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24 Marines and 72 Journalists Land at Mogadishu

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Each thumbs-up and chocolate bar, each jeep and clutch of dusky grenades, ramifies in uplink, and the pixels back home warm with expectancy, warm to their story, proliferate our forces in every waiting room, tavern, airport lounge, and den. It is our duty in this dark hour to remember those less privileged, those lacking cable and/or dish, who may suffer some static, who if they wish to know what’s on fire or the blood’s exact tint and hue must open a window and adjust their antennas by hand as best they can. Each G.I. agrees to give his exclusive twice, but then all their caskets slam shut like a skein of firecrackers. Which is really awesome in surround-sound. Also helicopters. The clatter scares our cats shitless.

It is our duty in this dark hour not to hog the remote. To review the distinctions between afmaal, aftahan, afmishaar, and afgarooq. To serve as hafidayaal in the food courts and bowling alleys. To italicize words we don’t know. To take Anthro 101 at the junior college, where we’ll learn African cities always come doubled: knot of village lanes coiled around the market and boulevards stretched straight across the dust by whites. The latter useful for parades, tanks, and quelling coups; the former for undulant dances, gris-gris, and malnutrition. It’s all right here in the textbook. Review this question before the exam. If after
we confiscate the children’s guns
bullets fire directly from their mouths
as they crouch behind sacks of rice rotting
in heaps on the docks will they ever run
out a) of entrepreneurial zeal
b) into the open where we can get
a half-decent crack at them c) of blood
d) all of the above, on their bellies,
in the crawl along the bottom of our screens.