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Go Tell the Spartans

By Daniel Ford

Cowboy!
Get that man out of that jug!
He say he not Cong.
We make him say he Cong.
He can't say anything if
you drown him. Now get him out!
Yes, sir, major. Instamment.
Cowboy!
He lie, major.
He goddamn bastard.
Put him back in the cage,
you hear me?
God damn it, Cowboy!
Do you hear me?
Yes, sir, major. Instamment.
Any traffic?
Uh, let's see. Mung Tau
wants to get lit up tonight.
You pass the signal
to Nighthawk?
It's passed.
What are you juicing up now,
Ackley?
Carrots and onions.
You think it'll cure
your pimples?
It'll keep my bowels open
anyways.
- AI.
- Major.
"Instamment, major."
I'm gonna zap that goddamn gook.
Which gook, sir?
Cowboy. He had a prisoner
stuck in the water jug again.
Well, you can't shoot
that goddamn gook, sir.
He knows English, French,
Chinese, and 75 Viet dialects.
I can shoot him. I can shoot him
and his goddamn dialects.
Thank you, Kwan.
I didn't get
my combat infantryman's badge.

Why not?
New regulation from Saigon...
that you gotta have
thirty days under fire.
I've only got twenty-two.
Well, I guess you'll have
to get out in the field, Al...
and kick a little ass, huh?
When, sir?
When I don't need you here
anymore. What's the new map?
We got a query from Saigon...
about some crummy hamlet
called Muc Wa.
It's in this map plot here.
What do they want?
Complete position paper.
Oh, shit.
Too goddamn many
static defense posts as it is.
That's what happened
to the French.
They got themselves tied down
in static defense.
What do we know
about this... this Muc stuff?
Muc Wa.
- Hey, sir.
- "Hey, sir."
Jesus Christ.
What is it, Toffee?
The replacements are here.
Close the door a minute.
Make up a position paper, Al.
Tell them that Muc Fuck
has about...
Muc Wa, sir.
Muc Wa. Muc Wa
has about two hundred people...
mostly old men,
women, and children.
No Cong activity there
for years.
Severe drought conditions.

No water for troops.
Uh, it's on a river, sir.
Well, fix it up.
In the opinion
of this command...
this hamlet is of no strategic
significance whatsoever?
"Et shitera."
Toffee. Toffee?
Yes, sir?
- You got their papers?
- Yes.
Hamilton, Raymond...
second lieutenant.
What the hell are they sending
us second lieutenants for?
All right, Toffee. Show the o...
- Yes, sir.
- Show the officer in.
Yes, sir.
Come in, lieutenant.
Lieutenant Hamilton, sir.
I'm Major Barker.
Captain Olivetti, the exec.
- So, lieutenant?
- Sir!
Relax, kid. Sit down.
Thank you, sir.
How old are you, lieutenant?
Twenty-three, sir.
And still a second?
What the hell do they expect us
to do with you?
We don't have any slots
for second lieutenants.
Send me into the field, sir.
I feel that
I can kill communists...
as well as any
first lieutenant, sir.
Well, let's not rush things.
Why did you volunteer
for Vietnam?
Well, sir...

I feel that
if my country's at war...
it's my duty to fight for it.
All right, lieutenant.
We'll see if we can't
find a slot for you.
Thank you, sir.
Yeah.
Next!
Oleonowski, sir.
How've you been, Oleo?
Sir?
Have I changed that much?
Goddamn. Mr. Barker.
Captain Olivetti, exec.
- How do you do, sir?
- Oleo and I served in Korea.
He kept my butt from being
shot off more than once.
Well, he was a pretty good
officer, too, sir.
Officers didn't have to be
very good with men like Oleo.
Where have you been stationed?
- South, sir. Delta.
- Hairy?
Oh, Jesus.
I'll tell you, sir...
I had three teams
shot out from under me.
How's it up here, sir?
Hairy sometimes, but
the casualties aren't too bad.
That's good, sir.
We'll find something for you,
Oleo.
Thank you, sir.
It's nice to be
in your command again, sir.
Sir.
Put him in charge of weapons
training with a squad of puffs.
I can use him in the field.
He's burnt out, Al.

Let him rest.

Next!

Lincoln, sir.

Abraham?

Yes, sir.

Well, we can use

a good bac si, corporal.

It says here you've been serving
with the dispensary in Saigon.

- Yes, sir.

- Been out in the field much?

Not much, sir.

Why not?

They didn't assign me, sir.

All right, corporal. That's all.

Abraham Lincoln.

How'd you like to go through
life with a moniker like that?

No wonder the poor bastard
looks like he's caved in.

- What'll I do with him?

- Assign him to clap control.

Corporal Stephen Courcay,
college graduate.

Draftee.

This one's a draftee, Al.

Demolitions training.

Well, that's S.O.P.

Charlie blew up everything
around here ten years ago.

Next!

What's your name, soldier?

Oh, sorry. Courcay, sir.

What are you doing here?

- Sir?

- In Vietnam. You volunteered.

Sir, if I had to be a soldier...

I wanted to be in

the roughest, toughest outfit...

in the U.S. Army, sir.

Well, that's fine, corporal.

But that adds six months

to your draft hitch, doesn't it?

Yes, sir.

Now, look, corporal...
I'm going to ask you once again
what you're doing here...
and don't give me
any of that crap...
about the roughest, toughest
outfit in the U.S. Army.
Does it matter, sir?
The point is, I'm here
of my own choosing, sir.
All right, corporal. Dismissed.
Now, what right
does a fucking draftee have...
to volunteer for anything?
Or second lieutenants?
What do you want me
to do with him, sir?
Put him on mosquito patrol?
What else?
You and the corporal
got plenty...
of insect repellent
on your faces?
Yes, sir.
You don't have any on your arms,
do you?
- No, sir.
- All right, lieutenant.
Quartermaster people in Saigon
gotta have this information.
They gotta establish
priorities...
for mosquito net
and an insect repellent.
Yes, sir.
You don't have to salute
all the time, lieutenant.
Not out here in the boonies.
Thank you, sir.
OK, corporal, follow me.
Any action?
Not yet.
- Toffee.
- Yeah, major.

Any traffic from Mung Tau?
Uh, yeah. They're asking
for the flare ships.
I told them they ought to be
up there in a few minutes.
Charlie's on the prod again.
God damn it,
I want to see those flares.
Nighthawk control must have
Mung Tau runnin' out its ears.
They flew forty-four hours
in there last week.
Screw Nighthawk. I want
that fuckin' jungle lit up!
- Toffee.
- Yeah?
- Send a signal to Nighthawk.
- There they go, sir.
Forget it, Toffee.
Yeah. OK.
Now they can kick
that little mother's ass.
There's a firefight
out there somewhere.
That's where I want to be.
Well, we have our own duty
to perform, corporal.
Ah, yeah.
You count this time,
I'll expose.
Oh, that's OK. I'll do it.
No. I never ask my men to do
anything I won't do myself.
OK... time.
Five...
Ten...
Fifteen...
Twenty...
Thirty seconds, sir.
OK, count!
I get twenty-three, sir.
Ow. They really zing you,
don't they?
Maybe we'll get

a purple heart. Ha!
I don't think
that's very funny, corporal.
OK, let's get moving.
We got four more stations
to run tests on.
That amapola will kill you.
It's altogether
fitting and proper.
What the fuck
are you talking about?
I'm telling you, that amapola
won't do you no good.
It's the last full measure
of shit.
You bet it is.
How long you been on the hip?
Four score and seven.
Yeah, well, sweet dreams,
Abraham Lincoln.
Berries from the earth, sir.
That means fuck off.
Hmm...
Welcome to Penang,
General Harnitz.
Captain Olivetti.
Gentlemen, Captain McCain.
Sorry I can't get here
more often, Asa.
Got a lot of ground to cover,
though. A lot of ground.
Captain,
you make your inspection...
while I powwow
with Major Barker.
- Sergeant Oleonowski.
- Sir.
See the captain has access
to anything he wishes to see.
Yes, sir. This way, sir.
Allow your men to wear...
those tiger-striped
frenchified fatigues?
Strictly unauthorized

in this command, aren't they?
Well, sir,
I like to allow the men...
some freedom in the field, sir.
For the sake of esprit,
you know.
Esprit. French word,
I believe, isn't it?
I believe so.
You know what happened
to the French in this country...
they got the shit
kicked out of them.
Now, that's not gonna happen
to the U.S. Army, Asa.
No, sir.
All right, Asa... Muc Wa.
Sir?
Muc Wa. Let's see
the coordinates with Muc Wa.
Oh, it's on the wall...
Where is it, Al?
- I took it down, sir.
- Well, put it up.
I sent in
a position paper, sir...
to intelligence, as requested.
I read your position paper.
Put it over here.
Yes, sir.
It said Muc Wa has
a population of two hundred...
but according
to other information...
Muc Wa hasn't been inhabited
since 1953.
You didn't reconnoiter Muc Wa.
I know your style, Asa.
Everybody knows your style.
You're a good field officer...
but you are inclined
to have it your own way.
General,
I don't have the people.

My command is spread thinner
than the hairs on a baby's ass.
I'm sure you can do it, Asa,
if you put your mind to it.
'Cause here's the situation.
Muc Wa was abandoned
by the French in 1953.
Shortly thereafter,
they lost the highway...
from here to the sea.
Then Penang fell,
with two thousand defenders.
Well, now,
we wouldn't want to repeat...
the mistakes of the French,
would we?
We want Muc Wa
reoccupied and garrisoned.
And that's your job, Asa.
Cut the mustard, Asa,
and don't fuck around.
Just cut it.
I'll do my best, sir.
Fine. I'll be watching.
Old hard-nuts
lays it on you, doesn't he, sir?
Yeah, well, I used to be
his commanding officer...
chewed his ass out.
Ass for ass, Al.
How many gooks you got
working on that canal?
About thirty, sir, but Jesus!
You heard the general.
Garrison Muc Wa.
Give 'em shotguns...
and sprinkle a few machine guns
among them...
just in case
Charlie should get interested.
OK.
And this new garrison will be
established here at Muc Wa.
And you, Hamilton,

will be in command.
Sir, I'm just a second...
I know, but I've been
keeping my eye on you.
I've tested
your leadership abilities...
on the mosquito patrol...
and I'm convinced
that you're the man for Muc Wa.
I'm recommending you
for promotion.
Thank you, sir. Thank you.
Now, according to standing
operating procedures...
we should have an ARVN officer
to lead the Viet troops...
but we're short
of ARVN officers.
In lieu of that,
I've assigned Sergeant Nguyen.
He's a fine interpreter.
He'll be a big help to you.
Major, I say this to you...
Knock it off.
You are also fortunate,
lieutenant...
in having Sergeant Oleonowski
on your team.
He's an old hand in Nam...
and I advise you
to lean heavily on his judgment.
Yes, sir.
I'm also giving you
Corporal Ackley...
as your signal man and
Corporal Lincoln as your medic...
both experienced men.
Corporal Courcey will act
as your weapons specialist.
My primary is demolitions, sir.
Good.
And now, lieutenant...
your troops
will be moved by truck...

to a point
on the inland highway...
about a half-hour's march
into Muc Wa.
Captain Olivetti
will brief you as to the time...
and organization
of your departure.
Any questions?
- Sir?
- Yes?
Sir, I feel I have
a fine team here...
and I'm sure
I speak for all my men...
we appreciate this opportunity
to fight for our country, sir.
Very well said, lieutenant.
That's all, men.
Oleonowski, please remain
for a few minutes.
Thank you, sir.
OK, Oleo.
That gook company is
a bunch of paddy farmers, sir.
I saw them being mustered.
They got shotguns.
Jesus Christ, sir!
This garrison, this Muc Wa.
No reason for Charlie
to be there.
In fact, Charlie
hasn't been reported...
within fifty miles of the site.
Any place we turn up, sir,
Charlie turns up.
You know that, sir.
Oleo, I'm giving you
a squad of crack mercenaries...
as insurance, just in case
you do contact the Cong.
OK?
OK, major.
That's all.

Shit.

General Patton's gonna make
a speech to his troops.

Men, we have been ordered
to march into the jungle...
where we will establish
a fortress...

for liberty and justice.

What are they laughin' about?

They pleased much, sir.

- You sure?

- Certainement.

Dinks laugh all the time,
lieutenant.

Don't let it bother you.

Well, that's enough, then.

Sat Cong!

Sat Cong!

Sat Cong!

Sat Cong! Sat Cong!

- Sat Cong!

- Sat Cong!

What's he doing?

Stirring them up. They're
saying, "Kill communists."

- Sat Cong!

- Sat Cong!

- OK, old man?

- Yeah, OK.

All right!

Fucking draftee.

I still don't know

what the hell he's doing here.

Why are we going so fast?

We don't travel slow

anywhere in this country.

Snipers. Charlie.

- What's that?

- Stay down, lieutenant.

Get out!

We ambushed?

Courcey!

- Yeah, sarge.

- Check that roadblock.

Me?
You're a demolitions man,
aren't you?
Yeah.
Tripwire, off to the left.
- Cowboy.
- Yes, sir.
Charlie's in a hidey hole.
Get him.
Medic!
Courcey.
Where's Corporal Lincoln?
Coming, sir!
Corporal, take care
of this prisoner's wound.
Sergeant, do you think
he's the only one out there?
Yes, sir.
They'll throw up a roadblock...
and leave one man behind to
blow it when somebody moves it.
He could've been squattin' out
there for three or four days.
- Ackley?
- Yes, sir.
Get a signal off to Penang.
Report this incident...
the time and location.
Sergeant Nguyen, I want you
to question the prisoner...
name, where he's from,
where his friends are.
Won't do any good, lieutenant.
He won't say anything.
They never do.
That's enough, sergeant.
OK, let's move out.
You're crazy.
You're crazy.
- You're crazy!
- It's all right. OK.
- You're crazy!
- All right, listen to me.
He cut his head off! His head!

I don't give a damn!
You listen to me!
Kid, that's what it's like
in this fuckin' war.
Sat Cong.
OK.
Bury him.
Lincoln,
look after the lieutenant.
Give him something
for his stomach.
You nailed to the ground,
Courcey?
Go puke with the lieutenant.
I'm not gonna puke.
It's their war, Courcey!
According to the map,
this is it, lieutenant.
Road to Muc Wa.
Cowboy, flankers out.
Detail five men to set up
the rear guard with Courcey.
Courcey,
you're rear guard advisor.
Wait a minute. How am I
supposed to advise them?
Stay a hundred yards behind us.
Keep looking over your shoulder.
Anything moves back there,
zap it.
Cowboy, set the point.
This way.
Sergeant Nguyen,
give the order to move out.
OK, uh, uh...
Let's... let's go, men.
That goddamn roadblock
wasn't there...
yesterday afternoon at 5:00.
The scout plane cased that route
for seventy-five klicks.
Maybe they just accidentally
decided to block that route.
Shit, the V.C. Doesn't do

anything accidentally.
They knew that convoy
was coming.
They know everything
we're gonna do.
And we don't know
a damn thing they're gonna do.
Hey, major.
A distribution package
from Saigon just came in.
Well, let me have it, eh?
- It's got a lieutenant with it.
- What lieutenant?
I think that'd be...
our psychological warfare
specialist...
from General Harnitz.
Table of organization
requires one.
It's a new directive.
You read it, sir.
Oh, yes, yes.
All right, Toffee, bring him in.
And, Toffee, try not to say
"Hey" to the lieutenant...
if you can help it.
Right, major.
Hey, lieutenant!
Major Barker.
Wattsberg, Finley, sir.
We've been expecting you,
lieutenant. Captain Olivetti.
- How do you do, sir?
- OK.
Oh, your distribution packet,
sir.
So, you're the new
psycho specialist, huh?
Covert warfare psychological
specialist, yes, sir.
What are you gonna do
for us, lieutenant?
Post the incident flow
priority indicator, sir.

Great. What's that?
Allow me, sir.
This, sir, is the indicator.
A computer in Saigon will
sift all intelligence reports...
and reduce the information...
to parables, ratios,
and mean averages...
whereby we shall be able
to assign defense priorities.
That is, sir,
the incident flow indicator...
will indicate
which of your outposts...
is the most endangered.
I'll enter that name
on the indicator here...
condition red.
Number two
will be condition orange.
Number three... condition yellow.
You mean...
you are going to tell us
where the V.C. Will attack...
before they do it?
With reasonable accuracy, sir.
That'll be the goddamn day.
I assure you, sir,
it works remarkably well.
Toffee!
Where shall I hang it, sir?
Stick it over the door.
Excellent.
Very... prominent, sir.
I'll make the first entries
tomorrow, sir.
I can't wait.
Toffee. See the lieutenant
has quarters...
and a place out there to work.
- Sure.
- Thank you, sir.
Where are we, Al?
I mean geographically,

where are we?
Vietnam. Penang, sir.
You sure
we're not in a loony bin?
Sometimes I get the feeling
we're in a goddamn loony bin.
Sergeant.
Lieutenant.
Muc Wa.
It's almost time for
the helicopter. Let's move out.
Lieutenant,
hold on just a minute.
Cowboy, VARs.
OK, lieutenant, we go in fast...
and lay some smoke
for the choppers.
Move out!
OK, I got it.
Keep it moving.
All right, let's get cracking.
Cowboy, get that bunker
over there cleaned up...
for the lieutenant's
command post.
- Ackley!
- Behind you!
Set your commo shack
up in there next to him.
Lincoln! Find yourself
a hospital somewhere.
- Courcey!
- Yo!
Have all three points
in the triangle...
manned and ready
in fifteen minutes.
Excuse me for taking over
like this, sir...
but we got to get this garrison
shaped up before Charlie time.
Night. That's Charlie time.
Fine, Sergeant,
but what can I do?

You make yourself comfortable,
sir. You're the officer.

- Cowboy!

- Yes, sir.

Assign every man
a place on the wall.
I want all the underbrush
cut down.
Nobody sleeps tonight,
not till we find out...
what kind of asshole situation
we got here.
Now let's move it along!
Come on, boys, chop it up,
chop it up! Let's go, let's go!
Night's comin', baby!
Move it out!
You read French, corporal?
Fairly well, sir.
I think it refers
to the battle of Thermopylae...
where the 300 Spartans died
trying to hold the pass...
if you remember
your Greek history, sir.
Yeah.
It says, roughly...
"Stranger...
"when you find us lying here...
go tell the Spartans
we obeyed their orders."
You think there's three hundred
French buried here?
I'll count 'em
first chance I get, sir.
Hey, major?
Hey, major, we got communication
established with Muc Wa.
Well, read it to me, hey.
"Operation Blaze
to blah, blah, blah...
"French fortifications
in usable condition.
"Team morale excellent.

No enemy contact.

"Standing operating procedures
in effect.

"We shall do our duty.

Lieutenant Hamilton,
Commander, Operation Blaze."

Let me have it. OK, Toffee.

"We shall do our duty."

Jesus Christ.

We better get some aerial
photographs of this place...
have 'em brought up in detail.
I wanna know how it lies like
I know the wrinkles on my face.
OK, major.

- Sergeant?

- Sir.

Now, why are you leaving
three gates in the walls?
You're giving the enemy
too many ways to break in.

Sir, them gates
is for us to break out of...
if and when the time comes.
Don't worry about Charlie
breaking in.

He'll come over these walls
like a forest fire.

Over the barbed wire?

Well, sir, the dinks
don't feel any pain.

The barbed wire just makes 'em
itch a little.

Well, that's hard to believe,
sergeant.

Well, sir, I hope you don't
have to see it to believe it.

Well, three gates. That's fine.

Excuse me.

Lieutenant's got the quick-step.

Yeah, well, he'll get over it.

Some do, and some don't.

Me, I think the lieutenant's
on the don't side.

What is it?
What is it?
Nuoc mam.
Somebody used fish sauce.
I don't smell anything.
We smell.
Well...
let's get off this trail.
Cong. We attack.
Well, let's make damn sure
before you start shootin'.
- No. Shoot first.
- Wait a minute.
We'll take a look first.
Some Cong.
Hello!
No! I'm an American!
Uh, tell your men
to lower their rifles.
Tell 'em.
Wrong, sir.
They communist people.
We'll see. Hold my rifle.
I'm... I am your friend.
Tell 'em. Interpret.
I'm... I'm not going to hurt you.
Interpret!
L... I have some chocolate.
I have some chocolate.
It's good.
Chocolat.
It's good.
It's all right.
Mmm. That's good.
Try a piece, hmm? Please?
It's good.
Yeah.
It's good.
Here's a piece for you.
And here's a piece for you.
They Cong, sir.
Who cares? They're hungry.
Here you go.
- She's nice.

- What are you, the Pied Piper?
God damn it, Courcey,
I send you out...
to map
the fuckin' jungle trails...
you come back with
a bunch of sick-lookin' dinks!
What the hell am I supposed
to do with them?

- They Cong.
- They're refugees.
- Ahh.
- It's a goddamn lie.
- They Cong family.
- No, they're not.

What is it, sergeant?
Who are these people?
Courcey dragged them
out of the pocket bush.
Cowboy,
give 'em rice and run 'em off.
Now, just a moment. Now, your
attitude is wrong, sergeant.
It is part of our job here...
to win the hearts and minds
of the people.

- Sir...
- We will make them welcome.
Sir, you don't understand.
I understand my duty, sergeant.
Now, Corporal Lincoln, take
these ladies to the hospital...
and give them a health check.
Corporal Courcey,
I'll make you responsible...
for seeing
they have food and shelter.
Sir, Cowboy says
this is a Cong family.
They don't look
like communists to me.
Sir, I been in this fuckin' war
for three years.
I still don't know

what a communist looks like.
Corporal Courcey, were
these people armed in any way?
No, sir.
Well, there you are, sergeant.
Carry on as directed,
Corporal Lincoln.
All right.
Tell the slopes to follow me.
Lincoln...
you better pop that little cunt
full of penicillin...
before the whole barracks
comes down with the clap.
What's Boo Jum doing in the red?
Mung Tau ought to be in the red.
No, sir, Mung Tau is definitely
declining in incident ratio.
My flow chart indicates...
that the next
concentrated offensive...
will be against Boo Jum.
There hasn't been a shot fired
in Boo Jum in three months.
Sir, if you wish me
to explain...
the incremental
digital contingencies...
and the compatible
logistical projection...
by which the flow chart
has arrived at red for Boo Jum...
Forget it, forget it. It's got
the toughest fortifications...
of any of the outposts,
and Charlie knows it.
Hey!
Hey, major, where you going?
I mean, just in case
I get some traffic.
I'm going to Tapang,
to a boom-boom joint...
and get my ashes hauled, OK?
Sure. OK.

Thanks.
Be back by Charlie time.
World War II.
What?
That's what I call the major,
World War II.
Precisely.
On the hill!
I think it's Cong!
- How many?
- I just saw one.
- Right over there.
- Move it, move it!
Hit all three points!
Come on, move your ass!
Move it!
That's pretty good.
Little mothers might give
Charlie a show at that.
Come on!
Was that another drill,
sergeant?
No, sir. We got a contact.
Enemy scout overlookin' us
from the hill.
I spotted him
in the cemetery, sir.
He left this note.
Charlie likes to leave
calling cards, sir.
Better set ambush patrols
tonight and every night.
Of course, sergeant.
I'll lead one myself.
You might wanna wait till
you feel a little up to it, sir.
Courcey will take
one patrol tonight.
Cowboy will take the other.
Yeah, I think you ought
to get off your feet, sir.
Just stay sort of quiet.
Yes, sir, we might not
get much sleep tonight...

if Charlie probes us.
Yeah.
Well, I'll be in my quarters
if you need me.
Yes, sir.
Amoebic.
Yeah.
Fourscore
And
And seven
Years ago
Our fathers brought forth
on this continent
A new nation
Conceived in liberty
Dedicated
To the proposition
All men
Are created equal
Brave
Uh, men
Living and dead
Who struggled here
Have consecrated it
Far above our poor
Power to add
Or detract...
Fire!
Under God
Shall have a new
Birth, freedom
And that government
Of the people
By the people
For the people
Shall not perish
from the earth
Corporal!
Corporal, are you all right?
Your president is safe.
Get up, you doped-up bastard!
We got wounded gooks
on our hands!
That's a girl.

You're OK.

Major?

Yeah?

- Signal, sir.

- Ahem. Come on in.

- Want some coffee?

- Oh, thanks.

OK, shoot.

Uh...

Mung Tau had a couple snipers
last night. That's all.

Lieutenant What's-His-Face
moved Mung Tau...

on down into the yellow.

Red's in the clear now.

I had a signal

from Lieutenant Hamilton...

about that little action

over at Muc Wa last night...

if you want me

to read it to you.

Mmm. Go ahead.

"From Operation Blaze
to Thunderhead.

Sir, we have met the enemy,
and they are ours."

You dirty rat.

You sneaked up on me.

I don't believe it.

Swear to God.

That's what he says.

What else does it say?

Uh, signal goes on to say...

the attack consisted

of twelve rounds of mortar fire.

There were two light casualties.

Mortar was knocked out

by an ambush patrol...

led by Corporal Courcey,

four Cong killed.

Courcey, huh? Hmm.

So, the draftee

got himself bloody.

Well, what do you know?

Commend Hamilton, and tell him
to pass it on to the draftee.
Yes, sir.
Fucking draftee.
Hello, little girl.
A-OK!
What are you doin', corporal?
I'm shortening fuses
to one second for the sergeant.
Oh, yeah?
Yeah.
He's gonna plant grenades
in front of the barbed wire...
with trip loops on 'em.
How do you feel, sir?
Oh, fine, corporal. I'm about
recovered from my bout.
Corporal, that little girl's
standing out there in the rain.
Well, what does she want?
I think she wants me.
You're joking.
She's just a child.
Cowboy says she's fourteen.
Well, you're not going to,
corporal.
That's strictly
against the rules for us.
No, sir. I'm not going to.
Oh, sir.
I finally got
those graves counted.
Exactly three hundred and two.
They were brave men, corporal.
They fought the battle
and lost...
but we won't lose.
We're Americans.
I got a schedule, sir.
I'm gonna pin my leaves on
before I'm twenty-eight.
I'm gonna have my eagles
before I'm thirty-two.
When I'm thirty-eight...

I'm gonna have a star.
Maybe two.
General Alfred by-God Olivetti.
That's my schedule, sir.
Very proper schedule, Al.
Very proper, indeed.
Just like an express train.
And you'll do it, too.
You'll do it
because you got the...
you got the coal,
and you got the steam.
But watch out for
those fucking block signals.
Well, how... how do you mean, sir?
Well, did you ever
ask yourself, Al...
why after two wars
and a bucketful of medals...
I'm still a major?
Well, I wasn't gonna
ask that, sir.
Booze and pudenda.
Oh, I could handle the booze,
all right...
but it was the pudenda
that got me.
I don't know that word, sir.
Well, in politer circles,
I think they call it pussy.
Don't laugh, son.
Listen, in the Pentagon,
there's a secret vault...
and nobody has the key
but the chief of staff.
He wears it around his neck.
And in that vault is
a list of names of officers...
who are not gentleman.
Now, any time an officer
comes up for promotion...
the chief steals into that vault
and runs down the list.
If the officer's name is

on that list, zap, no promotion.
I'm on that list.
I'm not a gentleman.
Oh, I was once, yes, but...
there's a certain general...
I won't tell you his name
or how many stars he wears...
but I was his aide for a while,
right after moving up to major.
And he had a wife...
who was some twenty years
younger than he...
and I guess
he wasn't up to snuff...
in the conjugal department...
because it wasn't long before
I found myself being groped.
But I was a gentleman, Al,
and this was my general's lady.
And I tried to be courteous and
remain upright at all times...
but, shit, how long
can a fella remain upright...
when he's being
crawled all over...
every time the general goes out
to take a pee or something?
Not long, right?
Well, finally, I screwed her.
Big mistake, Al, big mistake.
I thought
I'd cool her off some...
but it turned out
that I got hooked.
She was the hottest thing
I ever had in all my life.
Wow.
Thereafter, I found myself
humping her...
on any and every occasion,
in all fashions known to man.
Then one night
there was a big to-do...
at an embassy in Washington...

and I accompanied
the general and his lady.
Very prestigious affair.
Even the president was there.
And while the general
was brown-nosing...
around the president...
the lady and I
slipped out into the garden.
You know what a gazebo is?
Well, it's a big bird-cage
piece of junk...
that sits in gardens
covered with rose vines.
The lady and I slipped quietly
into this dark little bower...
and she sat
with her back to the door...
while I remained standing...
keeping a sharp lookout
all around...
whereupon she proceeded
to make love to me, orally.
Well, as you well know...
there comes a time
in the sexual encounter...
when a fellow is apt to lose
interest in the surroundings...
which is precisely
what I was guilty of doing...
and when things
swam into focus...
the first thing I saw
was the general...
standing in the arch...
pink roses
all around his old gray head...
and next to him
was the ambassador's wife...
and you-know-who.
The president?
Of the United States, on a tour
of the embassy gardens.
Jesus H. Christ.

There are stronger words
for that situation, Al...
like gee whiz and, oh, gosh,
and golly...
because the lady,
with her back to the door...
didn't know they were there...
and she had not yet
ceased operations.
And that's why,
after all these years...
I'm still a major.
What did you do?
Do?
When you saw 'em standing there.
I did the only thing
I've ever been trained to do.
I saluted.
What the hell
are you doing in my office?
Posting the incident flow
priority indicator, sir.
At this hour
of the goddamn night?
I thought it was important, sir,
in Muc Wa.
What the fuck is Muc Wa
doing in yellow?
The parables, sir.
Oh, screw the parables.
Muc Wa's nowhere.
Cong don't give a shit
about Muc Wa.
If you'll permit me
to explain, sir.
You're just trying
to make trouble for me.
You know that, God damn it.
Sir, there's a definite...
general converging
of incidents...
toward the vicinity
of Muc Wa, sir.
Oh, Christ.

Get up off the goddamn floor.
- Toffee!
- Present, sir.
Get Muc Wa on the horn.
Maybe they're asleep, sir.
They can't afford to sleep.
Wake 'em up.
Oleo, come in, Oleo.
What's your situation?
I got Cong on 2-7-2.
I'm buggin' off before
they cut us off from the river.
As soon as we hit the water
and clear the bank...
tear the goddamn jungle up
behind us.
Do you read me, Muc Wa? Over?
5-5, Oleo, we'll cover.
He's retreating
to the river, sir.
He wants cover fire
to make the crossing.
How can I do that?
Cowboy, get me a fire team.
Ackley, stay here
with the machine gun.
Good, good! Sergeant Nguyen.
Come on, Cowboy.
Team one.
I'll call it.
They're right on my ass!
You better get cover!
We got you!
Here we come!
Fire!
- Blow the charge?
- No! Get the fire team back.
They're comin' in now.
Sergeant, sergeant.
You left one of your men
out there.
Well, Christ, lieutenant,
we wasn't lookin' back.
- I'll get him in, sir.

- Damned if you will, Courcey.
Charlie's zeroed in on him,
just waiting for a sucker.
I'll get him myself, corporal,
but thank you for volunteering.
Didn't you hear what I said?
You're not in command here,
sergeant.
You don't see
any of those gooks...
running out there for him,
do you?
God damn it,
he's their buddy, not ours!
You will lay down an enfilade
fire, and I'll go out under it.
Enfilade, defilade...
Charlie's like a mole...
God damn it!
They're dug in by now!
You better listen to me.
Carry out my order, sergeant.
He's crazy.
Sir. Sir, listen.
He's stopped calling.
He's probably dead by now.
Don't you see I have
to go out there, Courcey?
- Don't you see that?
- Sir! Sir.
Cover him.
OK, soldier, I'm here.
You'll be OK now.
By God, Asa, I was right!
They don't want us in Muc Wa.
They don't want us
anywhere, sir.
Asa, it's a key defense point.
Look how quick
the Cong moved in.
The Cong moved in because they
knew it was a weak point, sir.
What's the reaction time
for your reinforcements?

With luck I can get air support
in about thirty minutes.
I'm not talking about
air support.
I'm talking about infantry...
bodies, fella.
How long does it take you...
to get your reinforcements
in there?
Two or three days, maybe.
Where the hell
are your reserves, Bangkok?
Sir, I have to get
my reserves...
from the province chief,
Colonel Minh.
Colonel Lard-ass Minh.
Well, ask him
to be ready to move.
I have to make a deal
with him, sir.
He don't lend support
for nothing.
Christ!
We're trying to help
these people fight the reds...
and they throw blocks into us.
The only way
we're gonna win this war...
is to get United States
combat troops in here.
All right, you do
what you have to do...
to get those reserves
and beef up Muc Wa.
By God, we can't let those...
scroungy little
jungle buggers...
chase the American
Advisory Command off a post.
Can we?
Sergeant?
We're ready to bury
the lieutenant, sir.

Sir?
We're ready.
We're gonna bury the lieutenant.
Dumb jerk-off.
We can't just
shovel dirt on him.
You've buried men before.
You know what to say
and what to do...
and you're in command now.
Shit on it.
What's the matter with you?
Look, you owe it
to the lieutenant to honor him.
The man he was trying to save
was in your squad.
You left him
out there in the mud.
He was a dink.
I'm sick and tired of
the goddamn fish-stinkin' dinks.
Courcey, I was soldiering...
when you were crapping
in your diapers.
Don't you tell me
how to do my job!
Get the fuck out of here!
Sarge...
Leave me be, kid.
I've had it.
When did you take this?
About a half hour ago, I guess.
Yeah?
OK.
You still want that C.I. B?
You're the new commander
at Muc Wa.
Chopper's taking you in.
Take a look at this.
If they hit, they'll hit from
the north and from the west.
Concentrate your defense
on those two fronts.
Yeah.

Right. Yes, sir.
I'll get my gear together.
Oh...
I read the signal on Oleo, sir.
It's too bad him
going off his rocker like that.
Two-bit war wasn't worth it.
Or that kid Hamilton.
Al...
If I can't wangle reinforcements
out of Colonel Lard-ass...
you bug out of there
at your own discretion.
Run like hell.
It'd be
the end of my career, sir.
Harnitz would see to that.
I'll take care of Harnitz.
Just don't be a hero.
Comment allez-vous, major?
- Very well, thank you.
- Ah.
A drink?
- Always.
- Ah.
To the U.S. Of A.
I thank you.
To the Republic
of South Vietnam.
Ah, merci. Merci beaucoup.
Please, sit.
Thank you.
The colonel
has considered your request...
for three hundred
additional troops...
but at this time,
it is not possible.
There is rumor of a coup
in Saigon.
The colonel must hold all
of his troops in readiness...
for support of the president.
I appreciate

the colonel's situation.
But I need reinforcements
for a place called Muc Wa.
Before the colonel makes...
an absolutely final decision,
let me add this.
A relief column going into
Muc Wa would need artillery.
Now, the American
Advisory Command...
has no artillery
in this province.
But Colonel Minh has. Allow me.
The colonel has a battery
of howitzers situated here...
to protect the old road from
the south going into Penang.
If that battery were moved
thirty miles to the east...
on the road to Phnom Penh...
They would be within range
of Muc Wa.
Now, I realize
that the colonel...
would be using
precious ammunition...
on a rather unimportant post.
But if the colonel
could spare the troops I need...
I will have five hundred rounds
of howitzer shells...
brought in by air transport...
And a thousand rounds
delivered by truck convoy.
It would take four or five days
for the truck convoy...
to bring the shells
from the American depot.
That could conceivably be
too late for their use...
could it not, major?
Could be.
In such a case, the American
depot would desire...

the return of the shells,
would it not?
In the whole history
of the United States...
they've never asked
for the return of anything...
be it guns, money, boats,
or howitzer shells.
They wouldn't know how to ask
for the return of anything.
If they did, it would screw up
the bookkeeping...
and everybody in Washington...
would have
a goddamn nervous breakdown.
You tell the colonel...
if he gets his hands
on the ammo, it's his forever.
A drink?
Always.
Alemay akefay.
I do not understand.
It's an old battle cry
from our American revolution.
It means, "To victory."
Merci. Merci.
- You got anything from Courcey?
- No, sir.
Ackley.
Read me. Over.
Ackley, read me.
I got Charlie. Stand by.
5-5, Courcey, over.
Charlie's got
a big team out here...
moving west along the river.
Roger, Courcey, stand by.
We're gonna get hit.
Maybe a couple hundred VC,
and they got hardware.
We'll be ready for 'em.
You tell Courcey
to dog 'em long enough...
to see if

they get across the river...
then get his ass back in here.
Shoot a signal off to Penang...
tell them we want flare ships
and air support on standby.
Cowboy, get outside
and shake the farmers down.
Yes, sir.
Charlie's crossing the river.
Now he's within mortar range.
You want to try a hit? Over.
Hell, yes, let's try it.
Let the bastards know
were onto 'em.
Give me the range and direction.
On the map, he's crossing...
in the middle of the third bend
above the fork.
Set your range
for two thousand yards.
I'll talk you on target
after the first round.
Signal when
you're ready to fire. Over.
When we get the range,
get out of there, Courcey.
They'll know
they're being observed...
and they're gonna be
on your butt, boy.
Stand by. Out.
Drop it.
Take it down two hundred.
Spray left and right for effect.
Drop two hundred, fire
left and right for effect.
I'm buggin' out.
There he is.
Major! Sir!
God damn it, Wattsberg...
every time I see you
it means bad news.
What the hell is it now?
Sir, Muc Wa is in the red, sir.

Captain Olivetti's
requested flare ships...
and air support on standby.
Intelligence reports
that the 507th VC battalion...
may be closing on Muc Wa, sir.
Is that all?
I'll bet you got
some more goodies for me.
Yes, sir.
Nighthawk control reports they
can't send up flare ships...
because General Harnitz
has grounded all helicopters...
and planes on request
of the Saigon government.
An attempted military coup
is expected, sir...
and all our air support
is gonna be needed...
to suppress the insurgents
in Saigon, sir.
You can turn in now, boys.
What are you going to do, sir?
Don't worry about it.
I'll think of something.
What's going on?
I just keep hammering
for air support, sir...
but Nighthawk just keeps saying,
"Negative, negative, negative."
Let me have the key, Toffee.
What's General Harnitz's
call numbers?
F-F-Z-T.
This is the code book, sir.
Fuck it.
Look.
Let's go in here.
Well, it's shocking, sir.
It's unthinkable
that any officer...
would address such a message
to his commanding general.

What would you like
to do about it, sir?
Sir?
Captain, there are things in
heaven and earth and the army...
they didn't teach you
at Virginia Military Institute.
This here is one.
There are some soldiers who
bought the rap with their blood.
They'll say anything to anybody
in a just cause.
Now, military coup
or no military coup...
you hop-ass over
to the combo room...
and fire off a signal
to Nighthawk control...
to put some air support
over Muc Wa.
Yes, sir.
'Cause apart from the fact
that maybe I got old Asa...
stretched pretty thin
up there...
that crazy son of a bitch might
just do what he says here...
shoot my balls off.
What do you think
I'm here for, Courcey?
Move over.
Will you sit down
on that box over there?
You're beat.
Been shot through the flesh.
Lucky. Hasn't lost much blood.
These little mothers are tough.
You can't believe
what I've seen 'em take...
and get up and trot
the next day.
You can't worry about 'em,
Courcey.
You better learn that.

You better get hard.
They don't know
what you're doin' here...
or what they're doin' here.
There.
Slopes out there shot him...
they don't know any more
than he does.
They could change places
and not know the difference.
A-OK, old man.
A-OK.
A... OK.
A... A...
Nighthawk to Blaze.
Nighthawk to Blaze. Over.
Got 'em, sir.
Blaze to Nighthawk.
What's your position,
and what do you got? Over.
Nighthawk to Blaze. One flare
ship and two hawks in group.
Position maybe ten miles
due east of you...
but a star shell
will help confirm. Over.
You got it, baby.
Nighthawk to Blaze. We see you.
Closer than we thought.
OK. Let's go.
OK, they got it.
Hey, they got it, major!
Hey, major, they got it.
Hey, major,
they got the air support.
Marvelous, sir. You did it, sir!
Yeah, well...
me and old Harnitz,
we go back a long way.
Blaze to Nighthawk!
You got us. Over.
We got you, Blaze. Over.
Then light us up!
Hit the goddamn treeline on

the west side of the triangle!
Hit the wall, Ackley!
Courcey! Cowboy! The north gate!
A couple of the bastards
are trying an end run!
That's the way the USA
kicks ass, Charlie!
That's the way
I get my goddamn C.I.B.
Wattsberg, what the fuck are you
doing out here in a chopper?
I requested it
in your name, sir.
- Sir, I have...
- You requested it in my name?
Soldier, shoot
this goddamn four-eyed nitwit.
Sir, the uniform code
of military justice...
expressly forbids
summary executions.
Oh, shit, Wattsberg,
what do you got?
This message, sir.
"Intelligence believes that
more than one thousand VC...
"are being moved
into the attack on Muc Wa.
"General Harnitz signals
he will not...
"repeat, he will not commit
additional personnel...
"to the defense of Muc Wa.
"Its strategic value
is not now believed...
"to be worth a major engagement
with the enemy.
"Immediately exfiltrate
all American personnel...
by aircraft
and disperse garrison."
Here. Give me that.
Sir, shall I take the helicopter
into Muc Wa?

I ought to let you.
Maybe you'd get yourself shot.
I want you to take the convoy
back to Penang.
I'll radio Olivetti
from the chopper...
that we're coming in
to exfiltrate the team.
I want 'em ready to go
the minute we touch down.
Understood.
Be careful, sir!
Wattsberg, do you love
your commanding officer?
Well... yes, sir.
That's fine,
because I love you, too.
Sir.
My men, they say they ride
in helicopter to Penang.
They're gonna do
what they're paid to do.
They're gonna help these farmers
bug out of here tonight...
and you're gonna be in command.
Sir, I am interpreter...
number one interpreter.
I go with you.
You can interpret, all right.
You tell 'em...
they set one goddamn foot
toward that chopper...
and the machine gunner'll
cut 'em in half.
I hear it, sir.
They're getting ground fire.
Git!
What do we got here?
We got two on stretchers
and five walking wounded.
God damn it, Cowboy!
Tell 'em to stay back!
Tell 'em now!
Tell 'em, Cowboy.

That Courcsey sure has a way
with the goddamn gooks, sir.
Let's get out of here
before he loses that way...
and they swamp the chopper.
Get the wounded aboard.
Come on!
Keep it moving! Keep it moving!
All right. Let's go.
We got a hit
in the hydraulic line.
We've got to leave
these walking wounded behind...
or I'll never get this heap
off the ground.
OK, OK. I got you.
No, back, back.
Move back. Come on, back.
Get away from the ship.
Sorry. Sorry.
Pilot says no.
We can't handle it.
Just not enough room
for all of you.
Now get back. Get back.
Come on, move.
Sorry. Sorry.
Sir, are you gonna leave
these wounded soldiers behind?
Pilot can't handle it. He runs
the ship. Now get aboard.
- No.
- What?
I said no, sir.
Corporal!
My orders are to exfiltrate
all American personnel.
Now get aboard that ship.
Look, boy, it's their war,
and it's their country.
We've done all we can do here.
They're gonna
rip this place off.
Hey, major!

Come on, for Christ sake!
I got to get it up.
I'm giving you an order,
soldier.
Get your ass on that ship!
Take it up, God damn it.
Come on, major.
Get back. Get back.
Now I know what's
peculiar about you, Courcsey.
I should have figured it
right off.
You got it written
in great big letters...
on your goddamn forehead...
h-e-r-o. Hero.
You're a fucking hero.
I'm sorry, sir.
I just didn't see how we could
leave these people behind.
We brought 'em out here.
How'd they do
in the fracas last night?
Fine, sir.
This character still
getting his jollies...
out of torturing dinks?
Couldn't have done it
without him, sir.
You screwing this kid?
No, sir.
Well, if we're gonna
break out of here tonight...
we'd better start planning it.
The aerial photographs show...
that this... this gully runs
back here about half a mile...
then flattens out into a meadow.
- You know it?
- Yes, sir.
That's the way we'll go.
The province chief's
got a bunch of 155 howitzers...
ready to blow hell out of

this neck of the woods tonight...
if I can get the son of a bitch
to use his ammo.
Charlie be too busy ducking
shells to worry about us.
You sure you're not
screwing this kid?
Yes, sir.
Somebody ought to.
Bring 'em along, Cowboy.
That is all, sir.
You're sure?
I don't want to leave
one goddamn thing...
that Charlie can use.
Certainement.
- You spike the mortars?
- Yes, sir.
Well, spike the machine guns
5 minutes before we shove off.
OK, Cowboy.
You seem to know
what you're doing.
I was trained
in demolition, sir.
So you said.
How about it, corporal?
How about what, sir?
What the fuck
are you doing in 'Nam?
Does it bother you, sir?
Well, now, it doesn't
bother me to the extent...
that I can't live
without knowing...
but we don't get
many draftees here.
Not yet, anyway.
And in particular,
we don't get any of your kind.
Well, sir...
it started with a dog.
You mean a broad?
No, canine, sir.

Just a little black dog
with a curly tail.
We used to tie him
in the furnace room...
during inspection time...
but he got loose this one time
and trotted in the barracks...
and took a liking,
or disliking maybe...
to the inspecting officer.
Went on his boot.
The officer kicked the dog,
and I kicked the officer.
You kicked the officer?
It was just a reflex, sir.
He was pretty nice about it,
really.
He could have court-martialed me
or sent me to prison.
He gave me a choice... Vietnam.
Very generous.
Very generous indeed.
What was the officer's rank?
Sir?
The officer's rank, corporal?
Uh, brigadier general, sir.
Now, that's a cock and bull
story if I ever heard one.
It did happen, but also...
maybe I just wanted to see
what a war was like.
That's more like it.
You know what you are,
Courcey?
You're a tourist.
Too bad we couldn't have
shown you a better war.
Like hitting the beach
at Anzio...
or smashing through to Bastogne
with Patton.
That was a tour worth the money.
This one?
This one's a sucker's tour.

Going nowhere...
just round and round in circles.
Get on with the job,
corporal.
They tried to run away, sir.
They Cong. You look.
They steal guns.
They Cong.
You killed the kids!
Whoa! Easy, Courcey.
You look, sir. You look.
I sorry, sir.
I say to Corporal Courcey...
these communist people.
A-OK.
A-OK. A-OK.
Give me that flashlight.
I count eight.
I thought there were nine.
- Nine, sir.
- That little girl is missing.
Search the camp.
Yes, sir! Instamment!
It's their war.
Give me a hand with that crank.
OK, corporal.
Let's get moving...
before old Lard-ass
opens up with his howitzers.
We got ten seconds.
OK, kid. Let's go.
All right. Now.
You spike the machine guns?
It's done, sir.
The Cong girl... we not find her.
Well, we can't hang around
and worry about that.
You lead off. Take the wounded.
Come on. Hurry.
What's it look like?
All clear
as far as I can make out.
We'll rest here for a minute.
We're well protected...

just in case those howitzers
get their triangulations wrong.
He's stopped his mortars.
He's getting ready
to take the fort.
Charlie's fighting
goddamn feathers for a change.
Come on, Lard-ass, you're on.
Let's go fast, soldier.
When we get to those trees...
we'll turn north and
head for the road to Penang.
The trucks will be there
about daybreak to pick us up.
- Cowboy!
- Yes, sir!
Take a man
and check out the area ahead.
Where you hurt, kid?
L... I don't know. I feel blood
running down my legs.
Maybe you just crapped
your britches.
I have very strong
sphincter muscles, sir.
The little mothers
are comin' for us.
Ah.
Oh, shit.
I'm goin' home, Charlie...
if they'll let me.