

## WHO ARE YOU FIGHTING FOR?

by Jacob Juntunen

(A man and woman in their mid-twenties sit in plastic chairs with coffee cups in front of them. There is a long silence.)

Do you want more coffee? DON

No. I'm already going to be peeing the whole trip. JANE

When does your bus leave? DON

Ten minutes. JANE

(pause)

Thanks for driving me to the bus station. JANE

No big deal. DON

It's a drive from Gambier to Columbus. Saves me a lot of trouble. JANE

Not much of a man to be driving my own wife to be leaving me. DON

Honey. JANE

What? DON

Thank you for driving me. JANE

Forget it. Come on. Don't go. Let's just get in the car and drive back home. DON

Honey. JANE

It's not like I want to be away, you know. Not like I called up and said, "Hey, send me to Iraq, would ya?" DON

I know. JANE

So why are you blaming me? DON

I'm not. JANE

Then why are you leaving? DON

You're a reservist. You're supposed to be gone six months and you've already been gone more than a year. JANE

I don't have a choice. This is important, bigger than you and me, and whatever reason I'm there, I've got to stay. I don't have a choice. There's no other way to look at it, not if you want me to be able to sit here and talk about it. DON

You joined so you could go to school. Where's school now? JANE

I told you, this is bigger than that. Some guys aren't... This is bigger than school. I'm going to school with the money when I get back. You're leaving me because I didn't go to school? DON

No. JANE

Why'd you send Julie and Annie to your Mom's house before we'd even talked about it? They're my kids, too. DON

You don't want them to see us do this, do you? JANE

How often do I get to see them? DON

How much do you see them now? JANE

You think I only want to see them when I get leave? What about all the e-mails, the phone calls? DON

You can see them as much as you want. JANE

I'm doing this to protect you, you know. Jack said there's a twenty-four hour guard at Gambier's water supply now. This world isn't safe anymore, and I'm over there keeping you safe. DON

JANE  
Why can't you protect me here?

DON  
Aren't people taking care of you? Didn't Jack fix the car? Isn't Mary helping with the kids?

JANE  
Yes.

DON  
This is war. No one's wife said, "Stay home," during World War II.

JANE  
I just don't understand why you're gone.

DON  
We're down range to protect America.

JANE  
I know. I know you had to go, but why are you still there? Who planned this? Who's in control?

DON  
The President's in control.

JANE  
How can he be? More people have... He said, "Mission Accomplished," but it gets worse every day.

DON  
There are some schools open in Baghdad. The news only tells you the bad things. There are elections in Iraq next month

JANE  
When you're back there. Down range again.

DON  
We have to make sure the Iraqi's can vote.

JANE  
What's it matter if I'm here or in Indianapolis with my Mom? You won't be here.

DON  
It matters to me.

JANE  
Why?

DON  
IT MATTERS TO ME!

(Pause)

JANE  
If you yell at me, I'm going outside and waiting by myself.

(Pause)

JANE

How can Bush be in control of things like Abu Ghraib? He wouldn't order that. He's a decent man.

DON

That was an exception. Some bad apples.

JANE

Privates wouldn't do things like that unless they were under orders. Maybe the CIA or who knows? Not privates. Not enlisted men.

DON

We're not like that. I'm there with people getting hurt, losing, like, arms and legs and stuff, getting killed for you, and you sit there and judge me? I didn't torture anybody. How can you say that? I give candy to the kids and they take it and then throw rocks at me, I don't know who's doing what, who's got a gun or something, and every day we go out into Sadr City in full gear in all that heat and clean up the same street and every night they fill it up with trash like animals and I do not torture them. I am there to help them and to help you and you judge me and they throw rocks at me and you think it doesn't matter whether you're home or with your mom or some other guy?

JANE

There's no other—

DON

I am a member of the US Army and I have to support my Commander in Chief and I'm going to, and if you can't see that...

(Pause)

JANE

The other day Annie asked me what "beheaded" means. She heard it on the news. How am I supposed to answer that? And I tell Jim again and again I can't work the night shift but he gives me these late shifts anyway—

DON

Doesn't Mary watch the kids when you work nights?

JANE

Yeah, but she can't watch our kids every night, and Jim says Walmart's got a stack of applications, so if I want to keep my job I better not complain and take what I can get. What am I supposed to do? I need Mom's help.

DON

But you don't have to leave me.

JANE

Maybe I'm not. I don't know.

DON

I'll be home soon.

JANE

When?

DON

I don't know. This isn't the one weekend a month I signed up for. I hate this. I'm not like those guys in the news, stripping them and dogs... No one I know is like that. Sometimes we have to... At checkpoints sometimes you don't know... I've seen mistakes. And I've seen... I've... This isn't what I signed up for. I do my job. I... Please. I want to come home. Why are you doing this?

JANE

Why won't you fight?

DON

I am fighting.

JANE

Why won't you fight for me, to be with me? I heard about a group of reservists suing the government, saying stop loss isn't in their contract or something.

DON

Where'd you hear that crap?

JANE

A girl told me about it.

DON

What girl?

JANE

A Kenyon student.

DON

What were you doing talking to one of them?

JANE

We were in line to vote. We were in line for hours. You have to go back down range to make sure they can vote but there were only two voting machines here in Gambier? I didn't even get to vote because I had to pick up the kids.

DON

It doesn't matter. Ohio went for Bush anyway.

JANE

I wasn't going to vote for Bush.

(pause)

DON

Why not?

JANE

Because you aren't here. Because I work full time and I can't even take care of the kids, and he hasn't once, not *once*, been to the funeral of a soldier and he's sending you there when you might...

(pause)

DON

When I might what?

JANE

Just come home. Fight for your home.

DON

I am. My unit's going back to protect my home. I have to go with them. It's my duty.

JANE

You have a duty to me. To Julie and Annie.

DON

You don't know what it's like. To be down range. The filth and the smell and the heat and what we have to do to keep those people under control. You have no idea how hard it is. To go back. But we're protecting you, can't you see that? I *am* fighting for you, fighting so I can come home. I can't desert my unit. I have to go.

JANE

But you can desert me?

DON

My country was attacked and I had to go to war. I didn't desert you. I have to fight for America. You don't know how hard it is.

JANE

Maybe. But I know how hard it is listening to the radio every night at three a.m. to hear the latest casualty count. I know how hard it is to listen again at seven before I get the kids up when the units are announced. I know how hard it is every time I hear a car pull up to the driveway, and I know how hard it is making sure no one, and I mean *no one*, is ever walking up my driveway. If anyone comes over, I tell them to go around back, come to the back door. I will not hear a knock at my front door. Not knowing where my husband is, that's hard. Not knowing what to tell my daughters about why their daddy's gone, that's hard. Explaining "beheading" to a five year old, that's hard. Waiting for the grim army officers all clean and shiny telling me my child's father is dead, that's hard. Seeing job after job gone and people hungry and there being nothing I can do about it, that's hard. I am angry, I am willing to fight, and I don't know who to fight. But I'm going to figure it out. And you being over there has taught me one thing: war don't end until the people fighting say it ends. And I say my fight is just beginning.

(Bus announcement from Columbus to Indianapolis)

JANE

That's my bus.

DON

Yeah.

JANE

I have to go.

Don't go. DON

I have to. Just like you. JANE

(She gets up)

Are you fighting me? DON

No. JANE

Then who? DON

I don't know. JANE

(She leaves. Lights fade on DON sitting in the chair.)

END OF PLAY