavy, sluggish.

MEATH  
 Come on... Come on...

The jet finally lifts off--just barely--clearing the end of  
 the runway by feet. Meath exhales, relaxes. Overhead monitors  
 drop down in the cabin.



ON SCREEN:

NOW SHOWING:

44           TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES (2003)           44

Rated R - Running Time: 109 min

MEATH

Cool.

("Arnold" voice)

"I'll be back."

45           INT. WORLD AIRWAYS DC-10 - NIGHT           45

Meath sleeps in the window seat. Next to him, Jessup stares out the window. The plane flies low. Oil refineries burn, towers belching fire into the black sky--controlled flames from flare stacks. Meath stirs awake, groggy. He looks forward, trying to focus. Jessup studies him.

JESSUP

Damn.

Meath turns to the window, sees the fires.

MEATH

Looks like hell.

JESSUP

No. You look like hell.

Meath glances down, sees his arms blotched with pustules. He touches his face, looks at his reflection in the window. Twice the pustules as before, and spread to his arms now.

MEATH

Shit.

JESSUP

Leper on steroids.

MEATH

Actually, steroids would reduce the swelling.

JESSUP

(yells playfully toward  
the flight attendant)

Medic! Steroids, now!

Jessup points to Meath's rucksack on the floor.

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
Oh, wait. You're a medic.

MEATH  
Rumor has it.

JESSUP  
Got any steroids in there?

MEATH  
I wish.

Meath sighs, covers his face with his hands, then shudders and removes them because it feels so creepy. With a half smile to Jessup, he shakes his head.

46

EXT. - LANDING STRIP - DAY

46

SUPER: SEPTEMBER 2003 - CAMP UDAIRI - KUWAIT

Meath's smallpox pustules now cover his whole face and also his arms. He and Jessup approach the landing area of the C-130 that has brought their vehicles. Meath is dismayed when he recognizes the "Monster Truck" in the cargo bay.

MEATH  
Oh god, it's the Monster Truck!

JESSUP  
(gestures to Meath's face)  
Suits you.

MEATH  
I'm not ridin' in that thing.

Meath spots LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG, 40, stout, marking things on a clipboard.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
Sir! Lieutenant.

Lieutenant Armstrong turns, faces Meath, and is taken aback by the sight of Meath's face.

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG  
Jeezus!

The lieutenant recovers, nods--he's seen smallpox reactions before.

MEATH

Yeah, I know. Sir, with respect, Sir, I had this vehicle stateside, and they told me it would not be here.

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG

I don't know why they told you that, Sergeant. We always bring those vehicles into the field. Troops are happy to have vehicles they're familiar with.

MEATH

I'm very familiar with it, Sir, and it's a piece of shit.

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG

You're a piece of shit, too, Sergeant, but you're here. And your lovely vehicle's here, and fuck-it-all, I'm here. Let's make the best of it, shall we?

MEATH

Yes, Sir.

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG

You won't be ridin' in it right away, though.

MEATH

Sir?

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG

Transport had a little problem getting it off the plane. Some issue with the steering. Might take a few days to fix.

Lieutenant Armstrong turns around and goes back to his business.

MEATH

(to Jessup)

Bosnia guy said they got all new vehicles.

The Lieutenant overhears, turns around.

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG

Bosnia? Oh, that was different. Clinton wanted us to look good on CNN. It was hardly a war zone.

(MORE)

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)  
Most casualties there were from  
accidents.

The Lieutenant goes back to his work, and Meath and Jessup  
walk away.

JESSUP  
Ha-ha!

MEATH  
What? There's no "ha-ha" here,  
Jessup. We're in a war zone.

JESSUP  
(chuckling)  
"You're a piece of shit too."

MEATH  
Whaddya think that makes you?

JESSUP  
Oh, I've got no illusions about it,  
Meat. Anybody halfway important,  
they didn't send 'em here. So by  
definition, if you're here, you're  
a piece of shit. Don't take it  
personal.

MEATH  
What about "Mr. Bosnia" back at  
Fort Riley?

JESSUP  
Probably just a drunk who knows how  
to take a compliment.

MEATH  
Yeah, well, when *I* look battle-  
hardened, I'm gonna *earn* it.

Meath glances at the vehicle, then turns away and looks at  
the sky, as if there might be some kind of help there.

47

EXT. CAMP UDAIRI - DAY

47

The soldiers are assembled for desert weapons training by  
Sergeant Major Manelli.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI  
Gentlemen, this is desert weapons  
training. The *real* desert weapons  
training.

Manelli motions to his AIDE, who hands him a rifle.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)  
This is an AK-47. The weapon of  
choice of our enemy.

He throws it in the sand, kicks it around, picks it up,  
throws it in the sand again, stomps in under the sand, then  
picks it up. He fires it: BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM!

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)  
And this...

Manelli hands the AK-47 to his AIDE, who gives him an M-16 in  
exchange.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)  
...is an M-16. The finest weapon  
the U.S. Army has seen fit to  
provide you with.

Manelli throws it in the sand, then picks it up. He attempts  
to fire it, but it jams.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI (CONT'D)  
Keep your weapons out of the sand,  
gentlemen.

MEATH  
We're all gonna die.

JESSUP  
That's just Manelli's way of saying  
"Keep your weapon clean."

MEATH  
Yeah. Keep it out of the sand. In a  
desert.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI  
Alright, men, line up, let's take a  
few shots, get you warmed up for  
battle.

The soldiers make a line, and begin shooting sporadically out  
into the desert. A GUN TRUCK with a bubble turret passes by  
behind them. The gunner loses control of the turret, and it  
swings loosely around, firing machine-gun rounds all up the  
line of soldiers. RATATATATATATATATATATATATATATATATATAT!  
Soldiers hit the ground. Several rounds hit right in front of  
Meath's face. The firing stops. The soldiers take a moment to  
see where the bullets came from, then get up one by one.

JESSUP  
This is going well.

MEATH  
Great! I'm gonna be killed before I  
even see the enemy!

The soldier who lost control of the machine gun has it firm  
in hand again, as he yells out:

MACHINE GUNNER  
Sorry, guys! My bad!

48

INT. - CAPTAIN'S TENT - DAY

48

CAPTAIN PERKINS (45, handsome, chiseled) is addressing Meath,  
Jessup, and Jackson.

CAPTAIN PERKINS  
Alright, men, you need to go pick  
up Private Schwartz at Intel 6 HQ.  
Here's the orders with the  
location.

Captain Perkins hands Meath the documents.

MEATH  
Um, Sir, we don't have any bullets  
yet.

CAPTAIN PERKINS  
You'll have 'em soon, Sergeant. Any  
other questions?

No one speaks. Meath looks at each as if to challenge them.

CAPTAIN PERKINS (CONT'D)  
Alright then, roll out. Report to  
me as soon as you get back.  
Dismissed.

The soldiers exit, and start to walk away. Meath lingers  
outside the tent.

JESSUP  
Meat, come on.

Meath unsticks himself, and they talk on the way to their  
Humvees.

MEATH  
You guys aren't gonna back me up?

JACKSON

On what?

MEATH

Uh, the "no bullets" thing. Aren't bullets kind of standard? A requirement for this whole "war" thing?

JESSUP

Relax, Meat.

They arrive at the Humvees.

MEATH

And these Humvees, look--they don't even have doors.

JACKSON

I think that keeps it cooler.

MEATH

I want doors. And I want bullets.

JESSUP

We're not in Iraq yet.

MEATH

Hell-lo!

(points)

It's right over there! Just a few miles.

JESSUP

If they had bullets, they'd give us bullets. It's not like they have bullets but they're not giving them to us.

JACKSON

Yeah, that would be crazy.

MEATH

*This* is crazy. I want freakin' bullets!

JESSUP

Yeah, but you don't *have* bullets. Therefore, you don't *need* bullets.

MEATH

Jessup, you are either the zennest guy I ever met, or you're just plain crazy.

Jessup grins, gets behind the wheel, and lights up a cigarette. Meath and Jackson get into the Humvee and they take off.

49

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

49

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

Meath sits on the edge of his bunk, clipping his toenails. Jessup enters and tosses a couple boxes of rifle cartridges on the bunk.

JESSUP

There's more at supply.

MEATH

(joyful)

Bullets!

Meath tosses the nail clippers, grabs the bullets, starts loading them into his rifle mags. Jessup does the same.

JESSUP

(singing to the tune "I  
Got Rhythm")

I got bullets, I got ammo;  
Got my rifle, who could ask for  
anything more?

Just then Lieutenant Armstrong bursts in and makes an announcement.

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG

Alright, listen up, everyone! We're  
going to Ramadi, gonna start this  
thing up. Some insurgents there are  
raising a ruckus, and we are gonna  
put 'em down.

A general round of cheers goes up among the soldiers.

DARROW

(excited)

When do we go, Sir?

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG

Thursday. You've got five days to  
get your shit in order, say goodbye--  
-I mean hello--to your loved ones  
and such-like.



Lieutenant Armstrong exits the barracks. There is an excited buzz of talk among the soldiers. Jessup lights up a cigarette.

MEATH

Woo-hoo! We finally get to do what we came here for!

JESSUP

Didn't I tell ya? "When we need bullets, we will have bullets."

Lieutenant Armstrong returns.

LIEUTENANT ARMSTRONG

Brass wants four soldiers from each outfit to go in early for recon. That'd be...

(looks at clipboard)

Parsons, Gonzales, Jessup, and Meath. You roll tomorrow morning, Oh Six Hundred. That is all.

Lt. Armstrong leaves. Meath accidentally tips the box of bullets, several spilling onto the floor.

MEATH

What?! Tomorrow morning?!

JESSUP

I thought you were excited: "Woo-hoo."

MEATH

Yeah, no, I am.

JESSUP

You not ready?

MEATH

Yeah, I'm ready. I'm just not "ready ready." Ya know?

JESSUP

I know. But we've got nine hours to get "ready ready."

Meath clumsily starts picking up the spilled cartridges. Jessup grabs a laptop and starts typing an email.

MEATH

Oh crap, email, yeah, I gotta email my mom.

Meath grabs his own laptop. There is a cartridge still on the floor, under the bunk.

JESSUP

Missed one.

Meath leans over to get the bullet and knocks his laptop off his lap, sending it clattering onto the floor.

MEATH

Shit!

JESSUP

Nine hours.

MEATH

(as he picks up his  
laptop)

Yeah, yeah.

50

EXT. DESERT - MIDDAY

50

SUPER: ON THE ROAD TO RAMADI

Meath prepares to fix a flat tire, as Jessup watches, smoking a cigarette. Another vehicle is stopped a hundred yards ahead, its occupants also fixing a flat tire.

MEATH

Shit! Second time!

JESSUP

Better than Gonzo and Parsons.

MEATH

Yeah, they laughed when we had our first one, now they've had three. Who the hell makes these tires?

JESSUP

I don't know, but I'm winning the bet.

MEATH

What bet?

JESSUP

After our first one, I bet Parsons they'd have more than us.

MEATH

What?

JESSUP

'Cause you're lucky, Meat. So if you're having *bad* luck, someone else has gotta have worse luck.

MEATH

You astound me, Jessup. How many extra tires do we have, anyway?

JESSUP

Enough. I think.

51

EXT. CAMP - EARLY SUNSET

51

SUPER: RAMADI - CAMP JUNCTION CITY

Vehicles come to a halt. The soldiers climb out. The base consists of concrete barriers, concertina wire, and sandbags around low prefab buildings. SERGEANT WALKER (African-American, 35, toned physique, shirtless under body armor) strides up to greet them.

THEN:

SGT. WALKER

Gentlemen, welcome to Camp Junction City!

(noticing Meath's face)

Whoa! Heckuva pox.

A MUSLIM CALL TO PRAYER begins from a loudspeaker on an unseen minaret.

MEATH

I know, I know.

(gesturing up)

What the hell is that?

SGT. WALKER

That's our quiet time.

MEATH

Quiet--?

SGT. WALKER

Call to prayer. Five times a day.

MEATH

I'm not sure I'd call it--

SGT. WALKER  
 'Cause when it plays...  
 (beat)  
 They don't shoot mortars at us.

MEATH  
 Mortars?

SGT. WALKER  
 Every day, one or two, maybe three.  
 Then they take off, 'cause they  
 know we'll catch 'em if they do  
 more. Let me show you to your  
 barracks.

Sergeant Walker leads. The soldiers follow. Lieutenant  
 Armstrong interrupts.

LT. ARMSTRONG  
 Medics! Listen up! You will be  
 staying in the former barracks of  
 Saddam's elite Republican Guard.  
 Your drivers may join you if they  
 so desire. This way.

Meath and Jessup follow Lt. Armstrong toward a large concrete  
 building with tall palm trees around it.

JESSUP  
 "Elite."

MEATH  
 Should be classy.

Prayer call continues.

52 INT. FORMER REPUBLICAN GUARD BARRACKS - NIGHT

52

Meath and Jessup enter a large cement room with debris  
 everywhere. A faded poster of Saddam hangs on the wall. One  
 wall is all large windows, every one blown out.

JESSUP  
 Looks like Detroit.

MEATH  
 (pretending offense)  
 Hey man, that's my hometown. And  
 yeah, it does.

JESSUP  
 "Elite Republican Guard."

MEATH

"Elite" for about three weeks—  
—until the 3rd Infantry wiped 'em  
out on their way to Baghdad. Which  
fell on my birthday, by the way.

JESSUP

Too bad you weren't there.

MEATH

Woulda been cool. Coulda got a  
medal, maybe.

Jessup moves over to the blown-out windows and looks out.

JESSUP

Seems open to possible intruders.

MEATH

I think they've secured the area  
pretty well.

Meath plunks his gear down next to the bunk farthest from the  
windows.

JESSUP

Do you think, maybe I could have  
that bunk?

MEATH

(sensing a little fear)  
Oh yeah, sure.

Meath drops his gear next to the bed closest to the window.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Time to take our malaria pills.

JESSUP

Weren't we supposed to take 'em in  
front of the medics?

MEATH

I *am* a medic.  
(beat)  
Not much point to it, though.

JESSUP

Meat, it's malaria.

MEATH

Odds of getting it here are about  
one in ten thousand. If that.

JESSUP

Yeah, but if you do get it...

MEATH

In Iraq it's *Plasmodium vivax*  
malaria. Doesn't kill ya.

Meath sits on the bed, grabs the pill bottle and reads the description that came with it.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Side effects include:

(pauses)

Anxiety, depression, insomnia,  
confusion--

JESSUP

I got those already.

MEATH

Nausea, headache, vomiting,  
diarrhea, nightmares or vivid  
dreams, panic attacks,  
hallucinations, psychosis, violent  
behavior, suicidal thoughts or  
actions.

JESSUP

I don't think I wanna take that  
pill.

MEATH

And "long-term neurological  
effects"--but that's a whole other  
list.

JESSUP

I'm not takin' it.

MEATH

We gotta.

Meath pops a pill and downs it with some water from his canteen. He hands Jessup the pill bottle and lays down on his bunk, puts his hands behind his head and closes his eyes. Jessup takes a pill from the bottle, then coughs to cover the noise as he flicks it off into a dirty corner of the room. He takes a sip from his canteen just for show, then lights a cigarette.

Meath is in his bed, asleep, but talking in slurred words:

MEATH  
 (in his sleep)  
 Oh m' Go[d], you sussa beautifuh  
 gir[l].

Jessup rouses Meath awake.

JESSUP  
 Meat! Wake up! I think I hear an  
 intruder!

MEATH  
 Huh?

JESSUP  
 I hear an intruder! Outside the  
 window.

Meath grabs his 9-mm pistol from beneath his pillow and  
 strides unsteadily to an open window.

MEATH  
 (confident)  
 I go[t] this. Don' worry, Dad.

JESSUP  
 Meat, you okay?

Meath peers into the dark night and carefully aims his  
 pistol. Then, instead of firing it, he shouts:

MEATH  
 Bang! Bang! Bang!

A stunned Jessup just stares at Meath, worried. Meath  
 notices, but mistakes the reason for the worry.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
 You don' think I got 'im?

Meath turns back to the window, pistol gripped with both  
 hands now. louder, "shooting" wilder with every "shot":

MEATH (CONT'D)  
 Bang bang bang bang! Bang bang  
 bang, bang bang bang, bang bang  
 bang bang bang!

Meath peers into the darkness for a long moment.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
 Tha' ough[t]a do it.

Jessup looks outside, sees no one. He grabs Meath gently by the shoulders, and guides him back to bed.

JESSUP

Yeah, that's... that's good, Meat.  
You got 'im. Back to bed now.

MEATH

Back to dreamland. There's some  
beauififuh gir[l]s here, Dad.

Jessup tucks Meath in, shakes his head.

54

INT. AID STATION - MORNING

54

Meath corners an obviously TIRED MEDIC (30-ish, deep reddish tan, glasses) slumped on a cot, his back against a wall, eyes heavy. Meath sits down next to him.

MEATH

(eager for information)  
So...where's the enemy?

The medic is not happy to have company, but he's too tired to walk away.

TIRED MEDIC

Everywhere. And nowhere.

Meath is puzzled, but interested.

TIRED MEDIC (CONT'D)

After 3rd Infantry took out the  
Republican Guard there's no Iraqi  
Army. We just fight insurgents.

MEATH

Yeah, that's what I heard, but--  
maybe this is a dumb question--what  
exactly is an insurgent?

TIRED MEDIC

Insurgents...can be guys who are  
fighting to help Saddam. Or guys  
who hate Saddam but hate us more.  
Or a teenage kid with an AK who's  
been listening to his uncles rant.

MEATH

O-kay. And our strategy?



## TIRED MEDIC

My experience here: our strategy is to sit and get shelled with mortars, in between periodic forays outside to get hit with ambushes, snipers, and IEDs. "Patrols," they call them.

Meath takes this in.

## MEATH

Well, that's...fucked up.

The other medic sighs heavily.

## MEATH (CONT'D)

What advice can you give me, medic to medic?

## TIRED MEDIC

Look, Sgt.--

(reads Meath's name tag)

Meath--I'm tired. I'm tired of living in this shit-hole, and I'm tired of putting guys in body bags. I ship home in a couple days and until then I just wanna sleep. You'll figure it out. Or not.

The medic slowly gets up and walks away. Meath stares at the leaving medic, and lets out a long slow breath.

55 EXT. LATRINE AREA - DAY

55

A dented TANKER TRUCK idles beside the row of PLYWOOD LATRINES, pump thudding as the IRAQI DRIVER feeds a HEAVY HOSE into the HOLDING TANK.

56 EXT. COMPOUND WALL - DAY

56

Darrow, Gonzo, and Parsons sit in the shade on ammo boxes, twenty yards from a row of nine battered PORTA-JOHNS with no doors. They smoke, and play cards on an overturned crate. On the crate already are three cards with photos of Iraqi "bad guys." [It's the "IRAQI MOST WANTED" PLAYING CARDS.] Darrow looks at the four cards in his hand. All have mustaches and berets, and one is wearing sunglasses. Meath walks past them and enters one of the Porta-Johns.

## GONZO

Dude, play a card already.

DARROW  
I'm tryin' to memorize this guy.

PARSONS  
They all have mustaches and berets.

DARROW  
This one has sunglasses.

PARSONS  
Yeah, that helps.

GONZO  
You're not going to find "Chemical  
Ali" here in the desert.

DARROW  
No, they caught him. I'm lookin'  
for Izzat Ibrahim.

PARSONS  
Izzat Ibrahim?

Gonzo peeks at the card.

GONZO  
I dunno. Izzat?

Gonzo and Parsons laugh.

DARROW  
We'll see who laughs when I find  
him, you fuckers.

57                   EXT. LATRINE AREA - LATER                   57

The hose is now coiled and latched back on the truck. The  
driver climbs in, eases the rig into gear, and drives off.

58                   INT. LATRINE AREA - CONTINUOUS                   58

Meath sits, staring vaguely in the direction of the card  
players. Suddenly--a WHOOSH!--then a heavy THUD just outside.  
Meath flinches. In the sand, three feet from the Porta-John,  
lies an UNEXPLODED MORTAR ROUND, half-buried in the sand.

MEATH  
Fuh!

59 EXT. COMPOUND WALL - CONTINUOUS

59

Gonzo yells out to Meath:

GONZO  
Hey, Meat, I bet that one scared  
the shit outa ya!

The card players all laugh. Meath lets out a long breath, takes a moment to process this near-death moment. He exits the shitter and stares at the mortar round.

GONZO (CONT'D)  
There's your big war story to tell  
your grandkids, Meat.  
(in a "Grandpa voice")  
Well, kids, I was sittin' in the  
shitter...

Meath ignores them, walks away slowly, shaking his head.

60 INT. BARRACKS - BEFORE DAWN

60

Soldiers are sleeping in their uniforms and boots when suddenly they hear the lieutenant screaming ON THE RADIO:

LT. ARMSTRONG  
Red-direct! Red-direct! Red-direct!  
Now! Red-direct!

The men bolt out of their beds and run to their vehicles.

61 INT. - VEHICLE - DAWN

61

Meath sits in the back of the vehicle as they cross the EUPHRATES RIVER. Shortly, the soldiers up top let loose with the 50-CALIBER MACHINE GUNS: Pota-pota-pota-pota-pota-pow! Pota-pota-pota-pota-pota-pow!

LT. ARMSTRONG  
Dismount! Dismount! Get the fuck  
out!

Meath and the other soldiers jump out of the vehicles and move forward. Parsons and Gonzo charge farthest, and suddenly Gonzo yells out from atop a low berm:

GONZO  
Medic! Medic, now! Man down! Man  
down!

Meath, adrenaline pumping, runs full-tilt toward Gonzo, clutching his medical kit with one hand and his rifle with the other.

MEATH

Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit!

Meath hears a godawful, inhuman moan coming from the other side of the berm.

MEATH (CONT'D)

(still running)

Oh my God, oh my God.

Gonzo frantically waves Meath over.

GONZO

Down there, Meat! Quick!

Meath vaults the berm and sees that the "man down" is a dying, skinny, bullet-riddled COW, mooing pathetically. Gonzo and Parsons burst out laughing.

PARSONS

Think you can save him, Meat?

GONZO

You can do it, Meat. You're a trained chiropratter.

PARSONS

Crack his back!

MEATH

You assholes.

Meath puts his medical kit back over his shoulder. There is no enemy fire--indeed, no enemy present. They all walk back to their vehicles, Meath cursing under his breath. He is about to get back into his vehicle when he spots the beautiful sunrise along the Euphrates River. He takes it in. The other soldiers pile into their vehicles. Meath is the last to climb inside, still looking at the sunrise.

62

EXT. DESERT - DAY

62

SUPER: OCTOBER 2003

A convoy screeches to a halt. The road is blocked by a burned-out car. Soldiers leap from their vehicles, taking cover behind tires and doors, scanning the ridges on the sides of the road.

Suddenly several rounds of SNIPER FIRE HIT THE DIRT near the lead vehicle. Sgt. Major Manelli pops up out of nowhere.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI

Let's charge it! This way!

Manelli charges toward the suspected direction of the sniper fire. No one follows.

JESSUP

Meat, go with him. Make sure he doesn't hurt himself.

MEATH

What? Why me?

JESSUP

'Cause you're the medic, Meat, and he might need one. Go!

Meath waves a couple other soldiers to follow him. They trot 50 yards, catching up to Manelli, who has stopped and is panting. There's no more sniper fire, and they give up and walk back to their vehicles.

MEATH

Why always me? It's not fair.

JESSUP

You shoulda checked the box on your enlistment papers that said, "Only send me to places where things are fair."

Meath glares at Jessup.

63

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

63

SUPER: NOVEMBER 2003

Sergeant Major Manelli enters, more proudly than necessary.

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI

Okay, everyone, it's "Hearts and Minds Day." Let's go, up and out there!

JESSUP

Hey, Sgt. Major, isn't "Hearts and Minds" what helped us win in Vietnam?

SGT. MAJOR MANELLI  
 Kiss my ass, Jessup. There's a big  
 box of soccer balls outside.  
 Everybody take two, then mount your  
 vehicle as per usual.

64

EXT. - VILLAGE - DAY

64

The convoy arrives. Curious kids pop out to watch. A soldier tosses out a soccer ball. Other soldiers hold up their soccer balls. Several boys run up to get one. A 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL starts to cross the road to approach them, but a 10-YEAR-OLD BOY pushes her down. Meath moves as if he is going to go help the girl.

MEATH  
 What the--

JESSUP  
 Be cool, Meath. This is Iraq.  
 Things are different here.

Meath settles back. Suddenly, the FEMALE GUNNER (25, strong, blonde) atop the vehicle in front of them jerks the 50-CALIBER MACHINE GUN aside, stands up, removes her helmet and whips around her hair. She leaps from the vehicle, strides over to the Boy, who says something defiantly in Arabic. She picks him up and holds him over her head like barbells, then throws him into a slimy ditch. The Girl sits on the ground looking at the Female Gunner in awe.

MEATH  
 Freakin' Wonder Woman! I didn't  
 know there were women here.

JESSUP  
 National Guard.

MEATH  
 Yeah?

JESSUP  
 Female MPs can be in combat now.

MEATH  
 Nice!

The Female Gunner goes and hands the soccer ball to the Girl, who is standing now, beaming. Meath gives the Gunner a thumbs-up, but she doesn't see it.

65

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

65

SUPER: DECEMBER 2003

Convoy crawling. Meath rides in the back of a Humvee, sweaty and silent. Then--

An I.E.D. BLAST under the Humvee two vehicles ahead of them. DIRT ERUPTS from under the sides.

MEATH  
(intense but calm, to  
driver)  
Go. Go now.

They pull up fast. The damaged Humvee sits tilted, right rear tire blown off. Meath jumps out and runs over to it. Inside, PRIVATE MARCUS is YELLING in pain and fear. A CALMING SOLDIER leans into the vehicle doorway with his hand on Marcus' shoulder, as an INFORMING SOLDIER turns to tell Meath what's going on.

PRIVATE MARCUS  
AAAAH! AAAAH! AAAAH! AAAAAAH!

INFORMING SOLDIER  
Marcus--he's been hit...  
(points to his own groin)

MEATH  
Shit. Okay...

Back at Meath's Humvee, Jessup takes an uncertain step in Meath's direction, but Meath waves him off, and he fires up a cigarette. Calming Soldier moves aside as Meath steps into the Humvee to treat Marcus.

66 INT. BLASTED HUMVEE - CONTINUOUS

66

Private Marcus is sprawled in the right rear seat.

PRIVATE MARCUS  
OWWWWW! OWWWWWW! OWW-OWWWWWWW!

MEATH  
Medic here. Lemme look.

PRIVATE MARCUS  
OHHHHH. OHHHHHH. OHHHHH.

MEATH  
Take a breath--slow, deep breath.  
Lemme see.

Marcus calms slightly and breathes slowly and deeply. Meath gently separates the soldier's legs. He takes scissors and cuts away the pants around the groin.

PRIVATE MARCUS  
(breathing deeply)  
It hurts, it hurts, it hurts.  
Ohhhhh.

MEATH  
I'm gonna take care of you.  
(sees the scrotum)  
Ohhhh, that's not good.

PRIVATE MARCUS  
OHHHH, NOOOO! What?!

MEATH  
The shaft is intact, that's good.

PRIVATE MARCUS  
My balls,... they hurt, they hurt,  
they hurt. Oh, my balls.

MEATH  
Yeah, they're shredded.

PRIVATE MARCUS  
OHHHHHHHHH!

MEATH  
You still got your dick. That's the  
good news.

PRIVATE MARCUS  
"Good news"?!

Meath begins to wrap the shredded scrotum in bandages.

MEATH  
I'm gonna wrap you up, and we're  
gonna get you out of here, okay?

PRIVATE MARCUS  
(calmer but still scared)  
OWWW. OWWW. OWWW.

MEATH  
Repeat after me: "My dick is okay."

PRIVATE MARCUS  
(brief pause, then weakly)  
My dick is okay.



MEATH

It's the truth. Keep sayin' it.

PRIVATE MARCUS

My dick is okay. My dick is okay.  
My dick is okay. My dick is okay.

67

INT. BARRACKS - DAY - SOON AFTER

67

Meath enters and dashes to his bunk. He opens his footlocker, rips out shirts, socks, a towel. He unzips his duffel and digs deep through spare boots and gear, tossing everything on his bunk. Meath drops to one knee and checks under the cot. Another medic, McGEORGE, built like a tackle, drinking a no-alcohol beer, notices the frantic search.

MCGEORGE

Why so frantic, Meat? Can't find your *Playboy* mag?

MEATH

No, my nut protector.

Meath stands, opens the top shelf of the wall locker, moves cold-weather gear aside. Not there.

MCGEORGE

They said wearin' those things was optional.

Another medic, RIFKIN, short, glasses, chimes in.

RIFKIN

Not made for comfort.

Meath pulls down a plastic tub, sifts through old knee pads and a cracked canteen.

MCGEORGE

I tried it. Hard to maneuver.

MEATH

Try maneuvering without your nuts, see how that goes.

Meath dumps out his laundry bag--just clothes. He crosses to the back of the room, rummages through the communal gear shelf. Just loose junk.

MCGEORGE

Whoa! What happened out there?

MEATH  
IED. Guy got his nuts shredded.

RIFKIN  
No more baby-makin' for him.

MCGEORGE  
Not a contraceptive method I wanna try.

McGeorge and Rifkin laugh, then start looking for their own nut protectors. Finally, Meath spots a drawstring sack behind his ruck, reaches inside, and pulls out his never-worn NUT PROTECTOR. He sits down on his bunk and holds it on his groin, closes his eyes.

MEATH  
(satisfied sigh)  
Ahhhhh. My new best friend.

68

EXT. - COURTYARD - EVENING

68

Meath arrives at a bombed-out building with a courtyard. There are American medics, and about TWENTY IRAQIS, ages 15 to 50. He approaches the sergeant who seems to be in charge, KOSTAS (30, glasses, serious).

MEATH  
Hey Sarge, I was ordered here to do some medic training.

KOSTAS  
Meath? Follow me.

They walk toward a group of Iraqis next to some supply boxes.

MEATH  
Aren't some of those guys a bit young to be doing medical training?

KOSTAS  
We're paying them more in a month than what they'd normally make in a year. So everybody and his brother shows up.

MEATH  
And his brother's kid, apparently.

There is a second group of men in another section of the courtyard--some even younger than the medic group--but Meath is not focused on them.

In that group, a soldier hands an M-16 to a 12-YEAR-OLD BOY. The boy holds the weapon tentatively, slips his finger toward the trigger.

KOSTAS  
We're not just training medical.

MEATH  
What else?

The rifle in the boy's hands flies wildly as he accidentally hits the trigger. BLATA-BLATA-BLATA-BLATA-BLAM! Everyone in the courtyard hits the dirt, including Meath and Kostas.

KOSTAS  
(still on the ground)  
Weapons training.

Kostas and Meath stand up, dust themselves off.

MEATH  
Could we maybe do the medical training over there, behind that wall?

KOSTAS  
Excellent idea, Meath.  
(to his group)  
Men, let's move those boxes over behind this wall. Everyone over there behind the wall.

69

EXT. DOWNTOWN STATION - DAY

69

SUPER: JANUARY 2004

Palm trees line the gate, like a hotel. Whitewashed walls, bright flags. Meath and Jessup stride up eagerly. A DOWNTOWN SOLDIER (25, casual demeanor) at the door greets them.

DOWNTOWN SOLDIER  
Welcome to the Taj Mahal. You came here voluntarily?

JESSUP  
Uh-oh.

MEATH  
Sgt. Major Manelli suggested it, but, yeah. Curious to see what Downtown Station's like.

DOWNTOWN SOLDIER  
I see. Step inside.

70 INT. DOWNTOWN STATION - CONTINUOUS

70

Inside: dim lights, peeling paint, sand on the floor, a bent fan clacking overhead.

JESSUP  
(accusingly)  
Manelli.

MEATH  
Where's the shitter?

DOWNTOWN SOLDIER  
No working plumbing. Porta-Shitter  
half block away.

JESSUP  
("this is your fault")  
Meat.

MEATH  
Half a block. It'll be fine.

JESSUP  
You said this would be a nice  
change.

MEATH  
I said a change *might be nice*.

JESSUP  
I'm gonna file to go back to Camp  
Junction City.

MEATH  
Yeah, alright. But we're here for a  
week.  
(bad British accent)  
"Let's make the best of it, shall  
we?"

71 INT. DOWNTOWN STATION - NIGHT

71

The ceiling fan clacks noisily. Meath wakes up from a light sleep.

MEATH  
(to himself)  
Shit.

He gets out of his cot, puts on his boots, and starts to walk outside to the Porta-Johns. SUDDEN SNIPER FIRE makes him dive low and scurry back into the building. He nudges Jessup.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Jessup. Jessup, wake up.

JESSUP

Huh?

MEATH

I gotta go take a deuce, but they're sniping at me.

JESSUP

Oh, okay, yeah, I gotcha, Meat.  
Hold on a sec.

Jessup grabs his M-16, aims it at the building across the street.

JESSUP (CONT'D)

Just yell when you're done and I'll cover you on the way back.

Jessup lays down a barrage of covering fire, and Meath dashes off to the Porta-John.

72 EXT. PORTA-JOHN - NIGHT

72

MEATH

(in the Porta-John, heard from outside)

Ahhhhhhh.

73 INT. DOWNTOWN STATION - AFTERNOON

73

Meath is reading his Bible. Jessup smokes and does a crossword.

JESSUP

You ready for the 2-mile PT test run on the 15th?

MEATH

No, I've just been lifting weights.  
You?

JESSUP

I can do four miles easy.

MEATH

And smoke like you do?

Jessup shrugs, grins, takes another puff.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Why do we have to keep doing PT all the time? Can't they just let us fight the damn war?

JESSUP

Like you're real busy with that. We spent the whole afternoon yesterday with binoculars pointed at the girls' college across the street.

MEATH

I don't know why, with all the clothes they got on.

JESSUP

How far can you do?

MEATH

Probably a mile.

JESSUP

You oughta get practicin', my friend.

MEATH

Here?

JESSUP

Other guys are doin' it.

MEATH

Yeah, alright. School's closed today, anyway.

Meath gets into his training clothes, leaves the room.

74

EXT. DOWNTOWN STATION - STREET - AFTERNOON

74

The street is lined with VENDORS of FRUITS AND VEGETABLES-- and PORN AND MUSIC CDS for the soldiers. Meath starts his run. After about fifty yards, in a stretch empty of people:

MEATH

(to himself)

This feels good. I can do this.

Suddenly a GRENADE EXPLODES behind him, sending dirt and shrapnel flying forward out in front of him.

MEATH (CONT'D)

SHIT!!

He darts into a protective doorway, then quickly turns back toward the compound, running faster still.

75

INT. DOWNTOWN STATION - CONTINUOUS

75

Meath enters in a fluster, plastered with dirt from the explosion.

MEATH

Thanks for the shitty advice,  
Jessup!

JESSUP

You're all dirty.

MEATH

Some fucker threw a grenade at me!

JESSUP

You were in the street?

MEATH

Yeah. You said I should practice.  
"Other guys are doin' it."

JESSUP

I meant other guys are getting in  
shape for it. Jumping rope, mostly.  
Christ, nobody's dumb enough to go  
jogging around here.

MEATH

You should be *specific*, Jessup! Be  
freaking specific in what you're  
advising.

Jessup shrugs his shoulders.

JESSUP

Maybe I'll just stop giving advice.

MEATH

Yeah, there's an idea. I'm gonna go  
clean up.

JESSUP

Wait, lemme get a picture. You can send it to your mom and dad, show 'em how heroic you are.

MEATH

(ironic)

Right.

JESSUP

No, serious, it looks good, like you just survived some badass battle or something.

MEATH

Because I *did*.

Meath calms down, then poses like a tough-guy hero. Jessup takes a polaroid. They admire it together.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Noice.

JESSUP

Truly heroic.

They break up laughing.

76

INT. - GYM - DAY

76

SUPER: FEBRUARY 2004

Meath is in the gym, lifting dumbbells. Captain Perkins walks in, ready to work out. Meath sets down the dumbbells and moves to a barbell bench.

MEATH

Hey, Captain, spot me?

CAPTAIN PERKINS

Sure. And you don't have to call me "Captain" here. "Dave" is good. Your first name is...?

MEATH

These jugheads call me "Meat." But if you could call me "Mike" that would make my day.

Perkins chuckles, goes over to spot Meath.



CAPTAIN PERKINS  
My captain's bars don't make me any  
better than you. Just a little  
luckier, maybe.

Meath starts doing bench presses, as Perkins spots him.

MEATH  
Thanks.

CAPTAIN PERKINS  
It's good to have a workout buddy.  
Keeps you goin'.

Meath does several reps.

MEATH  
Switch?

CAPTAIN PERKINS  
Sure.

Perkins does reps as Meath spots him.

MEATH  
Yeah, a buddy would help. Strangely  
enough, the oppressive boredom  
isn't quite enough of a motivator.

CAPTAIN PERKINS  
Yeah, you'd think it would be.  
You've got all damn day, there's a  
gym right here.

MEATH  
So you know you can, and you know  
you should...

CAPTAIN PERKINS  
But somehow it feels kinda  
pointless.

MEATH  
Right.

CAPTAIN PERKINS  
Whaddya say we do this twice a  
week?

MEATH  
Yeah, cool.

CAPTAIN PERKINS  
Monday, Thursday, 1600 hours.

MEATH  
You got it, Dave.

Perkins smiles. He gets up, they move to another weight setup and continue working out together.

77

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

77

Soldiers lounge on their bunks, smoking and swapping jokes, when Lt. Armstrong charges in.

LT. ARMSTRONG  
Gentlemen! I have word from some local informants there is a weapons cache out in Sector 8. Could even be WMDs. Meath, we'll be taking you and your 5-ton, and four other vehicles. Fall out, load up!

MEATH  
(to Jessup)  
Lieutenant's going to look good after this one.

JESSUP  
If it turns out.

They load into the vehicles and roll off into the desert.

78

EXT. DESERT - GRAVEYARD - DAY

78

Lieutenant Armstrong's vehicle stops at a graveyard, and the others stop behind it. They all dismount.

LT. ARMSTRONG  
My information says it's here.

SGT. WALKER  
Sir, it's just graves.

LT. ARMSTRONG  
A good place to hide weapons, Sergeant. Have the men start digging.

SGT. WALKER  
Yessir.

The soldiers are digging up graves and finding nothing. Suddenly they start taking SNIPER FIRE. Meath dives into a shallow grave. Parsons stays above.

MEATH

Get down here, man. Don't be a hero!

PARSONS

My back won't let me bend down.

MEATH

Get down here!

Parsons awkwardly and painfully gets to his hands and knees, then slides into the grave.

PARSONS

Can't you just tell the C.O. I'm not fit for combat?

MEATH

No.

PARSONS

Give me an adjustment, then?

MEATH

Alright. On your stomach.

Parsons lies on his stomach. Being careful to keep his head below the line of fire, Meath straddles Parsons, plants his palms between the shoulder blades, then gives a sudden thrust. POP!

PARSONS

Ahhhh. That's better.

MEATH

Sure. Come back next week.

Fifty yards away, an Iraqi pops up and starts running away. PRIVATE JOHNSTON (19, dead calm), raises his rifle and calmly takes aim. POW! The Iraqi goes down.

PRIVATE JOHNSTON

(calmly satisfied)

Got 'im.

LT. ARMSTRONG

That was a hell of a shot, son.

PRIVATE JOHNSTON

Just like shootin' deer.

There is a lot of shooting going on now. A soldier 40 yards away calls out:

CALLING SOLDIER

Medic!

MEATH

Fuck.

Meath gets out of the grave and starts running. Bullets are zipping past his ears: "Zzzt! Zzzt!" He speeds up until he reaches a wounded Iraqi lying unconscious on the ground. The man has many wounds, large and gaping.

MEATH (CONT'D)

What the fuck? You had me dodging bullets for this? This guy's hamburger.

CALLING SOLDIER

At least practice. You're a medic. Keep your skills up.

MEATH

Shit.

CALLING SOLDIER

Stick a IV in him or something.

Meath searches for an undamaged spot. As he moves the man's clothing to check, a GARAGE DOOR OPENER falls out on the sand. As Meath inserts an IV in the man's thigh, the Calling Soldier picks up the garage door opener and holds it up.

CALLING SOLDIER (CONT'D)

(to Sgt. Walker)

Hey, Sarge! Check this out!

Sgt. Walker strides over.

SGT. WALKER

A clicker. Could be a whole daisy chain of IEDs here.

CALLING SOLDIER

Didn't go off when we drove by, so he panicked and started running.

SGT. WALKER

Lieutenant will be disappointed there's no weapons cache, but I'd say this is our lucky day.

SUPER: MARCH 2004

Meath and Captain Perkins working out in the gym. Perkins holds his neck.

MEAT

Problem with your neck, Sir? I mean, Dave.

CAPTAIN PERKINS

Yeah, it's been kind of stiff, and I don't seem to have the range of motion I normally do.

Meath motions to a weight bench.

MEATH

Step into my office.

CAPTAIN PERKINS

Oh, that's right, you're a chiropractor.

MEATH

Not yet. But yeah, I studied it. Just need to pass the certs.

Perkins sits on the weight bench and Meath gives him a chiropractic adjustment for his neck.

CAPTAIN PERKINS

Wow, yeah, that's better. Way better. Thanks, Mike. When do you do your certification?

MEATH

There's one in September, but I won't get back in time.

CAPTAIN PERKINS

I can probably fast-track you--get you out in time for your certs.

MEATH

Really?

CAPTAIN PERKINS

Yeah, I have some discretion on that.

MEATH

Sweet! Thanks, Dave!

They trade a quick slap-handshake. Meath is delighted.

80

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

80

A squad stacks up outside a low stucco house. Sgt. Walker is in charge. Private Darrow, gung-ho, checks his mag.

SERGEANT WALKER

(intense)

Okay, listen--today, don't shoot kids, okay?

PRIVATE DARROW

Sarge, they dart out so quick--it's instinct.

SERGEANT WALKER

(holding back his anger)

Fuck your instincts. Don't shoot kids. Take a second to ID your target, Darrow.

PRIVATE DARROW

That second might be life or death for me or my guys.

SERGEANT WALKER

(getting angry)

Just this one fucking time. Darrow--everybody--don't fucking shoot any kids.

(voice chokes)

They're kids, okay? Just fucking scared kids trying to run the fuck away from men with guns.

Silence. The squad absorbs this as Sergeant Walker composes himself.

MEATH

Sarge...do I kick it?

Walker glances at Meath, then looks back at Darrow.

SERGEANT WALKER

(eyes still on Darrow)

Yeah.

81

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

81

The door EXPLODES open. Darrow is first in--eyes wide, finger already down. ADULTS in the room drop flat. An OLD MAN stands still, but with a defiant look. Darrow's M16 rips up the walls, and the old man quickly drops to the floor. An OLD WOMAN covers TWO SMALL KIDS with her body.

A MOTHER screams, arms spread in front of HER CHILD. No teens this time. Just adults, and children five and under. One round shatters a lightbulb. Then silence. Meath steps in behind Darrow, M-16 ready, but sees there's no reason to fire. Sgt. Walker sighs, and gives Darrow a dirty look that goes unnoticed.

82

INT. BARRACKS - EVENING

82

Meath lays on his bunk, staring at the bottom of the bunk above him. Jessup looks up from his "MAXIM" magazine.

JESSUP

You okay, Meat?

MEATH

I was just thinkin'.

JESSUP

Uh-huh.

MEATH

(after a pause)

Breaking down all those doors and shit. It's pretty intense. When I think about what we do--I don't really feel like it's right. Ya know?

JESSUP

It's your job.

MEATH

But when I'm doing it...it's cool. It's like, fun. *Really* fun. But *not* fun. It's kinda confusing.

JESSUP

"Savage glee."

MEATH

Exactly. Savage.

JESSUP

You smash that window out right now with your rifle butt, you'd feel amazing. But then you gotta fix it. War...you break something, you just move on.

Meath looks out the window. Jessup lights up a cigarette.

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
Just move on, Meat.

Meath brings his gaze back to the bottom of the bunk above him.

MEATH  
Yeah.

He closes his eyes. Jessup takes a puff and lets out a long exhale of smoke.

83 EXT. THE PORTA-JOHNS - DAY 83

MORTAR ROUNDS ARE LANDING--ONE, TWO, THREE! SHRAPNEL pierces some of the Porta-Johns. FOUR MORE MORTAR ROUNDS LAND in the area between the Porta-Johns and the Admin Building. Six SOLDIERS POP OUT of the Porta-Johns. Four have been hit.

84 EXT. THE PORTA-JOHNS - DAY 84

Medics attend various wounded soldiers.

RIFKIN  
Triage! How you doin' there, Meat?

MEATH  
This guy's yellow tag. In the nose, just a scratch. What've you got?

RIFKIN  
Graze to the shoulder. He'll be okay.

MCGEORGE  
Hey, where's Phillips? Wasn't he in one of those things?

Just then PHILLIPS, 19, skinny, freckled, emerges from a Porta-John, one hand holding a PORN MAGAZINE, the other staunching blood flowing from a leg wound.

MCGEORGE (CONT'D)  
Phillips, shit, you were jerking off in there?

PHILLIPS  
Yup!  
(pause)  
I got hit, but I'm like, gotta finish.



McGeorge laughs.

MCGEORGE

Dumbass. Let me take a look.

Meath drops to one knee by a SITTING SOLDIER--already pulling a bandage from his kit--takes a quick glance at the leg.

MEATH

Missed the artery. You'll be alright. Hold still.

Meath presses a gauze pad into place with one hand while unwrapping the elastic wrap with the other. Suddenly there is a shout from a CORPORAL EVANS (24, thin) at the door to the Admin Building.

CORPORAL EVANS

Medic! Captain's been hit!

MEATH

Shit!

Meath works fast to finish the wrapping.

85

INT. CAPTAIN PERKINS'S OFFICE - DAY

85

Rifkin gets there first. The window is broken. Perkins is slumped over on his desk. A blood-spattered document on his desk reads "Early Discharge." The name filled out near the top says "Meath, Michael," but the document is unsigned. The Corporal looks at the computer screen and reads the email:

CORPORAL EVANS

"Dear Judy." That's his wife.

Rifkin starts working on Captain Perkins. The right side of his forehead is gone. Meath bounds into the room, gets a glance, and shudders from the sight. Rifkin notices.

JESSUP

We got it, Meat. Step outside.

Meath pauses, then steps outside.

CORPORAL EVANS

Shit. Is he gonna make it?

RIFKIN

He's alive now. Chinooks coming?

CORPORAL EVANS

They're on their way.

Meath sits on a bench, pounding his knees with his hands. A soldier leaning against the wall offers a feeble condolence.

LEANING SOLDIER

Helluva war.

Meath looks at the soldier with a mixture of hurt and anger. McGeorge runs toward Perkins' office, hails Meath.

MCGEORGE

More casualties! Infirmary!

McGeorge and Meath run to the infirmary.

86

INT. - INFIRMARY - DAY

86

Meath and McGeorge are working on wounded soldiers. Rifkin arrives and joins them. Meath is working on a BIG SOLDIER with his guts hanging out who is CRYING loudly.

MEATH

You're gonna be fine, buddy.

BIG SOLDIER

I'm gonna die!

MEATH

(soft, calming)

You're gonna be fine. I gotcha.

BIG SOLDIER

No, I'm gonna die!

The soldier STARTS CRYING again. Meath does his best to patch him up.

MEATH

(wrinkles his nose)

Oof!

BIG SOLDIER

What's wrong?

MEATH

Nothing, I just...I'm not good with the smell of blood.

BIG SOLDIER

AWWWW! I'm gonna die!

MEATH

Can we get some morphine for this guy?!

87

EXT. INFIRMARY - DAY

87

RIFKIN

Quick thinking with that "smell of blood" remark--even though he didn't buy it.

MEATH

It's true, actually.

RIFKIN

So, he *is* gonna live?

MEATH

(shakes his head)

Nah.

RIFKIN

But you always gotta tell 'em they will.

Meath nods solemnly.

88

EXT. BASE - DAY

88

Meath, Jessup, and several other soldiers are piling up walls of sandbags high around the Admin Building. It's hot, and it's hard work.

MEATH

We shoulda had these up before. Why didn't we put these up before?

JESSUP

Nothing we can do, Meat.

MEATH

Were we stupid, lazy? What?

JESSUP

I dunno, Meat.

Private Darrow stops working.

DARROW

Man, this is bullshit. We gotta sandbag this whole place just because the captain got killed?

At this, Meath dashes over and starts pummeling the guy so fast and hard that Darrow is on the ground in an instant, putting his arms in front of his face to shield himself.

DARROW (CONT'D)  
Whoa, fuck, stop it, man! Stop!

Jessup and TWO OTHER SOLDIERS grab Meath and pull him off.

DARROW (CONT'D)  
What are you, nuts? Jeezus!

MEATH  
Don't fucking talk about the  
captain like he didn't fucking  
matter. Got it?!

DARROW  
Yeah, yeah, alright.

JESSUP  
(to the group)  
Me and Meat are gonna take a break.  
Finish it.

The soldiers nod, and get back to work--Darrow too, after Meath shoots him a threatening look. Jessup walks Meath off to the sideline.

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
You gonna be alright?

MEATH  
Fucking sandbags. Just fucking  
sandbags, that's all it woulda  
took.

JESSUP  
Yeah. C'mon, let's go grab a near-  
beer.

They walk off, Jessup's arm on Meath's shoulder.

89

EXT. RAMADI - DAY

89

Meath and Jessup are driving along a street with a WOUNDED G.I. in the back.

WOUNDED G.I.  
Am I gonna be okay?

MEATH  
Yeah, you'll be fine.

Wounded G.I. raises an eyebrow.

MEATH (CONT'D)

No, you will. Didn't hit an organ,  
or an artery.

WOUNDED G.I.

How much longer to base?

MEATH

Ten minutes, tops.

JESSUP

Meat, we're coming up on traffic!

Traffic has suddenly slowed down. It doesn't look good. Meath takes a look at the situation. There's a DILAPIDATED CAR very much in their way, but past that, the road is clearer.

MEATH

Ram 'em!

JESSUP

You got it!

The occupants of the vehicle they're heading for see them coming. Scared, they put their BABY up in the rear window to show they have a child in the car. Jessup sees it, but he's got momentum now, and there's no stopping. He changes his angle a little bit so as not to hit them head-on. BAM! Collision. Jessup slams the 5-ton into low gear, pushes the blocked car out of the way, and they roar past it.

90

EXT. - FIELD - NIGHT

90

Meath and Sgt. Walker stand next to a building in an open area with 20 Iraqi National Guardsmen (ING)--U.S. Allies. The ING wear old U.S. "CHOCOLATE CHIP" UNIFORMS left over from Desert Storm. There is a fire going in a half barrel.

SGT. WALKER

First rule for night guard duty  
with these ING guys: Give 'em their  
M-16s, but don't give 'em bullets  
unless there's an attack. They're  
not careful with weapons.

MEATH

I've seen.

SGT. WALKER

I'll take first snooze. Wake me at  
0400 if I'm not up.

Walker lays his head on his ruck, pulls a poncho liner over himself. Meath hands out M-16s to the ING guys, then drinks a coffee. An ING soldier offers chai. Another grins, dumping sugar in the cup until the bag's empty. Meath drinks it.

91

EXT. - FIELD - NIGHT - LATER

91

Sgt. Walker is asleep. Meath is stepping sideways back and forth, wired on coffee, chai, and sugar. The ING soldiers are chatting calmly amongst themselves. Suddenly BULLETS START HITTING THE SAND around them: "CH-CH-CH-CH-CH." There's no bang of gunfire, but these are definitely bullet hits.

MEATH

SHIT! Sgt. Walker, wake up!

Meath starts handing out magazines to the ING, who calmly accept them.

MEATH (CONT'D)

(to the ING guys)

Bullets, bullets, here!

Walker jolts upright. Another volley of bullets smacks into the sand.

SGT. WALKER

Meath, quick! In the doorway!

They duck into the doorway. The ING just drink their chai. The rounds stop as suddenly as they started.

SGT. WALKER (CONT'D)

(relaxing)

There's no attack. It's just wedding rain.

MEATH

"Wedding rain"?

SGT. WALKER

You've seen these people at their weddings, right? Shooting their AKs up in the air?

MEATH

They celebrate.

SGT. WALKER

What goes up, must come down. It's a mile away, so you don't hear the gunfire.

Meath thinks. No, he didn't hear any gunfire.

SGT. WALKER (CONT'D)  
Magazines, bullets, give back! Give  
bullets!

Meath and Sgt. Walker collect the magazines from the Iraqis.

SGT. WALKER (CONT'D)  
I'm back to sleep.

Sgt. Walker lies down again. Meath paces, amped up on  
caffeine and adrenaline.

92 EXT. BARRACKS - DAY 92

SUPER: APRIL 10, 2004

A convoy pulls out from the barracks: four BRADLEY TRACKED  
ARMORED COMBAT VEHICLES and a little crappy M997 HUMVEE  
AMBULANCE out front.

93 INT. HUMVEE AMBULANCE - DAY 93

Jessup drives the M997; Meath rides shotgun.

JESSUP  
You get what's going on here,  
right?

MEATH  
What do you mean?

JESSUP  
Us, in this little piss-ass death  
wagon, Sector 8? They tell us to go  
out ahead? We're the decoy.

MEATH  
Nah, I dunno.

The radio comes on.

RADIO  
Alright, boys, hold 'er right  
there. Pop out and get some fresh  
air.

JESSUP  
Uh, we're good, Sir. We're good  
right inside here.

RADIO

I said "Get some fresh air,"  
Private. That's a direct order.

JESSUP

(to Meath)

Man, this is fucked up. Why do they  
keep volunteering us for this shit?

MEATH

Because we didn't checkmark the box  
that said "Don't make me do shit  
that's fucked up."

94

EXT. HUMVEE AMBULANCE - A MOMENT LATER

94

Meath climbs out of the vehicle. Jessup follows him out.

JESSUP

(muttering)

I didn't sign up to be a fucking  
decoy.

Jessup lights up a cigarette. Suddenly TEN IRAQIS POP UP out  
of nowhere. Jessup panics and drops his SAW [machine gun],  
hits the dirt and rolls under the vehicle for cover.

JESSUP (CONT'D)

Shit! We're gonna be killed!

Meath quickly grabs the SAW.

MEATH

No way! My brother died on this  
date, so no way I'm gonna too.

JESSUP

Okay, you won't.

Meath aims the SAW, then realizes the Iraqis are wearing  
American "chocolate chip" pants.

MEATH

Wait, Jessup, that's ING. I think I  
trained some of those guys.

Lieutenant Armstrong yells from across the way.

LT. ARMSTRONG

What's going on over there, Medic?!

MEATH

Nothing, Sir!



JESSUP  
Right. "Nothing." Just a bunch of  
"friendlies" you almost killed.

MEATH  
Shit, you left the fight.

They both stand up.

JESSUP  
Geneva Convention says medic's not  
supposed to have a machine gun.

MEATH  
For a second, you were glad I did.

JESSUP  
Yeah.

MEATH  
Technically, Convention just says  
if I pick it up, the enemy is  
allowed to shoot at me. Which they  
do anyway, so...

The Iraqi National Guardsmen approach them, smiling.

AHMED  
Salaam, Meester Meat!

MEATH  
Hey, Ahmed!

The ING all smile and wave.

AHMED  
Have cigarette?

MEATH  
No smoke.

AHMED  
Cigarette, please?

MEATH  
(points to Jessup)  
He smokes.

The ING approach Jessup.

JESSUP  
Fuck, Meat. I gotta give away my  
cigs?

MEATH  
(chuckling)  
Sorry, man. Wasn't thinkin'.

JESSUP  
(to the INGS)  
Okay, just five. Five cigarettes  
only. Okay?

AHMED  
We are ten men.

A second ING speaks up.

ING #2  
Cigarette, please.

Jessup gives up, tosses them the pack, which they scramble  
over. He walks back to the vehicle and joins Meath.

JESSUP  
I give up. Can't even have a  
fuckin' smoke.

Meath gives Jessup a pat on the shoulder.

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
And don't tell me they're not good  
for me.

Meath puts up a hand, as if to say, "I didn't say anything."

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
They help my fuckin' nerves.

95 EXT. FOB - DAY

95

A flatbed truck backs up to the mess hall. INDIAN WORKERS in  
sweat-stained shirts and sandals unload crates while a GTC  
GLOBAL SUPERVISOR in a Polo shirt and "GTC" ball cap checks a  
clipboard. Across the yard, SOLDIERS play a game of HACKY-  
SACK. A HUMVEE rolls past, kicking up dust.

96 INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

96

Meath rips open an envelope. Reads. Stops cold.

MEATH  
"Your separation has been postponed  
under Title 10." What the hell?

JESSUP  
Stop-loss.

MEATH  
I'm going home in August.

JESSUP  
No you're not.

MEATH  
I signed the paperwork.

JESSUP  
You're stayin' here.

MEATH  
They signed the paperwork.

Jessup leans over, reads the letter.

JESSUP  
"Your separation will be  
rescheduled upon mission  
completion."

MEATH  
"Completion"? This mission's not  
even close to completion. Every day  
we go further nowhere.

JESSUP  
Got mine yesterday. Lieutenant said  
he was sorry, but it's in our  
contracts--in the fine print.

MEATH  
Shit.

97

EXT. FOB GATE - DAY

97

SUPER: MAY 2004

A HUMVEE idles near the gate, three soldiers already inside.  
Meath happens to walk by. The GATE GUARD steps out and  
approaches him.

GATE GUARD  
Sergeant, we saw movement past the  
berm. We need an NCO to round out  
this crew.

MEATH  
I'm beat. Can't you find somebody  
else?

GATE GUARD  
Sergeant, these guys need you. They  
really do. And the mission is now.

MEATH  
Alright.

Meath climbs into the passenger seat. The Gate Guard opens  
the gate. The HUMVEE rolls out.

98

INT. HUMVEE - DAY

98

The Humvee rolls out of the gate. Meath rides shotgun.

MEATH  
(to driver)  
So, what's your job?

DRIVER  
Uh...I'm a cook.

MEATH  
(to second soldier)  
And you?

RIGHT REAR SOLDIER  
Laundry.

MEATH  
(to third soldier)  
You?

LEFT REAR SOLDIER  
Fuel handler.

MEATH  
You mean...?

LEFT REAR SOLDIER  
Yeah, there's no G.I. Joe in this  
Humvee.

MEATH  
We're fucked.

Just then an RPG SCREAMS PAST overhead.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
 Let's pull this fucker back in!  
 Now!

DRIVER  
 REE-TREAT!

The Driver spins the Humvee around and speeds back toward the gate.

99

EXT. FOB GATE - MOMENTS LATER

99

The Humvee SCREECHES back through the gate, dust cloud trailing. The GATE GUARD swings the gate shut behind them.

MEATH  
 Why the hell aren't you guys  
 cooking? Or doing laundry?

LEFT REAR SOLDIER  
 Or hauling fuel.

RIGHT REAR SOLDIER  
 GTC Global brought in Indian guys  
 for all that.

MEATH  
 Yeah, I saw some at the mess hall  
 today. So all of a sudden you're  
 trigger-pullers? Who put this crew  
 together?

DRIVER  
 Gate guard saw me walking by and  
 yelled, "You! Humvee. Now."

LEFT REAR SOLDIER  
 Same here.

RIGHT REAR SOLDIER  
 Those Indian guys live in air-  
 conditioned trailers.

MEATH  
 Yeah, I know.

LEFT REAR SOLDIER  
 And their GTC supervisors make  
 triple what we do.

MEATH  
 No shit.

LEFT REAR SOLDIER  
 When I finish my tour, I'm comin'  
 back wearin' a Polo shirt and a  
 ball cap that says "GTC Global"!

They all crack up.

100 INT./EXT. 5-TON TRUCK - DESERT - DAY

100

SUPER: JUNE 2004

The Monster Truck sits two hundred yards back from the main fight. We hear the sound of small-arms fire. Inside, Jessup sits with a cigarette in hand, MAXIM magazine open. Meath, a MAXIM magazine open on his lap, is nodding off, his coffee cup tilted in his hand. A CD player plays classic rock, as radio chatter crackles in the background.

RADIO (O.S.)  
 Man down!

Meath stirs briefly, then nods off again. Radio chatter continues, as Jessup glances through the windshield, but at this distance he can't see anything. A few moments later he spots two soldiers approaching with a body bag on a stretcher. He nudges Meath awake, reaches over and turns the music down as Meath sets his coffee down and swings the side door open. He and Jessup pull the stretcher inside. Jessup goes back to his magazine--but he crushes out his cigarette and listens.

MEATH  
 Oh man, okay, who do we have here?  
 Name, unit?

STRETCHER BEARER  
 Gonzalez, Robert J. 1-16 Infantry.

Jessup, coffee cup almost to his lips, sets it down, stares at the steering wheel.

MEATH  
 Gonzo?

The stretcher bearer rests his hand on the zipper.

STRETCHER BEARER  
 You wanna ID him?

Meath turns pale, shakes his head, then quickly regains his composure.

MEATH

What happened? Where're the shots?

STRETCHER BEARER

Three in the chest, two in the gut.

Meath writes it down on his clipboard. Jessup sits silent.

MEATH

What happened?

STRETCHER BEARER

Charged a sniper. Took him out.  
Cleared the way for the platoon.

Jessup shakes his head.

MEATH

(to Gonzo, with respect)  
Five hits to take you out, Gonzo?  
That's a hero.

JESSUP

(straight ahead, softly)  
Crazy fucker.

Meath makes another note on his clipboard.

STRETCHER BEARER

We're back to the fight.

Meath nods. The stretcher bearers leave. Jessup helps Meath push Gonzo's body to the rear of the truck. They sit again, exchange a brief look, then pick up the *MAXIMS*. Meath grabs his coffee cup, but doesn't drink. Jessup takes a cigarette pack from his shirt pocket, but doesn't take out a cig.

101 INT. BARRACKS - EARLY MORNING

101

Meath suddenly wakes up, reaches for his 9-mm under his pillow, accidentally knocks it to the floor, then realizes where he is.

JESSUP

Meat, buddy, you okay?

MEATH

Yeah, sure. Is it lights out already?

JESSUP

It's morning, Meat. I don't think you're okay.

MEATH

No, screw you, I'm fine. I just need some sleep.

JESSUP

It's *morning*, Meat.

MEATH

You sure?

JESSUP

Yeah.

Meath rolls up to sitting on the edge of his bunk.

MEATH

Awright, I'm up. Zere coffee?

102

EXT. - SHITTERS - DAY

102

Soldiers cycle through the shitters, others loitering or playing cards in the nearby shade of a building. LIEUTENANT CARSON (square jaw, crew cut, has never smiled) comes out of a Porta-John, violently slamming a door as he exits.

LT. CARSON

You mother fuckers! There's shit all the way up to my ass in there! Find that fucking Iraqi shitter truck and get that shit sucked outta there!

HANSEN

Sir, we haven't seen the shitter truck guy lately.

LT. CARSON

That's my goddamn point, Private! Go find him! Send a street recon team. NOW!

Lieutenant Carson points to Meath and Jessup.

LT. CARSON (CONT'D)

You, and you, take this sad fuck here and go find the shitter truck guy. If I have to take one more shit up to my ass, your heads are all going in there. Do I make myself clear?

MEATH

Yessir!

JESSUP

Right away, sir!



LT. CARSON  
 You--Private Sad Fuck--tell Manelli  
 I said to send two Bradleys with  
 you.

HANSEN  
 Yessir.

Lt. Carson storms off.

MEATH  
 I really miss Perkins.

JESSUP  
 Quite the asshole. But he has a  
 point. Shitter guy hasn't been here  
 in weeks. We're all up to our asses  
 in shit.

Private Hansen introduces himself to Meath and Jessup.

HANSEN  
 Hansen. Guess I'm ridin' with you  
 guys.

JESSUP  
 (pointing)  
 Jessup, Meath.

HANSEN  
 Gotta find Manelli.

JESSUP  
 Well be at the gate.

Hansen trots off.

103 EXT. RAMADI STREET - AFTERNOON

103

Two Bradleys and Meath's 5-ton are cruising the streets of  
 Ramadi looking for the shitter sucker truck.

104 INT. 5-TON TRUCK - AFTERNOON

104

MEATH  
 Where the hell is that guy? We've  
 been cruising for four hours.

JESSUP  
 No idea, Meat. Should we head back?

MEATH

You want your head dipped in a  
shitter?

JESSUP

Forward ho!

The radio crackles.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

Razor Two-One, this is Checkpoint  
Four. How copy? Over.

Jessup answers.

JESSUP

Monster Truck. Private Jessup at  
your service.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

Cut the shit, Private. Request your  
presence, over.

JESSUP

Checkpoint Four, Razor Two-One.  
Solid copy. ETA one-zero mikes.  
Over.

Jessup clips the handset.

JESSUP (CONT'D)

(to Meath)

Sorry, Meat. Detour.

MEATH

Shit. Alright.

105 EXT. RAMADI - CHECKPOINT - DAY

105

Meath, Jessup, and Hansen are hanging out at the checkpoint. As a car comes through, a SERGEANT with a SAW (machine gun) looks inside, then waves them on. Same with the next car. Then a TOYOTA HILUX PICKUP approaches the checkpoint. Without warning, the SAW SERGEANT rips into the truck with the SAW. BRRRAAAPPP! A long burst. Four men inside drop. All dead.

SAW SERGEANT

Who's got the 5-ton?

MEATH

That would be us.

SAW SARGE opens the door of the truck. A body falls partially out, dangles.

SAW SERGEANT  
All yours, medic.

MEATH  
Can I ask why you--

SAW SERGEANT  
It's my checkpoint, Sergeant. I  
call the shots.

He grins with satisfaction at the pun that just popped out.

SAW SERGEANT (CONT'D)  
Load 'em up.

Meath shakes his head in wonder, but he, Jessup, and Hansen drag the four bodies to the Monster Truck, load them inside, and put them in body bags.

106 INT. 5-TON TRUCK - AFTERNOON 106

Rolling again. Hansen rides jammed against a body bag, sweat and stench closing in.

JESSUP  
Back to searching for Shit-Man.

HANSEN  
Sergeant, are we going to the  
morgue, or we still looking for the  
shitter truck?

MEATH  
Uhhh...

107 EXT. RAMADI - STREET - CONTINUOUS 107

Before Meath can answer, they are ambushed by insurgents behind some porticos. The two 50-CAL. GUNNERS on the Bradleys quickly take out the seven attackers.

BRADLEY GUNNER  
(shouts)  
Clean that up for us, will ya,  
guys?

MEATH  
Sure. 'Preciate the escort.

They bag seven more bodies and load them up. Jessup gets behind the wheel.

108

INT. 5-TON TRUCK - AFTERNOON

108

JESSUP

Bagging bodies and looking for the  
Shit-Man. More stories of glory for  
the folks back home.

MEATH

Beats sittin' in the barracks all  
day.

Jessup eyes Hansen and shakes his head in disagreement.  
Suddenly there is a MOAN in the back of the truck.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Oops. Not everybody's dead here.  
Hansen, help me out. We gotta unzip  
a couple of these bags.

HANSEN

(uncomfortable)

Uh, okay. All of 'em?

MEATH

Good question.

Meath shakes a body bag. It emits a moan.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Shake it. If it moans, open it up--  
just at the top, for air.

Meath and Hansen start shaking the body bags to check. Three  
of them emit moans.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Okay, that's three alive, eight  
dead. Izzat your count, Hansen?

Hansen is sitting jammed against a body bag--one with a live  
body. He looks pale.

HANSEN

I dunno. Sarge, there's no place  
for me to sit. Maybe I could ride  
in one of the Bradleys?

MEATH

Sorry, Hansen. We need you to pull  
security back there.

(MORE)

MEATH (CONT'D)  
 (to Jessup)  
 Definitely morgue now.

HANSEN  
 And hospital.

MEATH  
 Right, hospital first.

Jessup starts singing, soft and slow at first.

JESSUP  
 I see a little silhouetto of a man.

Meath looks at Jessup, continues the song, off-key.

MEATH  
 Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you  
 do the Fandango?

JESSUP  
 Galileo!

MEATH  
 Galileo!

JESSUP  
 Galileo!

MEATH  
 Galileo!

JESSUP  
 Galileo Figaro!

MEATH  
 Magnifico!

BOTH  
 Thunderbolt and lightning, very,  
 very frightening...me!

Hansen throws up.

109

EXT. BASE HOSPITAL - EVENING

109

The Monster Truck pulls up to the base hospital. Hansen is in the back talking to the bodies--in German.

HANSEN  
 Zu viele tot... zu viele... was  
 soll ich hier?... alle tot...

MEATH

What the hell's wrong with Hansen?  
What's he speaking?

JESSUP

It's German.

MEATH

What's he saying?

HANSEN

Zu viele tot... alle tot... wie...  
wie bin ich hierher...?

JESSUP

I dunno. I just know it's German.

MEATH

That's messed up.

JESSUP

I think we need to drop him off  
here too.

An ATTENDANT (mid-30s, composed) comes out.

MEATH

Hey, man. I got a few back here.

The attendant shines a flashlight in the back, sees all the  
body bags.

ATTENDANT

Whoa, dude, dude, dude. We only  
take live ones.

MEATH

No, yeah, I got a couple live ones.

JESSUP

Plus Hansen.

MEATH

Yeah. You got a spot for Hansen?

ATTENDANT

Lemme see what you got here.

The attendant opens the door, Hansen tumbles out, hits the  
ground and doesn't get up.

HANSEN

Nur Tod. Nur Tod.

ATTENDANT

Yeah, I'll walk this guy in. You bring the rest.

By now a small group of soldiers has come out.

HELPFUL SOLDIER

Holy shit! These all Iraqis?

MEATH

Yeah.

HELPFUL SOLDIER

They all dead?

MEATH

We had three alive when we started, but let's do the shake test again.

HELPFUL SOLDIER

Got it.

Meath, Jessup, and the Helpful Soldier start shaking the body bags.

MEATH

None for me.

JESSUP

Me neither.

HELPFUL SOLDIER

I got a live one.

The soldier unzips the body bag enough for the wounded Iraqi to breath, then drags him off the vehicle and through mud puddles toward the hospital. Meath and Jessup climb back in the front seat and drive off.

110 INT. 5-TON TRUCK - EVENING

110

JESSUP

Where to, Meat?

MEATH

Back to Command, I guess.

111 INT. LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

111

Meath, looking haggard now, steps inside, finds Lt. Carson in his office.

MEATH

Sir, I got all these bodies...

LT. CARSON

Fucking take them to the morgue.

MEATH

All right. Where the fuck is--  
(catching himself)  
Sorry, sir. Where--where's the  
morgue?

LT. CARSON

I don't know, Sergeant. In the  
city.

MEATH

In the city, where, Sir?

LT. CARSON

Just get them to the fucking  
morgue, Sergeant Meath!

MEATH

But...alright, Sir, yes, Sir.

Meath leaves the office, goes outside, and gets back into the  
Monster Truck.

112

EXT. 5-TON TRUCK - EVENING

112

JESSUP

So? Whaddya we do?

MEATH

Take 'em to the morgue.

JESSUP

Where's the morgue?

MEATH

In the city?

JESSUP

Meat, when was the last time you  
slept? Have you seen your eyes?  
You're fucked up.

MEATH

Nah, I'm okay. We need to find the  
morgue.



JESSUP  
Let's go back to the hospital.  
They'll know.

113 EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

113

Jessup drives up to the hospital. The ATTENDANT comes out again.

ATTENDANT  
More already?

JESSUP  
No, we just need to know where the  
morgue is.

Attendant pulls a map from his back pocket.

ATTENDANT  
Here's a map. By the way, when's  
the last time you got any sleep?

MEATH  
Is today Tuesday?

ATTENDANT  
Thursday.

MEATH  
Then it's been a while.

ATTENDANT  
Get some sleep. You got that thing,  
that look, in your eyes.

JESSUP  
See, I told you you looked like  
shit.

MEATH  
He's talking about you.

JESSUP  
(to Attendant)  
Thanks. See ya.

ATTENDANT  
Hope not soon. Night, guys.

114

EXT. MORGUE - NIGHT

114

Meath and Jessup arrive at the morgue, which has signs in both Arabic and English. There is a slight decline from the road to the building. They get out and open the rear door of the Monster Truck. They struggle to get the first body bag out.

JESSUP  
Drag or throw?

MEATH  
What?

JESSUP  
Too far to carry. Easier to drag or throw it?

MEATH  
It's all the same to him.

JESSUP  
I say throw. I'll take the feet,  
you take the head.

They each take an end.

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
Okay, swing. On "three" we toss.

Meath nods. They start swinging the body.

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
One...two...three!

They swing the heavy body, and on the third swing, as it leaves their grasp, there is an audible CRACK!

MEATH  
Ooof!

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
Oooo!

The body lands and then rolls down the incline, ending up on the doorstep of the morgue.

JESSUP (CONT'D)  
What the hell was that?

MEATH  
Think it was his neck.

JESSUP  
You're the chiropractor.

MEATH

Don't think I can fix that one. I think we can just roll the rest.

JESSUP

You got it, Doc.

They drag the rest of the bodies out of the vehicle, giving each one a push that rolls it down the incline to the morgue entrance. Ten bodies at the doorstep. They descend the steps and drag each body through the door. No one comes to meet them. Meath and Jessup leave, and get in the Monster Truck.

115 INT. 5-TON TRUCK - NIGHT

115

Jessup lights a cigarette.

MEATH

God, I'm tired.

JESSUP

Let's report to the lieutenant, then get some sleep.

MEATH

Yeah.

They drive off.

116 INT. LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

116

MEATH

Okay, live ones are at the hospital, dead ones are at the morgue. Sir.

LIEUTENANT CARSON

Did you search them?

MEATH

They're dead.

LIEUTENANT CARSON

(pointing to Jessup)

You look like shit. Go get some sleep.

MEATH

Don't I look like shit too?

JESSUP

He definitely does.

LIEUTENANT CARSON  
(to Meath)  
You're the NCO in charge. Go search  
the fucking bodies.

MEATH  
Yessir.

Meath and Jessup exit.

117 EXT. LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

117

JESSUP  
I get to sleep!

MEATH  
Fuck you.

JESSUP  
Naw, hey. I'll drive you back  
there. I'll sleep when I'm dead.  
Yee-hah!

118 EXT. - MORGUE - NIGHT

118

Meath and Jessup pull up at the morgue.

MEATH  
I'll go in and search. You stay  
with the vehicle.

Jessup reaches for his cigarettes.

JESSUP  
Have fun.

119 INT. - MORGUE - NIGHT

119

Meath enters the morgue. He starts searching the bodies--  
finding only IDs, wallets, a couple of phones. On the last  
body--a FAT MAN--he finds money: \$100 BILLS IN BUNDLES--  
enough to buy a house. Awestruck, Meath takes off his jacket,  
lays it on the floor, and puts the money on top of it to  
bundle it up. Suddenly two LARGE IRAQI MORGUE ATTENDANTS  
appear at the doorway. They spot the money, and Meath  
reflexively pulls out his 9-millimeter pistol.

MEATH  
Get the fuck back!

The Iraqis look at Meath, then at the money. Meath takes a deep breath, rubs his eyes, shakes his head to clear it.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Shit.

He uses his jacket like a slingshot to fling the cash into a far corner. The Iraqis edge toward it, and with the doorway clear, Meath holsters his 9-mil, grabs his jacket, and dashes out the door.

120

INT. 5-TON TRUCK - NIGHT

120

Back in the Monster Truck, Jessup is smoking. Meath climbs in, adrenaline rushing.

JESSUP

You're shaking. You alright?

MEATH

No.

(corrects himself)

Yeah. Just...kinda creepy in there.

JESSUP

(nods)

Morgue at midnight. Any booty?

Meath looks away, to hide his lie.

MEATH

Nah. Coupla phones, some IDs.

(turns back to face

Jessup)

Prob'ly fake.

JESSUP

No doubt.

MEATH

Man, I am crashin'. It's really hittin' me now.

JESSUP

Yeah? I just got my second wind.

Jessup looks at Meath with a smile.

JESSUP (CONT'D)

(sings, "I'll Sleep When

I'm Dead" - Warren Zevon)

"It don't matter if I get a little tired."

Meath gamely picks up the cue.

MEATH JESSUP (CONT'D)  
 "I'll sleep when I'm dead!" "I'll sleep when I'm dead!"

As the truck disappears down the road, they both belt out the guitar riff--

"Daah-da-da-da-da-dah!"

121 INT. BARRACKS - 1:00AM 121

Meath and Jessup lie down to finally get some sleep.

122 INT. BARRACKS - 6:00AM 122

McGeorge kicks Meath's bunk.

MCGEORGE  
 Meat, what the fuck!

MEATH  
 (groggy)  
 Whah? McGeorge?

MCGEORGE  
 Me and my driver are scheduled to use the Monster Truck today, and I go check and there's fucking body parts and blood all over.

MEATH  
 Body parts?

MCGEORGE  
 You can't leave a vehicle in that condition after a shift, Meat. You got to go clean that shit up, hose it down.

MEATH  
 Yeah, yeah, okay. I'm on it.

Meath falls back onto the bed. McGeorge picks him up, helps him to his feet.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
 Thanks.

MCGEORGE  
 Yeah, well, I got you to your feet. Cleanup's on you.

Meath shuffles out the door.

123 INT. MONSTER TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

123

Meath is hosing out the Monster Truck, fighting against the smell of the blood--of which there is a lot. The hose washes out a finger onto the ground. McGeorge stands outside the vehicle watching. Half of an ear is stuck in a tie-down ring, and Meath has to grab it and pull it out by hand.

MCGEORGE  
(peeking in)  
You coulda used a glove for that.

MEATH  
Oh, yeah. Wasn't thinkin'.

McGeorge tosses Meath some gloves, puts on some himself, then grabs the hose from Meath.

MCGEORGE  
Pick up the finger and toss the ear. Then go the fuck back to bed. I'll finish. The rest is just blood.

MEATH  
Thanks, man.

MCGEORGE  
Get some sleep, Meat.

Meath leaves. McGeorge hoses the truck's interior.

124 INT. BARRACKS - MORNING

124

Meath is asleep on his bunk, pants on, but shirtless. Jessup comes and nudges his arm.

JESSUP  
Meat! Wake up!

MEATH  
Wha? Again?

JESSUP  
Major Steinbauer wants to see you right away.

Meath looks at his watch, struggling to focus.

MEATH

God, I only slept like--three minutes. The Major?

JESSUP

Right away.

MEATH

'Bout what?

JESSUP

Didn't say. Wasn't in a good mood, though.

MEATH

Yeah, okay, gonna shower real quick.

Meath throws a towel over his shoulder.

JESSUP

I'd skip that if I were you.

Meath nods, then puts on his shirt, misaligning two buttons, then fixing them. He can only find one sock, so puts on one boot without a sock. He ties his boots sloppily. He stands up, throws the towel over his shoulder again, then realizes and takes it off.

MEATH

Okay, ready!

Then, as if he doesn't remember what he's ready for, he doesn't move. Jessup nods his head toward the door.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Right. The Major.

Meath hastily half-runs to the door.

125

INT. MAJOR STEINBAUER'S OFFICE - DAY

125

Meath enters, shirt tucked in sloppily, unshaven, bags under his eyes. MAJOR STEINBAUER (55, square jaw, no-nonsense) sits, hands folded on his desk, with Lieutenant Armstrong standing two steps to the side.

MEATH

You wanted to see me, Sir?

MAJOR STEINBAUER

Where's the money, Meath?



MEATH

Sir?

MAJOR STEINBAUER

Where's. the. money. Don't tell me there's no fucking money. You brought in some bodies last night, right?

MEATH

(barely coherent)

Bodies. Yeah. The lieutenant, he said, "Meat, go search the bodies," and we went to the hospital, but--no, that was before--we went to the morgue and there were bodies--we took--Jessup and me--we took the bodies--to the morgue. And the guy's neck snapped, so we rolled the bodies. Then the lieutenant said--no wait, did I say that part? Yeah, the lieutenant said "You can't sleep, you gotta go search the fucking bodies." So I went back and there was money, right--you said money--and there was, there was a lotta money--and the Iraqis thought I was gonna shoot 'em, and I--. I just left it there. I'm just a fucking medic, man--I mean, Sir--Sirs.

Major Steinbauer and Lieutenant Armstrong share a look.

MAJOR STEINBAUER

You're off the line, Meath. Go get some sleep.

MEATH

I keep tryin', Major, Sir, and they keep wakin' me up. Then there's all this blood, and I can't get the ear out oof the floor, and McGeorge gives me a glove and I--. Can I really? Can I really just sleep for a while?

MAJOR STEINBAUER

Yes, Sergeant, you can.

(to Lt. Armstrong)

Lieutenant, make sure this man gets some sleep, undisturbed. In a day or two, give him a new assignment. Something easy.

LT. ARMSTRONG

Yessir.

MAJOR STEINBAUER

Dismissed, Meath.

MEATH

Thank you Sir--Sirs. Thank you.

Lieutenant Armstrong escorts Meath out of the Major's office.

126

INT. BARRACKS - MORNING

126

Jessup enters, wiping sweat from his neck with a rag. The barracks are empty except for Meath, who stands looking dazed in the middle of the room in his shorts, holding a towel.

JESSUP

Hey... did you finally get a shower?

Meath blinks. Looks down at the towel in his hand.

MEATH

Uh... I dunno.

He touches his arm. It's dry. Jessup shakes his head. He guides Meath gently to his bunk, throws the covers back, and gently steers him down onto the bed and tucks him in.

JESSUP

Sleep tight, my friend.

Meath sighs--a long, full release--and closes his eyes. Then suddenly--

MEATH

Hey!

Jessup startles. Meath's eyes are wide open now.

MEATH (SOFTER) (CONT'D)

Am I battle-hardened yet?

JESSUP

Nah. You're way past that.

MEATH

(satisfied)

Good.

Meath smiles, his eyes close again and he's out.

127 INT. GYM - DAY

127

SUPER: THREE DAYS LATER

Meath is on a weight bench, doing light chest presses. A new guy, PRIVATE ROGERS (24, sturdy) comes in.

ROGERS

You're not doing much weight there.  
Want me to spot you, push it up a  
bit?

Meath considers.

MEATH

Yeah, okay, thanks.

ROGERS

Rogers. New in, couple days ago.

MEATH

Meat--I mean, Meath.

Meath lifts a set, with Rogers spotting.

MEATH (CONT'D)

Want me to spot you now?

ROGERS

No, I'm just doin' aerobic today.

Rogers steps onto a Stairmaster and starts his workout. Meath starts a dumbbell workout.

ROGERS (CONT'D)

Is it true about the shitters?

MEATH

Oh fuck! I was supposed to find the  
shitter sucker guy!

ROGERS

What?

MEATH

Why hasn't the Major dunked my head  
in the shitter?

ROGERS

They did say you were a little out  
of it. Shitters got sucked out  
yesterday. Some new guy did it. Is  
it true what they're sayin' about  
the guy that used to do it?

MEATH

Is what true?

ROGERS

He was gonna plant bombs in the shitters. Some fat Turkish guy was bringing money to pay him. But some sergeant with a SAW shot him up at a checkpoint. That true?

MEATH

Bombs in the shitters? Fuck me, I dunno.

ROGERS

They say you got that money, at the morgue.

MEATH

No, man. No money for me. I'm just a medic.

ROGERS

I heard about some guys copping some relics, from museums.

MEATH

That was Iraqis.

ROGERS

But if I found some *cash* like that, I'd sure as heck stuff my pants with it.

Meath stops his workout.

MEATH

I'm done.

Meath heads for the door.

ROGERS

Nice to meet ya--Meat.

128

EXT. EUPHRATES RIVER BRIDGE - DUSK

128

SUPER: JULY 2004

A two-lane bridge crawls with traffic. U.S. soldiers wave cars forward one at a time, checking trunks and undercarriages. Off to the side sits the Monster Truck. Meath sits on the hood, feet on the fender, Bible open on his knee.

Jessup, with one foot on the opposite fender, smokes, and reads "TIME" magazine. Meath turns a page, glances up. Across the river, a LONE SHEPHERD moves through the fading light, a line of SHEEP trailing behind.

MEATH

Jessup, check this out. I just read the part with "The Lord is my Shepherd," and I look up, and right over there--freakin' shepherd!

Jessup looks, sees the shepherd.

JESSUP

No shit! "The Lord works in mysterious fuckin' ways."

MEATH

"The Lord is my shepherd." That's kinda like "God's got my back."

JESSUP

Seems He does, Meat.

Jessup gestures with his cigarette at the river and the landscape.

JESSUP (CONT'D)

Some scholars think this place--the Euphrates--was the actual site of the Garden of Eden.

MEATH

Whoa, the Holy Land. I gotta tell my mom I was in the Holy Land.

Jessup looks at black smoke rising next to a MINARET in the mid distance, stubs out his cig on the hood, then flicks it onto the sand. A shiny new GTC Global MINIVAN cruises across the bridge toward them.

JESSUP

You're goin' home tomorrow,

MEATH

Tomorrow night. Kuwait, then home.

JESSUP

It's been real.

MEATH

(soft chuckle)  
Has it?

Jessup gives a light shrug, grabs his cigarette pack from his shirt pocket, taps the pack twice, rethinks, puts the pack back in his pocket. They look without interest toward the bridge checkpoint. The MUEZZIN CALL TO PRAYER starts.

129

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

129

Meath is waiting on the tarmac with a bunch of other soldiers. Lieutenant Armstrong stands with a clipboard checking soldiers in. Meath and Sergeant Walker are standing near a windsock, apart from the rest of the group. Meath looks up at the full moon in appreciation.

SGT. WALKER

How'd you manage to catch the early plane out?

MEATH

I'm a chiropractor. Major had neck pain. Now he doesn't.

SGT. WALKER

Hey, do you think you could maybe do something with my shoulder?

Walker rolls his shoulder, which makes a cracking noise. Meath takes a half breath, then sighs.

SGT. WALKER (CONT'D)

Never mind. You're exhausted.

MEATH

No, no, I'll do it. Let's just step over there. The other guys see me do it, I'll be busy the whole plane ride.

They walk to a spot twenty yards away. Meath adjusts Walker's shoulder, and as soon as he finishes, a mortar lands. They hit the dirt. The mortar round sends shrapnel right through the windsock where they had been standing. It's a brief attack, just one round. They get up, dust themselves off.

SGT. WALKER

Thanks.

MEATH

(pointing at the torn windsock)

Thank you! If you hadn't asked for an adjustment, we might be dead.

SGT. WALKER  
And if you hadn't said "Yes."

LT. ARMSTRONG  
Okay, that's everybody. Load up!

They all board the C130. It takes off with a whoosh!

130 INT. OFFICE / KUWAIT - DISCHARGE PROCESSING OFFICE - DAY 130

SUPER: AUGUST 2004 - DISCHARGE PROCESSING OFFICE - KUWAIT

CAPTAIN STIMPSON  
Did you fire your weapon, Sergeant  
Meath?

MEATH  
Seriously?

Meath stares at her, incredulous. She reaches into a lower desk drawer, grabs her purse, sets it on the desk as a sign of her imminent departure, and stares back at him.

MEATH (CONT'D)  
Okay then, No, I did not fire my  
weapon. I was just a medic.

CAPTAIN STIMPSON  
Mark it on the form. Sign and date.

Meath marks on the form, then signs. Stimpson stamps the form on the first and last pages.

CAPTAIN STIMPSON (CONT'D)  
Now we can both go to lunch.

Stimpson takes her jacket from a hook on the wall.

MEATH  
But...

Stimpson puts her cap on.

CAPTAIN STIMPSON  
(annoyed)  
What?

MEATH  
What if I do have PTSD?

CAPTAIN STIMPSON  
You don't.

MEATH

How can you be sure?

CAPTAIN STIMPSON

You signed the form.

Stimpson picks up her purse and exits the room.

MEATH

Huh.

**THE END**