

Soldier

An homage to Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl" (The New Yorker, June 1978).



Recruits with India Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, repeat back commands during a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program training session. (U.S. Marine Corps/Tyler Hlavac)

Wake up at oh-my-god-o'clock on Monday and run six miles; run another six miles at the same time Tuesday through Friday; to get night vision, keep one eye closed in a well-lit area and then open it in darkness; always field strip a MRE (meal, ready-to-eat), trade the veggie omelet but never the ChiliMac; when buying your dress blues, be sure to buy two sets in two different sizes, that way you can look sharp even if you lose ten pounds after coming back from deployment; Is it true that you desecrated corpses?; always have two designated marksmen for over-watch, especially when you eat; on Sundays let your subordinates rest, don't wake them up early to watch beheading

videos; don't urinate on the enemy corpses; you mustn't video record firefights, not even for your family; don't feed the pack of wild dogs – they will follow you; *but I never pissed on dead bodies and wouldn't think to*; this is how you perform an emergency tracheotomy; this is how you cut the trachea through the second and fourth ring then quickly shove the tube through it; this is how you call for a MEDEVAC and prevent yourself from pissing on a dead body like you're so hell-bent on doing; this is how you disassemble your weapon; this is how you clean your weapon; this is how you lube your weapon, but not so much that it attracts sand and grit; this is how you construct a Burn-Out Latrine – far from where we eat and sleep, because human waste harbors diseases; when you are conducting your daily burn out, make sure to use plenty of diesel fuel to incinerate the fecal matter; this is how you clear a room; this is how you clear a whole house; this is how you clear a village; this is how to interrogate a subordinate; this is how to interrogate a detainee; this is how to interrogate a terrorist; this is how you ask for tea in Arabic; this is how you ask for tea in Dari and Pashtu; this is how to behave in the presence of tribal elders or sheikhs who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the corpse-urinator you were warned against becoming; be sure to do hygiene every day, even if it is with baby-wipes; have a plan to kill everyone in the room – you're a warrior, you know; don't drive over or step on fresh asphalt – you might trigger a buried IED; don't throw stones at IEDs, because it might not be an IED at all; this is how to call for fire; this is how to win hearts and minds; this is how to conduct an ambush; this is how to conduct a raid; this is how to kill a child before it even becomes a terrorist; this is how to conduct peacekeeping missions; this is how to stage a scene, and plant evidence and get away with it; this is how to snatch and grab; this is how to torture a terrorist; this is how you torture yourself; this is how to water-board someone, and if this doesn't work there are other ways to make them say what you want, and if that doesn't work you haven't

improvised enough; always accomplish the mission; *but what if I can't accomplish the mission*; you mean to say after all this indoctrination, you are really going to be the kind of soldier who let their country down?