

Girls on the Bus

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I had to pee. I imagined the feel of the cool, smooth porcelain against my calves as I sat down and the comforting, smooth texture of the seat on the back of my thighs, holding me gently in place, letting my quadriceps relax, my bladder relax, the stream flowing down and splashing into the catch basin; a reverse fountain: beautiful.

Instead, there was an immense sandbox. I would have to pee, once again, like a cat.

It was mid-March of 1991 and the war to liberate Kuwait from the Iraq invasion was over. We had won. We were in the desert between Saudi Arabia and Iraq making our way across *wadis*, flooded plains, and sand toward a victory parade in Kuwait. There were no roads on our route, no convenience stores with their toilets like you find on the highways in America, no tap water, and no towels. There weren't even any port-o-pots. No. None of those comforts existed on this cross-country trip. We had been driving for five hours without a stop.

"Where are we gonna pee?" LT Basher asked me.

"No clue," I looked at her. We sat next to each other on the contracted bus, sharing a seat, not noticing the baby-wipe and sweat smell of our bodies to which we had become accustomed after six months in the desert. "How about if we hold up a towel and take turns peeing. I put my towel on top of my stuff in my rucksack, so I can get to it pretty easily."

"Sounds good to me. Let's go – I'm gonna burst!"

As we stepped out of the bus, I saw the tip of a landmine inches away from the buses' tire marks. I was not as concerned with that as I was with the urge to pee. But, just in case, I followed a path into the desert where other Soldiers had already walked. We could see the footprints in the moist sand. It was flood season.

We walked out into the sand, far enough to get some "privacy." I let Basher go first, holding the towel out to cover her while crossing my legs and tapping the right foot to distract myself. As Basher peed, we didn't notice what was happening back at the bus. Just after I pulled my pants down, I heard it and looked.

No, it wasn't a helicopter doing a fly-by or a tank battalion roaring through the desert. It was cheering. Basher turned her head and I peeked over the towel.

The young men, boys, our fellow soldiers with whom we had been serving over the last six months of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, culminating in this last four hour leg of the journey to Kuwait with no pee breaks, had climbed onto the roof of the bus to get a better look at our "sexy" activities. They began whooping and hollering.

No one told them to get down. No one told them not to look.

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Disclaimer: The names, except for mine, have been changed.

Excerpt – Full story pending publication