

**FIGHTING (extract)**

By Tom Green

**Scene 1**

Night. A clutch of rocks rising to at least eight feet in the middle of an open landscape.

Brieda, naked and gasping for breath, scrambles down over the rocks. Her hair is wet and her feet are muddy. She crouches down to cover herself.

Cluff, naked under a dressing gown that has become untied, follows her over the rocks. He looks around.

CLUFF: (panting) Is this it?

BRIEDA: (also catching her breath) What did you expect?

CLUFF: You think we'll be safe?

BRIEDA: Got any better ideas?

CLUFF: How about we keep going?

BRIEDA: Where to?

CLUFF: Aren't there supposed to be caves?

BRIEDA: What do you think this is?

CLUFF: You call this a cave? What's further down the hill?

BRIEDA: You mean, apart from a flat, open plain with no cover?

CLUFF: And what about that way?

He points.

BRIEDA: (sarcastic) Why not go and take a look?

A silence.

CLUFF: Are you cold?

Brieda looks away.

CLUFF: I picked up your towel after you lost it but then I dropped it climbing over that ledge.

BRIEDA: Fuckers.

CLUFF: They probably won't even bother to come after us now. They'll leave us out here all night to suffer.

BRIEDA: I should have just given myself up.

CLUFF: Got to play the game.

BRIEDA: I've still got shampoo in my hair.

CLUFF: Do you want this?

Cluff takes off his dressing gown.

BRIEDA: Don't be stupid.

Cluff hands it to her.

BRIEDA: Why should I have it and not you?

CLUFF: It's worse for a woman. To be— You know.

He tosses the dressing gown over to her. She puts it on. He squats down.

BRIEDA: Did you see what happened to anyone else?

Cluff shakes his head.

BRIEDA: There was another girl in the showers but I didn't see where she went.

CLUFF: Most people were asleep. I just heard the explosion and started running.

BRIEDA: Do you think we should have stayed?

CLUFF: While they shot at us?

BRIEDA: Blank rounds don't actually hurt.

CLUFF: We did what what we were supposed to do.

BRIEDA: It feels weird running away.

CLUFF: That was the point of the exercise. Must have been. An ambush. Overwhelming force. Training in every man for himself.

A silence.

CLUFF: How did you know about this place, anyway?

BRIEDA: (changing the subject) How long do you think we should stay here?

CLUFF: Until we get the all-clear. Like I said, they'll probably wait all night. So, answer my question.

BRIEDA: What question?

CLUFF: How did you discover this little hidey-hole?

Brieda shrugs.

CLUFF: What?

BRIEDA: Nothing.

CLUFF: Go on, tell me the secret.

BRIEDA: What secret?

CLUFF: The secret you're not telling me.

BRIEDA: There is no secret!

CLUFF: Have you been coming here to smoke puff?

BRIEDA: No.

CLUFF: To be with someone?

Brieda doesn't respond.

CLUFF: Bingo! This is your little love nest. Basic, but it serves the purpose, I guess. Who is he?

BRIEDA: There is no "he".

CLUFF: No "he"?

BRIEDA: No.

CLUFF: A "she"?

Brieda doesn't respond.

CLUFF: It's a girl! Isn't it? You come here with a woman, don't you?! You're a dyke! Fuck me!

Cluff chuckles to himself. Brieda tries to ignore him.

CLUFF: I don't have a problem with it. Who is she?

A silence.

CLUFF: Can I have my dressing gown back?

BRIEDA: What?

CLUFF: Well, I gave it to you because...

BRIEDA: Because what?

CLUFF: Because...

BRIEDA: Because I was a woman.

CLUFF: Yeah.

BRIEDA: I still am.

CLUFF: I know, but...

BRIEDA: And even though I don't like being patronised because of my gender, I like being naked here with you even less. So I'm keeping it.

Very carefully, Brieda peers above the rocks.

CLUFF: Anything?

Brieda shakes her head.

CLUFF: What's your name?

BRIEDA: Brieda.

CLUFF: (laughs) Breeder? Ironic. What with you being a les-

BRIEDA: (interrupting) B-r-i-e-d-a. Brieda.

CLUFF: Where's that from?

BRIEDA: My parents.

CLUFF: What country?

BRIEDA: My Dad was Slovakian. What's your name?

CLUFF: People call me Cluff.

BRIEDA: Clough? Like that football bloke?

CLUFF: What? No. Cluff. C-l-fucking-u-f-fucking-f

BRIEDA: Where's that from?

CLUFF: It's not my actual name. It's what people call me.

BRIEDA: What's your actual name?

CLUFF: I'm not telling you

BRIEDA: Why not?

CLUFF: Why should I?

BRIEDA: Is it embarrassing?

Cluff shrugs.

BRIEDA: How can a name be embarrassing?

Cluff doesn't respond.

BRIEDA: Okay, so why do they call you Cluff?

CLUFF: It's embarrassing.

BRIEDA: I give up.

CLUFF: People call me Cluff because it stands for something.

BRIEDA: What?

CLUFF: You'll think it's stupid.

BRIEDA: I'm past caring.

CLUFF: We were in a brothel in Warsaw after I first joined up. On leave. A group of us. Everyone was pissed. One bloke none of us really knew had sort of attached himself and kept talking about what he was going to do. Oral mainly. He described it all in great fucking detail.

Brieda yawns.

CLUFF: Am I boring you?

BRIEDA: Sorry.

CLUFF: We're all waiting our turn and then the moment arrives when they're ready for the first of us and, just to get rid of him, I tell this bloke to go first.

BRIEDA: I don't get it.

CLUFF: It's what I said. That's where the name comes from.

BRIEDA: What did you say?

CLUFF: "Cunt licker, you fuck first."

BRIEDA: Nice.

CLUFF: That's what I said.

BRIEDA: You're a poet.

CLUFF: It just came out. Everyone pissed themselves. And they kept saying it all weekend to make each other laugh. Somehow it became my nickname. Cunt - C. Licker - L. U. Fuck first - F-F. C-l-u-f-f. It stuck.

BRIEDA: They should have called you Clyff. The "u" should be a "y".

CLUFF: But it wasn't. It's Cluff. Not Clyff, Cluff.

A silence.

CLUFF: Have you ever done it with a bloke?

Brieda sighs and closes her eyes as if to sleep.

CLUFF: Have you? I'm not, you know. I'm not interested. In you. Like that. I just—

BRIEDA: (interrupting) Shut up.

CLUFF: I'd be a lesbian. If I was a woman. It'd be great.

BRIEDA: Can we change the subject?!

CLUFF: Sssh! We're supposed to be hiding, remember.

BRIEDA: This is ridiculous.

CLUFF: It's the army.

A silence.

CLUFF: How long have you done?

BRIEDA: Two years. Almost.

CLUFF: I've done three. Why did you join?

Brieda shrugs.

CLUFF: Was it, you know, a lesbian thing? Sorry! I'm interested, that's all. If I was a lesbian I'd join the army. Or maybe the navy. They're full of dykes aren't they? And poofs. It's a floating fucking fuck fest. A bloke I knew when I was a kid had been in the navy and he said he spent most of his time swatting away cocks.

Brieda has closed her eyes again.

CLUFF: Can I ask you one thing?

BRIEDA: No.

CLUFF: Do you ever go in for threesomes? Not just you, I'm not trying to be personal. But lesbians in general. Two girls and a bloke. Does it happen? In real life? Or is it just a porn thing?

BRIEDA: It's just a porn thing.

CLUFF: Really?

Brieda ignores him.

CLUFF: I thought so.

Brieda is trying to make herself comfortable but the rocks around her are jagged and uneven. She looks across to where Cluff is sitting. Cluff notices, and squats more tightly, covering himself up.

CLUFF: What?

BRIEDA: What?

CLUFF: What are you staring at? Don't stare at me!

BRIEDA: Would you mind swapping places? I'd really like to sit down properly. My legs are killing me.

CLUFF: Your legs are killing you?

BRIEDA: I might even try to get some sleep.

CLUFF: Your legs are killing you and you want to get some sleep?

BRIEDA: Yeah.

CLUFF: What about me?

BRIEDA: You're squatting.

CLUFF: Because I'm naked. Because I gave you my fucking dressing gown.

BRIEDA: If you're going to squat you might as well do it over here. And then I could sit down and lean against that rock.

CLUFF: Fuck off.

BRIEDA: At least sit down then.

CLUFF: I don't want to sit down.

BRIEDA: If you're going to have that place at least make the most of it.

CLUFF: We're in the army, not on fucking holiday.

BRIEDA: And the army hates waste. You being there while I'm here is wasteful. Isn't it?

Cluff thinks about this.

CLUFF: One of us should be look out.

BRIEDA: For what?

CLUFF: 'Enemy combatants'.

BRIEDA: You said they'd leave us here all night.

CLUFF: They might not. They might take pity on us. End it early. Let us go back to bed.

BRIEDA: And what will we do if we see them?

CLUFF: Run away.

BRIEDA: There's nowhere to run away too.

CLUFF: So we'll give ourselves up.

After a moment Cluff stands up, deciding, suddenly, to disregard being naked. Brieda watches him, not sure what he's doing.

CLUFF: Go on then.

BRIEDA: What?

CLUFF: Sit down. Go to sleep. I'm going to keep watch.

Brieda moves to where Cluff had been sitting. He, with exaggerated care, finds a place to peer through the rocks.

CLUFF: It's really dark.

BRIEDA: (sarcastic) Maybe they'll be carrying torches.

CLUFF: This is ridiculous. I'll be the biggest dick post in the unit. Ambushed in the showers for a training exercise and spending the night naked in some rocks with a moody dyke. They didn't mention that in the recruitment video. I knew the stuff about overseas travel was a load of bollocks. I knew that I wouldn't really be getting the chance to be all I could be. I knew there'd be lots of dull routine and boring, repetitive, mind-numbing shit. But I didn't know I'd have to run from the showers and spend the night naked behind some rocks with a moody dyke. They didn't mention that. I'm not saying it would have made a difference. Necessarily. I'm not saying that if they'd told me at that first recruitment talk that this is what I'd be reduced to, that this was the level of humiliation I could expect - I'm not saying if they'd told me that it would have made any difference, but at least I'd have been prepared. I mean, I was going to join up anyway. I'd decided. I'd made my mind up. It was either join the army of stack shelves in fucking Tesco's so there wasn't much they could have said to put me off - and, actually, I quite like dull routine and boring, repetitive mind numbing shit. It's something we never had enough of in our house. Stuff was always going off. Stuff was always happening. People. Noise. Brothers. Sisters. Neighbours. Family. All of that. Boring, for me, is okay. Boring is good.

He looks across at Brieda. She is asleep.