

The Shootout

by

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TIME: Early May 2011

PLACE: Dam Neck, Virginia

CHARACTERS

Interviewer: A woman, about 60 years old; a senior officer with a benign appearance

Operator: A man about 30 years old; a near-perfect physical specimen, except for a weariness about him.

At rise: Operator sits alone in a bare room at a spare metallic table, an empty chair across from him. He has been waiting awhile. Interviewer enters, carrying a manila file. Operator rises immediately, at attention.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The Shootout premiered as a staged reading at Spokane Civic Theatre's Firth J. Chew Studio Theatre on June 10, 2011, directed by Susan Hardie.

INTERVIEWER

At ease. Good morning.

OPERATOR

Good morning, Commander.

(OPERATOR sits, as does INTERVIEWER, setting the file on the table.)

INTERVIEWER

Thank you for coming in.

OPERATOR

I had a choice. There was an armed escort. Is something wrong?

INTERVIEWER

No, no.

OPERATOR

It's just it's my first leave in four months. I've got a plane at 1300 hours.

INTERVIEWER

Change of plans. You need to be debriefed.

OPERATOR

Again? Have we met before?

INTERVIEWER

I know you're special. And it's greatly appreciated, but you don't get to ask the questions.

OPERATOR

Yes, ma'm.

INTERVIEWER

How are you?

OPERATOR

Permission to speak, ma'm.

(INTERVIEWER nods.)

Pissed. Ma'm. Four months training, the mission, three debriefings. I'm ready for R and R.

INTERVIEWER

You should be. You've earned it. Orders were cut last night. The Commander-in-Chief wants to meet with some members of the Team Friday. Privately, of course.

OPERATOR

The President, ma'm.

INTERVIEWER

We're told it's a meet and greet. He may ask questions.

OPERATOR

Can he – yes, ma'm.

INTERVIEWER

We need to know everyone is ready. As a precaution. That's why I'm here.

OPERATOR

But what about – after the last briefing Tuesday, I signed the oath .

INTERVIEWER

(Removing a form from file and showing it to OPERATOR.)
That's rescinded. You are authorized to talk to me, and the President. We're re-interviewing all Team members that were in the building.

OPERATOR

Yes ma'm.

INTERVIEWER

We've established you're pissed. How are you otherwise?

OPERATOR

A-O-K, ma'm.

INTERVIEWER

And the mission?

OPERATOR

It, it was clockwork. By the book. Except for the mechanical. Can't trust those damn machines.

INTERVIEWER

That's why there were two. Just a few questions. What were your orders?

OPERATOR

Kill or capture.

INTERVIEWER

And your role?

OPERATOR

Third unit, Blue Unit. We were to breach the target with the other units. Once in, Red had the basement, White the ground floor, Blue second floor.

INTERVIEWER

Why were you there?

OPERATOR

Orders, ma'm.

INTERVIEWER

This was your first mission on a forward team. Why you?

OPERATOR

Point man, marksman. Interpreter, if needed. I speak Arabic. Saudi military brat, ma'm.

INTERVIEWER

Were you surprised he was on the second floor?

OPERATOR

Expect everything, assume nothing.

INTERVIEWER

When you got up there, what did you encounter?

OPERATOR

The subject, and a woman. A wife, I guess.

INTERVIEWER

You knew that?

OPERATOR

Not at the time. Later.

INTERVIEWER

The incident report, it says he resisted.

OPERATOR

Yes, ma'm. That's what it says.

INTERVIEWER

Tell me about that. You knew right away?

OPERATOR

Yes, ma'm. I could see – it was him. He was tall. He was standing there, with the woman, grabbing. They were grabbing at each other. I couldn't tell – they both had robes on. Traditional dress. I, I couldn't see what they had. What they were grabbing at, muttering to each other.

INTERVIEWER

How would you describe it?

(A beat.)

Furtive?

OPERATOR

Yes. Ma'm. Definitely. Furtive.

INTERVIEWER

Then what?

OPERATOR

He tore lose of her, and reached for something.

INTERVIEWER

He reached.

OPERATOR

Yes, like this.

(OPERATOR suddenly raises his hands above his head, somewhat startling

INTERVIEWER.)

Toward the ceiling.

INTERVIEWER

How high was it.

OPERATOR

The ceiling?

INTERVIEWER

How high was the ceiling?

OPERATOR

Eight, nine feet.

INTERVIEWER

Did you know what was on the ceiling?

OPERATOR

No, ma'm.

INTERVIEWER
In that split second, did you know?

OPERATOR
No.

INTERVIEWER
What did you know?

OPERATOR
I knew about planes into buildings, bombs in baby carriages, stuff like that.

INTERVIEWER
You knew that.

OPERATOR
Yes, ma'm.

INTERVIEWER
And you did what?

OPERATOR
I tapped him twice.

INTERVIEWER
You *shot* him. This wasn't a mob hit. The man was a class-one terrorist.

OPERATOR
Yes, I shot him. Twice.

INTERVIEWER
Where?

OPERATOR
In the face and torso.

INTERVIEWER
Which one first?

OPERATOR
The face, I think.

INTERVIEWER
You think. You don't know.

OPERATOR

The face. It was on automatic.

INTERVIEWER

On automatic, doesn't the barrel tend to rise with the first round? Wouldn't that suggest the torso first.

OPERATOR

Unless you counteract that, like we're taught. First, second - We're talking nanoseconds.

INTERVIEWER

Where in the face?

OPERATOR

Where?

INTERVIEWER

What part of the face?

OPERATOR

The eye. His right eye.

INTERVIEWER

If you were going for an eye, that would be a nice touch. Biblical. Don't you think?

(A beat.)

What about the woman – you shot her.

OPERATOR

When he let go of her and reached for the ceiling, she hit the floor. I shot him then –

INTERVIEWER

You didn't know, in that split-second.

OPERATOR

- she was yelling.

INTERVIEWER

She was yelling, and what, reaching?

OPERATOR

Yes, reaching.

INTERVIEWER

And you didn't know.

OPERATOR
I didn't know. I hit her in the leg. She crawled to him.

INTERVIEWER
You let her do that.

OPERATOR
Yes.

INTERVIEWER
Why?

OPERATOR
Ma'm?

INTERVIEWER
Why did you let her do that?

OPERATOR
I don't know. She was *moaning*.

INTERVIEWER
It was a good kill.

OPERATOR
Yes, it was. A good kill.

INTERVIEWER
But they tell me in quarters you're not sleeping.

OPERATOR
You a shrink?

INTERVIEWER
I'm the senior officer asking you why you're not sleeping.

OPERATOR
Because I'm tired, and haven't been away from this in months.

INTERVIEWER
That doesn't explain the screaming. When you do sleep – try to sleep. What is it?

OPERATOR
When I try...there's eyeballs. Bloody eyeballs, everywhere. I walk on them. They make this sound. They won't stop.

INTERVIEWER

Look at me. Even Special Ops are human. You'll be fine, give it time. We forget, or make peace.

(A beat.)

You're right, you need R and R. We're going to get you on that plane.

OPERATOR

What about the interview, the meet and greet.

INTERVIEWER

We'll cover you. You've done enough. My driver will take you to the airport.

(INTERVIEWER takes another form out of the file, and places it in front of OPERATOR.)

One more.

OPERATOR

(After looking at the form.)

This...it says no one. Can I talk to anyone here? Someone? Can I talk to you?

INTERVIEWER

No. This is who we are. This is what we do. It would be treason.

(OPERATOR hesitates, then signs the document. INTERVIEWER takes the form and inspects it, then rises to leave.)

It was a good kill. Thank you. The world is a safer place. Someone will be in shortly.

(INTERVIEWER exits. Slow fade to black.)

END OF PLAY

(6/13/11)