

R . S . C A R L S O N

Supply Run

All week a sniper worked the road to Bravo Four
and Thursday night an MP jeep
came in second to a land mine
in the first curve past the North Gate
so Friday morning Abercrombie asked the Captain
to clear a request to chopper gas and rations
out to our Bravo Four people
then wheeled the 4x4 out to the chopper unit's
dispatch bunker and waited.

Alpha Two was hot then
so ammo in and wounded out
stood number one priority.
Abercrombie sat all day chewing dust
from Hueys and Chinooks working the resupply
among Cobras needling in and out on firing runs.

Back at Detachment
the Captain translated the radio calls
burned in from Bravo Four
into printable official terms:

No gas. No generator. No radios. No mission.
Corporal you WILL make supply run tomorrow.

Saturday morning
Abercrombie haunted copter dispatch
through the same routine
until a damaged medevac piled in on two other birds
and killed any hope of a spare sortie.
Back at Detachment Captain got specific.

Corporal depart this compound by thirteen hundred hours
or I have your stripes.

Abercrombie hit the mess hall early
to sit with the clerks from Intelligence
and angle for hints on units working near Bravo Four.
All he drew was their stock arguments
on Mickey Mantle's home run record.

Per Captain's orders the South Gate MPs
called Detachment confirming
Abercrombie's departure as of 1254 hours.
As of 1600 hours Abercrombie spread five bucks MPC
for Coke and contraband whiskey
on the Detachment's club bar.
Wentworth hassled him from the pool table.

Looking green Abercrombie.
Charlie welcome you to Bravo Four with 1228?

Nope.

Sniper back on Hairpin Alley?

Nope. Just ARVNs walkin into town.

So?

Well. You go by them and they flip you
the local version of the bird.

Yeah? Guys comin in on pass and you expect them all to stop at the nearest temple?

Well. Theres this dude. I leave the load with our people and clear Bravo Four gate and he stands to hitch just outside the wire. Hes a grunt just in from the boonies and I figure its safer having someone ride shotgun and no way am I pickin up any dinks for that.

So? Sniper take him out on you?

Naw. Its him. We get a couple miles outa Bravo Four and we pass one ARVN from the infantry units co-located at Bravo Four and the ARVN pumps the finger and this grunt starts cussin him royal.

Big deal.

Well. Another couple miles we pass another ARVN and he pumps the finger too and this grunt turns to me an sez

Next sumbitch flips me the bird
Ima blow hiz shit away.

Sure Abercrombie.

By then I gear down for Hairpin Alley and theres another ARVN walkin like before and he pumps the bird just like the others and the grunt swings his M16 around and blasts the ARVNs guts into the ditch.

Next thing this dude swings his flash suppressor into my ear.

Toja I take out the nex muthuh did it and I always keep my word.

Anybody rats on me
my buddies come and take care of business.
But you got nothin to worry about.
You never saw a blessed thing.

R. S. CARLSON, a professor of English at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA, teaches literature, grammar, linguistics, expository writing, and poetry at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA. He served with the US Army in Quang Tri Province, Viet Nam 1970-1971, and in recent years has made several trips to China and Southeast Asia with various aid agencies. Carlson's poetry has appeared in many literary magazines, including Northwest Review; The Texas Review; The Hollins Critic; The Nebraska Review; and elsewhere.