

We arrive in Honolulu early in the morning. The officer who meets us gathers us around him and tells us everybody is in the 25th Infantry Division. Several Army busses arrive at the loading area, and we throw our duffel bags into the back of our bus and eagerly load up for the 20-mile trip to Schofield Barracks. At the replacement barracks, cooks prepare a late breakfast for us, and afterwards, I sit out back and take note of how quiet and peaceful everything appears. Everything is neatly trimmed and there is no trash or debris anywhere.

Our group of replacements assembles to hear their names called by a staff sergeant. Jordon, Sizemore, Arnold, and Corea get assignments to the 5th Mechanized Infantry. Another man from a different AIT company and I join A Company, 1st Battalion 27th Infantry, the Wolfhounds. The company is in the field when I arrive in D Quad where the first and second battalions of Wolfhounds live. A PFC Applebee, who loiters around the orderly room, takes us inside to meet First Sergeant Letoto whom everybody calls Top. After only a few minutes in A Company, I notice he likes his moniker, Top. "Top, which platoon are you going to put these two new guys in?" The executive officer wants to know. Top this and Top that, and each time he hears his pet name he perks up with a suitable answer.

"I am putting Lupton in the second platoon, Sir," he replies. The other guy goes to third platoon.

Applebee's mission is to guide us to the supply room where we draw our bedding and field gear. My assigned bunk is in the far corner of the third floor; it takes two trips up the stairs to lug up all of my stuff.

The barracks is a large single room with huge pillars supporting the high ceiling. Wall lockers line all four walls, the bunks are positioned perpendicular to them, and the center of the room lies vacant. At the end of each bunk is a footlocker. On the far wall, running the full length of the bay, a plywood dividing-wall creates a long narrow room where junior NCOs maintain their bunks. Along the left wall, another plywood partition creates a dayroom with a pool table in it. On the alternate exterior angle created by the intersection of these two wooden walls, is a small room where Old Sergeant Lifer lives.

The barracks are in the shape of giant squares called quads with driveways at each corner. In the center is a grassy courtyard with a basketball court, a gazebo, and in front of A Company is a doghouse, which houses General Kolchak IV, the two battalion's Russian-Wolfhound mascot.



Figure 1 shows the left quad is home to both battalions of Wolfhounds.

Applebee finagles the rest of the afternoon to show us around the area. We visit the PX, snack bar, and the theater. After chow, he shows us the beer garden where we drink a couple of 3.2 cold ones. I will admit my first day is a pleasant one.

On the afternoon of the third day, the XO, Lieutenant Yee, takes me to an intersection where he tells me to hold a cardboard sign that gives the convoy directions. I stand and watch truck after truck pass by loaded with tired, muddy soldiers. Eventually, a major stops for me and tells me he is Tail End Charlie; I hop aboard the jeep, and he drives me back to the quad.

Upon my return to the barracks, there is pandemonium everywhere I look. Except for me, everybody occupies himself with cleaning up; not knowing anybody, I stand around gawking at the spectacle. I walk into the latrine to take a piss and find the place swamped with half naked GIs vying for space at the laundry tub to wash their ponchos. On the shower floor, three men sit buck-naked in a puddle of muddy red water scrubbing away at their field gear with soapy GI brushes while others stand under the steaming showerheads washing away three days of mud. Drying field gear hangs everywhere.

The next morning I meet platoon Sergeant Rodriguez and my squad leader Sergeant Thomas. Sergeant Rod is busy getting the platoon ready for a field gear inspection and does not spend much time with me except to assign me to the 4th squad, heavy weapons. I complain to Sergeant Thomas that I have never seen some of the field gear issued to me yesterday. Not to worry, he details Buxton to show me how the sleeping bag harness works.

While getting ready for inspection, Tazlaar complains his poncho is missing, but he marked it with his name. Sergeant Rod makes everybody show him his poncho. Fagan is caught red handed with it, and his lame excuse is he made a mistake. After further questioning, Fagan admits he lost his poncho out in the field. Sergeant Rod tells him he will have to pay for it. Fagan is pissed as he shuffles down the stairs to grovel for another poncho.

Immediately after the inspection, everybody throws their gear in their wall lockers. Within minutes of the NCOs leaving, newspapers and trash of all kinds plus other refuse accumulate in the middle of the room. The pile accretes throughout Sunday as people add still more litter to the center of the barracks. On Monday morning,

everybody sweeps trash from their bunk area into the middle of the room where the litter disappears into a trashcan. I am astounded how efficient this system works.

Dempsey hands me a broom and tells me to clean under the 4th squad's row of bunks, and when finished, not to give the broom away, he wants it. I busy myself sweeping underneath a bunk when Jones comes over wanting the broom. I hesitate to reason with him, but Jones just snatches it from my hands, walks across the room, and begins cleaning up his area. The whole thing happens so quickly I do not know what to do. I look at Dempsey who tells me not to worry about it, and we busy ourselves lining up the bunks against a faded yellow line on the floor.

Even if I find the subject distasteful, I might as well address the issue of race in A Company. Since I enlisted, I experience little racial tensions with black men. Aside from a minor shoving incident in AIT, racial animosity stays submerged within each person's values. This unit is different though. In the past, black guys normally number about 10% of a company, but in this company, roughly 30% are black. This is not bad in itself, yet from the black soldiers of A Company, there exudes a palpable sense of enmity.

The black guys hang solely with their compeers, and their bitterness and loathing is not always subtle. Under the surface, and always present, is the fundamental antipathy for anybody white. I have dire misgivings about my new unit, and my WASPy white ass does not fit in well.

There are others, but five black guys in particular are the worst reprobates. Buxton, Fagan, Leatherwood, Richardson, Jones, and Greko, an Italian, whom I call the white nigger. Jones is a bigot, the biggest thief is Fagan, the biggest loudmouth is Richardson, Buxton is the meanest nigger when drunk, and Leatherwood is a sneaky, cowardly cur who will nail your ass when your back is turned. Greko is their only Caucasian pal; black or white most of the other platoon members cannot stand these jive niggers.

Up until now, my only experience with theft is in basic training when a fireguard stole pocket change from peoples' fatigue pants during the night. Things are different here. Every time I turn around something of mine disappears, my comb from my shaving bag, my baseball cap, my field gear, and even my dirty socks from my laundry bag vanish. If I want to keep it, I write my name on everything, and I mean everything. I am not the only theft victim either. Ward tells me he left the room for a few minutes one day and when he came back, every piece of his field gear disappeared from his wall locker. Even though there are several people in the room at the time, no one sees anybody swipe it. Ward has to replace all the equipment, and now he draws only 20 dollars a month pay until he pays for it all.

After a while, Dyer and I strike up a conversation. He is from Wyoming, is heavy into cattle ranching, and becomes upset when people accuse him of being a shepherd. Bray sleeps between Dyer and me, and everybody chides him about his stinky feet. Now and again, when Bray is asleep, somebody will relocate his boots to the lanai because they smell so bad. He is heavy into roller skating and can be found at the rink on his off hours chasing chippies. Eventually, Smokey Fell and I strike up a conversation and become friendly. He is a few years older than most of us and more avant-garde than I am.

Sergeant Thomas is my squad leader, and he is quite a trip. Sergeant Tom, as we call him, is a lifer on his third enlistment. He is black too, but he always treats me okay.

My only reservation about him is that he is always trying to impress upon me how much he knows about the Army and the weapons squad. He shows me boring field manuals about the M60 and squad tactics. I do not know how many of these books he actually reads or whether he merely carries them around for show purposes. Sergeant Thomas can make my life easy or hard if he wants to, so I listen attentively to maintain an ally.

Sergeant Rodriguez is our platoon sergeant. Aside from his obsessive-compulsive-disorder for a well-made-bunk, I have no qualms about Sergeant Rod except he has a peculiar habit of catching me walking out of the platoon bay and putting me on some crappy detail. Finally, I figure this out and search up and down the lanai before I leave the barracks. Several times, I see him coming and quickly retreat to the far end of the room feigning interest in shining my boots; he opens the door and gathers up some other hapless private for his cleaning and moping details.

A Company readies to become the reaction company for the entire Pacific theater. This means we must be ready to get on an airplane within two hours notice and fly anywhere the Cold War turns hot. One persistent rumor has us getting ready to invade China. I fall into formation with all of my field gear and weapon. We march to a large parking lot near the elementary school where everybody must spread out all the stuff they own so the platoon sergeant can inspect it piece by piece. Everything is all right, except I have only one canteen and my field jacket is in transit from the replacement depot in Oakland. Because I experience difficulty jamming every thing into my duffel bag, I opted to ship my field jacket because I did not think it was cold enough to need one in Hawaii. Sergeant Rodriguez tells me I must buy the missing items. After I complain I am too broke to buy another field jacket, he and Sergeant Thomas scrounge an old one for me. I go buy another canteen and cover at the equipment store.

Since arriving in Hawaii, I am impoverished, and I need extra uniforms to supplement my basic issue. Because the 25th Division does not allow its soldiers to use starch in their fatigues, we must change clothes every day, and I do not have enough uniforms. As Smokey Fell explains to me, some general's wife tried on starched fatigues one day and found them scratchy, so starch is history. I iron my fatigues each night, and that allows me to get two days wear from them but that is all. Ever since I landed, most of my money goes into purchasing more clothes and equipment.

On my first payday, finance makes a mistake and only gives me a partial pay. The finance clerk asks me if I can wait for next month, and I say no. Then the clerk makes a snide remark about everybody claiming to need his pay right away, but I insist. A week later, the rest of my pay comes through, but still, I am always broke.

Talk about dens of iniquity. On payday night, the barracks literally becomes a casino, and everywhere I look, people are gambling. Three guys pitch quarters off the wooden wall. In the dayroom, several others play eight ball for a dollar a ball. Five men use Bray's bunk as a card table, two sit on my bunk, and three others occupy Dyer's. Two black guys throw craps on another bunk across the room where they bet ten bucks a toss. I pass on this game after one says I look innocent enough. "Screw you," I think and turn to join the game on Bray's bunk where I win only one hand before deciding to drop out. I have only received partial pay, and now I am almost broke on the first day of the month. Greko, Buxton, and the like are very good poker players too, and I do not stand a chance. The game goes on well into the night.

Several days later, Fell invites me to visit Greko in the hospital. Greko elects to undergo a circumcision, so he can get several days of light duty. His operation goes poorly and the wound becomes infected. We walk to the hospital several quads away, and find him cautiously waddling down the hallway holding his bandaged dick with both hands. His dickhead peers back at us from a cocoon of white gauze held up with tape from his abdomen, which prevents his pecker from drooping. Fell and I stand laughing at his predicament. The three of us walk slowly back to his room where he carefully sits on his bed and shows us his blackened member. His swollen penis is three times its normal size with blood coloring the gland dark purple. The stitches encircling his dickhead are gnarly and curled forward resembling an inverted grappling hook. "Man, that goddamn doctor screwed up this operation," Greko grumbles, "nobody else's circumcision turned out like this, look at all of that goddamn blood in my balls. Greko complains he ran out of the ether used to staunch his middle-of-the-night erection. Goddamn, it hurt last night when I woke up with half a hard on. I shook up this can of ether and hardly anything came out."

"Why did you want to get circumcised in the first place?" Fell asks.

"I get three days light duty with a circumcision. That guy over there says a lot of the men in his unit get circumcised for the three days of sham time," Greko whines. His roommate nods affirmatively. "They make you clean your own room here too. I had to wipe down these blinds this morning, and the goddamn head nurse does not give a shit that my dick hurts.

"It is not her dick," I add reflectively.

When Greko returns to the quad, he shows Sergeant Rodriguez his still swollen gland. The inverted grapnel hooks are scraping his scrotum raw when he walks, and Rod lets him lie around the barracks all day. Intuitively, he works this sham for all it is worth. Eventually, the stitches come out and he must go back to training with the company. I do not think Top Letoto is too impressed with Greko's disability because the same night the stitches come out Greko has guard duty. He offers me fifteen dollars if I will pull his guard, and I agree.

This is the first guard mount I pull in A Company, and it is a little more involved than my experiences in basic and AIT. The guards dress immaculately in Class-A khakis with their brass shined, spotless rifles, and spit-shined boots. For the first time, I need to carry my bayonet.

After dressing, I lay my rifle and ammo belt on my footlocker and walk to the dayroom where I plan to take a catnap before guard mount. I slouch in the chair and drift off to sleep when I hear a persistent rattling in the squad bay. I open my right eye slightly to see Fagan bent over Buxton's footlocker frantically trying to figure out the combination. He jiggles the lock, spins the dial, and looks around to see who might be looking, he sees me, and quits his attempt then walks back to his bunk. I close my eye once more only to hear the same noise again. I open my right eye a tad to see Fagan trying to break into Buxton's footlocker, and again, he looks at me, thinks I am asleep, and returns to his pursuits. Fagan performs this ritual a third time before the bell rings signaling the guards mount. I ask Dyer if I should tell Buxton about Fagan's attempted theft, but Dyer advises me Buxton and Fagan are best friends and to forget it. With friends like Fagan, who needs enemies?

When the bell rings, the guards file out of the barracks and form four ranks in front of A Company. When the lieutenant arrives for inspection, Old Sergeant Lifer puts me in the front rank and calls us to attention. I am nervous and stare straight in front of me as the Officer of the Day and the Sergeant of the Guard inspect each guard individually. The OD cannot find any dust or dirt in my rifle, so far so good. He continues past me inspecting the next three men then walks behind us to look at our ponchos folded on our pistol belts. Each guard does something so the lieutenant can inspect their bayonet. I turn my head to the left to observe the guard next to me, but Old Sergeant Lifer yells, "Eyes front!" They come up behind me, and I do not know what to do, so I remain at attention. "Show the lieutenant your bayonet," Old Lifer Sergeant barks at me. Still oblivious, I lean my M14 across my front, grab it with my left hand, and try to yank my bayonet out of the scabbard with my right hand. "Not like that, Goddamn it!" yells the old man. Laughter erupts behind me, and I know instinctively I have screwed up, yet I stand clueless. The Sergeant of the Guard grips my scabbard and thrusts it forward for me to grab with my left hand, the handle points backward toward the lieutenant, and now I know. Repositioning my rifle to my right hand, I return to attention. I hold the scabbard rigidity, and the OD yanks the bayonet out. "Is this your first time on guard soldier?"

"Yes, sir," is my reply.

"See to it this man is orientated the next time, Sergeant." the lieutenant is nice enough to let my screw up pass as inexperience, but I have to say, he does not sound too happy with Old Lifer Sergeant. They proceed down the line inspecting everybody's bayonet, eventually finishing the review. After the lieutenant leaves, I have the acrid taste of humiliation in my mouth.

Old Sergeant Lifer looks at me, righteously dismayed. I want to make a sardonic quip regarding his leadership skills, but I tactfully keep my smart-ass remark to myself. The next question is which post I must walk. With some reservation, he assigns me to the live ammunition post guarding the bank; because of the live ammo, it is the most sensitive guard position at Schofield. He issues me a magazine with ten rounds in it, and I dutifully walk two hours on and four hours off throughout the night.

After my first two-hour guard, we return to the quad to see two black guys screaming threats at each other from the opposite ends of the second story lani. Their biceps flexing like gladiators, neither makes a move to assault the other one, which gives me the impression they are scared of each other. I hear a tired voice say, "Aw shut the fuck up," to which both antagonists reply in unison, "Fuck you," and the argument continues until Old Sergeant Lifer yells at them to go to bed.

The sun is rising when the ¾-ton truck finally arrives to retrieve me. I am exhausted, and my legs are wobbly as I amble toward the truck. I crack a slight smile of appreciation to the driver as I draw near only to receive a vicious rebuke from him. "Hurry the fuck up," the little black driver acerbically yells at me. After walking my ass off for the past two hours, his shitty demeanor takes me aback. I am tired and cranky and in no mood for the likes of this asshole.

"Hey, fuck you," I snap while maintaining my Negro shuffle until I arrive at the tailgate where I surrender my live ammo to Old Sergeant Lifer and hop aboard the vehicle.

At one time, the battalion gave the guards the morning to catch up on their sleep, but those days are long gone. After turning in my rifle, I eat morning chow, trudge up the stairs, and change out of my khakis and into my fatigues.

Today the company swaps out their bedding. Everybody disassembles their bunks, folds their mattresses in half, lays their pillow on top of it, and then takes their soiled sheets down to the supply room where they drape them across the counter. Martin, the supply clerk, stacks the sheets neatly so he can fold all of them into several big bundles for the laundry pick up. A lively discussion ensues about who in the company has been jerking off this past week by observing whose sheets have yellow cum stains in the middle. I escape this humiliation and appreciate the significance my jockey shorts afford me when changing my oil.

The company prepares for a three-day field problem in the Kahuka mountains on the north shore of Oahu. As I assemble my field gear, I casually refer to the field problem as a picnic. Smokey Fell admonishes me claiming the field is not easy, "This is no picnic, Lupton. I get so tired carrying the machine gun I have to jam the butt into the mud, and pull myself up the mountain one lousy step at a time. Take my word for it, this is no picnic." Others presage the toughness of the field too, but I am confident I can deal with the difficulty.

It is pouring rain when we pull out of the quad huddled underneath our ponchos as the convoy heads for the north shore. We drive past miles of pineapple fields where Sergeant Walker cautions me not to pick any pineapples, for the penalty is fifty dollars if they catch you, almost a months pay. The same goes for the ubiquitous sugar cane growing everywhere in the huge rusty-red fields.

The platoon spreads out on the beach along a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Sergeant Thomas instructs me where to dig a foxhole, which is easy digging in the sand. The battalion XO, Major Farmer, comes by after a while to inspect the position, and he complements me on my five-foot deep hole. After half an hour, I have to fill it in when the company assembles before moving out. Sergeant Fitch tells us the weatherman predicts 4 inches of rain this morning then 6 more tonight.

Leaving the ocean behind us, we begin humping up the foothills into the Kahukas at a leisurely pace. This is my first exposure to mountains. Before at Fort Polk, all we experienced were small hills, and we never carried much in our packs so the effort was easier. I begin feeling the fatigue of the incline shortly after starting our climb. I am sweating profusely, huffing, and puffing before we are even in the jungle when Sergeant Pierce waltzes past me uttering some obtuse comment about not being a man or manliness or sum such affront. I know to whom he is referring to and this motivates me to keep up.

I am thirsty all the time because I breathe hard through my mouth as we continue the climb. Growing on either side of the road are guava trees hung low with ripe fruit. The smell of ripening fruit attracts swarms of gnats, as does everybody else who gorges on the guavas to quench their thirst. What I do not know about guavas is they have a tendency to constipate you.

I struggle mightily though the rest of the day. By late in the afternoon I find myself deep in the jungle, the rainfall perseveres. We stop for the night at an assembly area, and Sergeant Rod picks me to go on an ambush patrol to the next hilltop. Sergeant

Gallegos, our supply sergeant, tells us we will receive our c-rations after we get up there. The 10-man patrol starts out as the rain begins anew.

Our objective entails a steep climb up a hill with only scrub grass scattered across the bare face of the slope; we must crawl on our hands and knees to keep from sliding back down. Most of us ascend two thirds of the way up only to slip helplessly back to their starting point. After watching several failed attempts, we are laughing hysterically. By digging footholds with my bayonet, I am the first to reach the top, and with this, we know the climb is doable. I offer my M14 to each climber at the steepest part of the muddy ascent, and with much fortitude, the entire patrol manages to reach the apex. I wash the red mud off my hands using the rainwater dripping from my poncho.

We settle in the scrub bushes just below the ridgeline for the night. The wind becomes down right chilly after the sun sinks into the Pacific Ocean, and when the rain lets up, misquotes come singing out of the grass. I put my mosquito net over my helmet, draw taught the drawstring around my neck, and slather bug repellent on my forearms and hands. I smugly watch the clouds of skeeters silhouetted against the almost darkening horizon.

From somewhere our c-rations materialize, but the entrée is missing, I never learn why. I eat the cookies, crackers and plastic cheese, and mix in the chocolate drink with water in my canteen cup. I wash the cup as best I can with what little water I dare to use and put the tin cup back into the canteen cover. That is it for dinner, and for the rest of the night, I listen to the mosquitoes swarm around my ears each time the rain lets up.

In the morning, we slide down the muddy hill to rejoin the company. Sergeant Fitch is nice enough to invite me to sit under his poncho tent while I eat my breakfast c-rations. I get the meat portion of last night's dinner, Chicken in Water, and my breakfast is Ham and Eggs. I gobble up the Ham and Eggs, but I am too full to eat the other meat dish. Sergeant Fitch tells me to rest up because we have a long way to go today.

The bivouac breaks up, and we begin our trek deep into the jungle. My lack of conditioning is soon apparent as I struggle to keep up to the man in front of me. Eventually, my column breaks trail paralleling the road as we ascend the mountain; I jealously watch other men marching easily on the road below me, wishing I were in their group instead of thrashing through deep overgrowth.

We come to a precarious section of the trail where the slope is steep with no trees growing down the mountainside. The track is merely the muddy footprints of the men in front of me, and with one wrong step, I will slide a hundred feet down the steep incline. If that happens, I have to climb back up. As I wait for the man in front of me to clear the open spot, Old Lifer Sergeant behind me angrily yells, "Just do it, son!" I take a breath and do it just as the old man says, and darn, I easily cross this difficulty without mishap in five long strides, and even I am impressed. With this obstacle past, I maintain my efforts to keep up with the rest of the column.

Several hours later, I am fading fast. The company keeps walking without a rest. It is now 1500, and I do not know how much more of this pace I can take. I thought we would break for lunch, but the captain relentlessly maintains the torrid pace for hours. The line of soldiers stretches out farther and farther as the afternoon wears on until we come to a switchback. I pray this upward climb will end soon; to rest my failing legs would be godly. Dog-tired, I begin the short leg of the switchback, round the corner, walk up a couple more steps, and then look up. I am devastated; the trail continues up the

slop of yet another hill. I can endure the fatigue no more; I turn and fall back against thick underbrush, which holds me from tumbling down the hill. Panting heavily, I watch the remaining troopers lumber past. Each stares as they hump up the hill and disappear into the jungle above.

I close my eyes for a second to consider what to do next. Suddenly, I wake up to the calls of Sergeant Thomas. He proffers me the only thing he has that will give me quick energy, his c-ration Date Nut Cake. With trembling hands, I open the can with my P38 and try to gulp down the carbohydrate, but I am nearly out of water and the cake is dry. Sergeant Tom wants to keep going, and I assure him I will be along in a minute; he disappears up the hill, turns left on the trail, and is gone. I am alone again.

Recalling Errol Flynn in the movie *Operation Burma*, where cut off and alone in the vast Burmese jungle, the Marauders literally crawl up a hill expecting to find a friendly village below where there will be food, water, and a long rest. The men are at their breaking point as lead elements reach the summit, and then heartbreak. The music bestows calamity as the camera pans over endless miles of mountainous jungle with no sign of civilization anywhere. Expecting reprieve, despair engulfs the patrol, and their moral is broken. I am overwhelmed when I look up the trail to see endless jungle, without the music of course.

Still chewing my Date Nut Cake I untangle myself from the underbrush, but I tire quickly and think to myself, "if I can just get a little more rest, I'll be all right," then I lay back on the underbrush, close my eyes, and instantly fall asleep again. I awake to realize nobody is going to come back for me, so I struggle up the dreaded hill. Upon reaching the top, I feel the dire need to take a crap. I step off the trail, squat, and shit out the single biggest turd I have ever seen. I actually perk up after taking my dump and feel genuinely refreshed.

Night is approaching, and my big problem now is rejoining the company; I am totally lost, jungle surrounds me, and I cannot even see the ocean from the hilltop. I search the surrounding hills and see some soldiers setting up their poncho hootch on the side of the knoll across a small valley, so I head for them believing they are A Company men. To my surprise, these soldiers are the aggressor forces. I did not even know there are aggressors in this field problem. I thank God for small favors when their platoon sergeant tells me to stay with them.

The two aggressors take me under their care; we eat our c-rations as dusk settles then squeeze together under their poncho tent for a good nights rest. The next morning I join them as they walk out of the Kahukas. My legs are still fatigued from the prior day, and I wind up dead last in their column as we walk endlessly until 1700 when all of a sudden, we arrive at an assembly point. I hear Captain Curbrow utter my name and pipe up to tell him I am here. He indifferently recognizes my presence and continues inquiring about other missing men.

Finally, I can sit down and wait for the duce-and-a-halves to take us back to Schofield, the past two days have been tough on me. I find myself sitting in the spare tire as we bump along a dirt road to the highway. Others ask where I have been and laugh when I tell them I walked out with the aggressors. Jones and Richardson make patronizing remarks about my misfortune as I sit in the tire rim of the spare. "Turkey neck," comments Richardson through his big floppy lips, and everybody cracks up. Buxton says something that I do not hear, and when I ask him what he wants, the

Brothers goad him, hopeful he will pick a fight with me. I am back on the defensive again.

Back a Schofield I participate in the pandemonium and jockey for my turn at the washtub and shower right along with everybody else. The whole scene is somewhat zooish.

The next morning we learn one man is still lost in the Kahukas, they think he deliberately went AWOL, but I know different, he got lost too. Sergeant Rod asks the platoon for volunteers to search for him. Empathy makes me want to participate in this rescue, and I put my hand up, but Old Sergeant Lifer just pooh-poohs me away with an acerbic remark. When nobody volunteers, Sergeant Rod picks nine others and me to look for the missing man.

Sergeant Taylor from the 4th platoon leads the patrol. We do not have to carry anything more than our ponchos and a canteen of water, for we are to be out there only for the afternoon. A duce-and-a-half transports us to Wheeler Army Air Field across from Schofield where we board an old Piasecki CH21, referred to as the Flying Banana, for a flight over the pineapple fields to a hilltop somewhere in the Kahukas.



Figure 2 Piasecki CH21-C helicopter

Presumably, a lost person will most likely pursue a river in hopes of following it to the sea, so we immediately descend into the valley below. During our search, we find a crashed Grumman Hellcat fighter plane overgrown by the jungle. From the impact, we note how the fifty caliber barrels curl neatly underneath the wing. Somebody suggests we look for bones, but Sergeant Taylor puts the kibosh to that idea, and we keep traveling through the water. Parts of the river are no more than a rill and at other times, the water becomes waist deep with a swift current.

Somewhere along the way, someone notices the antenna on our prc10 radio broke off. This leaves only the walkie-talkie that does not have enough range to communicate with anybody, especially in the bottom of this vale. At nightfall, we stop on a pebbly beach deep in the gully, make ourselves as comfortable as we can, and spend the chilly night wrapped inside our ponchos. We waken at daybreak, stiff, mosquito bitten, and hungry. A short walk of a quarter mile brings us out of the riverbank where we find Captain Curbrow who waited for us the entire night with two $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton trucks. Half the men load the first truck while I join the rest in the second one. On the way back, we can look through the windshield and watch the men in the first truck chowing down c-rations while we have none.

Back at the barracks, we clean up, hurry down to the mess hall, and then have to wait until the cooks make a special breakfast for us. We pass the time sleeping with our heads lying on the tables until chow is ready, and then we scarf up everything. The guy we were looking for walked out of the Kahukas, hitched a ride to Schofield, and arrived

at the barracks couple of hours after we flew away to look for him. He is there, well rested, and unconcerned. I will admit I am a little resentful.

After chow, we want to sack out, but Sergeant Rodriguez will not let us; the platoon prepares for an equipment inspection. I am so exhausted the best I can do is carry on listlessly.

I tell Sergeant Thomas I lost my machete when the scabbard broke away from the clasp holding it to my ammo belt. Sergeant Rod wants to see the broken clasp, but I tossed it when I returned from the field, not thinking I would need it anymore. When I tell him this, he declares I must pay for the missing equipment. The next payday, finance withholds eight bucks from my pay. I learn something new everyday in the Army.

Regulations forbid us to consume alcohol in the barracks, but on Saturday night, two six-packs of Hawaiian Primo beer miraculously appear. With only five of us in the barracks, Smokey Fell organizes a parlor trick where one person sits in a chair, and the other four people lift him above their heads using only two fingers each. Buxton, Greko, Bray, Fell, and I play this trick. Greko sits in the chair, Smokey puts his hands on the top of his head, pushes down for a ten count, and then the four of us place our two index fingers under his knees and armpits and together we lift Greko high in the air. He is light as a feather. Everybody cheers and congratulates Smokey for a great trick, and we pass more beer around. Each of us takes a turn in the chair, but nobody knows why the sitting man becomes so buoyant. Tonight is the only time I ever feel genuine camaraderie in the Wolfhounds.

Lights out is at 2200 hours. Everybody else is in bed except the Brothers Jackson and Green who carry on a conversation with a lamp sitting atop Jackson's footlocker. The lamp light and their big mouth jive-talk keep me from falling asleep. I watch as Sergeant Wicker appears from the NCO's room; he talks to both of the miscreants then quits the conversation, walks back into his room, reappears fully dressed, and rapidly walks out of the barracks. I take an hour or so to fall asleep because these two nitwits are annoying me, and I resent their intrusion on my sack time. I awake at 0500, unrested from my truncated repose, and resentful at the audacity of these two black assholes to carry on after lights out.

Days later, Greko asks me to pull his KP for fifteen dollars, we ask Sergeant Rod if this is okay, and he agrees. My day begins washing trays with a black guy from the 4th platoon whom I hardly know. In a cubbyhole just off the kitchen, we work frantically during the morning rush. My job is to scrape excess food off the trays, and wash them as fast as I can then put them into the rinse sink. My workmate inspects each tray, returns any dirty ones to me, places the clean ones in a wash rack, and runs two dozen at a time through the washing machine. After that, he stacks the steaming hot trays in the tray holder in the dining room. The other man is remote and glum, so when the pots and pans man offers to switch jobs, I say okay. I labor at the washtubs in the kitchen, preferring to work alone.

Two lieutenants stroll through the kitchen conversing about Green and Sergeant Wicker. Overhearing them, I stupidly proffer my knowledge of the incident. They take me back to the officer's dining room and read me my rights from the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I am clueless why they would do this, but when they are finished, I say okay and answer their questions about the confrontation. They offer me an opportunity to be important by testifying at a hearing, and I agree. "Don't worry about KP," one

officer assures me. I must change into Class-A khakis and report to the battalion headquarters across the quad where I meet Sergeant Wicker and Chilton. We hang around all afternoon waiting for something to begin but nothing happens. The three of us leave at 1800 hours and return to the barracks where I change clothes and go to chow.

Later that night, after Greko gets off KP, I notice him huddling with Buxton, Leatherwood, Richardson, and Fagan. Greko struts over demanding his fifteen dollars back. When I hesitate for a moment, Greko turns into an asshole. "If you do not give me my fifteen dollars, Lupton, I will give you the first punch, and then I am going to throw your ass over the lanai," he says in a flat, bullying voice. Unless I beat him unconscious with my one free punch, I believe Greko can make good on his threat. Looking over at his bunk, I see eight spook-eyes watching this charade with much interest. If I ever do get the upper hand, his four black-ass friends will surely give me a shot in the back of the head. Discretion being the better part of a certain ass whooping, I give up the money. Greko is right, it is his, but his approach is genuine Dago white trash.

"Okay, here," I dig into my wallet but hand him only thirteen dollars, "I will owe you two dollars till payday." I fork over the money, toss my wallet into my wall locker, and jam the lock closed. The spectators are spell bound; Greko gawks, his hand still outstretched. You could hear a feather hit the floor. The stand off terminates when he returns to his compatriots. At least I regain some of my lost vanity in this dispute.

The next morning I attend training as usual, but in the afternoon, I change into Class-A Khakis and walk over to the battalion headquarters with Sergeant Wicker and Chilton. Sergeant Wicker goes into a closed room first and after twenty minutes, he reappears. Chilton goes in next and stays the same amount of time, after which a lieutenant calls my name. I enter the room where there sits a panel of two majors and a sergeant major; Green occupies a table with his defense officer, a second lieutenant. The presiding major reads me my rights under the Uniform Code of Military Justice then asks me to swear to tell the truth, which of course I do. Lieutenant Yee, our executive officer who is also the prosecutor, asks me if I recognize the lamp Green used for light.

"Yes, sir," I reply.

"Did you see Sergeant Wicker speak to the two men?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did Green and Jackson turn off the lamp?"

"No, sir."

I look over at Green who sits expressionless at the defense table. His defense officer is nervous and unsure of himself, and the major sitting as presiding officer instructs him how to proceed. After a few attempts, he manages to form a question regarding where I was during the time of the alleged offense. I tell him I am across the room trying to sleep. Because I am a witness for the prosecution, he cannot think of another question that may benefit the defendant. "No further questions." The presiding major dismisses me with the perfunctory warning not to discuss these proceedings with anybody and to remain outside.

Just before chow time, the court-martial ends, they find Green guilty. Lieutenant Yee joins us as we walk across the quad. "Lupton, after that testimony, you better sleep in the orderly room tonight," Lieutenant Yee recommends. For the first time, I dawn on me what just happened; I helped put Green in the stockade. This makes me a little nervous, but I will be damned if I am going to sleep in the orderly room. What am I

supposed to do tomorrow night and all nights after that, sleep in the stupid orderly room? I trail Wicker and Chilton up the stairs. They disappear into the NCO's bunkroom, and leave me in the barracks. I expect a confrontation with the black brothers ganging up on me, but surprisingly, nobody appears interested in where I have been all afternoon.

After I change clothes and eat chow, I return to the third floor. The milieu is normal with small groups of soldiers talking among themselves; nobody pays any attention to me. I sit on the floor shooting the bullshit with Dyer when Captain Curbrow enters the room. "A-ten-SHUN!" Somebody yells and everybody snaps to, stiff as a board, as if time just froze.

"As you were," replies the captain; he briefly surveys the room. He walks to the bulletin board and feigns interest by reading the training schedule for several minutes. There is a hush in the room until the captain walks out without saying a word to anybody.

Green gets 30 days in the same stockade that once confined John Dillinger, the very same stockade that broke Angelo Maggio into a sniveling wimp in the movie *From Here to Eternity*. While my testimony is not a case breaker, I feel remorseful for participating. Never again do I see the two lieutenants who talked me into testifying, not at a hearing, but at a court-martial. Afterwards, Sergeant Wicker is a bit friendlier toward me, but Chilton remains a haughty jerk. I remain in the quad with the friends of Green and Jackson to fend for myself. This teaches me to mind my own business.

I notice Ward and Fell sitting with someone new, so I drift over to observe. As he pulls his clothes out of his duffle bag, Moschkin talks about his time in Vietnam as a shot gunner. In 1963, the 25th Division trains groups of 100 men to be door gunners in Vietnam for three-month tours, dubbed Shot Gunners. Moschkin volunteers for one of the last groups trained for this mission.

He creates an international incident when he breaks a bamboo flagpole with a Vietnamese standard attached to it. To a Vietnamese lieutenant, it appears Moschkin is desecrating his country's flag and he complains. The Army restricts Moschkin to his base for the remainder of his tenure in Vietnam, persona non grata. Everybody snickers and laughs at this incident. When he returns to Schofield, Moschkin climbs over the fence and goes AWOL; the MPs catch him trying to climb back in. He is now returning from 30 days in the stockade.

Captain Curbrow marches A Company to the base theater where we join the other two companies of Wolfhounds. We pack the place to capacity, occupying seats at the back of the room. When Colonel Cothra walks on stage, the battalion Sergeant Major calls the assembly to attention; the room groans with a low roar of 600 men coming to attention. The colonel asks us where we think the battalion is going on our next five-day field problem. I am clueless, everybody else yells, "the Summit Trail, sir!"

Several years ago, five Marines died on the Summit Trail in a training accident, and the Army closed it. This is the first time troops will traverse the trail in three years. As the name implies, the trail runs along the top of the Kahuka Mountains and the battalion will traverse the trail during a five-day endurance march. Preparations begin immediately.

"Do not step in any mud puddles lying in the middle of the trail, Lupton," Fell lectures me, "they don't look deep, but you could sink all the way up to your chest.

"No shit?"

“Take my word for it, this trail is dangerous. You will be walking on a slim muddy path with a cliff looming over you on one side and a drop of three hundred feet on the other side. Ya gotta watch what you are doing. Everything will be slippery and nobody has been up there for three years, the going will be tough, take my word for it.”

“Okay, Fell, I hear ya.” Concerned with this news, I survey the room to see everybody packing their field gear. Gut instincts tell me I have more enemies than friends. Who would help me in case of an ambush? Bray, no, Tazlaar, maybe. Dyer, he probably would help. Fell, he will moderate a dispute, but he has to be present to get involved. The rest are doubtful. I wander back to the NCO’s bunkroom and ask Wicker if I can stay close to him during this field problem. He asks why, and I tell him I do not trust certain people and feel some may be inclined to shove me off a cliff. He does not share my apprehension. Maybe I am being a bit paranoid, but I remain very uneasy. I return to my bunk and finish packing my gear.

I have trouble falling asleep this night, and I wake up late feeling tired. I rush through breakfast, not eating as much as I should on a day like this. The company loads the trucks, and we ride along the North Shore where they take us much higher into the foothills than the last time.

I find myself humping in a long line within second platoon. I watch Moschkin disappear around a corner with a five-gallon can of water strapped onto a WWII A-frame pack. Everybody carries extra equipment with him this time. I struggle with a spool of commo wire attached to my web belt.

When the column comes to a halt, Sergeant Rodriguez yells my name then shortly the medic leads Linwood back down the trail towards us. Apparently, Linwood slipped and wrenched his back. Sergeant Rod orders me to escort these two, and the battalion photographer, down the hill to an outcrop where a helicopter will fly Linwood to the aid station. The medic hands me Linwood’s field gear as we wait for the company to pass us by. As Linwood is going to the rear, we divvy up his c-rations. I chow down on his pound cake while he looks at me as if I am stealing the last food he will ever eat.

Our little patrol breaks into the open on a grassy knoll where we waive at several helicopters. Eventually a bubble chopper lands, and I yell over the engine noise that one man is hurt, and the pilot should take him to the battalion aid station. Reluctantly, he agrees, and Linwood is gone. This leaves the three of us sitting on the hillside waiting for another chopper to fly us back to the company. This helicopter never materializes.

Instead of catching up to the company, the medic decides to stay where we are; we build a poncho shelter to keep out of the sun. After 36 hours, we run out of food and come to a decision to hike to the highway where we hitch a ride on a ¾-ton truck and travel back to the battalion bivouac on the beach.

“Do not volunteer to rejoin the company, Lupton. We do not want to go up on that mountain, ya hear me?” the medic is serious. The next day the weather deteriorates, and a helicopter cannot safely land on the summit trail anyway. The next afternoon, a helicopter flies Sergeant Taylor back to the aid station with a seriously cut hand. He and another man cut trail with machetes until the other guy slices the back of Taylor’s hand wide open. An ambulance drives him back to the hospital for stitching.

For the next two days, I pull KP during the day and guard at night. The duty sucks, but I have to admit this is better than life on the Summit. On the fifth day, I help load the mess hall into a duce and a half and return to Schofield. When I return to my

third floor barracks, the steel upright holding my mosquito bar is missing. The stealing in this place just never stops. I go down to the supply room and ask for another, and Martin gladly gives me one.

I take the opportunity to clean up all of my gear before A Company turns the scene zooish once more.

Everybody has a story about his travails on the trail. They had to sleep in the muddy path because there is no clear spot along the shoulder of the trail. Tazlaar shows me his shoulders, rubbed raw by his radio's backpack straps. Somebody manages to light a fire in a steel pot with heat tablets and warm themselves for a few hours until the wood burns away. Greko cries in the middle of the night because he is so miserable. Sergeant Walker swears the temperature sinks into the mid fifties, the wind blowing all the time. They can only wrap up in their ponchos to stay warm. Especially at the end, people begin throwing away all sorts of equipment. They know they will have to pay for it but do not give a shit any more, anything to lighten their load.

The next day Sergeant Rodriguez picks me to join a party to search for abandoned equipment. Walking back from the end of the trail for over a mile, we salvage all sorts of field gear: radio batteries, shelter halves, A-packs, and just about every piece of paraphernalia in the infantry. The patrol comes back with a truckload of stuff.

There are persistent rumors the division is going to Vietnam; the buzz is unrelenting. In early December, Top Letoto checks off each man's name as we file into the mess hall. This is an important meeting and everybody needs to be on the same page. Captain Curbrow confirms the rumors; we are going to Vietnam. The captain tells us there are no more leaves, anybody scheduled to rotate after March 1 can forget about it, and dependents should arrange to live elsewhere.

The 1st Division, already in Vietnam, sends a list of items we may find useful. The most memorable item is a large knife. Hunting knives disappear from the PX within hours. An assortment of knives appears overnight from small conventional 6-inch hunting knives to Roman Falcata short swords. Everywhere I look, people sit around sharpening their knives. After a few days of searching, I buy a scuba diving knife at the PX. I look like an idiot with the dumb thing strapped to my skinny calf, but it is all I can find.

We must dye our white underwear green. In the military store, olive drab dye instantly vanishes, green dye at the PX evaporates too, and even blue and yellow dye is impossible to find. I write my mother to send me some. Our t-shirts and undershorts turn into a faggy light green.

Normally, the battalion undergoes jungle training in the spring, but now the training accelerates. The Slide for Life dominates the conversation for weeks. "They tie your wrists with a safety line so you won't fall off, you move to the edge of the platform, take a big step into thin air and your ass slides down this rope just like shit through a tin horn. The goddamn fork-stick gets smoking like a son of a bitch. Woo wee! What a ride!" Fell exclaims with a big smile. He did this exercise last spring when everybody got a chance to slide down the ropes.



Figure 3 the Slide for Life

“You better hold on tight like motherfucker!” Buxton is wide eyed, “what a rush!” When it is A Company’s turn to do the Slide for Life, I have KP; my day consists of washing pots and pans. That is okay though. It rains hard all day long and only a few men do the Slide. Actually, the training is fun but virtually worthless.

The next day we go to the Jungle Warfare School at Kara Village, which is a mock-up of a Vietnamese village, supposedly. They lecture us on how to search a village. Pseudo Viet Cong dressed in black pajamas keep popping up out of wells and tunnels all over the place as an officer narrates a scenario. It is only a show and it only resembles Vietnam in a figment of somebody’s imagination. As it turns out, the whole thing is somewhat corny.

We rise at 0345 to fire our M14s at the rifle range. First Sergeant Letoto earns the highest score, as one would expect from the top lifer. I shoot a high score too and rank about 18th in the company of 150 men. The targets are pop ups where a silhouette of a man mechanically pops up, you fire, and when you make a hit, it automatically falls down. The targets range from 50 feet to 300 meters, and we shoot from a variety of positions, standing, kneeling, and sitting.

For marksmanship, we use conventional bulls-eye targets, which we operate by raising and lowering each target from a trench at the end of the 300-meter range. After a line of men fire, we drop the targets, score them, patch the holes with either black or white sticky tape, and then hoist up the targets for the next round of firing.

I work in a storage shed affixing the paper targets to the frames. Sergeant Dunlap lectures me how he wants the targets positioned and leaves the room. Dempsey begins working on the project, and I see him stapling the targets in the wrong position. “Hey, Dempsey, Sergeant Dunlap wants the targets flush with the top of the frame,” I tell him without sounding haughty.

“Hey, fuck you, Lupton,” rebukes the sawed off little Hutu, “I don’t want to hear your shit anymore,” barks the stupid anus brain. I stand dumbfounded at the little jerk off’s behavior. He resumes stapling the targets in the wrong location until Sergeant Dunlap walks in and corrects him. Now he has to redo what he fucked up. The vainglorious little asshole turns to scowl at me. I say nothing.

Everybody runs 100 rounds through the machine gun, throws two live hand grenades, and fires five rounds from the blooper. The mortar platoon live fires everyday until the holidays.

The Army’s 45 pistols are old, loose, and inaccurate; generally, everybody hates them. Sergeant Loomis demonstrates the accuracy of the 25-year pistols by shooting at a small cardboard ammunition box at 25 meters. He is a very good shot and this is nice on

the pistol range, but in combat, your hand is shaking so badly you cannot hit a damn thing unless you are standing 10 feet away.

Everybody takes turns shooting the 45 while another man scores his target. After that, the scorer takes his turn shooting, and his buddy scores that target. This arrangement allows for a bit of fudging, and when two black guys score the highest in the company, even better than Top, Sergeant Loomis makes them do an exhibition shoot for us. It is hyperbole to tell you their scores are even close to their first round.

We do a lot of PT and bayonet training. With full field gear, the company pulls a forced march up to Kolekole Pass, five miles one way, five miles back; for the last two miles, we double time. Standing breathless at the quad, as the stragglers catch up, Captain Curbrow announces we had such a good march that we should reward ourselves with 20 pushups. A moan engulfs the formation, and the company dutifully drops to the ground in full field gear and does 20 sloppy pushups.

Sweaty and exhausted, we run up the stairs and enter the platoon bay to see Greko blissfully lounging on his bunk. He had his wisdom teeth pulled two days ago, and he keeps sucking on the clots to keep the wounds bleeding. This way he gets to sham out of training, and Greko works his charade for all it is worth.

“LaVilla is coming back,” Greko tells Fell, “and Prine too.”

“Who is LaVilla?” I ask.

“He is our squad leader who has been shooting on the rifle team for the past year, and Prine has been refereeing little league baseball.” I have been in A Company for two months and have never seen nor heard of either of these two phantom sergeants. The next day, like wraiths returning from the living dead, I meet Staff Sergeant LaVilla who is about 35 years old and a Korean War veteran. After a few weeks, he becomes somewhat paternal, and we get along okay. Sergeant Prine is a staff sergeant too, is a few years younger, and after two weeks, he comes off like a horse’s ass.

Sergeant Thomas moves over as second squad leader. Sergeant Walker gets his promotion to staff sergeant and the NCOs promptly throw him into the grease pit. First platoon’s Lieutenant Underwood receives a promotion to first lieutenant and the officers toss his ass into the grease pit too. No enlisted participate in this dunking. The grease pit is a rite of passage and is all good fun, unless you are the one thrown into the slime.

Second platoon gets a brand spanking new baby-faced West Point graduate for our platoon leader, Lieutenant Roth. The platoon bay fills up with transferees from the 14th Infantry, and we must double up the bunks to accommodate the new men.

“What the hell are they?” I ask looking down from the third floor lanai at three toy-like plastic rifles propped up with their cheapo clip-on aluminum bipods.

“They are M16s, the Army’s new rifle,” Fell answers with familiarity, “they are light as a feather. You can put them in water and the rifle will never rust. They are supposed to be dependable as hell too.” Such is the fable of the M16 in 1965. The 25th Division still carries M14s, and we will not see the new rifle until we are in Vietnam for two months. Sergeant Dunlap gives an orientation lecture about the M16 and that is about it.

It is a quiet Saturday afternoon as Ward and I play pool in the dayroom when Buxton and Fagan walk into the barracks. They have been drinking beer and Buxton is hyperactive. He comes into the dayroom jive talking about whitey this and whitey that. He directs his invective at me, grabs a pool ball, and tosses it at me as hard as he can. I

duck, Ward runs out of the room. Another pool ball crashes off the wooden partition resounding like a rifle shot. I recover quickly before he has another chance to throw a ball at me while still hunched over. Buxton comes around the table spewing his racist venom; I wisely keep the table between us. He grabs another ball, and I duck before it crashes off Old Sergeant Lifer's wooden wall, again it sounds like a rifle shot. Buxton throws another ball, I duck, and the ball smashes off the concrete wall behind me. We have come full circle around the table, and I dip once more as the eight ball flies over me, bouncing off the wall next to the window. Bent over, I head for the door and come to a dead stop when my face runs into the pool cue Fagan uses to block the door. Stunned, I stagger backward into the corner of the room. While watching Buxton approach, Fagan gets in two punches, forcing me further into the corner. Buxton takes two wild swings at me, but he is too drunk to be dangerous, and I block him easily. I make my move out the door coming face to face with nigger bell Fagan. "Fucking Lupton, downstairs telling the Captain the *niggers* are up here," he blurts.

"You're full of bullshit," I retort. I do not take my eyes off him; he still holds the pool cue.

"What the fuck is going on!" Old Sergeant Lifer bellows. I bet when that pool ball hit his wall, the old bastard jumped right out of his skivvies.

As quickly as the confrontation started, it is over. I retreat to my bunk where I swear to Dyer I am going to kill me a nigger if I ever get the chance. "Take it easy, Lupton, take it easy." I wipe the blood from under my nose where I struck the pool cue; my heartbeat slackens and in due course, I stop panting. Dyer stays close as the two perpetrators huddle on the opposite side of the room talking to others. Afterwards, things return to normal, but I sleep with my pocketknife open under my pillow from now on.

From my first few moments in A Company, First Sergeant Letoto lectures me, "Do not go down to Hotel Street."

"Yeah," counsels Nichols the company clerk, "you are better off never being on Hotel Street." The street's status as a sleazy dive predates WWII when it is a rite of passage for successive generations of servicemen to make their pilgrimage to Hotel Street.

"So what is wrong with Hotel Street?" I ask Smokey.

"There are lots of bars and fortune tellers," Fells lectures us. "You go in a darkened room with Mamasan, she sits you down at a table with a crystal ball, and then she tells you she knows what you want."

"Okay, what do I want?"

"You want is a girl."

"Oh, yeah, why of course, I want a girl."

"Then she asks you how much you are willing to pay for your desire to come true, and you give her some money. A girl appears from behind a curtain and the fortune teller tells you how much money it takes to have a date with this girl."

"Is that all?" Dyer wants to know.

"Well, you keep giving this broad money hoping all the time she will give you a piece of ass, or at least a hand job, but normally, you run out of dough first..."

"...and then the big fat Samoan tells you to leave," Greko pipes up from experience, "and you better leave too."

“Another scam is a girl dressed in only a grass skirt and a coconut bra will ask you if you want to make a souvenir picture with her, all the while she is bumping up against you, turning you on. The picture costs five dollars, and she will stick her ass up against your dick and grind you hard. After the guy takes the picture, that’s the end of that.”

“Aw man, that bitch had me so turned on,” Buxton interjects, “ma goddamn dick was so *haaard* I thought it would bust ma pants. After she wouldn’t give me no pussy, I thought, ‘fuck this broad,’ I went and found one walking across the Wahiawa bridge and put my knife up against her throat telling her to keep going. Man, my dick was *hard!* The damn old bitch started yelling, and I had to let her go.” I do not know if Buxton was joking, or he was dead serious, but I have no doubt this man is a serious scumbag.

Dyer and I go on pass to Honolulu, and of course, the first place we go is Hotel Street. We walk into a bar where two go-go dancers are ditty bopping in metal cages above the band. One girl is slim and not too hard to look at, but the other one is a big fat wahine. (Wa-heen-ee) She is so fat and ugly her face could stop a truck. She pursues an argument with a patron, which denigrates into threats and swearing.

“Are you boys 20? Let me see your IDs.”

“Hey, let’s get out of here,” I say to Dyer, he agrees, and we leave. Dyer could buy a drink, but I am under Hawaii’s drinking age of 20. We walk along Hotel Street a bit further stopping to look into an amusement parlor filled with pinball machines. With our mouths agape, we watch a six-foot faggot dressed in women’s clothing replete with high heels, false tits, and a black wig. We watch this fag get mad at a pinball machine, banging it with his fist until the attendant yells at him to get out.

“I don’t know, Dyer, I am beginning to think everybody is right about this dumpy street.”

“Yeah, I think you are right, Lupton. Hey, let’s see what is in this place.” I cannot believe it when he turns into the doorway of the iniquitous fortuneteller. I follow him inside where two Hawaiian girls separate us, and while Dyer is chatting to one broad, mine tries to nudge me over to a doorway. She gently prods my hip with the back of her hand wanting me to enter the next room, but I just stand there with my hands in my pockets recollecting Smokey’s homily. After a few tries, she gives up, and I conclude with a smirk on my lips, there is no truer fulfillment in a man’s life than skunking a whore. We leave to compare notes. It seems Dyer’s broad tries the same bullshit with him, but he just says no thank you ma’am.

“You said, ‘no thank you ma’am?’ Are you shitting me?”

“Nope, that’s what I said, no thank you ma’am,” he replies with such naiveté it makes me wonder if he has been poking cows out on the range way too long.

Our soiree to Hotel Street is finished; Top Letoto is right, stay away from Hotel Street. We eat a hamburger and catch the bus back to Schofield because we have to sign in before 2400.

I learn another lesson in the Army: those who enter the stockade eventually come out of the stockade. Green returns to the platoon after 30 days. Our eyes meet but we never say a word to each other. I guess he does not hold my testimony against me after all, but I am always leery of him.

I am sitting in the theater watching a movie one night when a notice flashes across the bottom of the screen, “All personnel from A Company, 1st Battalion 27th

Infantry are to report back to your barracks immediately.” This is it; we are going to Vietnam, who knows maybe even China. I am so keyed up I jog back to the company area expecting the company to be loading up the trucks for a ride to Hickam to board our plane to South Vietnam. My excitement overtakes me as I mount the steps to the quad. When I walk into the barracks expecting chaos, Sergeant LaVilla hands me an M14 and tells me to clean the butt plate. “The butt plate, that’s it?”

“Yeah, clean only the butt plate,” he instructs. With bore brushes, we scour the butt plates of all the company’s M14s, every goddamn one of them. At 0200, I crawl into my bunk only to get up at 0500 and resume cleaning butt plates. I cannot believe it. “Hey, you know in the old days,” laments LaVilla, “the old man would restrict us to the barracks for GP.”

“What’s GP?”

“General Purposes,” he replies confidently that he endured dumb shit like this as a macho trooper.

“That’s chickenshit,” I complain.

“Sure, but that is how the Army works, Lupton,” he vainly explains to me.

The married NCOs have to move into the barracks too. The place is jammed packed with double bunks and new men keep arriving until the company is at full strength, over 200 men.

The mess hall puts on a decent Christmas dinner even though everybody feels melancholy. We spend most of our time getting our equipment ready, filling and stacking our packing crates in the middle of the quad for pickup. On New Years Eve, I go to bed early only to wake suddenly at midnight when somebody sets off an artillery simulator on the lanai.

I feel we are ready to go to Vietnam.