

Tour of Duty

By Moyra Turkington

2–5

Players

Including a facilitator.



45
Minutes



Intensity

Supplies:

An object to denote the active player.

Keywords:

Military culture, combat trauma, sexual violence, rape.

Background

This is a collaborative freeform storytelling game where players, working together, will describe the experience of a single female soldier serving in active combat duty in the US military.

Setup

One player will lead, and keep hold of the game text. Find a random object to serve as a narrative control “button” and place it within reach of all players. The leader will read out the setup for the scene. Any player can pick up the button and start to describe the scene. Scenes do not need to follow a traditional narrative arc. Players collectively make a descriptive collage of memories, images, and feelings based on the GIs experiences. They should keep their contributions short and descriptive, and readily hand off to new players as they are eager to contribute. Scenes should only be about five minutes long. The leader can end a scene that is running long by narrating an end, and putting the button down.

Play

Scene 1 Setup

Female soldiers enlist for the same reasons as their male counterparts do: to serve, to travel, for education, training, or simply because they need a job. What kind of life did our G.I. have before she enlisted? Why did she sign up? Who was heartbroken, and who had never been more proud?

Scene 2 Setup

There are no special accommodations made for female soldiers. They go through the same drills, pass the same tests, and use the same equipment—all originally designed for men. Sometimes they even live in co-ed barracks. How did the drill instructors deride her when she struggled on the rope climb? How did she

hide the fact that her pack was cutting into the flesh of her hips? How did she prove without a shadow of a doubt that she had the steel to kill, coldly and efficiently?

Scene 3 Setup

In the field, female soldiers have access to exactly the same jobs as male soldiers, and most of them serve in co-ed units. When our G.I. thinks about her greatest contribution to her unit, what day does she remember? Who did she have to kill to keep her unit safe? Who got shot trying to save her? When the chopper went down, who got burned and who was saved?

Scene 4 Setup

Female combat soldiers face a greater risk of Military Sexual Trauma, or MST, than they do Combat Trauma. Seventy-nine percent of female soldiers in the US Military report experiencing sexual harassment during their time in service. Fifty-four percent report unwanted sexual contact. Thirty percent report rape—one third of which report multiple rape events and 14 percent of which report gang rape. When and how was it that our G.I. came face to face with the MST epidemic?

Scene 5 Setup

Those who report MST incidents or pursue justice often don't fare well. They face backlash: violence, further sexual assault, transfers, and discharge. Occasionally they win justice. MST victims face sharply elevated levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), addiction, depression and homelessness when they leave service. Who shattered her by denying what happened? How did they hurt her for speaking the truth? What became of her when she left the military?

Debrief

This subject matter of this nano-scenario may have strong emotional effects on some players. Check in on each other and talk about the experience to ensure everyone has a safe place to land.

“Combat trauma is bad enough, but with MST [Military Sexual Trauma] it’s not the enemy, it’s our guys who are doing it. You’re fighting your friends, your peers, people you’ve been told have your back. That betrayal, then the betrayal from the command is, they say, worse than the sexual assault itself.”

—Susan Avila-Smith, MST Survivor Veteran,
Women Organizing Woman

References:

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About the Designer

Moyra Turkington (Canada) is a larpwright, game designer, and practitioner with a background in Cultural Studies and Theatre. Her designs include *Crime & Punishment* (which won Game Chef in 2006), and *Run Them Again* (which won the Jury’s Special Prize Otto award at Fastaval 2014). She is also the curator and publisher of *War Birds*, an anthology of games by female designers about the contributions of women in World War II which includes her games *Against the Grain*, and *Model Protectorates*.