

# THE FAT SERGEANT

by  
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# THE FAT SERGEANT

For Majid, Tom, and Andrew

# THE FAT SERGEANT

CAST: 5 Men (or 4 Men 1 Woman)

KNIGHT, M/40s/Army Reserve NCO

MYERS, M/40s/African American, Army Senior NCO

AHMAD, M/40s-50s/ Iraqi, maintenance man, philosopher

BANKS, M/18-21/ any race, Army enlisted Soldier

FIRT SERGEANT, M/F/ 30s/ any race, Army Senior NCO

TIME: Around 2016

PLACE: Rural Wisconsin

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ACT 1  
SCENE 1

*Wintertime on a United States Army Reserve base in Wisconsin. Two uniformed Soldiers are administering a 'body-fat test' to another Soldier, KNIGHT, who is standing shirtless with his arms extended out to his sides. The lower ranking Soldier in the room, BANKS, is measuring his waist with a tape measure. Next, he measures his neck. Knight is flabby and past his prime but not exceptionally obese. MYERS is in charge here. The room is cold, the lighting harsh and clinical.*

**MYERS.** Dude, you're fat.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah, no shit, man. *(Myers shoots him a hard glance for giving a snappy answer in front of Banks. The hierarchy of the room has been disturbed a bit.)*

**BANKS.** *(Taking measurements, calling out to Myers.)* Neck, sixteen. Waist, forty.

**KNIGHT.** This the Army you always dreamed about, Banks?

**BANKS.** Pays the bills, Sergeant. Neck. Same. Sixteen. Waist. Same. Forty. *(Banks pauses while Myers enters the numbers into his phone.)*

**MYERS.** Do one more set to verify.

**BANKS.** Roger that, Master Sergeant. *(Banks repeats the same measuring process on Knight.)*

**KNIGHT.** Is this the kind of adventure you signed up for? Getting up close and personal with a half-naked doughy man with frozen nipples on this fine Wisconsin February morning?

**MYERS.** Poetic.

**BANKS.** I see it a lot more than I'd like to say, Sergeant. *(To Myers.)* Numbers are the same. That's it. The last one. *(To Knight.)* You can drop your arms now, Staff Sergeant Knight.

**MYERS.** Yeah, come down off the cross now.

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**KNIGHT.** You should have seen me in my prime, Banks.

**MYERS.** And put your shirt back on, please.

**KNIGHT.** Sorry for the nightmare fuel, gentlemen. But you did volunteer for this shit. *(Knight puts his shirt on.)* So, how'd I do? Do I get the job?

**MYERS.** *(Looking up from the calculation.)* You're over the limit.

**KNIGHT.** Bullshit. I'm never over the limit.

**MYERS.** Ain't no bullshit. You're over.

**BANKS.** How much is he over?

**MYERS.** Shit, I could tell you was over just by looking at you.

**KNIGHT.** I've never been over before.

**MYERS.** The app does the math, not me. I put the numbers in twice. See? You're over.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah, but I passed the PT test.

**MYERS.** You still gotta pass body-fat standards when you show up here. That's in the brochure.

**KNIGHT.** Show me how you're calculating that. *(Knight leans in to look at Myers' phone.)*

**MYERS.** According to the math you need a skinnier waist or a fatter neck.

**BANKS.** The Army measurement system is garbage. Don't say nothing about your actual fitness.

**MYERS.** That's the standard we got so that's the one we follow.

**BANKS.** I know, Master Sergeant. But he like he said, he passed his PT test.

**MYERS.** Barely passed the run. By like six seconds.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah, it's still passing. How much am I over?

**MYERS.** For your age the maximum is twenty-six percent.

**KNIGHT.** Shit.

**MYERS.** Like I said, lose some waist or gain some neck. You got ten days to figure it out.

**BANKS.** That's actually very doable, Sergeant. You know?

**MYERS.** In ten days if you're still over we send you back home to your unit. You'll probably lose a stripe too. They're coming down hard on fat senior NCOs.

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**KNIGHT.** In the meantime?

**MYERS.** Report to class everyday as normal until then. Next Monday morning we'll re-measure you.

**KNIGHT.** This is a fucking sweet way to start annual training.

**BANKS.** You can do this, Staff Sergeant. I've seen guys pull it off that came here looking worse than you. I mean... you ain't even all that bad.

**MYERS.** You look like shit, man. With them muffin tops spilling over your belt line. You're a Staff Sergeant. You're supposed to be a fucking leader.

**KNIGHT.** Don't hold back, man. Give it to me straight. *(Banks looks away, embarrassed for Knight.)*

**MYERS.** Banks thinks I'm fat shaming you, don't you? I am. You should be fucking ashamed.

**BANKS.** We had a guy lost fifteen pounds in ten days. Remember that guy, Master Sergeant?

**KNIGHT.** What's the fucking use?

**MYERS.** You knew you were gonna get taped when you showed up here, right?

**KNIGHT.** Yes. I knew.

**MYERS.** So you knew all this ahead of time. Right.

**KNIGHT.** I said, yes.

**MYERS.** So why the fuck you show up here fat?

**KNIGHT.** You are absolutely right, Myers. He's absolutely right, Banks. There is no excuse.

**MYERS.** It's like you knew we were coming and we still surprised you. Figure that out.

**KNIGHT.** I've never failed a tape test before. Figured I could squeak by.

**MYERS.** Take a hard look at yourself in the mirror. Might help you figure some shit out about your career.

**BANKS.** You want us to measure again, Master Sergeant?

**MYERS.** What we got is what we got. Ain't no do-overs.

**BANKS.** Couldn't hurt to do it one more time. Maybe suck in the stomach a bit, see what we get.

**MYERS.** You want me to fudge his numbers and let him slide?

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**BANKS.** No, Master Sergeant.

**MYERS.** Ain't doing that. What he got is what he got. We value integrity here. *(Begins filling out a form.)*

**BANKS.** I know, Master Sergeant. Just...we're all on the same side here. Right? Sergeant? *(Myers stops writing and stares hard at Banks, like he is about to chew him out.)*

**KNIGHT.** Integrity, Banks. Don't you remember that value from Basic Training?

**MYERS.** It's not a game, man. You're fat. You're wrong and you know you're wrong.

**KNIGHT.** I know what I am.

**MYERS.** You knew before you showed up here, too.

**KNIGHT.** Just a fat old sergeant.

**MYERS.** I'm older than you and I meet the standard. Because it's part of the job. Sign this. *(Myers hands Knight the form. Knight snatches it, signs it, then balls it up and tosses it on the floor.)*

**MYERS.** Sergeant, you need to check your fuckin' professionalism. *(Pause.)*

**KNIGHT.** You are absolutely right. Banks, he is absolutely right. Thank you.

**BANKS.** I've seen guys make it, Sergeant. You ain't over by that much. Ten days of heavy-duty PT...you can do this. *(Banks goes to pick up the balled-up form from off the floor.)*

**MYERS.** Stop, Banks. Pick up the fuckin form, Staff Sergeant. *(Knight and Myers stare at each other. Knight finally picks the form up from the floor and unrolls it. He hands it to Banks.)*

**KNIGHT.** I didn't mean for you to have to pick that up. That was unprofessional and I'm sorry.

**BANKS.** You don't even need to fast or anything crazy. Drink lots of water, try to run every day.

**MYERS.** You could stop fucking drinking too.

**BANKS.** Master Sergeant, I'm just gonna go drop his form off in the ops room. *(Myers nods, Banks leaves the room)*

**MYERS.** Now. You got anything else to say to me?

**KNIGHT.** Nope.



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**MYERS.** I catch you drinking during duty hours here and you're done. No special favors. You got me?

**KNIGHT.** Yeah.

**MYERS.** Yeah, what?

**KNIGHT.** Thank you? The fuck do you want?

**MYERS.** You're talking to a Master Sergeant. How about you address me with the respect I'm entitled to. At least in front of the kid.

**KNIGHT.** How about, fuck you, Master Sergeant.

**MYERS.** Motherfucker, what?

**KNIGHT.** Fuck you, Jim. Seriously. Fuck you!

**MYERS.** Bitch, I will beat your fuckin' ass right here.

**KNIGHT.** You better back up.

**MYERS.** What are you gonna do about it, you fat fuck?

**KNIGHT.** Bring it., Master Sergeant. *(They stare each other down. Banks reenters and senses the storm coming. He watches for a few moments then leaves again.)*

**MYERS.** Maybe you forgot who you are. We ain't on no first name basis here.

**KNIGHT.** I'm not playing this fucking Army game with you, Jim.

**MYERS.** Where you been I ain't been? Act like you're so above it. *(Myers suddenly pushes him into the wall. They go at each other, and Myers gets an overpowering grip on Knight and holds him against the wall.)*

**KNIGHT.** Get the fuck off me!

**MYERS.** You act like you're above it now but you're not. You just can't hack it.

**KNIGHT.** You wanna keep playing this bullshit part, fine. But I'm not playing!

**MYERS.** Where you been that I ain't? Huh? You don't wanna be here? Just leave.

**KNIGHT.** And if you want my respect then talk to me like a man. *(Knight breaks loose.)*

**MYERS.** You got nothing on me. Bad dreams, dead friends, divorces. Nothing! Might work back home telling stories at the bar but it counts for shit here. You ain't a hero. You're just a fat piece of shit.

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**KNIGHT.** Fuck you.

**MYERS.** I'm out here in fucking Wisconsin trying to hold my little piece of the Army together. And you can get the fuck out if you don't like it. This chicken shit school on this desolate miserable fucking base ain't much, but goddammit, it's mine. And we are going to enforce the standards.

**KNIGHT.** Great. I'll put you in for a bronze star. You ain't no fucking hero either. *(Myers smacks Knight across the head. Knight backs away.)*

**MYERS.** So fucking sorry for that. You need me to escort you to mental health? Fucking pussy. *(Knight glares, catching his breath.)* What the fuck are you even doing here?

**KNIGHT.** I need the money, man. Simple. This is thirty days of pay for me. And now you wanna send me home.

**MYERS.** Around these other soldiers you address me as Sergeant, motherfucker.

**KNIGHT.** Oh sure. Master Sergeant Motherfucker! Master Sergeant Motherfucker! How's that?

**MYERS.** You just another one of these fat fake-ass reservist sergeants embarrassing the Army. You're supposed to be a goddamn leader.

**KNIGHT.** I paid my dues to the fucking Army.

**MYERS.** Paid your dues... *(This time Knight springs at Myers and they start again to struggle and fight. Banks comes back into the room. He is followed by the FIRST SERGEANT.)*

**BANKS.** At ease! *(They stop when they see the First Sergeant. He studies them closely for several awkward moments.)*

**FIRST SERGEANT.** Myers, do you mind if I put young Banks to work in the S1 office today? We're shorthanded.

**MYERS.** Absolutely, First Sergeant. No issue.

**FIRST SERGEANT.** Good. Thank you. *(Addressing Knight.)* Everything all right here, Staff Sergeant?

**KNIGHT.** Yes, First Sergeant. Just reviewing my body-fat counseling with Master Sergeant Myers. *(First Sergeant examines the counseling form with Knight's body fat measurements.)*

**FIRST SERGEANT.** Are you going to fix this, Knight?

**KNIGHT.** Absolutely. I will, First Sergeant.

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**FIRST SERGEANT.** OK. Good attitude. Myers, can I see you a second? *(First Sergeant leaves followed by Myers. Banks hangs back.)*

**KNIGHT.** I must look like a real piece of shit to you, Banks.

**BANKS.** I ain't judging you, Staff Sergeant. You been more places than I have.

**KNIGHT.** Don't ever let this happen to you, OK. Don't fall apart.

**BANKS.** I got nuthin' bad to say. Hell, I ain't even been to war.

**KNIGHT.** That don't mean a damn thing, son.

**BANKS.** I'm the only slick sleeve around here.

**KNIGHT.** You got plenty of time.

**BANKS.** No. I'm a medical.

**KNIGHT.** What does that mean?

**BANKS.** The Army says that I am medically non-deployable.

**KNIGHT.** You broke? You don't look broke.

**BANKS.** Seizures.

**KNIGHT.** I don't follow.

**BANKS.** Seizures. Had one coming off range twenty-two six months ago. Weird, huh? Out of nowhere.

**KNIGHT.** I never heard that one before.

**BANKS.** Now they won't even let me carry a weapon.

**KNIGHT.** What are they gonna do with you?

**BANKS.** They want me discharged.

**KNIGHT.** Shit, man.

**BANKS.** Yeah, I'm trying to fight it. I want to stay in.

**KNIGHT.** They're putting you out for that?

**BANKS.** Looks that way. My orders could drop any time.

**KNIGHT.** Fuck. I'm sorry, dude.

**BANKS.** Master Sergeant Myers is trying to help keep me in. He's trying to stall the process and help me with my appeal.

**KNIGHT.** That sounds a lot like him. He always took care of his guys.

**BANKS.** I didn't realize you two knew each other. I never heard nobody call him by his first name before.

**KNIGHT.** We go back.

**BANKS.** Yeah, I noticed.

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**KNIGHT.** A long time ago I was his boss. In Iraq. You believe that shit?

**BANKS.** You were his boss? God damn.

**KNIGHT.** Something happened.

**BANKS.** Funny how things change, right?

**KNIGHT.** Our careers took different paths since that time.

**BANKS.** I hear that. Hell, I joined the Army to go to war. Not to be...

**KNIGHT.** Wrapping a tape measure around my fat ass?

**BANKS.** Pays the bills for now, Sergeant.

**KNIGHT.** Hey, thanks for the encouraging words before. I mean it.

**BANKS.** Shit, I hope you make it, Sergeant.

**KNIGHT.** You too, man.

**BANKS.** The U.S. Army occupies two foreign countries, and I ain't been to neither one. I done missed it all. It's fucking depressing.

**KNIGHT.** Being over there don't make you any more of a man.

**BANKS.** I wish I believed you. *(Myers enters the room.)*

**MYERS.** Banks, they need you in the S1 office.

**BANKS.** Moving, Master Sergeant. *(Banks nods towards Knight, exits. Silence for several moments.)*

**KNIGHT.** Good kid.

**MYERS.** Good Soldier.

**KNIGHT.** So of course they want to kick him out of the Army.

**MYERS.** I'd trade ten of you for one of him.

**KNIGHT.** You'd be right, too. Kid like that.

**MYERS.** Your class starts zero eight Monday morning. Building nine hundred. Go to the S1 office and sign for your barracks room key.

**KNIGHT.** I ain't staying in these fucking barracks.

**MYERS.** I ain't say you had to. But you'll be paying out of pocket if you don't. So go sign for your key. After that you a grown man so do whatever the fuck you gonna do.

**KNIGHT.** Thank you.

**MYERS.** Right. *(Myers turns to leave the room.)*

**KNIGHT.** You aren't the only one who misses him, Jim. *(Myers stops. After a few moments he speaks without turning around.)*

**MYERS.** Banks is right. You can make it. If you really try.

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**KNIGHT.** I live in Florida. I'm supposed to go out running in this fucking cold?

**MYERS.** Good luck, Troy. *(Myers leaves. After a few moments Knight drops down and struggles through a set of creaky push-ups. He goes to his knees. Darkness.)*

### SCENE 2

*Knight is in a cheap motel room talking on a cellphone standing in front of a full-length mirror. He has a bed sheet wrapped around his body and sips from a bottle of whiskey.*

**KNIGHT.** You still there? Candice? *(Silence.)* Not too pleased to hear from me, huh? *(Silence.)* I didn't say that I came to Wisconsin to see you. It's Army stuff. Reserve shit. You don't have to get all...*(Silence.)* I still owe the fuckers two more years. It's a month's pay. Which is good because I ain't got much else going on, you know? *(Silence.)* I'm staying at that one place. Remember that? That one time? I tried to get the same room. The place has kind of gone to crap. Heat doesn't work. *(Silence.)* No. Not yet. *(Silence.)* Because I thought we could discuss it more before... *(Silence.)* I don't have the papers. *(There is knocking on the motel room door.)* They must not have gotten forwarded to mom's house. Yes, I am. And yes, I'll get to them. When I'm done here. I will sign them. *(Silence.)* I'm here for a month. Maybe we could get together one night and talk about it. *(Silence.)* OK. *(Silence.)* Well, Candice, I guess then it's congratulations. Yeah. You did it. Now you can pursue your dream of living the life of a middle-aged whore. *(Silence. He winces in regret. There is more knocking on the motel room door. The call ends.)* I don't hate you. *(Knight lets the sheet fall and he is naked, or, alternatively, only wearing boxer shorts. He looks in the mirror and begins wrapping an extension cord around his neck. He takes a drink. There is more knocking on the door followed by sounds of someone putting a key in the lock. Knight slumps in a corner. The door is pushed open and a gust of winter air roars in. Darkness. After a few moments we hear sounds of AHMAD dragging a large metal air conditioning unit*

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*across the motel room. He struggles and moves in stops and starts. The noise stops. Moments later, lights up on Ahmad dressed in a maintenance uniform with his back to Knight, who is still slumped in a corner. Ahmad sits examining the A/C unit in the middle of the room for a few moments then, as though an idea had just occurred to him, he takes out a small notebook and writes. A small bowling ball sized bag is beside him.)*

**KNIGHT.** *(Coming to.)* Who are you?

**AHMAD.** Oh, I'm fine, who are you?

**KNIGHT.** What are you doing over there?

**AHMAD.** *(Without turning to face him.)* Trying to fix your heat.

**KNIGHT.** *(Realizing he is not wearing anything.)* How did I come to this?

**AHMAD.** I got a few theories.

**KNIGHT.** Hey, what's in that bag?

**AHMAD.** *(Now turns to face Knight.)* What difference does it make?  
*(Silence.)* You know who I am now?

**KNIGHT.** You're the maintenance guy.

**AHMAD.** A reasonable guess.

**KNIGHT.** Or so it says on your shirt there. If we're taking shirts at their word.

**AHMAD.** I brought you a space heater. It's not much. But it's something.

**KNIGHT.** Can you fix the heat?

**AHMAD.** *(Goes back to writing.)* That's what I'm here to do. *(Ahmad stops writing and stares at him.)*

**KNIGHT.** Is there something the matter?

**AHMAD.** No. No.

**KNIGHT.** You look like you want to ask me a question.

**AHMAD.** None of my business, buddy. But how come you were crying? *(Knight wipes his eyes and looks away.)*

**KNIGHT.** How long is this gonna take?

**AHMAD.** Hard to say, really.

**KNIGHT.** I gotta work out.

**AHMAD.** It's not exactly my area of expertise.

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**KNIGHT.** But you're the maintenance guy, man. Says so on your pocket thing there.

**AHMAD.** I'll be straight with you, OK. I've never fixed one of these suckers in my life.

**KNIGHT.** Huh. What do you normally do in this type of situation then?

**AHMAD.** Generally, I'll switch out the broken one with one that works from another room. Just sort of shift the broken ones around, you know?

**KNIGHT.** Oh.

**AHMAD.** That's not really a long-term solution.

**KNIGHT.** Have you ever considered getting someone who can actually fix them?

**AHMAD.** No, of course not. That's my job.

**KNIGHT.** Right. Are you gonna switch that one out with one that's not broken?

**AHMAD.** No. We don't have any extra that aren't broken right now.

**KNIGHT.** I see.

**AHMAD.** Your busted unit has entirely upset the balance of working to non-working heaters.

**KNIGHT.** A bit of a stand-off then.

**AHMAD.** Look, I'm no handyman. This uniform. This shirt. Gives off a very misleading vibe of competence.

**KNIGHT.** I know exactly what you mean, buddy.

**AHMAD.** Do you?

**KNIGHT.** You ought to meet the people that I work for. *(Knight picks up his Army uniform and waves it around. He stares at Ahmad for a moment.)*

**AHMAD.** I've met a few of you.

**KNIGHT.** Do I know you?

**AHMAD.** *(Returns to focusing on the heater.)* Well, what does it mean to know someone, really?

**KNIGHT.** Oh, Jesus Christ. Have we met?

**AHMAD.** What, like before now?

**KNIGHT.** Yeah. Before now.

**AHMAD.** *(Studies him closely.)* I doubt it.

**KNIGHT.** You look like a guy in Iraq.

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**AHMAD.** (*Sarcastic.*) Yeah, so do you.

**KNIGHT.** I get that a lot. (*Pause.*) But are you from there?

**AHMAD.** Jesus, I'm Puerto Rican, man.

**KNIGHT.** I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

**AHMAD.** Just fucking with you, man.

**KNIGHT.** Goddammit.

**AHMAD.** Yes, I am from Iraq.

**KNIGHT.** What are you doing here?

**AHMAD.** Making the best of it.

**KNIGHT.** How did you end up in Wisconsin?

**AHMAD.** For all my sins, I think. Right?

**KNIGHT.** No argument here. This fucking place.

**AHMAD.** Yes, I think we'd both prefer to be somewhere else.

**KNIGHT.** I didn't complain to anyone about the heat. (*Pause.*) Where would you rather be?

**AHMAD.** Full disclosure. I'm not much of a maintenance man. That's what he pays me for, but it's not my calling, you understand?

**KNIGHT.** Then why are you here?

**AHMAD.** Well, Joe gives me a tiny room where I can stay, and in return I pretend to fix things. Work the desk sometimes. Clean the pool.

**KNIGHT.** Pretty good grift.

**AHMAD.** I wear the uniform but it's not who I am.

**KNIGHT.** What would you call yourself, then?

**AHMAD.** My name is Ahmad. And I'm a philosopher. (*Knight smiles/chuckles. Silence.*)

**KNIGHT.** Oh. You're serious.

**AHMAD.** Yes. Quite serious.

**KNIGHT.** What must that be like, I wonder?

**AHMAD.** It's pretty fucking exhausting.

**KNIGHT.** Ahmad. I couldn't pick a philosopher out of a lineup. What kind are you? You a systems guy? A systematizer?

**AHMAD.** Nope.

**KNIGHT.** Or some kind of soothsayer? Maybe a prognosticator.

**AHMAD.** I'm more of a sense-maker.

**KNIGHT.** Huh. Sense-maker.



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**AHMAD.** That's right.

**KNIGHT.** Good luck.

**AHMAD.** For instance, currently I am writing a very lengthy philosophical treatise.

**KNIGHT.** You're doing that right now?

**AHMAD.** I was. But I got stuck. And then I came in here. And some thoughts did then occur to me. But my job can be very distracting.

*(Ahmad goes back to examining the heater. He bangs on it ineffectually.)*

**KNIGHT.** Ahmad?

**AHMAD.** What?

**KNIGHT.** How do you know that you're a philosopher?

**AHMAD.** How do you know you're anything, man?

**KNIGHT.** The uniform you wear. Your name tag. Pay stub.

Credentials...I don't know. Seems like there are ways of knowing.

**AHMAD.** What are you? *(Silence.)* I just decided to be one, OK?

Besides, I told you that I am writing a very lengthy philosophical work.

**KNIGHT.** Yes, that's right. You mentioned that.

**AHMAD.** A treatise.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah. What is that? What are you even saying? Treat. Are you saying, treat?

**AHMAD.** Never mind. It's a lot of hard work.

**KNIGHT.** Is it?

**AHMAD.** Studying. Reading. Thinking.

**KNIGHT.** That sounds exhausting.

**AHMAD.** I don't look like a serious thinker to you?

**KNIGHT.** In this light, Sir, it's really hard for me to tell what's what.

**AHMAD.** You don't believe me?

**KNIGHT.** I believe you are what you say you are.

**AHMAD.** That's very courteous.

**KNIGHT.** What's it about?

**AHMAD.** The treatise?

**KNIGHT.** Yeah, the thing. What's it about?

**AHMAD.** It's a first-person account. I write about my struggles and various biographical quests and missteps and...my journey to figuring out...what the world is. Something like that.

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**KNIGHT.** Sounds like something my little sister used to write in her journal.

**AHMAD.** You don't know what you're talking about. It's not a diary.

**KNIGHT.** (*Mocking voice.*) *Why didn't Bobby say 'Hi' to me in school?*

**AHMAD.** Just forget it.

**KNIGHT.** Could I read some of it?

**AHMAD.** Why would you want to do that?

**KNIGHT.** Maybe you know something I don't.

**AHMAD.** Maybe.

**KNIGHT.** Is that it right there?

**AHMAD.** Some notes I was making. You're welcome to take a look.

(*Handing it to him.*) But I write in Arabic, so...

**KNIGHT.** (*Flipping through the notebook.*) This is in Arabic.

**AHMAD.** As I said.

**KNIGHT.** I feel so strange.

**AHMAD.** You're standing there naked.

**KNIGHT.** That's part of it.

**AHMAD.** And you had an extension cord wrapped around your neck so I removed that. What the hell were you doing?

**KNIGHT.** Just being dramatic. No need to worry.

**AHMAD.** You sure?

**KNIGHT.** Yeah, I'm not gonna...do anything. I was staring in the mirror at my old flabby body. (*Goes to the mirror.*)

**AHMAD.** Is that what caused you to cry?

**KNIGHT.** Yeah.

**AHMAD.** That's not worth crying about.

**KNIGHT.** I only cried a little.

**AHMAD.** I could take out the mirror if you like.

**KNIGHT.** Oh, so you know how to uninstall mirrors.

**AHMAD.** I'm very good at that.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah, but can you fix it?

**AHMAD.** Not the way you want.

**KNIGHT.** Should have seen me in my prime.

**AHMAD.** Likewise. (*Silence.*) You're not that bad for your age.

**KNIGHT.** The Army says I'm too fat.

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**AHMAD.** Too fat for what?

**KNIGHT.** Too fat to lead men into battle.

**AHMAD.** Are you going into battle?

**KNIGHT.** As a Non-Commissioned Officer I present a poor example for the junior Soldiers in my charge.

**AHMAD.** How much weight you gotta lose?

**KNIGHT.** I think ten pounds in the next ten days would do it.

**AHMAD.** That would do it? What would it do?

**KNIGHT.** That would get me across the line. Give me some breathing room and momentum to make some more serious changes...and...maybe...

**AHMAD.** Yeah?

**KNIGHT.** But you don't need to hear my problems.

**AHMAD.** I'm a good listener. *(Silence.)* Ten pounds, huh. That's a lot.

**KNIGHT.** Yes, it is.

**AHMAD.** That's easy, though.

**KNIGHT.** Easy.

**AHMAD.** Just cut off your head. *(Silence.)*

**KNIGHT.** You gonna be much longer?

**AHMAD.** Hard to say.

**KNIGHT.** That's what you keep saying. I gotta work out.

**AHMAD.** Yeah, you said that already.

**KNIGHT.** Think I'll run ten miles tonight.

**AHMAD.** I'd check outside first if I were you. *(Knight puts on a winter PT cap and opens the motel room door to check the weather. The freezing Wisconsin wind blows thorough the room.)*

**KNIGHT.** Fuck you too, Wisconsin. *(Knight closes the door. He sits in the corner, pulls a sheet around him, and puts his head down.)*

**AHMAD.** It's nasty out there.

**KNIGHT.** Maybe later. You keep working, Ahmad. Or whatever you're doing. I'll just sit here and think a bit.

**AHMAD.** As you like. *(Ahmad watches him drift off. Then he starts writing again. Darkness.)*

## THE FAT SERGEANT

### SCENE 3

*A few hours later. Ahmad is sitting on the busted A/C unit in the middle of the floor.*

**AHMAD.** Have you ever wanted to kill someone? I mean, truly. Not just wanted them dead, but you wanted to do it to them. Yourself.

**KNIGHT.** It's just part of being a man, I think.

**AHMAD.** Yes, I think so. *(Silence.)*

**KNIGHT.** Even if there be murder in your heart, keep a smile on your face. *(Silence. Clears throat uncomfortably.)* Anyway...what were we talking about?

**AHMAD.** Sorry, I interrupted you. The book.

**KNIGHT.** The book. Yes. Before I went to Iraq the first time, I ordered a book. From Amazon.

**AHMAD.** A book about Iraq?

**KNIGHT.** Yeah.

**AHMAD.** Good.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah. I never read it.

**AHMAD.** So you knew nothing.

**KNIGHT.** Nothing at all. It was all a wonderful surprise for me.

**AHMAD.** But you were excited to go.

**KNIGHT.** I was thrilled. Yes, I wanted to go.

**AHMAD.** Why?

**KNIGHT.** I was hoping for some kind of...personal transformation, or...some shit like that.

**AHMAD.** Excited to go and kill strange people.

**KNIGHT.** You don't know what you're talking about.

**AHMAD.** Are you sure?

**KNIGHT.** I've got nothing against strange people. I tried to be nice to those people.

**AHMAD.** Those people. And now, after this great transformative journey, what do you know?

**KNIGHT.** About Iraq?

**AHMAD.** Or anything.

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**KNIGHT.** You're mocking me.

**AHMAD.** No. Honest.

**KNIGHT.** Nothing. Not a damn thing. That's what I know.

**AHMAD.** Damn, man. That's downright philosophical.

**KNIGHT.** What is?

**AHMAD.** Your epistemological humility.

**KNIGHT.** Sure. That. Nice of you to notice. *(Silence.)* I know that the kids there would start a riot over a soccer ball. I know that.

**AHMAD.** You know that, huh?

**KNIGHT.** That was the best part of it all.

**AHMAD.** What was the best part?

**KNIGHT.** Handing out the balls to the little kids. Making them smile.

**AHMAD.** A soldier handed my son a soccer ball once.

**KNIGHT.** I really love those kids. *(Silence.)* Grown men, now.

**AHMAD.** Not all of them. *(Silence.)* Yes, but you know something, Knight. The children they used to play hooky from school and wait for the Americans to drive by and throw candy and balls to them. You guys never thought that one through.

**KNIGHT.** I don't mean to be rude. You wanna drink?

**AHMAD.** Nah, man. Thanks.

**KNIGHT.** Muslim thing?

**AHMAD.** Sure. *(Knight checks his phone. He sends a text.)* How come your wife stopped talking to you?

**KNIGHT.** I got a few theories.

**AHMAD.** Let's hear one.

**KNIGHT.** She started reading a bunch of women authors and shit like that.

**AHMAD.** Women authors?

**KNIGHT.** Gave her all these ideas.

**AHMAD.** That's what happened? She got some ideas.

**KNIGHT.** I can't prove it.

**AHMAD.** As a testable hypothesis, it's weak.

**KNIGHT.** Me being over there didn't help.

**AHMAD.** Ah, OK. So, Iraq ruined your marriage, huh?

**KNIGHT.** I don't blame you personally, but...

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**AHAMD.** You know what I say to that?

**KNIGHT.** No. What do you say to that?

**AHAMD.** I say big fucking deal, man. You know?

**KNIGHT.** I think it's a pretty big deal.

**AHAMD.** You got off easy.

**KNIGHT.** You're not being a very good listener.

**AHAMD.** I'm tired of listening.

**KNIGHT.** Tired of listening.

**AHMAD.** To all of you.

**KNIGHT.** What do you mean, *all of us*?

**AHMAD.** All of you fucking vet bros. All of you.

**KNIGHT.** Hey, I ain't a fuckin vet bro, OK? That's not me.

**AHMAD.** With your trucks and flag stickers and infidel shirts.

**KNIGHT.** You don't know anything about me.

**AHMAD.** I know everything about you.

**KNIGHT.** Do you know that I live in my mom's basement.

**AHMAD.** What's wrong with that? She's your family. And you have your health. Maybe. (*Silence.*) You have a country. A job. Do you have a job?

**KNIGHT.** Oh, sure. Turns out I'm a philosopher too. Couldn't you tell?

**AHMAD.** If that's what you say you are.

**KNIGHT.** Right now we need heating and air conditioning experts more than we need philosophers.

**AHMAD.** I'm not so sure.

**KNIGHT.** And the Army sure don't need any more fat sergeants. Anyway, what about your wife? Your family? (*Ahmad gets up to leave.*) Wait. Where're you going?

**AHMAD.** I'm going to switch the heater out in my room for yours. Mine works pretty good. It won't take me very long.

**KNIGHT.** What about you? You need heat.

**AHMAD.** I'll be fine. With some extra blankets. (*Ahmad starts dragging the A/C unit across the floor.*)

**KNIGHT.** Dude, it's fucking freezing.

**AHMAD.** It's the only thing I can think to do.

**KNIGHT.** Ahmad?

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**AHMAD.** Yeah?

**KNIGHT.** Did he like it?

**AHMAD.** What?

**KNIGHT.** Did your son like the soccer ball? That the soldier gave to him?

**AHMAD.** Oh, yes.

**KNIGHT.** That's good.

**AHMAD.** Yes, he did. But I'm sorry to say that the ball was a piece of junk.

**KNIGHT.** Oh.

**AHMAD.** I don't mean to sound ungrateful. The kids played with it. But it split apart in less than an hour.

**KNIGHT.** That's the US Army. Bought from the lowest fucking bidder.

**AHMAD.** There was an Iraqi flag printed on the ball. And a phone number.

**KNIGHT.** That's right. An Iraqi Police hot-line number.

**AHMAD.** *(As though reciting a slogan.) Call this number to report the terrorists.*

**KNIGHT.** *To help facilitate the population's cooperation with the legitimate local Iraqi Security Forces.*

**AHMAD.** *Do not allow the enemies of Iraq to cause chaos.*

**KNIGHT.** *Building security and stability in the new Iraq.*

**AHMAD.** Is that what you guys were trying to do? *(Silence.)*

**KNIGHT.** Fuck if I know, man. That's what the captain told us. It briefs well, as they say. *(Ahmad goes to leave, dragging the air conditioning unit towards the door.)* Hey, man. I'm not gonna say nothing about the heat. I'm not trying to hem you up, OK? You keep yours.

**AHMAD.** No. You're the guest. Have a good workout, man.

**KNIGHT.** You're welcome to join me.

**AHMAD.** Right.

**KNIGHT.** Hey, Ahmad.

**AHMAD.** Yeah?

**KNIGHT.** I hope your son...I hope he turned out OK. In all that...mess. *(Ahmad continues dragging the A/C unit as the lights fade to dark.)*

## THE FAT SERGEANT

### SCENE 4

*A few days later. Early morning. Banks is mopping the floor. Knight enters after a morning work-out wearing his winter PT uniform.*

**BANKS.** Good morning, Sergeant.

**KNIGHT.** Hey, man. Is Doc around?

**BANKS.** Haven't seen him yet today, Sergeant.

**KNIGHT.** My fucking knees are screaming.

**BANKS.** You trying to go to sick call?

**KNIGHT.** No, I want to see if he has any of those heavy-duty ibuprofens.

**BANKS.** Got cha.

**KNIGHT.** I need to chug about eight of 'em.

**BANKS.** Hittin' it pretty hard?

**KNIGHT.** Trying to. Feeling my age.

**BANKS.** I got some stuff you can take. In my bag. It's hanging up there in the locker.

**KNIGHT.** You sure?

**BANKS.** Yeah, take what you need. Front pocket. Take the bottle with you. When you're done just stick it back in there. It's always hanging up there. *(Knight finds the pill bottle in the backpack. He examines it quickly then sticks it in his pocket.)*

**KNIGHT.** I'll bring this back to you.

**BANKS.** No worries. No hurry.

**KNIGHT.** Thank you kindly, youngster.

**BANKS.** Anytime. Hey, I wanted to tell you something, Sergeant.

**KNIGHT.** What's that?

**BANKS.** The other morning here when I heard you start screaming, Master Sergeant Motherfucker, I about lost my shit.

**KNIGHT.** Oh. You heard that, did you?

**BANKS.** That was fucking funny.

**KNIGHT.** At least I'm good for morale, right?

**BANKS.** Master Sergeant Motherfucker! Master Sergeant Motherfucker! I was dying.



## THE FAT SERGEANT

**KNIGHT.** You better be careful he don't hear you.

**BANKS.** Nah, he's in with First Sergeant. They were supposed to hear something soon about my medical board appeal. Hopefully good news.

**KNIGHT.** What are you gonna do if they put you out of the Army, Banks?

**BANKS.** I got no idea. This is all I want to be doing.

**KNIGHT.** Mopping floors?

**BANKS.** No. The Army. The life. All of it.

**KNIGHT.** Really? This?

**BANKS.** It's all I ever wanted to be a part of.

**KNIGHT.** You been to college?

**BANKS.** Nah.

**KNIGHT.** That's what you need to do, man. Look into it.

**BANKS.** I don't...know.

**KNIGHT.** Talk to someone at the education center here.

**BANKS.** That's really not for me.

**KNIGHT.** You should be going to college, Banks. A sharp kid like you.

**BANKS.** I don't know about all that.

**KNIGHT.** Go study something, or...shit, I don't know what the fuck goes on in college, but it looks like a good time. Have fun. Enjoy your youth.

**BANKS.** I got three kids, Sergeant.

**KNIGHT.** Oh. Well, Jesus.

**BANKS.** I know, right?

**KNIGHT.** No. I didn't mean that. That's just...That's really beautiful.

**BANKS.** Two, Four and Five. Actually, there's another one on the way.

**KNIGHT.** Oh my God. Jesus, Banks. Slow the fuck down.

**BANKS.** Yeah, right?

**KNIGHT.** You are a goddamn hero to me, buddy.

**BANKS.** You got any kids, Sergeant?

**KNIGHT.** No. I got two ex-wives, but...you know.

**BANKS.** Maybe it's best in that type of situation. You know? So the kids don't have to...

**KNIGHT.** Yeah, I get you. Kids don't deserve that kind of...

**BANKS.** But maybe someday, right?

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**KNIGHT.** No, I...I can't.

**BANKS.** Oh.

**KNIGHT.** Don't worry about it. Listen, I'll bring back your dope as soon as possible.

**BANKS.** Roger that, Sergeant. And don't worry, they won't show up on a piss test.

**KNIGHT.** Fuck if I care at this point. Have a good one, man.

**BANKS.** Just marking time until my time's up. *(Myers enters the room.)*

**KNIGHT.** *(On the way out.)* Good morning, Master Sergeant.

**MYERS.** Knight.

**BANKS.** *(To Knight as he exits.)* See ya, Sergeant.

**MYERS.** First Sergeant needs to see you in his office, Banks.

**BANKS.** Roger that, Master Sergeant. *(Banks puts up the mop and adjusts a few chairs and starts towards the door. He pauses at the door.)*

**MYERS.** I'll be there in a minute.

**BANKS.** Master Sergeant?

**MYERS.** Yeah?

**BANKS.** I really appreciate everything you did to help me. For what it's worth. *(Myers nods. Banks leaves. After a moment Myers grabs a chair and slams it angrily on the floor. He picks it up as though to fling it across the room but stops himself.)*

### SCENE 5

*Evening, in the middle of nowhere. Knight is out jogging. He comes to a stop, breathing heavily. He pulls his phone from his jacket pocket and checks it. He takes a small bottle from his jacket and drinks. The wind picks up. He sits on the ground.*

**KNIGHT.** Nothing quite like having all your bullshit problems put into perspective in a fucking instant. Three kids. Jesus.

**AHMAD.** *(Appearing from the other side of the stage.)* You're a long way out.

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**KNIGHT.** That fucking kid has got more responsibility on his shoulders and more grief to deal with than I can fathom. And here I am. Can't get my own bullshit problems in order.

**AHMAD.** There's no sense in keeping score.

**KNIGHT.** Best run I've had in a long time. No pain. *(Takes a drink.)*

**AHMAD.** Yes, I see.

**KNIGHT.** Ahmad, do you think that we have anything else left to give?

**AHMAD.** What do you mean by that?

**KNIGHT.** Do you ever feel like you're done?

**AHMAD.** Seems to me that our problem is nihilism.

**KNIGHT.** *(Sarcastic.)* I knew you would say that.

**AHMAD.** It's a very grey-haired problem, that. Not what's in front of us, but what we've left behind. And the meaninglessness of all the violence and the tears and the sins and fluids spilled out along the way.

**KNIGHT.** Fluids.

**AHMAD.** I remember once when the HUMVEE trucks rolled through our neighborhood, and there was this sucker in wraparound sunglasses. Big wad of dip in his lip. American.

**KNIGHT.** Of course.

**AHMAD.** And he's up in the machine gun nest on the truck. You know?

**KNIGHT.** The turret.

**AHMAD.** The turret, yes. So this sucker, I see him hand a water bottle down to this little neighborhood kid. The kid is running beside the truck yelling up to him, '*mista, mista,*' begging for stuff. And the kid he's kind of dumb, you know? And sunglasses guy hands him down a water bottle. But the bottle, it's full of piss. And he gives it to this poor dumb kid. And he's smiling through his sunglasses and hoping that this child would drink his piss. What do you think about that, Knight?

**KNIGHT.** Some guys did some ugly things.

**AHMAD.** Yes. Ugly things.

**KNIGHT.** Some were worse than others.

**AHMAD.** Honest, Knight, I wanted that fucker in the sunglasses to get killed.

**KNIGHT.** Did he?

**AHMAD.** How should I know?

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**KNIGHT.** We got hit with some pretty ugly things too, you know? Worse than piss bottles. *(Silence.)* What does all this mean?

**AHMAD.** I don't know, man. I don't know what's happening here. *(Silence.)*

**KNIGHT.** Drink to warm you up? *(Knight offers and Ahmad waves him off.)* God ain't gonna mind if you take one drink. Or maybe he will. But fuck it, right?

**AHMAD.** It's got nothing to do with God.

**KNIGHT.** You aren't Muslim?

**AHMAD.** I used to have problems with drinking. So I quit.

**KNIGHT.** You should have said something before.

**AHMAD.** Don't worry about it. My problem, not yours.

**KNIGHT.** Marriage is a lot different in Iraq, isn't it?

**AHMAD.** What does that mean?

**KNIGHT.** The men run things in those Arabic places. The women have to behave themselves or else. Right?

**AHMAD.** Man, where do you guys hear shit like that?

**KNIGHT.** Army cultural awareness class.

**AHMAD.** That's the garbage they teach you?

**KNIGHT.** En shah Allah. Skaku maku.

**AHMAD.** With such a deep cultural background like that what could go wrong?

**KNIGHT.** Why are you here?

**AHMAD.** The phone number.

**KNIGHT.** The one on the soccer balls.

**AHMAD.** And on these cards too. *(He hands Knight a business-sized card.)*

**KNIGHT.** I gave out hundreds of these things over there.

**AHMAD.** Soldiers gave one of these to my brother one day. *Call this phone number and turn in the enemies of Iraq.*

**KNIGHT.** Is that what all those squiggly lines say?

**AHMAD.** You can't read it. But you handed them out.

**KNIGHT.** I just tried to be nice.

**AHMAD.** You went there to be nice?

**KNIGHT.** I tried.

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**AHMAD.** Ever shoot a child, Knight?

**KNIGHT.** No.

**AHMAD.** No?

**KNIGHT.** I never shot any kids.

**AHMAD.** How do you know for sure?

**KNIGHT.** I never shot anybody in Iraq.

**AHMAD.** Never?

**KNIGHT.** I never even fired my fucking weapon, OK? *(Silence.)*

**AHMAD.** You say that like you're ashamed.

**KNIGHT.** You don't understand.

**AHMAD.** I don't?

**KNIGHT.** They send you over there. Again and again. And they take years of your life, right? Ruin your marriages, kill your friends, all of it.

**AHMAD.** I know about dead friends.

**KNIGHT.** So at the end of it you gotta have something to show for it.

**AHMAD.** Like what? A body count?

**KNIGHT.** You damn sure ought to get your money's worth.

**AHMAD.** My brother called that phone number.

**KNIGHT.** So what?

**AHMAD.** He reported about the militias that were coming into the neighborhood. Two days later they came and arrested him.

**KNIGHT.** Who came and arrested him?

**AHMAD.** The militias came and arrested him.

**KNIGHT.** Someone ratted on him for calling the number.

**AHMAD.** The militias were the ones answering the fucking phones.

**KNIGHT.** We didn't know that, Ahmad.

**AHMAD.** How could you not know that?

**KNIGHT.** Just a dumb fucking reservist, man.

**AHMAD.** Sure. Just smiled through your sunglasses and handed out the number. Fuck these people, right?

**KNIGHT.** I never said, fuck these people.

**AHMAD.** You said you need to lose about ten pounds, right?

**KNIGHT.** So?

**AHMAD.** That was about the weight of my brother's head when the militias dumped it off in our neighborhood.

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**KNIGHT.** That's not on me.

**AHMAD.** He wanted your help. And for that they killed him. *(Silence. The cold winds become more intense.)*

**KNIGHT.** We need to keep moving. It's a long way back.

**AHAMD.** Yeah. As you like.  
*(Darkness.)*

### SCENE 6

*Early morning. Knight enters the dayroom looking for Banks. He goes to return the bottle of pills, but the bag is not hanging in the locker. He finds an envelope with his name and opens it. We hear the voice of Banks as Knight reads. Myers steps into the room while he is reading.*

**BANKS.** Hey, Staff Sergeant Knight. I hope you get this. I just wanted to tell you that I have a lot of admiration for you and for what you've done for the Army and for the country. I enjoyed our talks together. Remember, we all have peaks and valleys, and I know you'll be back on top again. I believe that you have a lot more to give. Unfortunately, I don't have a future in the Army and that really sucks. But I know God has a plan for me and for my family. I'll figure it out with their help. You can keep the pills. Hope they help. Good luck. Tony Banks.

**MYERS.** Staff Sergeant Knight.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah.

**MYERS.** Can you get a couple of bodies from your class to scrape the ice off the sidewalk out front before First Sergeant gets in?

**KNIGHT.** What? Oh...sure, man.

**MYERS.** It's your guys' turn on the schedule.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah. Yeah, I'll get it done right now. Sergeant.

**MYERS.** Thank you. *(Knight goes to leave the room. He pauses at the door as if he will say something but then exits.)*

## THE FAT SERGEANT

### SCENE 7

*Past midnight. Knight is walking after a run. Snow is falling. He sits on the ground, catches his breath, and sends a text. Lights up on Ahmad. He is carrying a bowling ball-sized bag.*

**AHMAD.** I used to believe that the invasion, or the liberation, whatever you call it, that it was all a conspiracy to humiliate the Iraqi people and to destroy our country. To take away our dignity. To drive us all mad. The evidence was too overwhelming to believe otherwise.

**KNIGHT.** Now what do you believe?

**AHMAD.** Now. Now I lean towards the hypothesis that you guys were just fucking stupid.

**KNIGHT.** It's easy to get those two things confused.

**AHMAD.** And now neither one of us knows where the fuck we are.

**KNIGHT.** Is that why you're here? Part of your grand project.

**AHMAD.** It all has to mean something. Right?

**KNIGHT.** I'm so fucking lost.

**AHMAD.** Follow the moon. It'll take you back to the road.

**KNIGHT.** I don't know your side of the story. But I would like to.

**AHMAD.** I'm not so sure about that.

**KNIGHT.** I would read it, Ahmad.

**AHMAD.** It's written in Arabic, Knight.

**KNIGHT.** I want to understand. I can try.

**AHMAD.** Useless, I'm afraid.

**KNIGHT.** You wouldn't be out here if you believed that. If I can't read it then I can listen.

**AHAMAD.** *(Begins speaking in Arabic.)*

*نحن ننفذ عملية عسكرية في هذه المنطقة. أبقى في بيوتكم واتباع كل اوامر*

**KNIGHT.** C'mon, man!

**AHMAD.** How many Americans died in Iraq? Yeah, you know the answer. You may not know the exact figures, but you know, roughly. You kind of know.

**KNIGHT.** So what?

**AHMAD.** So how many Iraqis died?

## THE FAT SERGEANT

**KNIGHT.** I have no idea.

**AHMAD.** Right.

**KNIGHT.** I wasn't keeping score.

**AHMAD.** I was.

**KNIGHT.** I can look it up.

**AHMAD.** Iraq was your fucking graduate school. Your path to some manhood credentials. You get to tell your kids your wife and whoever else will listen to your bullshit all about it while you gaze wistfully to the horizon and spout off about how you have seen the face of war. Your little Homeric odyssey. Your summer camp heart of darkness journey down the Euphrates. *(Silence.)*

**KNIGHT.** I don't know what any of that shit means, dude.

**AHMAD.** Bullshit. You're not dumb, Knight.

**KNIGHT.** I'm just some fuck-up who wandered into your neighborhood one day, a thousand miles from my home. I tried to be nice to your kids. Because it was the easiest thing I could think to do.

**AHMAD.** My brother was a decent man. A lot better than me.

**KNIGHT.** We should have known. Yes, we were fucking stupid. And we died too. I lost someone, too.

**AHMAD.** He was your friend?

**KNIGHT.** He was my responsibility.

**AHMAD.** We should get going. *(Ahmad walks off. There is a passage of some time, Knight continues sitting on the ground. He closes his eyes and darkness slowly surrounds him.)*

**KNIGHT.** *(Opening his eyes.)* I was on the patrol when we found the head. It was sticking up out of the gravel and dirt. Eyes wide open. Surprised. Like someone had planted him there and he was sprouting up out of the ground. Growing. *(Silence.)* It was fascinating. So I took a picture of it. I wish I hadn't.

**AHMAD.** You still have it, don't you? The picture.

**KNIGHT.** Yeah.

**AHMAD.** Souvenir.

**KNIGHT.** Do you want to see it? *(Silence.)*



## THE FAT SERGEANT

**AHMAD.** One morning before the sun came up, I watched two men digging a hole along the side of the road. I knew what was going to happen.

**KNIGHT.** Were you with them?

**AHMAD.** I wasn't with those guys, Troy. But I watched. We all knew exactly what they were doing.

**KNIGHT.** You could have warned someone.

**AHMAD.** Called that tips-line, huh?

**KNIGHT.** You see it happen?

**AHMAD.** I watched it happen.

**KNIGHT.** What'd you do?

**AHMAD.** I took a picture. Like you.

**KNIGHT.** Souvenir. *(Ahmad opens the bag and tosses out a cracked US military helmet. Knight holds it in his hand and examines it closely. He lays back in the snow.)*

**AHMAD.** C'mon. Let's go back.

**KNIGHT.** You head back, Ahmad. I'm staying. Just follow the moon and you'll come to the road. *(Knight closes his eyes.)*

**AHMAD.** Not like this. C'mon, man. *(Silence. He stands over Knight for a few moments trying to get him up, then sits down beside him.)* You gave my child a soccer ball once, Sergeant Knight. And I could see in your eyes and in his eyes...I could see...He looked up at you grasping the ball in his hands and he said, "*God bless your hands, uncle.*" And you smiled back at him. So kindly. *(Blackout.)*

**END OF ACT 1**

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