

I stepped off the bus into three fucking feet of snow. I was the only one on the bus, and the driver had laughed viciously when he slammed the door to the bus and roared off in a cloud of diesel fumes.

The building I was looking at was old, white, and covered with snow. It looked vaguely familiar, and there was a path carved through the snow, which went from 3 feet where I was standing, to over my head.

Holy Christ, what did I get myself into?

BOOM BOOM BOOM! Three rapid-fire explosions that shake the trees and cause flakes of snow to drift down from their nearly bare branches. I look around, but no sign where it came from. Sighing, I grabbed my duffle out of the snow and headed through the carved snow channel to the building. While I was walking there was another set of explosions. That would explain why all the snow was on the ground but the branches of the trees were bare.

Inside the building wasn't much warmer, but at least Class-A's were warm. I had on my nice shiny E-2 rank, awarded for excellence during training at AIT, and was all giddy and proud of myself.

It took awhile of wandering around, but I found a woman, who offered to call my unit and have them send someone down to get me. She tells them I'll be in the cantina in the building, and then shows me where it is. She comments on my wedding ring, tells me that post housing is at a premium, and the nearest town is a little over 4 miles from post.

Great, I'm in Sleepy Fucking Hollow. No biggie, I joined up to avoid a nightly ass pounding in jail. Not to say I wasn't going to join anyway, it's just I ended up in the custody of the US Army a bit earlier than planned.

So I'm sitting there eating nacho's and drinking soda when the guy shows up. He looks shit-ass miserable, wearing Mickey-Mouse boots, a fucking parka, and cold weather trousers.

"You Monkey?" he asks, moving over to the radiator and standing over it.

"Yes. You from the unit?"

"Yup. Finish your nacho's." he tells me, then goes over and orders a beer. He sits down across from me, cracks open the beer, takes a long pull off of it and then belches.

"Who'd you piss off to end up here?" he asks me.

"Nobody. I was actually assigned here after AIT. Everyone else going to Germany had orders for 21st Replacement, I had orders for here." I told him. "Why? What's so bad except the snow?"

"Counting you, and me, the unit total now sits at 18 people." he grunts. "You had to piss off someone."

"Eighteen? As in ten plus 8?" The thought boggles my mind.

"Yeah. The other two hundred are supposed to be along in the next few months. You think that's fucked up, wait till you see our barracks." He finishes off the beer, snags a couple of my last nachos, then stands up and buttons his parka.

"Let's go, kid." I catch his rank when he grabs his cold weather cap off the table. E-4, but he looks about nine thousand years old. I silently follow him outside and into a Chevy Blazer, which he fires up, and we pull out in the streets.

"It gets cold her about August, there's usually snow on the ground by late September, and it stays till about March or April, from what I've heard from guys who have been here." he tells me. "Most of the buildings were built by the Nazi's in World War II, for example, our barracks were built in the 1930's and refurbished last month. Here, let's grab your TA-50 so you have your cold weather gear, I don't want you to freeze to death in the middle of the night." I nod, follow him in, and we roust a German guy reading a porn mag to give me my equipment. He doesn't make me sign anything, doesn't even have a list, he just hands me all this shit, and waves us out the door.

"Don't they keep accountability?" I ask, throwing the second duffle bag full of gear into the back of the CUC-V.

"Why? Nobody gives a shit about us or this place. DoD couldn't give a shit less what we do out here. You can literally

murder someone out here, and maybe, just maybe, Stuttgart will give a shit enough to send someone to investigate if it's an officer. If it's winter, it's chalked up to cabin fever. Hell, last week the engineer company lost two guys, nobody knows where they went, but since no vehicles are missing and they left their cold weather gear behind, we figure they are dead. We'll probably find them in the summer."

Oh Lord Jesus, where did I end up? We've been driving for a good 25 minutes, left post, and are on the range roads. We pass a corner that warns that in the last year 22 troops have been killed by taking the corner too fast. Given the way the CUC-V leans when we take the corner, it doesn't surprise me.

Finally, we pull up to a three story white building. It's starting to get dark. Only a handful of lights are on. We go inside, and I notice that it's warm in there. The first time since I left Frankfurt.

"Hey, Carter, this is Private Monkey, he needs a room and some linen." The guy says, and the Specialist behind the desk opens a box on the wall, pulls out a key, while the PFC opens a closet and grabs a sheet set, two wool blankets, and a pillow. They hand it all to me, then go back to watching some fucking show on the little TV.

My guide walks me upstairs, and down to the second half of the building, through the double doors. He stops to look around and shivers.

"There is only you in the whole section. Some of us sleep in the day room for comfort." he tells me, pointing at my door.

"Why?" I ask, unlocking it and pushing it open. It smells of paint and sawdust, and something else. Something that gives me goose bumps.

"You'll see." He digs in his parka and pulls out a bottle of tequila and hands it to me. "Stay warm, kid. When you wake up, go ahead and come down to the day room. I think we got an officer today, but right now, we don't have formation or anything like that."

I nod dumbly, completely confused. This is the Army? This is Regular Army? THIS is Active Duty? What. The. Fuck?

The door slams, and suddenly it feels like the room has gone shadowed despite the fact that light was on.

OK, shower/bathroom to my left, lockers to my right. Short "hallway" exactly as long as the embedded wall lockers were long. Fairly large room, with a radiator, refrigerator, two desks, two dressers, and 2 sets of bunk beds. I walked over, turned on the radiator, and listened to the clanking and thumping and other noises that radiators made.

Looking out the window, I can see fencing with rolls of razor wire on top and guard towers. Empty. Nothing in the huge lot, no movement in the towers. Turning away from the window, I draw the curtains to help the room warm, and begin putting my stuff away.

Everyone else in my AIT was sent to places like Umatilla, Black Briar Creek, Red Stone Arsenal, Johnston Atoll. I was sent to a fucking place that doesn't even have a goddamn name that wasn't even up to full strength. I began to suspect that the (ReA) after the unit name meant "Reactivated" since we may or may not have an officer.

I jerked off in the shower thinking of my wife, and went to bed. It was cold, but I was used to that from Juvie.

I woke up shivering, cold as shit under my blankets. There was someone in my room, I could feel their presence. I didn't move, didn't open my eyes, trying to focus on the person. I'd learned the trick in Juvie. I kept my breathing the same, but the air was ice cold and made me cough and sit up.

My room was pitch black, and freezing cold. I swung off the top bunk, and when my feet hit the floor, the floor actually had fucking ICE on it. What the fuck? I stumbled over, still positive someone was in the room with me, and fumbled for the light switch. I wasn't anyone's punk, if there was someone in her with a hard dick in their hand, I was going to bust open their skull.

My room was empty, but there was frost above where my head had been, and there was frost on the floor. I could still feel someone watching me, and whoever it was fucking hated me. Cold, and completely un-nerved, I gathered up my blankets

and grabbed my key, and left my room.

The hallway was dark and cold, and I was in my socks and woolen long johns. My breath plumed out in front of me in the light of the few lights that were on, and I walked the length of the hallway, pushing through the double doors, and eventually went down the stairs. Not all the way down, there was another landing below, but a hand painted sign said: "DAY ROOM/CQ AREA" on the second floor landing.

I pushed through the door, and found myself in the same room I'd originally entered the building through. The Specialist was leaned back in a chair, dozing, and the PFC was reading a book. I could hear snoring from another room, and dragging my blanket, I went in there.

There was 15 people in the room, all of them huddled up in chairs, their blankets wrapped around them. I dropped my shit in an empty chair, and went back into the CQ area.

"Hey, why's it so cold?" I asked the PFC. He looked up and then looked around.

"The furnace went out."

"Why the fuck did the furnace go out?"

"Nobody's loaded coal in it since earlier today."

"Why the fuck not?" I asked. He smiled, like he knew a secret. He reached up and grabbed a key, and came up to the desk. Taking a piece of paper, he sketched what I figured was a map to building.

"OK, we're right here. Go down that hall, through the double doors, go through the first door on your left, go down the stairs and exit the stairwell. There will be two doors on your left, mailboxes and a single door on your right. Go through the first door on your left, use that key, go all the way to the back of that room, and you'll find the furnace and a mound of coal with a shovel in it. Open the furnace, load up the coal, and use the can of gasoline to wet down the coal and light it up. Then come back." He pointed everything out on my map, and I suddenly realized he was talking a coal furnace. What the fuck? I'm familiar with them, the house my father owned on the West Coast had a coal furnace.

I nodded, he handed me a key and a flashlight, then went back to his book. Grumbling, I went back upstairs to my room, dressed, grabbed gloves, and went back down to the CQ area. I didn't say anything, but I was positive that there was still someone in my room. The hair on the back of my neck wouldn't stay down.

So, I followed his directions to the bottom floor. I noticed one thing he'd forgotten to tell me. There was a door that would lead outside, but it was locked and chained shut, and the chain was fairly new.

Curious, I unlocked the door, and swung it open.

HOLY SHIT!

A bare dirt floor and an unfinished ceiling stretched out into the darkness. I could smell interesting smells, and could hear a heavy, labored breathing noise in the darkness. The goose bumps and heebie jeebies that had faded while I'd walked through the building came back in force.

I was glad I was fully dressed.

I stepped into the room, onto the dirt floor, and walked into the darkness. I passed the source of the heavy breathing, and turned to look for it. An old electric water heater sat there, massive and ominous in the puddle of illumination from the flashlight. I could see where pipe fittings were leaking steam, making the wheezing, heavy sound of breathing. The air wasn't warm or moist, it was still cold, and I could see the glitter of frost on the walls around the loose pipe joints.

I wasn't in the Army. There was no way this could be the 80's Army. Somehow, I'd ended up in the 1950's.

I heard a skittering behind me, and whirled around, flashlight held close, and a pair of beady eyes glared at me from the

darkness. I felt the cold shiver run down my back, and realized that I didn't belong down here. That something down here didn't like us. Didn't want us in the building. It or they wanted us gone, wanted us to leave. Or wanted us to die.

The eyes suddenly moved forward, revealing itself to be a huge rat, easily as long as my forearm with its long tail. It rushed me, mouth open and eyes bright.

"FUCK YOU!" I yelled, took a step forward, and kicked that big ugly motherfucker back into the darkness. I made a crunching sound and aborted shriek. I backed up, slowly, not fully in possession of my faculties, not even aware I was backing away from the door I so wanted to escape out of.

When my back hit the far wall, and the shovel against the wall fell on the dirt, I screamed. I'd discovered in Basic Training and AIT that my voice carried. This time, however, a yell that could have been heard across an FTX firefight just fell flat, without even an echo.

I was nearly bald, but my hair was standing straight up. I could hear crunching sounds out in the darkness, and my fertile imagination conjured up ghouls pushing up from the dirt, gnawing on bones of past interlopers.

Spinning around, I saw an honest to god kerosene lamp. My hands shaking, I clipped the flashlight to my chest pocket and fumbled through lighting the lantern. I had my back to that cavernous room, and I was nearly sobbing with the knowledge that things were closing in on me. Things that wanted sweet, warm, flesh to gnaw.

The lantern provided a dim bubble of warm light, and I could see the glint of metal off to my right. Sure as shit, it was a furnace. That did nothing to ease my feelings though. The furnace was BIG, it was BLACK, and an old Nazi insignia was visible above the furnace door. The sight of it made my blood run cold. My imagination supplied screams coming from the furnace as I stared at it.

It wasn't a furnace, it was huge, black beast, lying dormant, that demanded living sacrifices to be fed into its maw.

"Fuck that. It's a goddamn furnace, this is a fucking basement, and this place is a shit hole." I growled up, feeling anger well up to replace my fear. I was goddamn soldier, a killer Uncle Sam had ordered forged in order to kill motherfuckers. I wasn't going to be afraid of a fucking furnace, an ugly dead rat, and some goddamn darkness.

I pulled open the door to the furnace, located the coal pile, and began shoveling coal into the furnace, just like that fuckhead PFC who'd sent me down here for a laugh at my expense, had told me to do.

I poured gasoline on the coal, and lit it up, then located the feed chute and loaded it. It came as no surprise that the feed-chute was full of cobwebs. These guys had been just shoveling coal onto the grate and lighting it up.

As a final "fuck you" I took the shovel and knocked the Nazi emblem off the fucking furnace.

Fuck those dead motherfuckers.

Holding the lantern, I walked the length of the basement, ignoring the little noises. That breathing? The hot water heater. That gnawing noise? Mr. Ugly Rats relatives feasting on his corpse. Those footsteps behind me? Echoes.

Wait.

What?

I stopped suddenly, and heard the footsteps continue on for another step or two.

I will not look behind me. I will not run. Monsters are not real. I will not run. I will not look behind me. Monsters are no FUCK IT! RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

I hit the door, kicked it open like it was a movie, and slammed out into the hallway. I pushed the door shut and held it, shaking and sweating.

As I was locking it, I heard a tapping noise, but refused to open it.

"Cocksuckers. Hope they like it in there." I growled. I blew out the lantern and set it by the door, then retraced my steps back to the CQ area. I glanced in, but counted fifteen people, still sleeping.

The Specialist was there, still dozing, but the PFC was missing. Good, fucker won't freeze to death, but let him stay down there till morning, the fucking prick.

"Dude, you're back!" I heard from behind me. I jumped, and spun around. The bathroom door was closing, and the PFC stood in front of me.

"Damn, you were gone almost an hour. I was starting to think we'd have to mount a rescue mission for you. Did you go in?"

"Yeah. I reloaded the coal, the radiators should start heating up any time." It was starting to dawn on me. Nobody had been playing jokes, nobody had been fucking with me.

"Nice work, Private. In the last two months, nobody has managed to do it, and most of us won't even go in there." the PFC told me. I nodded dumbly.

"So it wasn't my imagination?" I asked.

"No." he told me, then leaned in close. "These barracks, fuck, this whole post, is haunted."

I felt a chill run up my back.

Welcome to Germany, PV2 Monkey. You ain't seen nothing yet.

"GET THE FUCK UP! ALL OF YOU! ON YOUR FUCKING FEET! WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING STILL SLEEPING? WHY AREN'T YOU IN YOUR ROOMS!"

The screaming woke me up. My neck hurt from sleeping in the chair, and I was still jet-lagged. I'd been dreaming of being trapped in a large dark space with something breathing heavily behind me no matter which way I turned. I was glad I was woken, but the big mouthed fucker yelling was going to get a beat-down.

While all of that was shambling through my exhausted mind, I'd already leapt to my feet and to attention. My bleary vision settled on a man in BDU's, with the gold bar of an LT on his lapel. He was pissed, kicking chairs and rousing everyone.

I'd fallen asleep in my uniform, still coated in coal dust, and my boots dusty from the dirt floor and gritty from the coal dust. My eyes were gritty and I was bone deep tired.

"THIS IS THE GODDAMN US ARMY, NOT A FUCKING DAY CARE! NOW GET UP!" He managed to yell and bully us into a formation four wide and four deep. Glaring, he stood in front of us at parade rest.

"You guys are the sorriest looking fuckers I've ever seen. Whose the ranking NCO?" we all looked around.

"I am, sir." A guy with grey hair said, stepping forward. Oh God, all he had on his collar was Corporal. Everyone around me was specialists, PFC's, and me.

"Whose the officer in charge of this cluster fuck of morons?" he asked.

"You are, sir." the corporal said. I repressed a grin at his expression.

"You, Private Monkey, go wake everyone else up. I want a formation outside in twenty minutes." I noticed his uniform was pressed and starched, and his boots reflected his uniform.

"Sir, this is everyone else." The corporal said, grabbing my arm before I could take a step. "This is the entire unit. We sleep in here for warmth." The LT looked like he was about to explode. He turned and stomped off, and we all looked at each other.

Everyone introduced themselves to me. Out of everyone there, I was the only person who hadn't been sent here from another unit, who hadn't been busted at least once, and hadn't served at least 2 years in the military. The only explanation we could figure out for me being sent there was the fact I had been transported to Basic Training in handcuffs.

We all separated and returned to our rooms to get changed and dressed. I took a shower, the water was hot and warm, and the soap washed away the lingering feelings from the night before.

I took about my iron and ironed my uniform on the desk, putting a damp towel between the desk top and my uniform, so that it came out looking good. A quick bit of work, and my extra pair of boots were shined and ready. I shaved quickly, and headed back down to the dayroom.

Everyone was standing there in uniform, and the LT looked pissed. He was turning away from the bank of about a dozen phones on the CQ barrier.

"Why do those clocks have different times?" He sneered.

"The first is local time, the second is Zulu, the third is synched with the Pentagon, and the last is synched with NORAD, sir." A woman answered. She was E-3, and had a leg brace on. I noticed her titties filled her BDU blouse.

"Who ordered that bullshit?" The LT snarled.

"Sir, that was in the orders packet that we opened upon arriving here." The female, Stokes, answered.

"WHAT OPERATIONS PACKET?!?" he screamed. Great, this ass-monkey thought screaming meant good leadership.

"Carter, grab the Op-Orders!" A guy, Mann, yelled. The CQ came into the room, holding a thick manila envelope.

"Why wasn't I handed this already?" The LT asked. I could tell this guy was going to be a problem.

"You didn't check in last night, LT, and had not asked for it this morning." Carter answered. The LT tore the envelope out of Carter's hand and walked out, pulling a ring of keys from his pocket.

"Shit, this guy's going to be a problem." Mann grumbled. He pulled a pack of Camels out of his pocket and lit one. I went and bought a soda. I was down to less than \$5 in my wallet, and I doubted that the vending machines would honor traveler's checks.

I came back to everyone trying to figure out what kind of asshole this LT was going to be. The door blew open, cold air rolling over all of us. Standing in the doorway was a guy wearing Mickey-Mouse boots, arctic firing mittens, a cold weather mask, a cold weather cap, a pair of cold weather trousers, and a parka with the full lined hood pulled over his head. He had a box, sealed with a pair of metal bands, in his hands. He set the box on the table, and pulled off his mask.

"Fifth Corps sent these here. This is 2/19th Special Weapons, right?" he asked.

"Whose fucking asking?" The PFC behind the desk snarled.

The guy laughed. "Good answer. Good OPSEC. Wanna sign for these?"

"Mason, go find the LT!" The PFC yelled. A guy with no rank on his collar, but the darker squares of sew-on rank on his bare collar showing he had once been higher ranking, nodded and went into the stairwell.

"Damn, you guys are out in the middle of fucking nowhere." the guy bitched. He bummed a smoke off of Mann. "The goddamn main post doesn't even know where the fuck you guys are, and all the maps say is 'restricted area' for this area. Goddamn Cold War bullshit." (I'd become very familiar with that phrase over the years.)

"Why wasn't I notified you were on your way, soldier?" The LT yelled as he came out of the stairwell. The guy's face went from easy going bitching to hard as the goddamn ice that coated the windows.

"Well, why wasn't I notified, and you better answer, I'm an officer." (I've never forgotten that phrase)

The guy turned around and pulled back the hood of the parka. On his cap sat a single gold oak leaf.

"So am I. And I don't answer to you, Lieutenant." He looked positively pissed, and the LT went white. "Sign for this shit so I can get off this goddamn rock and back to some semblance of civilization." The LT stammered through apologies and fawningly signed the clipboard. The Major kicked the box across the floor, and left through the two sets of double doors.

It was then that the arrangement made sense. 2 sets of double doors acted as an airlock, keeping out the worst of the cold.

It was also snowing outside.

"Don't just stand there! Someone carry this down to my office!" the LT screamed at us. I shrugged, grabbed the box, and hefted it. It was pretty heavy, but I've always been stronger than my size made someone believe.

I followed the LT downstairs, and for some unknown reason I was suddenly afraid that the room beyond the stairwell door would be bare dirt. I breathed a sigh of relief when light bulb lit tile and cinderblock came into view. There was one door on my left, mailboxes on my right, a counter with a gap in it, and a chained shut door that the window was stark white. So were the full blown windows to the right. That meant that the snow was over the doorway. Holy fuck.

We went past a door behind the mailboxes, and to three doors. One recently painted "ISG" the other painted "XO" and the one the LT led me through was "CO". Inside the lights were on, and the desk was piled with what I assumed was the contents of the manila envelope.

"Set it there, private, then go stand at parade rest over there in case I need you." he said, going over and sitting behind the desk.

I let my mind drift as I stood there while he first popped the banding off and then began going through the stacks of papers. I saw him pull out maps, typewritten orders, and more packets. He was grunting at various things, but I tuned him out. My legs started to hurt, and my knees were aching.

The LT left and came back with a sandwich. Fucker didn't offer me shit, I just stood there, until finally he looked up. "Go get everyone else, tell them to form up out front of the building."

Out front? In the snow? Was he fucking high?

I snapped to attention, pulled a left face, and got the fuck out of there.

Everyone was sitting in the day room smoking cigarettes and drinking soda. Stokes had opened up her leg brace and was rubbing her knee and sighing.

"LT Greer wants us to form up outside." I said.

"Oh you have to be fucking kidding!" Another private, Cobb, snarled. I turned around and looked outside. It was bare white and you couldn't even see the steps off of the porch.

"That's what he said." I answered. "He said to form up in the lot across the street."

Grumbling, we went to our rooms and put on our cold weather gear. When I returned to the CQ area, everyone else but Stokes was already there. Private Cobb had a coil of 550 cord in his hands.

"All right, we'll all take a cut of that one," he said, pointing at the other coil of 550 cord, "Tie it to your parka belt, then loop it over this one. I checked, you can't see farther than a foot or two out there. Stokes will hold the barracks end, I'll be on the far end. As soon as the LT comes out there, we should be able to go in."

I just nodded dumbly. These guys and girls all knew better than me. I followed instructions, and was the fifth out the door.

Cobb hadn't been kidding. I damn near fell down the steps, and couldn't see my hand if I stretched it out in front of my face. It was only 1600, and it was nearly dark, with the wind howling around us.

I must have died on the bus and now I'm in Hell.

I felt the person behind me grab onto my back, and I reached back and grabbed his hand. We'd hold four people to a line, and hopefully get four lines. I bumped into the guy in front of me, and I stepped up next to him, my shoulder against his. Closer than any other formation I'd ever been in.

"TEN MINUTES!" the guy next me yelled.

"OK!" I yelled back, then turned to my right. "TEN MINUTES!"

"Roger!" the other guy yelled back. He was still holding my hand tightly. I reached out and grabbed the guy on my left's hand, and he squeezed.

It was freezing fucking cold, the wind was prying through the holes in the cold weather mask, and my ears and the tip of my nose were starting to hurt.

"FIVE MINUTES!" was yelled to me, and I yelled it down the line.

Where the fuck was LT? What kind of mad-man was he to send us out in this shit? If weren't tied together, we'd be spread all over and lost in the white-out. Fuck, if we weren't holding hands, we'd be all alone in the whiteness.

"FUCK THIS! EVERYONE BACK IN!" the guy on my left yelled. I passed it up, and soon I felt the guy on my right pulling me forward. I stumbled on the steps, and we went inside. We were covered with snow, and we all had ice on cold weather masks.

"Where's the LT?" Cobb asked.

"RIGHT HERE! WHY AREN'T YOU FUCKERS IN FORMATION? ARE YOU AFRAID OF SOME SNOW?" came the screaming from the stairwell.

"Sir, look outside. For the love of God, that's a blizzard!" Said another guy. I couldn't see his name.

"Did your recruiter promise you that you only had to work in the summer? GET YOUR ASSES OUTSIDE, GODDAMMIT!" he yelled. "AND WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS ROPE SHIT?"

"Blizzard security measures, to make sure nobody gets lost." Cobb said.

"That's an old wives tale. You losers better be outside in five minutes, if I have to come out and get you, there will be hell to pay!" the LT screamed, throwing open the doors and pushing his way outside.

Cobb lit up a cigarette, and offered me one. I took it, even though I didn't smoke, and looked around.

"Tell me he didn't just go outside without a tether." Stokes said, shaking her head.

"Aren't we going to formation?" I asked, looking around. Everyone was taking off their cold weather gear and rolling it up so they could sit on the floor on it.

"Don't worry, Private Monkey."

After about a half hour, people began wandering off, talking and chatting. Stokes was holding hands with Cobb, and they walked down the hallway together. I walked over to Mann.

"What happens now, Mann?" I asked, pointing at the door. "Don't we try to rescue him?"

"In a November blizzard? At night? Look, Private Monkey, he went out there in a field jacket and winter BDU's, no protective gear." Mann told me.

"He's already dead, isn't he?" I asked.

"Yup." Mann said, moving around behind the desk. "You've got CQ tonight, tomorrow morning, we'll call Fifth Corps and let them know they lost an officer."

I stared at the doorway. I later found out that none of that snow stayed on the ground, the winds whipped it around and later dumped it further down the mountain. We were too high up for too much to stay.

We found the officer that summer.

Everyone was asleep in the day room. Mann had given up trying to get TV reception through the snow and was reading a porn mag. We were passing a bottle of whiskey back and forth and sipping off it now and then.

There would be an eerie moaning down the hallways and behind the stairwell doors. The front outer doors would shake now and then, and my imagination always painted the LT, his skin white and waxy, pawing at the door with frozen hands. It had been over six hours since he had left.

The fact he hadn't returned didn't seem to bother anyone, and I'd be goddamned if I was going to show that it bothered me.

I jumped at a loud howling noise echoing down the hallway.

"Relax, Monkey, it's just the wind." Mann said, closing the porn mag and setting it on the counter.

"Why didn't we call in a search and rescue?" I asked, pointing at the large bank of phones. There were over 12 of them, all them plugged in with big old-style sockets.

"Only one of those works, and that's to an office at Corps. Right now, nobody is there because we aren't operational." Mann told me. Another moan drifted down the hallway and I shivered. Down the hallway, the lights flickered, and some stayed off. Mann looked down the hallway:

"I hate this fucking place." he grumbled. "We'll call Fifth Corps tomorrow and let them know we're down an LT." he saw me shiver again as a full blown shriek roared down the stairwell. "Look, just follow Cobb's advice, Private Monkey, he used to be an arctic environment trainer before he got busted for selling crack."

I nodded.

Mann went back to reading his porn mag, and I began going through the drawers looking for something to read. I found the CQ logbook, and began reading it. There was only 2 months worth the entries there. Apparently Cobb had been here, by himself, with just the construction workers coming in during the day, for nearly a month. The log held records of screaming, and a few times of hearing sobbing coming from the third floor bathroom. About a week into it, Cobb had stopped walking a patrol of the upper floors.

The Eighteen of us had only arrived in the last month. I was the first new person besides the LT to arrive in a week. They'd logged when I'd arrived, that I'd received my initial TA-50 issue, and had received linen and been placed in my room.

Mann had logged that the LT had gone outside, without protective gear, into a blizzard despite being warned, and had not returned after one hour and was presumed dead. He wasn't the only one. Apparently an E-5 had gotten drunk and had gone outside, and had not returned. He too was presumed dead.

BANG BANG BANG

The noise came from upstairs, right above us. I jumped, and Mann jumped too. I didn't feel so bad.

"What the fuck was that?" I asked.

"We don't know." Mann admitted. "It happens now and then. Fuck, I hope you're not a chickenshit, Monkey." Mann unlocked a desk drawer and pulled out two M1911A1 Colt .45's in holsters.

"Put this on, son." Mann told me. Mann looked to be in his mid-30's, and I responded by nodding and copying the way he belted it on.

"Why are we..." Mann shushed me. I opened my mouth to ask why, and a loud shriek came boiling down the stairwell and out of the vents. Following it was a sound like a woman sobbing loudly. The hair on my neck stood up.

Mann handed me a flashlight, and I saw the day to the day room shut, and heard the click of the lock.

My whole body was covered by goose bumps, hell, I had goose bumps on my balls, and my asshole felt like it was puckered shut. The sobbing sound was overlaid with shrieks.

BANG BANG BANG

Mann was grinning, but it was sickly looking. His face was pale.

"It's one of those nights." He said. I pretended not to notice the tremor in his voice. I heard what sounded like doors opening and slamming from upstairs, and another shriek came ripping down the hallway.

Then, like it was a fucking movie or something, the lights shut out one after another, marching down the hallway toward us, and then the lights in the CQ area cut out.

I could hear footsteps above us, and suddenly the emergency lighting kicked in. Red light spilled out from above me, painting me and Mann like brutalized corpses.

"Thank God." Mann breathed. I looked at him. "Last time they didn't cut on. Want to see something trippy?" Our breath was visible in the red light. I nodded, and he turned on a flashlight and stood up.

"Check it out, fully charged, right?" I nodded. I'd seen him open the package of OD green batteries and put them in less than twenty minutes ago. He got up, walked around the counter, and opened the doors to the hallway. Cold wind slapped me in the face, somewhere the wind was getting into the building unhindered. Mann slid the flashlight down the hallway, the spinning beam looking surreal.

He let go of the doors and ran back to me.

"Watch the light." he told me. I nodded silently, my mouth dry. Above us, it sounded like someone was stomping around in boots. There was another shriek, this one through the floor vents.

The light stayed nice, bright, and white, and I was just about to ask why we were watching a flashlight beam when it happened.

The beam dimmed, then came back, then it flickered, then it came back. Suddenly it dropped to extremely dim, stayed that way for a moment, then went out. It flickered back on, and then slowly dimmed away.

"Trippy, ain't it?" Mann asked me. "That's why Cobb quit doing the rounds, and why we don't do them either. You never know when it's going to happen." His face was painted surreal by the red emergency lights.

We sat there in silence, looking at each other once in awhile when a shriek was particularly loud. When banging sounded from the door behind us, from the tiny office behind the CQ area, we both jumped.

"FUCK THIS!" I yelled, standing up. My nerves were stretched too tight. I wasn't going to just sit here. There was NO

FUCKING SUCH THINGS AS GHOSTS! This was someone fucking with us or an effect of the blizzard top outside.

I walked over to the door and snatched it open, telling myself that a window must have blown open. The musty air was pushed back by another shrieking breeze, and in the red light I saw that the only things in there were a cot, a sleeping bag, a desk, and a chair. No windows. No vents.

"Cobb spent the last week he was here alone in there with these pistols at night. You watch, he's a little twitchy nowadays." Mann said, standing up behind me.

I slammed the door and turned back to Mann. "Look, this is bullshit. There's someone in here fucking with us."

"Who? Who the fuck is out here to fuck with us? There's not another fucking unit out here within five fucking miles! They're on the other side of the fucking mountain! We're above the goddamn ski resort for Christ's Sake!" Mann looked pissed, but I didn't care. This was bullshit. This was a US Army barracks, for fucks sake, nobody believed in ghosts.

"Give me the fucking keys, I'm going upstairs." I told him. I grabbed another flashlight and put new batteries in it, then shoved the rest of the batteries from the package in my pocket.

"You realize, we won't be able to hear you scream above the "wind", he told me, placing a strange emphasis on wind. I nodded and took two steps before Mann grabbed my arm.

"Look, kid, I realize you're all bad ass hell from AIT and Basic, but listen to me." he sounded urgent, and I stopped.

"Look, there are some posts in the US that are haunted. I'm not making this up, kid. Madigan Army Hospital at Fort Lewis is haunted, the parade ground at Fort Riley Kansas is haunted, Darmstadt is haunted, the whole fucking post. Don't go fucking around in here." I could see the earnestness in his voice, and reminded myself that he had been in the Army for 8 years before getting busted to his current rank. He'd been a Drill Instructor at Red Stone, training ChemCorps troops, and got caught fucking one of the students.

I sat down, and then nearly jumped out of my seat at what sounded like cackling laughter coming from down the hallway.

"Just the wind, kid." Mann told me. He didn't sound convinced, but I decided it was better to just stay here with him.

The night passed, but only an hour or so was filled with strange noises. The lights came back on at 3AM, and the wind died down. I was glad I'd refilled the coal chute on the furnace before dinner.

We ate MRE's for breakfast, and Stokes and Cobb took the only vehicle we had to the chow hall on main post and got us some food. According to Mann, out in the snow, was a building that would be our mess hall. The cooks were all due sometimes.

We called in what happened to the LT, and the guy on the other side of the line didn't sound surprised, or even worried. Just asked if we had any other casualties to report.

I went to bed.

The chair was uncomfortable, but the sounds of the rest of the company were comforting.

I slept till around noon, and woke up to someone stamping their feet. Bleary eyed I got up and walked out the day room doors and into the CQ area. Carter was taking off his parka, and there were two other people there.

A Captain and a Sergeant First Class.

"Jesus Christ, we got fucking dicked." The SFC bitched. When he took off the parka, I read the name "Vickers" on his

chest. He had jump wings, air assault wings, and a pathfinder badge.

"Who are you?" the Captain asked me.

"Private Monkey, sir." I told him.

"Jesus, Vickers, he's just out of boot." the Captain grinned. When he pulled off his parka I saw his name Bishop. "Well, Private Monkey, go get everyone. We had the mess hall load us up with a couple of mermitees so you guys can have hot chow tonight and for breakfast."

"Yes, sir." I said. I went to the desk, and wrote down what rooms had people in them.

Eighteen, out of over eighty rooms. Jesus. I gathered everyone up, and there were questions about the new CO or XO, and the new NCO.

We gathered for dinner, and ate chatting about what a shit hole we were stuck in. The far end of the hallway suddenly went dark and the Captain looked at us.

"It's eighteen hundred hours." Cobb said. The Captain raised one eyebrow, but let it lie. About ten minutes later the lights flickered back on.

"Every night, sir." Cobb said. A shriek flowed down the stairwell, and Captain Bishop and SFC Vickers exchanged a glance.

"Let me guess, just the wind?" Captain Bishop asked. Cobb nodded, and the CPT and the SFC exchanged glances.

"The Army actually expects you to stay here?" Captain Bishop said. "This is outfuckingrageous! In twelve years in the military I've never seen any shit like that."

The boots crashed upstairs. Wind my ass, there were dead Nazi's up there, I knew it. SFC Vickers looked up.

"How bad does it get, soldiers?" SFC Vickers asked as another scream ripped down the hallway. I noticed Cobb was scootched up into the corner, he was eating without looking at his plate. I'd seen that in Juvie a lot.

"Pretty bad, Sergeant. We've pretty much abandoned our rooms, and at night, we all stay down here." Stokes told him. "You haven't heard the worst of it. Last week was really bad."

"How bad, soldier?" Captain Bishop asked. He sounded genuine, not faking.

"Voices, sir. We could hear voices." Stokes was staring at her plate.

"What kind of voices?" Captain Bishop asked softly. Upstairs, the stomping sounded again.

"German voices, sir. And laughing." Stokes said. I looked around, and saw everyone else nodding.

"We all stay in here, tomorrow, we'll search this fucking building." Vickers said. A sobbing scream echoed out of the vents.

"Try to get some sleep, troops. God, this is just fucked up." Captain Bishop said. He saw that Carter and Mann had the .45's again, and raised an eyebrow.

"Here, sir." Mann said, handing Captain Bishop the pistol.

"Shouldn't these be in the arms room?" Bishop asked.

"We don't have the keys. Cobb found these in one of the offices upstairs." Mann answered, and Cobb nodded. A slow, mournful wail floated down the vents and the hallway, heralding a cold breeze that turned the room freezing. Our breaths

plumed out.

The lights shut out, about eleven, and I woke to Sergeant Vickers and Captain Bishop swearing. I tossed in my chair and went back to sleep.

We had command, finally. Things would be OK.

(OK, I'm heading out. I'll probably add to this. The most fucked up week of my life)

-----EDIT-----

You know the best part of all of this?

Not one of you is gonna believe me. Not about what's already written, not about the rest. Hell, when I was stationed at other posts, NOBODY fucking believed the shit we saw during the months leading up to getting the unit operational.

The fucked up shit, all the shit we saw, and what the Army did about it, nobody's going to believe.

Tomorrow, I'll post what happened the next day, what we found out about the building, and what happened to Cobb.

Where was I? Oh yeah, the third night I'd spent there.

I woke up early, it was around 0430 and cold as shit in the room. I got up, stretched, and pulled on my boots and BDU top. Curious, I took my lighter and light it, then ran it around the edges of the windows.

Nothing, the flame didn't even flicker.

It didn't flicker near the vents either. There wasn't any air coming in the room through the vents or the windows. Dammit.

Wait. What?

Aw fuck, the furnace was out again. No. Hell no. I'm not going back in that room, ever. Not even with a gun. Not even with a rocket launcher. Not even with tank.

Coward bubbled up from my mind.

Against a man? No. Against a beast? No. Against a water heater that breathed and a furnace that was probably used to burn people alive? Fuck. Yes. It's not like I'm the only one scared, these guys and girls were all people who been in for years, and they abandoned their rooms because of this shit. No. I refuse to be afraid. There's no such thing as the fucking boogey man and no such thing as ghosts. It's the 19 fucking 80's, nobody is afraid of ghosts anymore.

I slipped out of the dayroom and into the CQ area. Carter was leaned back in the chair, fucking with the rabbit ears on top of the little television trying to get Sesame Street to come in clearer. Another guy that I'd seen around but not really interacted with was reading a book. I waved to both and headed for my room. The hallway lights were on, but it still felt... dim.

I unlocked my room, retrieved another uniform and some underwear, grabbed a towel, and took a shower and shaved. I felt better in a clean uniform. I gathered up my laundry bag and headed for the laundry room. I'd memorized the barracks map that was in log book when I had assistant CQ. I tossed in my dirty laundry into the washer and added some Tide, then headed out to the CQ area.

"Sleep good, Private Monkey?" Carter asked, stretching and yawning.

"Yup, sure did, Specialist." A moan drifted down the stairwell.

"Good morning, soldiers." It was Captain Bishop, and he sounded waaay to cheery for a man who had just spent the night in this hell hole. I could hear Sergeant Vickers waking people up in the day room. Bishop walked up to the CQ area, and rested

his elbow on the counter.

"We're going to search the barracks today. There is 20 of us, we'll break into teams of four. I want every locker, every room, ever closet, every bathroom checked. If the door doesn't open with the keys we have, kick the goddamn thing in." Captain Bishop said. I could hear Stokes lurching into the CQ area. Her knee didn't work worth a shit.

"What about the arms room and the NBC area? We don't have keys for the locks, and they're pretty serious locks." Carter asked, bringing a ring of keys out of the desk door. "We have 6 master keys, and four keys for each room, unless someone is staying in the room, then we only have 2 or 3 keys."

"We'll figure that out after lunch. We'll have breakfast, I'll assign teams, and we'll knock this out by lunch." Captain Bishop looked totally in control. "We'll go onto main post for lunch."

I nodded, and waited while everyone came out into the CQ Area. The whole unit, all 20 of us, was smaller than my AIT class. I was getting familiar with everyone. Cobb looked like he hadn't slept in a month, and I hoped someone had let Sergeant Vickers and Captain Cobb know that he had been stuck here, by himself, for a month.

I was assigned with Mann, a woman named Stevens, and a black guy named Smith. We drew lots, and ended up with the far side basement. The water heater/furnace room, the war-stock storage, the tool room, a mailroom, a set of offices.

I didn't say a word, but I could tell my companions weren't too thrilled about the area we drew. I swore I heard a chuckling noise float up through the vents. We walked silently down the hallway, past the double doors, and then into the stairwell. When we opened it, freezing air poured over us, and I took my gloves out of my thigh pocket and pulled them on.

"Shit, I should have thought of that." Stevens said. "Damn, Monkey here is the only one of us with a field jacket too."

"Shut up, let's knock this shit out and get out of here." Mann said, and we headed down the stairs. When we pushed the door open, the small hallway at the bottom of the stairs was pitch black. Christ, this was turning out run already.

"This room first." Mann said, unlocking and pushing open the doorway to that huge dirt floored room. I felt fingers tickle up my spine as I looked at the dark maw of the doorway. Was it just my imagination, or did our little hallway get darker somehow?

Fuck this. I'm a US Army soldier. There's no such thing as ghosts, there aren't any dead Nazi's stalking around these barracks.

I pushed past Mann, snapped on my flashlight and dropped it into the pocket of my field jacket. The others followed me.

"OK, spread out to double arm intervals." Mann said. I scootched my way between Mann and Stevens, that way I wouldn't be at the end, and wouldn't have to touch the walls. I was a clever monkey.

"I'm not near a wall." Smith said. Mann went by me, and I heard some movement. "Shit, where is the wall?" Mann asked. I suppressed an urge to run for it. I heard Stevens breathing heavily, and squeezed her hand. She squeezed back.

"OK, damn, this fucker is about 8 people wide." Mann said. I ran the numbers in my head. The room was damn near the size of the barracks, but the doorway opened up against the far side, and it was right down the stairs.

The dimensions didn't fit.

Mann came back and grabbed my hand, and I realized that it was because it probably went underneath the lawn. Duh.

We walked forward, shining our flashlights on the ground; Smith had his pointed at the other wall. We saw several rats slither into the holes in the concrete, and the water-heater looked more sad than menacing. It must have been around 20 years old, and wasn't holding up well.

We finally reached the far end.

"I'm gonna reload the furnace." I told them. Mann told me to go ahead, and the three of them talked while I sweated through

reloading the feeder-chute and starting a new fire.

"Ready? Let's get out of this fucking room, it's creepy." Mann said. We all nodded in the light from the furnace, and then we got the fuck out of that room. In the hallway, Mann kicked the lantern I'd left there god knows how long ago, and it bounced off the wall and shattered.

"Nice going, Mann." I said.

"What the fuck was that?" Smith asked.

"An oil lantern. I used it the other day when I refilled the fucking furnace." I replied.

"No fucking way, there's nobody that would go through that fucking room by themselves." Stevens said.

"At ease that shit. Let's hit the war-stocks room." The calling me out on reloading the furnace the other day stopped, and Mann unlocked the war-stocks room.

"What the fuck are war-stocks?" I asked.

"Well, our unit has to have up to date stocks to roll out in case the Soviets or the East Germans jump. SO it's stored in this room... What the fuck?" I looked over Mann's shoulder.

Nothing. The room just stretched out into the darkness.

"This is bullshit! Cobb and I loaded this shit off of five-tons! I goddamn KNOW this fucking room was full!" Mann swore, stepping into the room.

The wind grabbed the door out of Steven's hand and slammed it shut.

We could hear Mann yelling and trying to open the door, and we tugged on it hard. The handle was ice cold, and the wind was swirling around us, making an unearthly banshee wail the whole time.

The wind quit, and the door flew open. Mann fell on the floor and scabbled away from the empty gaping door. His eyes were huge, and it was probably the most frightened I'd ever seen someone. He kicked the door shut, and scabbled to his feet.

"What?" I asked.

"There's someone in there." Mann said.

"Bullshit." I said. I pulled the door open and stepped in. I expected it, I knew it was going to happen, but the wind shrieked and the door slammed shut behind me.

The floor was concrete, and I began walking the length. Fuck this, there's no such thing as ghosts, there's no such thing as monsters. I found the two huge double doors that opened onto the loading dock according to the map I'd memorized. The doors were chained shut from the inside.

There were a few wooden chunks, but that was it.

I ignored the breathing noise on the inside wall. That was the water heater. I ignored the low chuckling laughter, that was the furnace. I ignored the footsteps, that was echoes of my boots on the concrete.

As I started walking back toward the door, I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. A warm puff of cold air hit the back of my neck and bald head.

I must have passed under a vent or air leak.

One step. Two step.

phhhhhhhhh

It's just the air.

One step. Two step. Three...

phhhhhhh

RUN DUMBSHIT!

I hit the door with my shoulder, like I'd just plowed the Tumwater quarterback. My shoulder slammed the bar nearly flush with the door, and the door crashed open. Stevens and Smith went reeling away, and I turned around and kicked the door shut, putting my back against it and holding it.

"Someone in there?" Mann asked. I straightened up and adjusted my BDU top.

"No, just my imagination." I stepped over by him. Smith locked the door.

"Did you find any of those pallets?" I shook my head. "The pallet jacks?"
No again. "Where the fuck did it all go?" he asked.

"Maybe another unit stole it? Or black marketers." I said, rubbing my hands together. Damn, they were freezing. Everyone nodded. That's what happened.

We'd tell the MP's, and CID would investigate.

The MRE's, uniforms, TA-50, concertina wire, body bags, tents, and cammo nets would never be found.

The tool room was empty, and I stood in the hallway "warming up" while Stevens and Smith checked it. No tools, but Mann assured me that the trucks with the tools had not arrived yet.

He told me that Cobb and he had spent the first 3 days moving the beds, dressers, desks, and refrigerators up into the rooms and the offices on the other side of the basement.

While he talked, he opened the mailroom door, and we swept our flashlights around inside. Nothing.

According to him, they'd just finished loading the furniture into the rooms the day I arrived.

"Hey, I have a question." I said.

"Shoot." he answered, holding open the door while Stevens and Smith left the tool room.

"Well, if the only phone that works is the one that is a locked line to Fifth Corps, how the fuck did you know to come get me?" I asked. It had been bothering me since the night before.

Mann laughed, and explained. Apparently, the number they had for my unit at the reception center/rec center was the number to the Fifth Corps office, and they'd call the unit on the locked line. Duh. I should have figured that out myself.

We pushed at the door to outside, but only managed to get it about two inches open. We could see packed snow around the edges, and gave up.

"Where do you suppose the LT ended up?" Smith asked, as we entered the stairwell.

"Fuck him; he got what was coming to him." Stevens swore.

"He's probably in the back parking lot. If he went around the building, he would have got lost behind us. There isn't shit behind this building but snow, trees, and eventually the ski resort." Mann answered. We pushed into the hallway and ran

into the group searching the first floor.

They hadn't seen jack, so we helped them sweep the rooms on the first floor.

"Captain Bishop and Sergeant Vickers are checking the third floor." Stokes told us from the hallway while Mann and I searched another barracks room.

"What the fuck are they doing up there?" Mann asked. "There isn't shit up there but empty rooms and the attic access."

"They think whoever it is that's fucking with us is hiding on the third floor." Stokes answered. Mann laughed.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

"The box-heads who were doing the construction refused to refurbish those rooms. They wouldn't even repaint the offices. The two of them are in for a shock." Mann told me.

"Box heads?"

"Germans."

"What's the surprise?" I asked. Hell, asking this kept my mind from putting monsters under the beds to jump me.

"The walls still have all the old Nazi paintwork. We're talking swastikas and lightning bolts and eagles." Mann replied. "It's like something out of a world war two movie."

"Why is it that fucking Nazi's are creepy?" Stevens asked. "I lived in the South, and we had the Civil War, but you never hear tales of dead Rebels killing people."

"They weren't evil." Smith said, stepping into the hallway. "They may have been slave holders and the like, but they weren't evil like these assholes were."

We stayed silent while we checked the laundry room, the broom closet, and finally ended up back in the day room. The other groups dribbled in, and finally Sergeant Vickers and Captain Bishop showed back up. Both of them looked disturbed.

"Get everyone together. We're going back to main post. You guys have a hot lunch." Captain Bishop told us.

Did you know that if you really need to, you can fit 10 people in a Chevy Blazer?

We pulled up to a mess hall, and we all bailed out. Lunch wasn't great, but it was hot, it was fresh, and that made it good.

"Hey, Monkey, you still got that bottle I gave you?" the person I'd first met, Specialist Thompson, asked me.

"Yeah. I left it in my room. I kind of forgot about it." I answered.

"The CO told me to take the CUC-V to the Class VI. He pitched in, we're all going to sit in the day room and get drunk tonight. You want anything?"

I dug in my wallet and pulled out a \$20 traveler's check. I signed it, and handed it to him. "Grab me a bottle of Wild Turkey; use the rest to make sure everyone else has a bottle." I told him. He looked surprised.

Cobb lit two cigarettes and handed me one absently. I took it, even though I didn't smoke, and leaned back in my chair to belch. Everyone laughed, and Smith cut loose with a belch louder and more abrasive than mine, which I laughed at.

"Say, Monkey, have you figured out why the barracks are haunted?" Smith asked. I shook my head and coughed from a drag of the cigarette. "Well, this post wasn't even discovered till after World War Two was over. It was found by some guys who got lost.

"This is one of the SS training grounds. The welcome center is featured on a few old documentaries as having Hitler

inspecting SS units in front of it. Our building, however, wasn't discovered until the early 1960's, and even then, it wasn't really examined until close to the 1970's.

"Rumor control says the first guys in it vanished, and the area was listed as restricted." I nodded. I'd heard the major bitching about the fact the area was listed as a restricted area on the map. "Here's the fucked up part, Monkey.

"The place was where the SS cadre, the trainers, were barracked. It was also there they practiced new techniques and kept their skills sharp."

"Torture." I said. The heads around the table nodded. "You mean to tell me that the Army, the U Fucking S Army is making us live in a place where motherfuckers who are the standard for evil tortured people to death?"

Everyone nodded, and I spent the rest of the time till Captain Bishop and SFC Vickers picked us up trying to figure out who I'd pissed off to end up there.

Everyone else was talking in low tones in the CUC-V. There were 10 of us packed into it, and we were passing around a bottle of Ausbach. Three in the front, four in the middle, and 3 us packed into the back on top of the toolboxes.

In AIT and Basic, when we went somewhere by truck, we always talked and BS'd. This ride, all we did was pass the bottle and pass around the cigarette Cobb had lit up. SFC Vickers seemed particularly disturbed, staring out the window and taking long pulls off the bottle.

The 10 of us went through 3 bottles of liquor by the time we pulled up to the barracks.

I climbed out of the truck, the wind whipping at my parka, and I stared at the building. The building I had to go back into. The building that the Army expected me to live in and like it. The building where motherfuckers who came to mind when you said evil had tortured people to death, beaten people to death, practiced strangulation techniques, and planned foul deeds.

It was three stories tall. A basement, and supposedly a sub-basement we hadn't checked. There was an attic, but nobody had gone in there. The roof was steeply inclined, and I understood it was because of the snow. I could see iron rings on the roof, and I asked Thompson about them.

They used to tie the treetops to the rings, pulling them over the building to hide it.

The trees clustered close to the building, the snow was up to the windows, about five feet deep.

While I stood there and watched, lights came on in one of the room, and then shut off.

The other CUC-V pulled up. Figures, I was probably the only one who saw it.

We trudged into the building, not like men and women who had come home, but rather like we were walking to the firing squad.

We were all overstressed. I may not have been an NCO, but I sure as shit knew when people were past their breaking point. Even I was seeing things, and probably hearing things.

The CQ area was cold, and dim. It took Carter three times of flicking the switch to get the lights to come on. Captain Bishop didn't say anything, just walked into the day room cracking open a bottle of Bacardi 151. We all followed, and Thompson began handing out bottles out of a rucksack. I got two bottles of Wild Turkey. It was more than I needed, shit I hadn't drunk that much since I got tossed on my head in Juvie by the cops.

We all began bullshitting, and eventually ate from MRE's. We had a marmite full of food, but MRE's just felt right. Everyone talked about their fall from grace. The fact I'd arrived in handcuffs, that Thompson had been an E-6 who'd beaten up another soldier bad enough to hospitalize the guy over a woman, Cobb had been a prime suspect in a murder, and even though they'd busted him for failure to report, they'd never pinned the murder on him. Captain Bishop had beaten the fuck

out of his Brigade Commander for calling him a nigger, SFC Vickers had gotten caught fucking his superior's wife, Stokes had gotten drunk and wrecked her car and killed another soldier in a head on collision. I was the youngest there. The next one closest to me was 22. These guys and girls had joined the Army while I was still catching feels in JR High.

We were all criminals. If penal units still existed, it was us.

Murderers. Thieves. Thugs. That was us.

I passed out around 1900, and slept through the night. We didn't have fire guard, we didn't bother with CQ or ACQ or even duty driver. We all got drunk, some of us drunk enough to puke in the trash cans before going back to drinking.

I woke without a hangover.

I was angry when I woke. Anger I was used to, I was always angry. Todd fucking with me, the engineer of the Crazy Train fucking with me. Anger was part of my life. It was cold, and I was pissed off.

I stomped over to the CQ desk and dug through the drawers till I found the map for the building. Looking at it, I located the main breaker boxes.

In the furnace room.

Fine, if that's how it was going to be, then that's how it would be. I refused to be intimidated by dead Nazi scumbags. I was too old to believe in ghosts or hauntings. That shit was for little kids. I was a goddamn man.

I replaced the batteries in my flashlight, and headed down the hallway and to the stairwell.

I paused on the mid-way landing down. The creepy feeling had washed over me, but I pushed it away and decided there was no way I was going to be scared by some fuckheads.

Above me, the door to the stairwell opened. When it closed, the lights in the stairwell went out.

I rolled my shoulders, a habit I'd picked up, and pushed my way through the darkness till I found the stairwell exit. Growling to myself, I pushed out and into the hallway, and found the handle of the door that led into the furnace room.

It took me a minute to unlock it. There were muted impact noises from the stairwell, but I ignored them. There were 3 windows in that stairwell, and it wasn't outside the realm of possibility that one of them had air leaking and making it thump.

I opened the door to the furnace room, and the lights turned on in the hallway, flooding the area with hard white light.

Fuck you. I ain't afraid of you.

I moved into the room, following the sketch I'd made of the map in my little green notebook. How the fuck did we miss it, it was between the water heater and the furnace? The gritty black dirt made crunching noises under my boots, and I could hear the whisper of rats in the darkness.

A thread of dark thought bubbled up to the surface of my mind. If I was to trip, and get knocked out, would they come to eat me?

Followed by: "How the fuck did they survive all these years out here?"

I didn't want to know.

I found the breaker boxes. Three huge metal boxes, with words in German written on them. I didn't read German, and I didn't care. I opened the box, and stood there staring.

Fuses. Fucking fuses and each box had a large switch. The kind that you grab the wooden handle and move it up or down.

I used the flashlight to look around, and found a box of fuses on top of the middle box. Looking carefully, I checked each fuse through the glass. Often having to rub the glass clean.

I heard murmuring behind me and ignored it. I heard footsteps and ignored them. I heard breathing and blew it off. I was a US Army soldier, I'll be goddamned if I was going to run away just because it was dark and creepy. Of course it was, it was a goddamn basement of a 50 year old building, of course it was creepy.

I had to replace 6 fuses, and two of the bus-bars needed thrown back. It needed about a dozen more fuses, but I'd gone through the box I'd found.

The fuses had the double lightning bolts of the SS on them. Talk about a fucking ego.

I closed the fuse boxes, reloaded the feeder chute on the furnace. And walked, slowly, back to the exit.

Once again, I heard that weird creak. But since I was holding my balls in my hands, I didn't break out running. I bounced up and down on my toes, and noticed that there was a slight give to the ground beneath me.

What. The. Fuck?

It suddenly dawned on me, and I jumped away, backing toward the door.

The sub basement. We couldn't find the access, because I was the only one who'd come down to the furnace room. The building plans still had the old German markings, they were the original Nazi blueprints, that's the only reason we knew that there was a sub-basement, but the access wasn't listed.

Nobody would have found it. Who the fuck would have dug in that grainy black dirt, that dirty that felt sticky and unclean, for a fucking access?

I headed back out, sighing in relief when I locked the door to that fucking basement. I walked back up the stairs, relishing the cold white light of the light bulbs, and then headed down the hallway to the CQ area.

When I pushed through the double doors, I saw Stokes come out of the office behind the CQ area. Captain Bishop was behind the desk in the little room, with the cardboard box that the LT had made me drag down to the CO office. SFC Vickers looked up from something he was writing on and waved at me.

"Private Monkey, they fixed the land lines between us and post, we have phone usage. Grab a bite to eat." He told me. I nodded, went over and got my mess kit from my little nest in the day room. I went into the bathroom, and washed out my mess kit, then scooped up some greenish looking eggs with leathery looking ham embedded in the clumps.

Eating while I walked, I went into the day room and sat down in my nest. I ate in silence, happy to fill my gut with lukewarm eggs and Korean War ham. Fucked up thing, the food I'd eaten in Juvie was worse than this shit I had shoveled out of one of the two tins from a green container. Finishing up, I went and washed out my mess kit and put it back.

"Private Monkey, Captain Bishop wants you." Thompson told me, coming out of the CQ area. I nodded and went up to the office door and knocked three times, just like military etiquette demanded.

"Enter." I walked in, and stood at attention in front of the desk. "Have a seat, Private."

I sat down, curious as to what was going on.

"I'm Captain Bishop, temporary CO until the unit is fully up to speed." He began, holding a folder. I recognized it as my command PRP records. The PRP records came with carrying as TS-SSBI security clearance.

"I see that you had a choice of joining the military or being tried as an adult." He started.

"Yes, sir."

"And you have to complete a three year tour of the military, or if you are chaptered out, you will go to jail."

"Yes, sir."

"It says here you were transported to Basic Training in hand cuffs, and transported from Basic Training to AIT in handcuffs."

"Yes, sir."

"I expected, when I looked at the rest of your record, that I would find low level performance at best." I waited. "I was pleasantly surprised.

Graduated top of Basic Training, you were the Distinguished Honor Graduate of your AIT, and were promoted. You've also been decorated twice, both of them Army Achievement Medals, for your performance, and there are letters of commendation from your instructors."

The last part was new to me.

"I don't know why you are here. I suspect you got screwed by someone who only read the details of your military entry. Well, we're all in this together, so I expect you to keep up your current standard."

"Yes, sir."

"Any questions?" he asked me.

"Yes, sir." He raised an eyebrow, and I continued. "What is this unit, sir? Where is everyone else? Why the hell are we so far away from the rest of post? Why doesn't anyone know we are out here?" He held up his hands.

"Department of the Army just reactivated this unit two months ago, Private. We're a special weapons unit, which means that..."

He lectured me on the new unit, and what it boiled down to, is with a recent round of SALT talks, things were going to change in Western Germany. The places we worked were classified, the contents of the bunkers would be classified, if asked, we'd say were part of the Military Intelligence group. Our phone calls to the States would be limited. Our incoming and outgoing mail would be read and screened by the guys from MI. We were restricted to post unless we received permission to leave post.

He summed it with a saying I would use to define my life.

"Cold War bullshit, Private Monkey. Dismissed."

I left, and Captain Bishop called in Private Meyer. SFC Vickers waved me over.

"You have CQ tonight. The phones are working, so if anyone comes in after hours, they have our number to call us so we can go get any newbies." A moan drifted down the hall. "Where the hell were you?"

"I did a recon for the fuse box."

"Did you find it?"

"Yeah, and I found something else."

"What?"

"The access to the sub-basement. I found it when I was walking back from replacing a bunch of the fuses." SFC Vickers looked startled.

"I'll need about 20 more fuses to bring everything up to speed." I told him. He wrote that down in his notebook.

"Sub-basement? It's on the blueprints, but nobody has found it." He told me. "Stokes, Tandy, Cobb! Grab your flashlights and come on!" He turned back to me. "Show me. Let's find out what kind of secrets this building holds."

We gathered up, and SFC Vickers made sure we got all our cold weather gear. Just in case. Belted up, covered in cold weather gear, with flashlights and extra batteries, we headed back to the furnace room.

"Hey, Stokes." I whispered.

"Yeah?" We were trailing everyone else.

"Ever read the Shining?" I asked.

"Want a broken jaw?" She asked. I shut up.

We went into the room, and it took me about 10 minutes to find the place where the floor cracked beneath my feet. PFC Tandy and Cobb grabbed the coal shovels, and we shoveled the dirt from over that spot.

There was about 2 inches of dirt over a concrete floor. Over the wooden planks that made up the access hatch to the sub-basement. The concrete was old, blackened by age (I told myself), and smelled funny.

Cobb used the shovel to bust the rusty old lock on the trapdoor, which was about a half-dozen planks. They used the shovels to pry the door up.

And our flashlights dimmed, flickered, and went out. Stokes screamed.

BANG BANG BANG came from upstairs.

I screamed.

I unscrewed my flashlight while everyone was cursing, dropped out the batteries, dug batteries out of my pocket, and reloaded my flashlight. The beam came on stark and white, illuminating Cobb's tightly drawn and pale face.

"Replace your batteries." I said, forcing my voice to stay steady. I heard everyone murmur, and handed Tandy an extra pair of batteries. It took a moment, and everyone got their batteries replaced.

"Open that hatch." SFC Vickers ordered. I stepped on the shovel, and worked my gloved fingernails under the lip of the hatch, and putting my legs and back into it, I heaved the hatch open.

Out flashlight beams illuminated a set of wooden stairs going into the darkness, and the weak beams could not pierce the black gloom that surrounded the ladder.

"What the fuck is that smell?" Tandy asked.

It smelled. Bad. It reminded me of an old deer carcass I'd found.

"I don't know. Private Monkey, lead the way." I stepped onto the steps, and heard them creak and splinter. Nervous, I moved down the stairs, expecting them to give out and sending me crashing to the unseen floor, breaking my legs, and leaving me as food fu guys stay here, I'll fucking check. This place isn't fucking haunted, it isn't fucking full of dead goddamn Nazi's, it's just a creepy old fucking building. Fuck you guys." I swore, stomping off into the darkness.

Behind me, someone cocked at .45.

My whole body was covered in goose bumps tight enough to make my skin ache.

My boots clomped on the old concrete, and I stepped into a puddle of water that had seeped in. I was trying to control my breathing, and even though I was dressed in a parka, cold weather pants, field jacket, and winter BDU's, I was freezing.

I was also sweating at the base of my spine and between my shoulders.

My flashlight caught something, and curious, I moved over to it. Crates. Dozens of them, they stretched out into the darkness.

"FOUND SOMETHING!" I yelled.

Silence back.

"HEY! I found something!"

Silence.

"YOU FUCKERS BETTER NOT HAVE LEFT ME! I SWEAR I'LL KILL YOU!" I yelled.

"We're right here, Private Monkey, calm down." I heard SFC Vickers tell me. His pale face loomed out of the darkness, and he bore a striking resemblance to the hero of *The Thing* and it gave me the chills. "What is it?"

"Didn't you... you know what, I don't want to know." I stated. "It's crates, lots of them." I flashed my flashlight on the side, showing the old emblem that was still visible despite its age.

An eagle. A swastika.

"Holy Jesus." Stokes breathed, thumping up next to us.

"Jesus doesn't know about this place." Tandy replied.

I shrugged, and looked at the lid of the crate. SFC Vickers slapped a bayonet into my hand; I started prying on the lid. The lid gave with a screech, and Cobb giggled, a sharp, brittle sound. The crate contained boxes, all marked with the same emblem that was on the map of the building.

"Open one." SFC Vickers ordered. I shrugged, grabbed a box, and tore it open.

Sheathed knives fell out. Four of them.

"Holy mother of God." Stokes whispered as I bent over, picked one up, and lifted it.

It was an old Nazi SS dagger. The crate must have contained hundreds of them.

SFC Vickers shined his flashlight around, and draped on one wall was the Nazi flag.

Our flashlights chose that time to die. I bent down, tucked the dagger in my boot, and dug out my last set of batteries. When my flashlight came back on, I swept it over everyone's faces.

"Let's get the fuck out of here." SFC Vickers said, and I grunted in agreement. I had to lead the way, and we slung the trapdoor back over. We headed back to the door at a quick time, and all laughed nervously when SFC Vickers locked the door.

"Monkey, did you keep that dagger?" Stokes said, pointing at my boot.

"Yeah. I wanted proof. If we get upstairs, and there's nothing wrong with it, then this place isn't haunted." I replied, almost challengingly.

We walked back to the CQ area, and found out that Mann and Carter had gone to get us lunch and dinner. While SFC Vickers made his report to Captain Bishop, I pulled the sheathed dagger out of my boot and tossed it on the CQ counter.

"Where the fuck did you get that?" Smith asked.

"Sub-basement. There's a shitload of crates down there." I answered. "One of them had these in them."

"Aw man, this is fucked." he said. "We're in a goddamn haunted building."

"You wanna know what's worse?" I asked, grinning.

"What? What could be fucking worse?" Smith asked.

"You're black." I told him. He stood there, staring at me for a moment.

Then he started laughing. I was laughing with him, and vaguely aware that Tandy had gone into the bathroom. Smith handed me a bottle of Jack Daniels, and I took a deep hit off of it.

"This is just fucked." Smith said. "I don't know whether I feel better or worse that the CO doesn't seem to care we're drinking during duty hours."

I took another hit off the bottle and passed it back.

"Who fucking cares. This is bullshit." I replied.

Mann and Carter came in the doors, carrying two mermits each. Everyone bustled around, and we passed around the bottle and ate a hot lunch.

"Private Monkey?" Captain Bishop asked, looking at me over his mess kit.

"Yes, sir?"

"You have CQ tonight. Sergeant Vickers tells me you aren't afraid of that furnace room, so it will be your job to keep the furnace running." WHAT!
GIMME A BREAK!

"Yes, sir."

The rest of the day went with us gathered up in groups, talking about the banging from upstairs. We were sitting eating dinner when I noticed something.

"Hey, where's Tandy?" I asked. There were only 19 of us sitting there.

"Who?" Captain Bishop asked.

"Private Tandy. He's missing." I said.

"Has anyone seen Private Tandy?" SFC Vickers asked.

Nobody had. I brought up that I'd seen him go into the bathroom.

"Come with me, Monkey." SFC Vickers ordered. I set down my dinner, stood up, and together we went into the bathroom.

"Private Tandy, are you in here?" Vickers called. "Are you all right? Do you need assistance?"

"YOU BETTER BE BEATING OFF!" I yelled. Vickers looked at me with a grin, and we stepped around the small corner. Two stalls, two urinals, two sinks.

No window.

A shaving kit was scattered on the counter between the sinks, and I stared at it as SFC Vickers checked each stall.

"He's gone." I said. SFC Vickers turned and looked at me. "They got him."

"Bullshit. We've all been drinking today. He must have gotten drunk and wandered off." Vickers answered.

"And left his shaving gear?" I asked.

"Hell, I got drunk and left my wallet in a Korean whorehouse." Vickers answered. I nodded. "Anyway, he's not in here. Let's go check his room." We left and Captain Bishop looked up.

"He's not in there; we're going to check his room." Vickers told the CO.

"All right, everyone, split up. Stokes, you're here with me. Everyone else, go looking for Tandy." Captain Bishop ordered. "Monkey, Sergeant Vickers, the two of you check the furnace room."

"Yes, sir." SFC Vickers said. I stayed silent, but made a point to reach over the counter and grab the SS dagger. Fuck the dumb shit; I'm not going down there unarmed.

We walked by the groups opening rooms and checking inside, through the double doors, then into the stairwell.

"Jesus, Monkey, do you think he came down here?" Vickers asked, wiping his mouth.

"No. I think they got him." I admitted honestly. I didn't know who, or what, they were, but I was seriously beginning to believe we weren't alone in the building. I was seriously beginning to believe something was wrong in this building.

When SFC Vickers opened the door of the furnace room, I could see the cherry glow from the furnace at the far end. I'd never seen that before, and it made a chill run down my back.

The wind howled, and the door slammed shut behind me, cutting off the light from the stairwell. I clicked on my faithful OD Green flashlight, drew the SS Dagger, and ventured deeper in.

"Tandy? TANDY! You better not be fucking with ME!" I called out.

The breathing of the water heater answered me.

I'd taken a step, and my boot came down on empty air, and I fell forward, dropping the knife and my flashlight as I plunged forward. I went through wood, and slammed onto concrete, knocking the wind out of me and filling my vision with stars. The thick parka saved me from any real injury, but my breathing was painful.

My flashlight was laying about 10 feet from me.

And I'd fallen through empty air and into the sub-basement, smashing the steps as I fell.

"Tandy?" I called out softly, rolling over and crawling to my flashlight.

"Tandy?"

I grabbed my flashlight and shined the beam around, the light catching the dagger. I scooted over to it, scooped it up, and hefted the weight in my hand. They didn't teach knife fighting in the Army, but the first rule of knife fighting is that you will get cut. Expect it, accept it, and cut the other guy while he thinks victory is his. Don't spin the knife. Don't toss it from one hand to the other. Don't do any lunges showing off. Keep it low, to the side, angled upward, for a slash across their body or arms, or a straight thrust under the ribs.

The Army didn't teach recruits knife fighting. My father taught knife fighting.

I shined the flashlight around in the darkness, looking for whatever was in there. There were broken planks around where I'd

landed, and the light shined off of puddles of ice and slush. Water was leaking into the sub-basement from somewhere, and shining my light above me, at the ceiling, showed icecicle nubs and full blown icecicles hanging from the steel beams that supported the concrete floor that was covered with dirt in the basement above me.

"MONKEY! WHERE ARE YOU!" sounded from above me.

"IN THE SUBBASEMENT! WATCH IT, THE HATCH IS OPEN!"

A light flashed down, and I moved over to stand in the puddle of the beam.

"You all right?" SFC Vickers asked. "I couldn't get the door open, the wind was whipping down the stairwell.

"Yeah, that seems to fucking happen." I swore, flashing my light around. "My fucking ribs and back hurt." Hey, what was that?

"Just a second." I told him, and walked over. It was a pack of Marlboro's, Tandy's brand. I picked it up, opened it up, and lit one with shaking hands. I didn't smoke.

I walked back into the puddle of light from SFC Vickers's flashlight and looked up into the beam, squinting.

"I think he was down here. I found a pack of cigarettes. Marlboros." I called up. There was a pause.

"I think I dropped them. I smoke Marlboros." SFC Vickers called down. "Toss 'em up, I need a smoke." I slipped three out and put them in my pocket, then tossed the pack up.

"Thanks. Are you all right?"

"Yeah, I said I'm fucking fine. It's cold and creepy down here."

"Can you hang on, we're going to have to get a rope, and the stairs are all fucked up." SFC Vickers called down.

Fucker was going to leave me.

"I'll be fine."

"Here, catch." Something dropped from above, and I grabbed it, dropping the knife. It was one of our two .45's. I stuck it in the belt of my parka and picked up the knife, sheathing it in my boot, and drew the .45.

"Look, you may have to shoot Tandy, can you do that?" Vickers asked.

"Yes, sergeant. I can utilize lethal force against Private Tandy if I deem it necessary." I said, in formal, clipped tones.

"Good. I'll be right back." He told me, and the light vanished.

Fucker. I checked my watch, and sighed in acceptance. My watch was shattered, broken all to shit by the fall.

Something moved out in the darkness, and I realized I was in the middle of the room, without a wall to my back. I started backing up, figuring the left wall was closer. I could hear something moving, and I could hear the sound of breathing from somewhere in the darkness.

It's just the fucking water heater. Be a goddamn man.

When I bumped into the wall, I jumped, and something dropped on me from above, enveloping me, grabbing my arms and legs, and smothering me. I fired the pistol three times in rapid succession, yelling and struggling. I managed to tear my way free of the grip of my assailant, and fired into it's shape on the ground, hearing the bullet ricochet and whine off into the darkness to smash into something.

That Nazi flag wouldn't fuck with me again. I'd kicked its fucking ass.

I picked up my flashlight from where the beam was illuminating part of the white circle and the red of the background, and shined it to my left and right. There were posters on the wall on my left, and a map on my right.

Aw fuck. This wasn't just where the crates were stored; they used to do stuff in here. My brain summoned up the image of Jewish men and women screaming as "approved torture" techniques were used, the faces of men smiling as they strangled victims to display their technique and skill, or to teach an audience.

Fuck this; I'll go back to jail.

Well, I wasn't going to get any un-lonelier down here. I went over and looked at the map. I wasn't sure what the map was of, but I figured it was of part of Germany. There were markings and stuff I was unfamiliar with, but I did recognize the international symbol of a box with an X through it.

Someone had been tracking military units in here.

The further I went down the wall, the stronger that musty smell began to be. I could hear boot steps echoing around me, I could hear breathing, but I blew them off. If Tandy was down here, if he loomed out of the darkness, I wasn't even going to warn him, I was going to blow his ass away. Fuck him.

I reached the corner, and discovered desks lined up against the wall. Shining my flashlight into the room itself, there were more desks, and I could dimly see something different.

If I'm gonna get eaten by cannibal undead Nazi reverse snow vampires, I might as well check some shit out before it happens. I walked over there, being careful at one point when I was walking across ice.

It was a podium, with the Nazi SS logo on the front. I was kind of disappointed that there wasn't a book, or a speech, laid out. There was a riding crop (how fucking cliché) on the podium. Bummer.

I finished a circuit, weaving my way through boxes I really didn't want to open. I wasn't sure where the smell was coming from, or even what it was, and was kind of relieved. My curiosity had overwhelmed fear.

BANG

I brought up the .45 and spun slowly in place.

I could hear breathing, always behind me. I was breathing hard, my breath visible in the light of my flashlight. Nothing, but I could still hear the breathing.

"PRIVATE MONKEY! Are you down there?" I heard. Flashlight beams lanced down through the opening, a good fifty feet away, and I ran into the puddle of light, looking up.

"Throw me a rope!"

"Did you find Tandy?"

"FUCK TANDY! THROW ME A GODDAMN ROPE!" the breathing was heavier, and I could feel the darkness closing around me. Those fucking Nazi's had been holding a class on tracking us one by one through the building and killing us, to bring us down here and eat us while we screamed.

The rope fell from the opening, and I tucked the pistol into the belt of my parka, dropped the flashlight into the pocket, and climbed up the rope. Fear and desperation lent me a lot of strength, and I was up it in a flash.

"Did you find him?" SFC Vickers asked.

"No. There's no-one down there." I told him. He held out his hand, and I stared at it.

Complete with what happened to Cobb, what was in the sub-basement, and more.

"2/19th Special Weapons, Private Monkey, how can I help you, sir or ma'am?" I rattled off.

Silence.

"Hello?" I asked. Cobb was staring at me.

HHHHHHHHHHSS

It was low, gravelly, and liquid.

"It's for you." I said, holding the phone out to Cobb.

Cobb looked at the phone, took it, and put it to his ear. I could hear the sibilant hiss, the liquid exhale of air, even though Cobb was the one who held the phone.

Cobb dropped the phone, and leapt up, grabbing me by my throat and slamming me against the wall. He was squeezing hard, and his face was red.

"WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!" he screamed.

I slammed my arms up between his, breaking his grip, and slammed my forehead into his face. His nose crunched, and I kneed him in the balls, he stepped back, and I stepped forward and slammed my right forearm into his face, knocking him down. Before he got up, I slammed a boot into his stomach. He was curled up in a ball on the floor, and I could hear a busy signal coming from the swinging phone receiver.

"Don't ever fucking touch me again, asswipe." I snarled, rubbing my throat. The day room door burst open, and SFC Vickers stood there, the .45 in his hand. I'd seen that pistol in his hands more lately than I saw it the first few days I was here.

"What's going on?" He asked, walking toward us. Cobb was still sitting up, holding his nose.

"Nothing." he said.

"We were just having a discussion." I lied. I'd learned the way the military worked. If nobody talked, nothing happened, and fights between men were rarely reported. If you laid your hands on another man, and he kicked your ass, well, you were just shit out of luck.

I reached over and hung up the phone.

"Cobb's nose is bleeding." SFC Vickers stated, the master of the obvious. I was starting to realize that maybe there was more to him getting sent here than just fucking someone's wife. He'd left me alone in that goddamn hole, and he always made sure all of us were first into a room.

"I hit myself in the face with the phone." Cobb replied, putting two fingers on each side of his nose. With a crunch, he set it. I picked up the phone and hung it up. SFC Vickers looked at both of us curiously, and then went back to the day room.

"Jesus Christ, Monkey, where did you learn to fight like that?" Cobb asked, wiping his nose off with the hem of his shirt.

"We moved a lot." I told him.

"Bullshit."

"It's the truth." I was being serious. I hadn't learned much in Juvie, just got better at what I was doing.

"Goddamn, son, remind me not to tangle with you again." Cobb told me.

"Sorry about that." I was honestly embarrassed.

The phone rang again, and both of us stared at it.

"Don't." Cobb said when I started to reach for it. "Just. Don't."

The phone kept ringing. My mouth was dry, and my imagination was running wild. I knew it was Tandy on the other line. That hiss was him trying to speak, to call to us for help, while some dead Nazi wrapped boney fingers around his throat and squeezed like Cobb had done to me.

"Answer that goddamn phone!" SFC Vickers yelled, stomping into the room. He had that fucking pistol in his hand again, and was looking a little too wild-eyed for my taste.

"No." Cobb replied. I just shrugged.

"Answer the phone, Private." SFC Vickers was a bit ominous. I'd begun to notice things about him.

"Fuck it." I snarled, and grabbed the phone. "2/19th Special Weapons, Private Monkey, how can I help you, sir or ma'am?"

Nothing, just whispering silence.

"Hello?" I knew it was coming.

Hsssssssss

Low, sibilant, bubbly. The hair that didn't exist on my head stood straight up.

"It's for you, Sergeant." I said, in my best dead-pan voice. He snatched the phone out of my hand.

"Sergeant First Class Vickers speaking." He said. I noticed it was nearly a fawning tone. He stood there, and his eyes widened. He threw the phone at me, bouncing it off my chest. My bruised ribs twinged.

"You think this is goddamn funny, Private?" he yelled.

"Not particularly, no." I told him.

"No, what?" he asked. There was a pretty large vein writhing on his forehead.

"No, Sergeant." I answered.

"THEN WHO WAS THAT?" he screamed at me. Behind him, I could see the door to the dayroom open, with Captain Bishop coming out.

"Maybe it was Tandy." I said. I wanted to feed him that goddamn pistol. It wasn't pointed at me, but it wasn't pointed away from me either. I hung up the phone, and didn't care that my hand was shaking.

"Think this shit is funny, Private? All these bullshit spooky sounds, just happening to find a bunch of old Nazi bullshit, all the lights switching off. Think this is a good game of 'Scare the Sergeant' or some shit?" He was pointing the pistol at me, jabbing with each word.

"What's the problem, Sergeant?" Captain Bishop asked. Vickers whirled around, pistol still in his hand, and Captain Bishop grabbed the barrel.

"Relinquish the weapon, soldier." He ordered. Sergeant Vickers let it go.

"Privates Cobb and Monkey think they're comedians." Vickers said, whirling around. I was starting to wonder what he heard.

ring ring

Cobb and I turned to stare at the phone. So did Vickers and Bishop. Stokes and Mann were coming out of the dayroom. Even sleepily disheveled, Stokes looked good. The cold perked her nipples through her T-shirt, hard buttons on top of those huge titties.

ring ring

"Gentlemen?" Captain Bishop asked. The phone rang again. We all were looking at him. "Aren't you going to answer it?"

ring ring

"2/19th Special Weapons, Private Monkey, how can I help you, sir or ma'am?" I repeated into the receiver.

Nothing.

"2/19th Special Weapons, Private Monkey, how can I help you, sir or ma'am?" I said again, slowly and distinctly.

Still nothing.

This is new.

"2/19th Special Weapons, Private Monkey, how can I help you, sir or ma'am?" I asked a little more forcefully.

SSSSssssssssssss.

"It's for you." I said, handing the phone to Captain Bishop.

"Captain Bishop speaking, how may I hel...." his face turned a grayish color.

"WHO IS THIS?" he shouted. He held the phone out at arms length, and we could all hear it.

Breathe in.

HHHHHhhhhhhhhhhssssssssssss

Breathe out.

SSSSSssssssssssss

I grabbed it out of his hand, and slammed it down.

"What the fuck was that?" He asked.

"Tandy." I told him.

"Where's Tandy?" Stokes asked, holding onto her arms and shivering.

The lights in the hallway clicked off, and a low moan echoed down the hallway and stairwell in tandem. I could see one flickering bulb at the far end of the hall. Nobody answered her.

"What happened to your face, Cobb?" Bishop asked.

"I fell." Cobb said. Bishop looked at me, looked at my hands, then shrugged.

"What's going on?" Mann was looking fairly confused. Cobb lit two cigarettes and passed me one. I didn't smoke, but I took it anyway.

"We don't know, something is..."

ring ring

"Fuck you!" I yelled, the anger, the rage, at all this bullshit boiled to the surface. I grabbed the phone and slung it against the wall, shattering the black plastic casing.

"RING NOW, BITCH!"

Behind me, the whole phone bank, with the exception of our dedicated Fifth Corps line, started ringing. I stood there, facing the wall, and the broken plastic, while the other black phones, identical twins of their freshly murdered brother, began sounding out.

"Don't." Captain Bishop breathed. "Don't. Answer. The. Phones."

The lights went off in the CQ area, and up above, the boots thundered on the floor while the phones screamed.

I squeezed shut my eyes, and wished I'd wake up in my cell.

Behind me, in the darkness, the phones were ringing. Behind me, four men and a woman were standing. Above me, boots slammed onto the floor, and a scream roared down the hallway.

"Fuck this." I snarled, spinning around. I began grabbing phones and yanking them from the wall plugs. Fuck whoever was calling, I didn't feel like talking on the phone.

The lights buzzed on, slowly, and the crashing stopped, before I had even yanked the third one free. I kept going though, I wanted this shit over.

Cobb's nose was bleeding again, and if those dead Nazi's smelled it, they'd be on us like a hooker on a cock wrapped with \$50's.

"Everyone into the dayroom. Private Monkey, secure all the doors." Captain Bishop ordered. Everyone rushed past as I picked up the key ring. I picked the cigarette off the ground from where I'd dropped it. I didn't smoke, I just felt more comfortable with it in my hand.

By the time I was done locking the hallway doors, it was only Captain Bishop and myself in the room. As I passed him, he handed me the .45.

"Just in case, son." He told me. I nodded, and pushed through the first set of doors to outside. Outside, I could see the bare streets, with snow pulled off the banks being blown by the wind sparkling in the lights at the end of the short brick walk that led from the road to the front doors. I locked the doors, and stared for a moment at the slope of the hill across from us. The LT's car was still parked out there. I wondered if he was inside of it, coated in ice, or maybe sharing a smoke with Tandy. At the top of the hill was a fence, with concertina wire on top. I couldn't make out the guard towers, but knew they were up there.

I could see the two CUC-V's, and the five ton.

Still, I locked the doors. To the left, one time. They'd open with a push against the bar, but not from the outside. I backed up, and pulled open the door, never taking my eyes from the glass doors. Now was when the body came flying through the glass, and we were already down a man, already there was somebody missing that could be slung through the glass at me.

I backed into the CQ area, and locked the inner doors. I could still see outside, and still see the missing LT's car. He was in

there, listening to Duran Duran, smoking a cigarette, and planning on coming in here and ripping my throat out. Then he'd drink my blood. Then he'd gnaw the flesh from my...

I shook my head to clear away those thoughts. Fuck him. I bet I could whip some undead butterbars ass. I was Private Monkey, bad motherfucker. Killing machine. Twisted steel and sex appeal. All the women love a killer.

"You alright, Private?" Captain Bishop asked. He sounded genuinely concerned, so I answered him while I locked the door to the stairwell.

"Dark monkey thoughts." I told him.

"Monkey?"

"Yes, sir. My father called my brothers and I his 'monkey-boys' out of affection. I'm a good climber." I told him.

"Oh. I thought you were saying something else." he admitted.

"We all bleed and die the same, sir." I answered, letting him know I knew what he meant by those words.

The hallway door locked firmly, the two bathroom doors did not, neither did the empty room that read "REC ROOM" above the door jam. The boots had stopped stomping, but we were still working by flashlight. I knew there weren't breakers tripping; it was fuses, so that meant that the wiring was bad. That was it, just bad wiring. The wind was coming in through the walls, and shifting the wiring. Tandy had gotten drunk, or maybe he was despondent about his spank-sock rejecting, or something, and had gone outside.

"Private Monkey, why is there an SS dagger stuck in your boot?" Captain Bishop asked me.

"We found a bunch of crates, and Sergeant Vickers left me alone in that sub-basement. I'm a soldier; I'm more comfortable with a weapon in my hands." I shrugged. "You can have it."

"They are illegal here in Germany. We have to turn Nazi paraphernalia over to our German hosts so they can destroy it." Captain Bishop looked thoughtful. "How many do you think were down there?"

"Well, sir, the sub-basement extends roughly the length of the building and *CRASH CRASH CRASH* "KEEP IT DOWN UP THERE, ASSHOLES!" (that got me a funny look)

"And I'd estimate about a quarter of it is full of crates. Some of them are different sizes, so I doubt they are all knives. There's also a torn Nazi flag with bullet holes in it." I finished.

"Let's go get some shut-eye, son." Captain Bishop told me. I noticed he didn't ask for the .45 back, nor did he ask me to give up my knife.

I went in the day room, found my little nest, and closed my eyes. I heard Captain Bishop lock the dayroom door before I fell asleep, but not much else.

Breakfast was lukewarm mermite eggs and kangaroo meat. I kept catching myself doing headcount, and Cobb visibly flinched every time a scream howled out from the hallway, the stairwell, or from above us.

"Listen up, men." Captain Bishop ordered. We all paid attention to him while we kept eating. "Sergeant Vickers and SPC Carter will be going into post. We're going to have MI put a tap on our phones. They will also bring back dinner and tomorrows meals. Private Cobb will be taking the 5-ton and getting us two light sets, a one point five K generator, and some other supplies."

We all nodded, and he went back to eating.

After breakfast, Sergeant Vickers and SPC Carter left in one of the CUC-V's, and I sat on the steps on the building, parka cinched tight. I found one of the Marlboro's in my pocket, and lit it up. I didn't smoke; it just helped warm the air, instead of freezing my lungs.

Captain Bishop was still convinced that there was a logical explanation for all of it, and I desperately wanted to believe him. Unfortunately, I couldn't come up with one.

Thinking dark thoughts, I finished the cigarette in the sub-zero windy out-doors, flicked it into a snow bank, and figured things could always be worse.

I was right.

After lunch found me using the rope I'd climbed the day before to rappel down into the sub-basement. I had the heavy-duty emergency flashlight out of the five-ton, one of the .45's, a crowbar, and the knife. I was to use the cammo stick to mark the crates I'd opened.

Mann would stick with us with a light. Smith would write everything down that we found. Stokes would stay upstairs and scream loudly if anything killed her. Seriously, that's what she was told to do.

Captain Bishop and two other men were going to do a sweep of the building's perimeter. Personally, I felt we had a higher chance of survival than they did.

My boots thumped as I hit the icy floor, and I yelled up that I was clear. Moving off slightly, I switched on the light and watched Smith climb down.

"Dammit, I know I'm next." Smith bitched, moving over to stand next to me.

"Why?"

"Two crackers killed already? I'm so fucking next." Smith said. The tone was light, but the shadows made his face look serious. Mann was almost down, and when he was, he yelled up to the others that he was down. That meant that Cobb and the others would be setting the light sets up. They were going to lower down some heavy duty lights as soon as they were set up.

"Ready?" I asked. The other two nodded, and we moved away from the puddle of light and into the darkness.

"Vickers left you alone down here? What an asshole." Smith said, looking around.

"No choice. I couldn't get back up." I answered. The weight of the .45 in my poncho pocket was comfortable. Out in the darkness, we could hear something moving.

"How's your ribs?" Mann asked.

"Healing." I answered, taking the tire iron from the 5-ton out of my parka belt and slamming it into the wood of the crate. I pushed hard, and the nails lifted with a scream that echoed. Mann shined in the flashlight.

Inside were flat black cases, and I opened one up to find a pistol and a single magazine nestled in the black felt inside.

"No fucking way." Mann breathed.

"Pistols. Crate 1." Smith said. I scrawled a 1 on the lid of the crate, and we moved to the next one.

This was going to take awhile.

We showed the inventory sheet to Captain Bishop. The generator didn't run worth a shit, it kept cutting out after about an hour, so we'd all just left after we'd been down there for almost four hours.

"Christ, this is enough to arm all of post."

"It's graduation, training stocks, sir." Smith told him.

"What makes you think that?" Captain Bishop asked.

"Well, we found uniforms, untailored, pistols in cases, daggers, blankets, pillows, a couple small boxes containing insignia, you know, stuff you would give graduates?"

"Makes sense." Captain Bishop answered. He took our inventory sheet, and went into the office.

We all separated into little clumps. Stokes regaled us with stories of Fort Lewis, Smith cracked jokes about growing up in the south, Cobb talked about Fort Erwin, Mann talked about where he grew up, and I smoked the cigarette that got passed around. I didn't smoke, but it was polite.

The doors banged open, heralding the arrival of SFC Vickers and SPC Carter. They were lugging a mermite can each. SFC Vickers glanced around, then snarled: "Well, what the fuck are you assholes sitting around for, go get the goddamn mermites out of the CUC-V."

"Yes, sergeant." I answered crisply. The five of us headed out into the biting wind, the ice crystals stinging our flesh. We grabbed the mermite cans and moved as fast as we safely could back to the fucking building. I saw a light come on on the third floor then go out. I caught Smith's eye, and he nodded. He'd seen it too.

Carter went back outside, and returned with a case of beer and a bunch of mess plates. I headed back out and grabbed some mess trays and put a box of silverware on the top them, then headed back. I saw another light flicker on, then off again, but decided to ignore it.

Captain Bishop was serving everyone up, and everyone was heading into the dayroom with their plates. The food wasn't great, but it was hot, it was filling, and that made it good.

After dinner, Captain Bishop assigned me and Stokes to CQ. Most of the time it took an E-5 to pull CQ duty, but since all he had were a bunch of privates, a couple PFC's, a handful of specialists or corporals, and SFC Vickers, well, he was kind of screwed.

We sat in silence for awhile. I remembered the last time my wife was lying sweaty underneath me. I counted the times the lights flickered. I went over soldier tasks in my head.

I ignored the sound of the boots from overhead. I ignored the flickering of the lights. I even ignored the shrieks and screams.

ring ring

Fuck.

"2/19th Special Weapons, Private Monkey, how can I help you, sir or ma'am?" I answered. Stokes was just staring.

Silence.

"Hello?"

HHHHSSssssssssssss

I set the receiver down and turned to Stokes.

"Get the Captain." He'd left strict orders on this. She nodded, stood up stiffly, and limped to the dayroom.

I put the phone to my ear and listened carefully.

"Hello, Sleepy Hollow bed and breakfast." I said cheerfully.

HHHHssssssssssssssssss

"Yes, sir, the homosexual room is available."

SSSSSSSSssssssssss

"And you want an extra large used butt plug on your pillow every morning?"

HSSSSSSssssssssssss

"And you're going to let me bang your mom and cum on her face?"

Sssssssssssssssss

Captain Bishop moved up next to me at a near run, grabbed the phone, and started dialing.

"This is Captain Bishop, is this Staff Sergeant Powers? Good. Listen, I need you to trace all the phones on this bank." He gave me the thumbs up and a smile, but I just nodded back.

Whoever it was, they were still slowly hissing in my ear.

"What? Then check again, goddamn it!" he yelled.

Some more hisses.

OK, at first, this was scary, now it's just fucking annoying.

"All right, thanks." He said, and hung up the phone. He took the phone out of my hands, listened for a moment, paled, and slammed down the phone.

"What was that?" Stokes asked. I was looking down the hallway. The shadows were making it look like someone was slowly coming toward us, but I couldn't see anyone, just a shadow.

"I asked the local MI, who's in charge of post OPSEC, to track any activity on our phones." He explained.

*ring...

I picked up the receiver and hung it up.

"But when they ran the trace, the only active phone was the one I was on." He finished.

"Phone number." I said, turning my attention to him.

"What, Private?"

"How many people have our phone number, sir? The phones were just turned on; you can't tell me someone knows our brand new number." I finished.

The lights shut off, and the emergency lights kicked on, bathing all of us in red light.

"And one other problem." Stokes said. I could see sweat on her upper lip.

"And it is?" Captain Bishop prompted.

The red emergency lights flickered.

"The reason why they can't find a line in use."

The emergency lights in the hallway clicked off one after another behind Captain Bishop.

"Spit it out, soldier." Captain Bishop looked nervous. He was about to be a lot more nervous, I knew what was coming.

One of the three emergency lights in the CQ area cut out.

"Those calls are coming from inside this building." she finished.

The rest of the emergency lights went out, and the wind shrieked down the stairwell with a banshee wail.

I started laughing.

I kept laughing in the darkness. Sharp, brittle laughter that I couldn't stop. The line from the movie kept flashing through my head: "Have you checked the children?" I could picture some old Nazi, all withered up, maggots writhing in his eye sockets, whispering into the phone: "Haben Sie die Kinder C

knock knock

It was a barracks room, I closed my eyes and visualized the copied map in my little green notebook in my pocket. Not the map, but where I was when I drew it, and what I was thinking when I drew it. It's an old trick, but it works.

The room was unoccupied. Tandy's room was on the floor below, my room was in the further back section, and the only other person on the second floor beside me was Mann and Smith. Mann's was all the way at the end of the hallway, Smith's was next to mine.

"Private?" Captain Bishop sounded nervous.

"Shhh." I told him, ghosting by him. The flashlight beam was skittering all over the far hallway, throwing strange and menacing shadows. He started to turn toward me, but I was by him and resting my fingertips on the door as lightly as I could and still have contact.

knock knock

The door didn't vibrate. The sound was coming from the room itself. Somewhere inside. I used the master key to slowly unlock the door, and waited, my hand on the lever.

Knock

I shoved open the door, and took four steps into the room, carrying myself past the bathroom and the built in wall lockers.

Knock

The sound was coming from in front of me, by the window.

I moved forward, stepping up and resting my fingers against the pipe leading into the radiator.

knock knock

The pipe shivered slightly with each sound.

Heh.

"Private?" Captain Bishop shined the light into the room, and I wondered what he saw. Was it just me, or some twisted shape with a hand full of steel?

"Just the radiator, sir." I told him, walking back out into the hallway and closing the door. I locked it. "Air in the pipes, probably."

At the far end of the hallway, the crashing sounded again, and another moan drifted down the hallway. I sucked on my fingertip and stuck it upwards, feeling for the breeze. Nothing. I ducked down as the moan swirled around us and started to go by. There. A slight breeze.

On the floor? Interesting.

I unlocked the door again and opened it.

"Sir, when I close the door, please shine the light on the bottom of it." I asked him.

"What are you doing, Private?"

"Seeing if there is a gap beneath the doors." I answered, stepping inside. I closed the door, and knelt down.

I could see him pan the beam over the doorway. There was about a quarter inch gap at the bottom of the door. I stood up, opened the door, and came back into the hallway.

"Well?" I locked the door.

"There's a gap, that gives air room to move, and can affect the air currents. Did you ever live in an old house?"

"No."

"If you did, you'd know that old buildings settle strangely, and that lets air in, and the air catches in places and makes weird noises. Kind of like water puddling." I told him.

"How do you know?" He asked.

"My father told me." I answered, with conviction in my voice.

In front of us, the crashing sounded again.

"And that? What did your father say about that?" He sounded honest, not like he was sneering.

"Run." I told him, and started down the hallway. I was going to find out, once and for all, what the fuck classes they were teaching. Jew Strangling 101? POW Torturing 225? Medical Experiments 115? Stabbing 110? Whatever it was, I was going to find out.

With or without the Captain.

I could hear Captain Bishop moving behind me as I stopped in front of the door. According to my map, past these wide double doors was a fairly large open area, listed as a classroom on the map. I didn't know what the crossed out German word meant, but I didn't care either.

"What are you waiting for?" Bishop asked.

"Sssh." I replied, rocking back and forth on my heels.

*BANG

I leaned back.

BANG

I slammed one boot against the center of the doors, putting everything I had into it. The heel of my combat boot hit between the door handles.

BANG*

The doors flew open, and wind whipped around us. The light behind me flickered and went out, but I was already moving into the room, knife held low and ready. I took three steps into the room and stopped, turning in a slow circle.

Nothing. Not a fucking thing. The room was cold enough that I could feel my nose and ears start to hurt, and the knife felt like I was holding onto a chunk of ice.

"GODDAMN IT! I HATE THIS SHIT!" I yelled. Captain Bishop came in the room, and I could hear him dicking with the flashlight. I kept the knife low and pointed down in case he bumped into me.

I didn't want to accidentally stab his ass.

"Almost." Bishop said. I waited, keeping my breathing slow and steady, and feeling embarrassed for my reaction.

"There." The light clicked on and he panned it around the room.

Closed windows on one wall, up toward the top. Three sets of double doors leading out besides the ones I'd kicked open. A set of bathrooms, and a single door. We unlocked each one in turn, and looked inside.

Jack and shit.

We stood in the main room, the flashlight illuminating my legs.

"What the fuck is making the noise?" Captain Bishop asked.

"Wait." I answered.

We stood there silently, waiting.

"Why did you attack that cop?" Bishop asked me, out of the blue. "You damn near beat him to death. Why?"

"My sister." I replied, straining my ears. Why did he have to choose now to make small talk?

"You're sister? What, was he raping her?"

"Yes, sir." I answered. He shut up. I figured he would, that's pretty much how everyone reacted.

BANG BANG BANG

It came from upstairs again. The third floor. It was louder in here, and echoed. There was something just before the crashing, but I didn't catch it.

"Let's head back. I don't like the feel of this." Captain Bishop said.

"Yes, sir." I went over and unlocked the stairwell and pulled open the door. He waved me inside, and I waited for him on the landing.

When the door shut, we began moving down the steps. We were halfway down when the doorway above us, at the top of the stairs, crashed open. Captain Bishop jumped, but I'd been expecting it.

This was a little too repetitive to be ghosts. This was structural problems.

We went down to the first floor, and I unlocked the door. I could smell that Captain Bishop was sweating, and smell that acrid smell that fear made. I locked the door behind us when we went to the CQ area. I moved around the counter, sat down, stuck the knife into the sheath tucked in my boot, and then put my boots up on the counter.

"Well, sir?" I asked.

"What, Private?"

"Find out what you wanted to know, sir?" I asked. I had my own theories by this point.

"No. Someone's fucking with us, and I'm starting to believe Cobb that this place is haunted." He told me. At the far end of the hallway, the emergency lights flickered and went out again.

"Are you going to be OK out here?" He asked me.

"Yes, sir." I answered. He set the .45 on the counter, and turned away. "Come and get me if there are any problems."

I chuckled to myself as he knocked on the door and waited for Stokes to open it.

Problems? What kind of problems could we be having?

Mann relieved me at breakfast, and Stokes and I ate eggs and rat meat.

Mmmm. Everyone looked sandy-eyed. I'd plugged in the phones about zero five hundred, and nobody had called. Pervert or not. I'd decided that the radiator had proven that this wasn't a haunting; this was a building that was old, falling apart, shittily maintained, and half-assed rebuilt.

Stokes was staring at me oddly when I stood up and stretched. Cobb was smoking a cigarette and I reached down and grabbed it, taking a drag, and then handed it back to him. I didn't smoke, but the taste of the cigarette would get the nasty taste out of my mouth. Cobb grinned at me.

Mann had unlocked the doors, and I headed down to my room. Fuck this, I wanted a shower. Oh fuck, my laundry. I'd forgotten all about it. At least I'd put it in the drier. It had sat in there for several days, but I was worried that I'd open the drier and find old SS uniforms replacing mine.

When I went into the laundry room, my laundry was on the counter, neatly folded and separated.

No. No fucking way. I thought, picking it up and heading out of the laundry room. No fucking ghost, anywhere, is going to fold laundry. Not even some anal retentive dead Nazi SS instructor. To me, it was just further proof that all of this was just structural.

I managed to unlock my room without dropping my laundry, and kicked the door shut behind me. I put away my laundry, and caught sight of the flask of Tequila that SPC Thompson had given me.

Fuck it. I took the bottle with me into the bathroom, turned on the water, and waited for it to heat up. When it heated up enough, I stepped in and sat down cross-legged. I pulled a couple hits off the bottle, stood up, set the bottle on the sink, and took care of business.

Finished with memories of my wife and last meeting, I washed off, then grabbed the bottle again. I took a long pull standing there, with the water sluicing down my back.

The lights went off in the bathroom, instantly plunging it into darkness.

I took another hit off the bottle and leaned my head against the tile of the shower.

I missed my wife. I missed my friends. I missed my twin sister. I hoped my twin brother had gotten anally raped to death by a moose.

The lights flickered.

I took another long drink, nearly emptying the flask, and thought about Susan. I used our wedding ring to make clinking noises against the bottle. The water was hot, smelled faintly of rust, but it was hot. I missed her voice, I missed her smell, I missed the way she would cuddle up to me in the middle of the night.

The light flickered, buzzed, and went out.

I scratched my balls and wondered what Stokes titties looked like under that brown shirt, and tried to imagine what her ass looked like. She was a big woman, but I was willing to bet she was all woman under those BDU's.

The light came on with a snap, and I turned off the shower. I dried off, drug on my blue and gold PT shorts, and went out into my room. I'd left the door open, and the steam had boiled out of the bathroom and coated the whole place with frost.

"What the hell were you doing in there, jerking off?" Stokes asked me. She was sitting in the chair that normally went under the desk, with her leg stretched out.

"Yeah. What the hell are you doing in here?" I asked. Oh shit. She probably knew I'd been wondering about her.

"It's too noisy down there. They're getting a block and tackle from Third Shop along with some pallet jacks, and they're going to load all that Nazi shit you found onto some trucks." She told me. "Mind if I sleep in here? Mine's on the first floor, and they're dragging all that shit right by my room."

"I snore." I told her, vaulting into my bed. One hand on the edge of the bed, and just fling myself into the top bunk. I pulled the green blankets off and tossed them on the floor, then slithered underneath the comforter I'd brought with me, buried in my duffle bag.

"You've got to be kidding." She told me, picking up the blankets.

"I'm married." I told her. She tossed the blankets up on the bed and climbed up painfully.

"Good. So we know where we stand." She pulled off the leg brace and tossed it on the floor. I rolled over and faced the wall.

I couldn't get my mind off of her titties against my back until I went to sleep.

I woke up first, seriously in need, and pressed up against her. I sighed in the cold and dark, pulled her hand off me, and slid out from behind her. Climbing down the front of the bunk wasn't easy, but I didn't tear my dick off, so it was good.

I took another shower.

When I came out, she had managed to get down out of the bunk, and was sitting on one of the spare beds.

"Go ahead, towels are on the shelf." I told her, walking up and opening my drawer to get a clean uniform. She nodded and limped into the bathroom, shutting it and locking it. I wanted to laugh. Less than a half hour ago, she'd been holding... never mind, I was married, and I didn't need to think about that. Besides, we were asleep, so it didn't count.

I was finishing lacing up my boots when she screamed.

I walked up to the door and knocked.

"It's just the lights." I told her.

"Monkey?"

"Yeah?"

"It scared me."

"Just wait it out." I answered.

"OK." I went back into the main part of the room, and took the time to shine my boots. They needed it. Tuck the dagger into my boot, and I'm good. I dry-shaved, tossed the razor in the garbage, and sat down.

According to my little map in my green notebook, the third floor and the attic weren't refurbished. I was willing to bet that there was a hole in the wall or something. I made marks on my little map. I was sure it was electrical problems and structural problems.

There are no such things as ghosts.

Stokes came limping out of my bathroom, naked in all her glory, toweling her hair. I could see the scars running up and down her bad leg, and another thick scar underneath her left breast. She'd gotten messed up in that wreck.

I turned around and waited till she got done dressing.

"Don't you like me?" She asked.

"I do."

"You don't even look."

"I'm married."

"Never mattered to anyone else." Her hand fell on my shoulder.

"It matters to me." I answered, putting my hand on top of hers and squeezing. My wedding ring glinted in the light. She held my hand a moment longer, and then stepped away, taking her hand with her.

Goddamn it.

I waited till she cleared her throat and turned around. She was dressed in her uniform again, and I was painfully aware of just how much that uniform concealed, how shapeless it made her look.

Fuck.

Together we walked down to the CQ area, she asked me about the circumstances of joining the Army, I grunted in response. I let her use me for balance when we were going down the stairs, I didn't want her to risk hurting her leg.

Everyone was sitting in the CQ area, and there were people I didn't recognize. Dinner was spaghetti and out of mermite cans again. I did a quick head count, and came up with 25. Oh joy, we'd been reinforced. All of them were E-4's and waaay too old for their rank.

"There's the man." Cobb said. He lit a cigarette and handed it to me. I took it, I didn't smoke, but it was polite.

"What?" I asked.

"You're the furnace man. Mind showing some of these guys how to reload it?" Cobb asked. He had an evil grin, one I matched.

"No problem." I answered, walking over and picking up the heavy flashlight.

"You seven, form up on Private Monkey." Captain Bishop said. He stood up and handed me the .45. I checked the action,

and put it in my thigh pocket.

"Be back in 10 minutes. Get your parkas and your gloves." I told them. I'd carried my parka under my arm, my gloves were in my left thigh pocket. I'd only been here a few days, but I'd learned quickly.

"You guys close that hatch?" I asked. My ribs ached still.

"Yeah, we closed it." Mann said.

"We moved all that shit out of there. You wouldn't have believed all that shit down there." Smith added. "Over twelve trips with the 5-ton to clear it all out."

"Barring anything unusual, we'll be ordering a replacement water heater and furnace, and the engineers are going to send down some electrical guys and plumbers to check the building out." Captain Bishop interjected.

I nodded. He didn't prod me for a correct answer, or to expound on whatever I had to say.

"How was your rest?" Cobb snickered. I stared at him, and after a moment, he looked away.

"Fine." I answered eventually. There was mumbling, but that was about it. Stokes looked at me strangely, and I smiled at her.

"Private Monkey, you mentioned these." SFC Vickers had two boxes of fuses in his hand, I took them and tucked them into the pocket of my BDU blouse.

The newbies had finally gathered back up, and I put on my parka, buckled it, and pulled the .45 and transferred it to the pocket on my parka.

"Monkey, take this." Cobb told me. I looked down, and he was holding up a coil of 550 cord that had a bunch of D-rings hanging off it.

"Thanks, Cobb." I replied, taking it and putting it in my cargo pocket. He was right, it might come out useful.

"Let's go, troops." I said, and led them down the hallway. I had to leave them there, while I went back and got the master key. Someone had locked the stairwell door. They all looked at each other oddly when I unlocked it.

When I pushed open the door, the lights in the hallway and the stairwell cut off. Two of the emergency lights cut in, and the stairwell stayed dark. There was a low moan that echoed through the stairwell, and an answering shriek from the upstairs hallway.

Someone swore under their breath.

"At ease that shit." I growled, stepping into the stairwell. We went down to the bottom floor, and I unlocked the stairwell door. I waited till everyone was in the little hallway, and I pointed at the door.

"Once we are past this door, there are no lights, it is a dirt floor, and do not trust what you hear." I told them.

"Come on, Private, save the fucking ghost stories, we're not greenies." One guy laughed. I just stared at him for a moment, then he dropped his gaze.

"If you men and women are done." I stated. Nobody said anything, and I unlocked the door.

"Jeeze, what an asshole." someone whispered. That's why you don't whisper, numb nuts, it carries.

The stench of something wrong gushed out and enveloped us. Someone coughed, but I just pushed my way into the darkness. The light from the flashlight was dim, but I wanted proof this time. My regular flashlight was still off, with the batteries in my pocket.

Someone bitched about the smell, and I told them all to shut the fuck up. I didn't say anything, I was counting steps.

Twenty steps in, the flashlight flickered. At thirty five, it cut out.

We stood in the darkness. The water heater was slowly breathing in the darkness, and I could see the glow of the furnace in the distance.

"What happened?" Someone asked. Female.

"Happens all the time." I answered, clipping the heavy one to my parka belt and dragging out my regular, issue, flashlight. I replaced the batteries, and the dim light turned on.

"Follow me." I told them. Someone swore softly. I could feel the hair on my neck raising up, and the goose bumps forming. I couldn't hear any strange noises over all the racket all the fucking noobs were raising.

We got to the furnace, and I instructed everyone on how to keep a furnace fed and cared for. They asked about the wheels, and I told them that there was no way to tell what the fuck they were for. This wasn't a steam furnace; this was an old style coal heats air air floats up type furnace.

I hated the big black fucker.

We'd taken about a half dozen steps when my flashlight cut out. I couldn't resist, I ghosted away, found the wall with my hand, and leaned on it.

"Remember, ghosts don't exist." I whispered.

I heard them cursing, yelling for me, and in general being pissed. After a few moments, the sounds stopped, and we could all hear the basement.

The hissing breaths of the water heater, and the grinding chuckle of Mr. Furnace. There was a scampering noise, and someone screamed.

"SOMETHING JUST RAN UP MY LEG!"

I chuckled. Mr. Rat would do that. I felt a fierce joy, an obscene thrill at torturing these guys and girls like this.

Not so brave now, are you, fuckers?

I swapped out the batteries, and turned on the flashlight. I shined it around, and found them scattered everywhere.

"What the fuck is wrong with you people? Don't you have any goddamn discipline? Look at this bullshit. The goddamn rotten wood hatch to the sub-basement is about three feet from you, dipshit. That's a twenty foot fucking fall to concrete." I walked up to each of them. "Next time this shit happens, STAY THE FUCK TOGETHER!"

I was grinning fiercely, convinced they'd learned the danger of this goddamn building. I led them back to the CQ area, locking the doors behind me.

"Cobb is missing." Captain Bishop told me.

I suddenly wanted a cigarette.

"Monkey, take three. Where do you think he might be?" Captain Bishop asked me.

"Attic, sir." I replied. I knew he wasn't in the furnace room. I'd have seen him. "Mann, Carter, Smith, and Stokes." I said, pointing out each of them. I went around back of the CQ counter, pulled open the drawer, and grabbed another packet of batteries. I left the heavy duty one there, my little issue one was my friend, it wouldn't fail me. It was issue, but a gift from a

friend in AIT. Long story short, she shoved it in her snatch on a drunken bet. I lost the bet. The flashlight was my buddy, it wouldn't fail me.

"Check the attic. And, uh, Monkey?" I looked at Captain Bishop, "Protect your men." I nodded, and took the .45 out of my pocket. He nodded, and I turned around.

"Let's go." I said, and didn't even bother looking behind me to make sure they were following me. It didn't seem weird, that I was a PV2 with less time in than these guys and gals had spent in the field, and they were listening to me. I liked Mann, he was a good guy, and a hard worker. Smith had a wry sense of humor, and I trusted him to have my back. Carter didn't strike me as the type to let me down, and he wouldn't run. Stokes, she was looking for redemption. I don't know why I knew it, I just did. Maybe the time I spent as Basic Training platoon sergeant? Maybe the time I spent as Class Sergeant in AIT.

We went up the stairs, to the third floor, and I checked the door. Locked, but that didn't mean shit. I was willing to bet Cobb had a key. He's been here all alone for two weeks.

The memory of his lunge to my throat suddenly came to the front. Wait, didn't someone vanish? Wasn't only he and one other guy here, and that guy supposedly vanished? My throat gave a dull throb.

I held my hand up and clicked off the flashlight.

"If you see Cobb, don't fuck around, kill him if you have to, but don't trust him." I ordered. My eyes were adjusting to the darkness, I could feel them around me. "I think he's got cabin fever."

"You've got to be kidding." Stokes whispered. "He's never hurt me."

I pressed the .45 in her hand. "You move slower than us. Don't fuck with him, shoot him in the goddamn knee and scream." I put my hand on the push-bar of the door. "Let's do this."

I eased open the door, and looked around. There was a huge emblem painted on one wall, and moonlight was streaming through the windows. The storm was over us, and I could see clouds slowly moving toward us. We wouldn't have light for long.

The room was empty, and the same layout as the floor below. I ghosted through the room, and tried the first set of doors.

Locked. Damn it.

I unlocked and opened the door. I could see wires hanging down from the walls, desks, and another goddamn Nazi mural. There was dust on the floor, with some footprints, but no Army boot prints.

He hadn't been in here.

Each of the other rooms was the same. Desks. Typewriters. Murals. Telephones. It was like the Nazi's had just got up and left for lunch and never come back. I picked up a clipboard and looked at it. German, and I didn't speak a bit of it. It could have been a nasty note specifically to me, and I wouldn't have known it.

Still, something about it sent goose bumps down my spine, and I set it down.

Something bad had happened here.

We met back up in the main room. Stokes was leaning against the wall, the windows over her head, and the pistol held in both hands. The clouds were rapidly approaching, and I knew we were going to run out natural light soon.

He'd found two pistols, who was to say he didn't find more? And now that you mention it, who the hell was to say that the armory key wasn't "missing" but rather riding in Cobb's pocket?

I knelt down and drew the SS dagger from my boot.

"What?" Stokes asked.

"Who put the locks on the armory?" I asked.

"Cobb, but the key is... oh. Shit." Stokes answered.

"Back us up, Stokes." I handed the knife to Mann, who shook his head. I handed it to Smith, who took it and looked at me.

"What, because I'm black I can stab someone?"

"Fine, give it back."

"Fuck you, it's mine now." I chuckled, and moved over to the door.

"Smith, you and Carter go down and check the armory, then report back. If you're not back in ten minutes, Stokes, Mann, and I will mount a rescue mission." I said.

"Be careful, Monkey, Cobb's a bad motherfucker. He knows Karate." Mann said. I snorted, remembering the feel of Cobb's nose smashing against my forehead.

"Cobb's a punk." I said. "He's all fucking talk, just get on him and hurt him. Stokes, Mann, stay here."

We split up, and I ghosted down the hall. I was good at it, moving silently. Less than 2 years before, during hunting season, I'd gotten close enough to a deer to thump it on the nose. I doubted Cobb would be as sensitive as a deer.

I checked each of the doors, ignoring the moaning. The moaning was of the dead, I was hunting the living. They were all locked, and each one I silently cracked open and moved in silently.

The clouds had come back in, but there was still enough light to see.

Muttering to myself, I headed back down the hallway. Everyone was back.

"Cobb wasn't down there. The arms room was still locked." Smith said, offering me back the knife. I took it. "I'm telling you, that cracker is long gone."

"No, he isn't. He wants to leave, but he can't. He's in here somewhere." I told them. "He's got cabin fever. Come on, help me find the attic access."

It took us about twenty minutes, but we found it in an office. Smith stood on the desk and pushed up the hatch, telling us that if he got killed, his "black ass" was going to haunt us forever.

"Holy fuck." he whispered.

"What?" I asked.

"The whole attic is full of more of those goddamn boxes." Smith told us.

Below us, we heard the crashing of boots, and a scream drifted up through the vent.

"Fuck this, he's not up here. Let's head back to the CQ area." I said. Everyone agreed, and we left the hatch open when we headed out.

Downstairs, everyone else had reformed up, but nobody had found Cobb.

"Everyone in the dayroom. We'll search for him tomorrow. Monkey, you've got first watch." Captain Bishop ordered. I nodded, took the master key and flashlight, and went out to the CQ area.

It would be dark, the storm would cut off most of the moonlight, but my eyes would adjust.

Crazy white man, or dead Nazi's. Something was in here with us.

I had the weirdest feeling everything was about to come to a head.

I stood in the shadows behind the CQ desk for about an hour, thinking dark thoughts.

Cobb had murdered that guy. I knew it as strongly as I knew he'd wrapped his goddamn dickbeaters around my fucking neck. The place wasn't haunted, but it was a fucking wreck, and Mann was right. Ionization was fucking our shit up. Same place every time for the batteries to cut out in the basement, and batteries didn't last too long when they were in use.

The Nazi's had left, that much we knew. When the US troops found this building, they did a cursory sweep and left. There had been POW's stored on this post during World War II, and it was a "Displaced Persons" encampment following World War II. Knights had fought here at one point. We were smack in the middle of the Fulda Gap, the first line of defense against the Red Steamroller.

Bad things had happened here. Rumors of torture practice, garrote practice. Stokes had told me about there being an off limits area where the whipping post, with it's iron ring that people's hands were lashed to, was still intact.

Wounded animals nest up, son. My father's voice whispered inside my mind.

I turned from where I was staring at the hallway, moving slow so I wouldn't attract attention. The SS dagger was in my hand, I'd put the .45 in my pocket.

FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK!

Two slow steps took me there, and I gently pressed down on the door handle. It clicked, the sound buried beneath a low moan of agony drifting down the hallway. I pushed open the door, and looked in.

Cobb was passed out on the single bunk in the office, a bottle of Bacardi 151 still in his hand.

Motherfucker.

He had been there all along. Too many people had come in, too many unfamiliar faces, and he'd retreated to his nest where he'd hidden from the sounds of the barracks when he was here all alone.

He didn't try to roll his thumbs

If you're really strangling someone, you roll your thumbs to crush the windpipe. He'd just squeezed. As I stared at him, I sincerely doubted he could murder anyone. I'd met murderers, rapists, and the like in maximum security before I was transferred. Cobb wasn't a killer, he was scared shitless.

I knelt down next to him. He reeked of booze.

"Cobb." I whispered, shaking him. Nothing. He didn't even flinch. I pinched his earlobe between my thumbnail and fingernail. He didn't even so much as fart. He was fucking wasted. I picked up his pack of smokes and took some, putting them in the pocket of my parka. You never know when you might need cigarettes.

I stood up, and quietly left him to his nightmares. I locked the door, more out of politeness than anything else. I went over to the dayroom, unlocked the door, and went inside.

Captain Bishop was sleeping right next to the door, and I shook him awake.

"Sir, come with me." I said. He looked at me oddly, but followed. I closed and locked the door behind me.

"What is it, Private?" Captain Bishop asked. At least he kept his fucking voice quiet.

"I found Cobb." I told him.

"Fuck, you didn't kill him, did you?" Bishop asked.

"No, he's passed out in his little hidey-hole with a bottle of 151." I pointed at the door. Captain Bishop followed where I was pointing and let out a laugh.

"You've got to be fucking kidding. We turned this place upside down, and he was in there asleep the whole fucking time?" I nodded. "Ain't that some shit." He let out a long breath. "Fucking figures. God, I hate this building." A moan drifted down the hallway, and the crashing noise came from upstairs. I checked my watch.

"What?"

"The crashing, it comes every forty-five minutes to an hour, every night."
I said.

"So? Spit it out, Private."

"I've got a theory, but I'm not sure."

"You've got a theory? You? You didn't even finish high school." SFC Vickers scornful voice said from the doorway. I'd heard it open, but figured it was someone going to take a piss. SFC Vickers stomped out into the CQ area.

"Who the fuck are you talking to out here, Private Monkey? You're supposed to be on guard duty, not running your fucking mouth. Private Cobb could have run by you playing a goddamn bugle with all the noise you're making." He stomped right by Captain Bishop and I, up to where my flashlight was sitting on the counter.

About 10 feet from me. Moron.

"He's talking to me, Sergeant. Do you have a problem?" Captain Bishop's tone was colder than the wind outside.

"No, no sir, I don't. I thought, well, I didn't see you there." He was turned toward us, trying to squint in the light of my flashlight.

"Seeing as your GT is under 100, and you failed your last SQT, I don't think you should be commenting on anyone's intellect." Captain Bishop finished.

"Well, I thought Monkey was just out here showing off." Vickers finished lamely. Showing off? No, that would be if I walked up to him, pulled his goddamn bullying head off, and shoved it in his ass.

"Who was responsible for searching the CQ area and the first floor, Sergeant?" Bishop's tone was freezing now. I thought about breaking out the swimming trunks and standing outside to warm up.

"I supervised three of the new soldiers." Vickers replied.

"AND HOW DID YOU FUCKING MISS COBB PASSED OUT IN A FUCKING BUNK?" Bishop yelled. It pleased me to no end to see Vickers flinch. I'd been right. He'd bully the lower enlisted, but sucked up and looked all buddy buddy the minute someone higher ranking was around.

"They assured me that they searched the entire area, sir." He sounded like a fucking weasel.

"Well, they didn't. Private Cobb could have been found hours ago, if you did your job." Captain Bishop took a deep breath.

"You found Cobb?" Smith asked from the dayroom door. Behind him I could see the glint of lots of eyes and looming shadows.

"He's passed out drunk in that office." Captain Bishop told everyone. "He wasn't grabbed by dead Nazi's; the ghost of LT Greer didn't get him. He just returned to the place he'd been living after seventeen hundred and went to sleep."

"Oh." Someone said from inside the room, and the door shut.

"Sergeant, if I ever hear you use that tone again, or disparage a soldier again, without due cause, I will follow the recommendation from your last CO and have you ejected from this man's Army. Do you follow?" The cold tone was back.

"Yes, sir." Vickers said, hanging his head. He turned and went into the dayroom, leaving me alone with Captain Bishop.

"How'd you figure it out?" Captain Bishop asked, nodding toward Cobb's hiding place.

"He's got cabin fever. Too many people he didn't know. He went out of his way to make friends with me, always lighting me cigarettes and offering me hits off his bottle and sitting next to me when we ate." I told him. "I've read the FM on psych, and he fits the description of cabin fever."

"It's called disambiguation, Private." Captain Bishop replied. "Where did you get medical FM's?"

"One of my DI's got them for me. I've read a lot of FM's since I joined the Army." I replied.

"Hmmm." He rubbed his jaw and stared at me.

"Carry on. Can you handle the rest of the night?" he asked.

"Yes, sir." I answered.

Cobb came stumbling out of his little fortress about 0400, staggered into the bathroom, and I could hear him throwing up over the sound of the wind outside. When he came out, he saw me leaning in the shadows and shambled over.

"Got a light?" He asked me.

"Yeah." I answered, lighting two cigarettes and handing him one. I didn't smoke, but Cobb needed a friend right now.

"Thanks, Monkey, you're an OK guy." he told me. I shrugged. He didn't know me that well yet.

"I didn't kill that guy." He told me. He leaned against the wall and sighed.

"I believe you." I told him.

"Really? Why?"

"My room-mate in maximum security before I was transferred to Fort Lost In the Woods was a murderer. All he talked about was how he was innocent.

Plus, no offense, but you aren't too good at the whole assault and battery thing." He looked at me oddly.

"That's not just a rumor?"

"No." He waited for me to explain, and then just dropped it.

"I hate this place." He told me. We both looked over when the dayroom door opened. One of the newbies walked out scratching his ass and went into the latrine.

"We're stuck here." I told him. We stood silently. The newbie left the bathroom and went back into the dayroom.

"Go snuggle up next to Stokes, dude. Get some rest. Captain Bishop wants everyone up at 0600." I told him. He stared at me for a moment. "Oh for Christ's Sake, I didn't fuck her, I'm married. She just stayed in my room. Fuck."

"Oh." Cobb replied. I watched him go into his hidey-hole and get his blanket, then go into the dayroom. He closed the door and locked it, leaving me to my thoughts.

What the fuck happened to Tandy?

Outside, snow was starting to blow. I stood and watched it, nearly hypnotized by its dancing. That was when it dawned on me.

The light poles at the end of the walk never flickered or went out!

I took out my green notebook, and jotted that little fact down, then returned it to my breast pocket. It meant something, and my brain was whirling to figure it out.

In the morning, I'd throw all the main breakers, and have someone watch and see if they turned off. If not, that meant they were on a separate circuit, which meant there was another fuse box somewhere. Maybe outside, or somewhere else, and the power for the building was all fucked up due to having two separate fuse boxes.

It made sense.

At 0600, I could hear Captain Bishop waking everyone up. He dragged two mermite cans out for us to eat out of. I sat and ate, thinking about the various theories I had come up with. I didn't even flinch when the scream sounded through the stairwell. I was pretty sure there were air leaks, and as strong as the wind was out there, it would shriek as it passed through the gap.

I had all of it figured out.

Really, smartass? What happened to Tandy, then? Huh?

At 0700, Captain Bishop told me to get some rest, that he'd wake me up at 1700. I nodded, gave him the .45, he gave me a bottle of Jack Daniels, and I headed back to my room. When I got there, I laid on the bare mattress of the bottom bunk and lit one of the cigarettes. Marlboro. One of the ones I'd stolen from SFC Vickers.

I didn't smoke, but it helped me think.

The temperature in my room had plummeted, so I swung my legs off the bed, and turned up the radiator. I stood there for a moment, looking at the snow. I couldn't even see the guard towers across from me.

I went in and stood in the shower, letting the water run down my back. I finished the cigarette and threw it in the toilet, trying to figure out where Tandy could have gone that we couldn't have found him. In retrospect, where Cobb went was a no-brainer, but Tandy was tougher.

I was exhausted. I missed my wife, but at least the vision of Stokes nakedness was fading from my memory, overlaid by the familiar feel of my wife's body against my hands.

We'd gotten married while I was at Red Stone Arsenal, real quick, while I was on weekend pass. I'd spent the weekend in her arms; we never left the hotel room.

I missed her desperately. I held that vision of her, standing in front of the bathroom, the steam rolling around her, posing naked, touching herself, telling me not to move, to just watch her.

I held the memory long enough to finish, soaped off, then got out of the shower.

Who the fuck was I fooling, playing Boy Detective. I was a goddamn PV2, and Vickers was right, I hadn't even graduated High School. I was an uneducated military brat and hick.

I climbed in bed, snuggled down in the comforter my wife had given me, and stared at the ceiling.

Sleep came slow and fitful. I kept waking up to thumping noises above me.

I woke up when the door opened, and Mann called out my name.

"I'm awake." I told him. He came in and sat down in the same chair that Stokes had sat in. I swung my legs out the bed, and noticed that my breath was visible.

"Have fun?" I asked. He looked dog tired.

"We used a block and tackle to remove all that shit from the attic and sent it to main post. Eight trips through the goddamn snow, but Captain Bishop is sure we got all that fucking Nazi shit out of here. Tomorrow, we're going to photograph then paint over all those murals on the third floor." He told me, and rubbed his face. "Got anything to drink?"

"In the desk drawer." I jumped down, walked over in my underwear, and dug out a cigarette. I offered one to Mann, who refused, lit one, and went and sat down. The cold air stung, but it was helping me wake up. Mann pulled out my bottle of Jack Daniels and took a long pull off of it before handing it to me. I took a hit off it, and then passed it back.

"How's Cobb holding up?" I asked.

"OK. We got in about 10 more people, including another butterbar. You were right, when Captain Bishop excused us from the work detail; he went and hid in the office." He took another pull off the bottle and looked at me. "You act like a former NCO, you know that?"

"Nope. Just PV2." I answered, taking a drag off the cigarette and then a pull off the bottle. It settled in my empty stomach, and I felt the warmth spreading through my limbs.

"Huh." Mann replied. He took another pull off the bottle, then stood up and handed it back. "Anyway, Captain Bishop wants us all there for a headcount every night now."

I nodded, and Mann left. I pulled out one of my uniforms that some ghost had nicely folded for me, used a damp towel as a break, and ironed it. I polished my boots, dirty from coal dust and the black, gritty dirt of the basement..

Dirt? Why dirt in a basement?

Fuck. The question bothered me as I pulled on my uniform and my nicely brush-shined boots. They needed a good spit shine, but I was too busy to have time for it. I grabbed my parka, made sure my gloves were in my pocket, and tucked the SS dagger into my boot. It was starting to get to be a habit. The damn thing didn't even creep me out any more.

As I walked down the hallway, a low moan followed me, and I got Goosebumps on my legs. At the far end of the hallway came the crashing and I checked my watch.

Which was stopped at midnight.

I stopped, held it up to my ear, shook it, and checked it again. Nothing. Son of a bitch, goddamn thing must have gotten knocked. My stomach growled, and I started back down the hallway. When I opened the doorway to the stairwell, a shriek tore down it. I let the door slam, and counted the seconds.

Ten seconds later the door above me crashed open, and another scream ripped up the hallway. I smiled to myself, and went into the CQ area. I counted, and another crash of the door being slammed open and a shriek roared up the stairwell. Ten Seconds. Exactly.

As I crossed the CQ area, I checked the snow outside. It was blowing from left to right. Yesterday, it had blown from right to left.

Gotcha

Everyone was eating in the day room. Cobb waved at me, and I waved back as I walked over to the CQ area. Captain Bishop looked up at me and waved me around the counter. I walked over and sat down.

"You said you had a theory." He stated more than asked. I noticed he had a clipboard. I nodded and handed him my green notebook. He opened it up, and started leafing through the pages.

Lists of times, wind direction and sounds, wall thickness by brick thickness, time it took for noises to start from my radiator, gaps in the window sills to wall measurements, guesses, theories.

"You've really thought this through." He stated, handing it back to me.

"Yes, sir."

"So you think a better heater and water heater, insulation in the walls, as well as new plumbing and wiring will fix all of this?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"All right. One last question."

"Go ahead, sir."

"Where's Private Tandy?"

Godammit.

"I don't know, sir." He laughed, surprising me.

"Good to know you don't think you know everything." He told me.

I was watching over his shoulder, and noticed that it was getting dim at the far end of the hallway, past the double doors.

"What's wrong, Private?"

"I'm not sure, something doesn't look right." I told him, standing up to get a better look. The whole end of the hallway looked like a mist had risen from the floor. I felt my body erupt in goose bumps, and the hair on my neck raise up.

"What the fuck is that?" Captain Bishop asked, looking down the hallway.

The mist was thickening, starting to seep under the doors. It rolled down the hallway like a living thing, slowly approaching us. I realized Captain Bishop was backing up as I lifted my boot up onto the counter and drew the dagger.

A roaring noise was echoing from the vents, and beyond the doors was turning black. The grey mist was billowing from between the cracks where the doors met. Blackness started spilling from between the doors, and something in the blackness beyond the doors gave out in a shower of sparks.

"Mother of God." Captain Bishop breathed.

Black dirt.

My mind kept flashing to the dirt, to my boots, and back to the dirt.

The bottom of the doors was invisible, and a heavy, obscene breathing was emanating from the vents. I was starting to sweat. I glanced at Captain Bishop, and he was sweating too.

Coal.

"Who was on fireguard tonight?" I asked, moving around the counter and into the CQ room. The mist was fast approaching, more than halfway down the hallway.

"Specialist Plows, one of the ones you took down there, why?" Captain Bishop sounded honestly scared as the cloud moved toward us.

"PLOWS! POST!" I yelled. Plows came out of the dayroom, spotted the cloud in the hallway, and jumped back.

"Holy fuck! What is that?"

"Did you fuck with ANY of the wheels on the furnace?" I asked.

"No."

"Don't fucking lie to me, soldier."

"I didn't."

"What did you do with the shovel."

The far doors were invisible, and I was sweating hard. It was hot as hell in here.

Black dirt. Coal. Dust....

"GET EVERYONE OUT OF HERE!" I yelled. It all clicked.

What about Tandy?

FUCK TANDY!

"What's wrong, Private." Captain Bishop asked.

"That's goddamn smoke; this place is fucking burning down. THAT asshole!" I pointed at Plows, "Fucked something up down there."

"EVERYONE OUT, GET THE FUCK OUT!" Captain Bishop and SPC Plows ran into the dayroom, yelling at everyone to get out. I reached forward and grabbed the door handle, turning around to face everyone.

"Everyone at once. We open these doors, and the winds going to come whipping in here, and I don't know what will happen." I said.

SFC Vickers pushed me as hard as he could, sending me against the doors and stumbling into the doors to outside. I fell backwards, lost my balance, and tumbled down the steps. I could hear people moving by me, and saw the stairwell door blow open, filling the room with flame.

Someone came by me, their BDU's on fire, and I grabbed them and slung them into the snow.

"WHERE'S CAPTAIN BISHOP!" I yelled. I heard him call out.

"HERE! FORM UP ON ME!" I heard from his voice, which was loud as hell, overriding the wind. "EVERYONE HOLD HANDS, FORM UP ON ME!"

I plunged my hands in the snow, finding the guy who'd been on fire, and pulled him up. He screamed in my ear, but I drug him toward the CO's voice. We heard something crumble inside the building, and I bumped into someone.

I grabbed a handful of tittie.

"Stokes?" I yelled over the wind.

"Monkey?" It was her.

"SOUND OFF! ADAMS!"

"HERE!"

We went down the line.

"COBB!"

No answer.

"COBB!"

Nothing.

"HAS ANYONE SEEN COBB!" I let go of Stokes hand and broke into a run.

"Monkey!" she yelled. I ignored her, leaping over the steps, dropping my shoulder and veering to the side of the door. The glass side-windows couldn't be too thick. I went through one, then the other, and felt glass rip at my arms and bald head, but ignored it.

First rule, son, is you'll get cut...

Flames were roaring up the stairwell, and the door was flapping back and forth. The whole thing was lit up hellishly by the flames. I vaulted over the CQ counter, and landed on a chair, which slid out from under me. My head bounced off the counter as I went down.

Susan? I rolled over, unsure of where I was, and got to my feet.

The door.

I stepped forward and kicked it with everything I had. The door burst open, and I was inside, grabbing up Cobb and slinging him over my shoulders. My ribs screamed, but I ignored them as I stumbled out. The goddamn hallway was engulfed in flame, and the stairwell was nothing but a pillar of fire.

Coughing, I took a deep breath, held it, and ran through the glass I'd already shattered. Something pulled at my leg, but I kept going, stumbling down the steps and falling, dropping Cobb on the bricks.

I slid forward, feeling my hands tear, and slammed head first into the light pole at the end of the walk. I got to my feet, and swung at the figure in front of me. My knuckles rang off his chest, so I swung again, then came forward with a forearm and a knee, both of which he blocked with iron hard limbs.

You're fighting the light pole, dumbass.

I stumbled back, shaking my head. I was dizzy, and it hurt to breathe.
Drill Instructor Matthews had just got done kicking my ass to show me who was top dog...

No, wait.

I stumbled over, grabbed Cobb, and yelled.

"CAN ANYONE HEAR ME?" I knew that wasn't right, but it was all I could think of.

"OVER HERE, SOLDIER! FOLLOW MY VOICE!" I followed the CO's bellowing, dragging Cobb with me. My fucking leg hurt like a motherfucker. I bumped into someone, and swung.

"MOTHERFUCKER!" someone yelled, and grabbed at me. I swung, connected, then my arms were pinned.

"Private Monkey, it's OK." Stokes. I knew her. She had nice boobs. "Come on; get in the CUC-V."

"I found your boyfriend." I told her brightly. "I found Cobb. I couldn't find Tandy." A light shined in my eyes.

"Fuck, he's got a concussion, get him in the truck."

They pulled me over to a truck; I tried to fight for a second, and then realized what was going on.

"Oh fuck, his knee."

I looked down. There was a chunk of glass sticking out of the side of my knee.

"Ain't that some shit." I said, and passed out.

I limped behind the CQ, who was patient. My head was bandaged, as were my hands, and I was on crutches, but I'd gotten Cobb out.

I'd lost all my worldly possessions.

He opened a door, and said something to the person inside, and I crutched up to him. Another soldier looked at me, a cigarette hanging from his mouth.

"Got a smoke?" I rasped. My throat hurt from the smoke. He nodded, staring at the bandages on my head. He lit one and handed it to me. I didn't smoke, but I didn't want him to sit there and smoke alone.

"I'm Private Monkey." I told him, and he moved aside so I could get into the room.

"Sergeant Tanner. You look like hell, Monkey." he said. "I'll clear the bottom bunk for you."

I nodded tiredly, and stood there while he stripped the bed.

"You have any blankets?"

"No."

"Shit, you can use mine, man." he left the blankets on the bed, and I crutched up and sat down, groaning when the movement pulled at my sore ribs. I swung my legs into the bed, and pulled one of the blankets over me. I put my boots on the bed rail, and relaxed, feeling the painkillers do their work.

"Umm, I snore pretty badly." Tanner told me.

"No problem." I replied. I closed my eyes and went to sleep.

It was temporary housing; another unit had offered to put us up.

It was warm. It was quiet.

I opened my eyes once, and saw the glint off the hilt of the dagger in my boot.

Fuck it.

I slept.

EPILOGUE

It was spring, the majority of the snow was gone, and late March was warm. We'd moved out to one of the training areas, and said it was Pre-ARTEP. Our new barracks had been finished being built, and the construction workers had found the LT about 250 feet from the building when the snow melted far enough.

He'd gotten turned around and froze to death.

I was sporting Corporal rank, and nobody had bitched one bit when I was jumped two pay grades. It had taken two months of physical therapy to get rid of my limp, but I'd blown the PT test away.

I sat in the tent, listening to the radio, and calling each guard post in turn. Not bad, I was a mere Corporal, and they let me pull Sergeant of the Guard, put me in charge of the QRF, and had given me my own squad.

Nobody believed us when we told the stories in the NCO club. Everyone blew it off, called us liars, but we talked about it to each other. It drew an invisible line between those of us who had gone through it, and those who had arrived after.

Smith had fully recovered. Just first degree burns on his head and hands. He constantly claimed that the building tried to get him, since "the black guy always dies" in the scary movies.

That was his claim to fame. He was black, and he'd survived.

The charges SFC Vickers had tried to press on me had fallen flat. I'd been concussed pretty badly, and the dispensary had kept me for 2 days for observation after pulling the glass out of my forearms and knee. To top it off, when his reenlistment date came up, the Army declined his services, and he was put out. Captain Bishop had never forgotten that he'd shoved me out of the way, bringing in fresh air for the fire to feed off.

Captain Bishop had made me turn in the SS dagger, but had bought me a heavy duty Gerber fighting knife as a gift. It rode in my boot, and nobody had ever told me I couldn't wear it there. Even when the platoon was at full strength, and we had a platoon sergeant and a platoon leader. Both the SFC and the 2LT had let the fact I was carrying a knife ride.

So it was in the middle of Pre-ARTEP, in late March, and it was about 0900. I'd been on duty for about an hour, when OP Two called in that they'd found something, and needed me to come out there right away. I asked them what it was, and they insisted that I come out there.

Fucking privates.

I left Mann in charge of the TC, and headed out there with the walkie-talkie on my belt. My M-16A1/M-203 was slung over my shoulder, and my Kevlar was a comfortable weight. I only had on my flak jacket, my field jacket, my winter BDU's and my long johns. The newbies all bitched about the cold, but shit, at least I didn't need a fucking parka inside the fucking barracks.

I went out past the perimeter, and into the bushes. I paused for a second to light a cigarette. I didn't smoke, but the air was cold, and having a cigarette warmed it before it hit my chest and made me cough. I closed the Zippo Cobb had given me with a snap, and headed out toward OP2.

Veering around a bush, I called out to OP2 that I was heading in. Two days ago, some overzealous private had taken a shot at me when I forgot to call to them. We had live ammunition, shit, we had to with all the goddamn ammo we were guarding, but that didn't mean he could shoot at me.

"We're over here, Corporal." One of the privates said. I followed his voice, and came out into the clearing they were standing in.

The three of them were standing in front of something that I couldn't see. Something in the dead leaves and winter grass.

"What the fuck are you guys doing out of the OP." I asked.

"Private Thomas came out here to take a piss, and look what he found, Corporal!" The kid's voice was high pitched.

I moved forward and looked down.

Tandy grinned up at me.

-

Eat_at_Milliways posted:

Why was all the spooky shit happening every 45 minutes then?

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Ice would form in between the walls, on the support beams, but the vents for the heating system leaked badly from the rats and age (which is why the barracks never got warm) and the ice would weaken at the base, and come crashing down, cooling the vents, and the ice would build up again.

That noise I kept hearing, and other people kept mentioning as almost able to hear right before the crashing?

The ice breaking free.

That was my theory.

I tried to figure out the phones, but crossed wires are all I can think of. If I'd been thinking straight, I'd have checked the other lines, and found out which of the others had the hissing noise in it.

It was rhythmic from the hot air blowing out of a hole in one of the vents, and pushing the wires together.

The only mystery that was never solved, that the Army just wrote up and ignored, was the fact that Tandy had supposedly wandered just over 6 miles, in a blizzard, dressed only in his BDU's.

I'd been out there when we dug the foxhole for OP2. I'd stood right where they found Tandy.

I never saw him.

When it went around that we found him, Stokes, Cobb, Mann, Smith, me, and a few others had nightmares that he had shambled from where he had frozen to death, around the mountain, and was coming to get us.

We had dreams of him bursting into the tent while we were sleeping.

What happened to Tandy?

Officially: Death due to exposure.

To us? The building got him.

<http://sa.mrbill.net/humpermonkey.html>

<http://sa.mrbill.net/humpermonkey2.html>