

Going out at night the medics gave you pills, Dexedrine breath like dead snakes kept too long in a jar. I Michael never saw the need for them myself himself, a little contact or anything that even sounded like contact would give me him more speed than I he could bear. Whenever I he heard something outside of our their clenched little circle I he would practically flip, hoping to God that I he was not the only one who'd noticed it. A couple of rounds fired off in the dark a kilometer away and the Elephant would be there kneeling on my his chest, sending me him down into my his boots for a breath. Once I he thought I he saw a light moving in the jungle and I he caught myself himself just under a whisper saying, " I'm not ready for this, I'm not ready for this. " That's when I he decided to drop it and do something else with my his nights. And I he was not going out like the night ambushers did, or the Lurps, long range recon patrollers who did it night after night for weeks and months, creeping up on VC base camps or around moving columns of North Vietnamese. I he was living too close to my his bones as it was, all I he had to do was accept it. Anyway, I he would save the pills for later, for Saigon and the awful depressions I he always had there.

I he knew one 4th Division Lurp who took his pills by the fistful, downs from the left pocket of his tiger suit and ups from the right, one to cut the trail for him and the other to send him down it. He told me Michael that they cooled things out just right for him, that he could see that old jungle at night like he was looking at it through a starlight scope. " They sure give you the range, " he said.

This was his third tour. In 1965 he had been the only survivor in a platoon of the Cav wiped out going into the Ia Drang Valley. In '66 he had come back with the Special Forces and one morning after an ambush he had hidden under the bodies of his team while the VC walked all around them with knives, making sure. They stripped the bodies of their gear, the berets too, and finally went away, laughing. After that, there was nothing left for him in the war except the Lurps.

" I just can't hack it back in the World, " he said. He told me Michael that after he'd come back home the last time he would sit in his room all day, and sometimes he'd stick a hunting rifle out the window, leading people and cars as they passed his house until the only feeling he was aware of was all up in the tip of that one finger. " It used to put my folks real uptight, " he said. But he put people uptight here too, even here.

" No man, I'm sorry, he's just too crazy for me, " one of the men in his team said. " All you got to do is look in his eyes, that's the whole fucking story right there. "

" Yeah, but you better do it quick, " someone else said. " I mean, you don't want to let him catch you at it. "

But **he** always seemed to be watching for it, I **Michael** think **thinks** **he** slept with **his** eyes open, and I **he** was afraid of **him** anyway. All I **he** ever managed was one quick look in, and that was like looking at the floor of an ocean. **He the man** wore a gold earring and a headband torn from a piece of camouflage parachute material, and since nobody was about to tell **him** to get **his** hair cut it fell below **his** shoulders, covering a thick purple scar. Even at division **he** never went anywhere without at least a .45 and a knife, and **he** thought I **Michael** was a freak because I **he** would not carry a weapon.

“ Didn’t you ever meet a reporter before? ” I **Michael** asked **him**.

“ Tits on a bull, ” **he** said. “ Nothing personal. ”

But what a story **he this man** told **me him**, as one-pointed and resonant as any war story I **Michael** ever heard, it took **me him** a year to understand it:

“ Patrol went up the mountain. One man came back. He died before he could tell us what happened. ”

I **Michael** waited for the rest, but it seemed not to be that kind of story; when I **he** asked **him the man** what had happened **he** just looked like **he** felt sorry for **me Michael**, fucked if **he**’d waste time telling stories to anyone dumb as I **Michael** was.

**His** face was all painted up for night walking now like a bad hallucination, not like the painted faces I **Michael** had seen in San Francisco only a few weeks before, the other extreme of the same theater. In the coming hours **he**’d stand as faceless and quiet in the jungle as a fallen tree, and God help **his** opposite numbers unless they had at least half a squad along, **he** was a good killer, one of **our their** best. The rest of **his** team were gathered outside the tent, set a little apart from the other division units, with its own Lurp designated latrine and its own exclusive freeze dry rations, three star war food, the same chop they sold at Abercrombie & Fitch. The regular division troops would almost shy off the path when **they** passed the area on **their** way to and from the mess tent. No matter how toughened up **they** became in the war, **they** still looked innocent compared to the Lurps. When **the team** had grouped **they** walked in a file down the hill to the lz across the strip to the perimeter and into the treeline.

I **Michael** never spoke to **him** again, but I **he** saw **him**. When **they** came back in the next morning **he the man** had **a prisoner** with **him**, blindfolded and with **his** elbows bound sharply behind **him**. The Lurp area would definitely be off limits during the interrogation, and anyway, I **Michael** was already down at the strip waiting for a helicopter to come and take **me him** out of there.

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Sometimes, sleeping at Khe Sanh was like sleeping after a few pipes of opium, a floating and a drifting in which your mind still worked, so that you could ask yourself whether you were sleeping even while you slept, acknowledging every noise above ground, every explosion and every running tremor in the earth, cataloging the specifics of each without ever waking. Marines would sleep with their eyes open, with their knees raised and rigid, often standing up on the doze as though touched by a spell. You took no pleasure from sleep there, no real rest. It was a commodity, it kept you from falling apart, the way cold, fat caked C rations kept you from starving. That night, probably sleeping, I Michael heard the sound of automatic weapons fire outside. I he had no real sense of waking, only of suddenly seeing three cigarettes glowing in the dark without any memory of their having been lighted.

“ Probe, ” Mayhew said. He was leaning over me Michael, completely dressed again, his face almost touching mine his, and for a second I Michael had the idea that he Mayhew might have run over to cover me him from any possible incoming. (It would not have been the first time that a grunt had done that.) Everyone was awake, all of our their poncho liners were thrown back, I Michael reached for my his glasses and helmet and realized that I he had already put them on. Day Tripper was looking at us them. Mayhew was grinning.

“ Listen to that fucker, listen to that, that fucker’s gonna burn out the barrel for sure. ”

It was an M 60 machine gun and it was not firing in bursts, but in a mad, sustained manner. The gunner must have seen something; maybe he was firing cover for a Marine patrol trying to get back in through the wire, maybe it was a three- or four-man probe that had been caught in the flarelight, something standing or moving, an infiltrator or a rat, but it sounded like the gunner was holding off a division. I Michael could not tell whether there was answering fire or not, and then, abruptly, the firing stopped.

“ Let’s go see, ” Mayhew said, grabbing his rifle.

“ Don’ you go messin’ with that out there, ” Day Tripper said. “ They need us, they be sendin’ for us. Fuckin’ Mayhew. ”

“ Man, it’s all over. Listen. Come on, ” he said to me Michael. “ See if we can get you a story. ”

“ Give me a second. ” I Michael put on my his flak jacket and we they left the bunker, Day Tripper shaking his head at us them, saying, “ Fuckin’ Mayhew ... ”

Before, the fire had sounded as though it were coming from directly above the bunker, but the Marines on watch there said that it had been from a position forty meters farther down the trenchline. **We they** walked that way in the dark, figures appearing and disappearing in the mist around **us them**, odd, floating presences; it seemed like a long walk and then **Mayhew** bumped helmets with **someone**.

" You wanna watch where the fuck you're goin', " **he** said.

" That's 'You want to watch where the fuck you're going, *Sir*.' " It was **a lieutenant**, and **he** was laughing.

" Sorry, Sir. "

" Mayhew? "

" Yes, Sir. "

" What the fuck are you doing over here? "

" We heard some shit. "

" Who's that man? Where's his rifle? "

" He's a reporter, Sir. "

" Oh ... Hello. "

" Hello, " **I Michael** said.

" Well, " **the lieutenant** said, " you missed the good part. You should have been here five minutes ago. We caught three of them out there by the first wire. "

" What were they trying to do? " **I Michael** asked.

" Don't know. Maybe cut the wires. Maybe lay in a mine, steal some of our Claymores, throw grenades, harass us some, don't know. Will not know, now. "

**We they** heard then what sounded at first like a little girl crying, a subdued, delicate wailing, and as **we they** listened it became louder and more intense, taking on pain as it grew until it was a full, piercing shriek. The three of **us them** turned to each other, **we they** could almost feel each other shivering. It was terrible, absorbing every other sound coming from the darkness.

Whoever it was, he was past caring about anything except the thing he was screaming about. There was a dull pop in the air above **us them**, and an illumination round fell drowsily over the wire.

“ Slope, ” **Mayhew** said. “ See him there, see there, on the wire there? ”

I **Michael** could not see anything out there, there was no movement, and the screaming had stopped. As the flare dimmed, the sobbing started up and built quickly until it was a scream again.

A **Marine** brushed past **us them**. **He** had a mustache and a piece of camouflaged parachute silk fastened bandana style around **his** throat, and on **his** hip **he** wore a holster which held an M 79 grenade launcher. For a second I **Michael** thought I **he** had hallucinated **him**. I **he** hadn't heard **him the Marine** approaching, and I **he** tried now to see where **he** might have come from, but I **he** could not. The M 79 had been cut down and fitted with a special stock. It was obviously a well loved object; you could see the kind of work that had gone into it by the amount of light caught from the flares that glistened on the stock. **The Marine** looked serious, dead eyed serious, and **his** right hand hung above the holster, waiting. The screaming had stopped again.

“ Wait, ” **he** said. “ I'll fix that fucker. ”

**His** hand was resting now on the handle of the weapon. The sobbing began again, and the screaming; **we they** had the pattern now, the North Vietnamese was screaming the same thing over and over, and **we they** didn't need a translator to tell **us them** what it was.

“ Put that fucker away, ” **the Marine** said, as though to **himself**. **He** drew the weapon, opened the breach and dropped in a round that looked like a great swollen bullet, listening very carefully all the while to the shrieking. **He** placed the M 79 over **his** left forearm and aimed for a second before firing. There was an enormous flash on the wire 200 meters away, a spray of orange sparks, and then everything was still except for the roll of some bombs exploding kilometers away and the sound of the M 79 being opened, closed again and returned to the holster. Nothing changed on **the Marine's** face, nothing, and **he** moved back into the darkness.

“ Get some, ” **Mayhew** said quietly. “ Man, did you see that? ”

And I **Michael** said, Yes (lying), it was something, really something.

**The lieutenant** said **he** hoped that I **Michael** was getting some real good stories here. **He** told **me him** to take her easy and disappeared. **Mayhew** looked out at the wire again, but the silence of the ground in front of **us them** was really talking to **him** now. **His** fingers were limp,

touching **his** face, and **he** looked like a kid at a scary movie. I **Michael** poked **his** arm and **we they** went back to the bunker for some more of that sleep.

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At Dong Ha, after days without a bath or a shave or a change of fatigues, **we they** went to the headquarters of the 3rd Marine Division, where **Prager** requested an immediate interview with **General Tompkins, the commander**. **The general's** aide was a brisk dude of a first lieutenant, scrubbed and shaved and polished to a dull glow, and **he** stared at **us them** in disbelief. That initial distaste was mutual, and I **Michael** did not think **we they**'d ever get beyond it, but a moment later **he** led **us them** reluctantly into **the general's** office.

**General Tompkins** was seated behind **his** desk dressed in an OD sweatshirt, and **he** gave **us them** a smile that made **us them** feel slightly lunatic, standing there in **our their** stubble and dirt and wrecked fatigues. When **the lieutenant** left the room, it was as though a great door had been slammed against the chill, and **the general** asked **us them** to be seated. In spite of **his** hard good health and **his** taut, weathered face, **he** reminded me **Michael** of **Everett Dirksen**. It was something sly and amused in **his** smile, a lurking wit behind the eyes, a soft gravel in **his** voice, each sentence rounding out in a grand deliberateness. Behind **him** several flags hung in their standards, and across the length of one entire wall there was a remarkable relief map of the DMZ, with several small sectors covered over, obscured from the eyes of unauthorized personnel.

**We they** sat down, **the general** offered **us them** cigarettes (by the pack) and **Prager** began the questioning. It was all stuff I **Michael** had heard before, a synthesis of everything **Prager** had gotten together during the past four days. I **Michael** had never seen any point in asking generals heavy questions about anything; they were officials too, and the answers were almost always what you expected them to be. I **he** half listened, tuning in and out, and **Prager** began a long, involved question dealing with weather variants, air capability, elevation and range of **our their** big guns, **his** big guns, problems of supply and reinforcement and (apologetically) disengagement and evacuation. **The general** touched **his** fingertips together as the question developed, smiled and nodded as it went into its third minute, **he** looked impressed by **Prager's** grasp of the situation and, finally, when the question ended, **he** placed **his** hands on the desk. **He** was still smiling.

"What?" **he** said.

**Prager** and I **Michael** looked at each other quickly.

“ You’ll have to excuse me, boys. I’m a little hard of hearing. I don’t always catch it all. ”

So **Prager** did it again, speaking unnaturally loud, and **my Michael’s** mind went back to the map, into it really, so that the sound of outgoing artillery beyond **the general’s** windows and the smell of burning shit and wet canvas brought in on the cold air put **my his** head back at Khe Sanh for a moment.

I **he** thought about **the grunts** who had sat in a circle one night with a guitar, singing “ Where Have All the Flowers Gone? ” **Jack Laurence** of CBS News had asked **them** if **they** knew what that song meant to so many people, and **they** said, Yes, yes, **they** knew. I **he** thought about the graffiti that **John Wheeler** had discovered on a latrine wall there, “ I think I’m falling in love with Jake, ” and about **the grunts** who had gone running up the trenchline to find a stretcher for **me him** to sleep on, about **Mayhew’s** space blanket, about **the kid** who had mailed a gook ear home to **his** girl and could not understand now why **she** had stopped writing to **him**. I **he** thought of **the thirteen Marine maneuver battalions** deployed across the Z and of the brutality and sweetness **they** contained, all the ways **they** had of saying **their** thanks, even though **they** knew you were crazy for being there. I **he** thought about the Marines at Khe Sanh on this night; it would be about the forty fifth night of the shelling, the Flood had not lasted this long. **Prager** was still talking, **the general** was still nodding and touching **his** fingertips together and the question was almost finished. “ General, ” **Prager** said, “ what I want to know is, *what if* he decides to attack at Khe Sanh and, at the same time, he attacks at every single base the Marines have set up to support Khe Sanh, all across the DMZ? ”

And I **Michael** thought, Please, **General**, say “ God forbid! ” Let your hands fly up, let involuntary shudders rack your spare, tough frame. Remember Langvei. Remember **Mayhew**.

**The general** smiled, **the crack trapper** anticipating something good, past all doubting. “ *That ... is exactly ... what we ... want him to do,* ” **he** said.

We **they** thanked **him** for **his** time and cigarettes and went out to look for a place to sleep that night.

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There was a spec 4 in the Special Forces at Can Tho, **a shy Indian boy** from Chinle, Arizona, with large, wet eyes the color of ripe olives and a quiet way of speaking, a really nice way of putting things, kind to everyone without ever being stupid or soft about it. On the night that the compound and the airstrip were hit, **he** came and asked **me Michael** if there was a chaplain anywhere around. **He** wasn’t very religious, **he the boy** said, but **he** was worried about tonight.

He'd just volunteered for a "suicide squad," two jeeps that were going to drive across the airstrip with mortars and a recoilless rifle. It looked bad, I Michael had to admit it; there were so few of us them in the compound that they'd had to put me Michael on the reaction force. It might be bad. He the boy just had a feeling about it, he'd seen what always happened to guys whenever they got that feeling, at least he thought it was that feeling, a bad one, the worst he'd ever had.

I Michael told him that the only chaplains I he could think of would be in the town, and we they both knew that the town was cut off.

"Oh," he the boy said. "Look, then. If I get it tonight ..."

"It'll be okay."

"Listen, though. If it happens ... I think it's going to ... will you make sure the colonel tells my folks I was looking for a chaplain anyway?"

I Michael promised, and the jeeps loaded and drove off. I he heard later that there had been a brief firefight, but that no one had been hurt. They didn't have to use the recoilless. They all drove back into the compound two hours later. The next morning at breakfast he the Indian boy sat at another table, saying a lot of loud, brutal things about the gooks, and he wouldn't look at me Michael. But at noon he came over and squeezed my his arm and smiled, his eyes fixed somewhere just to the right of my his own.

For two days now, ever since the Tet Offensive had begun, they had been coming by the hundreds to the province hospital at Can Tho. They were usually either very young or very old or women, and their wounds were often horrible. The more lightly wounded were being treated quickly in the hospital yard, and the more serious cases were simply placed in one of the corridors to die. There were just too many of them to treat, the doctors had worked without a break, and now, on the second afternoon, the Viet Cong began shelling the hospital.

One of the Vietnamese nurses handed me Michael a cold can of beer and asked me him to take it down the hall where one of the Army surgeons was operating. The door of the room was ajar, and I he walked right in. I he probably should have looked first. A little girl was lying on the table, looking with wide dry eyes at the wall. Her left leg was gone, and a sharp piece of bone about six inches long extended from the exposed stump. The leg itself was on the floor, half wrapped in a piece of paper. The doctor was a major, and he'd been working alone. He could not have looked worse if he'd lain all night in a trough of blood. His hands were so slippery that



I Michael had to hold the can to his mouth for him and tip it up as his head went back. I he could not look at the girl.

“ Is it all right? ” he the doctor said quietly.

“ It’s okay now. I expect I’ll be sick as hell later on. ”

He placed his hand on the girl’s forehead and said, “ Hello, little darling. ” He thanked me Michael for bringing the beer. He probably thought that he was smiling, but nothing changed anywhere in his face. He’d been working this way for nearly twenty hours.

The Intel report lay closed on the green field table, and someone had scrawled “ What does it all mean? ” across the cover sheet. There wasn’t much doubt about who had done that; the S-2 was a known ironist. There were so many like him, really young captains and majors who had the wit to cut back their despair, a wedge to set against the bitterness. What got to them sooner or later was an inability to reconcile their love of service with their contempt for the war, and a lot of them finally had to resign their commissions, leave the profession.

We they were sitting in the tent waiting for the rain to stop, the major, five grunts and myself himself. The rains were constant now, ending what had been a dry monsoon season, and you could look through the tent flap and think about the Marines up there patrolling the hills. Someone came in to report that one of the patrols had discovered a small arms cache.

“ An arms cache! ” the major said. “ What happened was, one of the grunts was out there running around, and he tripped and fell down. That’s about the only way we ever find any of this shit. ”

He was twenty nine, young in rank, and this was his second tour. The time before, he had been a captain commanding a regular Marine company. He knew all about grunts and patrols, arms caches and the value of most Intelligence.

It was cold, even in the tent, and the enlisted Marines seemed uncomfortable about lying around with a stranger, a correspondent there. The major was a cool head, they knew that; there wasn’t going to be any kind of hassle until the rain stopped. They talked quietly among themselves at the far end of the tent, away from the light of the lantern. Reports kept coming in: reports from the Vietnamese, from recon, from Division, situation reports, casualty reports, three casualty reports in twenty minutes. The major looked them all over.

“ Did you know that a dead Marine costs eighteen thousand dollars? ” **he** said. **The grunts** all turned around and looked at **us them**. **They** knew how **the major** had meant that because **they** knew **the major**. **They** were just seeing about **me Michael**.

The rain stopped, and **they** left. Outside, the air was still cool, but heavy, too, as though a terrible heat was coming on. **The major** and **I Michael** stood by the tent and watched while an F 4 flew nose-down, released its load against the base of a hill, leveled and flew upward again.

“ I’ve been having this dream, ” **the major** said. “ I’ve had it two times now. I’m in a big examination room back at Quantico. They’re handing out questionnaires for an aptitude test. I take one and look at it, and the first question says, ‘How many kinds of animals can you kill with your hands?’ ”

**We they** could see rain falling in a sheet about a kilometer away. Judging by the wind, **the major** gave it three minutes before it reached **us them**.

“ After the first tour, I’d have the goddamndest nightmares. You know, the works. Bloody stuff, bad fights, guys dying, *me* dying ... I thought they were the worst, ” **he** said. “ But I sort of miss them now. ”

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**We they** could see **the colonel** approaching, a short, balding man with flinty eyes and a brief black mustache. **He** was trussed up tightly in **his** flak jacket, and as **he** came toward **us them** small groups of Marines broke and ran to get their flak jackets on too, before **the colonel** could have the chance to tell them about it. **The colonel** leaned over and looked hard at **the unconscious Marine**, who was lying now in the shade of a poncho being held over **him** by **two corpsmen**, while **a third** brushed **his** chest and face with water from a canteen.

Well hell, **the colonel** was saying, there’s nothing the matter with **that man**, feed some salt into **him**, get **him** up, get **him** walking, this is the Marines, not the goddamned Girl Scouts, there will not be any damned chopper coming in *here* today. (The four of **us them** must have looked a little stricken at this, and **Dana** took **our their** picture. **We they** were really pulling for **the kid**; if **he** stayed, **we they** stayed, and that meant all night.) **The corpsmen** were trying to tell **the colonel** that this was no ordinary case of heat exhaustion, excusing **themselves** but staying firm about it, refusing to let **the colonel** return to the CP. (The four of **us them** smiled and **Dana** took a picture. “ Go away, Stone, ” **Flynn** said. “ Hold it just like that, ” **Stone** said, running in for a closeup so that **his** lens was an inch away from **Flynn’s** nose. “ One more. ”) **The Marine** looked awful lying there, trying to work **his** lips a little, and **the colonel** glared down at the fragile, still

form as though it was blackmailing him. When the Marine refused to move anything except his lips for fifteen minutes, the colonel began to relent. He asked the corpsmen if they'd ever heard of a man dying from something like this.

" Oh, yes Sir. Oh, wow, I mean he really needs more attention than what we can give him here. "

" Mmmmmm ... " the colonel said. Then he authorized the chopper request and strode with what I Michael am is sure he considered great determination back to his CP.

" I think it would have made him feel better if he could have shot the kid, " Flynn said.

" Or one of us, " I Michael said.

" You're just lucky he didn't get you last night, " Flynn said. The evening before, when Flynn and I Michael had arrived together at the base camp, the colonel had taken us them into the Command bunker to show us them some maps and explain the operation, and a captain had given us them some coffee in Styrofoam cups. I Michael had carried mine his outside and finished it while we they talked to the colonel, who was being very hale and friendly in a way I Michael had seen before and did not really trust. I he was looking around for some place to toss the empty cup, and the colonel noticed it.

" Give it here, " he offered.

" Oh, that's okay, Colonel, thanks. "

" No, come on, I'll take it. "

" No, really, I'll just find a - "

" Give it to me! " he said, and I Michael did, but Flynn and I he were afraid to look at each other until he the colonel had returned underground, and then we they broke up, exchanging the worst colonel stories we they knew. I Michael told him Flynn about the colonel who had threatened to court martial a spec 4 for refusing to cut the heart out of a dead Viet Cong and feed it to a dog, and Flynn told me him about a colonel in the Americal Division (which Flynn always said was sponsored by General Foods) who believed that every man under his command needed combat experience; he made the cooks and the clerks and the supply men and the drivers all take M 16's and go out on night patrol, and one time all of his cooks got wiped out in an ambush.

We they could hear the sound of our their Chinook coming in now, and we they were checking to see if we they had all of our their gear, when I Michael took a sudden terrible flash, some total dread, and I he looked at everyone and everything in sight to see if there was some real source. Stone had been telling the truth about this being my Michael's last operation, I he was as strung out as anybody on a last operation, there was nothing between here and Saigon that didn't scare me him now, but this was different, it was something else.

"Fuckin' heat ... , " someone said. " I ... oh, man, I just ... can't ... fuckin' ... *make it!* "

It was a Marine, and as soon as I Michael saw him I he realized that I he had seen him before, a minute or so ago, standing on the edge of the clearing staring at us them as we they got ourselves themselves ready to leave. He'd been with a lot of other Marines there, but I Michael had seen him much more distinctly than the others without realizing or admitting it. The others had been looking at us them too, with amusement or curiosity or envy (we they were splitting, casualties and correspondents this way out, we they were going to Danang), they were all more or less friendly, but this one was different, I Michael had seen it, known it and passed it over, but not really. He the Marine was walking by us them now, and I Michael saw that he had a deep, running blister that seemed to have opened and eaten away much of his lower lip. That wasn't the thing that had made him stand out before, though. If I Michael had noticed it at all, it might have made him seem a little more wretched than the others, but nothing more. He the Marine stopped for a second and looked at us them, and he smiled some terrifying, evil smile, his look turned now to the purest hatred.

" You fucking guys, " he said. " You guys are *crazy!* "

There was the most awful urgency to the way he said it. He was still glaring, I Michael expected him to raise a finger and touch each of us them with destruction and decay, and I he realized that after all this time, the war still offered at least one thing that I he had to turn my his eyes from. I he had seen it before and hoped never to see it again, I he had misunderstood it and been hurt by it, I he thought I he had finally worked it out for good and I he was looking at it now, knowing what it meant and feeling as helpless under it this last time as I he had the first.

All right, yes, it had been a groove being a war correspondent, hanging out with the grunts and getting close to the war, touching it, losing yourself in it and trying yourself against it. I he had always wanted that, never mind why, it had just been a thing of mine his, the way this movie is a thing of mine his, and I he had done it; I he was in many ways brother to these poor, tired grunts, I he knew what they knew now, I he had done it and it was really something. Everywhere I he had gone, there had always been Marines or soldiers who would tell me him what the Avenger had told Krynski, *You're all right, man, you guys are cool, you got balls.* They

didn't always know what to think about you or what to say to you, they'd sometimes call you " Sir " until you had to beg them to stop, they'd sense the insanity of your position as terrified volunteer reporter and it would seize them with the giggles and even respect. If they dug you, they always saw that you knew that, and when you choppered out they'd say goodbye, wish you luck. They'd even thank you, some of them, and what could you say to that?