

Pompeii

Billy Woods

For nearly an hour, the condemned men sat in a bus and watched crews erect their execution posts on the quiet beachfront

White man's burden, Lloyd, my man, white man's burden

You paid the price, you followed orders
Months at a time laying in ambushes by the borders
The blunt cackle of gun battles, last breath death rattles, air-sucking thump of mortars
Then flames, hideously gorgeous
And when command said find the informants
You followed orders
You visited the camps
You oversaw the torture
You tightened the clamps
You lied to reporters
You dug the pits
You made sure the confessions were recorded
You still see their faces
Corners of your eyes is morbid
Copper in the air, taste it
Flowing like a open faucet
Can't erase it
But you a soldier
You follow orders
Once the war was won
Switched fatigues for corporate
Suits and ties, but close those eyes
Still see them, clear as portraits
Watching yourself go through the motions
Pretending you're not dead, adrift in a black ocean
So imagine the relief when the indictments are finally read
Grey hair on your head
Lean into the mic, flanked by lawyers
And finally tell someone
All you did was follow orders

One time is one time
'Cause that's all it takes to change your life
You been had it coming but no worries
The postman always rings twice
Thrice, the Ghosts came, Past, Present, Future
Price on your dome so chunky, anyone could be the shooter
Then lay low, as you lie down
Uneasy is the head that rocks the crown
One time is one time
Cause that's all it takes to change your life
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It always starts small
Got a little something, made it flip
Not about to ball, just upgrade the whip
Maybe a little something on the wrist
Your little dun seen your new kicks
He see you in the hall smoking sticks
Seen the ass on your new bitch, poking

Baby powder between her tits
Keep bugging you, he got the itch
You let him get a taste
Twelve months later he's taking the trips
Cause now you shoving bricks, cinder blocks, masonry bits
Family ties like Cain and Abel
Cutting cocaine on the kitchen table
Ain't want no trouble
But evil got roots
You said no guns, but he said he had to shoot
Fire out the cannon
You can't serve God and Mammon
Flying back uptown, interior salmon
Cops got y'all jammed in
You made the wrong move, trying to ram 'em
Boys in blue commenced to blammin'
And just like that you both out the game like the O'Bannons
Commissioner's press conference only got room for standing
At the funeral, your team poured some liquor
Then commence to plotting and planning
Divide up your re-up before the first shovel full of dirt landin'
Moms distraught but your uncles' is like
"What the fuck did she think would happen?"

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