

PFC BROWN

Written by Ben Markus Tabor

Wednesday mornings we'd play basketball in the motor pool. There was cammie netting above us protecting us from the morning sun, and palm trees to our sides. I wasn't too good, actually I sucked. But, it was fun loosing your mind in a game. That's why I wondered why PFC Brown never wanted to play. Not a big deal. Right? Even his active duty friends played sometimes. I didn't like him to be honest. One time we were playing and the ball rolled over to him sitting on a picnic bench. A normal human being would just role the basket ball right over. Right? The asshole decided to kick it. With his boots on. Of course it went no where near us. "What the fucks your problem PFC Brown!" I yelled and probably should have gone over there and whooped his ass. I am a better fighter than basket ball player. But he was kind of a big kid... And, I don't mean your typical Marine big either. I mean you typical full case instead of a six pack. I would have whooped his fat-ass.

I like to try to like Marines because they are my family, so I decided to give him another shot. It turned out to be another great morning with not a cloud in the sky. There was a wonderful view of the Tigris River and a great arch showing Arabic architecture outside our barracks. Palm trees hung over the streets as if we were in Miami or something. It was almost like a vacation land, as long as you thought of all the things it wasn't.

Again, PFC Brown was sitting all alone on a picnic bench in the Mech Bay probably waiting for one of his friends to go to chow with. "What's up PFC Brown!" I said that day, showing every bit of enthusiasm and love I shared for every Marine.

“Nothing,” he said and continued to look at the ground, and I figured he thought was too good to talk to a Reserve Marine. Our company was kind-of divided, in Iraq, into three groups; the active duty Marines from Camp Pendleton, the reserve Marines from Pittsburgh and the Reserve Marines from Providence. PFC Brown was a part of the active duty Marines, which could have been a part of his cockiness. They thought they were so much better because they live a life that any normal human would want to kill themselves in. Typical. Right?

The time I finally realized who PFC Brown was, was that night. It was like any normal night I had off. Although this night I remember thinking the camp was pretty fucking creepy. It was one of Saddam’s brother’s palaces, and there were rumors we were sleeping in one of his torture chambers. There was a full moon that that illuminated the sky but also created dark shadows that held ghosts I tell you. And there was a chilly breeze, that rattled the trees, which looked like fucking skeletons shaking, I swear to god.

I made it to bed around midnight, after I went to the gym, shower, and the internet center. I plenty of time to sleep until 0630 right?

Well at 0200 in the morning everyone was woken-up (that usually meant a drill). No one could stand a drill because it seemed to hold no purpose to us. Gunny Fensley came into our barracks which slept fifty marines in bunk beds, and resembled an enormous bathroom because of its white tiled walls that were probably once painted with blood. We quickly got in formation, half asleep, and he started yelling everyone’s names.

“King, Barousou, Barrerra, Greir...,” he went down the line, and there were two Marines missing. Gunny was ferocious and said, “You all can’t go to sleep until these fuckin’ Marines are found!”

One was PFC Brown, which only grew my hate for him. In formation,

whispers were passed. “I herd there was a gun shot,” and “I saw MP’s sectioning off one of the shitters”. Ngyuen, one of the missing Marines arrived from the gym. Where the fuck is PFC Brown? I thought.

Gunny came out, not sure what to say, but managed to say something he could use, “Ahh... Fuckin’ Marines, you should always log in the book where you’re going... Ahh... you can fall-out and go to sleep now.”

Shivers invaded my body, unwilling to believe what my mind couldn’t comprehend. I tried to go to sleep as the last whisper diffused across the barracks like a ghost, “PFC Brown shot and killed himself.”

A full book of selected short stories is projected to be released late 2008
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