



Source: Thomas Ricks and Ann Scott Tyson, '[Worst yet to come for US in Baghdad](#)', *Washington Post* in *Sydney Morning Herald* online, 12/01/07.

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Writer/s: [John O'Brien](#)

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We were four guys in an SUV rounding up goats, toting guns and stuffing everything in the back. No one stopped and questioned us though that thug Toomie in his uniform looked like he wanted to. So we had a couple of drinks too. Not enough drinks, I might add. Hanno was meant to bring drinks but he only brought enough to get himself wasted and once you divided that by the four of us it just made for a mellow edge, which was probably to the good.

So we rounded up three goats, and scraped the vehicle over the old dry shit they call the earth here, land of milk and honey I mean, sorry Mom.

I don't know how we got separated, we just did. In Hollywood some East German agent would have seen me shooting at the cigarette packets on top of the rocks and admired me so much he wanted—no SHE wanted—me to come work for them and then someone else from the CIA or Mossad would come and turn me into a double agent because of my superhuman capabilities, but really most Mossad people are like my friend J (not his real initial), you know accountant types who don't remember the last time they had sex cos they never have. Anyhow, somehow I was out of the vehicle and the other guys were inside and I was meant to meet them or maybe—yeah maybe I was meant to be minding two goats while they took the other three back to Yasdur's place—I shouldn't smoke pot it cracks my senses in two.

So I lay in the shadow of a rock and watched the milk and honey blow across the horizon, and I was tempted to fire my gun to remind them after the first fucking hour waiting but I only had two bullets left and I was saving them to make a demonstration of my fierce ire when they returned.

The goats had wandered away. I phoned my Mom but she was hosting a lingerie party, would you believe it, and she's like 50 years old and divorced. I phoned Kiki but she wasn't answering so I texted her instead.

And then two cars pull up like 50 metres down the hill from me. A woman gets out and a guy and a little girl. Also these SUITS, I hate suits, Mom wants me to get a job in a bank but I tell her to fuck herself if she thinks I'm gonna wear a suit. Maybe that's what she does, she puts on her lingerie and fucks herself. It doesn't bear thinking about.

Then the guy and little girl get in and that car drives off. And there's screaming. It's fucking murder that screaming. And the woman and one of the suits are hitting each other, this is serious shit.

Which is why it was very unfortunate that my gun goes off at that moment. At that moment also the woman and both the suits—or was there a third suit?—draw their guns. I don't like guns, they're kind of dangerous. That's all I see before I'm ducking down behind my rock again.

Suddenly my rock's like too small and I notice I'm breathing way loud. But then there's the silence that follows, and these people mean business, I mean that woman wasn't just hitting that suit, she was kicking the crap out of him, and the suit wasn't going down either.

Silence. No footsteps nothing. My heart beating like doof doof hell.

And then, I didn't script this, there's another car coming, and the woman's voice, in Russian, saying something right about two metres from my rock! Somehow they snuck up on me while I was listening my hardest for them. I know it's Russian cos of all the goddamn immigrants Mom's been befriending.

So the woman's running and so are the suits—I don't know for sure exactly what's happening—and then there's machine gun fire. God I hate guns. And me with one bullet left. I even giggled once cos I thought—hey, if I only had a cyanide capsule!

A bullet twangs off my rock. I'm hoping it's not my guys coming back and getting caught in some international crossfire incident. The shooting stops and there's silence again and it's worse cos I know they can sneak around like Ninja. Scared? I'm so fucking scared I'm thinking I'm gonna go home and tell Mom I want that job in the bank, that's how fucking scared I am. I'm in *Black Hawk Down* and I'm gonna fucking die.

There's a car driving off. There's another shot, and I swear the sound of someone pleading in Russian for their life. Pleading, anyroad, and that's cut off by the very last shot. Then the other car going.

I don't move. Fuck that. I am staying where I am. I am deciding what suit would suit me, I am deciding to propose to Kiki or maybe break up with her, something's gotta give there, I am praying.

I'm looking at a thin green line on the rock—lichen. But it's a start and I'm thinking this is a desert of milk and honey, and it's gonna be 42 degrees by late this afternoon and people shooting and there's a line of lichen here. I don't know if it's coming or going. Is it the last little bit or is it a pioneer? I don't care. It's alive.

I'm that lichen.

Finally the guys came back for the goats and me and they were asking me about all the blood and why I was pointing at the rock and babbling some hippie green shit. I'm not making it up. I can show you the place. I can show you the blood. And especially I can show you my rock.

I'm gonna live, man. Gonna be a pioneer in a bank.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by John O'Brien.*