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## What Was I Thinking?

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## What Was I Thinking? By SSgt Justin Perry

All around me I can feel the explosions now. I can see some of my brothers bunkered down behind whatever they can find in this God-forsaken country. John, our platoon medic, is hovering over me. I can see his lips moving but can't seem to make out the words. Even though I'm motionless, I feel like the entire world is spinning around me. All I can think about is the cool autumn breeze rolling through the densely colored leaves on the farm back home. "How did I get here?" I thought. "Why can't I remember the faces of those who care so much for me"? An education they said, travel the world, training beyond anything you'll ever receive in the civilian world. True, SWAT police forces can't touch what we've been through, but I'll trade it all out right now, just to be home. I'm going to die here. I can't believe this is happening to me! It's 110 degrees out here, I have 80 pounds of gear on, and yet I feel like I'm freezing to death. Why couldn't I have just gone to college? That's right, my sister got the college money, and I had the choice, military or local gas station. Don't get me wrong, I love my country, and I feel an intense sense of pride knowing that I'm making my father proud by serving in the same uniform he donned for 26 years, but why did we have to pull patrol this morning?

I can still taste the stale instant coffee from breakfast on my teeth. We were all laughing and goofing around to ease the fear that we all felt and just didn't admit. It was about that time our platoon leader decided to volunteer us for patrol since we were all so talkative during breakfast. I bet he would have sung a different tune, if he knew then what he knows now. We hadn't been out of the deuce and a half transport for more than 30 seconds before the first shots rang out. We all ran for cover and tried to calculate where the shots were coming from. Then we started to hear the dreaded, deep, thump. The sound of mortars being fired sends chills down your spine. Then, all I could hear was silence. Even now all I hear is a distant humming noise. It wasn't even the good humming noise, like the one after a concert, this one was just different. I wonder what kind of welcoming I will get when I go home. I wonder if Julie, the beautiful girl from down the road will come to see me. I wonder if Dad will speak at the ceremony, and I hope Mom can hold it together during the whole thing. I don't think the American public realizes that we don't want to be here any more than they want us here. I wish we could have just all packed it up and came home. Hell, this morning would have been a great time to ship out of here and head for the farm. Instead, all I can hope is that Mom picks out a better casket than what the service is going to provide to me for my final trip.