

A FEW GOOD MEN, courtroom scene with Colonel¹ Jessup **Colonel Jessup is testifying about a “code red”**

This audio is taken from the most famous scene in the nineties classic film A Few Good Men. The film is about the murder of Marine William Santiago at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. Lieutenant Laffey (Tom Cruise) thinks that Santiago was killed as a result of a “code red”, a violent extrajudicial punishment. In the courtroom scene Lieutenant Laffey is trying to get Colonel Jessup (Jack Nickolson) to admit that he ordered the “code red”.

Lieutenant Kaffee: Colonel Jessep! Did you order the Code Red?!

Judge Randolph: You don't have to answer that question!

Colonel Jessup: I'll answer the question. You want answers?

Lieutenant Kaffee: I think I'm entitled².

Colonel Jessup: You want answers?!

Lieutenant Kaffee: I want the truth!

Colonel Jessup: You can't handle the truth!

Son, we live in a world that has walls, and those walls have to be guarded by men with guns. Who's gonna do it? You? You, Lieutenant Weinberg? I have a greater responsibility than you can possibly fathom³. You weep⁴ for Santiago, and you curse the Marines. You have that luxury. You have the luxury of not knowing what I know - - that Santiago's death, while tragic, probably saved lives; and my existence, while grotesque and incomprehensible to you, saves lives.

You don't want the truth because deep down in places you don't talk about at parties, you want me on that wall -- you need me on that wall.

¹ Colonel: pronunciation “ker’nel”

² To be entitled: to have a right to something

³ Fathom: (verb) to understand why someone acts as they do

⁴ Weep: to cry tears, to cry a lot

We use words like "honor," "code," "loyalty." We use these words as the backbone of a life spent defending something. You use them as a punch line⁵.

I have neither the time nor the inclination to explain myself to a man who rises and sleeps under the blanket of the very freedom that I provide and then questions the manner in which I provide it.

I would rather that you just said "thank you" and went on your way⁶. Otherwise, I suggest you pick up a weapon and stand a post⁷. Either way, I don't give a DAMN what you think you're entitled to!

Lieutenant Kaffee: Did you order the Code Red?

Colonel Jessup: I did the job --

Lieutenant Kaffee: -- Did you order the Code Red?!

Colonel Jessup: YOU'RE GOD DAMN RIGHT I DID!!!

⁵ Punch line: the final phrase of a funny story or joke

⁶ Go on your way: (idiomatic phrase) continue on your journey

⁷ To stand a post: take your designated position as a guard