

A Soldier's Guilt

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Note about script:

A man, a former soldier on the edge of a knife. PTSD is no joke. It can be so brutally, brutal. He is about to end it all. He cannot forgive himself for what he has done—what he had to do? He has called for help, but will it get there in time?

Note about the Characters:

There is no particular accent that needs to be used with this character. I have him set as being from Missouri. If you have a better idea, suggest it in a revision you submit for approval and publication. Doc. H.

Note about the Language:

I try, as I always do, to make the character as real as possible. Sadly, foul language seems to make most characters more “believable.” If, however, you want to cut or slightly change the language to be more “audience-friendly” (depending on your venue), go for it! Offer the alterations back to me in the form of a revision for approval and publication. Doc. H.

We begin:

I can't sleep Chief, images keep going through my mind like a train through a tunnel, running into a wall, as it explodes. BOOM! Then, like some awful magic trick, it is put back together and continues down the track. *Chugga. Fuckin' Chugga.* I don't think you can understand that if you can't really understand what it means to say such a thing, Chief. The images keep rolling through my head, dead bodies, blood carnage, hate, death, bat-shit crazy stuff that has sent so many of my friends to the loony bin or worse.

But nobody can really understand any of this shit, unless you've been there, done that! Been there, seen that. Unless you've lived it, Chief. Know what I mean? No...you don't. You don't know what I mean.

Shit. So much shit!

What have I seen? You ask like you doubt me. You ask like maybe this dumb farm boy does really have a case to be the way he is. To dream the way he dreams. To feel the way he feels, Chief.

I'll let you in on a little Fuckin' secret. Are you ready, Chief?

You want to know the biggest lie a man has ever said, that all of us say? Do ya, Chief?

Here it is: *I am fine.* How do you like the golden nugget, eh? That is our lie, all men. I am fine. Well, I am not fine. Most of us aren't, but I am really not fine. That's why I made the call—a call for help.

What have I seen? Wow Chief, you seemed stuck on that shit. You like blood and gore, don't ya? You want a good action movie where everyone is being blown to bit, but that shit ain't real. I have seen real. I mean Real Real!

I've seen so many things, I felt so many feelings. I don't know where to start, where to stop. I don't know where to begin, where to end. I don't know what to think. I don't know what to believe. I don't know what to take from it all.

But:

I do know I'm lost.

I do know I'm scared.

I do know I'm angry.

I do know I'm sad. Stupid ass word- *Sad*.

I do know I'm passionately obsessed with ending at all. How's that sound, Chief?

How can this be? How can a man like me, who grew up so good, so pure on a farm in Missouri, with good parents, a great brother, a great family, and married a wonderful woman, have two children? Everything that you're supposed to want and everything you're supposed to get...and I had it, but then Everything changed.

I had to go to war. I remember as a little kid playing with toy soldiers in the dirt that I thought it would be fun to go to battle, fight for my country, all that shit. Well, Chief, I was wrong. Dead....wrong. I just want it done, but I AM FINE, right?

That's why I called you, dispatch. I hear you talking to a 9-1-1 operator. Yes, I know you're here to help, but you're not hearing me.

No, Ma'am, I already gave you my name, number, rank, everything.

Help, me please. HELP, please! Send somebody to help me. I'm one small step from done. I can't take this pain. I can't take the images. I can't take these ideas of the things that I've done, the people that I've killed.

Killed? Wow!

You know what is funny, Chief? As a kid, I wouldn't even kill a bug. Some of my friends would take a magnifying glass in the middle of a hot summer day and fry it and laugh. I couldn't even do that.

I cherished life

I cherish life

But now what have I become?

Am I done

(Building) Am I insane? Am I insane? Am I insane?

No matter how many times I say it, how many times I question it, you never really understand what's going on. I never really understand the feelings that are going through my head so rapidly.

(Building) God, I need help. God, I need help. God, I need help. Please make this pain go away NOW, or I will make it go away.

Yes, Ma'am, I am still here. Tell the officer to hurry, please.

I was just a typical kid getting ready to graduate, not really sure what I wanna do with my life. College? No, I could barely get through high school. I had a new wife, a high school sweetheart. She was pregnant. Our first child, we didn't plan it, but we hope to have it one day when you get married soon. So quickly to

the courthouse. Married. I tried for a few years to work odd jobs, but none of them worked. Still, I was happy. Happy with my new wife, my baby boy. *Baby boy. Why did you kill a baby boy?*

But then she told me she was pregnant again with kiddo number 2. I needed to make better money, I need a way to pay for us.

Operator? I'll pray the Office is on the way? Good, tell him to hurry. I am losing my girl. Yes, I'm armed (soldiers are always armed). Am I dangerous? YES (soldiers are always dangerous). But operator, tell him I am not a danger to him, only to myself. I can't hang out much longer, please!

So, what did I do, Chief? I had no real job, a wife, a kid and another on the way. Finally, I listened to what my dad had been saying for years... I joined the Marine Corps (*Salutes*).

Semper Fi Motherfucker

That seems like the best idea: a chance to pay the bills, an opportunity to fight and die for the country that I loved, a chance to make my father (a former Jarhead) proud of me.

He was so proud when I told him my unlisted:

It's the right thing to do. He told me.

I'm proud of you, Son. He said as he shook my hand like a MAN!

Proud of me? Proud of me? I wonder if he would be proud after he found everything that I did, and the name of "freedom."

But that doesn't seem to matter now, doesn't it?

So I've tried and missed it went through boot camp. For the first time in my life, things were starting to make sense.

My first tour was during what us Jarheads called the Kuwait Marine War. The world called it Persian Gulf War. We went over there for revenge, some said. We went there to protect the Kuwaiti people from the evils from Iraq, some said. Some thought we were just there protecting oil. I did not care. I was there. I was ready to fight. To kill. Or so I thought

During the Battle of Ad-Dawrah, we were on patrol one day of some shitty 3rd world town. So far my deployment had been easy. Only a few small fights. Nothing really to see. Until this day.

We had to patrol

Quiet. All day, nice and quiet. Until... POP. POP. POP the sound of a MK 13 Mod ripped through the silence. I should have known something was coming, but I missed it. Three of my buddies were instantly down. Instantly dead. Gone. It took only one look at the face, well what was left of their faces, to know. No doubt about that Chief. Gone.

What happened next still seems like a hazy dream. It was my turn. My turn to inflict pain. I lost all control of my body. I simply acted. They say that is what heroes do. But I am no hero Chief. No hero at all.

I was filled with an anger that I could never imagine was in me, an anger that I could never explain to somebody who has never been there, but I hated everything. I wanted to see everything burn everybody in my way would burn I had to make the death of my friends mean what something that's fucking stupid I know, but at the time it made sense.

Semper Fi motherfucker

So, I charged into the nearest building because I thought I had heard shots come from there...I kicked open the door like some Barney Badass started shooting anything that moved...I started shooting. I did not stop until the clip of my M4 Carbine was empty. I couldn't stop pulling the trigger, even after the chamber was cleared, and the firing pin just continued to CLICK, CLICK, CLICK. I could not stop. I enjoyed it at least for a moment. God, I can't believe I could say that out loud, but for a few moments, Chief, I enjoyed it...the killing. Empty. Nothing left to give. No more death to deal out. I finally let go of the trigger.

Operator, I know an operator, yes, I see at the lights. I see he's there. He's almost here. Please tell him to hurry. I'm about to take it. I'm about to take the one thing that I have left for myself, my own life, please hurry. I'm so scared, I'm so alone. I'm so sad. I'm such.

Yes, I killed a couple of insurgents. To be exact, a father and a son. The father was still holding his M13 in his dead fingers. To tell the truth, Chief, between you and me, the gun wasn't in anybody's hands. That's what I told the sergeant when I gave my report and had already put the gun in that poor bastard's hands.

You know why, Chief? You know why the father was not holding his rifle and why it was just lying against the wall, because the father and son were sitting down at dinner or lunch or whatever.

But that doesn't stop me

The real problem was not that I killed an armed man with my spray of bullets. I could probably have lived with that. He wasn't probably the sniper who took out my buddies, but he was definitely an Iraqi soldier. He deserved to die. But....they did not....they did not...The family, dear God, I can still see their faces: Wife, two kids, a boy, and a girl about the same age as my own, gone. Nothing left but the blood and guts dripping from the walls behind them, and the ceiling, Dear God, it was dripping down from the ceiling. How could a bullet do that to children, spread the mess so far...so far...and I had done that...Their eye, their dead eyes, looking at me...looking into my soul.

Desperation
Hope
Freedom

It doesn't matter now. They are all dead. The Father, the Son (Holy Spirit, amen). The mother ("Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.")

And the kids. Look like my kids. I always look like my own kids in my nightmares.

Their blood bathed the walls like paint, some sort of sick painting.

I woke up many nights since then, sweat and urine soaking my sheet, the stench of my own blood and piss in the air. I would always run to the bathroom, then vomit in my toilet until I had nothing left to vomit. Not that I have much in my stomach anymore besides Jack Daniels. Nobody was there to hear me, though. So who cares? She left me, Chief. She took our kids and left me, Chief. She was tired of my shit. And, I think she always knew; I never told her what I did (how could I), but she must have known. I am a coward. Even now, I am a coward. I am not sure I have what it takes to pull this trigger again, but this time to stop myself, stop the pain!

I can't undo it anymore, Operator. Yes, I hear his car. He is here. Not sure if he made it on time. Pretty sure he didn't. I am tired of being a coward, operator. Thank you for trying. Good night, operator. No....you have helped enough....goodbye

You know what the gunny thing is, Chief? They gave me the goddamn CMH for my work the day. The goddamn Congressional Medal of Honor, for doing what I did, simply because the Brass considered this house as a fortified outpost from which sniper fire came.

They said by taking it out, I saved lives.

Did I save other soldiers? I'm sure I did. Turns out the father was a sniper, the son was his spotter, but the wife and children?

Why the hell were they even there?

Even as they pinned that metal to my chest and I saw the great pride in my father's eyes in the audience, even as my mother cried, I wondered that. Why were his wife and kids in that room? Why?

Why did I do it? All of them.

But I was a hero, right, Chief? I am a hero, RIGHT CHIEF.

They gave me the CMH for taking out that outpost, but in reality, I simply killed

(Putting a gun to his head)

Murdered

Took life

Ended at all

For them

Sorry, Chief, you're too late.

(Stomps)