

2-5 Mean and Green Don't Mean Stupid

Looking out over the beautiful valley below, you're deep in thought. It's springtime in the rugged mountains of Afghanistan. And for the moment, even the distant sounds of the goats below seem peaceful.

Reflecting back over your previous three deployments, this one is winding down. After nearly forty eight months in a combat zone, you've only got two weeks to go.

Your family stateside is a memory of loss, the same as the Brothers and Sisters you've seen wounded and killed. It all seems like a bad dream... a nightmare you continue to feel every waking moment.

Small arms fire breaks the silence. You return to full alert. Being a Marine Scout Sniper, you swing your M-24 over the sandbags as you scan the ridgeline of the adjacent mountain.

"Hey, Sarge! Did you see that shit on the Internet? Some media puke back in the world said they found lithium here in Goat Country!"

"Yeah Roberts. I saw that bullshit," you reply, "but you know that's not why we're here."

The Internet keeps you informed of all the latest news and political rhetoric on the national media. But you're living the reality of the War in Afghanistan... moment to moment. Besides, as far as you can tell, there isn't much news about Afghanistan anyway. You're wondering if they still call this, "The Forgotten War."

Leaning over the sandbags while looking through the spotter scope, Corporal Roberts continues...

"Don't worry, Brother. It looks like we're headin' for Africa next. It'll be warmer there, and we're sure as hell used to goats."

Your Buddies over in the Army Special Operations units are already going home wounded from countries in Africa, fighting Al Qaeda. Countries that the average American hasn't even heard of. At least not yet.

Looking over to Roberts with a shit-eatin' grin on his face, you reply...

“What the fuck... Over!”

Thoughts of returning to America make you feel uncomfortable inside. It's like you've got a hole in the middle of your chest, an emptiness you can't fill. You're starting to feel a sadness when Roberts, still smiling, breaks the silence...

“We've got two more weeks in this fucking place, Sarge, then back to garrison duty to get treated like dog shit. You figure those babes down in Oceanside might still wanna have a drink with us?”

Roberts is a damn good Spotter. He's been with you for three deployments down range. Wheeler, your first Spotter, got torn up pretty bad at the end of your first tour.

“Hey! Check out that dumb ass Hajji down there, Sarge! He don't know whether to shit or go blind! Look at him scopin' us out. He's talkin' in a radio to his goats!”

You've got him in your cross hairs. Roberts is right, he's talking on a handheld radio and communicating with the enemy. You're caught in a conflict, the politics of “Winning the Hearts and Minds” and survival. You hesitate.

You don't want to be accused of an illegal kill, of being a murderer. You've only got two weeks to go!

“Let's do 'em, Sarge! C'mon, he's a bad guy, for sure!”

“No Roberts!” you reply. “Those other Hajjis would snatch that radio before we got down there. They'd lie and we'd get accused of murder. We'd end up in Leavenworth.

No way! Besides, you know how much fuckin' paperwork we've gotta do now when we shoot one of these assholes! Even if we're right!"

Even with all the bullshit now, after four years in-country, it still seems more real here than back in the states. Pullin' a pack of cigarettes out and passing one to Roberts, you both light up and lean back on the sand bags.

"You know, Roberts, I don't even wanna go back. What are we goin' back to?"

"Yeah Sarge, after a few showers and a couple of good meals, there ain't shit back there. Only good thing is the booze."

The peace is broken.

"Incoming! Hit the Deck!"

"They're walkin' 'em in on us, Sarge! I knew we shoulda killed that fucker!"

When the attack finally ends, three Marines lie wounded; one is dead... all your Brothers, your Friends, your Fellow Warriors. Doc is taking care of the wounded. Again, all is quiet.

Lighting up another cigarette, you look over to Roberts, then down into the valley. Robert takes a long drag, then exhaling says...

"Why the fuck are we really here, Sarge?"

Turning your head, and looking into his eyes, you reply...

"Doesn't really matter, does it, Brother? Guess we've got nowhere else to go."

By this point in the book, you might be gettin' to

understand the overwhelming conflicts that our Troops face, both in War and at home. You might also be asking yourself, “How can they possibly reintegrate (blend) into society again and etch out a decent life?” That, in fact, is no easy task.

Now, I don’t make political statements. That’s up to politicians. But I’ve gotta explain a few things here for our Troops fighting in or returning home from Afghanistan. And you ain’t gonna see this on the nightly news, or listen to it on NPR.

As it’s been explained to me, what I’m about to say is not a violation of any national security issues. But what I’m about to say is for the peace of mind of our Troops, my Brothers and Sisters.

As you know, Al Qaeda is a new breed of enemy. They are radical, fundamentalist, Islamic Warriors. But their radical beliefs are not the standard for ninety nine percent of all Muslims. Just like the beliefs of radical groups here in America don’t represent all Americans. But Terrorism definitely is a problem, so somebody’s gonna have to jerk their chain. That be us.

We went into Afghanistan to stabilize the country enough so Al Qaeda didn’t turn it into another Nazi Germany. Only difference then was that Hitler didn’t use religion for an excuse to exterminate the Western Powers.

We’re also there to make sure that Pakistan’s nuclear weapons don’t fall into the hands of the Taliban... members of the Al Qaeda Smotherhood. And the Taliban are sorta like club members of Al Qaeda. It’s kinda like bein’ a small gang in cahoots with a real big gang. Don’t matter, ‘cause you’re still a gang-banger, but Big Brother is always lookin’ over your shoulder.

So then, to prevent Pakistan from getting overrun by

radical, kill-all-the-infidels Holy Warriors, we moved into town to kick some gang-banger ass. We've done it, and we're still doin' it.

Can you imagine what would happen if Al Qaeda got hold of Pakistan's nukes? You could say goodbye to New York City, Disney World, and most of Israel in a heartbeat. And by the way, Europe is not excluded from the hit list.

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is the only support we have in Goat Country. And even though corruption is rampant in the ranks, they're the only thing that's gonna hold the country together when we leave.

With their troop strength, they're most likely only gonna be able to maintain peace in and around the major cities. The mountains to the Northeast and the deserts to the Southwest will once again be open to Taliban control.

And yes, we're gonna leave. That's because we don't have nearly enough Troops to lock down the border to Pakistan. And with the proposed cut backs in our Troop Strength in the Army and Marine Corps, it ain't likely we're gonna have another big surge of military might.

From what I hear from the Troops, the only way we're gonna be able to go back there again (when, not if, it turns to shit) is to make it a Covert War. That means Special Operations tactics. You can look that up on the Internet if you don't know what it means.

So what's the point of this Jar Head briefing? Real simple. Our Troops have done one helluva job in disrupting Al Qaeda's copy-Hitler approach to putting a goat in every household. They've kicked the shit out of the Taliban and shown them that the Infidels (that be us) have something to say about spousal abuse, child abuse, animal abuse, and setting up Terrorist Summer Camps to blow up innocent, non-Koran-readin' people. And our military did

all this with very few Boots on the Ground, very little money, and one outstanding attitude!

Alright then, let's get back to how smart our Troops are and the shit they have to deal with.

Do you think that our Warriors don't know that military contractors and other multinational corporations are making major bucks off of these Wars? Of course they do. Hell, you've only gotta Google the top one hundred military contractors to get an eyeshot on that one.

Does it piss 'em off? Yep! Will they decide not to return to War to defend freedom because of it? Absolutely not! They'll go back until the job is done, period. But don't try to bullshit 'em, 'cause you won't get past first base.

Our Troops only tolerate the rhetoric, but they sure as hell understand it. It's best not to throw rocks at the junkyard dog, 'cause at some point, the gate's gonna be open.

They believe as I do, that the NOBLE reason we're in Afghanistan is to fight Al Qaeda and any other Gang-Banger-Terrorist-Groups. The darker side of this War is like any other war that's ever been fought.

Some people make a ton of money from the violence. Don't suspect that's gonna change in the near future. And speaking of the near future, here's another tidbit for you. So deal with it.

The designation OIF means Operation Iraqi Freedom and pertains to the war in Iraq. The designation OEF means Operation Enduring Freedom and pertains to global Terrorism. That means terrorism in Iraq (when the Taliban moved in after our occupation), terrorism in Afghanistan, and other parts of the world, including Africa. Wherever there is a terrorist threat, and wherever Al Qaeda is planning to kill innocent people, our Troops are

likely to go there.

Less than one percent (1%) of our population is military. They are the ones making the stand for freedom. I venture to say that ninety percent of our population has no real fact-based understanding of what's really going on globally, let alone in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Besides the lack of accurate information given to the American People, they have also not been given the proper briefing on what the actual effects of War are on a human being.

Our Troops, our Sons and Daughters, are carrying the burden of War; the loss, the effects of killing, and being torn apart between two worlds. But not only are they caught in the physical and emotional impact of battle, our Troops must also endure the political frustrations of War as well. As in "political protocol." I'll explain.

The word protocol means, "The forms of ceremony and etiquette performed by diplomats and heads of state," no shit. How the hell do you perform etiquette on the battlefield? Here're a couple of examples of just how bone-headed stupid this whole notion is.

In Afghanistan (I won't say where), our Troops chased armed Taliban into a mosque (an Islamic holy building). The enemy knew that infidels (us) could not enter the sacred site because of our "diplomatic" restrictions. The mosques in both Afghanistan and Iraq became holding facilities for weapons and enemy personnel... a safe zone in which to plan attacks and return to after missions against our Troops.

On one occasion (and there were a lot), the ANA was in on the chase. And still the ANA would not allow American Troops into the mosque. In that situation, there was almost a firefight between our Soldiers and the ANA,

when some of our Troops insisted on entering the mosque in pursuit of the enemy. Of course the story is more detailed, but I think you get the picture. Imagine the frustration of taking casualties and not being able to go after the ones who caused it.

On many occasions, our Troops were not allowed to open fire on the enemy because of possible civilian casualties. Even when they were firing at our Troops! The Taliban was using their own wives and children as human shields while firing at our Troops. Again, political protocol in action.

Here's another one for you: On many occasions, the enemy was dressed in foreign made American uniforms with ski masks covering their heads. Their uniforms were exact replicas of U.S. soldiers, right down to the name-tags and weapons.

These imposters would go into villages at night and cut off the heads of several people living there. They wanted to turn everyone against the Americans. And the Americans knew who was doing it but couldn't say a damn thing.

Another threat to our Troops has been foreign mercenaries. That is in Afghanistan, Iraq and other places in the world. And many of these guys don't come from countries that hate America. Here's just an example to think about.

In the Korengal Region of Afghanistan, the foreign mercenaries (trained professionally military) were paid up to six thousand American Dollars for each planned attack on our Troops. The expendable Taliban troops (cannon fodder) would get from fifty to five hundred dollars each.

Where did the money come from? Well, without fueling the Jihad, let's just say it may have come from

within countries that are supposed to be American Allies. Makes ya wonder, don 't it?

Even with all this going on, our Warriors continue to do their job. But knowing the truth, saying nothing, and continuing your mission for freedom requires tremendous strength. They have such strength.

I've been asked many times, "Why do they want to go back?" Let's see if I can explain this a bit.

Against all obstacles, it is the Warrior's Heart and Spirit that drive them back into battle, back into War. It's not the horror they experience, but the love they feel for one another that compels them to return.

They are pulled back by the Beast; longing for the demonic pleasures of viciousness. And they are also pulled back by the Spirit; longing to express the highest nobility of creation; those Angelic qualities instilled in all humanity.

Interesting, isn't it? The Warrior lives in the darkest valley of demonic hell, in the depths of the cruelest environment on earth. And yet, as we stand side by side with the phantoms of human evil, we find our own Divinity, our place in the Universe, the God within us.

By walking on the precipice of hell, balancing between life and death, pulled by both Light and Darkness, the Warrior finds his own Divinity, the true meaning of life.

Ever ask yourself, "What is it that's so alluring about War? What's the adventure we seek?"

Well, isn't just a little of that a test? A challenge to find out who we are and what we're made of? "Do we have the courage of Heroes past, fighting for a noble cause, fighting against overwhelming odds for the Greater Good?"

But does anyone ever truly expect to open Pandora's

Box, to see what looks back at them in the Mirror of Self-Reflection? To look into your own eyes and Know you are capable of the truest, purest love, as well as the most wicked cruelty imaginable causes a shutter deep down into the depths of our souls, into our very existence.

Through this we learn that our greatest challenge, our greatest friend and worst enemy, is not in the world we walk within, but within ourselves. To understand the strengths and weaknesses of ourselves is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of humanity. This is only learned through hardship, and only learned through the heart.

So then, my friends, do you see why our Troops, our Warriors, return to War? Do you see what drives them to their own death? And do you also see how informed they are about life, and how wise they've become? With all the weight they carry, they still carry on. What more could be asked of any human being? They live Honor!

There has never been a more intelligent and self-aware military. And yet, what they know does not prevent them from what they do.

They do this for every single soul walking the streets of human liberty. Their lives are filled with pain, and they have been changed forever. Yet they would do it all again for what they believe in.

How then can we ignore their sacrifice for freedom? How in good conscience can we pretend their experiences in War are not our responsibility?

They live and breathe War on the battlefield. Their only hope is for each of us to welcome them home and into our hearts, to acknowledge that their sacrifices were not in vain. They have paid the price; they have given all they have to give.

Now we must give back, walking side by side with them into their tomorrows. And if we do reach out, perhaps their uncertain future may bring them some small measure of well-earned peace, a peace they will cherish for the rest of their days.

And I say this to each of you, my Fellow Warriors, take off your body armor and stow your weapons. Put on your civilian disguise, and walk with me up the trail to the Summit of Knowing.

Open your hearts and understand just who you have now become, and respect that beautiful soul. Walk with pride and Honor, and remember that you are never alone. All Warriors past and present walk with you, side by side into your days to come.

My Greatest Respect to each of you, my Brother and Sister Warriors.

Most Sincerely,

Sgt. Brandi,
United States Marine Corps **Semper Fi!**

**You ain't done yet!
Keep on readin'!**