

Phil Klay: Coming home (excerpt from the novel *Redeployment*¹, 2014)

The thinking comes later, when they give you the time. See, it's not a straight shot back, from war to the Jacksonville mall. When our deployment was up, they put us on TQ², this logistics base out in the desert, let us decompress³ a bit. I'm not sure what they meant by that. Decompress. We took it to mean jerk off a lot in the showers. Smoke a lot of cigarettes and play a lot of cards. And then they took us to

5 Kuwait and put us on a commercial airliner to go home.

So there you are. You've been in a no-shit war zone and then you're sitting in a plush chair, looking up at a little nozzle shooting⁴ air-conditioning, thinking, What the fuck? You've got a rifle between your knees, and so does everyone else. Some Marines got M9 pistols, but they take away your bayonets because you aren't allowed to have knives on an airplane. Even though you've showered, you all look

10 grimy and lean. Everybody's hollow-eyed, and their cammies⁵ are beat to shit. And you sit there, and close your eyes, and think.

The problem is, your thoughts don't come out in any kind of straight order. You don't think, Oh, I did A, then B, then C, then D. You try to think about home, then you're in the torture house. You see the body parts in the locker and the retarded guy in the cage. He squawked like a chicken. His head was

15 shrunk down to a coconut. It takes you a while to remember Doc saying they'd shot mercury⁶ into his skull, and then it still doesn't make any sense.

You see the things you saw the times you nearly died. The broken television and the hajji⁷ corpse. Eicholtz covered in blood. The lieutenant on the radio.

You see the little girl, the photographs Curtis found in a desk. First had a beautiful Iraqi kid, maybe

20 seven or eight years old, in bare feet and a pretty white dress like it's First Communion. Next she's in a red dress, high heels, heavy makeup. Next photo, same dress, but her face is smudged and she's holding a gun to her head.

I tried to think of other things, like my wife, Cheryl. She's got pale skin and fine dark hairs on her arms. She's ashamed of them, but they're soft. Delicate.

25 But thinking of Cheryl made me feel guilty, and I'd think about Lance Corporal⁸ Hernandez, Corporal Smith, and Eicholtz. We were like brothers, Eicholtz and me. The two of us saved this Marine's life one time. A few weeks later, Eicholtz is climbing over a wall. Insurgent⁹ pops out a window, shoots him in the back when he's halfway over.

So I'm thinking about that. And I'm seeing the retard, and the girl, and the wall Eicholtz died on. [...] On the flight, I thought about that, too. [...]

30 And we got off the plane and there's a big empty landing strip, maybe a half dozen red patchers and a bunch of seven tons¹⁰ lined up. No families.

The Company Guns¹¹ said that they were waiting for us at Lejeune¹². The sooner we get the gear loaded on the trucks, the sooner we see 'em. [...]

35 Looking out, I sort of knew where I was, but I didn't feel home. I figured I'd be home when I kissed my wife and pet my dog. [...]

After all the rifles were turned in, First Sergeant had us get into a no-shit parade formation. We had a fucking guidon¹³ waving out front, and we marched down A Street. When we got to the edge of the

first barracks, people started cheering. I couldn't see them until we turned the corner, and then there they were, a big wall of people holding signs under a bunch of outdoor lights, and the lights were
40 bright and pointed straight at us, so it was hard to look into the crowd and tell who was who. Off to the side there were picnic tables and a Marine in woodlands¹⁴ grilling hot dogs. And there was a bouncy castle. A fucking bouncy castle.

[...] Then I saw Eicholtz's dad. He had a sign, too. It said: WELCOME BACK HEROES OF BRAVO COMPANY. I looked right at him and remembered him from when we left, and I thought, That's
45 Eicholtz's dad. [...]

I don't think a lot of guys recognized him, and I knew I should say something, but I didn't. I backed off. I looked around for my wife. And I saw my name on a sign: SGT PRICE, it said. But the rest was blocked by the crowd, and I couldn't see who was holding it. And then I was moving toward it, away from Eicholtz's dad, who was hugging Curtis, and I saw the rest of the sign. It said: SGT PRICE,
50 NOW THAT YOU'RE HOME YOU CAN DO SOME CHORES. HERE'S YOUR TO-DO LIST.
1) ME. 2) REPEAT NUMBER 1.

(834 Wörter)

Phil Klay: Redeployment, 2014.

<http://www.npr.org/books/titles/286369664/redeployment?tab=excerpt#excerpt> (abgerufen am 06.05.2014).

1 redeployment – die Truppenumverlegung

2 TQ – military acronym for Al-Taqaddum, a U.S. military base in Iraq

3 decompress – here: time for recuperation before leaving the war zone

4 shooting – here: a description of air being forced through a nozzle in an airplane

5 cammies – military slang for camouflage uniform

6 mercury – das Quecksilber

7 hajji – term used in the U.S. military for a person of Arab / Middle Eastern descent

8 Lance Corporal – ein militärischer Dienstgrad

9 insurgent – der Aufständische

10 red patchers and seven tons – here: referring to soldiers who wear red patches on their uniform and military vehicles

11 Company Guns – die Vorgesetzten der Kompanie

12 Lejeune – U.S. Marine Corps Base, north of Jacksonville, N.C.

13 guidon – military flag (Wimpel)

14 a Marine in woodlands – a Marine wearing a camouflage uniform