

THE DOCS



A GRAPHIC NOVEL BY THE NAVAL HEALTH RESEARCH CENTER

THE DOCS

A GRAPHIC NOVEL

PRODUCED BY
THE NAVAL HEALTH RESEARCH CENTER

PREPARED BY
RTI INTERNATIONAL

THE DOCS TEAM

AUTHORS

Heidi Kraft
Russ Peeler
Jerry Larson

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

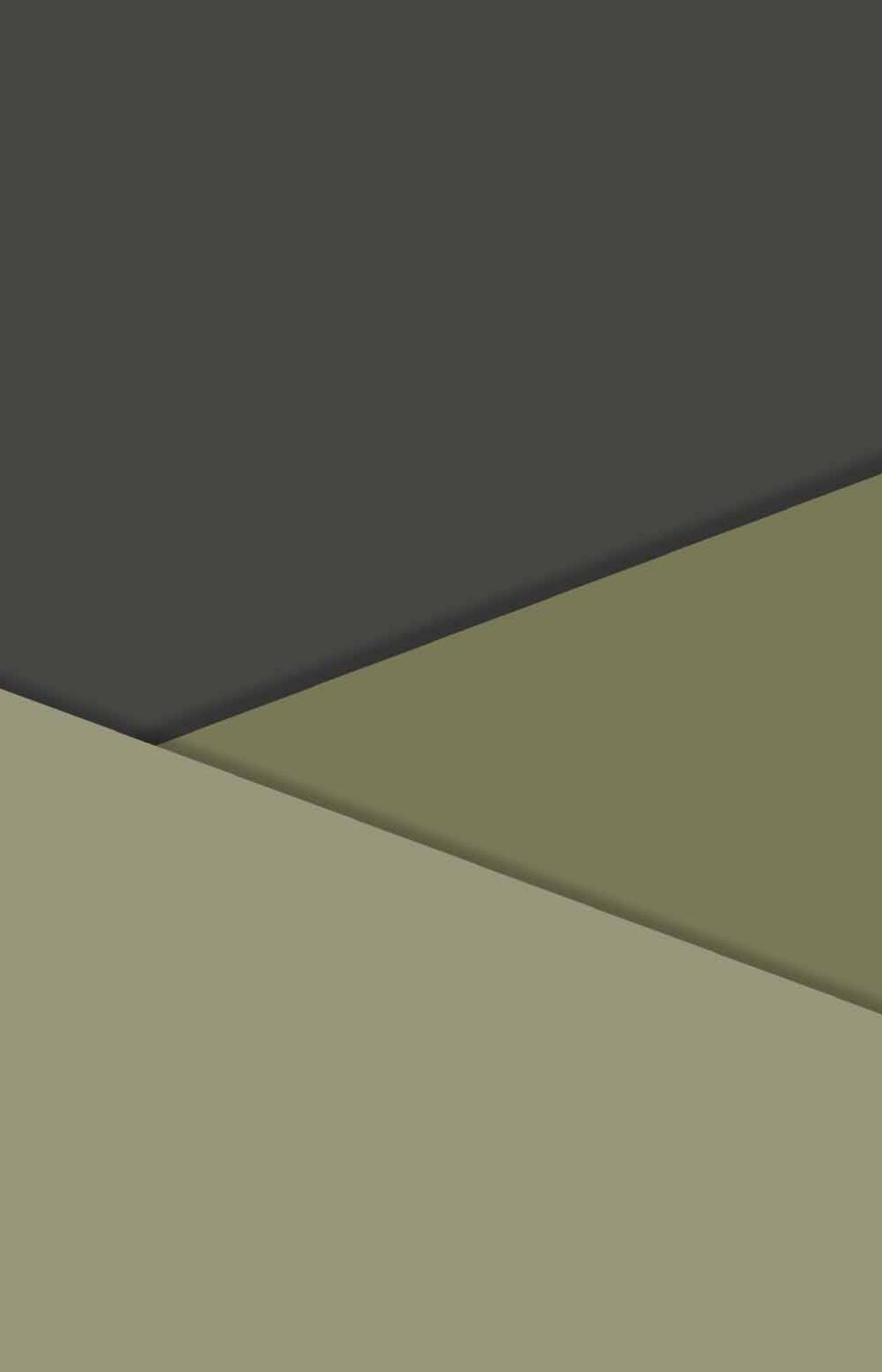
Carrie Borst

PROJECT MANAGERS

Jerry Larson
Laurel Hourani

ARTISTS

Shari Lambert (*Illustrator*)
Daniel Wiggins,
Dao Nguyen,
and
Diane Philyaw (*Colorists*)
E. Andrew Jessup
(*Letterer*)



DEDICATION

This story is dedicated to all Navy Corpsmen—past, present, and future—who stand in harm's way and selflessly honor their vow to care for those wounded during combat, either in body or spirit.

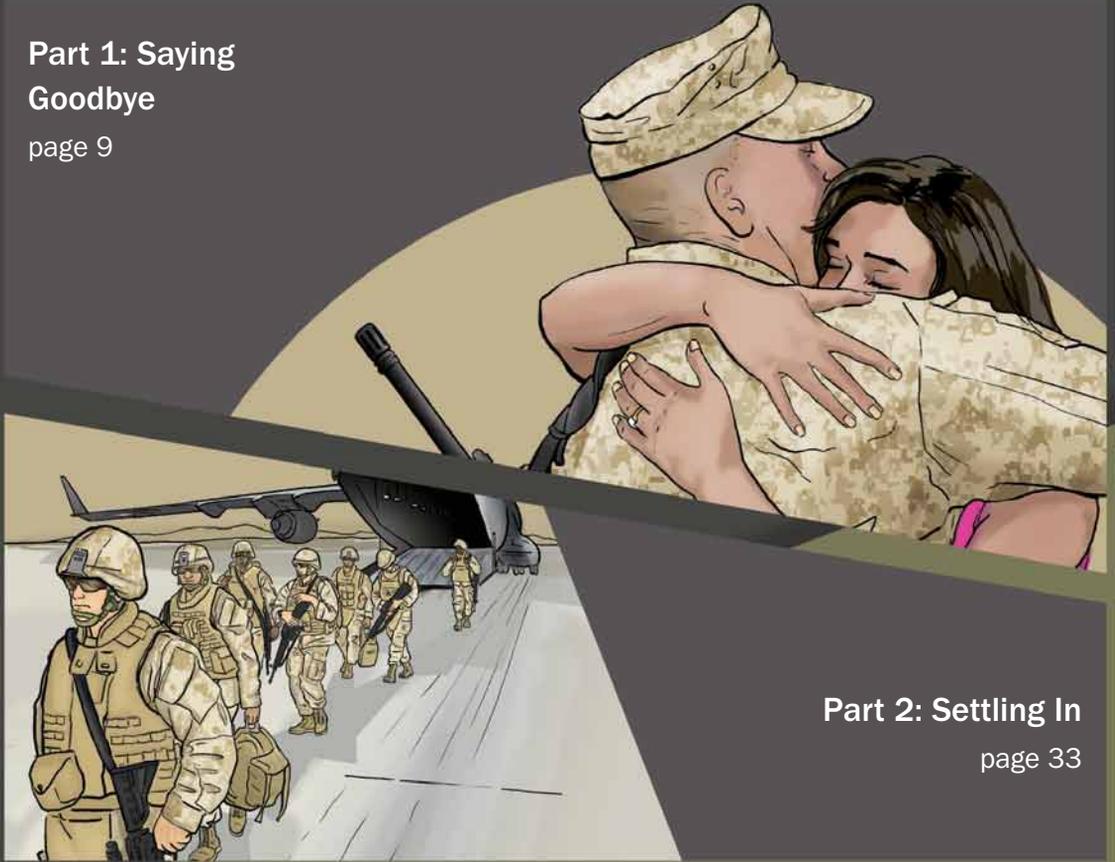
AUTHORS' NOTE

The Docs is the story of four Navy Corpsmen deployed to Iraq. While some events in the novel are specific to Operation Iraqi Freedom, this graphic novel is not intended to depict any specific time period or conflict. Rather, it represents a more general view of military life within a combat zone. The intent is to highlight challenges faced by Corpsmen in all wars. The commitment of Corpsmen to meeting these challenges is, like the story itself, timeless.

CONTENTS

Part 1: Saying Goodbye

page 9

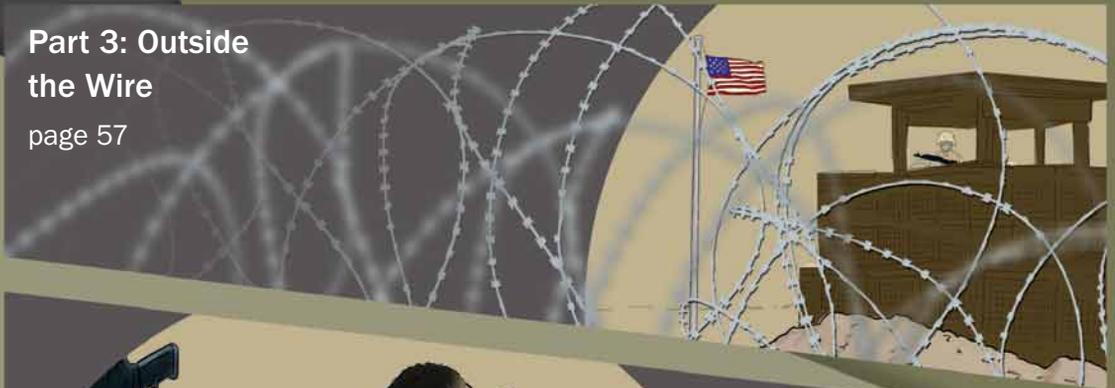


Part 2: Settling In

page 33

Part 3: Outside the Wire

page 57



Part 4: The Price of Freedom

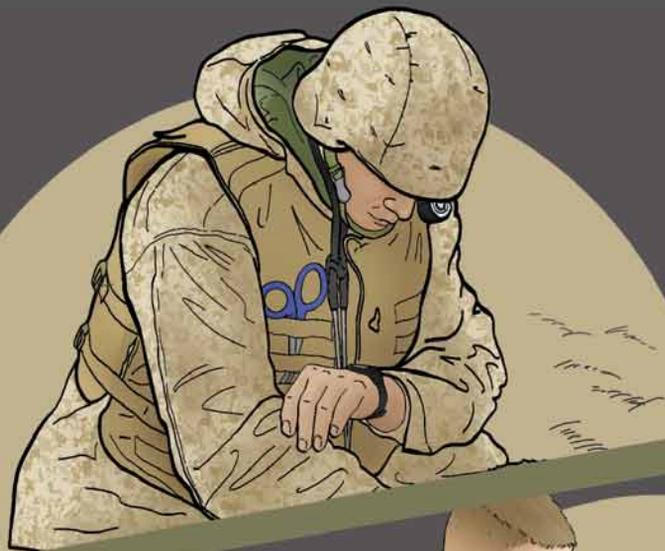
page 99



CONTENTS

Part 5: Lives in the Balance

page 135



Part 6: Voices of Support

page 163



Part 7: Returning Home

page 175

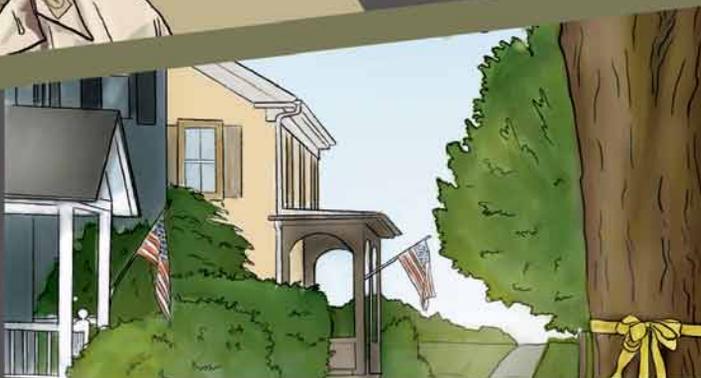


Part 8: Epilogue

page 185

Resources

page 199







PART 1
**Saying
Goodbye**



Marine Regiment, Marine Corps Base, California
Mission: Operation Iraqi Freedom



HM3 Jason Banks
USN, Kilo Company,
Marine Infantry Battalion
Age: 19





...MAN, DO NOT BRING UP THE DAMNED SCORPIONS AGAIN. I HATE THOSE THINGS!

DUDE, YOU'RE A U.S. MARINE. YOU CAN'T BE AFRAID OF A LITTLE BUG.

HEY, BRING ON THE INSURGENTS, BUT KEEP THE SCORPIONS AWAY. THEY'RE NASTY! WAIT TILL YOU FIND ONE IN YOUR BOOT.

HEY, DOC. YOU NEW AROUND HERE?



YEAH, NAME IS BANKS.

I'M EVERETT, JOHN EVERETT. FIRST TRIP TO THE DESERT, DOC?

YEP.

DON'T LET THOSE GUYS WORRY YOU. IT'S NOT SO BAD. BESIDES, YOU TAKE GOOD CARE OF US AND WE'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU.



SO, DOC, WHERE YOU FROM?

MISSISSIPPI.

I KNEW IT! I'M FROM ALABAMA.



SO, WHY THE NAVY? WHY NOT THE MARINE CORPS?

WHAT, DOC, DID YOU WANT TO WEAR THE CRACKER JACKS?

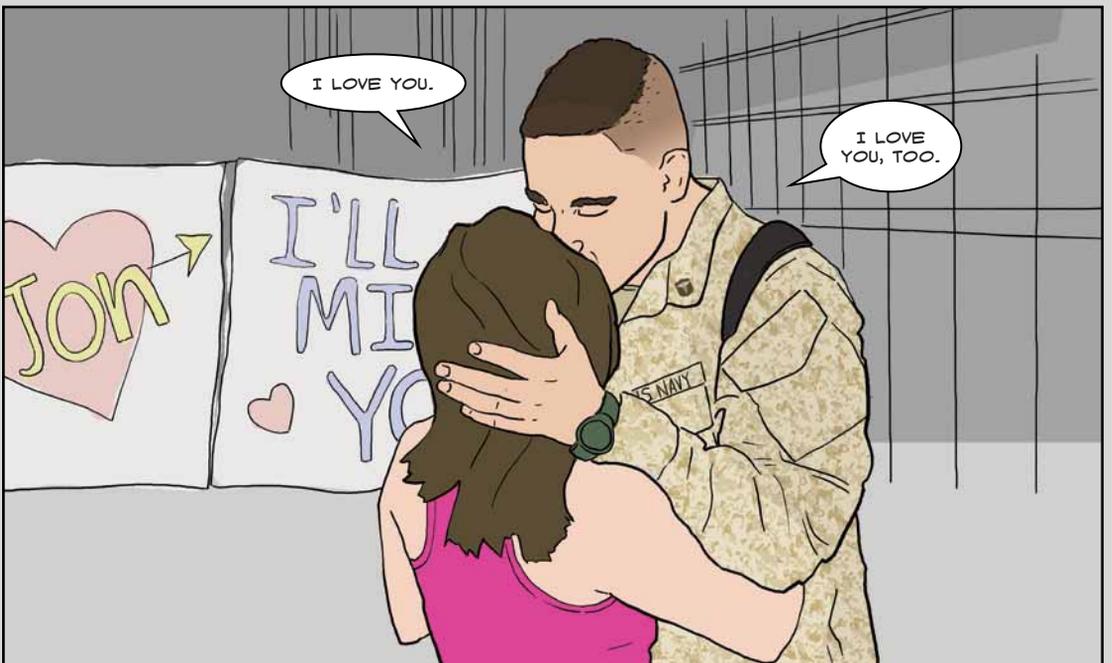
HEY, DO YOU SEE ANYBODY WEARING CRACKER JACKS AROUND HERE?



SO, WHY THE NAVY THEN?

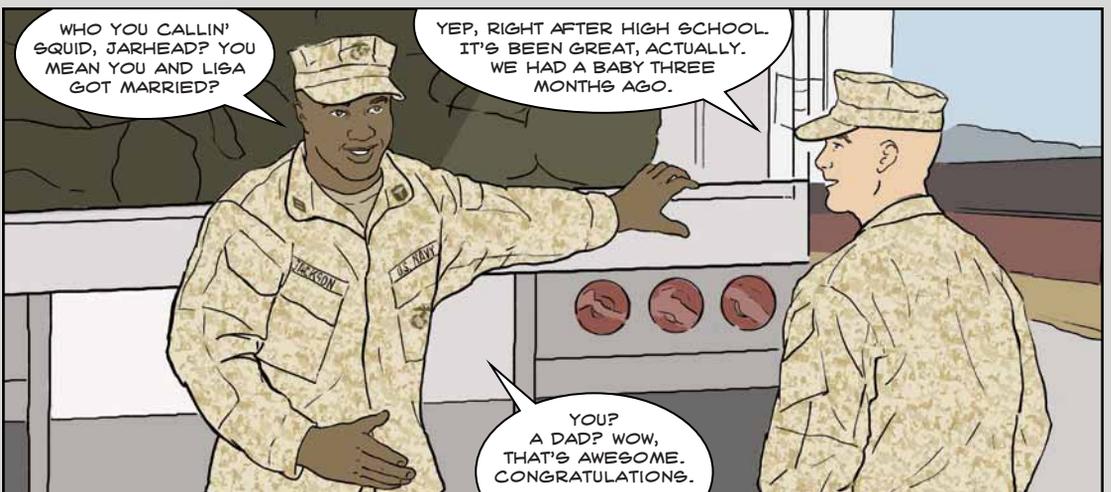
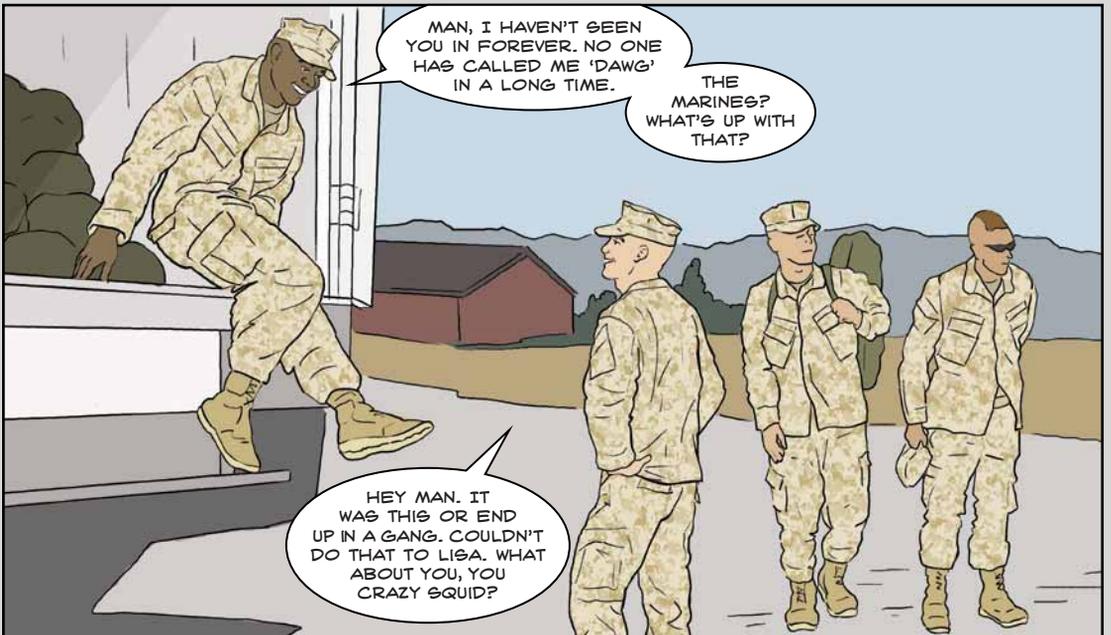
MY GRANDFATHER WAS A CORPSMAN WITH A MARINE UNIT IN KOREA. WANTED TO SERVE MY COUNTRY AND BE A SAILOR LIKE HE WAS.

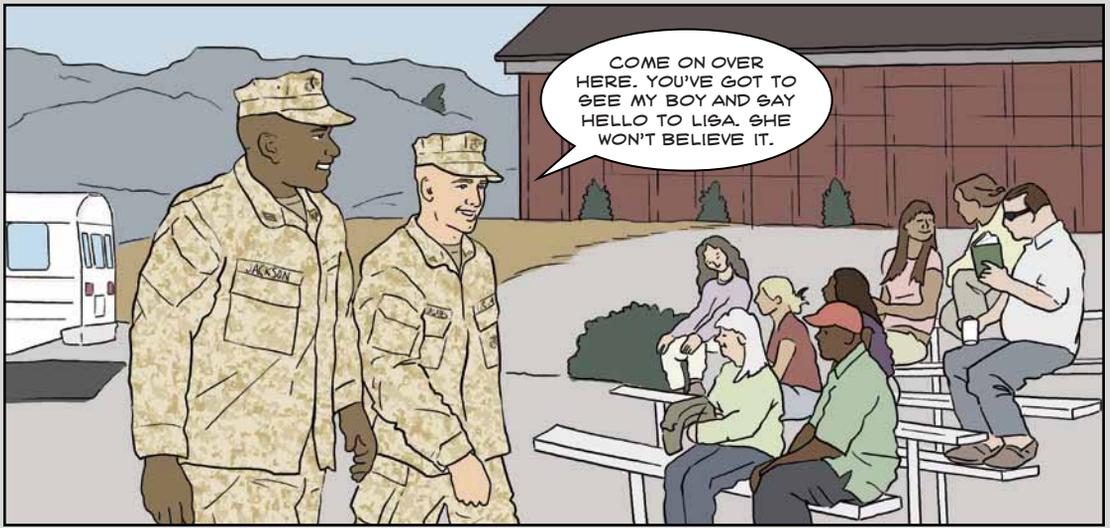
WELL, DOC, YOU'RE GETTING YOUR CHANCE. JUST DO WHATEVER WE DO, ALWAYS, AND KEEP YOUR HEAD ON A SWIVEL.

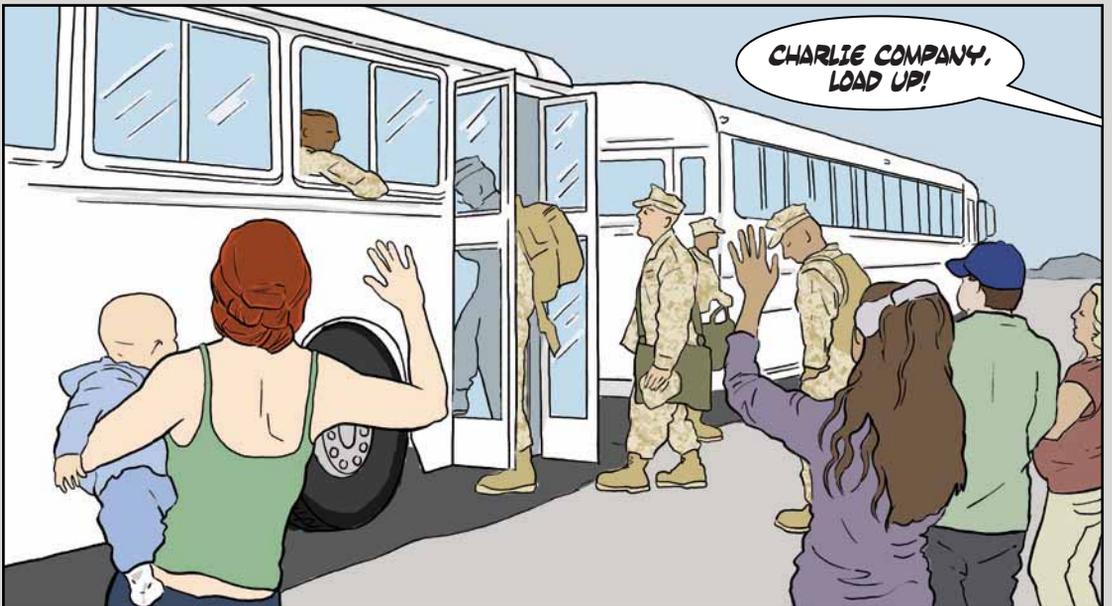


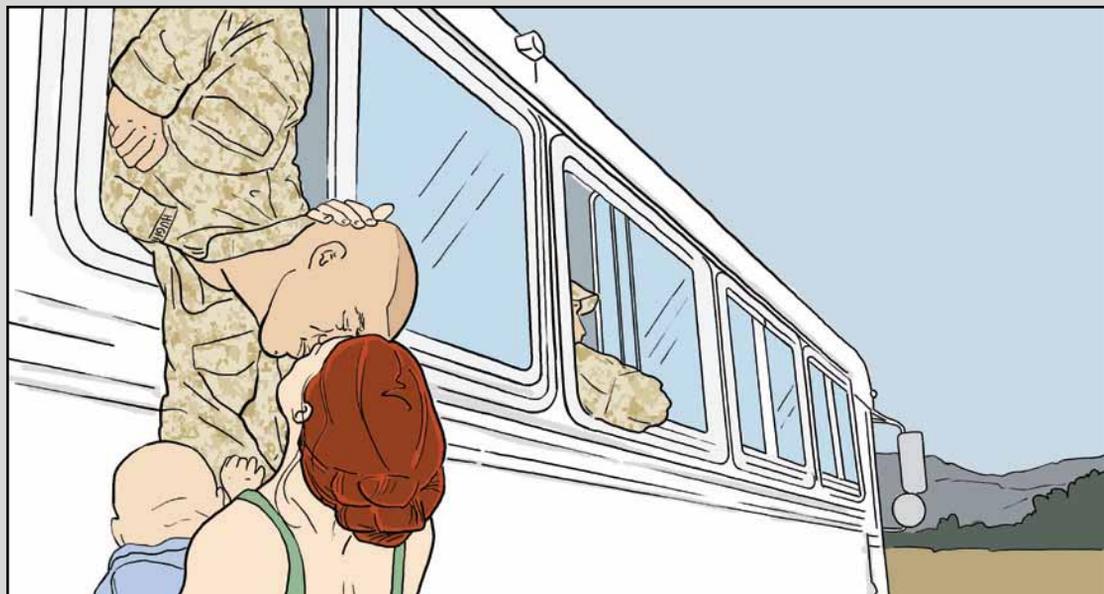
HN Derek Jackson
USN, Charlie Company,
Marine Infantry Battalion
Age: 19



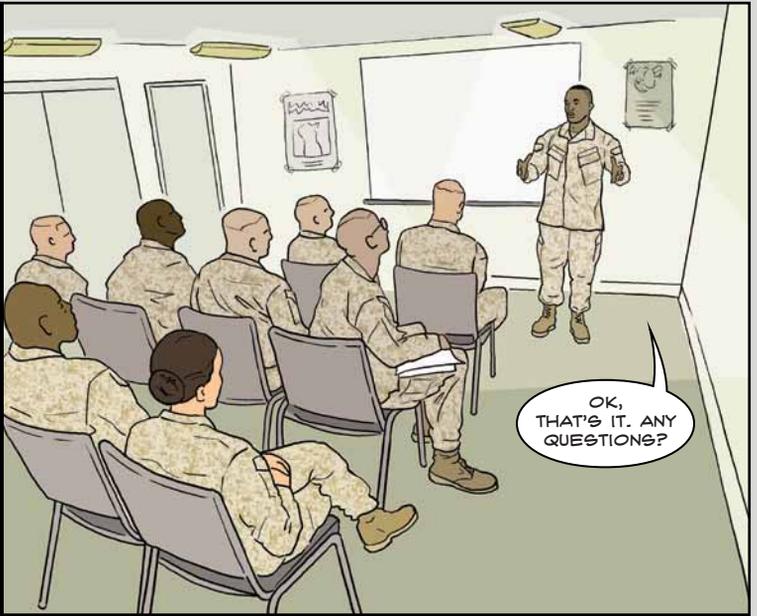








HM2 Erica Mendez
USN, HQ Company, Marine
Infantry Battalion
Age: 22



OK, THAT'S IT. ANY QUESTIONS?



YES, SIR. I WAS WONDERING IF YOU HAVE ANY UPDATE ON PETTY OFFICER MILLER'S CONDITION?

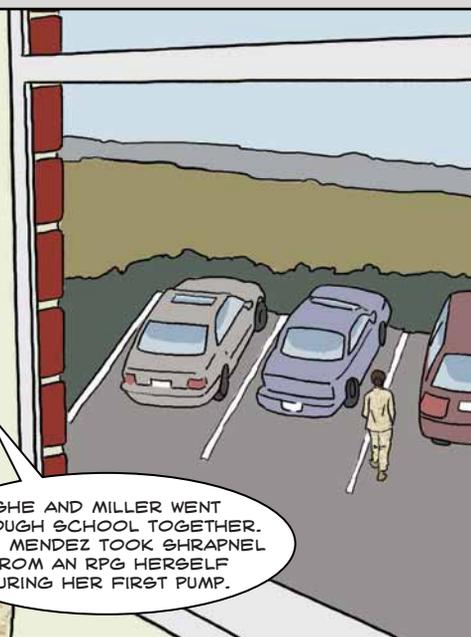
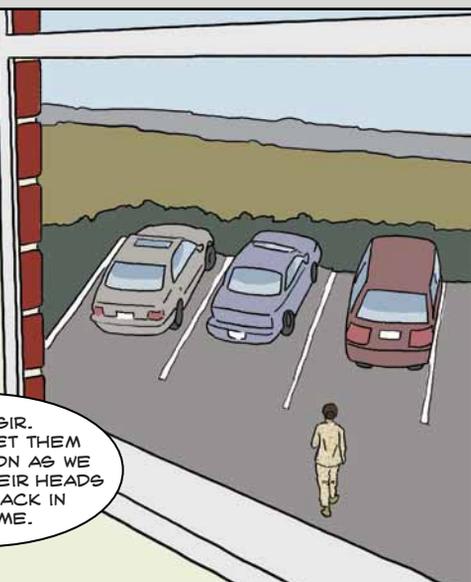
HE'S EN ROUTE FROM GERMANY. I KNOW THAT A LOT OF YOU KNOW MILLER AND ARE WORRIED ABOUT HIM. I'VE ASKED FOR AN UPDATE AND WILL LET YOU KNOW AS SOON AS I HEAR SOMETHING FROM BETHESDA.

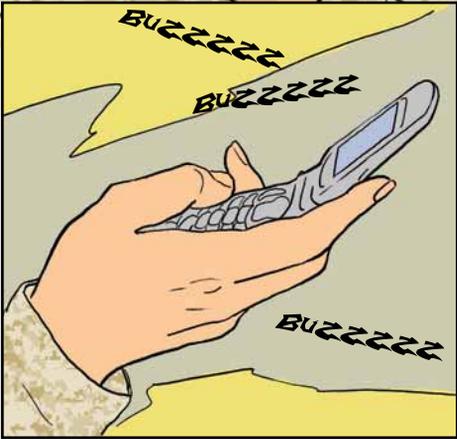
IF THERE'S NOTHING ELSE, WE'RE DONE HERE, SO GO HOME. SEE YOU ALL AT 2100.



HM2, WHO'S MILLER?

HE'S A FRIEND. A DOC IN ECHO COMPANY.







THANKS FOR TAKING THE DAY OFF TODAY.

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? OUR LAST RUN ON THE BEACH TOGETHER FOR SEVEN MONTHS.



HOW FAR DO YOU WANT TO GO TODAY?

LET'S GO LONG. AT LEAST 10. WANT TO BURN OFF SOME OF THIS STRESS.

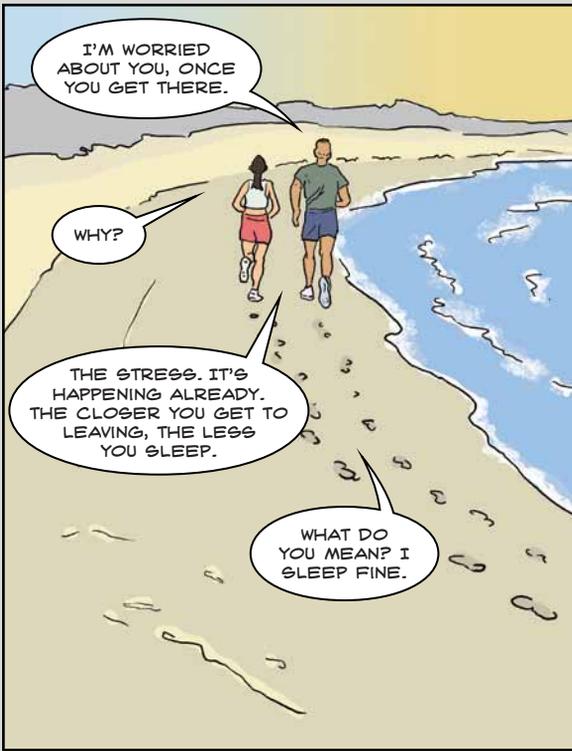


SO, HOW'S THE SHOULDER FEELING?

STILL STIFF. HURTS A LITTLE BUT THE ORTHOPOD SAYS THAT IT WILL TAKE QUITE A WHILE FOR THAT TO GO AWAY.

DO ME A FAVOR WOULD YOU? KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN THIS TIME.

YES, SERGEANT.



I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU, ONCE YOU GET THERE.

WHY?

THE STRESS. IT'S HAPPENING ALREADY. THE CLOSER YOU GET TO LEAVING, THE LESS YOU SLEEP.

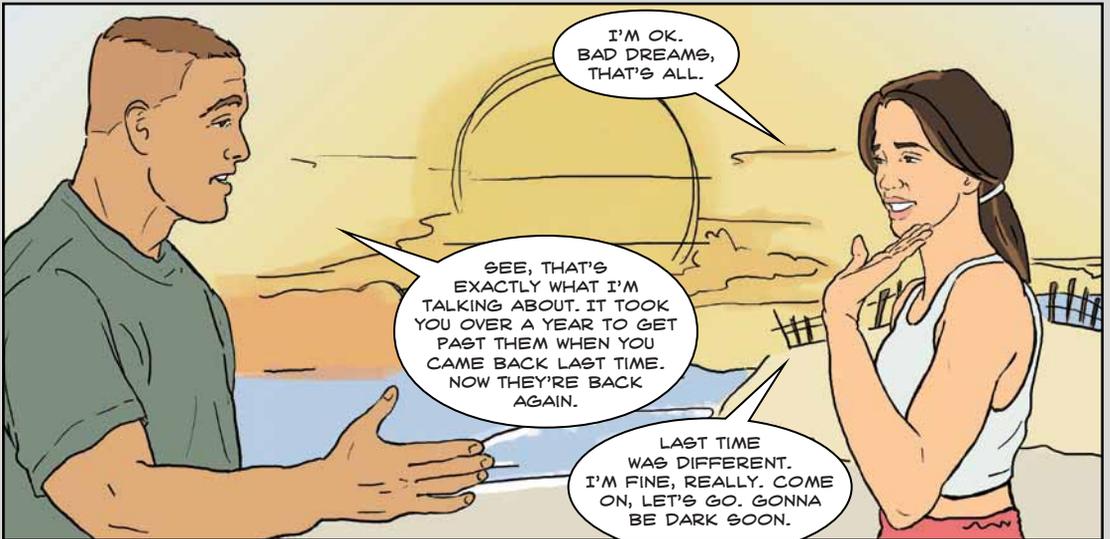
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I SLEEP FINE.



NO, YOU DON'T, ERICA. EVERY TIME YOU'VE STAYED AT MY PLACE SINCE YOU WERE TOLD YOU WERE DEPLOYING, YOU'VE BEEN UP AT 0200.

HOW'D YOU KNOW THAT?

YOU REALLY THINK I DON'T NOTICE WHEN YOU TRY TO TIPTOE OUT OF THE ROOM?



I'M OK. BAD DREAMS, THAT'S ALL.

SEE, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. IT TOOK YOU OVER A YEAR TO GET PAST THEM WHEN YOU CAME BACK LAST TIME. NOW THEY'RE BACK AGAIN.

LAST TIME WAS DIFFERENT. I'M FINE, REALLY. COME ON, LET'S GO. GONNA BE DARK SOON.

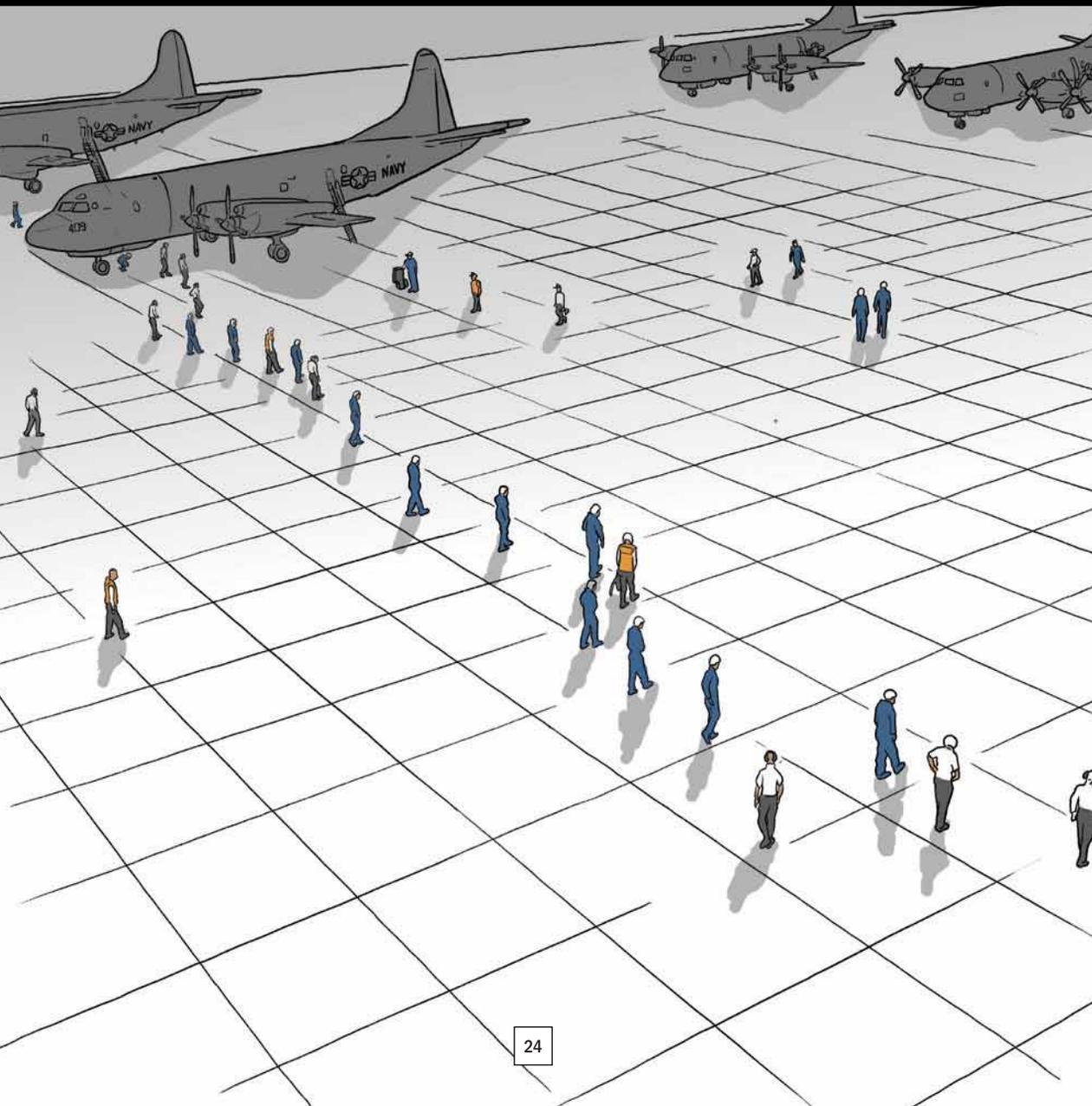


YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE CARE OF YOUR MARINES OVER THERE. YOU'VE GOT TO LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF, TOO.

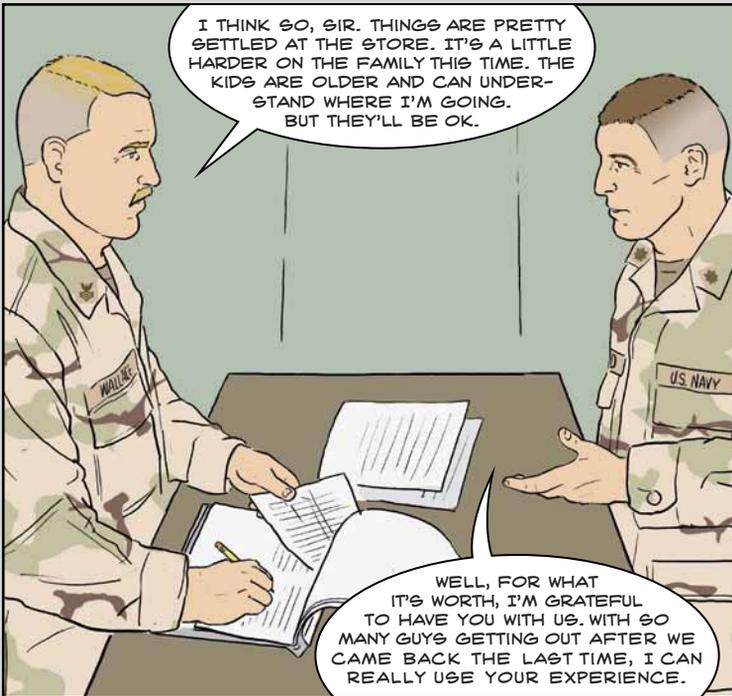
I WILL, I PROMISE. YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY, I'LL BE FINE.



**Naval Mobile Construction Battalion, Naval Air Station, Florida
Mission: Support Construction Projects in Central Iraq**



**HM1 John Wallace,
USN Reserve, Naval Mobile
Construction Battalion,
Alpha Company
Age: 38**



Later...



HI, HONEY. JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW I DROPPED BY THE STORE REAL QUICK TO CHECK ON THINGS ONE LAST TIME... THEN I'LL BE RIGHT HOME.

Thanks for Shopping Hudson's

OK...SEE YOU ABOUT 6:00. THE KIDS CAN'T WAIT FOR YOU TO GET HERE. THEY HAVE A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR YOU.

GREAT! LOVE YOU. SEE YOU IN A LITTLE WHILE.



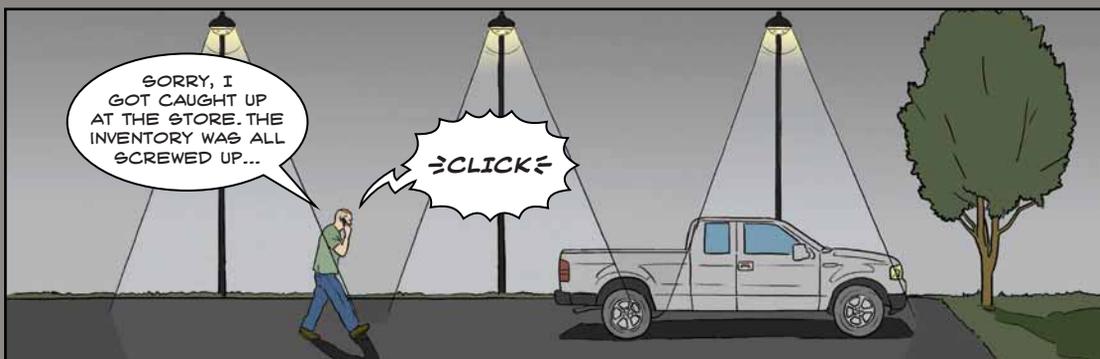
HEY, TOM, HOW'S THE INVENTORY COMING ALONG? YOU GET IT FINISHED UP?

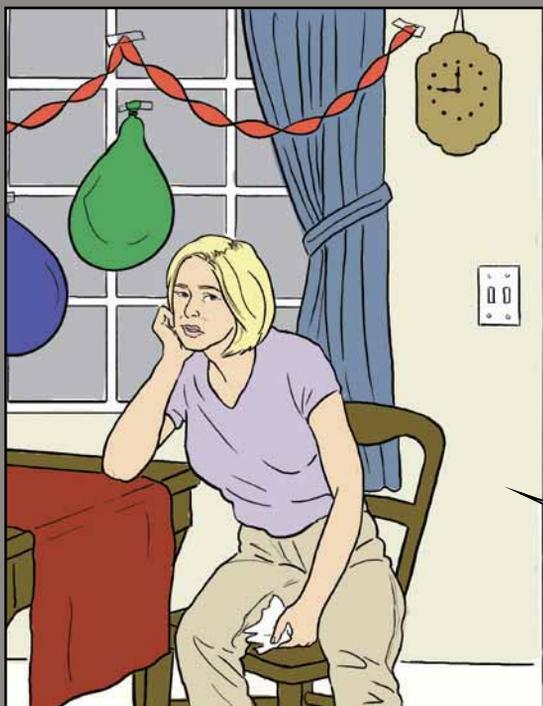
I'M GLAD YOU CAME BY. I'M NOT SURE THE NUMBERS ARE WORKING OUT.

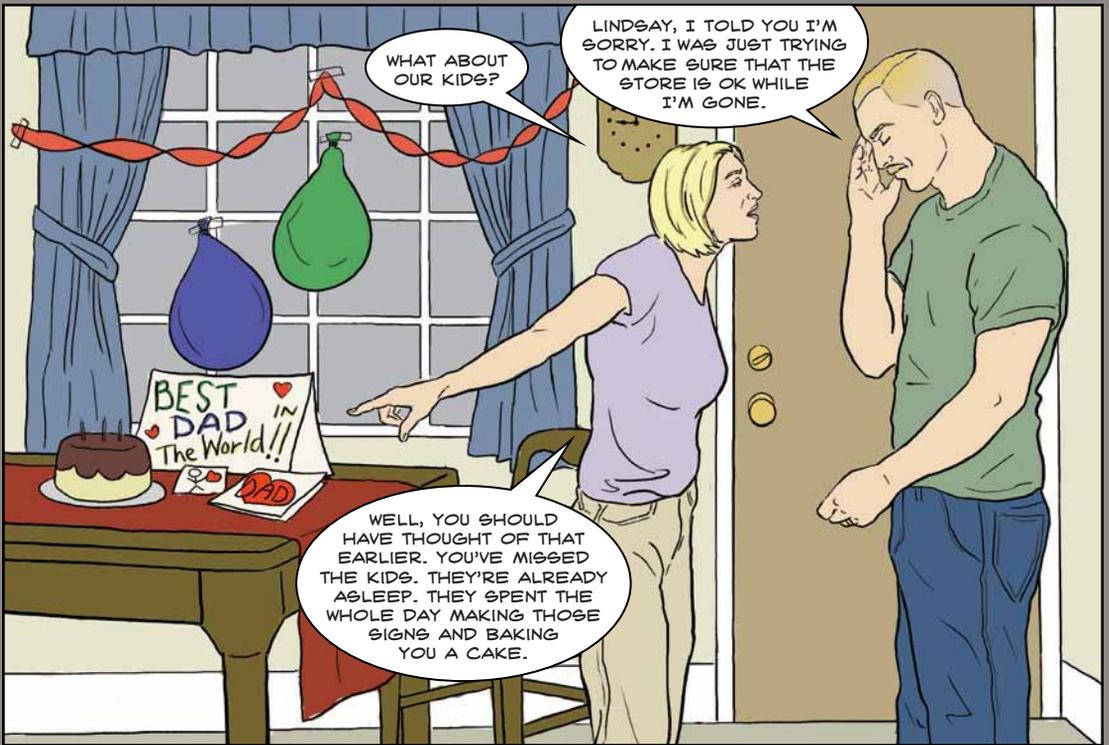
LET ME HAVE A LOOK. I CAN'T HEAD OFF TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD WITHOUT THIS BEING STRAIGHT.

LET'S GET BUSY. LINDSAY AND THE KIDS ARE WAITING FOR ME AT HOME.









WHAT ABOUT OUR KIDS?

LINDSAY, I TOLD YOU I'M SORRY. I WAS JUST TRYING TO MAKE SURE THAT THE STORE IS OK WHILE I'M GONE.

WELL, YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT EARLIER. YOU'VE MISSED THE KIDS. THEY'RE ALREADY ASLEEP. THEY SPENT THE WHOLE DAY MAKING THOSE SIGNS AND BAKING YOU A CAKE.



THAT'S ENOUGH! YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU'RE GIVING ME GRIEF ABOUT THIS. IT'S YOUR FATHER'S STORE.

WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ANYTHING?

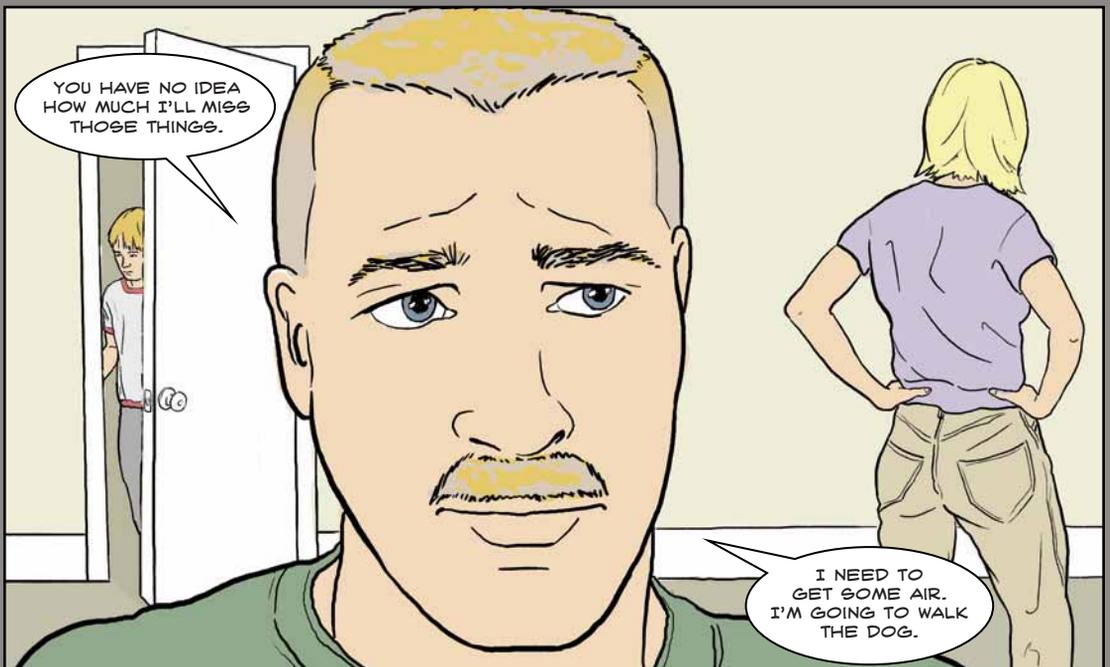
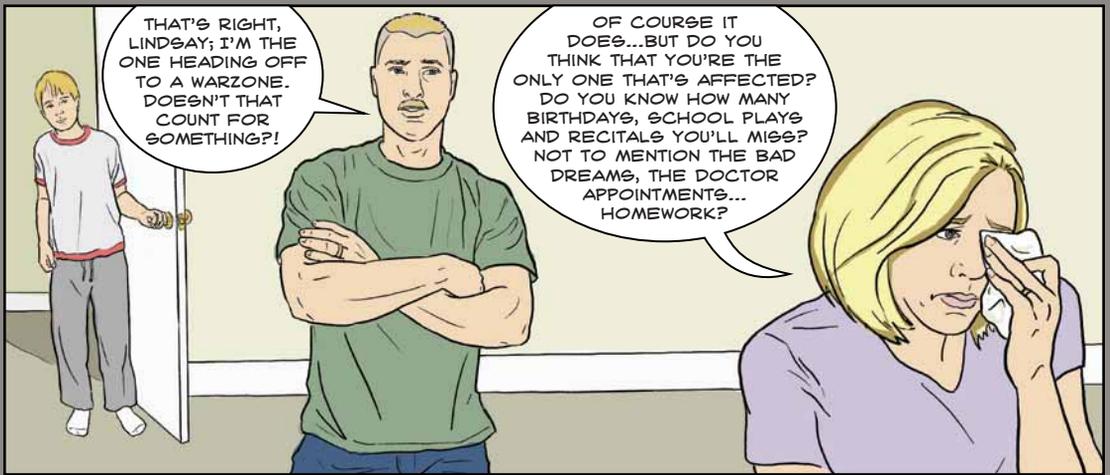


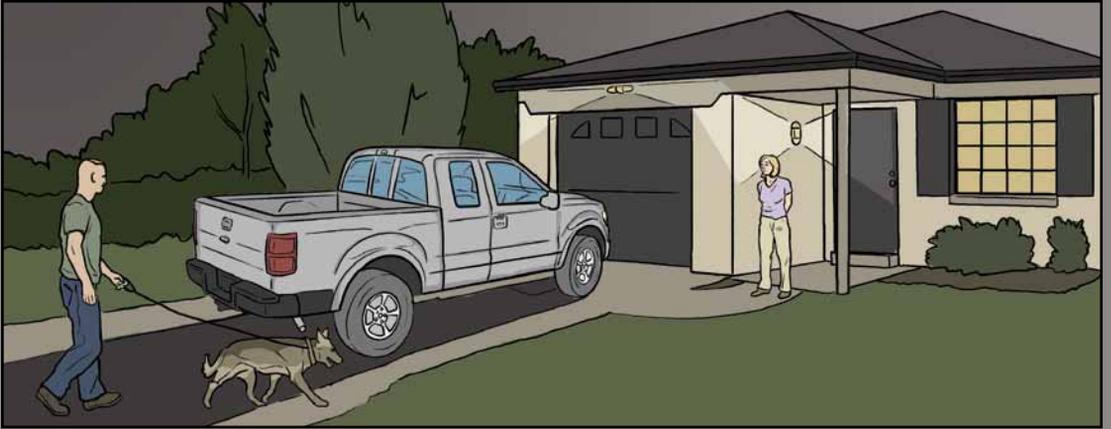
LOOK, I LOVED MY EMT JOB BUT GAVE THAT UP SO WE COULD RUN THE STORE FOR YOUR FATHER WHEN HE RETIRED.

WHAT? YOU'VE NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT BEING UNHAPPY RUNNING THE STORE.



I'M NOT SAYING THAT I'M NOT HAPPY. JUST THAT I GAVE UP SOMETHING TO TAKE IT OVER. AND NOW THAT WE DID, I HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT IT'S DONE RIGHT. THAT'S ALL I WAS DOING TONIGHT, MAKING SURE THAT THINGS ARE DONE RIGHT.







An illustration of a military scene. In the background, a large military transport aircraft is parked on a tarmac with its cargo door open. A line of soldiers in desert camouflage uniforms and helmets is walking away from the aircraft. In the foreground, a soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet, goggles, and a rifle, is walking towards the viewer. A black rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text 'PART 2 Settling In'.

PART 2
Settling In

Marine Infantry Battalion, FOB, Western Iraq



BANKS—Crimson Tide





I TELL YOU WHAT, I WISH MY MOM WERE HERE TO COOK ME SOME DECENT FOOD.



WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE FOR MY MOM'S PORK CHOPS AND FRIED POTATOES!

MY MOM'S SUNDAY DINNER, THAT'S WHAT I MISS. BAKED HAM, BUTTER BEANS, MASHED POTATOES AND GRAVY, HOMEMADE PECAN PIE.

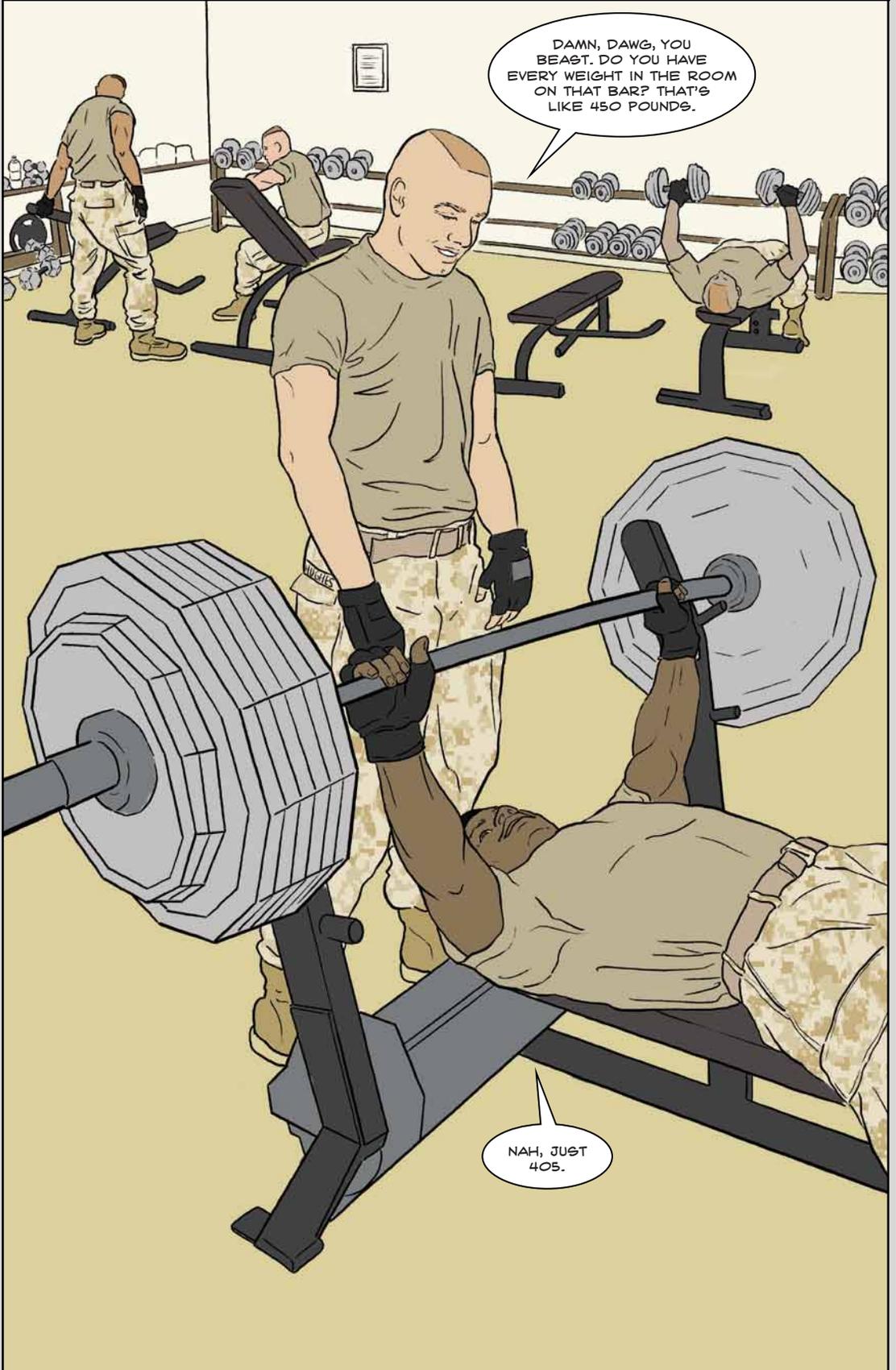


DAMN, YOU'RE KILLING ME.

WHEN WE GET BACK, YOU CAN COME WITH ME TO VISIT MY MOM AND HAVE SUNDAY DINNER WITH US.

DEAL. IF I DON'T STARVE TO DEATH OVER HERE FIRST!

JACKSON—Carry My Letter



NAH, JUST
405.



YOU KNOW, DAWG, I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

I MEAN, WE HADN'T SEEN EACH OTHER IN WHAT, ALMOST TWO YEARS? AND NOW, HERE WE'RE BUNKING TOGETHER IN IRAQ.

YEAH, DARRELL, FEELS LIKE OLD TIMES. SO, HOW ARE THINGS BACK HOME? YOU HEARD FROM LISA? HOW'S DARRELL JR?

YEAH, I GOT A LETTER FROM HER TODAY. IT'S ONLY BEEN THREE WEEKS SINCE I LEFT AND HE CAN SIT UP BY HIMSELF ALREADY.

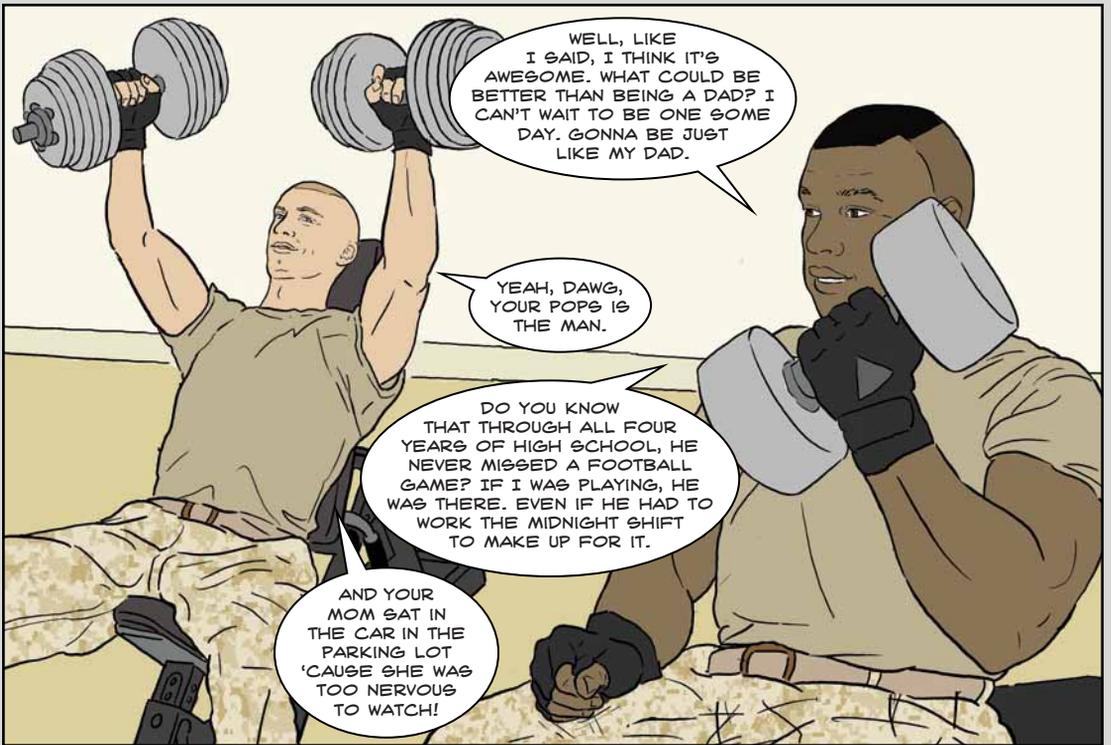
THE THING IS THAT I'M MISSING IT ALL. HELL, HE'LL PROBABLY BE WALKING BEFORE I GET BACK.



THAT'S NOT THE HALF OF IT. LISA TOOK A PREGNANCY TEST. LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO BE A DAD AGAIN.

NO KIDDING?! THAT'S AWESOME! CONGRATULATIONS!

I DON'T KNOW, DAWG. TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, IT SCARES THE SHIT OUT OF ME. HELL, HAVING ONE KID SCARED THE SHIT OUT OF ME. BUT NOW TWO?



WELL, LIKE I SAID, I THINK IT'S AWESOME. WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN BEING A DAD? I CAN'T WAIT TO BE ONE SOME DAY. GONNA BE JUST LIKE MY DAD.

YEAH, DAWG, YOUR POPS IS THE MAN.

DO YOU KNOW THAT THROUGH ALL FOUR YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL, HE NEVER MISSED A FOOTBALL GAME? IF I WAS PLAYING, HE WAS THERE. EVEN IF HE HAD TO WORK THE MIDNIGHT SHIFT TO MAKE UP FOR IT.

AND YOUR MOM SAT IN THE CAR IN THE PARKING LOT 'CAUSE SHE WAS TOO NERVOUS TO WATCH!



YOUR OLD MAN WAS IN THE NAVY, WASN'T HE? HE WAS A CORPSMAN IN 'NAM, RIGHT?

YEAH, TWO TOURS. I GUESS THAT'S WHY I SIGNED UP. HE DIDN'T TALK ABOUT IT VERY OFTEN BUT I GUESS IT SUNK IN.

TO THIS DAY, HE STILL EYES THE EXITS EVERY TIME HE SITS DOWN IN A RESTAURANT. FUNNY THING IS, HE THINKS THAT I DON'T NOTICE.



HEY, DARRELL, SPEAKING OF MY PARENTS, I'VE BEEN THINKING. WOULD YOU HOLD MY LETTER FOR ME?

SURE, DEREK.

MENDEZ—Return Downrange

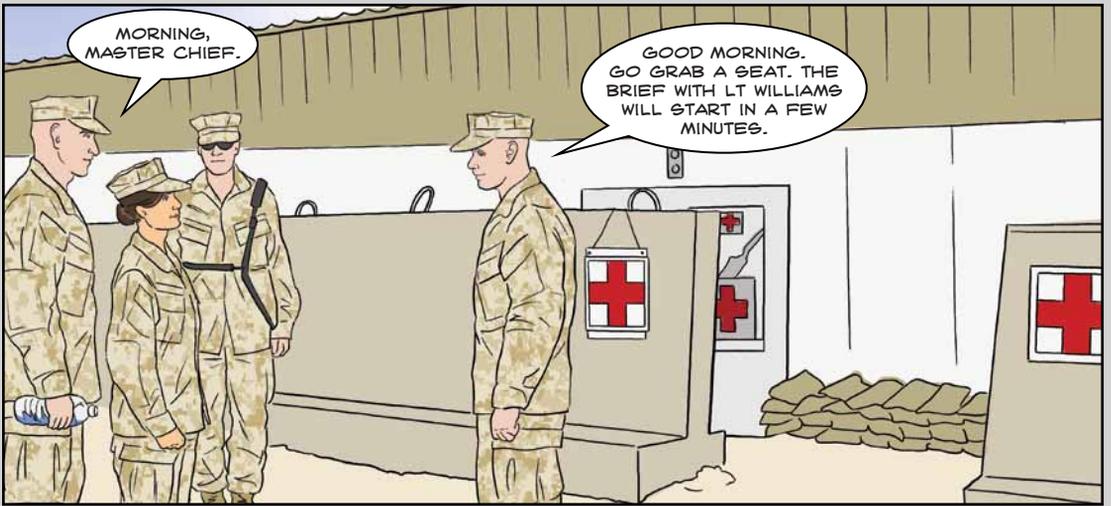


AHH, ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE.

WHAT A DUMP. EVERYTHING IS BROWN.

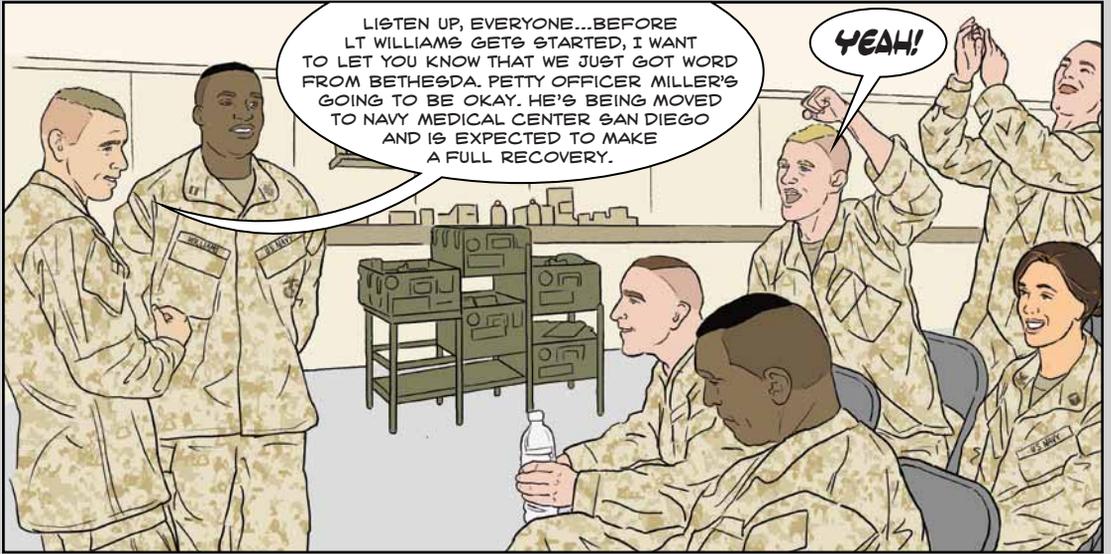
HEY, MENDEZ, BRINGS BACK A FEW MEMORIES, HUH?

OH, YEAH. WAS IT THIS HOT THE LAST TIME?



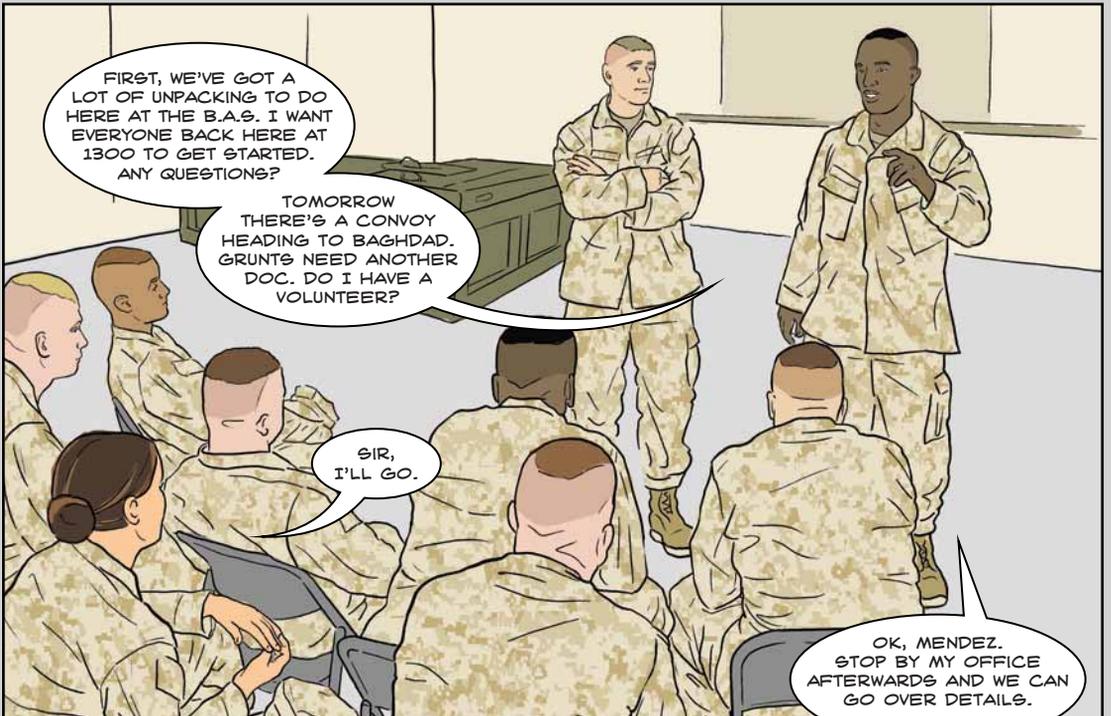
MORNING, MASTER CHIEF.

GOOD MORNING. GO GRAB A SEAT. THE BRIEF WITH LT WILLIAMS WILL START IN A FEW MINUTES.



LISTEN UP, EVERYONE...BEFORE LT WILLIAMS GETS STARTED, I WANT TO LET YOU KNOW THAT WE JUST GOT WORD FROM BETHESDA. PETTY OFFICER MILLER'S GOING TO BE OKAY. HE'S BEING MOVED TO NAVY MEDICAL CENTER SAN DIEGO AND IS EXPECTED TO MAKE A FULL RECOVERY.

YEAH!

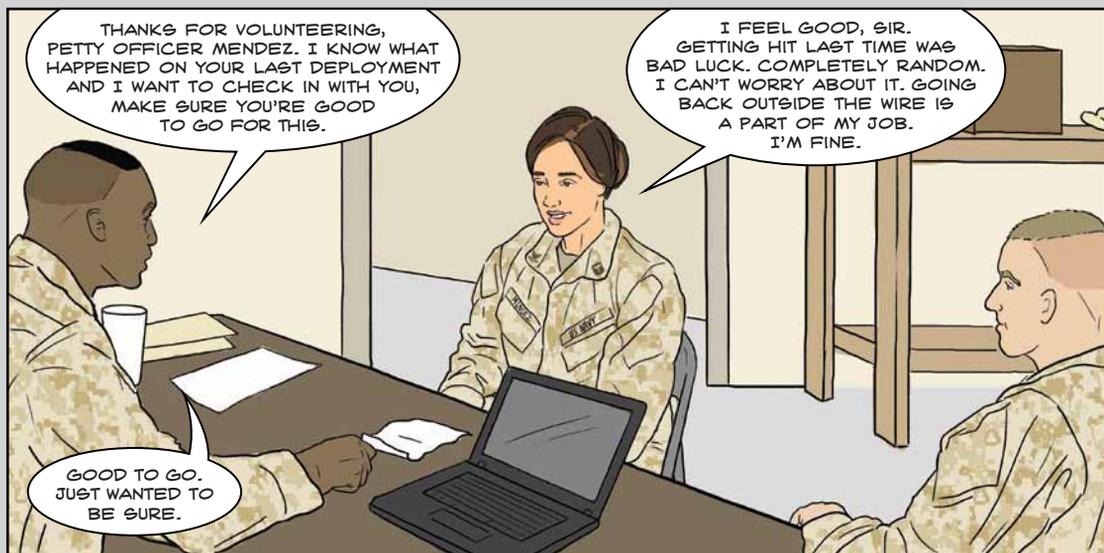


FIRST, WE'VE GOT A LOT OF UNPACKING TO DO HERE AT THE B.A.S. I WANT EVERYONE BACK HERE AT 1300 TO GET STARTED. ANY QUESTIONS?

TOMORROW THERE'S A CONVOY HEADING TO BAGHDAD. GRUNTS NEED ANOTHER DOC. DO I HAVE A VOLUNTEER?

SIR, I'LL GO.

OK, MENDEZ. STOP BY MY OFFICE AFTERWARDS AND WE CAN GO OVER DETAILS.



THANKS FOR VOLUNTEERING, PETTY OFFICER MENDEZ. I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED ON YOUR LAST DEPLOYMENT AND I WANT TO CHECK IN WITH YOU, MAKE SURE YOU'RE GOOD TO GO FOR THIS.

I FEEL GOOD, SIR. GETTING HIT LAST TIME WAS BAD LUCK. COMPLETELY RANDOM. I CAN'T WORRY ABOUT IT. GOING BACK OUTSIDE THE WIRE IS A PART OF MY JOB. I'M FINE.

GOOD TO GO. JUST WANTED TO BE SURE.



THERE'S A SECOND DOC COMING FROM CHARLIE COMPANY. HN DEREK JACKSON. SUPPOSED TO BE SOLID BUT IS VERY GREEN. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.



UNDERSTOOD, MASTER CHIEF. I'LL CATCH UP WITH HIM BEFORE THE CONVOY ROLLS. MAKE SURE HE'S SQUARED AWAY.



TAKE SOME TIME THIS AFTERNOON. THE OTHERS CAN HANDLE UNPACKING.

ACTUALLY, SIR, I'D PREFER TO GO HELP OUT. BETTER TO KEEP BUSY.

FAIR ENOUGH. REPORT TO THE STAGING AREA, 0400.

YES, SIR.

Alpha Company, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion, Dam FOB, Western Iraq



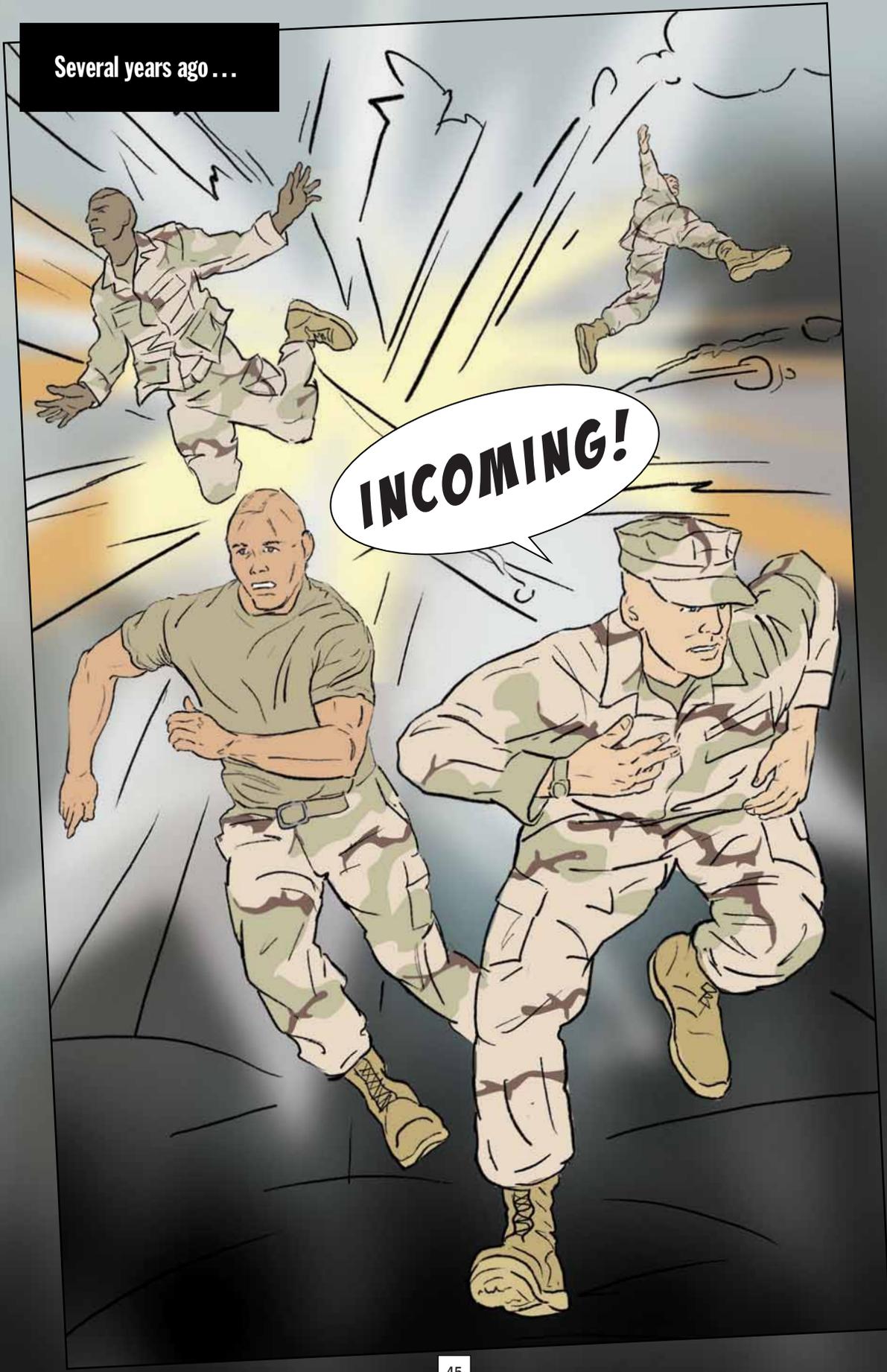
WELL, GENTLEMEN,
THIS IS HOME FOR THE
FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

WALLACE—Lingering Memories

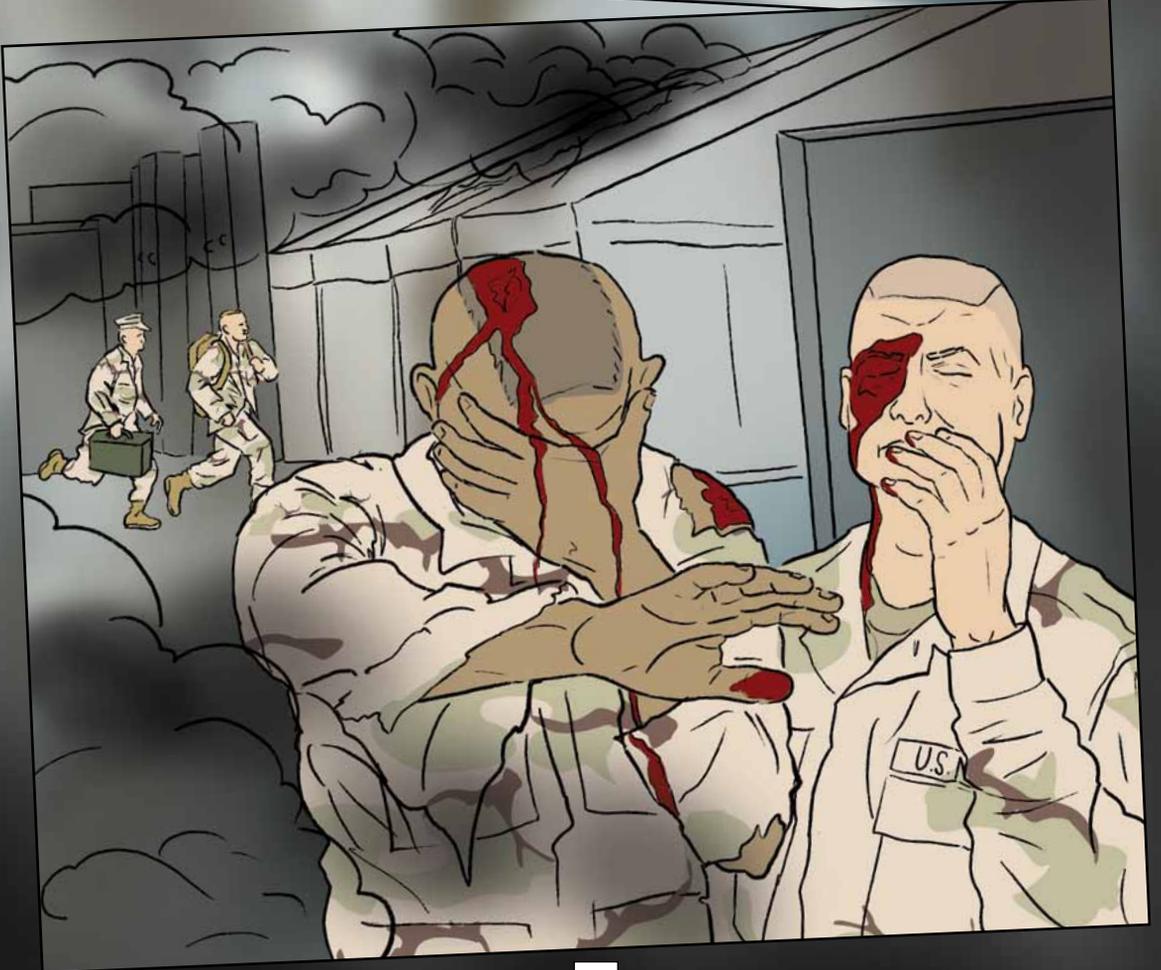


Several years ago ...

INCOMING!









OH MY GOD.

CORPSMAN UP!

SOMEBODY HELP ME!

WHERE THE F--- IS THE DOC?

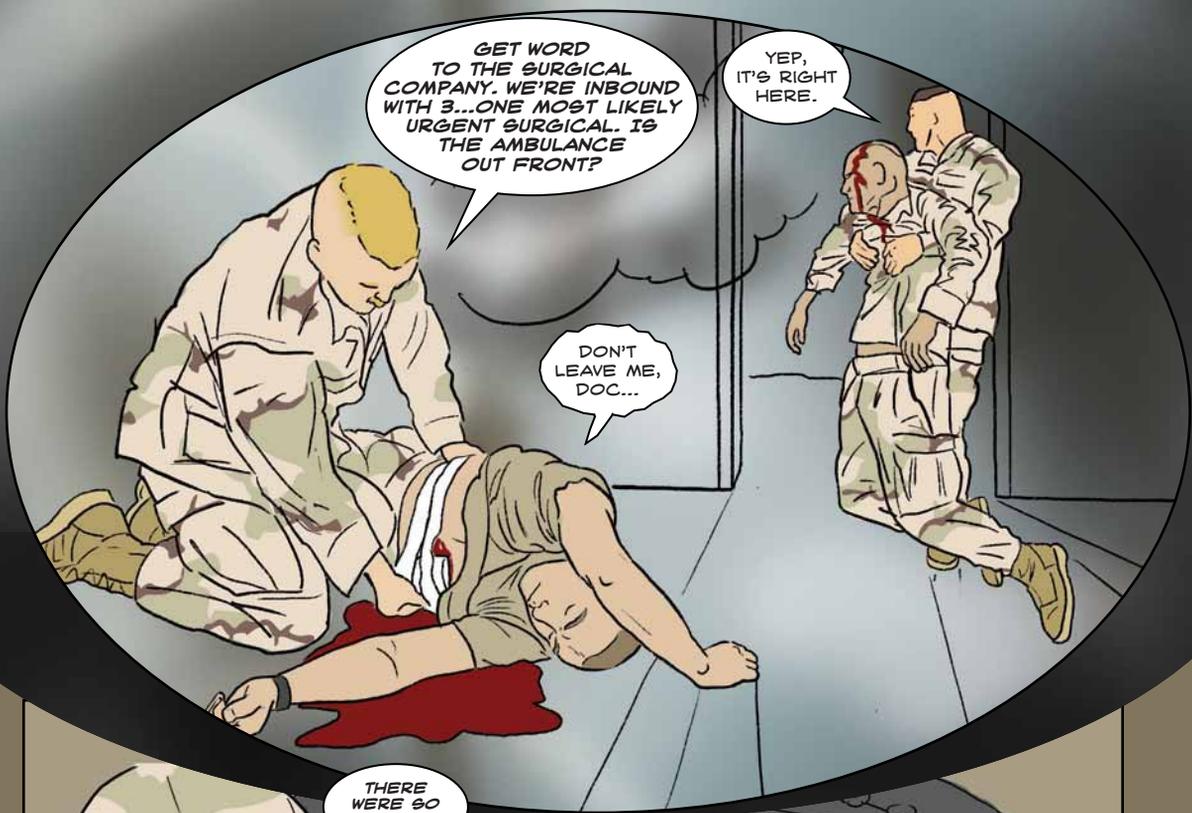
AGGHH..

SHIT! I'M HIT!

CORPSMAN UP!

FLETCHER!
SHIT, WALLACE,
YOU'VE GOT TO HELP
FLETCHER!

HE'S
GONE.



GET WORD TO THE SURGICAL COMPANY. WE'RE INBOUND WITH 3...ONE MOST LIKELY URGENT SURGICAL. IS THE AMBULANCE OUT FRONT?

YEP, IT'S RIGHT HERE.

DON'T LEAVE ME, DOC...

THERE WERE SO MANY...

SO MANY I COULDN'T SAVE...

I FELT SO F---ING HELPLESS.

WALLACE. WALLACE. HEY WALLACE! YOU OK, MAN?

WHAT? YEAH, I'M OK. JUST THINKING ABOUT OUR LAST DEPLOYMENT. NO PROBLEM.



DAMN, I REALLY THOUGHT THAT I HAD PUT ALL THAT BEHIND ME AND ONE CONVOY BRINGS IT ALL BACK LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY.

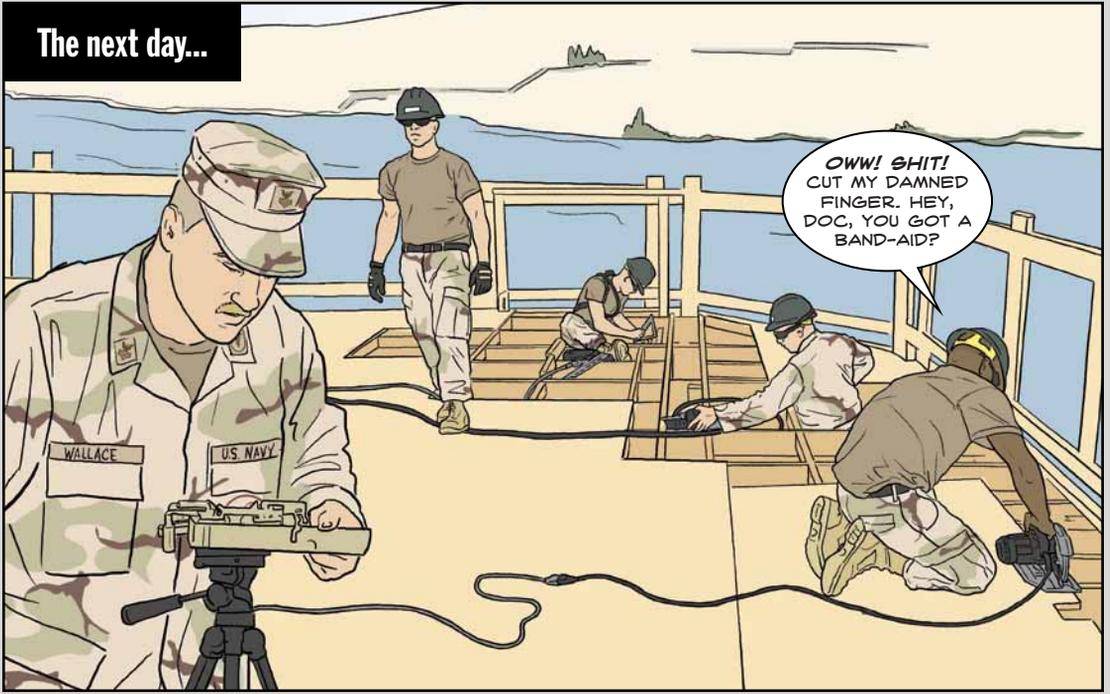


HEY, WALLACE, THEY SHOULD HAVE US WORKING ON THE ELEVATORS, NOT THE TURBINE. THERE MUST BE A THOUSAND STAIRS.

NAH, THAT WAS ONLY ABOUT 300. YOU'LL GET USED TO IT.

MAYBE, BUT I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET USED TO THIS SMELL. IT'S LIKE A MILLION ROTTEN EGGS.

The next day...



Later...

WHAT'S UP WITH THIS HEAT? EVERYBODY TOLD ME IT WOULD BE COOLER UP HERE. I'M NOT FEELIN' IT!

NO SHIT! I THINK THIS COUNTRY GETS HOTTER EVERY TIME I COME BACK.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU BEEN OVER HERE?

THIS IS MY THIRD TOUR. SECOND FOR BROWN AND ISAAC.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

22

20

20

SHIT. MY SON'S ALMOST AS OLD AS YOU GUYS. HE'S GONNA BE 18 IN A FEW MONTHS.

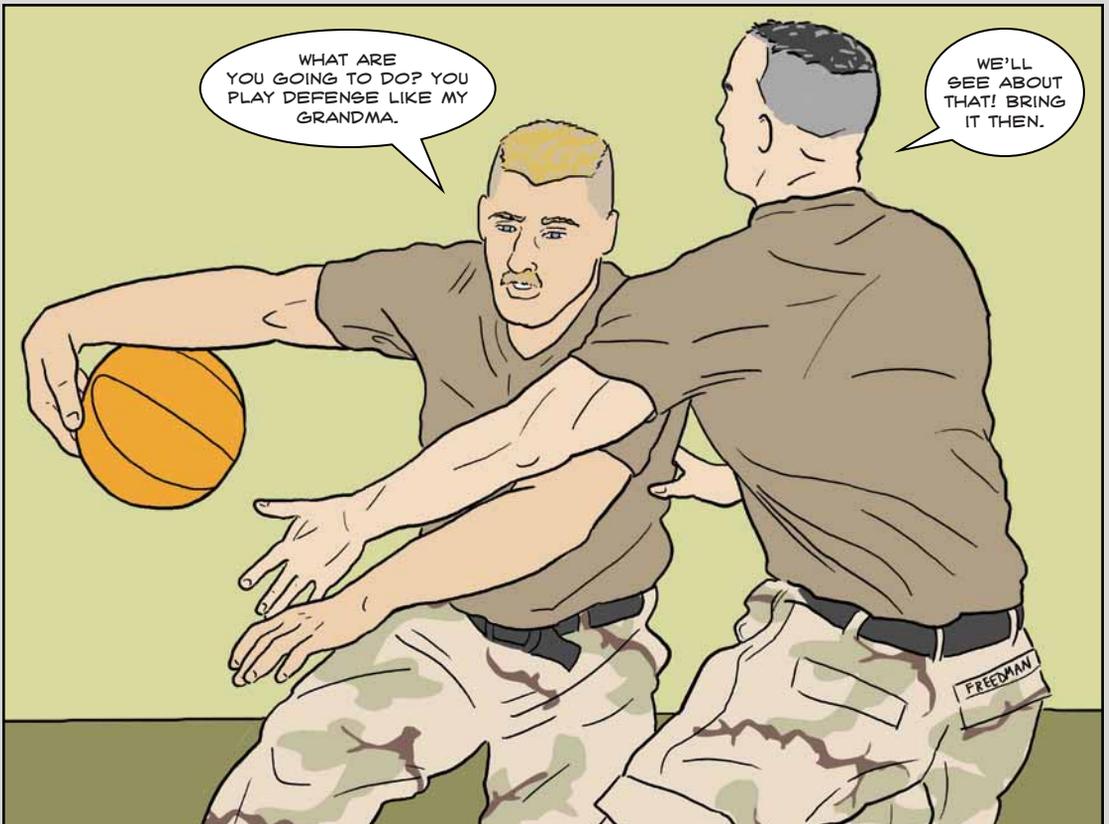
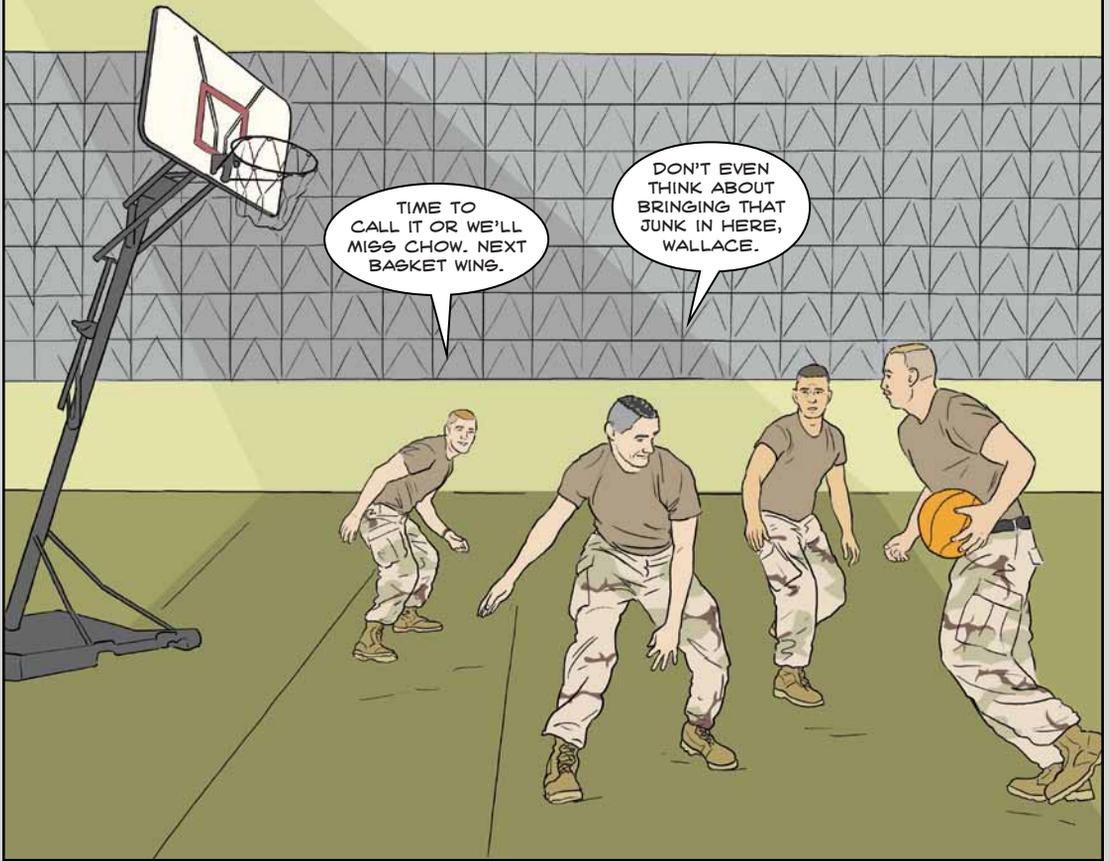
DAMN, GRAMPS! HOW OLD ARE YOU?

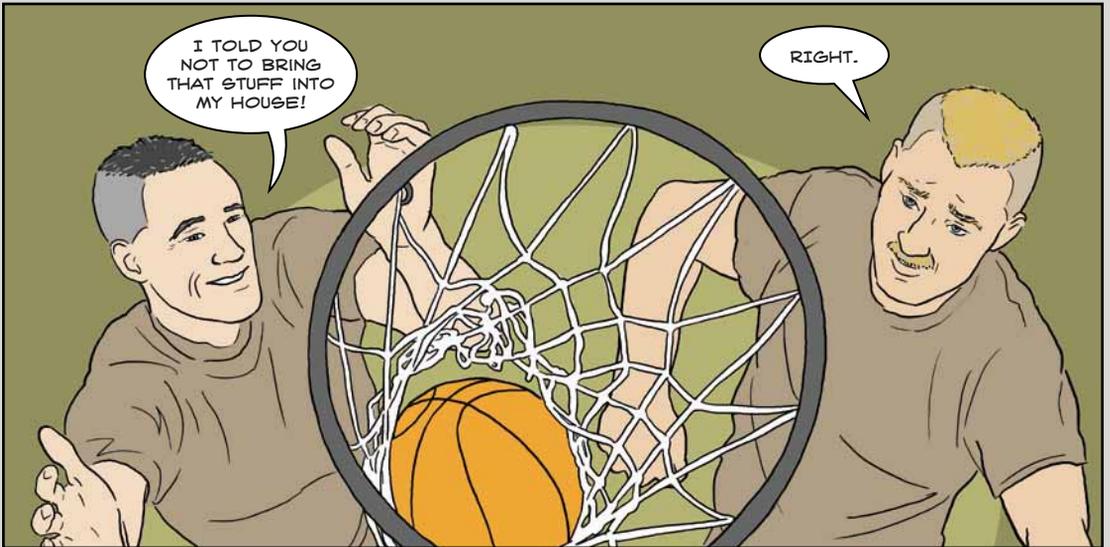
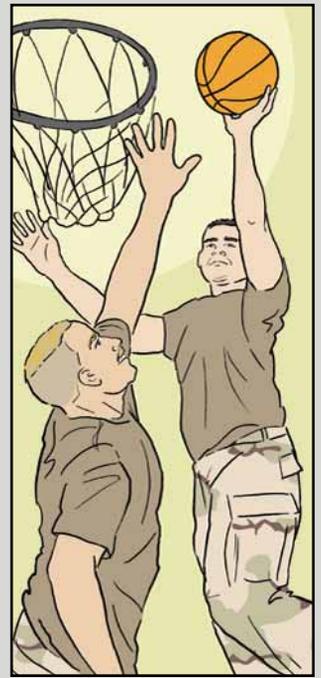
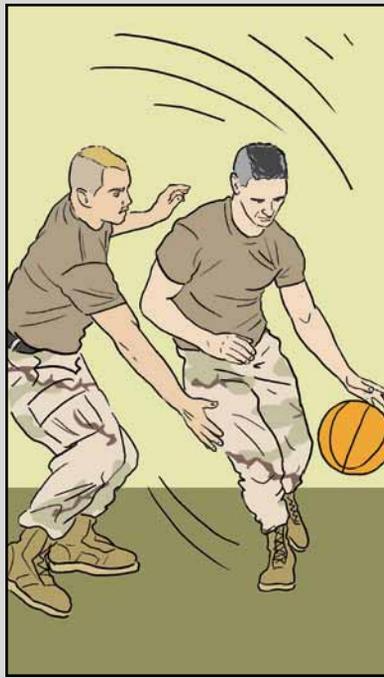
36

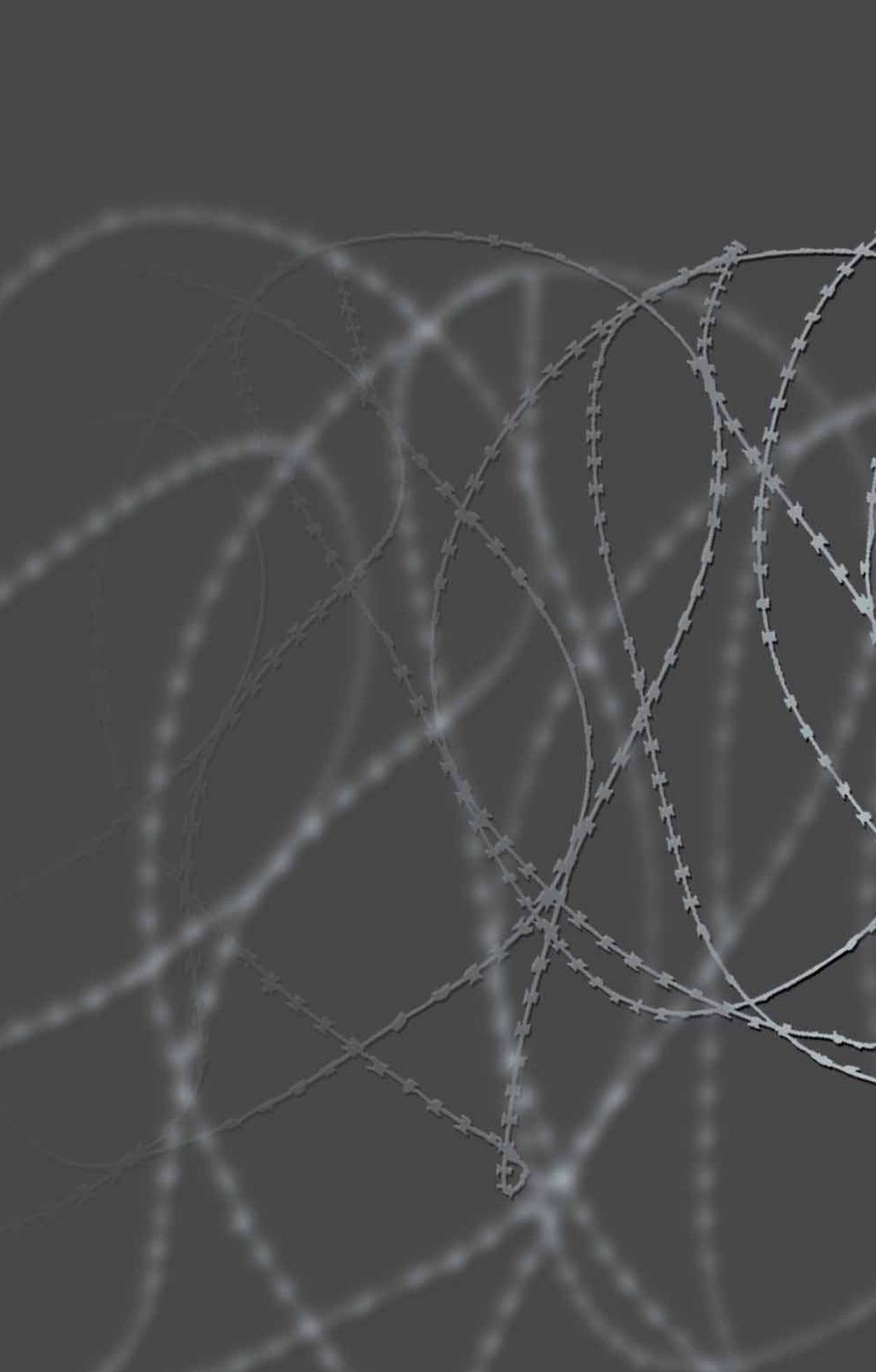
SAD THING IS, ADKING IS THE YOUNGEST OF THE THREE OF US. I'M 38 AND FREEDMAN TURNS 40 NEXT MONTH.

OOH-RAH. DUDE, ARE DEPENDS STANDARD ISSUE IN THE SEABEES?

A little downtime...



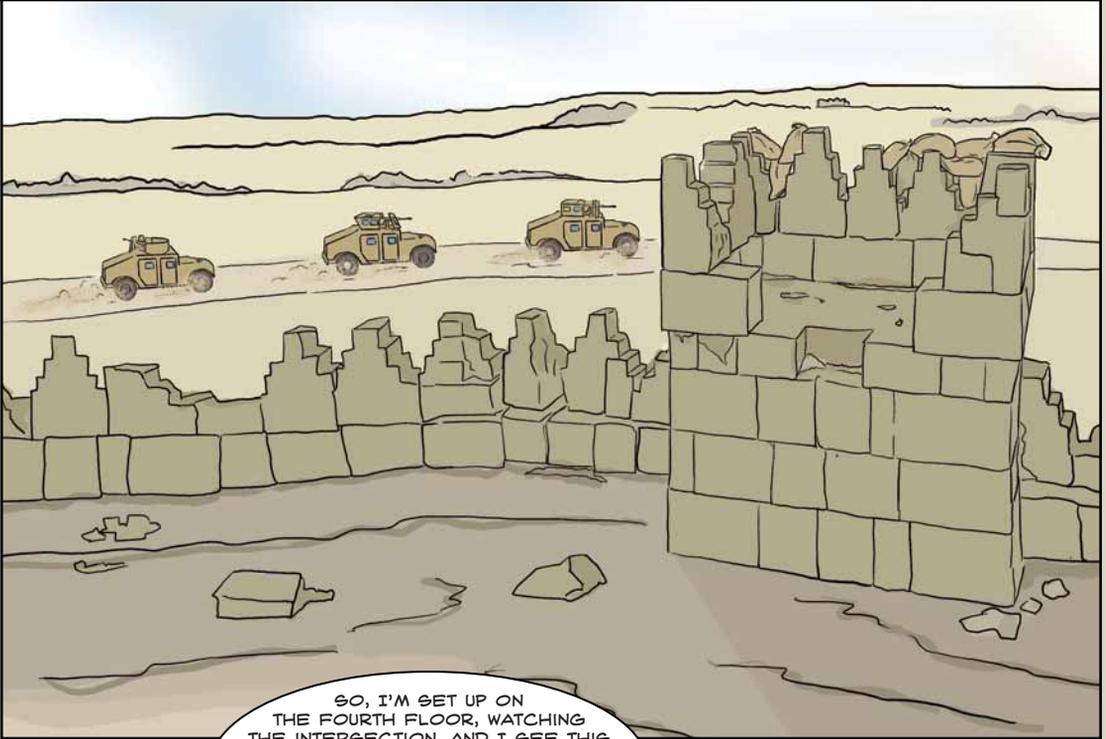






PART 3
**Outside
the Wire**

BANKS—On Patrol



SO, I'M SET UP ON THE FOURTH FLOOR, WATCHING THE INTERSECTION, AND I SEE THIS A--HOLE TURKEY PEEKING AROUND THE CORNER OF THE BUILDING. I HAVE THE CROSSHAIRS RIGHT ON HIS FOREHEAD AND I'M GETTING READY TO LAY HIM DOWN.

BUT, RIGHT AS I SQUEEZE OFF THE ROUND, DAMNED IF HE DOESN'T DROP HIS F---ING AK AND BEND DOWN TO PICK IT UP. THE ROUND GRAZES THE TOP OF HIS HEAD. I ACTUALLY SAW HIS HAIR FLY UP!

DUDE, HE MUST HAVE PISSED HIS PANTS!

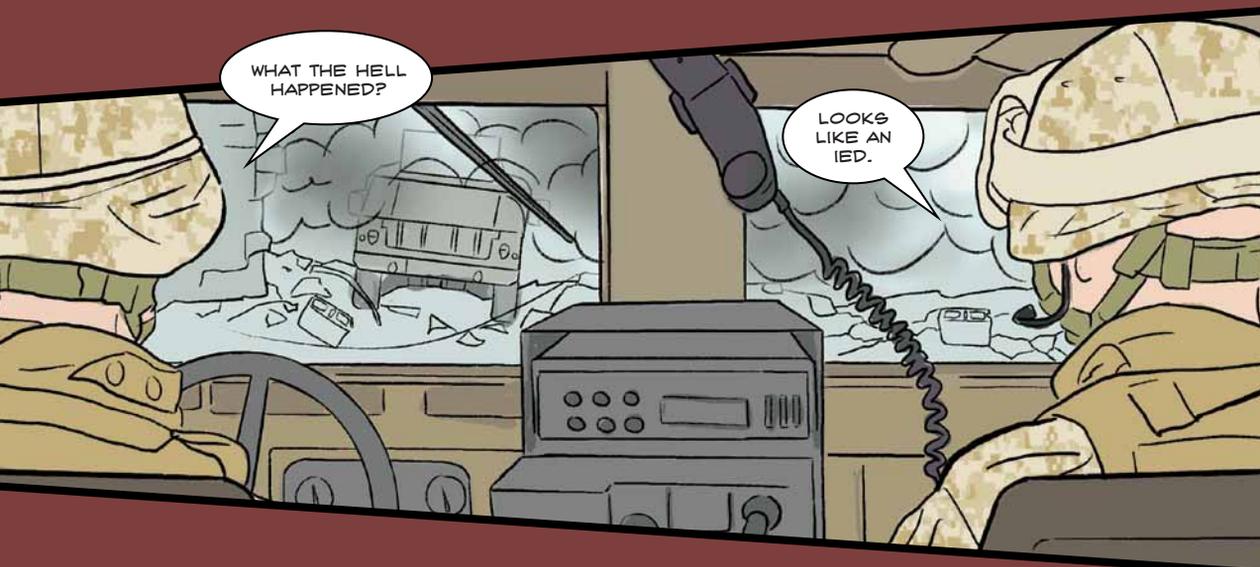
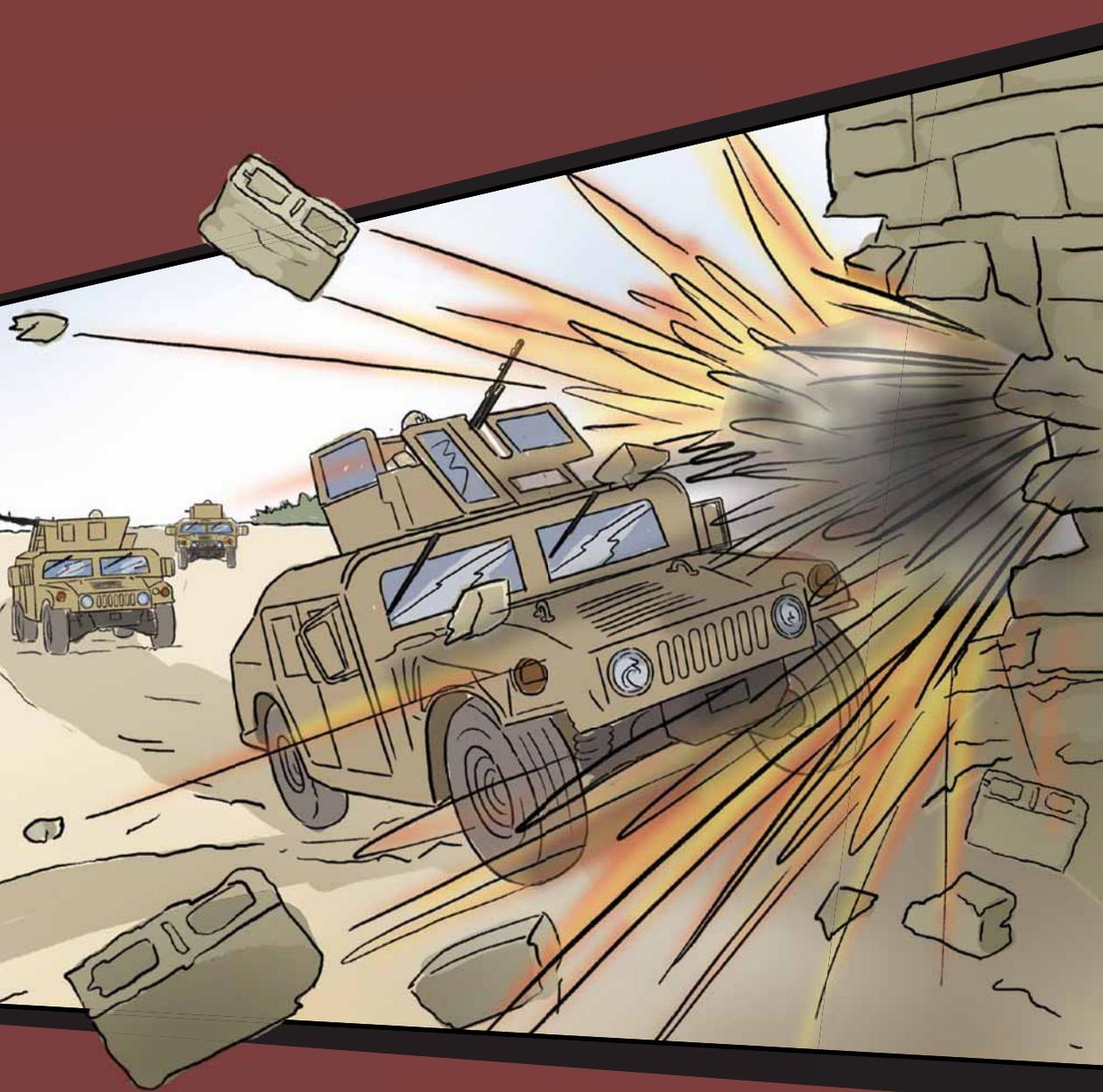


OH HELL YEAH!

HE F---ING FREAKED. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE MOVE SO FAST IN MY LIFE! SON OF A BITCH WAS OUT OF SIGHT BEFORE I COULD CHAMBER ANOTHER ROUND.

THAT'S ONE LUCKY F---ER!





WHAT THE HELL
HAPPENED?

LOOKS
LIKE AN
IED.

A military scene in a desert environment. In the foreground, a soldier in a tan uniform and helmet is crouching behind a low wall of sandbags. He has a determined expression. In the background, another soldier is standing near a large, tan military vehicle that has been damaged, with flames rising from its roof. A third soldier is visible further back. The scene is filled with the sounds of battle and the urgency of a medical emergency.

CORPSMAN UP!

IT'S CLEAR, DOC. GET IN THERE!

WILCO, CORPORAL!

A close-up view of a soldier lying on the ground, his leg bleeding profusely. A second soldier is leaning over him, focused on providing medical aid. The soldier on the ground is in pain and fear. The background is a hazy, greyish landscape, suggesting a battlefield or a zone of conflict.

STAY STILL, PEARCE. GOT TO GET THIS BLEEDING STOPPED.

DOC, DON'T LET ME LOSE MY LEG! YOU CAN'T LET ME LOSE MY LEG! PLEASE!

TRY TO STAY CALM. WE'RE GONNA GET YOU OUT OF HERE AS SOON AS WE CAN. HELO'S ON THE WAY.



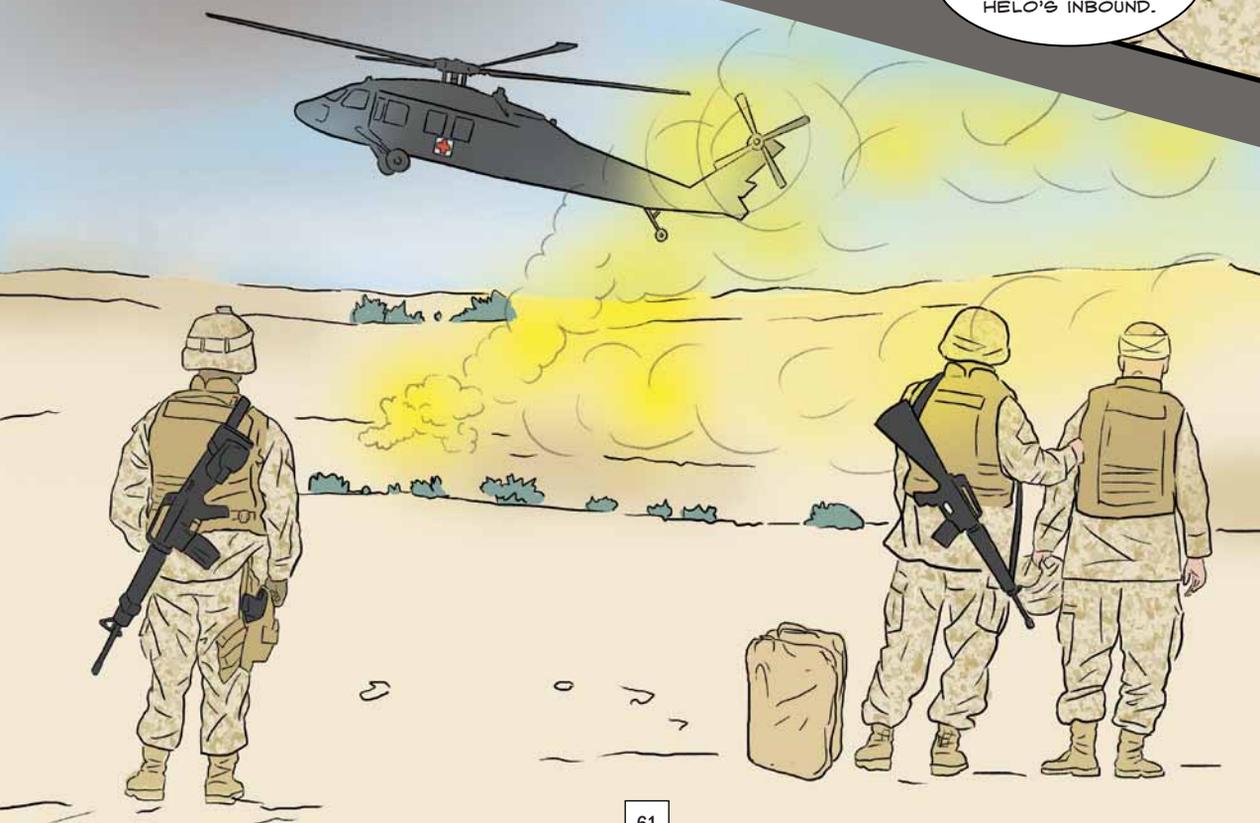
YOU'RE GONNA BE OK, RICE.

YOUR ANKLE'S BROKEN, DRAKE. NOT TOO BAD.



DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, DOC. I HEARD YOU TALKING TO PEARCE. HE GONNA BE ALRIGHT?

HIS LEG'S PRETTY BAD. HE'S STABLE, BUT WE GOTTA GET HIM OUTTA HERE. HELO'S INBOUND.



The next day at the FOB...

ALRIGHT, EVERETT. YOU'RE GOOD TO GO. IT WAS A PRETTY NASTY BLISTER SO YOU NEED TO KEEP THE BANDAGE CLEAN...DON'T WANT TO LET IT GET INFECTED.

MAN, I'M EXHAUSTED...FEELS LIKE HALF THE BATTALION CAME THROUGH HERE TODAY...ALL OF 'EM WITH THE SAME NASTY CRUD THAT'S GOING AROUND.

CLINIC DUTY MUST SEEM PRETTY DULL COMPARED TO THE SHIT YOU DEALT WITH YESTERDAY. THAT WAS GREAT WORK.

THANKS, MAN. BUT I FEEL REALLY BAD ABOUT PEARCE'S LEG. GOT HIM STABILIZED BUT NO WAY HE'S KEEPING IT. WAY TOO MUCH DAMAGE.

HEY, DOC. DON'T CARRY THAT AROUND WITH YOU. YOU DID ALL YOU CAN DO. AT LEAST HE'S ALIVE, THANKS TO YOU. HE'LL FIGURE OUT HOW TO DEAL WITH IT.

A BUDDY OF MINE LOST BOTH LEGS AND AN ARM TO AN IED A WHILE BACK.

DAMN.

ACTUALLY, HE'S DOING ALRIGHT. HE'S AN INSTRUCTOR AT SOI. HELL, HE EVEN RUNS SKS WITH HIS BIONIC LEGS.

IT'S ALMOST 1900, WE NEED TO HUMP IT OVER IF WE'RE GOING TO MAKE MAIL CALL.

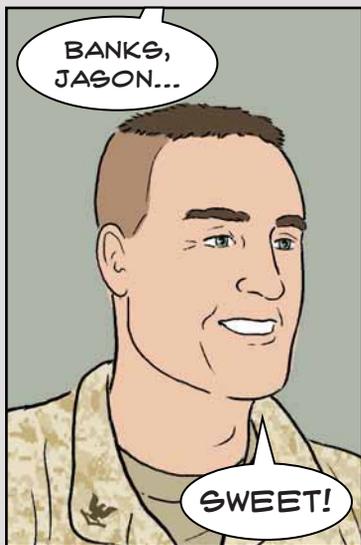


LEWIS, BRUCE...
JONES, TOMMY...
EVERETT, JOHN...

HEY, EVERETT!
WHO'S IT FROM,
YOUR MOMMA?

NAH, SPEARS,
ACTUALLY IT'S FROM
YOUR MOMMA.

SPEARS,
DUDE, YOU JUST
GOT SERVED.



BANKS,
JASON...

SWEET!



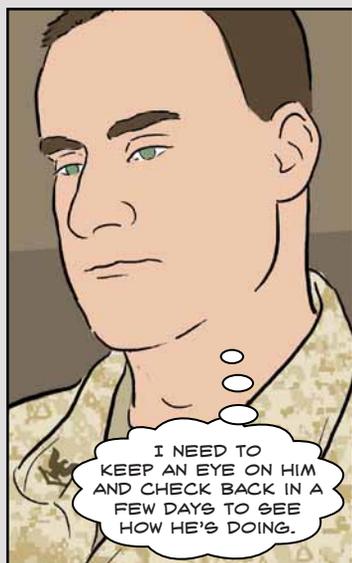
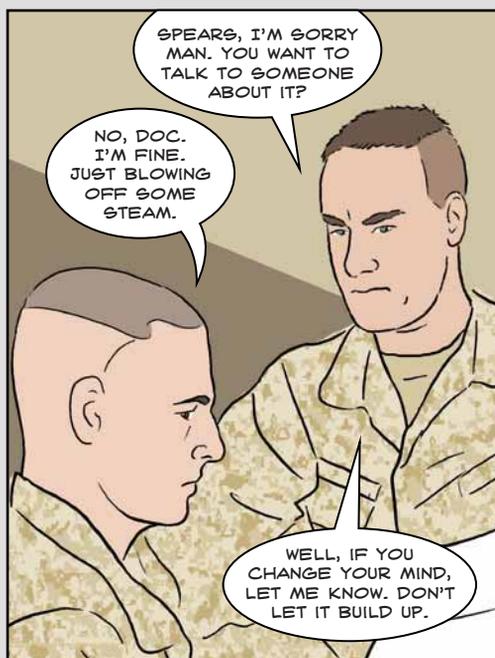
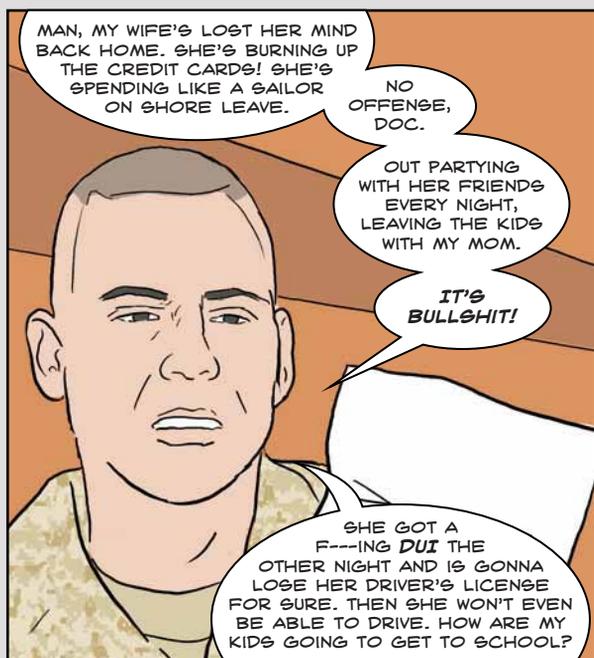
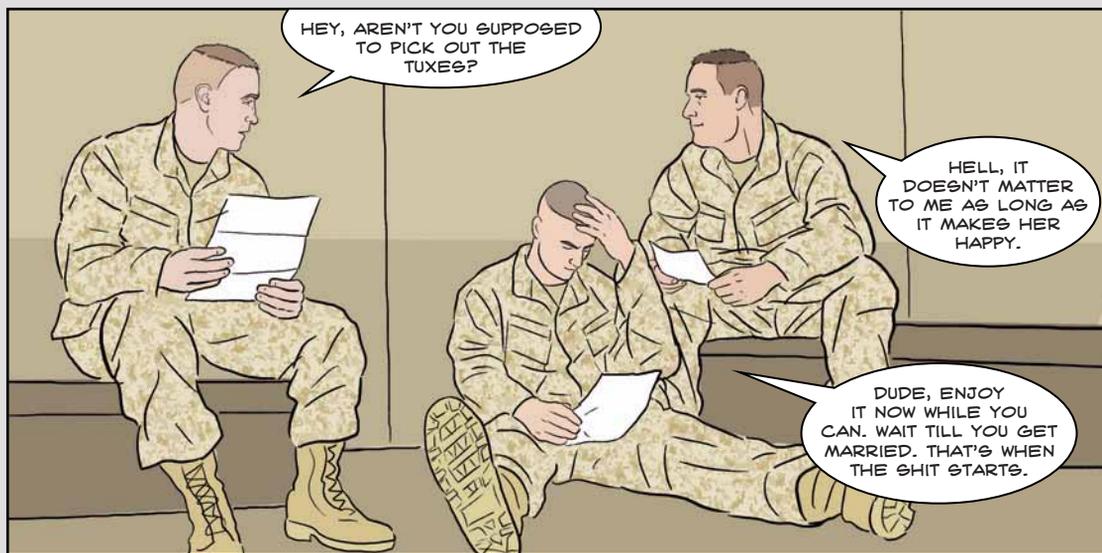
IT'S FROM
AMANDA. MY FIANCE.
WE GOT ENGAGED
RIGHT BEFORE I
SHIPPED OUT.

COOL. MINE
ACTUALLY IS FROM
MY MOM. SHE'S TELLING
ME ALL ABOUT MY GREAT
AUNT'S GALLBLADDER
OPERATION. I MEAN
ALL ABOUT IT.

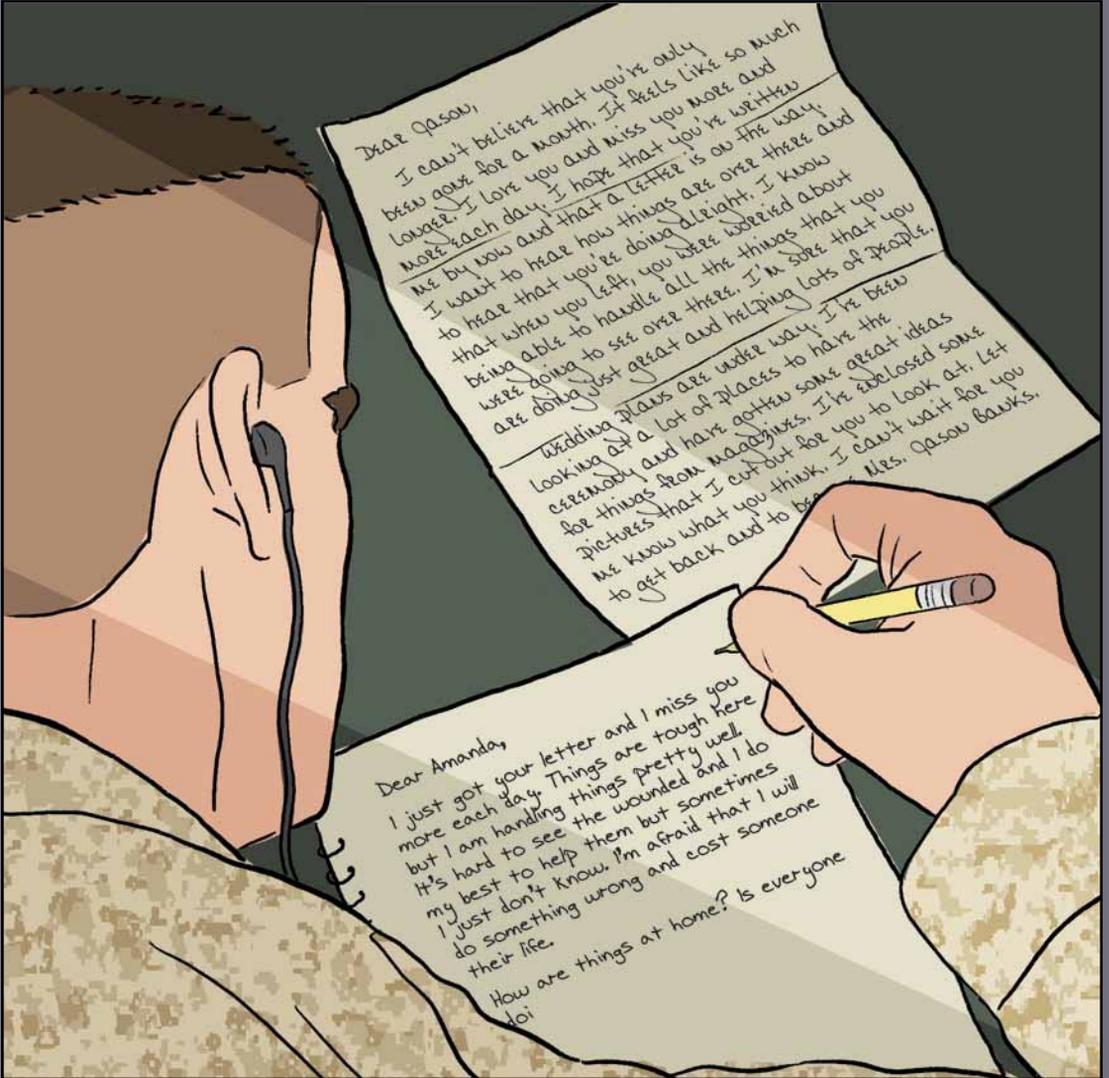


SO, HOW
ARE THINGS
WITH YOUR
FIANCE?

SHE'S
GOOD. A LITTLE
LONELY BUT HANDLING
THINGS PRETTY WELL.
SHE'S EVEN PICKED
OUT HER BRIDESMAID
DRESSES AND
THE TUXES.

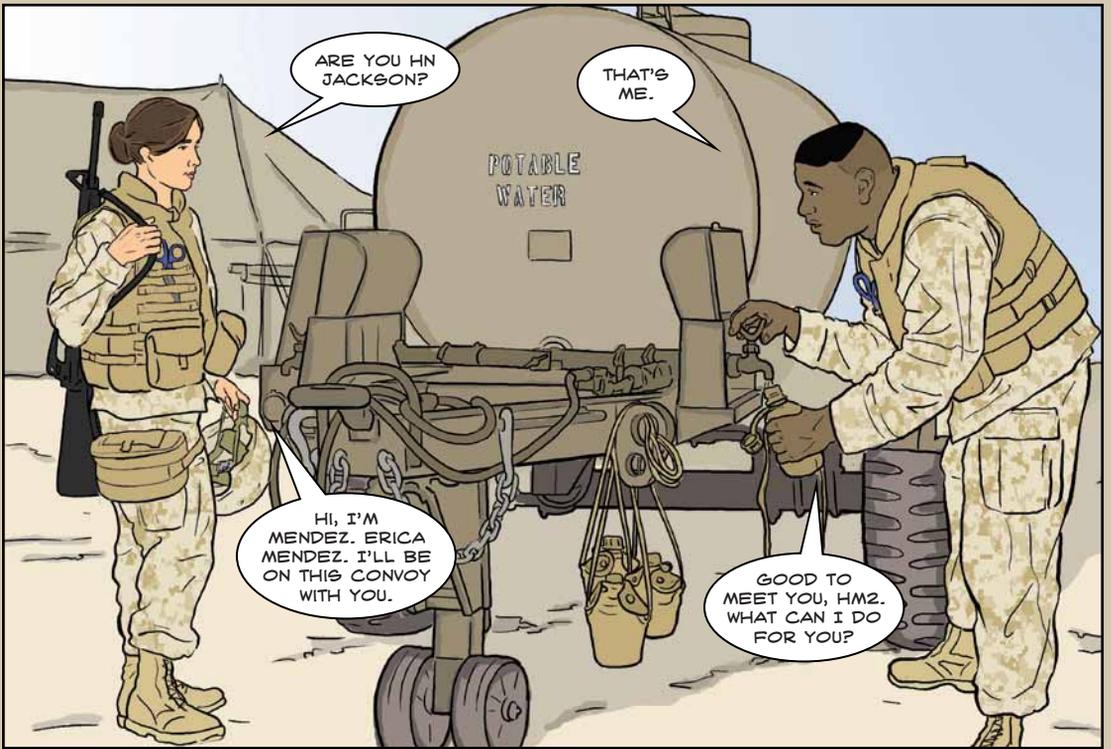


Later...



MENDEZ and JACKSON—Convoy to Baghdad





ARE YOU HM JACKSON?

THAT'S ME.

HI, I'M MENDEZ. ERICA MENDEZ. I'LL BE ON THIS CONVOY WITH YOU.

GOOD TO MEET YOU, HM2. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?



LT WILLIAMS ASKED ME TO CHECK IN TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU'RE GOOD TO GO.

CHECKING UP ON THE NEW GUY, HUH?

YEAH, GUESS SO.

HEY, I UNDERSTAND. I'D BE CHECKING UP ON ME, TOO.



SO, YOU GOOD?

YEAH, GUESS SO. LITTLE EDGY, BUT I'M OK. I MUST HAVE REVIEWED THINGS IN MY HEAD A THOUSAND TIMES. THINK WE'LL SEE ANY BAD SHIT?

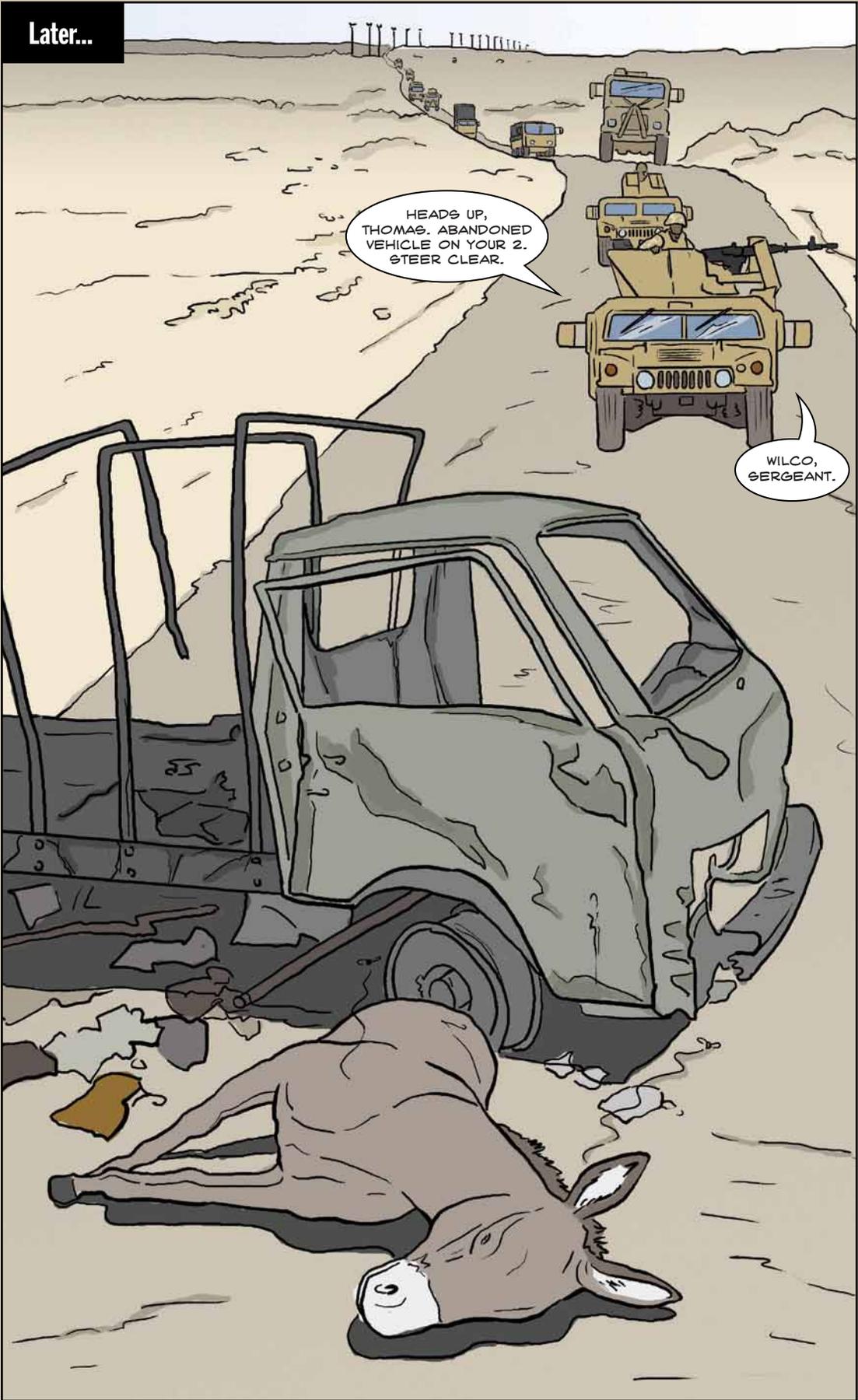


MAYBE. DON'T WORRY. TRUST YOUR TRAINING AND YOUR INSTINCTS AND YOU'LL DO FINE. BUT, MOST IMPORTANT—LISTEN TO YOUR MARINES. THEY KNOW THE DRILL.

ROGER.



Later...



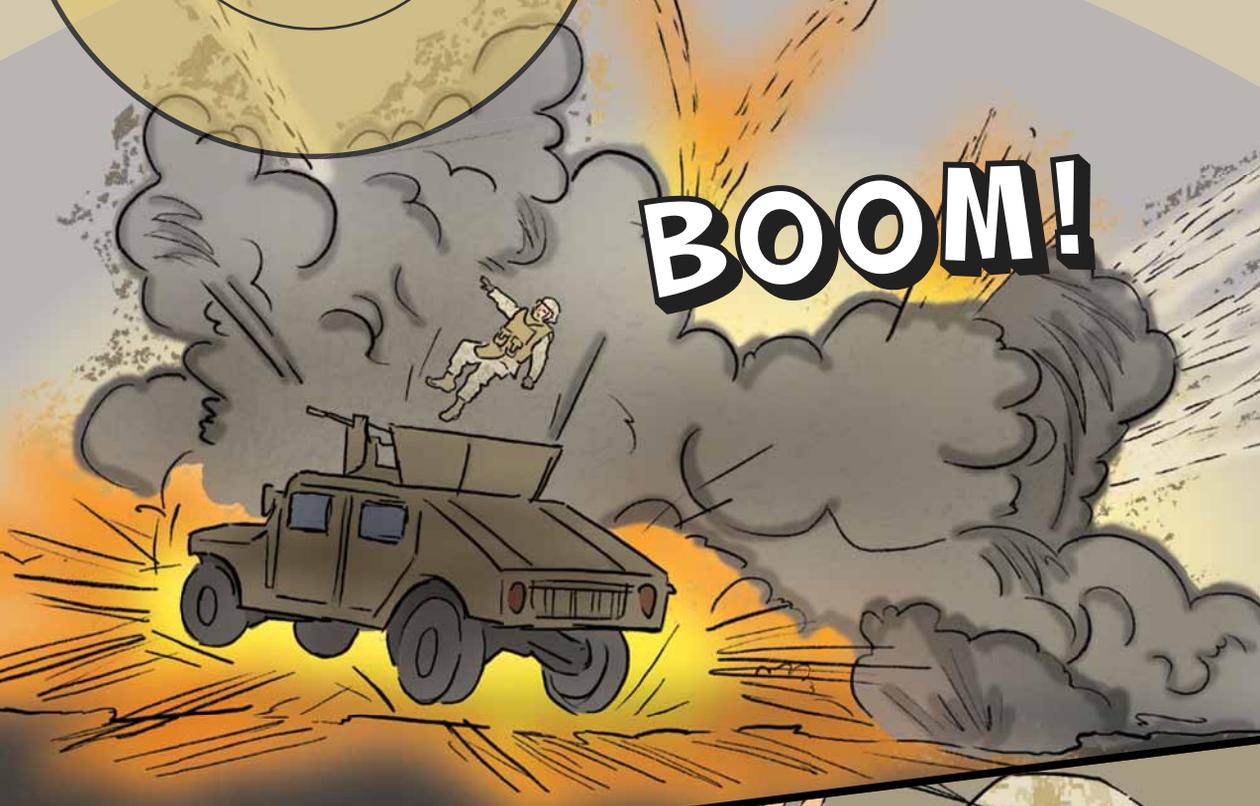
HEADS UP,
THOMAS. ABANDONED
VEHICLE ON YOUR 2.
STEER CLEAR.

WILCO,
SERGEANT.



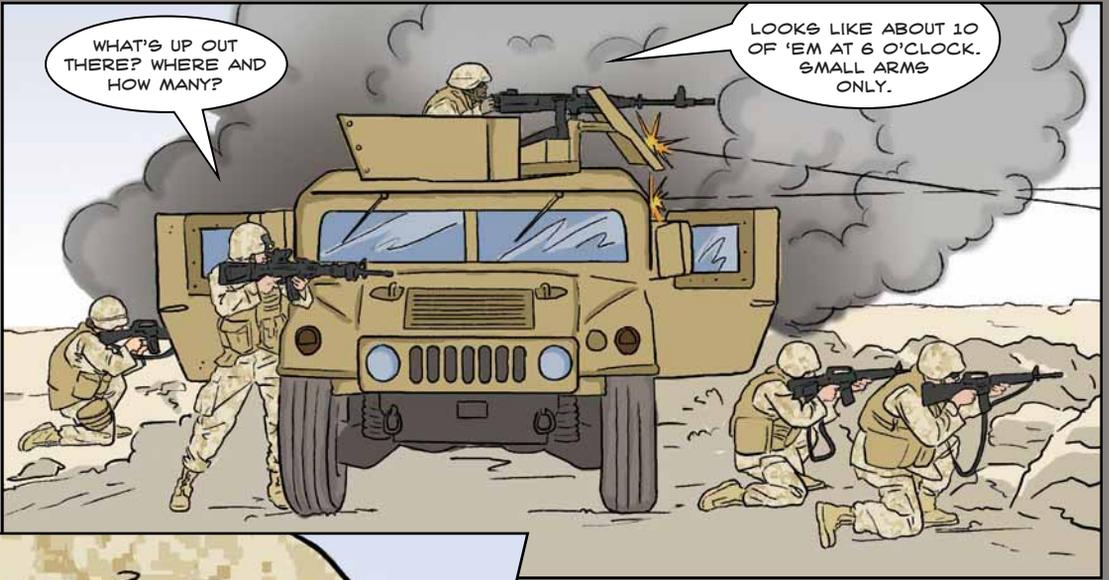


BOOM!

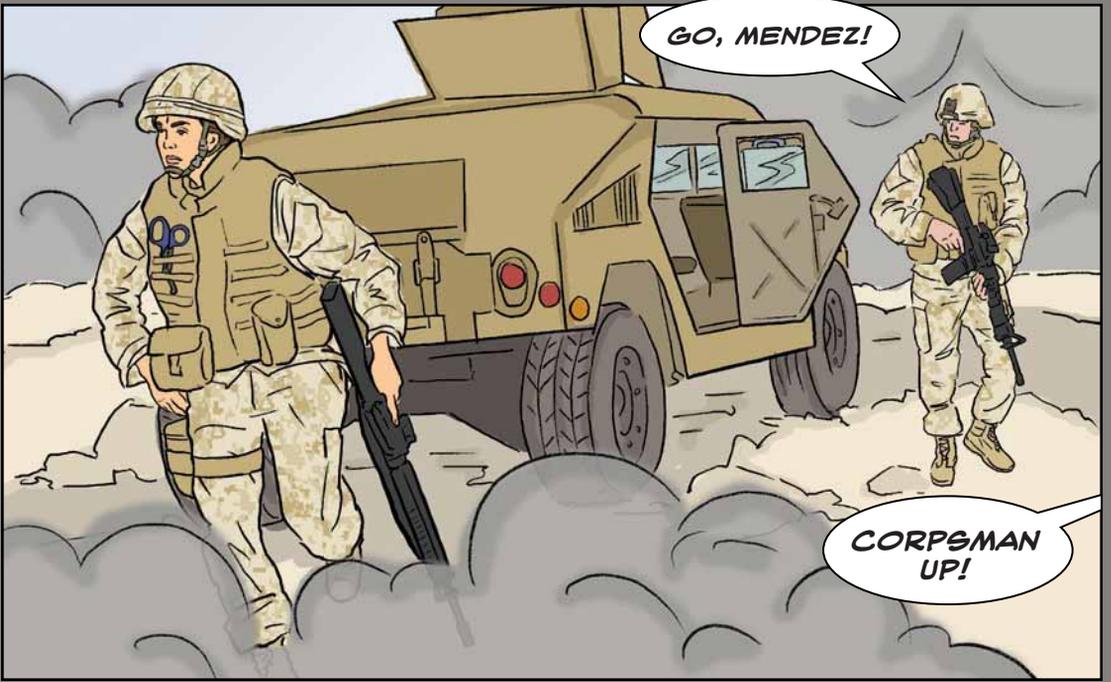


F---!!! WHAT WAS THAT?









GO, MENDEZ!

CORPSMAN
UP!



JACKSON,
I'VE GOT THIS ONE.
GO CHECK ON THE
OTHERS! START WITH
THE THIGH WOUND --
RIGHT THERE!

WILCO.



SHIT!
STAY WITH ME,
CORPORAL!



JACKSON,
HOW ARE YOU
DOING??!

I'VE GOT IT!
DON'T WORRY
ABOUT ME!



CORPORAL,
YOU WILL NOT DIE
ON ME. DO YOU
UNDERSTAND!?

=>GASP!<=>
=>WHEEZE...<=>



LOST THE PULSE! HOW LONG TILL THE MEDEVAC GETS HERE?

ABOUT TEN MIKES OUT.



DAMMIT, I TOLD YOU CORPORAL, YOU ARE NOT F---ING DYING ON ME. NOT TODAY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?



JACKSON, YOU OK?

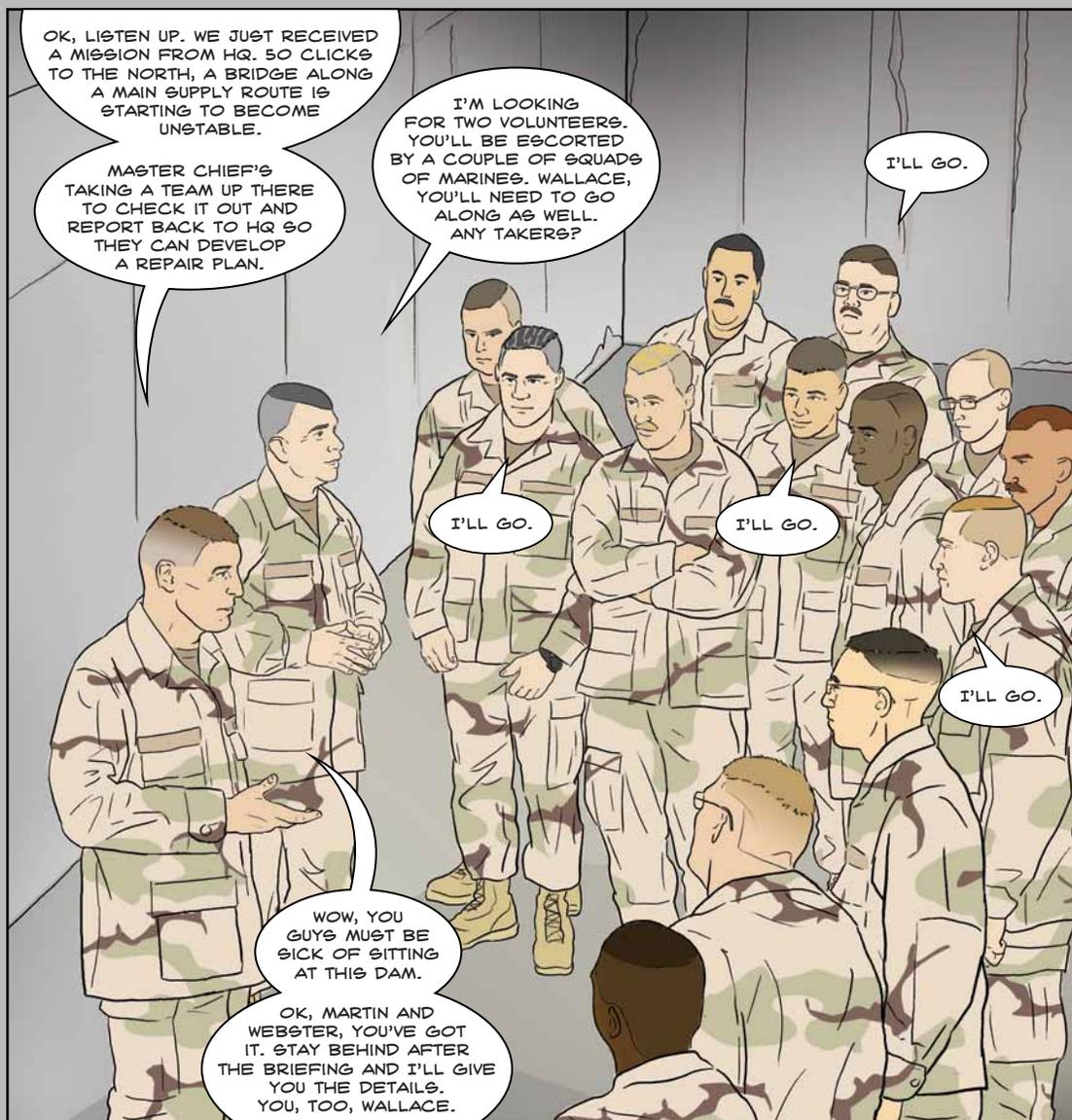
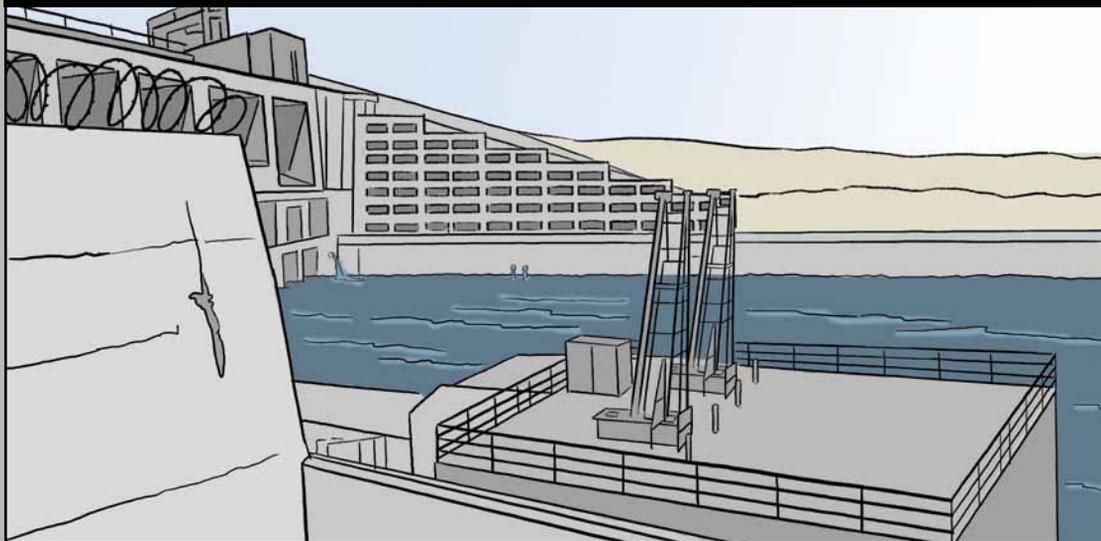
AFFIRMATIVE. UNDER CONTROL.

HELO'S INBOUND IN TWO MIKES.





WALLACE—A Helping Hand



OK, LISTEN UP. WE JUST RECEIVED A MISSION FROM HQ. 50 CLICKS TO THE NORTH, A BRIDGE ALONG A MAIN SUPPLY ROUTE IS STARTING TO BECOME UNSTABLE.

MASTER CHIEF'S TAKING A TEAM UP THERE TO CHECK IT OUT AND REPORT BACK TO HQ SO THEY CAN DEVELOP A REPAIR PLAN.

I'M LOOKING FOR TWO VOLUNTEERS. YOU'LL BE ESCORTED BY A COUPLE OF SQUADS OF MARINES. WALLACE, YOU'LL NEED TO GO ALONG AS WELL. ANY TAKERS?

I'LL GO.

I'LL GO.

I'LL GO.

I'LL GO.

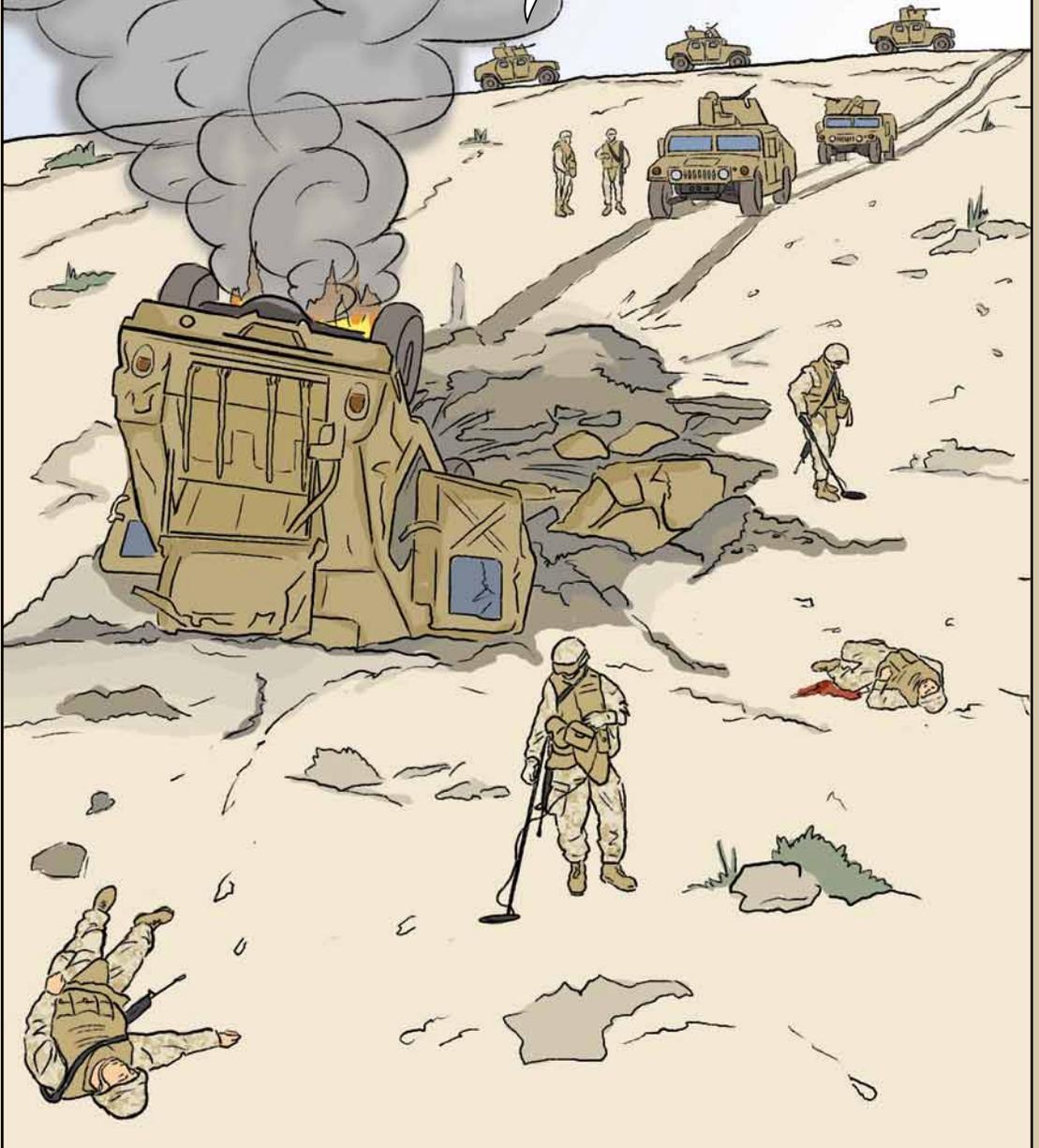
WOW, YOU GUYS MUST BE SICK OF SITTING AT THIS DAM.

OK, MARTIN AND WEBSTER, YOU'VE GOT IT. STAY BEHIND AFTER THE BRIEFING AND I'LL GIVE YOU THE DETAILS. YOU, TOO, WALLACE.

The next day 0730...

PHOENIX ACTUAL,
THIS IS PHOENIX VICTOR
ONE. PATROL OF FRIENDLIES
TURNED OFF THE MSR AND THE
LEAD VEHICLE HIT A MINE. TWO
WOUNDED PERSONNEL DOWN
INSIDE THE MINEFIELD. EOD
IS ON SITE. OVER.

PHOENIX VICTOR
ONE, THIS IS PHOENIX
ACTUAL...SEE IF
WALLACE CAN HELP
THEM OUT. OVER.





HELLO, I'M HMI WALLACE. WHAT'S THE SITUATION?

GOOD TO MEET YOU, HMI. I'M BANKS, HMB BANKS.

WE'VE GOT TWO MARINES DOWN IN WHAT LOOKS LIKE A HOT MINEFIELD. THEY WON'T LET ME GO IN UNTIL EOD CLEARS A PATH.



HOW BAD ARE THEY?

HAVE A LOOK. THE ONE ON THE LEFT, FLEMING, LOOKS LIKE HE HAS SHRAPNEL WOUNDS TO HIS RIGHT THIGH. SIGNIFICANT BLEEDING, BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S LIFE THREATENING ASSUMING WE CAN GET OUT THERE SOON.



WHAT ABOUT THE SECOND GUY?

THE BIG GUY'S DAWKINS. I'M MORE WORRIED ABOUT HIM. I SEE THAT HE'S BREATHING BUT HE HASN'T MOVED MUCH SINCE THE EXPLOSION.

I AGREE. WE NEED TO GET TO HIM SOON.



WE?

SURE. YOU DIDN'T THINK I WAS GOING TO LET YOU HAVE ALL THE FUN OF WALKING OUT INTO A MINEFIELD, DID YOU?

THANKS. I CAN USE THE EXTRA HANDS OUT THERE. WHEN WE GET THERE, MIND IF I TAKE THE ONE ON THE RIGHT -- DAWKINS, AND YOU TAKE THE LEG WOUND -- FLEMING?



OK, DOCS... LISTEN CAREFULLY. WHATEVER YOU DO, FOLLOW EXACTLY WHERE I GO. YOU STEP WHERE I STEP AND NOWHERE ELSE. DO THAT, AND EVERYTHING'LL BE FINE. GOT IT?

ROGER THAT. I'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS STRETCHER. WHEN WE GET THERE, CAN YOU FIND ME A CLEAR SPOT TO SET IT UP?

NO PROBLEM.



OK, BANKS. IT'S CLEAR WITHIN 5 FEET ALL AROUND. YOU CAN PUT THE STRETCHER ON ANY SIDE. BUT DON'T GO OUTSIDE OF THAT.

FOLLOW ME, WALLACE.

OK... I'M GOOD HERE.



HOLD UP, DAWKINS. IT'S ME, BANKS. I'VE GOT YOU.

WHAAAAAT!? WHAT HAPPENED? GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!

DAWKINS, STAY STILL. I'LL GET YOU OUT OF HERE AS SOON AS I CAN. I'VE GOT TO STABILIZE YOUR HEAD AND NECK FIRST.

WHAT??!! GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!



WALLACE, YOU'RE CLEAR IN A 5-FOOT RADIUS BUT STAY CLOSE. I'LL LEAD YOU OUT WHEN YOU'RE READY.

FLEMING, RIGHT? LISTEN... LOOK AT ME... RIGHT HERE...LOOK AT ME... STAY STILL...I'M GIVING YOU SOMETHING FOR THE PAIN. IT WON'T TAKE LONG TO START WORKING.

DOC, HELP ME. OH GOD, DOC. IT HURTS. PLEASE.

OK, DOC.



WOW, DOC. IT'S STARTING TO WORK ALREADY.

GOOD. I'VE GOT TO GET THE BLEEDING STOPPED SOME SO I CAN GET YOU OUT OF HERE. THE MEDEVAC IS ON THE WAY.



DOC... WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO ME?

FLEMING, YOU SHOULD BE FINE... BUT DON'T PLAN ON DANCING FOR A WHILE.

ummmph!

THANKS, DOC.

GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE NOW!

DAMN! STAY PUT, FLEMING.

HANG ON, BANKS! I'M COMING!

GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!

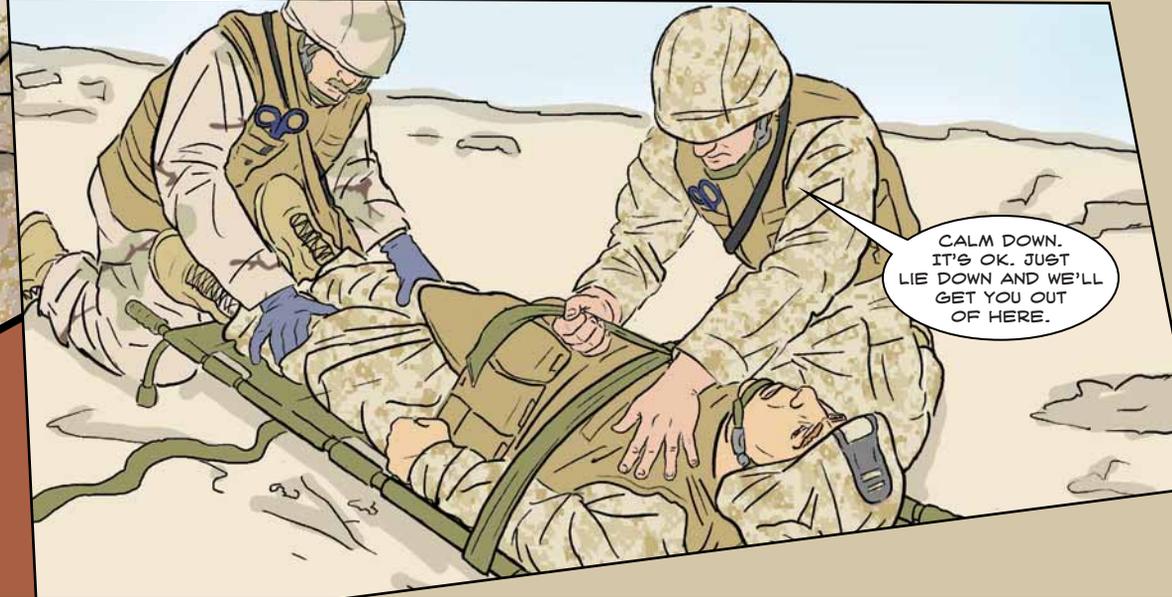
DAWKINS, IT'S ME, BANKS! LAY BACK DOWN! YOU'RE GONNA GET US BOTH BLOWN UP!

NO, DOC! WAIT! LET ME CLEAR THE WAY!

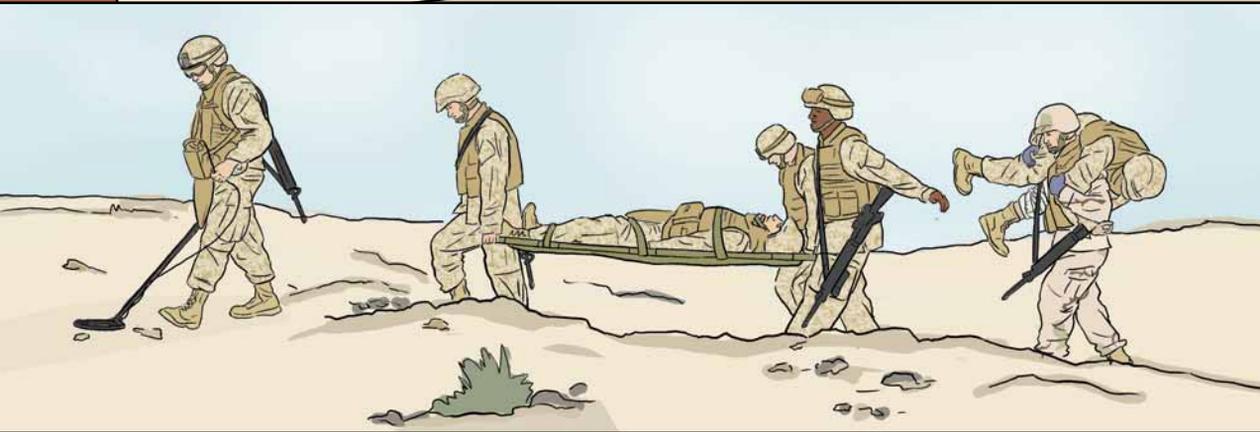


GOTTA GET HIM STRAPPED DOWN. HELP!

OUTTA HERE! GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!



CALM DOWN. IT'S OK. JUST LIE DOWN AND WE'LL GET YOU OUT OF HERE.





I'LL GET AN IV STARTED HERE WHILE YOU CHECK OUT DAWKINS FOR TBI.

YEAH, LOOKS LIKE HE GOT HIS BELL RUNG PRETTY GOOD.

OK, MARINE. CAN YOU TELL ME YOUR NAME?



HUH?
...UM...DAWKINS
...TERRENCE
DAWKINS.

CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED?

NO CLUE,
DOC.

ALRIGHT, TELL
ME WHAT YOU
REMEMBER.

RIDING IN
CONVOY...HEADED TO...???
...DAMN, DOC, THAT'S ABOUT IT...
RIDING IN THE CONVOY...DON'T
EVEN REMEMBER WHERE
WE WERE HEADED.

IT'S OK.

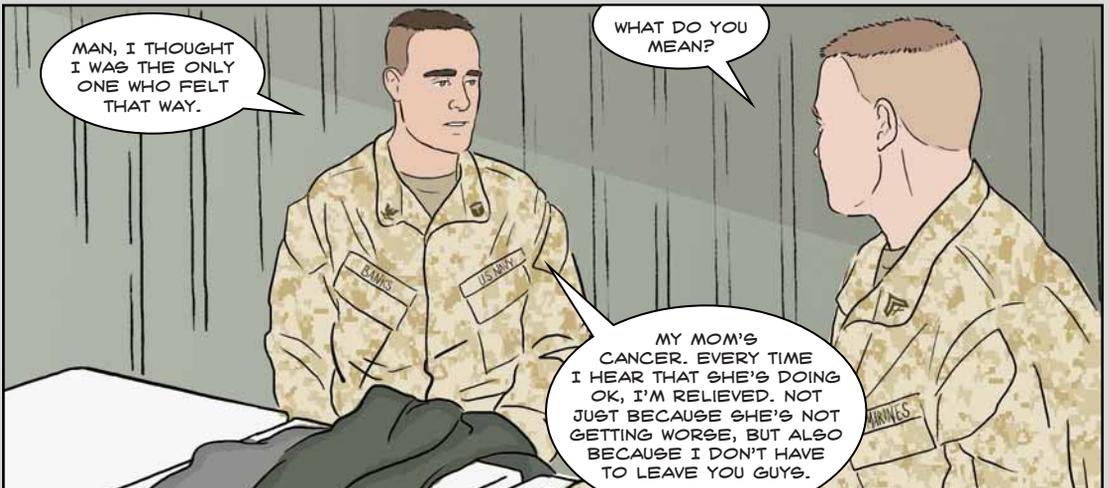
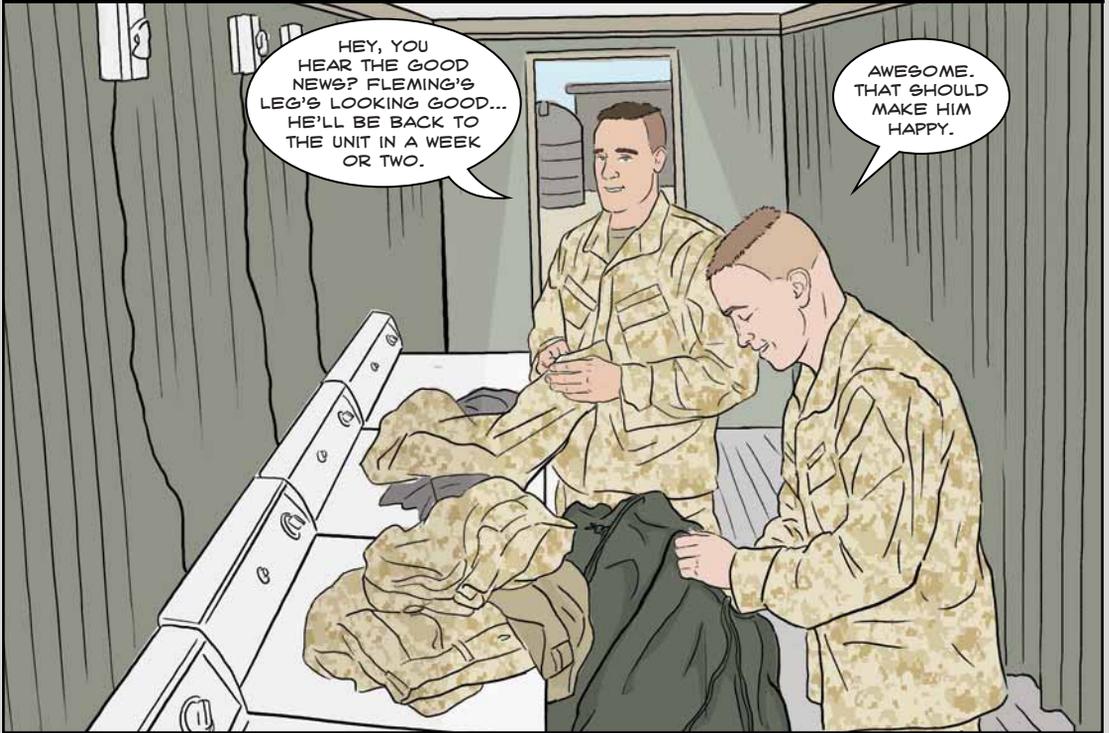


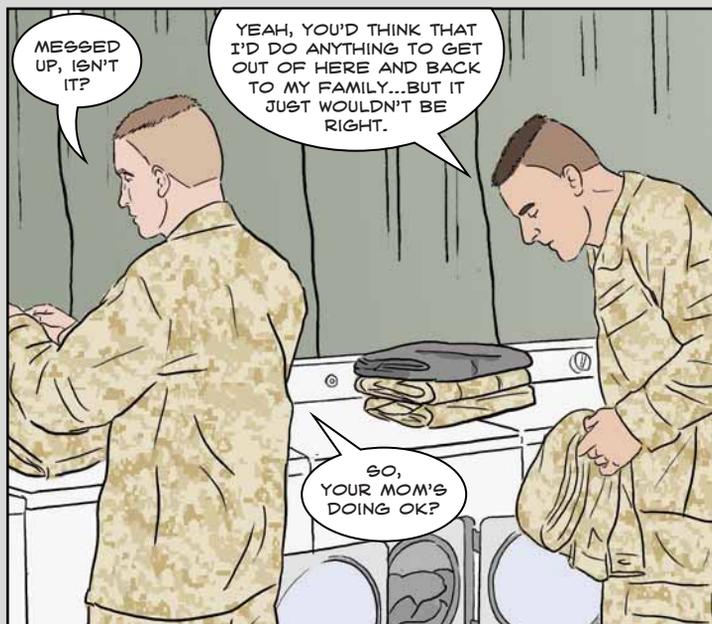
I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING, DOC. YOU'RE ONE CRAZY MOTHER. YOU COULD HAVE GOTTEN YOUR ASS BLOWN UP.

IT'S NOT MY ASS I WAS WORRIED ABOUT.



BANKS—Something in Common

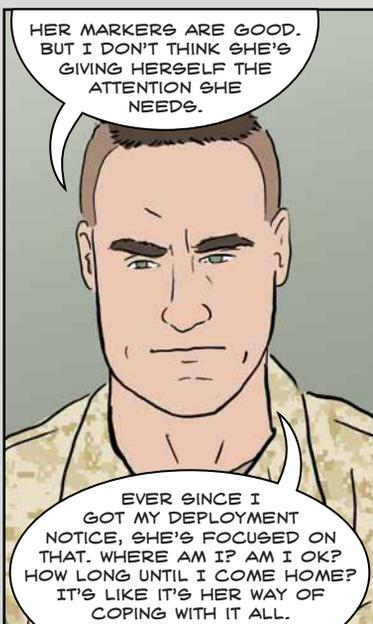




MESSED UP, ISN'T IT?

YEAH, YOU'D THINK THAT I'D DO ANYTHING TO GET OUT OF HERE AND BACK TO MY FAMILY...BUT IT JUST WOULDN'T BE RIGHT.

SO, YOUR MOM'S DOING OK?



HER MARKERS ARE GOOD. BUT I DON'T THINK SHE'S GIVING HERSELF THE ATTENTION SHE NEEDS.

EVER SINCE I GOT MY DEPLOYMENT NOTICE, SHE'S FOCUSED ON THAT. WHERE AM I? AM I OK? HOW LONG UNTIL I COME HOME? IT'S LIKE IT'S HER WAY OF COPING WITH IT ALL.



MAYBE IT HELPS HER BY KEEPING HER MIND OFF THE CHEMO.

YEAH, I GUESS... BUT I STILL WORRY ABOUT HER. SOMEBODY NEEDS TO TAKE CARE OF HER AND MY BROTHER JUST ISN'T GOOD AT THAT STUFF.

BUT, HEY, THAT'S ENOUGH ABOUT ME.

OH, YEAH, I FORGOT. YOU DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT.

WELL, SOMETIMES IT ISN'T BAD, I GUESS.

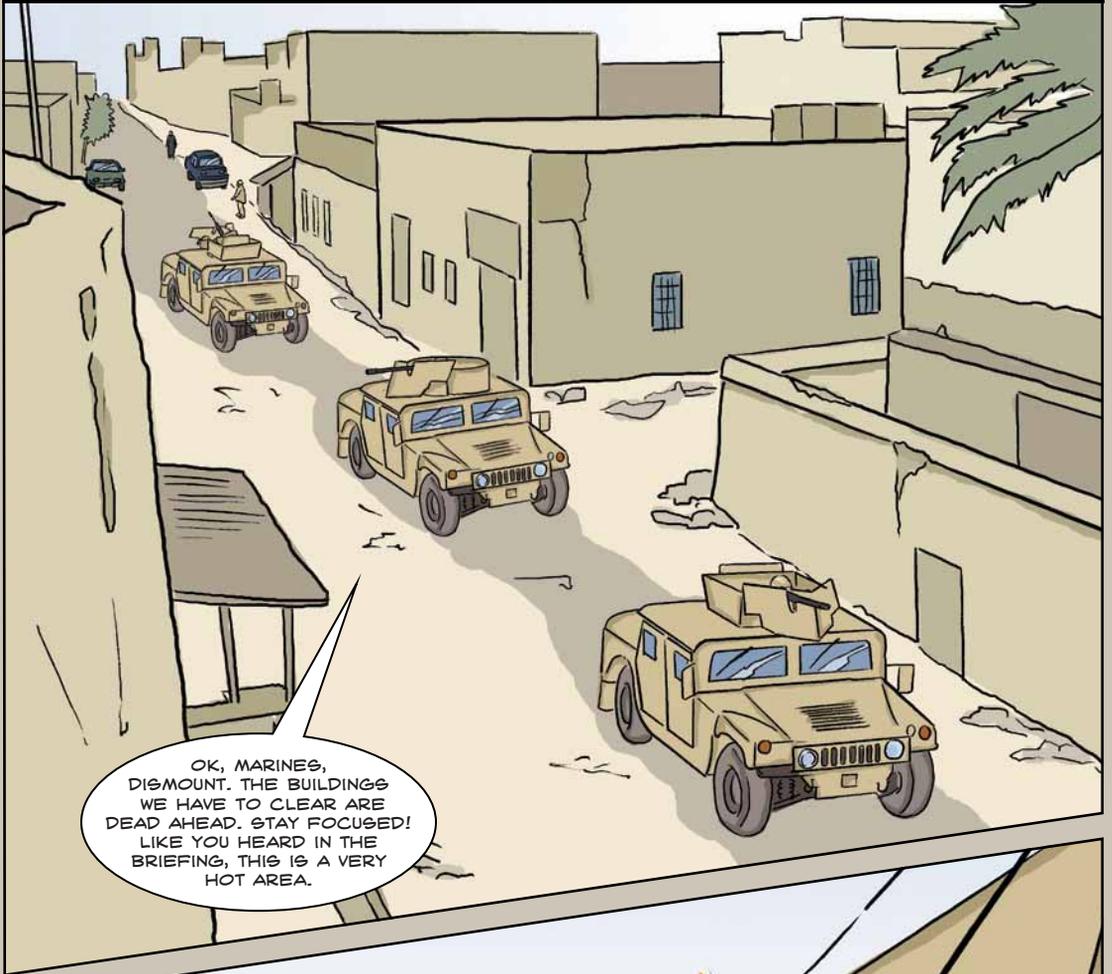
NO SHIT.



HEY, WHAT ABOUT DAWKINS? HOW BAD WAS HIS HEAD INJURY?

HE'S STABLE BUT IT'S STILL PRETTY SERIOUS. HE'S ON HIS WAY TO GERMANY...

BANKS—First Kill







HOLY SHIT,
DOC! THAT WAS
CLOSE!

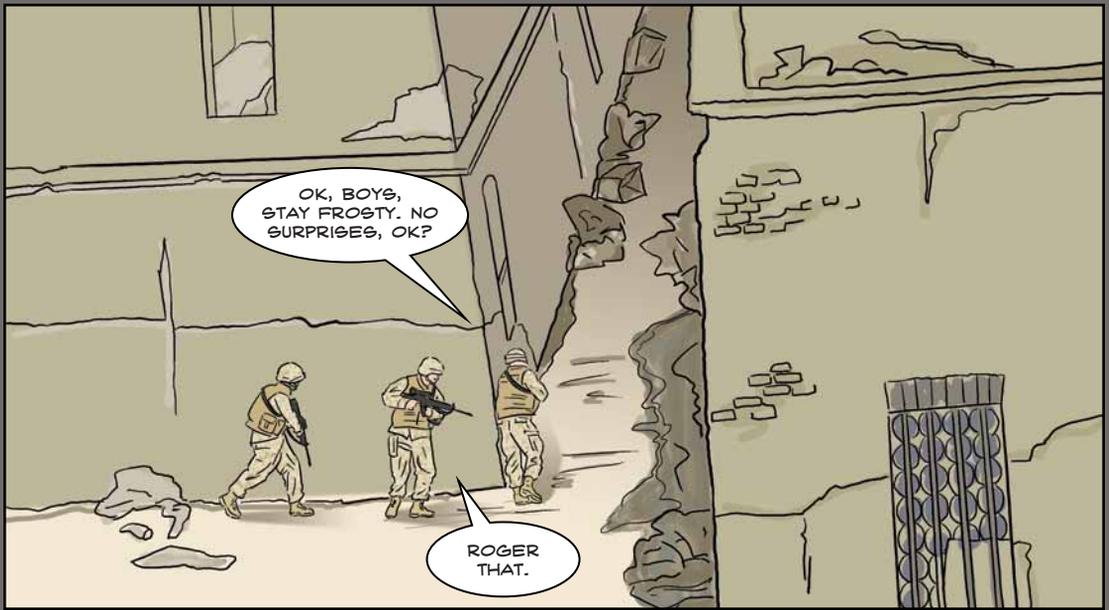


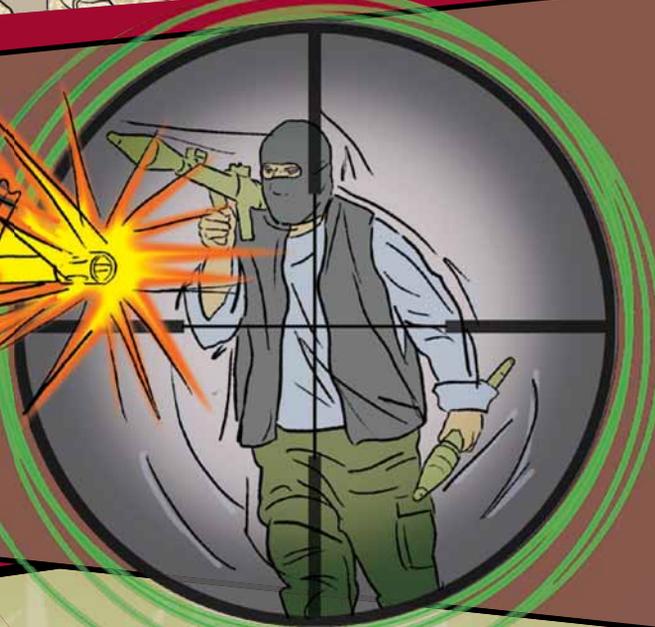
TIMMONS,
GET MORE
SUPPRESSING
FIRE UP
THERE NOW!

CPL EVERETT!
TAKE SPEARS AND
BANKS AND SECURE
OUR LEFT FLANK.

WINTERS!
YOU, LEWIS AND
PETERSON COVER
THE RIGHT! WE DON'T WANT
THESE BASTARDS
FLANKING US.

WILCO,
SERGEANT!







WELL DONE, BOYS. SPEARS, GET BACK OVER AND SEE WHAT'S UP WITH THE CONVOY.

ROGER.

GOOD WORK, DOC.



DOC. HEY, DOC! BANKS! YOU IN THERE?!

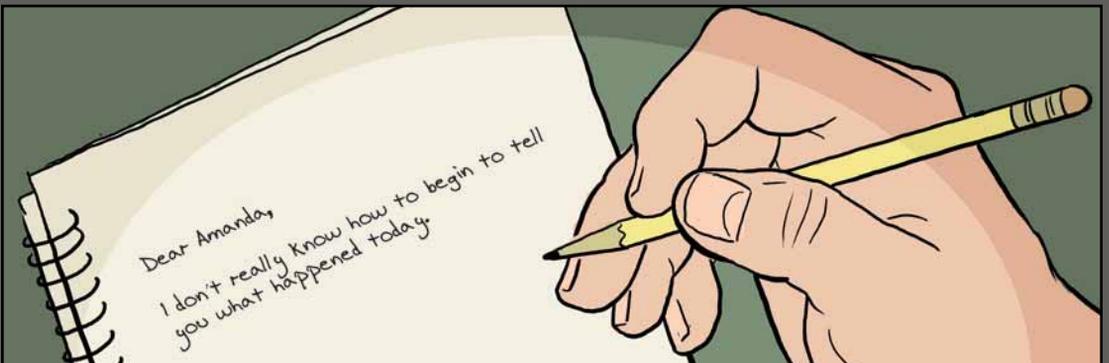
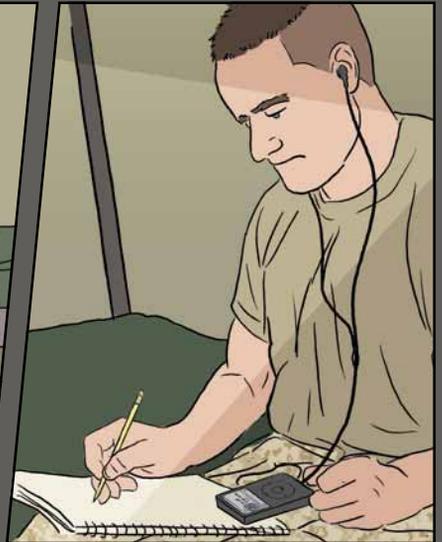
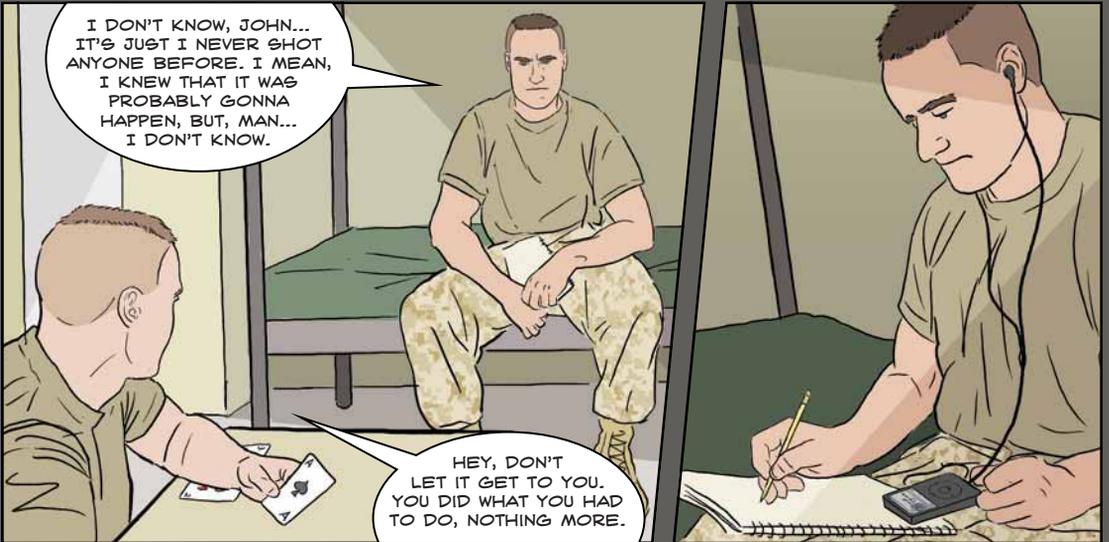
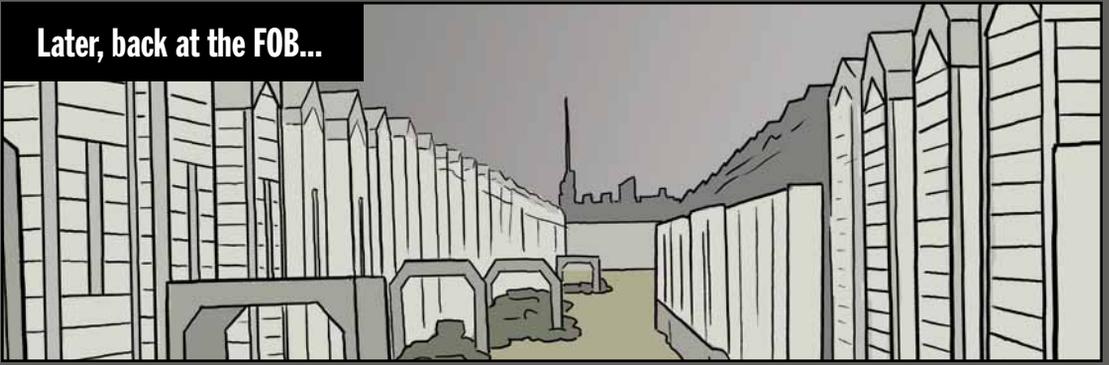
YEAH. I'M GOOD.



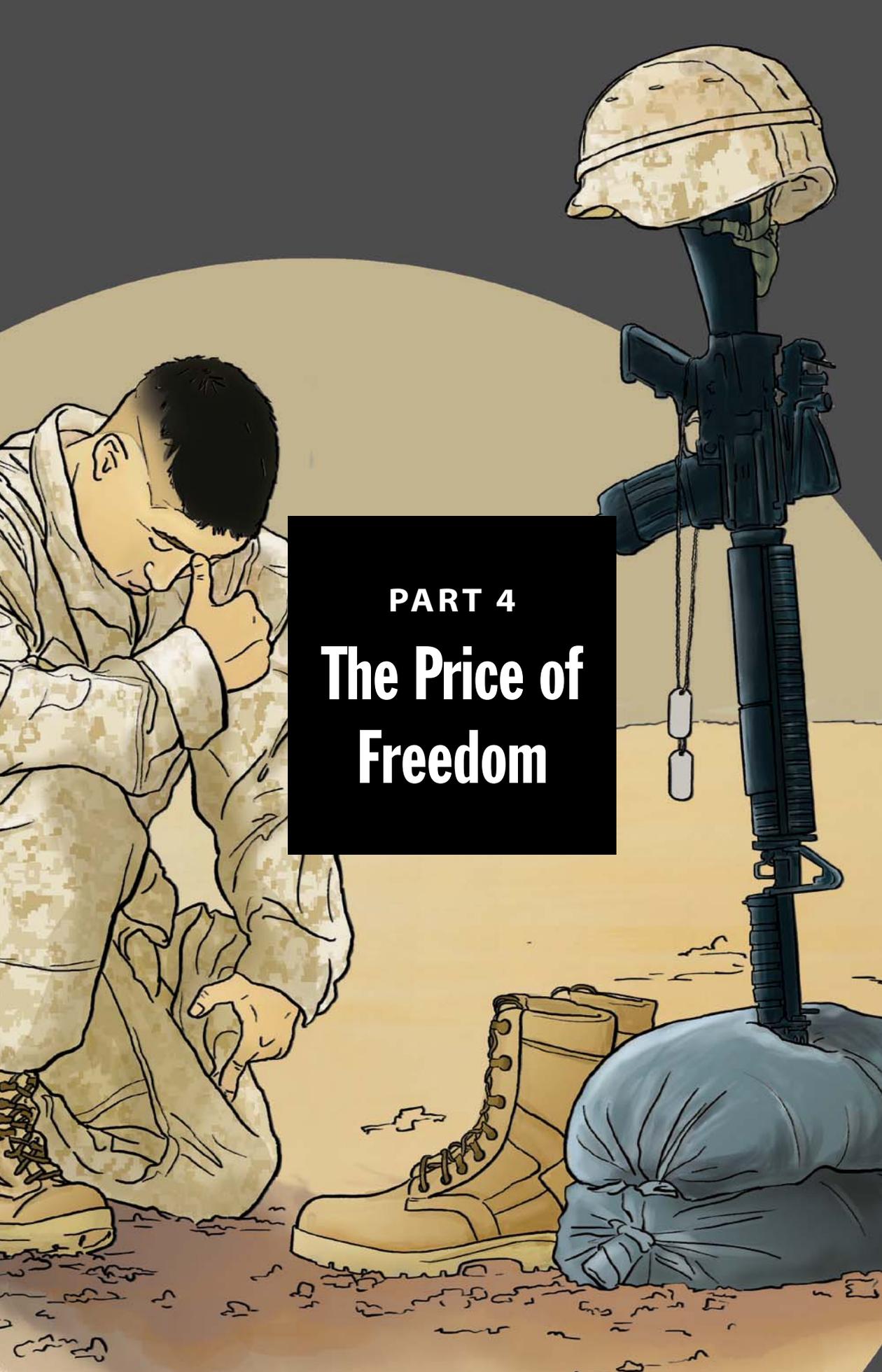
ALRIGHT. THERE'S SPEARS. HE'S SIGNALING US BACK TO THE CONVOY. LET'S GO.

OK.

Later, back at the FOB...







PART 4
The Price of Freedom

BANKS—Cordon and Knock



WE'RE HEADING INTO HAIFA FOR A CORDON AND KNOCK. OSCAR MIKE AT 0600 SO I WANT EVERYBODY IN FULL BATTLE RATTLE AND READY TO ROLL BY 0530.



KICKIN' DOWN DOORS IN HAIFA. OOH-RAH!!

SHIT! NOT HAIFA! I HATE GOING IN THERE. I DON'T WANT TO GET MY ASS SHOT OFF IN HAIFA!

COME ON, WINTERS, EMBRACE THE SUCK.

0600...

WELCOME
TO PURPLE HEART
BOULEVARD.

خطر
البقي بيبيديا
DANGER
STAY BACK

ALRIGHT,
MARINES, DISMOUNT.
WE'VE GOT 6 HOUSES TO
CLEAR IN THIS BLOCK.
STAY SHARP.

NO ANSWER.
BREAK IT IN.

ROGER,
CORPORAL.

DAMN,
THAT'S A HELL
OF AN ARSENAL
-- RADIO IT IN.

BANKS,
COME WITH ME.
LET'S CHECK
UPSTAIRS.





THANKS,
MAN.

NO PROBLEM,
DOC. YOU OK?

I'LL CALL IT IN.

BROWNBAG TWO ONE,
THIS IS BROWNBAG TWO ONE
ACTUAL. BE ADVISED, WE HAVE
ONE HOSTILE DOWN ON THE
SECOND FLOOR. REPEAT, ONE
HOSTILE DOWN ON THE
SECOND FLOOR.

Later, back at the FOB...

...THEN THE DOOR BLASTS OPEN AND HE'S RIGHT BEHIND DOC...READY TO PULL THE TRIGGER.

I'M LIKE, OH HELL NO... THIS IS NOT GOOD. BUT THEN, DOC PULLS SOME SERIOUS NINJA SHIT. HE GRABS THE DUDE'S ARM AND YANKS HIM DOWN, AND THEY END UP ON THE FLOOR WRESTLING FOR THE WEAPON.

OOH-RAH, DOC.

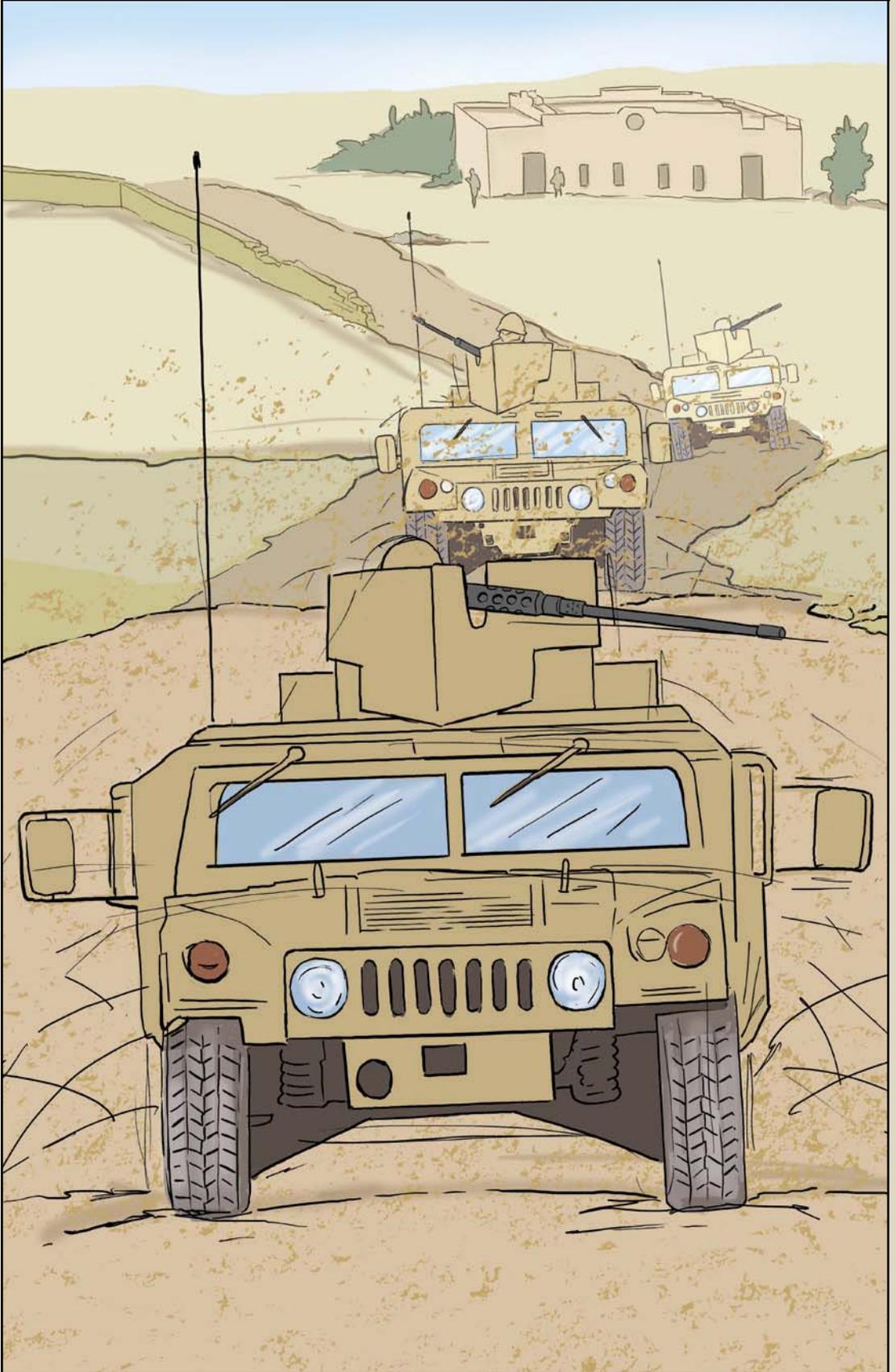
NO WAY I WAS LETTING THAT ARM GO...

THAT DUDE'S LUCKY I ENDED IT QUICK. DOC WAS GETTING READY TO GO MEDIEVAL ON HIM.

YOU MUST HAVE THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE WRESTLING ONE OF THOSE ALLIGATORS BACK IN MISSISSIPPI, DOC!

YEAH, RIGHT...

JACKSON—A Tough Decision





WHO YOU KIDDING, HUGHES? NO WAY AN UGLY MOTHER F---ER LIKE YOU HAS A WIFE WHO LOOKS LIKE THAT!



OH, THAT'S COLD!! COME ON, JACKSON, YOU GONNA LET HIM TALK TO ME THAT WAY?



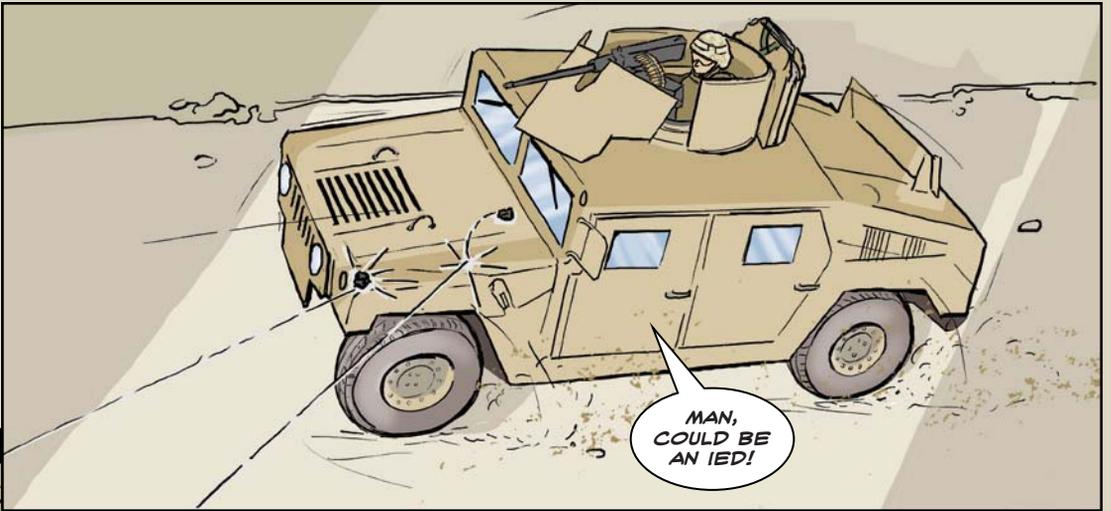
HUGHES, JACKSON, EYES LEFT! ANGRY CROWD AHEAD. JENKINS -- STAY ALERT ON THAT .50.

IN THE GREEN AT 10 O'CLOCK.

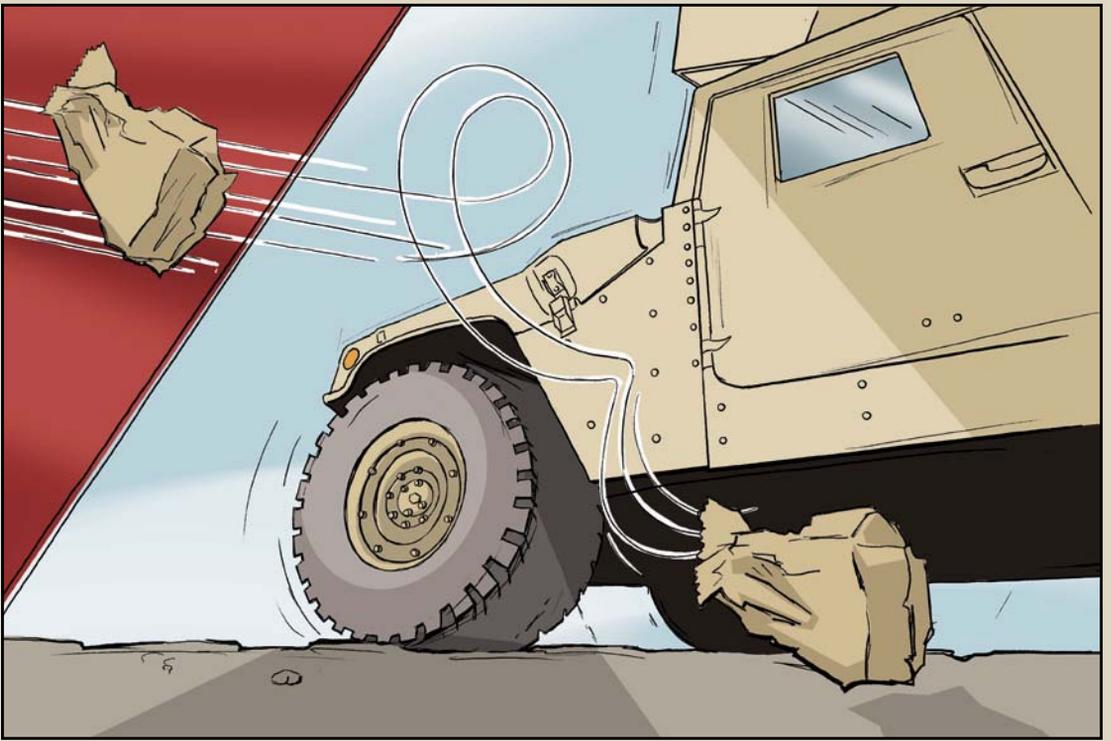
WHAT'S IN HIS HAND?! WATCH HIM, JENKINS!



WILCO, CORPORAL!







Later, back at the FOB...

MAN, I'M STARVED. LET'S GO TO CHOW. MIGHT AS WELL, IT'LL BE MRE'S FOR WEEKS AGAIN SOON.

GOOD IDEA.

WHERE'S JENKINS?

HE'S JUST BEEN SITTING ON HIS BUNK SINCE GUNNY RIPPED HIM A NEW ONE.

MAN, THAT WAS THREE HOURS AGO!

DAWG, HE SHOULD'VE KNOWN BETTER. HE KNOWS THE RULES. COULD HAVE GOTTEN US ALL KILLED.

YOU GUYS GO AHEAD. I'LL CATCH UP. I'M GOING TO CHECK ON JENKINS.







TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, DOC, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK.

I DISOBEYED A DIRECT ORDER AND COULD'VE GOTTEN A LOT OF GUYS KILLED. GUNNY IS PISSED. SO ARE THE GUYS IN THE UNIT.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE...



OK, HE'S NOT IN IMMEDIATE PHYSICAL DANGER.

WE'RE NOT IN THE FIELD SO CHECK, COVER AND CALM DON'T REALLY APPLY ANY MORE.

I'M CONNECTING WITH HIM RIGHT NOW...JUST HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO COORDINATE.

I CAN KEEP MY EYES ON HIM, HELP HIM WORK ON THE LAST TWO C'S...



JENKINS?



HEY, MAN, I WONDER IF MAYBE YOU MIGHT WANT TO TALK TO SOMEONE BESIDES ME?

LIKE WHO?

THE BATTALION OSCAR PSYCHOLOGIST.



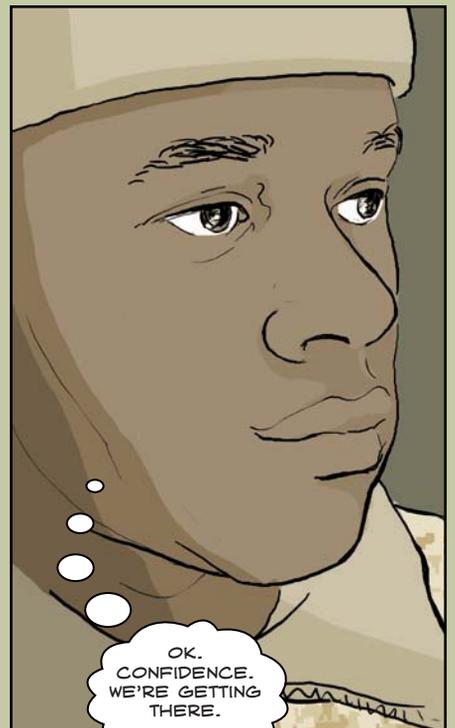
A SHRINK?

I DON'T NEED A SHRINK, DOC. I'M NOT CRAZY.



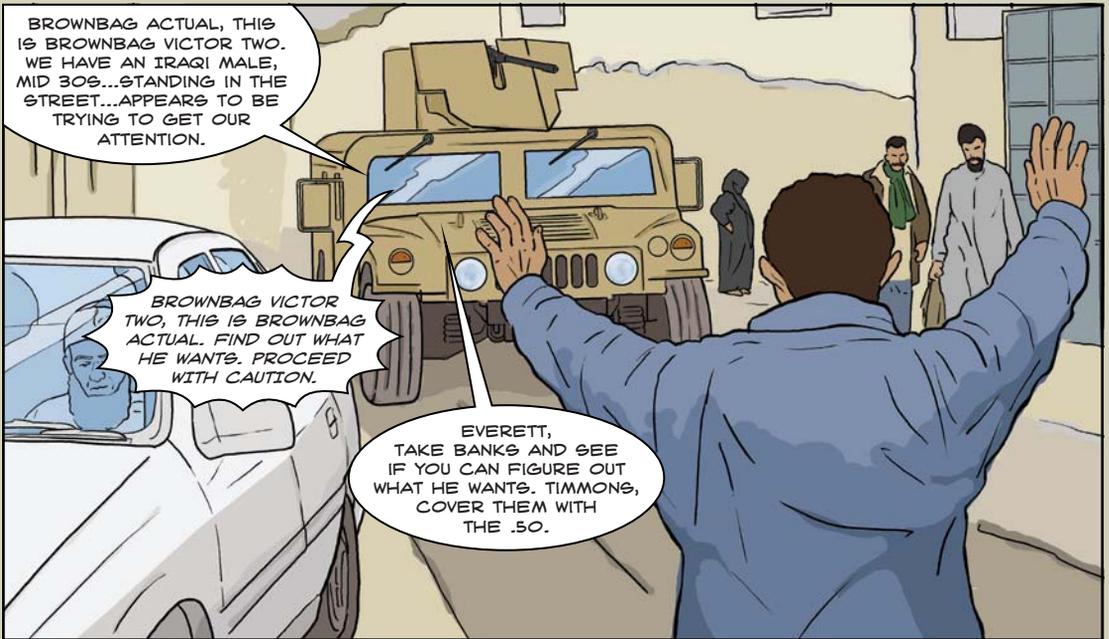
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT LIKE THAT. HE'S JUST SOMEONE TO TALK TO. IT'S COMPLICATED STUFF. YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIGURE IT ALL OUT ON YOUR OWN. HE DEALS WITH THIS KIND OF STUFF ALL THE TIME. I THINK HE CAN HELP.

YOU THINK SO?



BANKS—Horrors of War





BROWNBAG ACTUAL, THIS IS BROWNBAG VICTOR TWO. WE HAVE AN IRAQI MALE, MID 30S...STANDING IN THE STREET...APPEARS TO BE TRYING TO GET OUR ATTENTION.

BROWNBAG VICTOR TWO, THIS IS BROWNBAG ACTUAL. FIND OUT WHAT HE WANTS. PROCEED WITH CAUTION.

EVERETT, TAKE BANKS AND SEE IF YOU CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT HE WANTS. TIMMONS, COVER THEM WITH THE .50.



KIND OF HARD TO UNDERSTAND HIM. HE'S SCARED SHITLESS. SOUNDS LIKE IT'S HIS SISTER AND HER FAMILY, SOMETHING ABOUT HER HUSBAND WORKING AS A TRANSLATOR FOR AN AMERICAN COMPANY.

SAYS HE SAW A GROUP OF MEN FROM THE LOCAL MILITIA GOING IN THEIR HOUSE. WANTS US TO GO CHECK IT OUT AND SEE IF THEY'RE OK.

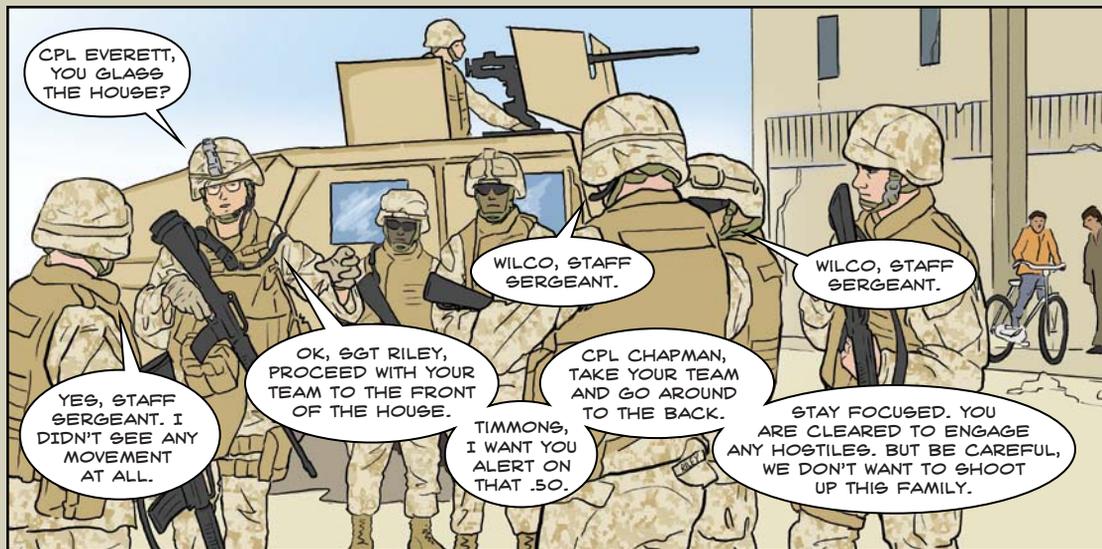
BETTER CALL IT IN.

BROWNBAG ACTUAL, THIS IS BROWNBAG VICTOR TWO. BE ADVISED, THE IRAQI THINKS THAT HIS SISTER'S FAMILY MAY HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED BY THE LOCAL MILITIA. REQUESTING THAT WE CHECK THE HOUSE.

INTERROGATIVE: HOW SHOULD WE PROCEED?

BROWNBAG VICTOR TWO, THIS IS BROWNBAG ACTUAL. OBTAIN THE LOCATION OF THE HOUSE.

AFFIRMATIVE.



CPL EVERETT,
YOU GLASS
THE HOUSE?

WILCO, STAFF
SERGEANT.

WILCO, STAFF
SERGEANT.

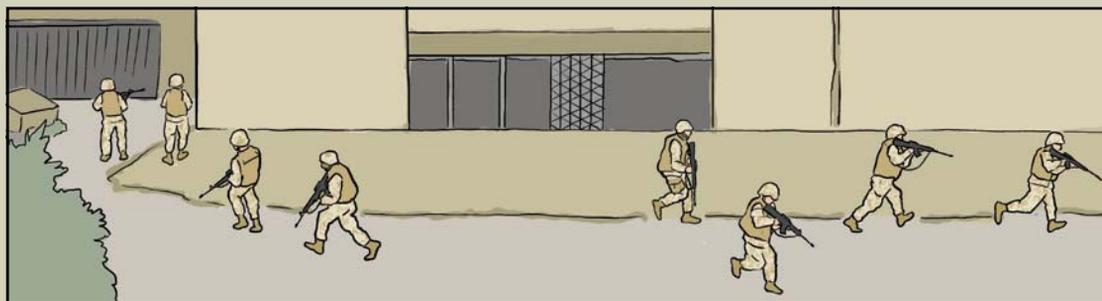
YES, STAFF
SERGEANT. I
DIDN'T SEE ANY
MOVEMENT
AT ALL.

OK, SGT RILEY,
PROCEED WITH YOUR
TEAM TO THE FRONT
OF THE HOUSE.

CPL CHAPMAN,
TAKE YOUR TEAM
AND GO AROUND
TO THE BACK.

TIMMONS,
I WANT YOU
ALERT ON
THAT .50.

STAY FOCUSED. YOU
ARE CLEARED TO ENGAGE
ANY HOSTILES. BUT BE CAREFUL,
WE DON'T WANT TO SHOOT
UP THIS FAMILY.



BROWNBAG TWO ONE TWO,
THIS IS BROWNBAG TWO ONE.
INTERROGATIVE: WHAT DO
YOU SEE?

BROWNBAG
TWO ONE, THIS IS
BROWNBAG TWO ONE TWO.
BACK OF HOUSE
IS CLEAR.



BROWNBAG TWO ONE,
THIS IS BROWNBAG TWO
ONE TWO. FRONT OF HOUSE
SECURE. PROCEEDING UP
THE STAIRS.

OH, SHIT!
DOC, GET UP
HERE, NOW!

WHAT THE
HELL HAPPENED
IN HERE?

HOLY...

NO IDEA...



HELP ME CHECK TO SEE IF ANY OF THEM HAS A PULSE.

NOTHING HERE, DOC.

NOTHING HERE EITHER. HELP ME CLEAR SOME ROOM. I'M GOING TO TRY CPR!



OH MY GOD!



NO PULSE HERE.

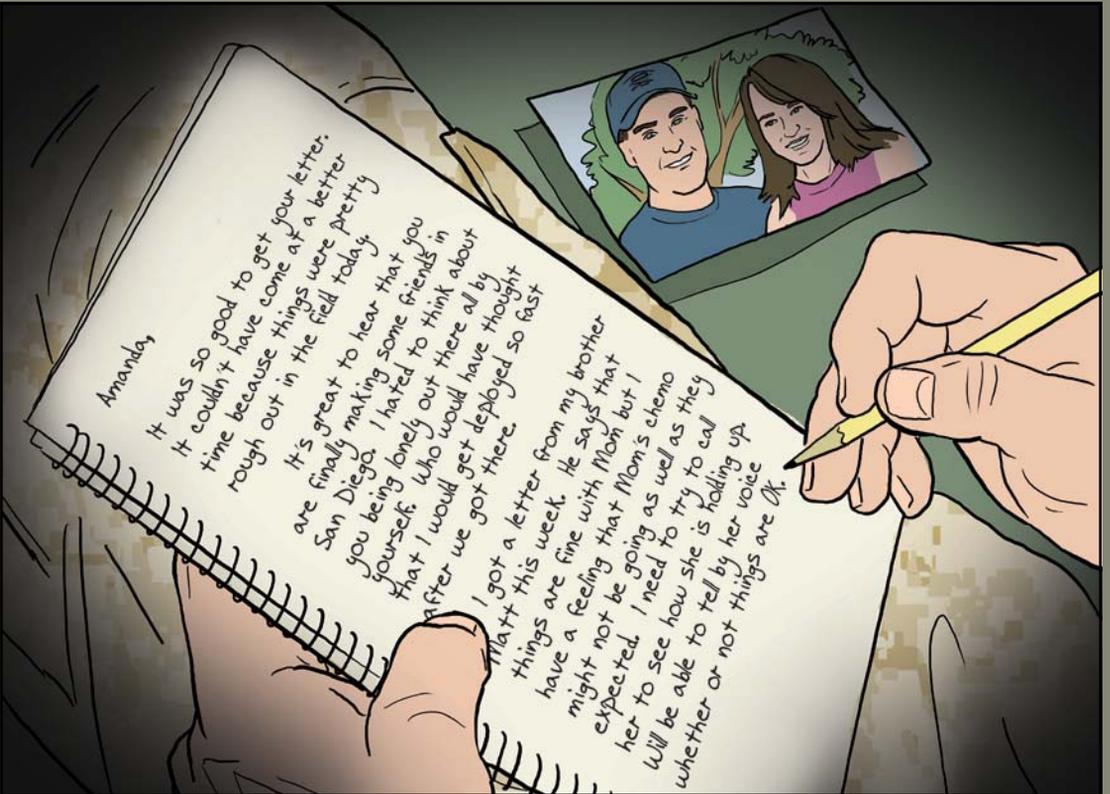


NO USE, DOC. THEY'VE ALL BEEN EXECUTED. THEY'RE GONE.

I'LL CALL IT IN. COME ON. LET'S CLEAR OUT.

WHAT THE F---P!! WHO THE F--- EXECUTES WOMEN AND CHILDREN?!!

Later, back at the FOB...



MENDEZ and JACKSON—Man Down



DON'T WORRY ABOUT MY BOY HERE, MENDEZ. HE'S GOT US COVERED. RIGHT, DAWG?

YOU BET.

BEST DOC IN COUNTRY, THAT'S WHAT HE IS. NOBODY DOES IT BETTER THAN DAWG.



DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO HUGHES. HE'S FULL OF IT.

SEEMS LIKE A GOOD GUY...

HEH, YEAH. HE'S AN OLD FRIEND.



MAN, BIG MISSION TOMORROW.



YEAH, IF THINGS GET HOT, COULD BE A LOT FOR JUST THE TWO OF US TO COVER.

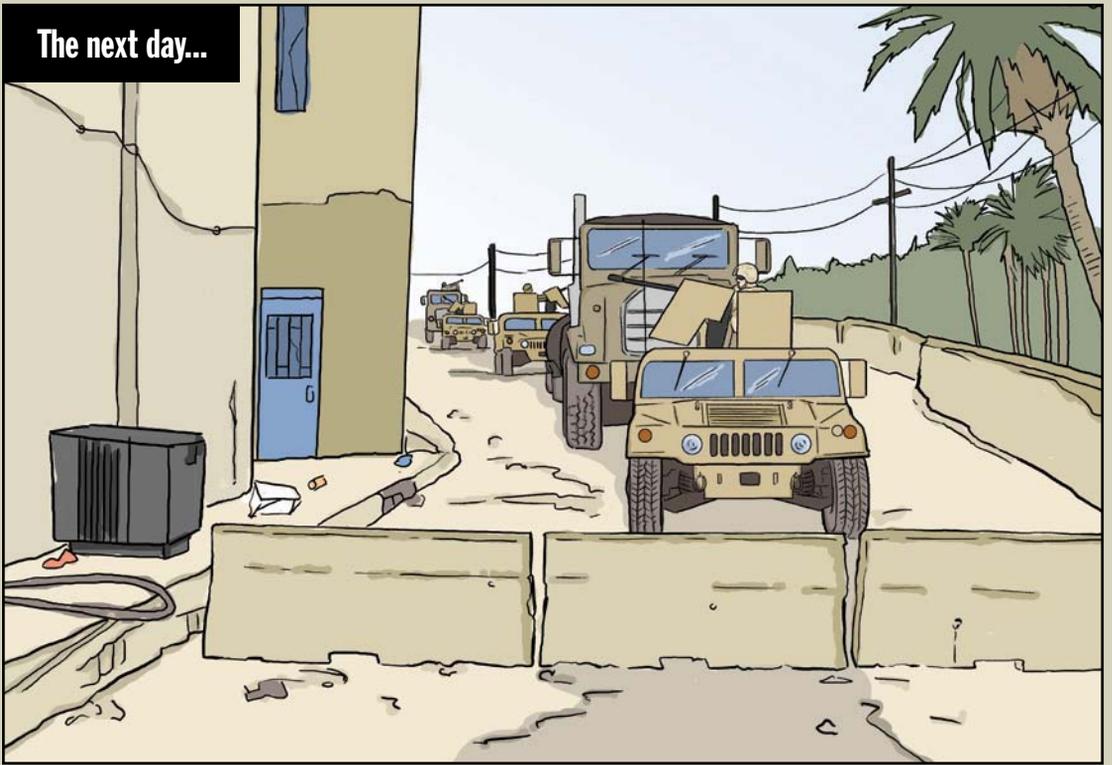
YOU'RE GONNA BE UP FRONT.

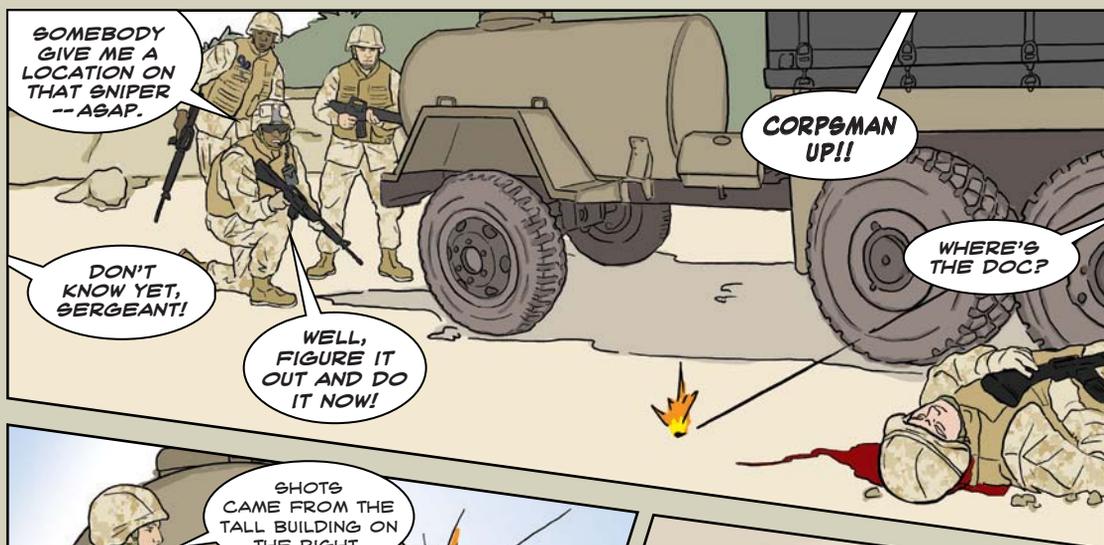
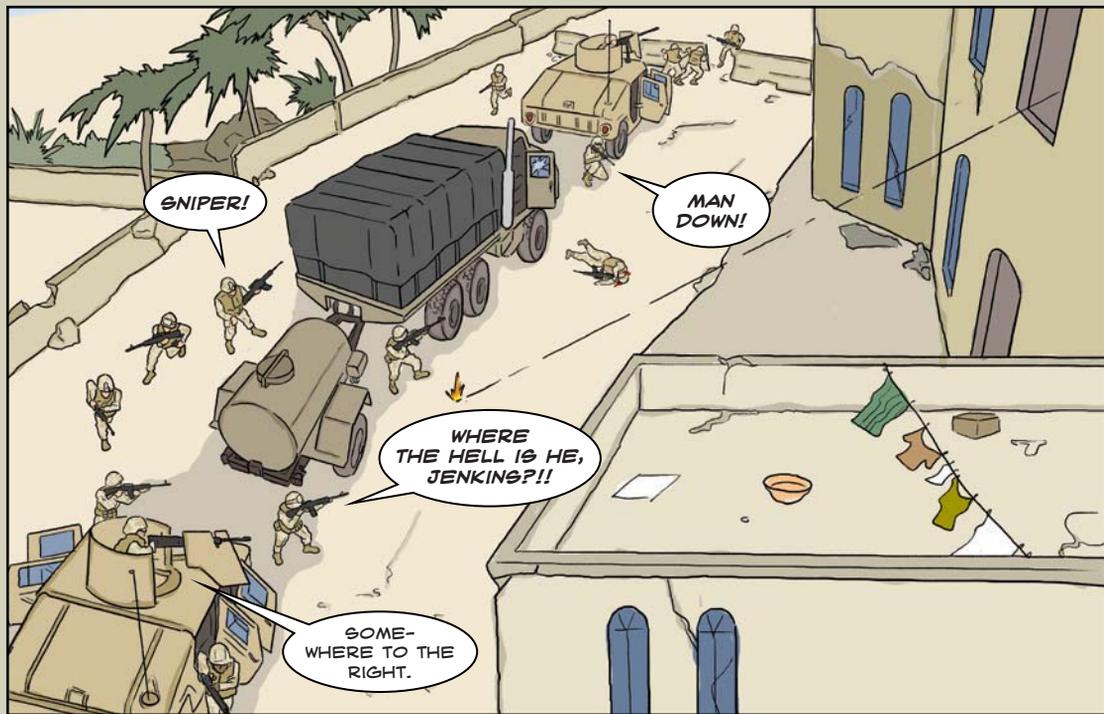


IF THE FRONT GETS HIT, YOU COVER THE WOUNDED UP YOUR WAY AND I'LL GET THERE AS SOON AS I CAN. SAME FOR ME IN THE BACK.

ROGER THAT.

The next day...









MENDEZ, WAIT UNTIL THE SNIPER IS NEUTRALIZED.

HE'S OUT THERE.

AFFIRMATIVE. HUGHES, WHERE'S JACKSON?!!

I GOT YOU. HELO IS ON THE WAY. WE'LL HAVE YOU OUT OF HERE IN NO TIME.



BUT THE SNIPER...

DAWG, GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE!



SECOND
FLOOR
WINDOW!

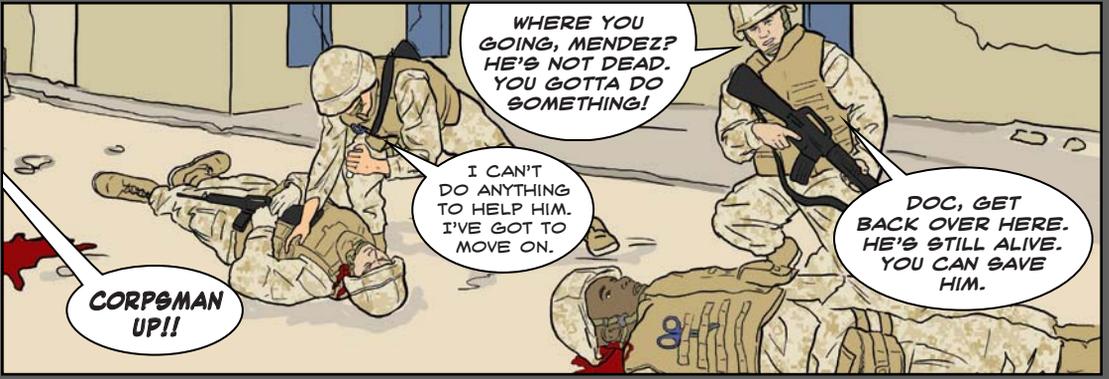
F---, DAWG!
NOOOOO!

STAY HERE,
HUGHES!

THERE'S
NOTHING YOU
CAN DO.







CORPSMAN UP!!

WHERE YOU GOING, MENDEZ? HE'S NOT DEAD. YOU GOTTA DO SOMETHING!

I CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP HIM. I'VE GOT TO MOVE ON.

DOC, GET BACK OVER HERE. HE'S STILL ALIVE. YOU CAN SAVE HIM.



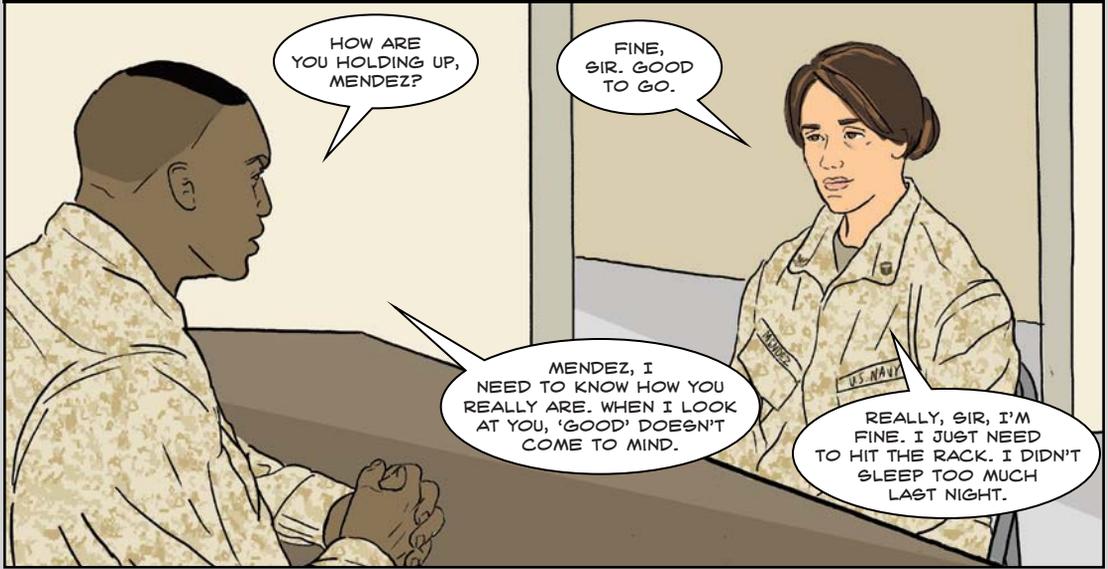
YOU GOTTA TRUST ME ON THIS, HUGHES. THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. I HAVE TO TRIAGE.

LET IT GO.

DEREK...



MELENZ—Putting it Away



Two days later...



MIKE, I THOUGHT I'D NEVER CATCH YOU AT HOME.

ERICA, YOU OK?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOUR VOICE. IT DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT. SOMETHING GOING ON?

DON'T WORRY, I'M FINE. IT'S JUST BEEN A REALLY LONG WEEK.

THIS CORPSMAN... HE WAS...WELL, HE WAS JUST A KID.

WHAT ABOUT HIM?

MIKE, YOU KNOW, CAN'T TALK ABOUT IT...

ERICA, I'M SO SORRY.

THANKS...CAN'T QUITE SEEM TO GET IT OUT OF MY HEAD...I'LL BE OK IN A FEW DAYS.

ERICA, WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SLEPT?



I DON'T KNOW... REALLY SLEPT?... THREE OR FOUR DAYS AGO, MAYBE...I'VE GOTTEN AN HOUR OR TWO HERE AND THERE. THAT'S ALL I NEED.

ERICA, YOU CAN'T KEEP GOING LIKE THAT.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO, MIKE...MAKE MYSELF FALL ASLEEP?

COME ON, ERICA...I KNOW THAT. BUT YOU CAN SEE SOMEONE AND GET SOME HELP.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME. I'M FINE. I'LL GET SOME SLEEP TONIGHT. I PROMISE.

CAN WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE? HOW ARE THINGS AT HOME?

Later that week...



...I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE SHE'S OK. SHE SEEMS PRETTY WITHDRAWN SINCE JACKSON WAS KILLED. AND SHE HASN'T SAID A WORD IN ANY OF THE BRIEFINGS. THAT'S NOT LIKE HER AT ALL. WHAT DO YOU THINK, MASTER CHIEF?

I'VE TALKED TO HER ABOUT IT. SHE SAYS SHE'S FINE, BUT I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT, SIR. IT HIT HER PRETTY HARD. GIVE HER A LITTLE TIME THOUGH. I THINK SHE CAN PULL IT TOGETHER.

EXCUSE ME, DOC?

CAN I TALK TO YOU FOR A MINUTE?

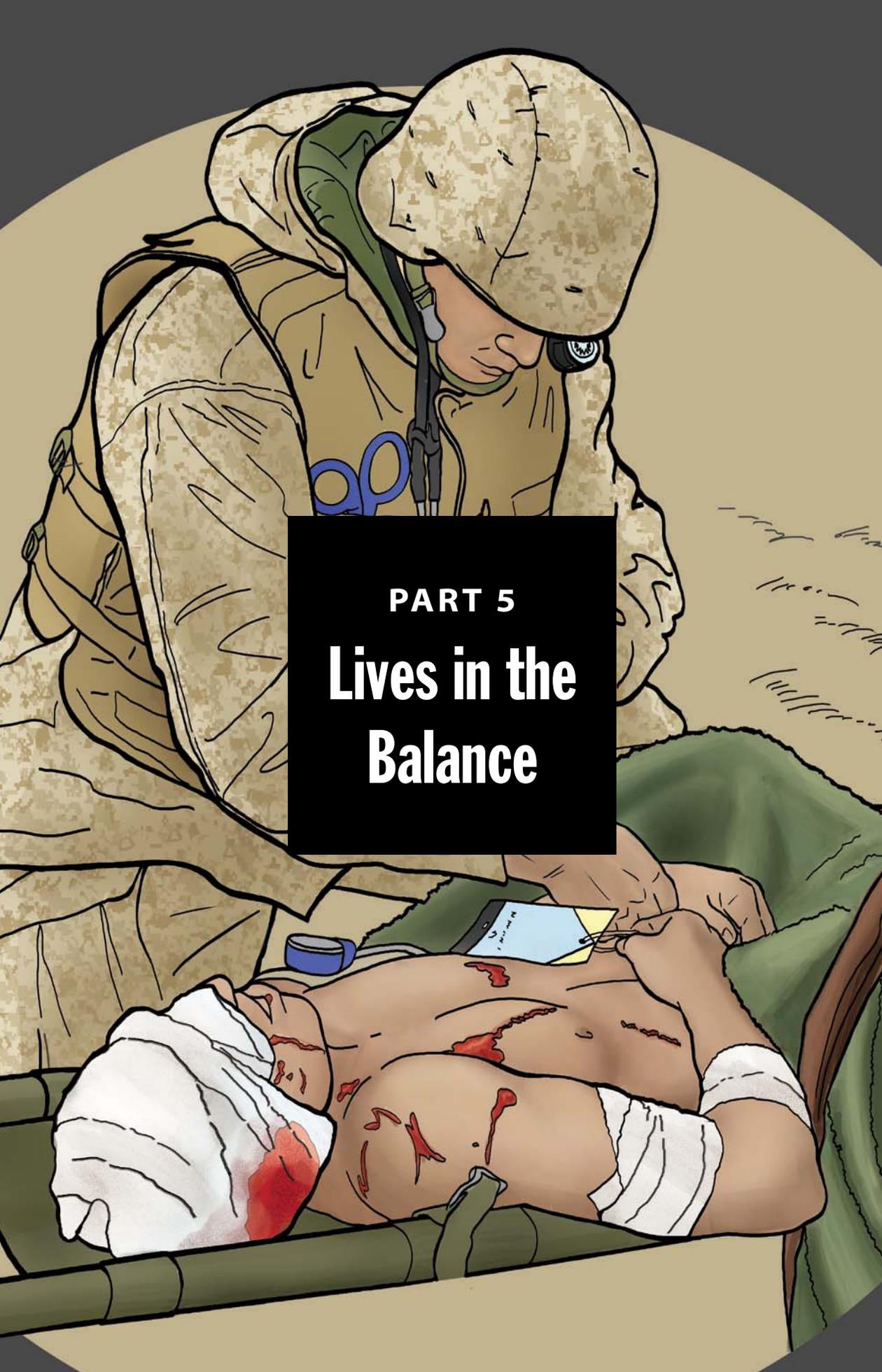
SURE.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU REMEMBER ME, BUT I'M JACKSON'S BUDDY FROM HIGH SCHOOL.

YES, I REMEMBER YOU, HUGHES.







PART 5
Lives in the
Balance

WALLACE—News From Home



LOOK OUT, WALLACE. SOON AS I FINISH WITH ISAAC AND BROWN, I'M COMING FOR YOU!

I'M WAITING, LANG.

DOUBLE KILL!...
TRIPLE KILL!

I'LL FRAG YOUR ASS STRAIGHT INTO THE OLD FOLKS' HOME!



I CAN'T BE STOPPED!! WHO WANTS SOME??!!

ALRIGHT, WALLACE. COME TO PAPA!

DUDE, YOU'RE ON FIRE.

OH, CRAP!

PWNED!

KILLTROCIITY!

KILLAMANJARO!



YOU'RE RIGHT, LANG. YOU'RE THE MAN.

SO TRUE. WALLACE, YOU DID OK FOR A NOOB.

WELL, THIS NOOB HAS TO RUN. GOTTA TRY TO GET A PHONE CALL HOME. TOLD MY WIFE I'D CALL AROUND 1900. THEY SHOULD BE HOME BY THEN.



**SURGERY??!!
WHAT THE HELL
HAPPENED??!!**

IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. HE FELL OFF THE SLIDE AT SCHOOL. CALM DOWN, JOHN. THE DOCTORS SAY IT WENT WELL.

HOW'S JACK?

HE'S GOOD. THEY HAD TO PUT IN FOUR PINS. YOU SHOULD SEE THE CAST...IT GOES ALL THE WAY UP TO HIS HIP.

MAN...HOW LONG WILL HE BE IN IT?

AT LEAST 6 WEEKS. THEY'LL REEVALUATE AT THAT TIME AND SEE IF HE CAN GO TO A SOFT CAST.

WOW. HE REALLY DID IT UP RIGHT, DIDN'T HE? HOW LONG IS HE OUT OF SCHOOL?

PROBABLY A WEEK. THE DOCTORS DON'T WANT HIM OUT OF BED THAT WHOLE TIME.

JACK, IN BED FOR A WEEK?

YEAH, RIGHT... YOU KNOW HOW HE IS. I'LL HAVE TO TIE HIM TO THE BED! AFTER THAT, NO WEIGHT ON IT FOR AT LEAST 6 WEEKS. HE'LL HAVE TO LEARN TO USE CRUTCHES.

WOW, YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HAVE YOUR HANDS FULL. I'M SORRY I CAN'T BE THERE TO HELP.

WE'LL GET THROUGH IT. BUT I'M PROBABLY GOING TO HAVE TO HIRE SOMEONE PART TIME AT THE STORE. I HAVE TO BE HERE TO TAKE CARE OF JACK, AND TOM CAN'T COVER ALL MY HOURS.

GUESS WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE. HEY, TALK TO GENE NEXT DOOR. BEFORE I LEFT HE SAID HIS SON WAS MOVING BACK HOME FOR A WHILE AND WAS LOOKING FOR WORK. MAYBE HE HASN'T FOUND ANYTHING YET.

GREAT IDEA. I'LL CALL HIM TOMORROW.

CAN I TALK TO JACK?

SURE. LET ME TAKE HIM THE PHONE.



HEY, DAD.

HEY, BUD. HOW'RE YOU DOING?

PRETTY GOOD.

YOU SOUND TIRED.

YEAH, THEY GAVE ME SOME STUFF AT THE HOSPITAL TO MAKE ME GO TO SLEEP AND I'M STILL SLEEPY.

I KNOW. BUT, YOU'VE GOT TO LET YOUR LEG HEAL.

MOM SAYS I HAVE TO STAY IN BED ALL WEEK. THAT STINKS.

BUT A WHOLE WEEK IN BED?



HEY, LOOK AT IT THIS WAY...NO SCHOOL AND I BET YOUR MOM GIVES YOU ALL THE ICE CREAM YOU CAN EAT. MAYBE SHE CAN SET UP A TV IN THERE. THEN YOU COULD PLAY VIDEO GAMES AND WATCH MOVIES RIGHT IN YOUR ROOM.

THAT WOULD BE COOL.

THE WEEK WILL BE OVER BEFORE YOU KNOW IT. THEN, WHEN YOU GO TO SCHOOL, YOU CAN GET ALL YOUR FRIENDS TO SIGN YOUR CAST. MOM SAYS IT'S A BIG ONE SO THERE'S PLENTY OF ROOM FOR LOTS OF SIGNATURES.

YEP.

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT, BUD. WHEN I GET HOME, I'LL GIVE YOU \$1.00 FOR EVERY ONE THAT YOU GET.

REALLY?!

YOU BET!

AWESOME!

DEAL THEN. LISTEN, I HAVE TO GET TO WORK SOON. CAN YOU PUT YOUR MOM BACK ON THE PHONE?

SURE.

HEY, BUD... YOU HANG IN THERE, OK? I LOVE YOU AND MISS YOU. I'LL CALL SOON TO CHECK UP ON YOU.

OK, DAD. I MISS YOU, TOO. LOVE YOU, HERE'S MOM.



WOW, HE CERTAINLY PERKED UP. WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?

WE JUST MADE A LITTLE DEAL, THAT'S ALL. HE CAN TELL YOU ABOUT IT.

OK... MUST BE A GOOD ONE. YOU SURE CHEERED HIM UP.

HONEY, I'VE GOT TO RUN TO CHOW AND THEN TO A MEETING. I'LL CALL BACK SOON WHEN ALLISON IS HOME FROM SCHOOL. TELL HER I LOVE HER.

I WISH YOU WERE HERE.

I'M SORRY, LINDSAY. I LOVE YOU...BYE.

I LOVE YOU, TOO.

Later...



MAN, WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE FOR MY WIFE'S LASAGNA.

I HEAR THAT, WEBSTER. I'D LOVE A LITTLE HOME COOKING ABOUT NOW.

WHAT ABOUT YOU, WALLACE? WHAT WOULD YOU ORDER FROM HOME?



WALLACE, WAKE UP! YOU OK?

YEAH, SORRY, FREEDMAN. LOTS OF SHIT GOING ON BACK HOME.



WHAT'S UP?

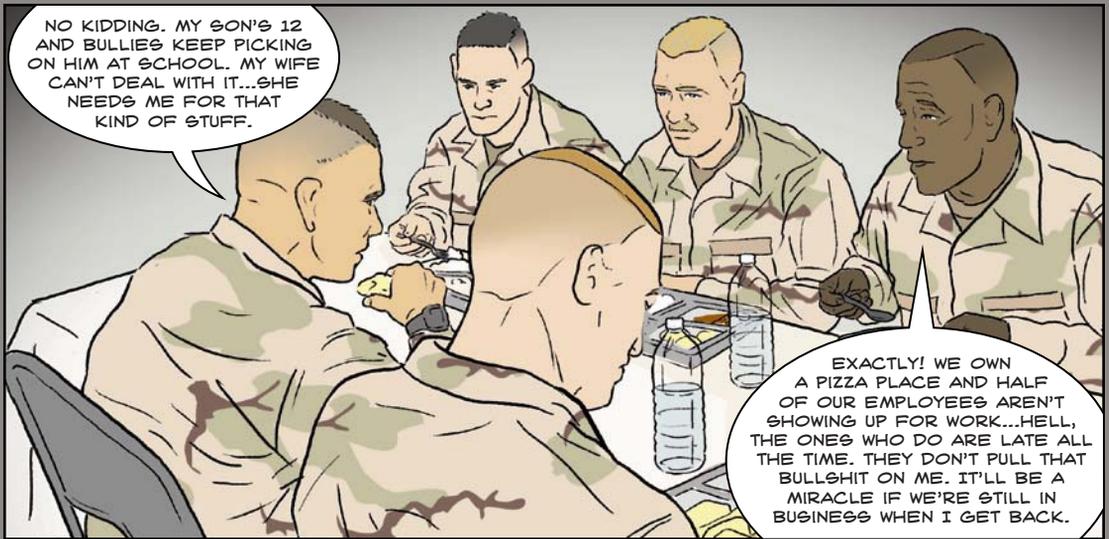
I TALKED TO LINDSAY EARLIER. MY BOY FELL OFF A SLIDE ON THE PLAYGROUND AND BROKE HIS LEG IN THREE PLACES. HE HAD SURGERY TODAY TO PUT IN PINS TO HOLD IT TOGETHER.



I'M SORRY, MAN.

THANKS. IT SUCKS. LINDSAY SOUNDED REALLY STRESSED ON THE PHONE. HERE I AM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD AND CAN'T DO A DAMNED THING.

HEY, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. I FEEL LIKE SHIT WHEN THINGS ARE GOING ON BACK HOME AND I CAN'T BE THERE.



NO KIDDING. MY SON'S 12 AND BULLIES KEEP PICKING ON HIM AT SCHOOL. MY WIFE CAN'T DEAL WITH IT...SHE NEEDS ME FOR THAT KIND OF STUFF.

EXACTLY! WE OWN A PIZZA PLACE AND HALF OF OUR EMPLOYEES AREN'T SHOWING UP FOR WORK...HELL, THE ONES WHO DO ARE LATE ALL THE TIME. THEY DON'T PULL THAT BULLSHIT ON ME. IT'LL BE A MIRACLE IF WE'RE STILL IN BUSINESS WHEN I GET BACK.



MY WIFE DOESN'T HAVE A CLUE ABOUT THE NAVY. SHE KEEPS SAYING 'JUST TELL THEM THAT YOU NEED TO COME HOME.'

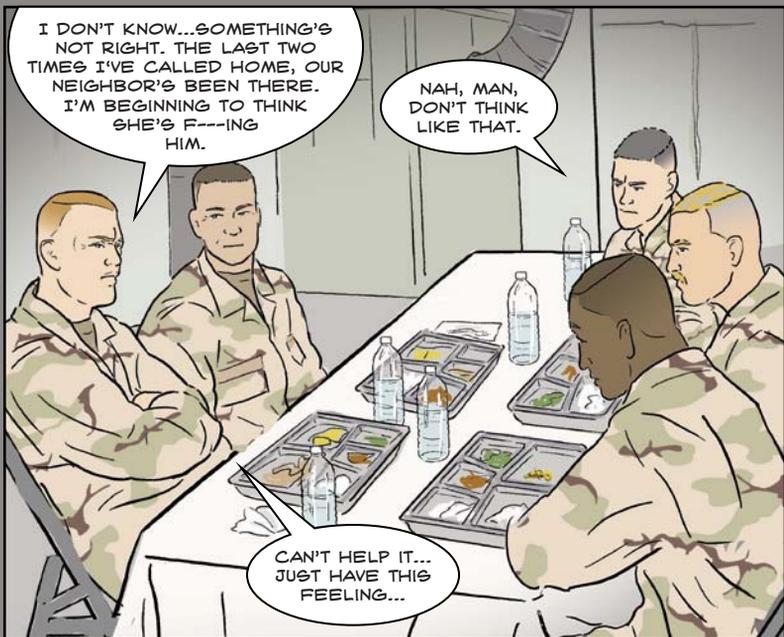
ROGER THAT, HONEY, I'LL GET RIGHT ON IT!



YOU'RE QUIET, MARTIN...WHAT ABOUT YOU? EVERYTHING PERFECT AT HOME?

NAH, WEBSTER, COURSE NOT. BUT AT LEAST YOU CAN TRUST YOUR WIVES.

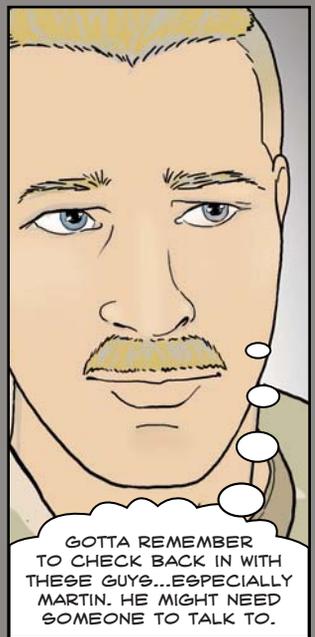
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



I DON'T KNOW...SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT. THE LAST TWO TIMES I'VE CALLED HOME, OUR NEIGHBOR'S BEEN THERE. I'M BEGINNING TO THINK SHE'S F---ING HIM.

NAH, MAN, DON'T THINK LIKE THAT.

CAN'T HELP IT... JUST HAVE THIS FEELING...



GOTTA REMEMBER TO CHECK BACK IN WITH THESE GUYS...ESPECIALLY MARTIN. HE MIGHT NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO.

WALLACE—A Smiling Young Face



WELL, GENTLEMEN, MARTIN AND WEBSTER DID SUCH A FINE JOB OF ASSESSING THE DAMAGE TO THE BRIDGE UP NORTH, HQ'S DECIDED TO REWARD US WITH THE REPAIR JOB.

NICE GOING, MARTIN AND WEBSTER.

HEY, IT'S BEAUTIFUL UP THERE. YOU'RE GONNA LOVE IT. RIGHT, DOC?

OH, YEAH, YOU BET.



HQ ESTIMATES A MINIMUM OF 30 DAYS TO MAKE THE REPAIRS, SO WE'LL BE DIGGING IN. BRAVO 3 SQUAD WILL ACCOMPANY US.

SUPPLY CONVOY WILL ARRIVE ON SITE NEXT MONDAY. THAT GIVES US A COUPLE OF DAYS TO BUTTON THINGS UP HERE.

RIGHT. THE WORK ON LEVEL 4 HAS TO BE FINISHED BEFORE WE GO. THAT'LL MEAN SOME LONG HOURS FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS.

BY THEN YOU GUYS WILL BE READY TO GET OUT OF THIS DAM FOR A WHILE.

BUT WHAT'LL I DO WITHOUT THE SMELL?

FORGET THAT. HOW WILL I SLEEP WITHOUT THE COMFORTING HUM OF THE GENERATORS?

0400 Monday...



MAN, TWO MONTHS... AS OF TODAY, TWO MORE MONTHS TO GO. I CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO CALIFORNIA.

WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU'RE GONNA DO, LANG?

I'M HEADING TO 'IN-N-OUT BURGER'. A DOUBLE-DOUBLE, ANIMAL STYLE FRIES AND A CHOCOLATE SHAKE. I CAN'T WAIT.



THE BURGERS ARE GREAT AND ALL, BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR GIRLFRIEND?

I GOTTA HAVE IT. SHE'S GONNA HAVE TO WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, BROWN?

ME, I CAN'T WAIT TO GO SURFING. I'M GRABBING MY BOARD AND HEADING STRAIGHT TO GOLD BEACH. NOT COMING IN 'TIL IT'S TOO DARK TO SEE.



GOLD BEACH IS SWEET, BUT I LIKE DMJ'S BETTER. I'M A GOOFY-FOOT, SO THE LEFT OFF THE SANDBAR IS PERFECT FOR ME.

WOW, DOC! YOU SURF?!

USED TO, WHEN I WAS STATIONED AT PENDLETON. TRIED A FEW TIMES SINCE I MOVED TO FLORIDA BUT IT'S JUST NOT THE SAME. PLUS, NOW WITH KIDS...



DAMN, IF HAVING KIDS MEANS NO MORE SURFING THEN I'LL PASS ON PARENTHOOD.

WHAT ABOUT YOU THEN, DOC? FREEDMAN? WHAT DO OLD MEN LIKE YOU LOOK FORWARD TO WHEN YOU GET HOME?

NOTHING COMPLICATED. JUST WANT TO SIT ON MY DECK WITH MY WIFE AND KIDS AND AN ICE COLD BEER. MAYBE GRILL A FEW STEAKS.

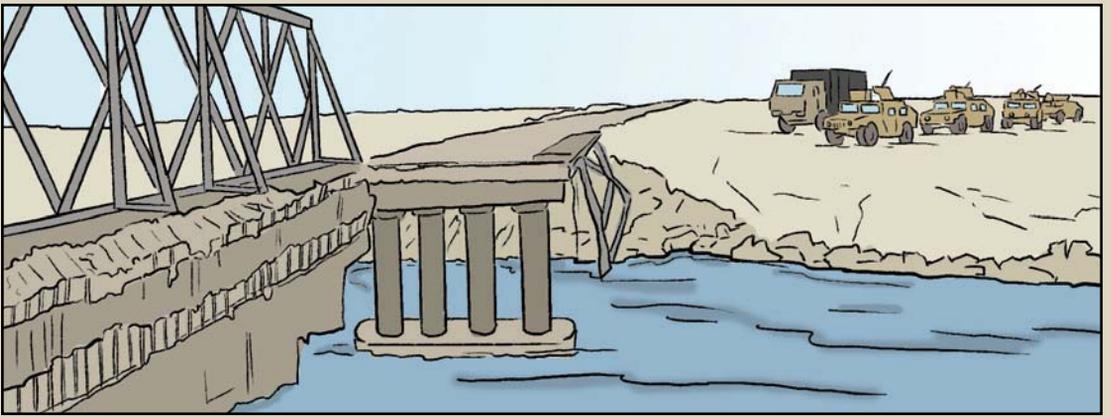
HELL, YEAH!



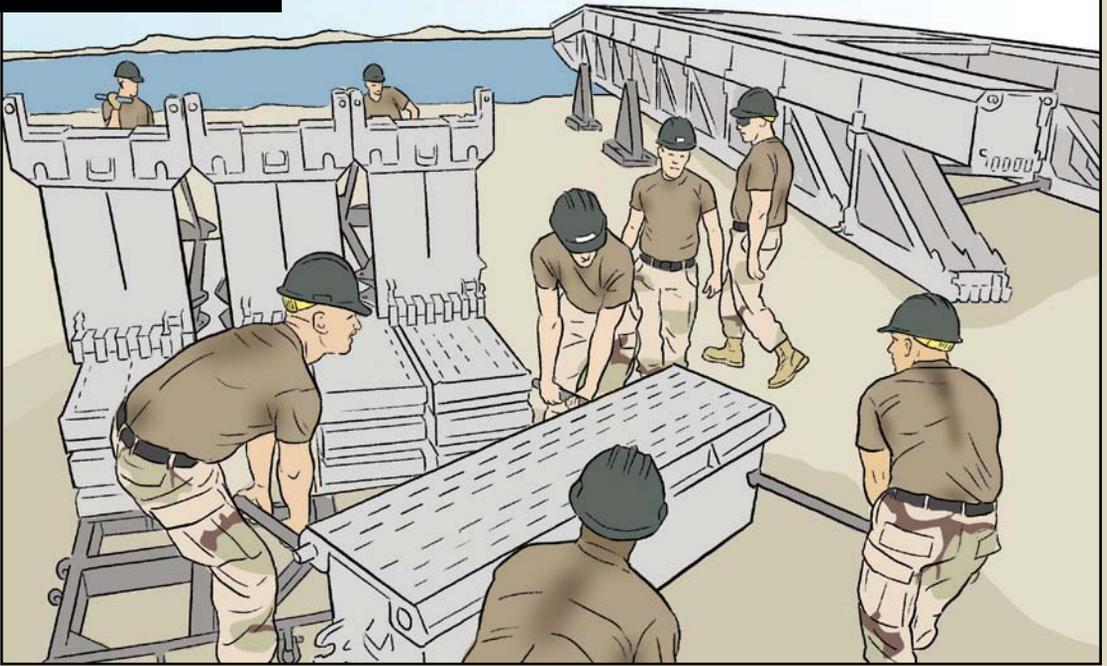
I KNOW EXACTLY WHERE I'M GOING, LANG.

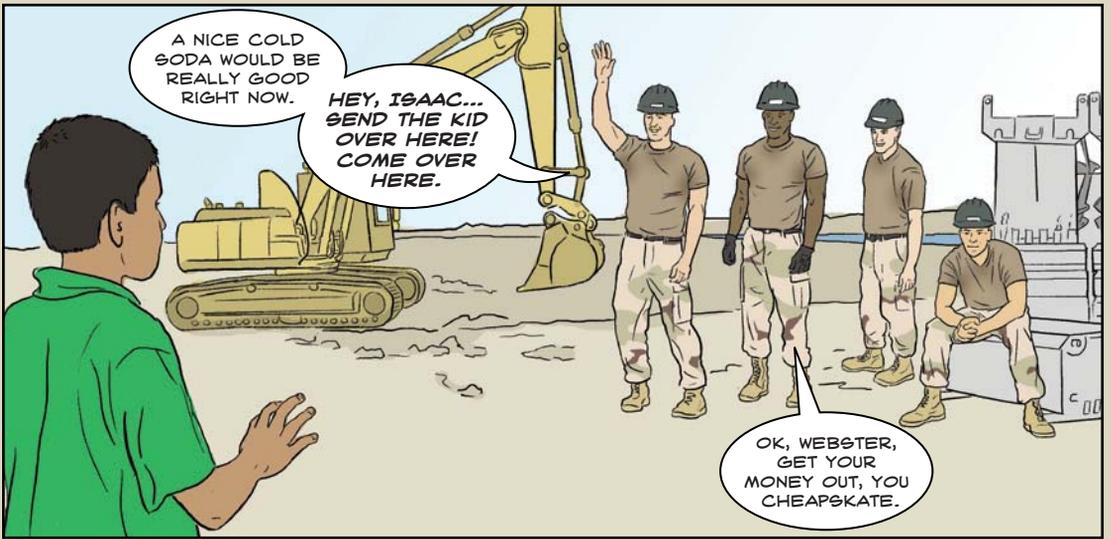
WHERE'S THAT, ISAAC?

TO YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S HOUSE WHILE YOU'RE AT 'IN AND OUT BURGER'!



Later that week...





A NICE COLD SODA WOULD BE REALLY GOOD RIGHT NOW.

HEY, ISAAC... SEND THE KID OVER HERE! COME OVER HERE.

OK, WEBSTER, GET YOUR MONEY OUT, YOU CHEAPSKATE.



HEY THERE, BUDDY. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

RAHEEM.

HELLO, RAHEEM. MY NAME'S WALLACE.

WELL, RAHEEM, WE ALL WANT SODAS AND WEBSTER'S BUYING.

THAT'S FREEDMAN AND ADKINS. AND THE REALLY UGLY ONE THERE'S WEBSTER. HE'S VERY THIRSTY.



HERE'S A FIVE, RAHEEM. KEEP THE CHANGE. JUST MAKE SURE YOU'RE HERE EVERY DAY WITH SOME COLD ONES. WALLACE IS BUYING TOMORROW.



THANK YOU. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

BANKS—Who to Trust

WE'VE JUST BEEN GIVEN A NEW MISSION. A CHIEF OF THE IP WAS KILLED EARLIER THIS WEEK. HIS FUNERAL IS TOMORROW AFTERNOON.

IT'S A PRIME TARGET FOR MORE ATTACKS. WE'VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR IP FORCES THAT'LL BE RUNNING SECURITY.

SIR, YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING. IP? THOSE GUYS DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING. NO WAY THEY CAN CONTROL THAT KINDA CROWD.



WELL, SPEARS, THAT'S WHY THEY HAVE US SUPPORTING THEM.

SIR, THEY JUST... COMPLICATE THINGS. THIS WOULD BE SIMPLE IF WE WERE RUNNING THE SHOW.

OBVIOUSLY, SIR, YOU KNOW A LOT OF US FEEL WE CAN'T TRUST THEM.

YOUR RESERVATIONS ARE NOTED. BUT THE MISSION REMAINS THE SAME. WE'LL SUPPORT THE IP. UNDERSTOOD?

AFFIRMATIVE.



YES, SIR.

GOOD, IF THERE'S NO MORE CONCERNS, LET'S GO OVER THE DETAILS...

The next afternoon...





MAN, THIS GIVES ME THE CREEPS.

LOOK AT THESE CLOWNS. THEY'RE BARELY PATTING DOWN THE MEN AND ARE HARDLY EVEN LOOKING AT THE WOMEN.



HEY, YOU SEE THAT GUY? LOOK AT HIS BAG. LOOK SUSPICIOUS TO YOU?

THE OLD MAN? YEAH, MAYBE.

THE IP LET HIM GO RIGHT BY.

OK, SPEARS, LET'S GO CHECK HIM OUT. BANKS, YOU STAY HERE AND MONITOR THE GATE.

ROGER THAT.



LOOK, MISTER. I GOTTA SEE WHAT'S IN THE BAG.

SPEARS, CHILL MAN. HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND YOU. WE NEED A TERP.

WELL, WE DON'T HAVE A TERP AND THIS MOTHERF---ER'S NOT BLOWING ME UP.



GEEZ, SPEARS, CAN'T YOU TELL HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND YOU?

HEY, THE GUY DOESN'T UNDERSTAND. GET A TERP!



WHOA. SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT. WHY'S HE WEARING A HEAVY COAT IN THIS HEAT?



FORGET THE OLD MAN! CHECK THE GUY AT YOUR TWELVE!

EVERETT! LOOK OUT! TWELVE O'CLOCK!

WHAT?

NO!!!



AGGGH...
MY HEAD. WHAT
THE HELL
HAPPENED?



**HOLY
SHIT!**

ALRIGHT,
JASON, YOU'RE OK.
NO MAJOR DAMAGE.
GET UP. YOU'VE GOT
WORK TO DO.



HANG ON,
I'M COMING...
EVERETT!...
SPEARS!
WHERE ARE
YOU?

CORPSMAN UP!



Ferr,
**MY
KNEE!**

MUST HAVE
TWISTED IT IN THE
BLAST. COME ON,
JASON, BREATHE.
GET THROUGH IT.
THEY'RE CALLING
FOR YOU.

CORPSMAN UP!



SPEARS!
OK, BUDDY, I'VE
GOT YOU.



OH, NO,
SPEARS...
GOODBYE, MY
FRIEND.



**JOHN!
EVERETT!
WHERE ARE
YOU? YOU
OK?**

**HANG ON,
I'M COMING!**

☞GURGLE...☜

**JOHN...IT'S
ME, JASON.
HANG IN
THERE.**



**YOUR AIRWAY'S
CRUSHED. DON'T TRY
TO TALK. I'VE GOT TO
GET IT OPENED UP.**

**THIS WILL
HELP YOU
BREATHE.**



**STAY WITH ME,
JOHN. YOU HEAR ME?
YOU GOTTA STAY
WITH ME!**



CORPSMAN UP!

**JOHN, I'M JUST
HOLDING PRESSURE
HERE, BUDDY. TRY TO
BREATHE NORMAL.
YOU'RE DOING
GREAT.**

**CAN'T LEAVE
THIS ONE...GET
WORD WE HAVE
AN URGENT
SURGICAL.**

CORPSMAN UP!

I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO WORK.

WHOA, DOC! NOT WITH THAT LEG.

MY KNEE? NO BIG DEAL. THINK I SPRAINED IT IN THE EXPLOSION. BUT I'M FINE FOR NOW. CAN DEAL WITH IT LATER.

THAT'S NOT A SPRAIN. YOU NEED TO LAY DOWN.

WHAT THE HELL??!!

BANKS, RIGHT? YOU GOTTA LAY DOWN. YOU'RE BLEEDING PRETTY BADLY. DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN EVEN STAND ON IT.



LOOKS
LIKE HE TOOK
SOME SHRAPNEL
JUST ABOVE THE
KNEE.

GOTTA
GET YOU BACK
TO SURGICAL.
GONNA GIVE
YOU SOMETHING
FOR THE
PAIN.

HOW
IS EVERETT?
THE GUY I
WAS WORKING
ON?

NO, WHAT
ABOUT EVERETT??!!
I NEED TO
CHECK...

HE JUST LOST
CONSCIOUSNESS.
NEED TO GET HIM BACK TO
SURGICAL ASAP. HE'S LOST
A LOT OF BLOOD.

A hard realization...

WHAT THE HELL? WHERE AM I? I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO SURGICAL?





EVERY
SUN HAS TO
SET.

WHAT THE...

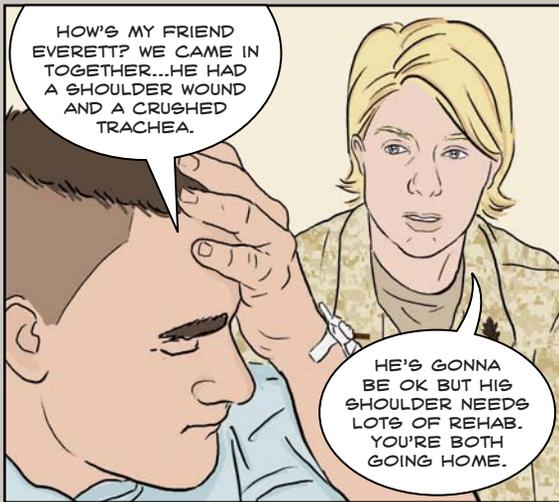
YOU AND
ALL THE AMERICANS
WILL DIE, JUST LIKE YOUR
FRIEND EVERETT. THE
SUN WILL SET FOR
YOU ALL.

WHAT??!!

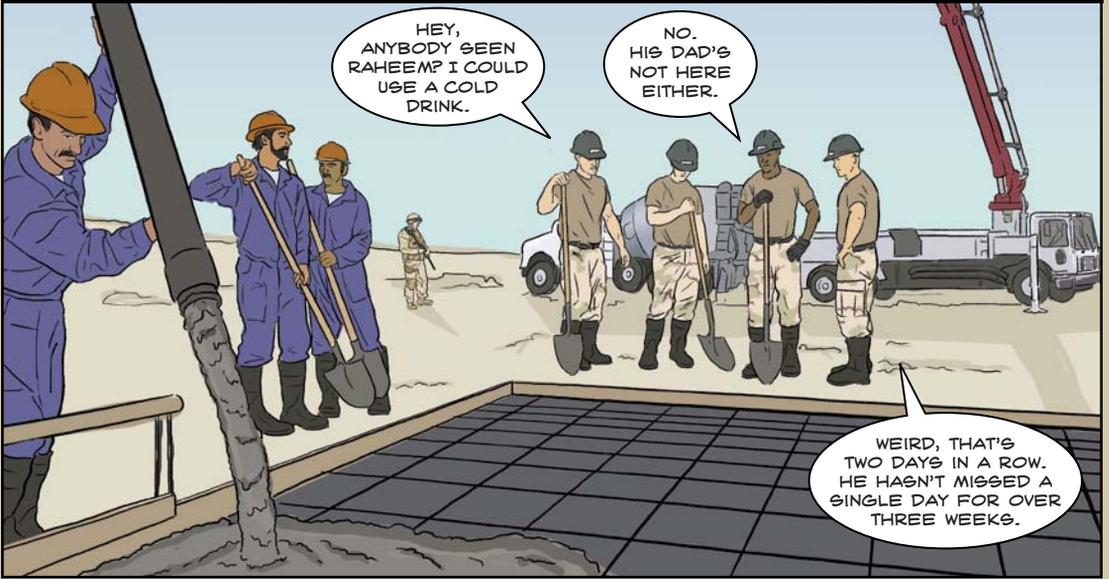
THIS IS NOT
HAPPENING.

BUT IT IS. YOU'RE
DYING, JUST LIKE YOUR
FRIEND. YOU COULDN'T
SAVE HIM. YOU FAILED.
YOU LET HIM DIE.

JASON...
JASON...



WALLACE—An Unspeakable Act



HEY, ANYBODY SEEN RAHEEM? I COULD USE A COLD DRINK.

NO. HIS DAD'S NOT HERE EITHER.

WEIRD, THAT'S TWO DAYS IN A ROW. HE HASN'T MISSED A SINGLE DAY FOR OVER THREE WEEKS.



MASTER CHIEF SAID HIS DAD AND THE OTHER LOCALS DIDN'T SHOW UP FOR WORK YESTERDAY EITHER.

WAS IT SOME KIND OF HOLIDAY?

YEAH, MAYBE. BUT MOST OF THEM ARE BACK TODAY. WONDER WHY NOT RAHEEM AND HIS DAD.



EXCUSE ME. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE BOY IS?

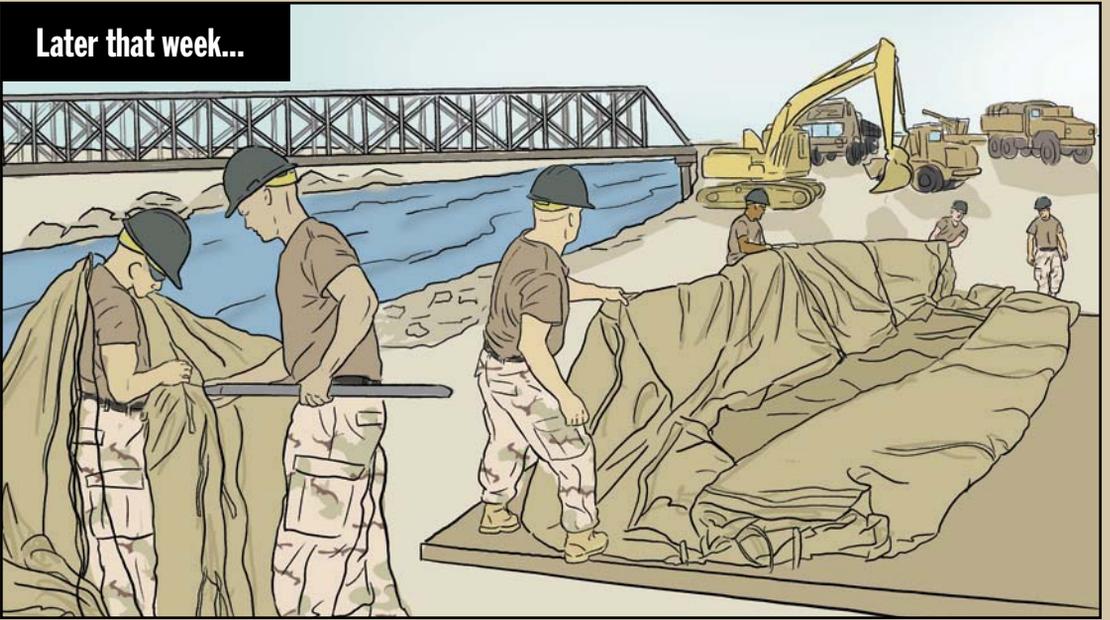


RAHEEM? HE'S DEAD. INSURGENTS EXECUTED HIM...

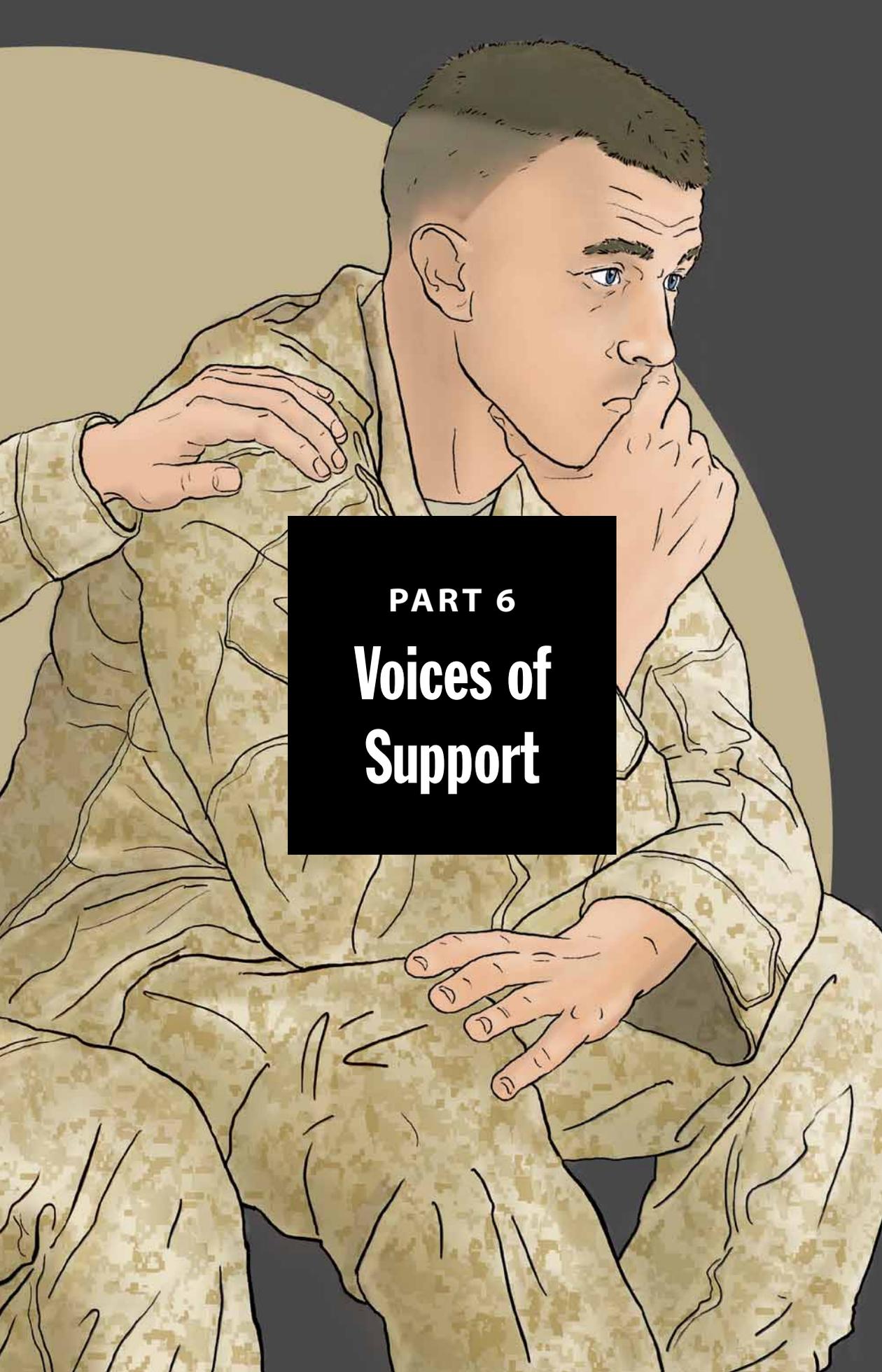
WHAT??!



Later that week...







PART 6
Voices of Support

MENDEZ—Back to Work



MASTER CHIEF, CAN I HAVE A WORD?

SURE, MENDEZ. WHAT DO YOU NEED?



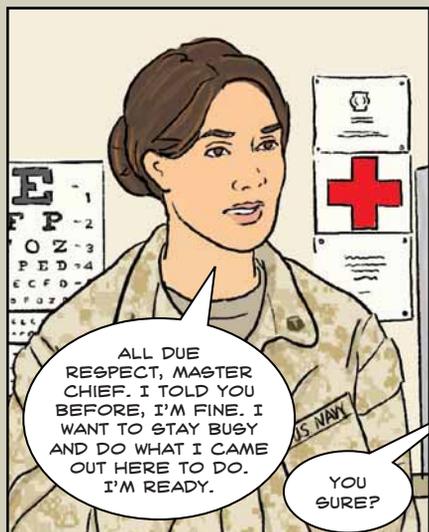
IT'S ABOUT BRAVO COMPANY'S PATROL TOMORROW. I'M WONDERING WHY I WASN'T ASSIGNED. I'M NEXT ON THE LIST.

LT AND I THOUGHT IT'D BE A GOOD IDEA TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE MORE TIME.



A LITTLE MORE TIME FOR WHAT?

COME ON, MENDEZ. YOU KNOW WE'VE ALL HAD YOUR BACK SINCE JACKSON WAS KILLED.



ALL DUE RESPECT, MASTER CHIEF. I TOLD YOU BEFORE, I'M FINE. I WANT TO STAY BUSY AND DO WHAT I CAME OUT HERE TO DO. I'M READY.

YOU SURE?



POSITIVE. I'M GOOD TO GO. I'D TELL YOU IF I WASN'T. WOULDN'T JEOPARDIZE MY MARINES.

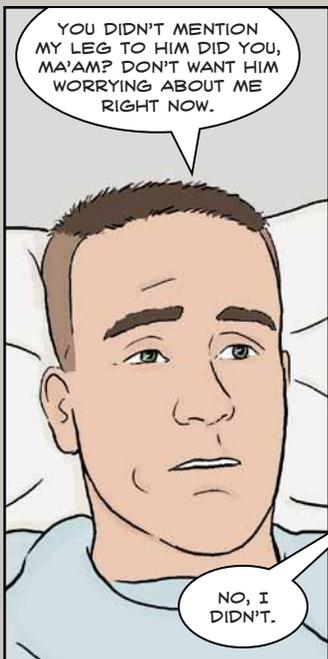
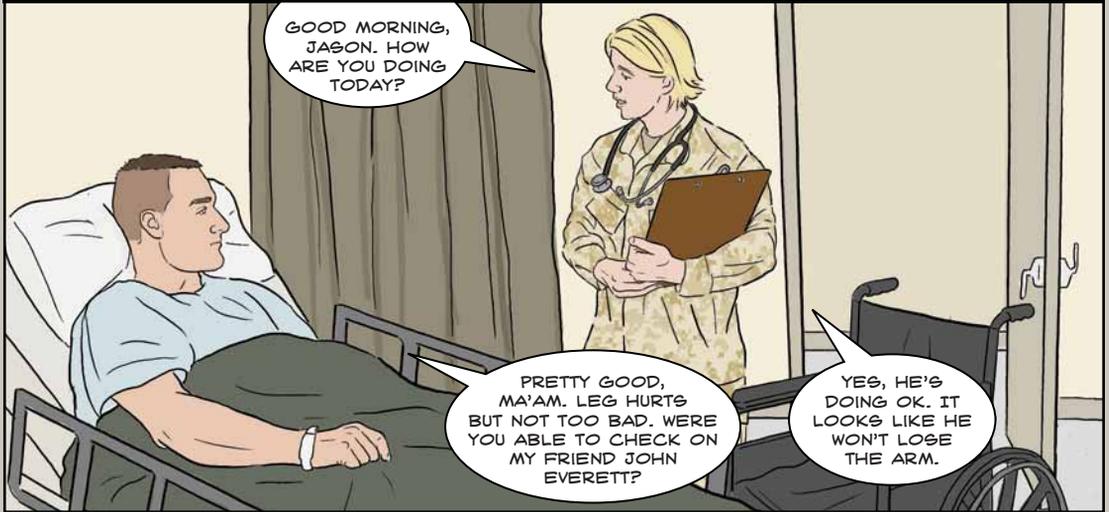
OK, MENDEZ. YOU'VE GOT IT. I'LL MAKE THE SWITCH. CHECK IN WITH SGT WALLS. HE'LL BRIEF YOU.

ROGER.

1900 the next day...



BANKS—Checking on a Friend





Later...

...AND THEN HE SAYS...

ALRIGHT YOU TWO. TIME FOR BOTH OF YOU TO GET SOME REST.

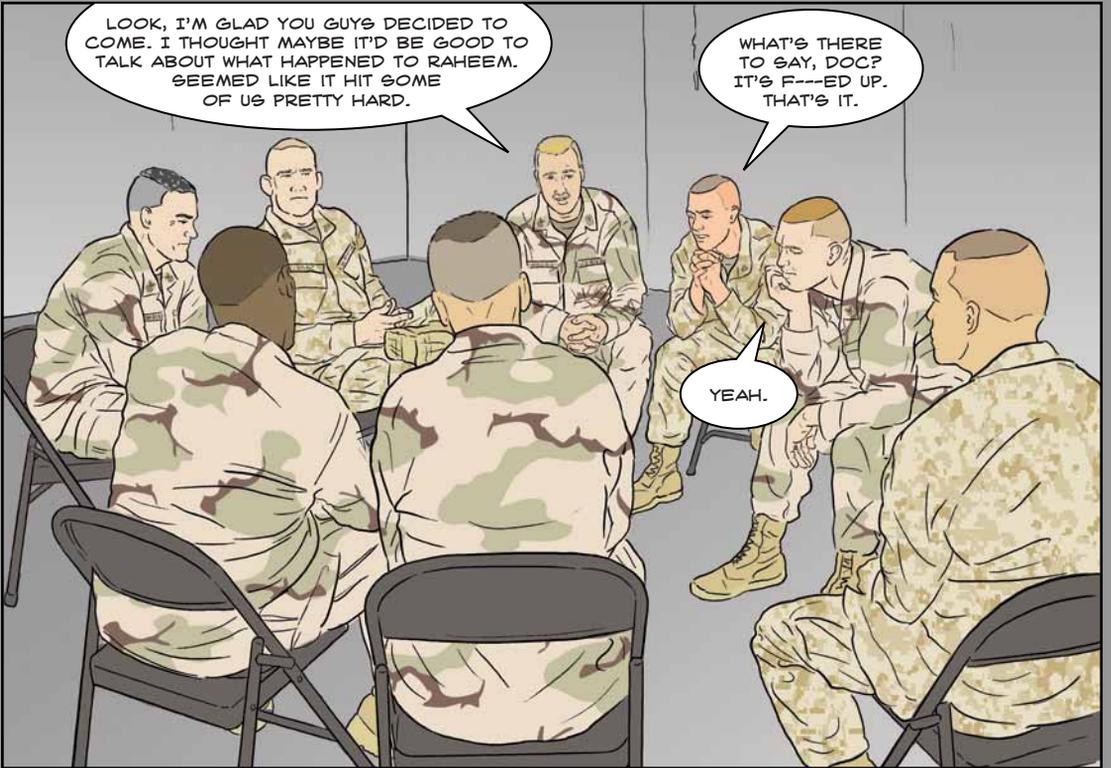
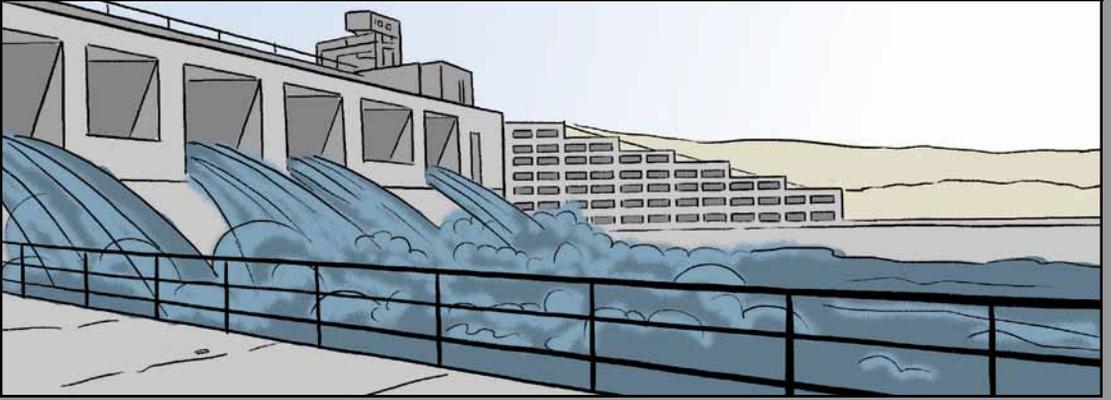
DAMN, THAT WAS FAST. I'LL BE BACK SOON, BUDDY.



YOU'RE WELCOME, JOHN.

≡≡

WALLACE—Support in Numbers



LOOK, I'M GLAD YOU GUYS DECIDED TO COME. I THOUGHT MAYBE IT'D BE GOOD TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO RAHEEM. SEEMED LIKE IT HIT SOME OF US PRETTY HARD.

WHAT'S THERE TO SAY, DOC? IT'S F---ED UP. THAT'S IT.

YEAH.



I KNOW. WE ALL AGREE. BUT IT'S STILL MY JOB TO ASK.

HOW ARE YOU GUYS DOING?



I'M FAR FROM OK. I SEE THAT KID'S FACE EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYES TO GO TO SLEEP.

YEAH, KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, LANG. HE WAS THE SAME AGE AS MY NEPHEW.



THAT KID'S POOR FATHER.

YEAH, I WAS STRESSED OUT WHEN MY SON BROKE HIS LEG. SEEMS LIKE NOTHING NOW.

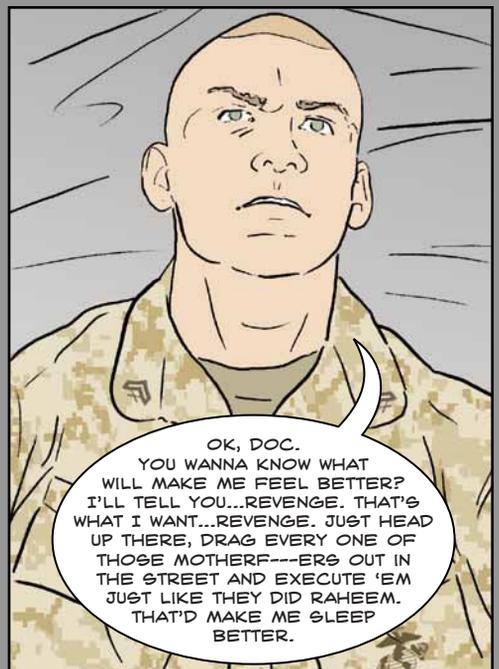


WHAT IF THIS IS OUR FAULT? WE WERE BUYING DRINKS FROM HIM. DID THAT SET HIM UP?

COME ON, YOU CAN'T OWN THAT, WEBSTER.

HE'S RIGHT. WE WERE JUST TRYING TO HELP OUT A KID WHO WAS DOING SOMETHING FOR HIS FAMILY. NO WAY ANY OF US COULD'VE SEEN THIS COMING.

I GUESS. STILL FEEL LIKE SHIT ABOUT IT....





HOW THE HELL YOU GONNA DO THAT, ISAAC? WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO THEY ARE.

SOMEBODY UP THERE KNOWS. I'D START WITH THE F---ERS WHO DIDN'T SHOW BACK UP TO WORK. THEY KNOW WHO THEY'RE AFRAID OF. THEY'D TELL ME...ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

DUDE, YOU'RE NUTS.



HEY, THE DOC ASKED ME.

ISAAC?

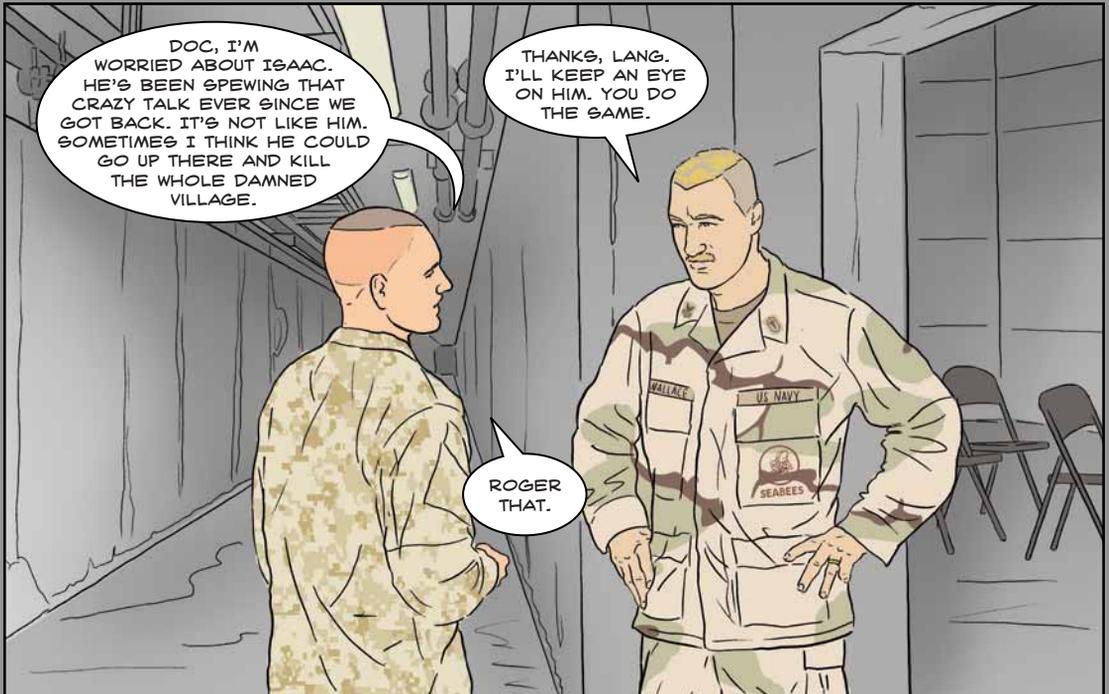
SORRY, DOC, I GOT NOTHING ELSE TO SAY.



ANYBODY ELSE?

NO ONE?

...OK, I THINK WE'RE ABOUT DONE HERE. THANKS FOR COMING OUT. REMEMBER, IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, JUST GIVE ME A YELL.



DOC, I'M WORRIED ABOUT ISAAC. HE'S BEEN SPEWING THAT CRAZY TALK EVER SINCE WE GOT BACK. IT'S NOT LIKE HIM. SOMETIMES I THINK HE COULD GO UP THERE AND KILL THE WHOLE DAMNED VILLAGE.

THANKS, LANG. I'LL KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. YOU DO THE SAME.

ROGER THAT.

Later...

MASTER CHIEF, I'M WORRIED ABOUT ONE OF THE GUYS.

OH?

IT'S ISAAC. HE REALLY WENT OFF IN THE MEETING TONIGHT. HE'S CARRYING AROUND A LOT OF HATE. TALKING ABOUT GOING BACK UP THERE FOR REVENGE. LANG SAYS HE'S BEEN SAYING THINGS LIKE THAT FOR A WHILE. I'M FEELING LIKE THIS MIGHT BE A LITTLE PAST MY ABILITY TO MANAGE.

ISAAC?! HE'S A GOOD KID.

I KNOW. BUT IT SEEMS LIKE THIS INCIDENT HAS HIS HEAD PRETTY MESSSED UP.

OK, TELL YOU WHAT. I'LL TALK TO HIS GUNNY. SEE WHAT HE THINKS AND ASK HIM TO KEEP AN EYE ON ISAAC FOR A WHILE.

THANKS. I WILL, TOO. IF HE'S NOT A LOT CALMER IN A FEW DAYS, I'LL WANT HIM TO TALK TO EITHER THE CHAPS OR COMBAT STRESS.

OK, WALLACE, YOUR CALL ON THAT. I'LL BACK YOU UP. JUST LET ME KNOW.

ROGER.



PART 7
**Returning
Home**

BANKS—Best Man



HEY, MAN!
YOU'RE LOOKING
BETTER. I HEAR YOU
CAN TALK NOW,
TOO.

SOME.

THAT'S
GREAT.



JASON, I'M
REALLY SORRY
ABOUT YOUR LEG.
YOU OK?

HOW'D YOU
KNOW?

DID YOU THINK
THAT I WOULDN'T
ASK SOMEONE WHY
YOU WERE IN HERE?
SO, HOW ARE YOU
DOING?



GOOD...I THINK. AT LEAST
AS GOOD AS I CAN BE. I
TALKED TO AMANDA. SHE SAID
EVERYTHING IS FINE, BUT
I'M SCARED.

SCARED
OF
WHAT...?

I DON'T KNOW.
SHE SAYS IT DOESN'T
MATTER AND I KNOW SHE
MEANS IT. BUT, I'M AFRAID
WHEN SHE SEES ME
FOR THE FIRST TIME,
IT WON'T BE.



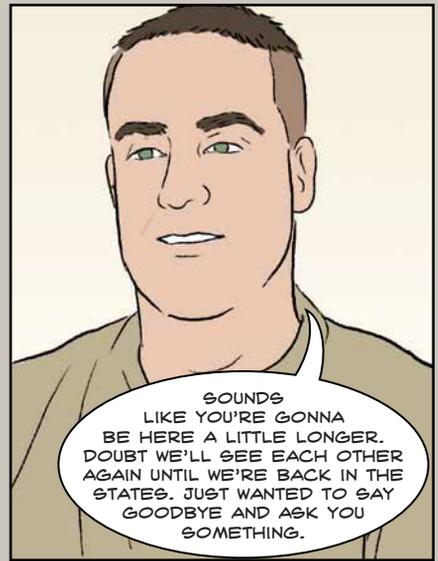
COME ON, THAT DOESN'T
SOUND LIKE THE GIRL
YOU BRAGGED ABOUT
FOR THE PAST
7 MONTHS.

I KNOW.
BUT SHE NEVER
SIGNED UP FOR
THIS.



IF SHE'S HALF THE WOMAN YOU SAY SHE IS, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

THANKS. GUESS I'LL FIND OUT SOON. JUST GOT WORD, I'M HEADED FOR LANDSTUHL TOMORROW. HOPEFULLY I WON'T BE THERE TOO LONG BEFORE THEY SEND ME HOME.



SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE GONNA BE HERE A LITTLE LONGER. DOUBT WE'LL SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN UNTIL WE'RE BACK IN THE STATES. JUST WANTED TO SAY GOODBYE AND ASK YOU SOMETHING.



WHAT'S THAT?

AMANDA AND I ARE GONNA WAIT FOR A WHILE BUT I WAS WONDERING IF YOU'D BE THE BEST MAN AT OUR WEDDING?



OF COURSE...

BELIEVE ME, I'M GONNA BE WORKING HARD EVERYDAY TO MAKE SURE THAT I'M READY TO WALK DOWN THAT AISLE WITH MY NEW BRIDE.



ALRIGHT, JASON, TIME TO GO. LOTS TO DO BEFORE YOU SHIP OUT.

NO PROBLEM. JOHN, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. I'LL BE CHECKING YOUR PROGRESS. I EXPECT YOU BACK HOME SOON.

I'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU.

WALLACE—Time to Go



AS I'M SURE YOU ALL KNOW, WE'RE PREPPING TO REDEPLOY IN TWO WEEKS. MEANING THAT WE CYCLE BACK AT THE END OF NEXT WEEK.

THAT ONLY GIVES US A FEW DAYS TO FINISH ANY WORK ON THE TURBINES AND GET ALL THE GEAR SQUARED AWAY.



GUYS, WE'RE SERIOUS SHORT TIMERS NOW. SIT ON OUR ASSES FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS HERE IN THE FOB AND WE ARE OUT OF HERE!

DAMMIT, WEBSTER. DON'T EVEN SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT. IT'S MURPHY'S F---ING LAW. YOU WATCH... THEY'LL SEND US OUT ON ANOTHER MISSION NOW.

HEY, DOC, IT'S GONNA BE WEIRD, AFTER EVERYTHING, TO LEAVE THIS PLACE.

YEAH...



HEY, DOC. YOU BACK FOR ANOTHER ASS WHIPPING?

NO WAY, LANG. JUST DROPPING BY TO SAY GOODBYE TO YOU GUYS.



YOU'RE KIDDING ME! YOU OUT OF HERE ALREADY?

YEAH. WE'RE SHIPPING HOME END OF NEXT WEEK.

YOU LUCKY BASTARD. WE'RE STUCK UNTIL AT LEAST NEXT MONTH.



WELL, DESPITE HAVING TO CHANGE YOUR DIAPERS AND WIPE YOUR NOSES FOR 7 MONTHS, IT WAS AN HONOR TO SERVE WITH YOU.



YOU, TOO, DOC. THANKS FOR EVERYTHING.

YEAH, DOC. YOU'RE PRETTY COOL FOR A GEEZER.

HEY, IF YOU'RE EVER IN JACKSONVILLE, LOOK ME UP AT THE STORE...HUDSON'S HARDWARE.

ROGER THAT, DOC.

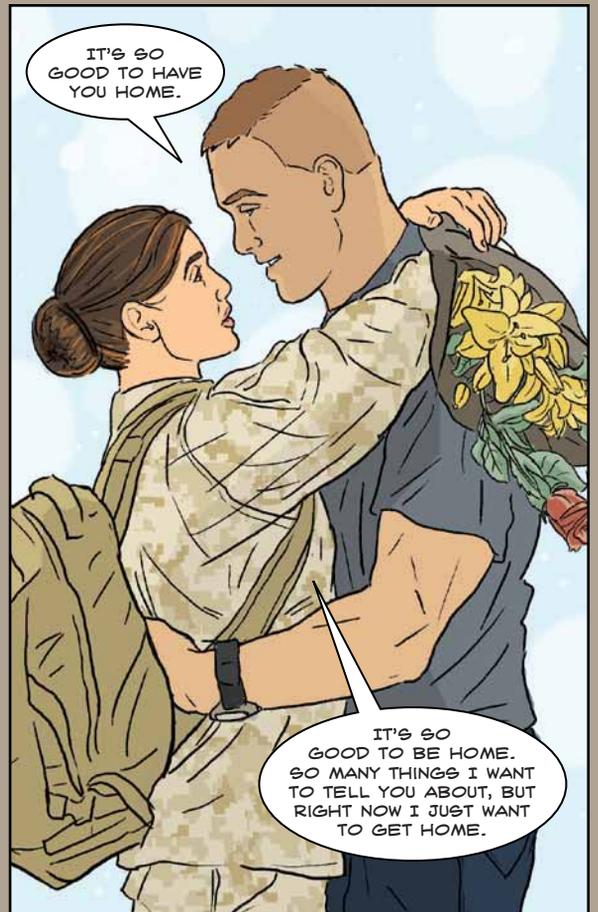
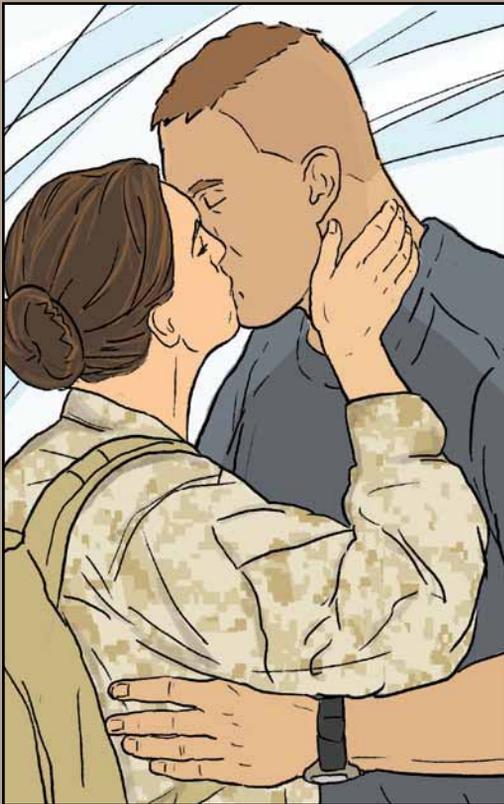
MENDEZ—Heading Home



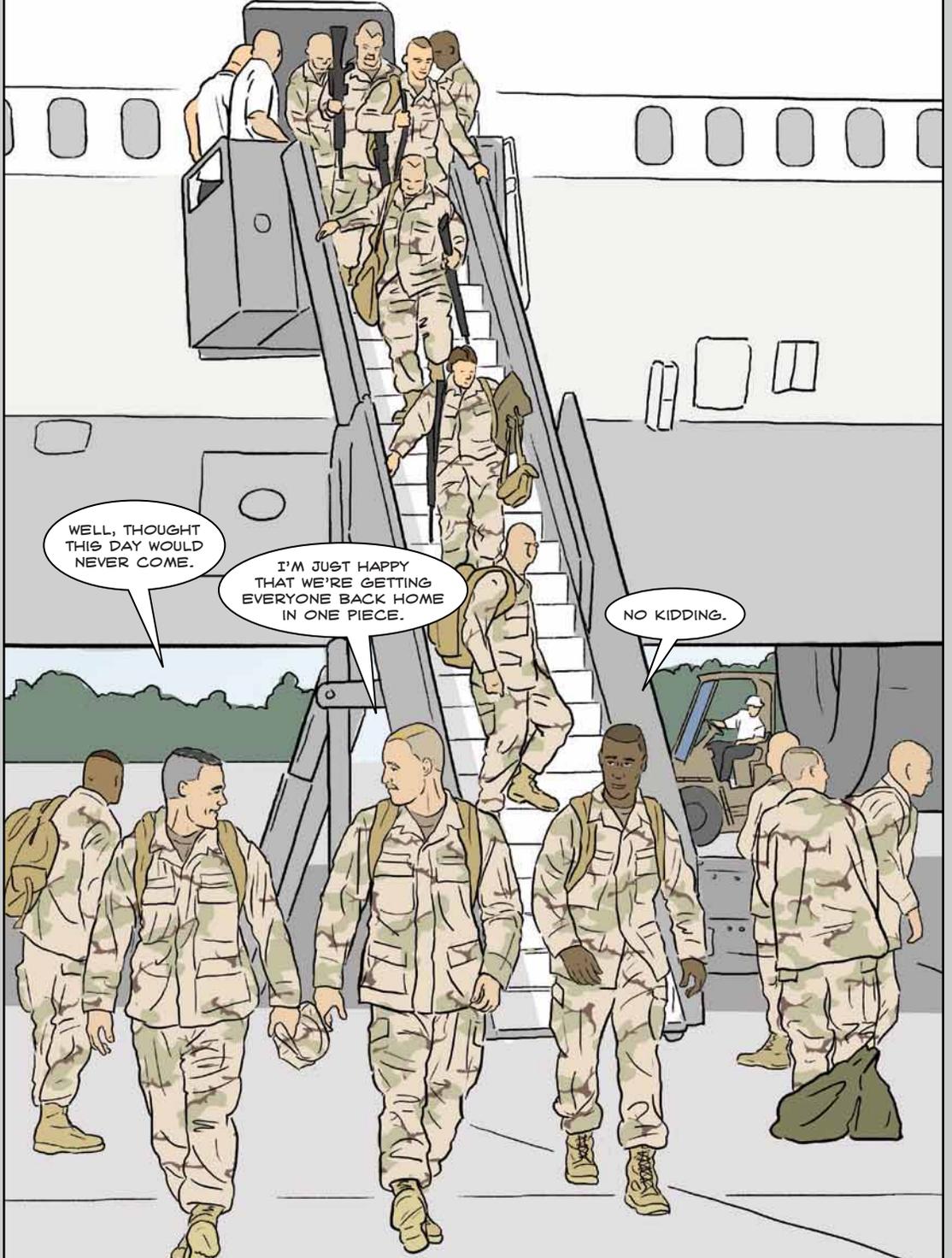
YOU DID GOOD, DOC.

DAMN, JACKSON...

HEY, DOC. GLAD YOU WERE OUT THERE WITH US TODAY.



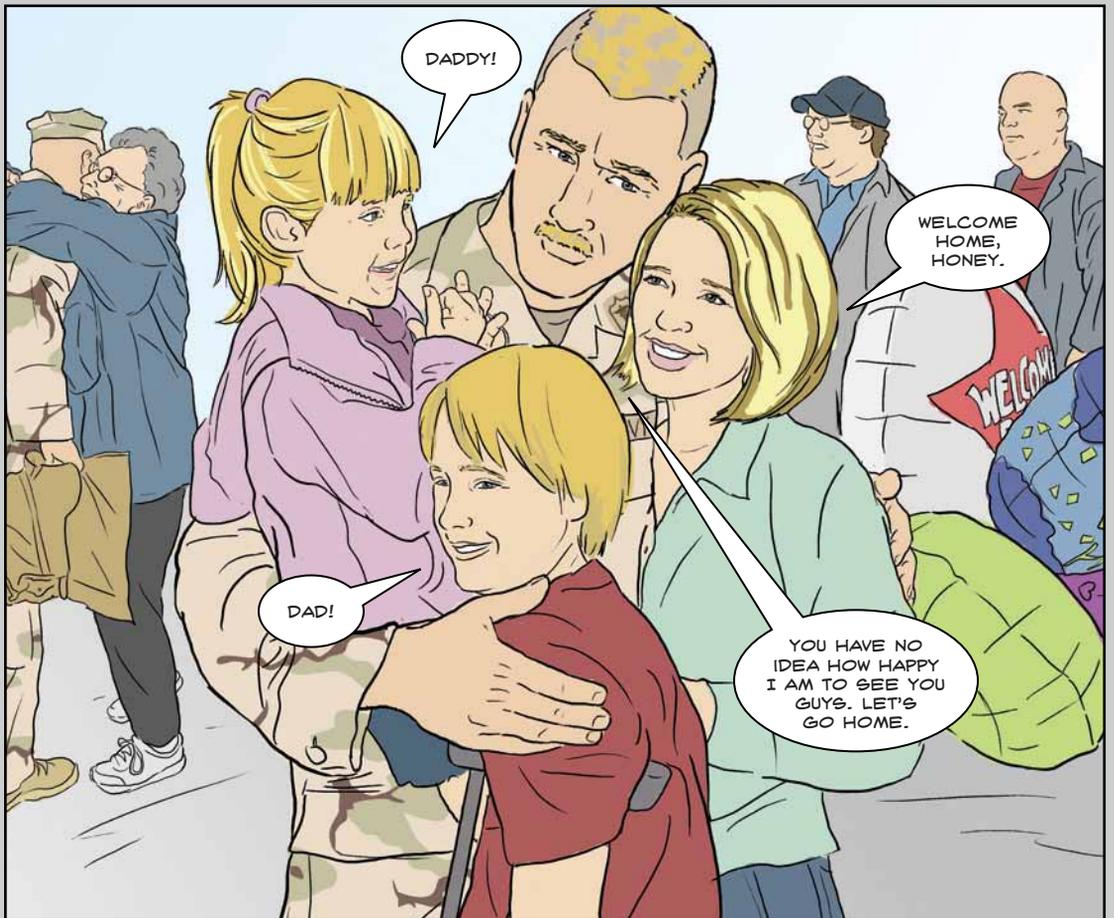
i Air Inter



WELL, THOUGHT THIS DAY WOULD NEVER COME.

I'M JUST HAPPY THAT WE'RE GETTING EVERYONE BACK HOME IN ONE PIECE.

NO KIDDING.





PART 8
Epilogue

WALLACE—Looking Forward



HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A HAPPIER KID?

I KNOW. HE HAIN'T SAT STILL SINCE THE DOCTOR TOOK THE CAST OFF THIS MORNING.

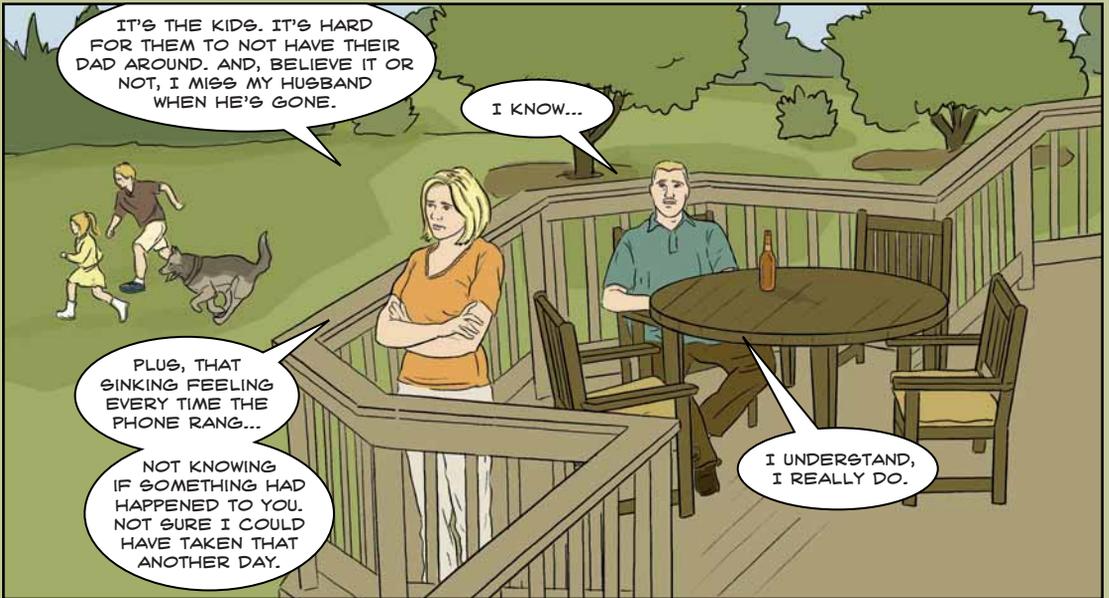
EVEN THE DOG CAN'T KEEP UP WITH HIM.



JOHN, CAN WE TALK FOR A MINUTE? AT THE COOKOUT LAST NIGHT, I HEARD YOU TALKING TO SOME OF THE GUYS ABOUT REUPPING. ISN'T THAT SOMETHING WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT... AS A FAMILY?

I HAD A FEELING YOU MIGHT WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT.

I'M NOT SAYING I DON'T WANT YOU TO STAY IN. JUST THAT WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT IT.





SURE. I DON'T ACTUALLY HAVE TO REUP FOR A WHILE. LET'S WAIT A FEW MONTHS AND KEEP TALKING ABOUT IT. THEN WE'LL DECIDE.

THANK YOU, JOHN.

BANKS—A New Hope

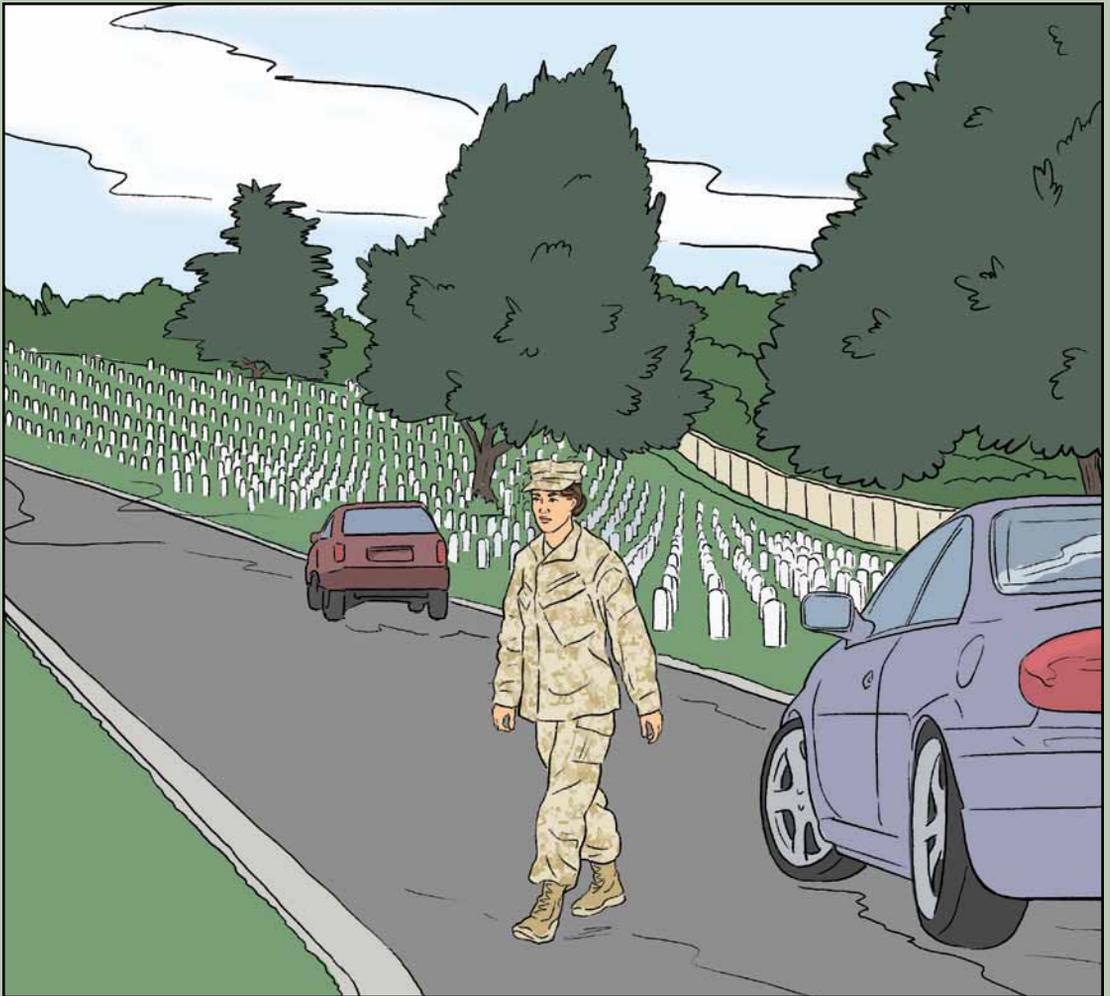




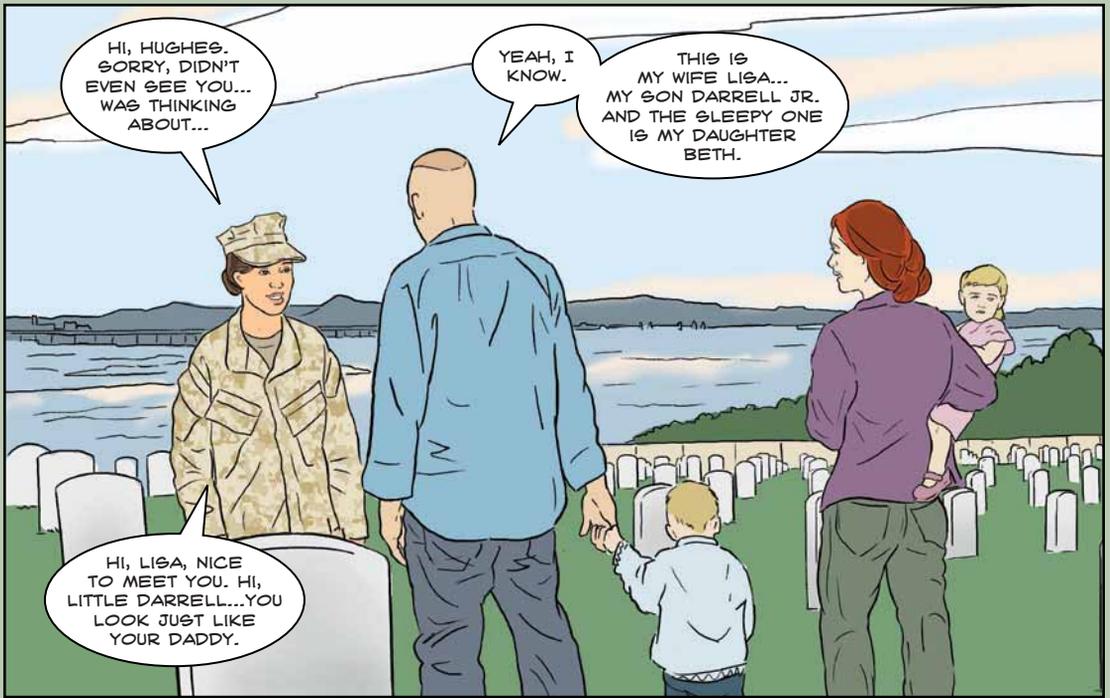


MELENZ—Silver Star

MIKE, DO YOU EVER PICK UP YOUR CELL? WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I NEED TO PUSH OUR RUN BACK TO 1900. I'VE GOT SOMETHING IMPORTANT THAT I'VE BEEN MEANING TO DO FOR A WHILE. SEE YOU AT THE BEACH.







HI, HUGHES. SORRY, DIDN'T EVEN SEE YOU... WAS THINKING ABOUT...

YEAH, I KNOW.

THIS IS MY WIFE LISA... MY SON DARRELL JR. AND THE SLEEPY ONE IS MY DAUGHTER BETH.

HI, LISA, NICE TO MEET YOU. HI, LITTLE DARRELL...YOU LOOK JUST LIKE YOUR DADDY.



I COME HERE A LOT. MAY SOUND WEIRD, BUT I LIKE TO TALK TO HIM SOMETIMES... TELL HIM WHAT'S GOING ON. JUST LET HIM KNOW WE HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN HIM.

IT'S JUST UP THAT HILL. I CAN SHOW YOU.

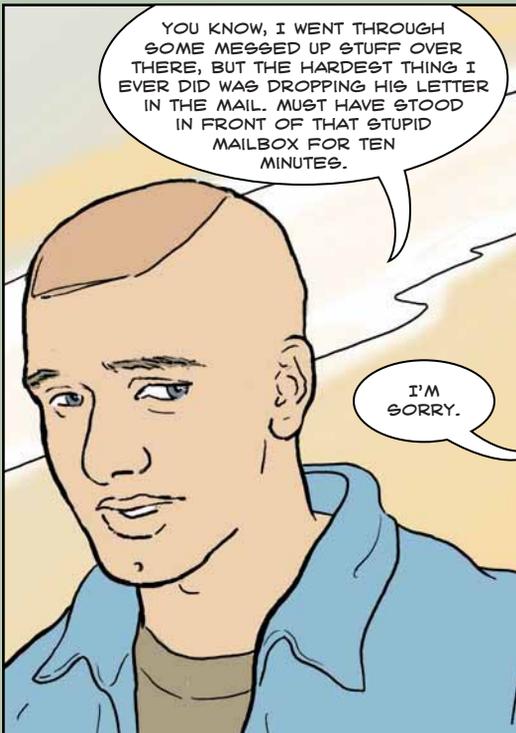
THAT'S NOT WEIRD...IT'S LOYALTY. YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND.

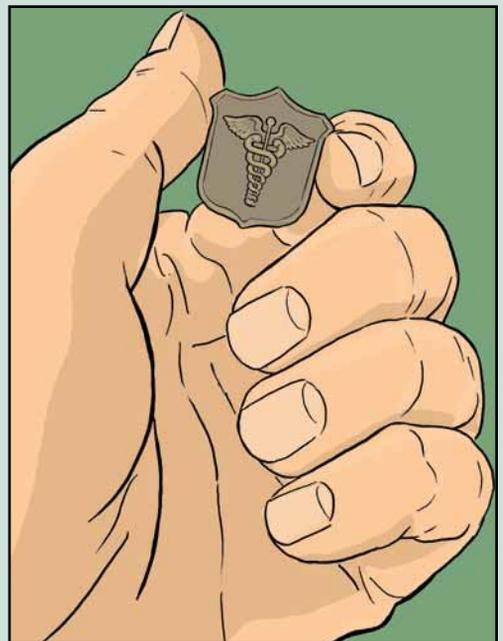
THANKS.



LISA, WHY DON'T YOU STAY HERE WITH THE KIDS? I'LL SHOW DOC WHERE TO GO. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

OK.





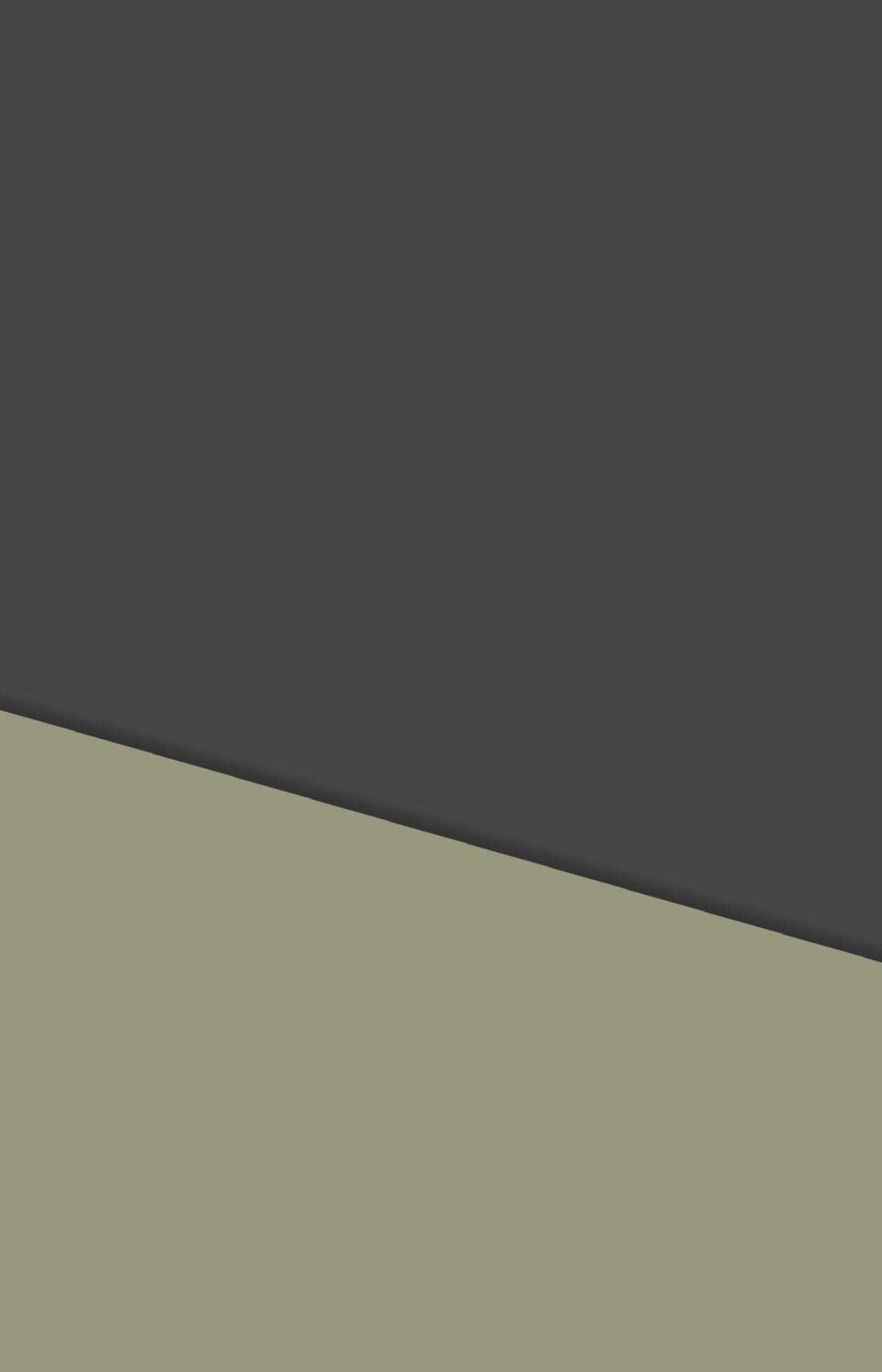
'LIVE FOR
OTHERS
SO OTHERS
MAY LIVE.'

GOOD
WORK, DOC.
REST IN
PEACE.

+

DEREK
JACKSON
HN
US NAVY
MAY 22 19
JAN 20 20
OPERATI
IRAQI FRE





RESOURCES

The following resources were used in developing *The Docs*:

Hughey, M. (Ed.) (2001). *Operational medicine: Health care in military settings* (NAVMED P 5139) [CD-ROM]. Wilmette, IL: Medical Education Division, Brookside Associates; Washington, DC: Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, U.S. Department of the Navy; MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command. (Available from CAPT Mike Hughey, MC, USNR [Fmr.], doc@operationalmedicine.org.)

Scalera, B. (2006). *Comic artist's photo reference: People and poses*. Cincinnati, OH: Impact.

Simon, M. (2005). *Facial expressions: A visual reference for artists*. New York: Watson-Guptill.

Technical consultant: Ben Beatty, PhD, MPH, CHES. Beatty is a veteran with 18 years of service: 12 years in the Marine Corps and 6 years in the Navy during his enlistment.

Photos of Hudson's Hardware courtesy of Leigh Hudson, Garner, NC.

Photos of Marines coming home from Iraq to Camp Pendleton, CA, courtesy of Melinda Applegate, Tempe, AZ.

Iraq combat photos courtesy of William P. Nash, MD, CAPT, MC, USN (Ret.).

Photos and information from the following Web sites: <http://www.news.navy.mil>, <http://www.navy.mil>, <http://www.marines.mil>, <http://www.marinecorpstimes.com>, <http://www.defenselink.mil>, <http://www.defenseimagery.mil>, <http://www.af.mil>, <http://www.army.mil>, <http://www.armymedicine.army.mil>.



“There are Corpsmen and then there are ‘docs’ . . . A doc is someone you can count on. He’s someone in your platoon that when something happens to one of our fellow Marines, you can call on him and not have to worry. He’s your buddy, a comrade in arms, a person who you count on to cover your back, to lay down fire, dig fighting holes or do whatever the hell Marines are doing. That’s who a doc is.”

— *Field Medical Service School (FMSS): The Making of a Fleet Marine Force Corpsman*, Navy News Service
<http://usmilitary.about.com/od/navytrng/a/fmss.htm>

The Docs deals with situations that are best understood by adults and is not meant for readers under 18 years of age.