

INSTUTIONALIZED WARFARE

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Scene I:

Luke enters begins center stage.

Luke: There are wars to be fought everywhere and in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice Shylock chooses to end his life rather than convert to Christianity. To me Shakespeare's character of Shylock is a warrior surrounded within a system that would rather belittle his differences than praise his humanity. Shylock was a son, a businessman, a husband and a father who chose in the end to take his own life. Maybe his war had become too much. We live in a world where 48 veterans attempt suicide daily, **(beat)** 18 succeed; it's now eight months later that number is now 22 a day killing themselves. This piece is just a glimpse into the mindset of those individuals who commit suicide. This is the story of one veteran that delves into the psychology of what possibly and very plausibly leads combat veterans to suicide. So rather than looking up the barrel of a gun or putting a rope around his neck, these are his words. There are hundreds of veterans like him all part of a rare fraternity of soul survivors with similar stories; that is to say a typical platoon is from - eight to 12 men and only one survived. This is his story.

Scene II: Joining the Military.

RC walks up the aisle.

R.C: When a person, especially a young person joins the military when they sign up to make something out of their lives, they can't possibly know that what they might become is something they may not really want to be. Because joining the military is to acquire the target. To sign the contract is to lock and load on the rest of your life to raise your hand to pull the trigger. Once the projectile leaves the muzzle, it becomes a future outside the control of the person who squeezed the trigger.

Men getting off the bus at boot camp.

Actor: MOVE IT, MOVE IT, MOVE IT GO, GO, GO NOW GET YOUR BUTTS ON THAT LINE. Whatchu' lookin'. Did I say that you could eyeball me boy? Answer me when I address you.

R.C.: I....

Actor: Shut up I didn't order you to speak!

Luke: There were times before a mission would happen I would catch a glimpse of the person I was before any armed conflict. What would I tell the young man holding his weapon, the killer of the person I was before all the battles? Ya' know what I would say, **(beat)** run as far as you can, and as fast as you can, back to what made you happy.

Larry: Even if it only exists in your mind because to be here to be in the Suck, **(beat)** sucks.

Luke: Yeah that's what they call the fleet Marine Corp, The Suck, because it sucks the life right outta' you.

Scene III: A Warriors Words.

Carlos prepares to move on Luke's line "...it sucks the life right outta' you. He stands up from the audience from the second row and begins slowly in reflection.

Carlos: When he closes his eyes all he can see is the dark human side. **(Carlos moves towards the stage}** Echoes from the past calling his name. Is it to blame or ease his pain? We're waiting for you brother on the other side. Take your time, it's for you to decide. There is no blame; it's all just a game, your life and ours are all the same. It's okay that you survived, do something good so we too can be heard. Warriors' words from the other side

Erin enters left aisle.

Erin: For me the dead come mostly at night I slip from fitful, restless sleep where it's impossible to tell where one dream leaves off and the other begins. I haven't slept well for years, I mistakenly assume exhaustion will drop me into nothingness, a

numb state of mind but I'm wrong. In the dream the restless dead walk some are holding children, riddled bodies.

Larry: A young mother-never-to-be, her baby covered with blood and bits of brain matter. There's no sound but their eyes plead, Please don't take my life;

RC: Please not my wife my children?

Carlos: Please don't take us from each other; we're human just like you?

Erin: Please don't take us from ourselves?

Luke: Every time I go back to the shadows, I wonder if this will be the time I pick up the weapon and tum it on myself. Ya' see there are dead marines in those shadows, wounded souls that made it home from war after staring into the darkness too, too long. We try to continue our lives but we can't. Veterans know this, **(beat)** I know this, how can we come back and tell them.

RC: We know what it's like to see our loved ones

dead. **Erin:** Our sons dead, our mothers **(beat)**

dead,

Luke: The women we love **(beat)** dead. Veterans may not be able to find these words to tell the ones we love that more than anything we just want the pain to stop.

Actors pay attention to the change of mood, energy and emotional direction!

Carlos: Sometimes people get it, they sense the attitude, see the signals.

Erin: Yeah and sometimes, they don't, like when some stupid-idiot-piss-bird presses too hard on the wrong day.'

RC: Not knowing they're flirting with disaster.

All: Standing before a human I.E.D.

Luke: Then the body takes over.

Carlos: Who does shit-bird think he is?

RC: Getting in my face like this! Then the body begins to feel the presence of a phantom pam.

Erin: Like the itching of a missing limb, **(beat.)** Is this dude serious, this piece of

crap serious?

Luke: The left hand is curled around the Zytel handgrip of the MP-5 Submachine gun and the trigger finger is poised forward along the lower receiver case.

RC: The 30 round magazines are loaded with 28 rounds to lessen the chance of a feed malfunction.

Carlos: The fifth and last rounds are tracers so I'll know when the magazine is almost empty.

RC: And when it is completely empty, the weapon is clean.

Luke: I know this because my shit is squared away; the body only knows one truth, one law, the finality of the solution. When pushed, push back decisively, push back immediately.

Larry: Call it what you will Basic Training, Boot Camp, but ...

Carlos: Once that person is trained not to value life it becomes easier to kill another human being.

RC: If a person is trained to kill others.

Erin: They've already been trained to kill themselves, which makes the act of suicide the sum of everything a veteran's learned. It's training for combat, the kill or be killed spirit of the bayonet. Inflicted one last time on the one person the veteran knows will understand.

All: Himself.

Larry: The pressure builds up over time, mood swings, the depression and the nagging, knowing certainty that something is wrong.

Erin: The anger and pain inside comes from all the things I had to do in the Suck

Carlos: And the screwed up reasons we were given to carry out what we did, veterans kill themselves because some of us get lost in a world we thought we knew.

RC: And many of us can't find our way home because the place we left isn't the same place we came back to **(beat.)** All war taught me is there's very little worth killing for.

Erin: And even less worth dying for.

Larry: From there it's a very short step to thinking there isn't much worth living for either.

Luke: We feel betrayed, **(beat)** and we feel as though...

Everyone: We've been lied to.

Scene IV: After Action Report will be acted out by all the players in this piece

Based on after action report

Fifth Pit Designation "The Untouchables" call sign Whipple-wizard was a five man Special Forces team designed to extract civilian and enemy personnel. This team consisted of me, my cousin Dave, Vince, Derrick, and Robb; all men I grew up with. The date was April 19th 1994. The mission was to extract an American civilian who was in the vicinity of Rwanda doing missionary work. This civilian was the daughter of a senator who was 011 the Special Operations Oversight Committee (S.O.O.C)

The civilian was in the middle of the attempted genocide of the Tutsi by the Hutu. At the time, we knew nothing about this person. All we were aware of was that all assets were available to accomplish the mission. Commonly referred to as a (POTUS) mission among Special Forces Units.

Action resulting in the death of four Alpha team members reads as follows:

0300; While on foot moving toward the target location, Dave, who was point man, signaled an all clear indicating it was safe to cross the street at an intersection one block from target house. Just as Dave made it half way across the street, a vehicle known as a technical came around the corner it had a fifty caliber heavy gun mounted in the back. At that very moment a young boy came out of nowhere and started to cross the street as well. Dave reached out to grab the boy to stop him from walking out in the middle of the street. What Dave did not see was the sniper at his two o'clock on the rooftop at the end of the block. I however, did see the sniper; I grabbed Dave as he simultaneously grabbed the boy and yanked the both of them back behind me. I was now standing where Dave was; he and the boy were now where I was. I was shot by the sniper that had Dave in his sights; however I had body armor

on so I was ok. I engaged the sniper, and the truck. At that moment a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) was fired from the rooftop behind us directly at our six o'clock and struck Dave in the lower back, literally cutting him in half. Additionally, the other three team members were engaged by enemy combatants at close range. Vince, Robb, and Derrick neutralized nine combatants. Unfortunately, they died doing so.

After neutralizing the targets I was engaged with, I turned to Dave who was bleeding out. I knelt down and held his head in my arms to comfort him. He had only moments to live and more combatants were coming. We all had an agreement that if a situation like this ever arose we would do the obvious. I was stalled by Dave, who was yelling at me, "Just do it god damn it and get the woman out!" It was the hardest thing I ever did in my life. He was not going to live for more than a few minutes, and, still to put a bullet in his brain was unthinkable. He held his hand on the trigger until I pulled it. He did not have the strength to do it himself, or he would have. I then checked on the other team members and confirmed they were all deceased. I took their dog tags and Dave's ring that I still wear with my dog tags. The ring originally belonged to Elizabeth Self's great grandmother Liz, who gave it to Lori. David's wife. After that I dragged them together and popped three thermite grenades to incinerate their bodies so they could not be desecrated. That's what happened to ShugaJi and Gordon in Somalia just six months prior to this. I then moved to the target building to get Gloria, only she refused to leave without the children; so I went back, got the truck, with the fifty cal on it, and piled them in it. Showed Gloria how to cycle the 50, and then headed for the extra fast route.

We all thought this woman was some undercover asset. Turned out she just had a father in high places. The senator resigned after Gloria returned state side. To date the Untouchables have the dubious honor of being the only SF Team to *never* fail a mission. Additionally, the one hundred and twenty eight missions were back to back sustained operations over eight years with no casualties till that day. I am the soul survivor of The Untouchables.