

# MC 062: Transit

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G.I. JOE #62

Transit

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Summary: In the People's Tribunal courtroom in Borovia, recently arrested Stalker, Quick Kick and Snow Job are found guilty of various crimes and are each sentenced to five consecutive life terms of hard labor. The three Joes are led outside where protestors fill the streets, shouting at the Joes and throwing tomatoes at them. Various television news reporters are there, all speculating as to who sent these mysterious strangers who have said nothing of their identities. Quick Kick nearly attacks a soldier who shoves him towards a truck, calling him "little yellow monkey". Stalker and Snow Job try to calm Quick Kick, knowing that they'd take any excuse to shoot them.

As one of the reporters mentions that the fourth member of the Joes' group is missing, several members of the Joe team are watching the broadcast on a cheap TV somewhere in the United States. Leatherneck is disgusted by Outback, assuming he escaped to save himself, leaving his teammates behind "to rot". Roadblock tells Leatherneck that they don't know the whole story yet. The TV's reception worsens as a Tomahawk helicopter lands outside. The Joes are stationed in three quonset huts in the middle of the desert. They all run outside to see why Lift-Ticket has made an unscheduled trip, and can't believe it when Outback steps out of the helicopter. All the Joes are suspicious, and ask him what happened in Borovia. Outback says he doesn't know what they mean. He heads inside with the Joes close behind. Leatherneck pushes the issue, and Outback explains that he's been debriefed, and has been told to say nothing about what happened. Leatherneck sarcastically remarks how "convenient" that is for Outback. Not caring about what Leatherneck thinks, Outback lays back on his bunk. Leatherneck gets in his face and begins to threaten him. He quickly steps back when Outback pulls a hunting knife on him. "Don't you even begin to threaten me..." Just then, the nearby telephone rings. Roadblock quickly answers it. It's Grunt, still at Georgia Tech, offering his help to rescue Stalker and the others. He's shocked when he's told that there won't be a rescue mission. Roadblock has to hang up to calm the situation between Outback and Leatherneck, leaving Grunt sadly looking at an old photo of Stalker, Clutch, Snake-Eyes and himself.

In a crowded of a prison train heading to Borovia's Gulag 23, Stalker reassures his injured friends that they're going to make it because Outback got away to tell their story, and somebody will come for them. Snow Job -- lying down with his coat over him like a blanket -- disagrees and reminds Stalker that "we got crossed off before we left the states." He adds that he and Quick Kick won't even make it if they don't get some medical treatment. The other prisoners hear this and one of them, Leonid tells Stalker that his friends are dying and he notes that they have good sturdy shoes. He approaches and Stalker tells him to get back, and that he won't let them loot from the sick men. Leonid presses on and dives for the Joes. "Don't do this!" Stalker shouts. "Don't surrender your pride and humanity..." Leonid is not swayed: "Hunger has no pride! Winter cares not for humanity!" Stalker kicks him, knocking him to the ground. The other prisoner see this and rush forward to steal Leonid's shirt.

In Denver, Billy is training with Jinx. As they fight, Billy gets frustrated by not getting any answers to his questions. He bests Jinx, grabs her wrist and demands to know what the tattoo on her (and Storm Shadow's and Snake-Eyes') arm means. He holds his bo staff at her throat. He stops when a throwing star is thrown at his bo. The Blind Master threw it, and tells Billy it wasn't Jinx's place to answer him. They then show Billy a "family photo" of their ninja clan, which includes the Hard Master, the Soft Master, Storm Shadow, Snake-Eyes, the Blind Master and an eight-year-old Jinx. Also in the photo is the "faceless master", a man whose face is blurred in every known photo he is in. The Blind Master then tells Billy his training will continue in San Francisco with Jinx. The Blind Master will not go with them, however. He explains that he's off to "someplace warm -- with palm trees."

Outside of Fred VII's garage, Raptor and Fred arrive in Raptor's car with shovels in hand. They've come from burying Cobra Commander. Fred reminds Raptor to not get any "funny ideas". He's an accessory to the Commander's murder now. Fred goes inside, but before Raptor gets out of his car, he spots Billy and Jinx leaving the Blind Master's building in a red sports car. Jinx is driving, but explains to Billy that the Beastie Boys cassettes in the car don't belong to her. They're the Blind Master's. Billy asks if he actually drives the car. "Only at night", Jinx says. Unnoticed by the young ninjas, Raptor decides to follow them. Fred runs outside to stop him, but Raptor shouts that there's no time, and he'll call

Fred later.

In Borovia, the train stops at a station. A guard opens the door and leaves food for the prisoners: two stale loaves of bread and a bucket of water. Most of the prisoners scramble forward to fight for the food. Stalker fights them back, yelling, "We're not going to be reduced to animals!...We're men." He grabs the smallest man in the car and tells him to divide up the food equally, or the bigger men will make him pay. Even the wounded get an equal share. "We have to help each other. Nobody else is going to." He tries to keep Leonid from dehydrating and keeps him warm to stop his hypothermia. He can't understand why Stalker would help him since he owes him nothing. All the other prisoners were righteous men at one time, which is why they were arrested. They don't believe in any ideals anymore, and can't believe that Stalker still does. "Why do you help me? What do you gain?" he asks. Stalker answers simply, "Self-respect".

On the highway just outside of Denver, Billy and Jinx spot Raptor's BMW following them. Jinx handles the sports car well in the dense traffic and gets too far ahead for Raptor to catch up. Angrily, Raptor pulls over and realizes that his hawks can track them better from the air than he can on the road.

At the Joes' desert base in Utah, later that night, all the Joes have left except for Leatherneck and Roadblock. They continue to argue about Outback. Roadblock says that Outback was ordered to leave by Stalker so the Joes would know what had happened. Stalker was in command and would've done the same. Leatherneck doesn't buy it. He recalls that in Sierra Gordo, Stalker ordered Snake-Eyes to leave, but Snake-Eyes relieved Stalker of command and stayed to let the others escape. "Not the same thing," Roadblock explains. "Stalker was badly wounded. Snake-Eyes had the right to relieve him. Stalker was rightfully in command when he ordered Outback to leave!" Leatherneck isn't convinced: "All we got is Outback's word for that!" The argument is suddenly interrupted when three Joes wearing hard hats pop up out of a trap door in the middle of the room. "Keep it down up here! We can hear you all the way down on level three!"

Back in Borovia, the prisoner train arrives at Gulag 23. The men are all marched into the prison camp to be deloused, processed and ready for work details in the morning. As they enter the camp, Stalker tells the others to memorize where everything is for when the break out. Quick Kick asks what the point is. The guard towers are visible everywhere, and even if they broke out, he and Stalker would never blend in with the Borovian peasantry. He adds that Snow Job won't be in any shape to travel for a long time. Leonids agrees, telling Stalker that the gulag will break him. "Never," Stalker says. Leonid answers, "They have all the time in the world..."

Billy and Jinx arrive in San Francisco and enter the Army base called the Presidio. Jinx stops in front of the Defense Language Center. Billy thinks the place sounds pretty dull. "We won't have you conjugating verbs here. This is a cover," Jinx assures him. "For what?" Billy asks. "You'll see," Jinx says. Meanwhile, Raptor watches them enter the building. "Now here's a bit of information that somebody in Cobra might pay handsomely for!"

To be Continued...

Review: "Transit" is a perfect title for this story, since it's another "in between" issue in which the characters seem to be traveling to their next storyline: Stalker, Snow Job and Quick Kick travel to the Gulag while Billy heads for his renewed relationship with Storm Shadow and the Joes. Meanwhile, Outback's return home after a long trip sparks some conflict with the other Joes.

The action is sparse, but conversations seem to move the story along. Stalker's refusal to give up on his chances of escape is even questioned by Quick Kick and Snow Job, but his character remains as stubborn as ever. This story begins what is to be a very dark, sometimes disturbing storyline that G.I. Joe is not usually known for. The images of political prisoners thrown into the brutality of the Gulag is dark enough, but the sickly prisoners who seem to have lost their humanity are especially scary.

Billy's scenes aren't as complex, but we get a brief look at the structure of the ninja clan. The "family photo" that the Blind Master and Jinx show him includes some familiar characters. This scene also includes the first mention of Onihashi, the swordsmith. His assistant is in the photo, but his face is blurred in every known photograph. Apparently, long-time readers were supposed to assume this was Zartan, but we will learn much later that it was not. It's also mentioned that the Blind Master was an honorary member of the clan before he lost his sight in an accident. We also learn that Jinx is "Storm Shadow's second cousin on his mother's side." It's interesting to note that in Jinx's appearance in the animated G.I. Joe: The Movie, she mentions her "blind ninja master".

A very compelling part of the story is Outback's return from Borovia. We've already seen that he reluctantly followed Stalker's order to leave them behind, and Special Missions #6 showed us his difficult escape. But the reaction of the other Joes is unexpected in G.I. Joe, but makes perfect sense. The other Joes' suspicions about Outback also fits since he is a very recent addition to the team, so he's not yet fully trusted. Though Leatherneck is not used very often in the series, his character is consistently played as an opinionated, loudmouthed jerk, which is actually in keeping with his cartoon appearances. None of the other Joes are exactly thrilled to see Outback, but they decide to leave things alone. Leatherneck can't stand the thought that Outback left his teammates behind. Outback first reacts by ignoring him, but when he pulls out a knife, this becomes the most tense scene of conflict among the Joes in the whole series.

Interestingly, the argument isn't really resolved in this issue, and will be left hanging until issue #67. There's a nice bit of continuity in Roadblock and Leatherneck's argument when Leatherneck brings up his mission into Sierra Gordo in issue #55. The end of the argument gives us a hint that the desert base the Joes are at actually has levels below it, giving us the first hint that this is the site of the new Pit.

There is still humor in this issue. The protest in Borovia seems to have been organized by the government, and one protestor is told that he "is not decrying with sufficient fervor, comrade!" The protestor nervously says, "I'm decrying as hard as I can!" This is a typical 1980s cold war portrayal of the communist state. It's also funny to imagine the Blind Master driving his Ford GT40 and listening to the Beastie Boys.

There are few significant problems in the story, but there's one last frustrating look at Grunt at Georgia Tech. We briefly see him offering his help to rescue his buddies -- especially Stalker -- and essentially getting the phone hung up in his face. What's frustrating is that we don't see Grunt again for sixteen issues, and the series just about gives up on his storyline. The other problem is the mixture of two pencilers. Changing artwork tends to distract readers from the story, and this happens somewhat in this case.

#### First Appearances:

- Geography: The Pit III (above ground only, not yet known to be Joe headquarters)

#### Reprinted in:

- The Transformers (UK) #236-240 (January 27th - February 17th, 1990). A Marvel UK series that began reprinting Action Force stories after the end of that series. These issues reprint this story in five parts, alongside original stories. All references to "G.I. Joe" were changed to "Action Force".
- Classic G.I. JOE: Volume 7 (February 2010). A trade paperback collection from IDW Publishing. Includes issues #61-70.