

Priorities

By

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INT. COMMAND BUNKER - DAY

VARIOUS SOLDIERS, some carrying clipboards move busily about the command bunker checking in on desks and electronic devices, making notes, discussing findings with colleagues, entering and exiting the scene at random. A young female ORDERLY strides confidently up to the COLONEL JESSUP seated at a desk in the center of the chaos salutes and presents a clipboard to the reading officer.

ORDERLY

Sir! These requisitions require your signature.

Colonel Jessup lays down the promotion list that he's been reading and takes the clipboard, prepares to sign, then pauses...

COLONEL JESSUP

Wait a second, are we really out of those goddamned 84 millimeter anti-armor rockets again?

ORDERLY

Captain Wilkes says we are sir. He said they've been seeing a lot of armor activity in his sector lately and that his men have needed to use them.

Colonel Jessup draws a line through the requested rockets then signs the requisition, slapping the pen down emphatically when he finishes and hands the clipboard back to the orderly.

COLONEL JESSUP

You tell that idiot Wilkes to make his men make the rockets they have left last. Those goddamned things cost nearly eighty thousand dollars a pop and every time I order them General Whitaker reams me a new ass because of the expense!

ORDERLY

Absolutely sir! I will make Captain Wilkes aware of your concern about the expense sir!

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COLONEL JESSUP
(ordering)

Dismissed!

The orderly salutes smartly and then exits the scene. Jessup leans back, lifts a large glass and takes a deep drink from the straw. The camera zooms in on the condensation on the outside of Jessup's glass.

FADES:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The camera begins zoomed tightly into the beads of sweat on a LINE TROOP's forehead (mimicking the condensation on Jessup's glass). The camera pulls slowly back to reveal the battered and dirty face of a soldier who's been obviously stationed on the front lines for quite some time. His uniform is tattered and dirty; covered here and there with burned holes and spots of blood. He raises binoculars to his eyes and surveys the battlefield.

LINE TROOP

Fuck! Armor! They're gonna be on us
in seconds! Edwards, get on the
horn and get us some artillery down
on registration point Quebec Niner!
Break out the fucking AT rockets
boys!

SECOND TROOP

(off screen)

No rockets left! We're out!

LINE TROOP

Fuck! What are we supposed to hold
them off with, rocks? Edwards! ETA
on that artillery?

EDWARDS

(holding radio microphone)

Two mikes!

LINE TROOP

(to distant rumbling of tanks
on the move)

Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck!

Line Troop leans forward into the sandbags of his fighting position, shoulders his weapon and begins firing in the direction where he had located the approaching armor, mumbling curse words under his breath as he does. He is joined at the wall by Edwards and Second Troop. Dirt begins kicking up from bullet impacts all around them as they fire. Eventually Edwards breaks and runs. He's gunned down, shot in the back as he does. Then there's a large explosion. The camera falls over on its side and is obscured for a time by smoke and flying debris. As the smoke clears, the camera is zoomed in on Line Troop's face. He's lying on the ground his eyes opened but vacant - obviously dead. The sweat on his forehead has been replaced by rivulets of blood. A booted foot lands between the camera and Line Troop's face.

FADE:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Colonel Jessup is meeting with his command officers (CAPTAIN WILKES, CAPTAIN BRADLEY, CAPTAIN WARNER and CAPTAIN MARCUS). The officers are seated around a table. Jessup stands before a map, pointer stick in hand. On the map are clearly drawn battle lines. Huge areas on it are crosshatched in red, showing the loss of territory to the enemy. Jessup slaps his pointer stick angrily on a particularly large red hashed area on the map.

COLONEL JESSUP

Wilkes! Do you care to tell me how your company managed to lose ground across 60% of your sector? What the fuck are you doing out there taking a vacation?

CAPTAIN WILKES

Sir, the enemy threw the 13th Armored Brigade against us. They have been testing our defenses for over a week. We requisitioned anti-armor rockets and you denied the request. When the enemy finally did come in force, we had nothing to stop them with. My company now is at 38% strength and just about combat ineffective. Sir!

COLONEL JESSUP

I'm tired of your excuses Wilkes. Have your men fall back to rally point Tango-Three for re-supply, reinforcement and retraining. Bradley, your company will have to move up and replace Echo Company on the line.

CAPTAIN BRADLEY

Sir, my men are in the middle of sensitivity training and won't finish until 1800 on Thursday, three days from now!

COLONEL JESSUP

Right! I forgot that. Well that training is mandated by HQ and we all know how essential it is! So here's what we do. Marcus, you spread Alpha south into Echo's sector. Cover the whole way down to redoubt 32. Warner, you spread

(MORE)

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COLONEL JESSUP (cont'd)
Charlie Company north to cover up
to redoubt 47 and Wilkes, what's
left of your unit will have stay to
cover from redoubt 32 to 47 until
Bravo Company is out of training.
Then Bravo can take over the
original lines that Echo Company
held and Alpha and Charlie can fall
back to their original sectors. Got
it?

CAPTAIN WARNER
Yessir! However, if we're to move
into Echo's sector, we're going to
need those AT rockets if we're
supposed to do anything stop the 13
Armored, sir.

COLONEL JESSUP
(sighs in disgust)
Goddamn it! Get the requisition on
my desk and I'll sign the damned
thing. You'll have your fucking
rockets by next week. You people
are killing me here. General
Whitaker is going to have a living,
breathing cow! Now get the hell out
of my face and make it happen
people! I've got a promotion board
to study for,

Everyone rises and files out of the room.

INT. COMMAND BUNKER/EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY INTERCUT:

GENERAL WHITAKER is on the phone with Colonel Jessup. Jessup is at his desk in the Command Bunker while Whitaker is in a golf cart, dressed to play golf. MR. KWAN waits impatiently in the passenger side of the cart while Whitaker talks on the phone.

COLONEL JESSUP

Yes General, I am well aware of how expensive those 84 millimeter rockets are, but if the enemy sends tanks the men need something to stop them with.

GENERAL WHITAKER

Jessup, I'm sure you're aware how unpopular this war is with the voters. Show after show on the evening news is preaching about the loss of life and the billions of dollars we're spending to fight the Asian Confederation. They all suggest that money would be far better spent funding the Free Food for Immigrants Program or as subsidies for the solar car manufacturers that the unions keep howling about. This sort of shit makes the president very nervous...
...The same president that is up for reelection next fall. When he gets nervous the Secretary gets nervous and well Jessup shit rolls down hill as I'm sure you are aware.

COLONEL JESSUP

Yes sir, I understand your concerns!

GENERAL WHITAKER

Do you Jessup? I don't think you do! Now let's put the icing on this shit-cake of yours, I have a GNN reporter with a video of one of your troops calling a dead A-CON soldier a "gook"! The sons-a-bitches are replaying it in a loop every 15 minutes on the air! So at 4 AM in the goddamned morning I have Secretary Mathis on the phone with her knickers all in a

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GENERAL WHITAKER (cont'd)
clot screaming at me about voters
of Asian descent! You know what
that means Jessup?

COLONEL JESSUP
No sir, what does that mean?

GENERAL WHITAKER
Well Jessup, that means that I
started off promising additional
sensitivity training for your men.
The Secretary wasn't buying it. She
said that wasn't enough. So now, in
addition to extra sensitivity
training, every platoon has to be
assigned a Sensitivity Officer that
reports through a separate chain of
command directly to the Secretary
and eventually to the Congressional
Committee. Their job is to report
every micro-aggression they
encounter and our budget will be
based on how well we've eliminated
all instances of insensitive
behavior from within the ranks! It
also doesn't help that you've
managed to lose half of Idaho to
the goddamned A-Cons! Now go back
to those retarded trigger pullers
of yours and get those fucking
morons under fucking control and
moving in the right direction. Your
promotion depends on it! Do I make
myself clear Colonel?

COLONEL JESSUP
Crystal sir!

Whitaker fitfully hangs up the phone and tosses it into the
cup-holder of the golf cart before turning to speak to the
MR. KWAN in the passenger side of the cart.

GENERAL WHITAKER
Sorry for the delay Mr. Kwan, shall
we head out to the tee?

MR. KWAN
It is not wise to keep your future
employer waiting General, but I
forgive you this once as long as we
can count on your support getting
the contract for the M19 Armored

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MR. KWAN (cont'd)
Fighting Vehicle through the
appropriations committee just like
you helped us win the contract to
supply the M-31A3 84 millimeter
Anti-armor Rocket system.

GENERAL WHITAKER
You know that Global Tech
Industries can count on me Mr.
Kwan! I'm your man!