

OBSERVATIONAL DIARY

SUBJECT: PRIVATE PYLE  
DATE: JUNE 1985  
LOCATION: KUBRICK ESTATE

Stanley shares his research. Drawings of sets. Aerial views of Beckton Gas Works. And then the videotapes.

I had no way of knowing how many audition tapes he received for "Full Metal Jacket," but judging from the size of this room and that all four walls are stacked with tapes, it's easy to say that Kubrick received tens of thousands. (I imagine Val Kilmer somewhere in this room, trapped inside a plastic VHS box.)

How could he have had time to watch all of the tapes? I can't believe it, but I shouldn't be surprised. He's Stanley Kubrick.

KUBRICK: This is the room with only the good auditions.

Stanley says he feels like he's found some of the best actors around. Some great faces. He's cast everybody now but the character of Pvt. Pyle. I don't hesitate to recommend an actor.

Vincent D'Onofrio asked me to shoot his headshot.



DATE: SUMMER 1982 (THREE YEARS EARLIER)  
LOCATION: CENTRAL PARK

I have just met Vince at an audition for the movie "Private School."  
We walk through the park and talk about acting and technique.

Vince studies Lee Strasberg's "Method" with Sharon Chatten,  
a teacher from the Actors Studio. I study with Stella Adler.

Adler and Strasberg have different approaches and are thought to be absolute enemies. I think it would be interesting to see the differences between the two. Vince agrees.

VINCE:                    You can visit my class and I can  
visit yours.

TIME:                    DAYS LATER  
LOCATION:                ACTING LOFT

In Vince's class, I do exercises that are very different from the work I do with Stella. In one exercise, we are supposed to relax and fill ourselves up with the "life of our characters." Everyone is calm. Except for one girl. I can see her body filling with tension as she goes into fits of spastic cursing. During class the girl launches into her monologue from "In the Boom Boom Room." She's playing an angry go-go dancer. I smile at her during a break. She doesn't smile back. She is angry. Even after the class is over, she's angry.

The impression I get from Vince's class is that once you get into character, it's easier to stay in character. My approach is contrary. When the director says "Cut," I like to let it go. Try and be myself again. Hang out.

Unfortunately Vince never gets the opportunity to go to my school.

TIME:                    A YEAR LATER  
LOCATION:                THE HARD ROCK CAFE

I walk down 57th Street and see Vince in front of the Hard

Rock Cafe. He's working as a bouncer. We had lost contact with each other and it is great to see him again.

Vince knows I've been having a good run lately and is happy for me. I promise Vince that if there is ever an opportunity to recommend him for a part I will.

TIME: TWO YEARS LATER  
LOCATION: KUBRICK ESTATE

MODINE: (to Kubrick)  
Vince D'Onofrio.

In the script, Pyle is described as an overweight country boy. I tell Stanley that Vince is neither southern nor fat, but that he is a good actor and can put on the weight and do an accent. Stanley tells me to get in touch with him and have him audition.

Good luck, Vince!

OBSERVATIONAL DIARY

SUBJECT: GETTING SLAPPED  
DATE: JANUARY 1986  
LOCATION: BASSINGBORNE AIRFIELD

Vince tells Lee to slap him for real. Then he tells Stanley that he is going to have Lee slap him. Vince saw me getting slapped for two days in the barracks and just wants to get it over with.

Lee slaps Vince silly.

SQT. HARTMAN: What side was that, Private Pyle?

Lee slaps him again. Vince's fatigue hat spins off his head.

SQT. HARTMAN: What side was that, Private Pyle?

It is horrible to hear Lee's hand smack against Vince's face. Afterward, Vince is really quiet. His face and jaw hurt. But it is over. We move forward. We are all really happy to move forward.

January 16, 1986

Order. Disorder.

The military's goal is to create order.

To the military, the world is chaos.

The military recognizes this and imposes conformity.

There is only one way, one god, one country. You do not belong to yourself. You are part of a machine. Theirs.

Directors are the same way.



OBSERVATIONAL DIARY

SUBJECT: D'ONDORIO'S KNEE  
DATE: JANUARY 1986  
LOCATION: BASSINGBORNE AIRFIELD

Vince runs toward an obstacle on the course. He plants his foot to jump, but his knee says uh-uh. We hear the horrible sound of ligaments tearing in his knee. Vince goes down hard. Vince is taken to the hospital. Shit. What will we shoot without him?

TIME: DAYS LATER

Vince is back. He has a knee brace that he'll have to wear for the rest of the film. His knee couldn't handle the extra pounds he put on.

Vince is in pain. But he's back and we're moving forward. We are all happy to move forward.

OBSERVATIONAL DIARY

SUBJECT: SCHISMS  
DATE: JANUARY 1986  
LOCATION: BASSINGBORNE AIRFIELD - WOODS

ENGLISH EXTRA NO.1: Fergie's a good shag.  
ENGLISH EXTRA NO.2: You shagged her too?  
ENGLISH EXTRA NO.3: We've all shagged the ginger-haired cunt.

I'm joking around with a bunch of the English extras. About fifteen of them claim to have had sex with Princess Ferguson. Our banter is interrupted every ten minutes by a camera rehearsal.

Stanley is waiting for the sun to get lower so that streams of sunlight will filter through the trees. After a rehearsal, Stanley tells me to get ready and stop joking around because he is ready to shoot. I say that I am ready and that I wasn't joking around.

VINCE: Yes, you were.

Because we all had our heads shaved, I thought we looked like dickheads... "swinging dicks". Here I'm teaching the English guys how to play "flies-up". We're looking at someone about to knock a baseball into the air.



Okay, I was. But Stanley wasn't reprimanding me. He was saying he was ready and to, as he says, "tense up." I look at Stanley. He is as baffled as I am. Stanley gets behind the camera. I walk back to the start mark to prepare for the shot. Vince follows me closely from behind.

MODINE: What?  
VINCE: You were joking around.  
You're always joking around.  
MODINE: You're right. I was joking around.  
So what, Vince?

The extras are all watching and waiting for a fight.

VINCE: Well, you should stop joking around.  
MODINE: And what if I don't? What are you going to do if I keep joking around, Vince?  
VINCE: I'm going to kick your ass.  
ENGLISH EXTRAS: (in chorus)  
Oye! Hit 'im!

Vince and I lean toward each other. Neither of us is backing down. I have a choice to make.

MODINE: (thinking)  
If I break my rifle over his head, he goes to the hospital and we stop production. I get a reputation for making trouble on a film set.



for truly hateful things. But I'm almost there.

MODINE:

(to Vivian)

Thanks, Vivian. Would you tell  
Vince . . .

How fucking infantile is this?

January 24, 1986

I am having to deal with him a lot since this started. Teaching him how to make his bed. Teaching him how to dress. How to clean his rifle. How to stand at attention. There is such anger and tension between us both. He looks at me with that moronic look and I want to slap him.

OBSERVATIONAL DIARY

SUBJECT: V. D'ONOFRIO  
DATE: JANUARY 1986  
LOCATION: BASSINGBORNE AIRFIELD

I'm trying to figure out why Vince has gone on the offensive. I want to believe it's because of where he has to go as an actor. That "get in character, stay in character" way of acting.

Cari and I were Vince's closest friends in England. We enjoyed each other and helped each other out as much as we could. I think he's under a lot of pressure with this role.

So now, no one can help him with what he has to do as an actor but himself. I think he's pushing us out of his life so





he can do his work. He doesn't want the comfort of friendship from me or anyone else. He's going to take a journey into madness. I forgive him because I know that this is not his heart. I'll try and respect that and be his friend. Even from a distance.

OBSERVATIONAL DIARY

SUBJECT:                    PREPARATIONS  
DATE:                        JANUARY 1986  
LOCATION:                    MODINE'S DRESSING ROOM

Vince and I are ready to come to blows. We don't talk anymore about anything. Not even professionally. We are preparing for the fight that seems unavoidable.

I buy a speed bag and bolt it to the wall in my dressing room. It's a great way to get ready. I get about two hours of punching in a day between setups and lunch. The sound of the speed bag echoes in the hallways and it's not a secret what I'm doing or preparing for.

LOCATION:                    D'ONOFRIO'S DRESSING ROOM

Vince buys a bench press and free weights. I see him when I walk past his dressing room. He leaves the door open and seems to be making a show of how much weight he can lift. He groans and hisses as he works out and then bangs the metal weights on the floor or onto the bench press. Bravo. BFD.

I will say this: he's quickly transforming all that fat into muscle.

OBSERVATIONAL DIARY

SUBJECT: BLANKET PARTY  
DATE: JANUARY 1986  
LOCATION: THE BARRACKS AT ENFIELD

I hit Vince over and over with a bar of soap. It isn't really a bar of soap. It is a towel with a rag inside for bulk. Regardless, I am beating him. We've been at odds for weeks now. I do want to kick his ass for being such a fucking dickhead, but I take no pleasure in this towel beating. Because he cannot fight back. He cannot defend himself. What pleasure is there in beating the defenseless? Zero. It's shameful. I feel disgusted by the whole event. Ironically, the towel beating is called a blanket party. Some party.

The beating that I give Pvt. Pyle is no different than when I went out for Pop Warner football. I was Pvt. Pyle in football gear. I was completely lost. I did my best but I didn't know the rules. I made mistakes and was punished for my mistakes. I continued to make mistakes and the coach punished the team for my mistakes.

I was spit on. Kicked and insulted. Dizzy and vomiting, I gave up. There was no Pvt. Joker assigned to help me to understand the rules of football. I dropped out. The scar of quitting was real and deep.

I'm finished being angry with Vince. It's stupid. A waste of life. I hope that something will happen to Vince that will help him to see how ridiculous this has become. Let him be angry. It's over for me.

LOCATION: GLEBE PLACE HOME

I read Lyle Kessler's screenplay adaptation of "Orphans." Alan Pakula is directing the film and is in London to see the Steppenwolf production. Pakula wants me to read for the role of Treat. I'm very excited.

I ask Vince if he'll help me out. Vince and I exhausted our hostility toward each other long ago. I would say that our anger was a waste of time if I wasn't aware of the clear fact that it contributed greatly to the work we did on camera. I think the scenes we did were honest and something that we'll be proud of. I suggest to Pakula that I audition with Vince. Acting is sometimes like playing tennis in that you can only be as good as your partner.

LOCATION: UPTIGHT ENGLISH HOTEL LOBBY

Vince and I have shaved heads and look like a couple of soccer hooligans. The hotel managers thoroughly check us out before we're escorted upstairs by their biggest bellman.

LOCATION: PAKULA'S HOTEL ROOM

Pakula's room is tiny. Pakula isn't small. Now the tiny room is filled with four six-foot-plus guys -- three of whom





Beni Camp Radua

have come together to talk about a play. It's kinda funny.  
Uncomfortable. There isn't even room to fart!

PAKULA: (tipping the big bellman)  
Thanks.

The big bellman leaves. I'm certain he is standing outside  
the door in case Pakula starts to scream.

PAKULA: Tea?

We accept. Our big fingers try to fit into the little handles of  
delicate china. After a few minutes of blah blah, Pakula asks:

PAKULA: What's he like?

Even famous directors wanna know.

TIME: MINUTES LATER

Vince and I read through a couple of scenes. It's good, but  
Pakula wants more.

PAKULA: Get into it! A little louder, more  
aggressive.

I look at Vince. We both know that if we get louder, the cops  
are going to pound in the door and haul us both to jail. I  
try to explain.

MODINE: Ah, Mr. Pakula, Vincent and I are  
playing the reality of the scene  
given the confines of your hotel room.



Pakula nods and accepts my nonsense. I leave the audition feeling that I have a fish about to strike at my hook. A great feeling!



Vince and Lori sing an aria on a London street