

Band
of
Brooders
a one act war drama

by Jim Pangrazio

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Cast: US Army Rangers – Rick, Donna, Ed, Luis.

Scene: Afghanistan – early morning hours. An outpost on a ridge where the unit has been securing a road running through a valley.

Rick is present – standing, handling rifle – others enter – Ed and Luis teasing Donna by tossing a package of tampons outside her reach until she grabs it. When seated: Luis, Donna, Ed, Rick.]

LUIS

[Mock saluting.] Band of brothers plus one neutered sibling reporting!

DONNA

[Surprised. Grabs at Luis' crotch.] How'd it happen? Razor slipped while you were shaving your legs in the shower?

LUIS

Oh, I'd never deprive you of the chance to have a real man.

DONNA

You're real men all right!....of the sort that loves to eat, drink and sleep with masses of their fellow real men...love it so much they can easily spend 20 years doing it!

LUIS

Eddie...you hearing this mouth?!

ED

So what are we....a Band of Buttfuckers?

DONNA

[She puts her arms around both Luis and Ed.] Hey, don't knock it! That release of tension calms you guys and helps us all get along so well.

ED

She thinks we joined a fucking catholic holy order instead of the army.

LUIS

Well, we are on a mission.

DONNA

Like Jesus who wandered around the desert with a bunch of dudes.

LUIS

I guess that makes you Mary Magdalene. [Grabs Donna – she slaps his arm.]

ED

Or...Maybe she's not even a girl!

LUIS

It's that 'don't ask, don't tell' shit. 'She' doesn't have to tell us.

ED

Come on Ms. Donna Maupin....let's do some close order drillin'! [Gets close to Donna. Gyrate.]

LUIS

Yeah....drillin' for honey! [Doing sexualized pushups.]

ED

Privates on parade! [Trying to grab her.]

RICK

[After he becomes increasingly annoyed with what he's hearing.] Will you dip-shits please shut the fuck up?!....Is the clearing secure?

LUIS

Yeah, it's fine...What the fuck is burning your culo?

RICK

I joined the army.....not a fucking troop of clowns!

DONNA

Geez....we're so sorry that we're just fuckin' little people!

ED

Not like the football celebrities you're used to hobnobbing with, huh Richard?

DONNA

Here you have even more guys to pat you on the ass. [Game time. Rick stands front stage right. The others approach from behind whispering, 'What time is it?' 'It's game time.' Gradually getting louder. Repeated – along with 'The Dog's in the House' and 'woof' noises, dancing. Rick answers quietly several times – 'Game time.' They all touch Rick.]

RICK

[Waving them quiet.] Quiet down...Okay...Don't get me wrong...I love our band of bastards and bitches ranging from this country to that shooting up whoever gets in the way....but wouldn't it be more fun if we were fucking around at home...and not just 4/5th of the squad...

LUIS

...Christ!!!..Why the fuck do you have to keep rubbing that sore?..Leave Rod in peace...And while you're at it...deep six the fucking right – wrong horseshit! We're fucking sick of hearing that we're a band of criminals.

ED

Yeah, because, First.....I don't *give* a shit. Second.....Ain't nobody else *gives* a shit.

DONNA

Third....[Mock patriotic declaration.]What's good for America is good for the world.
[Salutes and then spits into a can.]

LUIS

And Fourth..How about giving us some of that shit? We chew gum and she chaws tobacco..How ladylike! [Donna hands Luis a pack of Red Man chewing tobacco.] You see? [Holding up package.] Red Man...[pointing to skin on arm.] Colorado. Tobacco was an important herb, even a sacred one, for my Indio brothers.

ED

Hey, wait a second.....I thought you were Latino.

LUIS

[With overblown pride.] Eddie....Unlike you newcomers, we Latinos proudly have the blood of the original inhabitants coursing through our veins. That's why we honor their traditions. Tobacco: chewed to sooth hunger when a warrior was on the hunt...smoked in peace ceremonies...scattered about the earth in services for the dead.. And here we have a girl chewing it...It's almost sacrilegious!

DONNA

[To Luis.] If you actually knew anything about American Indians, you'd know that the women also chewed tobacco.

RICK

Yeah, Louie...Up in el norte they chewed tobacco...Down Mexico way they had their hearts chopped out.

LUIS

Damn lies and prejudice! [To Donna.] And you don't even know the ceremony....Every movement has a meaning...Watch! [He takes some in his hand. Donna takes back the pack. Luis puts the tobacco in his mouth..Then starts to gag and stomp around.] What the fuck!

ED

Rick...You should record this...I think Lou is showing us the sacred ritual.

RICK

[Holding up phone as if he's recording the event.] Louie...Do those steps again....I never saw an Indian dance like that in the movies...

DONNA

[Has gotten up and is behind Luis imitating dance.] Slow down!...How can someone so inexperienced keep up with you?

LUIS

[Spraying spit all over the place.] Fucking disgusting shit!!!!

DONNA

Don't do that! Spit into the can! [Holding can toward Luis.]

LUIS

[Moving arm around.] Who cares about this fucking shitscape?

DONNA

For now this post is our fucking living room and I don't wanna be stepping into your damn spit, even if it is part of your fucking religion!

ED

[Taking can from Donna and looking into it.] We better do it Louie...This might be the closest we get to swapping spit.

LUIS

If she keeps chewing that shit...it ain't going to be worth swapping!

ED

[Spitting on bottom of foot.] At least it's still good for healing wounds.

RICK

What's the matter with your foot?

ED

Just a busted blister..

RICK

That could get infected...Donna, better spray it.

DONNA

I'm not the resident podiatrist.

ED

C'mon, Donna...[Shaking foot in her face.]That's what got you moved up to the front lines...[Pause.].It's Okay...look...the bottom of my foot is almost white.

DONNA

[While wiggling a toe and spraying the bottom of his foot.] I know...Pinktoes.

ED

HIMES! – Cotton Comes to Harlem?

DONNA

Yeah!

ED

...How about, “If he Hollers, Let him Go”?

DONNA

[While slapping bandage on the bottom of Ed's foot.] Nope!

ED

Owww! [Donna opens laptop. See's something on screen and signals Rick over.]

LUIS

[Moving toward Ed.] How does the first part of the 'Holler' thing go? “Catch a Ni..”

ED

...Watch it, Lou, or I'll call you Spic.

LUIS

I'm not Puerto Rican.

ED

[Donna has put on an earpiece and is signaling quiet. Rick has opened his phone.] There are no rules of etiquette when it comes to name-calling. You can use Spic or Nigger against anybody...We even have 'white niggers'...Oops! [Quickly puts hand over mouth and looks at Donna and Rick.]....Hope our white folks didn't hear me?

RICK

[To Ed and Luis.] Will you shut the fuck up?...We have something important coming in. [Ed and Luis move closer to Donna.]

DONNA

[To superiors.] Yes sir. There are 4....Ridge 32...[Longitude and Latitude]...There's a

clearing...plenty for a landing...we just checked. Zero five hundred. Yes sir. Out. [Pause.]

LUIS

[Gesticulating.] So tell us, huh....Speak!....[Pronounced 'Spic.']

DONNA

The relief of Fort Ridge 32 will happen ahead of schedule...D Company is taking over this area...Chopper on the way for us! [All whoop it up..high fiveing...Rick makes a forceful 'yes' gesture.]...Oh, and the latest news.The New York Times reports that the liberation of Afghanistan is going beautifully, but the Afghan army will need our help a bit longer...

RICK

...Yeah, [Pointing to phone.] Strange we're getting out sooner when the fucking president signed us on for another 12 years!...

LUIS

Maybe by then they will learn to point their rifles at the other guys instead of us...But, fuck them, we'll take it...Right now we have two weeks of R and R coming to us. [Dancing.]

ED

[Seated.] Right...We've kept this little stretch of road clear for any idiot that cares to travel on it. Now it's D Company's turn to guard this patch of dirt. [Picks up handful of dirt.] Dammit, Louie...you and your fucking spit!

LUIS

Put it back! That's reserved for D Company!..[Pause]...Shit...I need some AIR-conditioning. [Taking off shirt and throwing it in Donna's face – she throws it back.] This is one fucking hot night! I wonder if we might have wandered on to a compost heap.

RICK

[Pause.] [Sarcastically.] Maybe we are on top of a mass grave....Dozens of bodies rotting away...Victims of one of our drone attacks.

ED

[To Rick.] Will it make you feel better if Lou performed another sacred spitting service?

RICK

I would feel just fine if we gave the people a better choice than either accept our freedom or their death.

LUIS

Goddammit!...they will learn to love that freedom even if we have to keep pounding it up their asses!

DONNA

[Quoting Arnold Schwarzenegger and with his accent.] “Freedom is a right ultimately defended by the sacrifices of our servicemen and women.”

RICK

[Rises, with his rifle.] All right!...To arms Minutemen and women! We're off to invade Washington...It's loaded with fucking scumbags who are enemies of freedom.

ED

Okay. [Grabs rifle and stands up. Hears explosions and drops to the ground along with others.] Was that from D Company?...Fuck...Maybe Washington is bringing the war to us.

DONNA

But no fear, Rick, we'll consider bringing the war home as soon as we finish with this one.

LUIS

Yeah...Ricky wants to fight Washington, so he joins the army and runs 10,000 miles away from it!

RICK

At least I've learned enough so that I will soon be running in the right direction, which is more than I can say for you guys.

LUIS

[Gets up and starts running in place.] Look, Rick, I'm running...to get important things...like money to live on...educational opportunity....maybe a fast track to citizenship...I'll run, run, run until I get them.

RICK

Yeah...in place and for yourself...But what about our fucking country? When you put your hand on your heart and stand for your citizenship, will you be able to swear allegiance to a land of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness when you are living in its fucking opposite?

DONNA

Oh...Ricky! You are just so sweet!..I love it when a guy expresses himself like a dreamy girl. [Gets up..puts an arm around him and tries to give him a small stuffed animal.]

RICK

Fuck you and the horse you rode in on....

DONNA

....But let me tell you something...Those fucking fine words are bullshit...Now and right from when our country was founded.

ED

It was a fucking slave society, remember? [Slight pause.] But there's no denying that we've become slightly more civilized since then.

RICK

You mean black people needed to be enslaved in order to become civilized?!

ED

FUCK NO!!!..It was the goddam owners that needed civilization...People so fucking barbaric they thought it was alright to own other people. The Civil War settled their hash.

LUIS

And that's like what we've been doing over here....We're not fighting for perfection, but we've liberated these countries from dickhead dictators...and the people have more freedom than when they were ruled by Saddam and the Taliban.

DONNA

One small step for mankind...

RICK

....And one giant leap for imperial domination! So when we use fine words we're just making polite conversation.

DONNA

Your problem is that you want everything all at once....Those words are ideals....And ideals are part of the process of becoming civilized.

RICK

Civilization equals trivialization...What fucking bullshit!...You guys can have it...At least I'm done. I'm skating out of here in 30 days. [Pause.]

ED

[Preacher tone.] No listen, Rick....Speaking decently breeds decency. Sure, we have guns, but we still want a better world.

DONNA

[To Ed – slapping injured foot.] How many times did your momma have to slap those fine words into your brain?

ED

Ow!...A lot....I can still feel the sting.

RICK

[Rising to face the others.] Well, she's made you into a fine fucking chaplain. But all they mean is that our imperial civilizing process has just transformed words like 'freedom', 'legal' and 'justified' into murder, theft and rape.

LUIS

Now hold on!....I admit I've had a few trigger mishaps that I regret, and I've picked up some trinkets here and there, but I'm clean on the rape charge.

RICK

[With intensity.] Really?...What is rape? It's sticking something in a place where you have no right to stick it. By criminally invading these countries, we've stuck ourselves where we have no right to be.

DONNA

We're involved in internationally sanctioned interventions.....It has nothing to do with rape.

RICK

[Intense.] UN approval just makes it statutory rape. So if the guys formed a Security Council and voted that your pussy needed intervening...that would be okay?

LUIS

Alright!....Being civilized is finally paying off! Eddie, you choose me for the Council and I'll select you; that way we out-vote Rick. Donna doesn't count because it's her pussy that is defying the world's demand for peace, and all we want is some of that peace....[Crawls toward Donna who is seated.]

DONNA

[Pushing Luis away.]...Listen, assholes!....*I'm* the only one who decides if I want male intervention.

RICK

But why should they listen to you when our country, or the UN, could care less about the complaints of the people we are subduing?

LUIS

Wait a second!....Let's not give up on the pussy question so fast. Remember...This is rifle [holding rifle]...This is gun [grabbing crotch]....This is for killing...This is for fun!.....

DONNA

....One shoots a bullet!...And the other is all done! [Giving Luis a thumbs down. Slight Pause.]

LUIS

[Officialese.] I submit to the Council a Memorandum of Understanding that we are here shooting for a just peace...

DONNA

.....With the addendum that they keep it in their pants...

ED

[Pointing to Donna and then back to Luis to have him continue.]...You are out of order!....

DONNA

...Except when in the toilet or watching porno.

LUIS

[To Rick.] How the fuck can we develop a sound fucking policy when the decision-making process is constantly being fucked with? [Pause.]

RICK

Just because we don't *know* what the fuck we're doing because our bosses make the decision doesn't mean we aren't fucking doing it! Like....is our mission to defend America or offend the world?

ED

I'm defending my little world. If you weren't so fucking spoiled, that would be enough.

RICK

What's your little world?

ED

Retired with pension at age 39. Then I'll be able to enjoy time with my family and do something worthwhile and not this bullshit. [Showing picture of family. Then looks toward Luis.]

RICK

Luis?

LUIS

Oh, me? I hope to be sworn in as an honored patriotic citizen of my new country. And if I don't make it....my family will use the \$400,000 payoff as seed money.

RICK

Generational advancement....

ED

...Generational advancement!!!???.....[Laughing.]

RICK

...Yeah...Like insects and other small critters.

LUIS

[To Ed.] What are you laughing about?...He just called us small critters.

DONNA

[After everyone looks at her.] Oh...you know...the usual things...escape from personal troubles...desperate for a change... How does it go?.....See the world.....meet interesting people....

LUIS and ED

....and *kill* them!! [Loud and Laughing.]

RICK

Well that's just fucking fine! We destroy their little worlds in order to advance our little worlds. At least no one can say we don't fuckin' respect family values! [Pause.]

ED

[Sounds get Ed's attention and he peers over the barricade...followed by Luis.]
It's a fucking vehicle!...

LUIS

...With dimmed lights...

DONNA

[To Rick?] Shall I radio D Company?

RICK

[Finally takes a look himself.] Yeah... [Donna's communication is inaudible at this point.]

ED

[Shouting toward vehicle.] Keep moving you fuckers...or stop and get blasted!

RICK

Wait for the command!

LUIS

What if they are planting IED's?

RICK

What if it's one of our own...or our allies?

ED

Fuck the allies!

RICK

It's not stopping...Donna, tell them a vehicle is heading south-west.

[The three leave the barrier...lastly, Ed.]

ED

I'll bet it was the bad guys.

DONNA

[Finishing radio communication.]...that's south-west....Yeah, I'll tell him. Out. [Short pause - To Rick.] They have a Special Forces guy with them who has been inquiring about you.

RICK

What's his name?

DONNA

I don't know...Matt something...Matt..[hesitating]...Tudor?

LUIS

Mat...tador!..Ole!

DONNA

Friend or fan?

RICK

I wouldn't have either in the Special Forces. [Pause.] C'mon, Eddie, since you were so gung ho, let's take a closer look. They didn't stop but they might have dropped someone off while on the move. [Rick and Ed go off stage. Pause.]

DONNA

Geez...Rick is getting shakier by the day...and I don't think it's just because he's a short timer.

LUIS

It began when he took over after Rod...He was not the same person...

DONNA

The experience got him thinking...

LUIS

Not good on a combat team.

DONNA

Still, I prefer Rick...

LUIS

Sure...The football player...

DONNA

I could give two shits about that out here...No...Ed can be a little crazy...Remember when he slugged our interpreter?

LUIS

Yeah...but I'll take crazy Eddie over shaky Ricky any day.

DONNA

I Wonder why that Special Ops guy is looking for Rick.

LUIS

Do you think he's here to take him out?

DONNA

Jeezus!...You and your fucked up English!...You mean escort him back to base... Naw...That doesn't make any sense....he'll be out in a few weeks.

LUIS

What's wrong with my English?...take him out...escort him out...same thing.

DONNA

There's a big fucking difference..Take him out means..Wait...Here they come. [To Ed and Rick.] So soon?...What's up? [Ed comes in first highly agitated.]

RICK

[In defensive position as are all but Ed who is standing.] They are...We were going to get nearer the road but there are signs they know access points to our position.

ED

[Agitated. Loud.] Fuck! Fuck!...Some messing with our fish-line...that chopper can't come too soon.

