

The Man I Killed

by
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Based on the Short Story
"The Man I Killed"

By:
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EXT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE - DAY

On the edge of a jungle, American land troops scour the earth. They move forward, slowly creeping mid stature through the thick brush. At the end of the line is...

TIM, a 23-year-old, white soldier holding an M-16A1 assault rifle. Compared to the other men in the Army, Tim is small and scrawny. He shakes and whimpers as he creeps forward along the ground.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

His jaw was in his throat...his upper lip and teeth were gone...his one eye was shut...his other was a star-shaped hole. That is what happened to the man from the village of My Kye.

From above, dozens of airborne missiles plummet towards the American troops. Men scream and run for whatever cover they can find: a rock or a fallen tree.

Tim dives to the ground, covering his head with his gun until the missile fire stops.

Slowly, he gets up and checks his surroundings. Nothing noticeable has changed. To Tim's left is...

AZRA, who is 28-years-old. He wears a camouflage bandana over his head, his knuckles are taped white, and the veins in his biceps pop out as he grips his jet black assault rifle.

AZRA

WHOOEEEEEE...Let's kill these motherfuckers. Here I come you Gook bastards!

Azra runs off screaming.

Tim looks back towards the jungle and sees dozens of white flashes. He ducks down behind a dirt hill.

From all around, machine gun fire and screaming mutes all other sounds commonly emanating from the jungle.

Everything is silent...

Tim grasps his helmet as begins to walk forward. Next to him now, creeping masterfully is...

Kiowa, a 43-year-old 1st Lieutenant who begins marching, closing the gap between himself and the jungle's edge. Kiowa is burly and strong. There is no fear in his eyes.

KIOWA

Go! Go! Go!

(to Tim)

Get your ass over that hill
soldier! Keep moving forward!

Tim storms forward, moving within 10 yards of Vietnamese turf, when suddenly he takes cover behind a fallen tree. A few stray bullets zip by overhead. Tim takes a deep breath, jumps to his feet, exhales, and begins forcing himself into the jungle.

Up above more missiles begin their howling descent.

25 feet ahead of Tim, a Vietnamese soldier wearing a gold-plated necklace scoots out from behind a tree and begins firing rapidly.

Tim drops to one knee and begins firing, striking the man twice: one shot to the head and the other to his throat.

AZRA

You trashed that fucker!

A missile lands nearby the man Tim killed, launching him a dozen yards back into the jungle.

AZRA (CONT'D)

You see that? See ya later
motherfucker!

Besides trembling a little, Tim's body is frozen stiff.

AZRA (CONT'D)

WHOOEEEEEE!

KIOWA

Keep going! Tim, keep moving
forward!

Gun fire stops completely.

Including Tim, Azra, and Kiowa...a few soldiers remain standing. They drift away, into the jungle.

INT. VIETNAMESE JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS

Slowly the three men creep into the jungle. Kiowa and Azra grip their guns tightly, always aware. Tim stares off.

A few feet ahead Tim notices the sun creating a glare on a piece of metal.

Azra runs up ahead.

AZRA

Look at this sorry Gook fucker.

Kiowa slowly approaches and looks down at the dead man...

His head has long black hair and is bent back and to the side at an awkward angle. The man's face is lightly freckled and his nose is undamaged. His one cheek is torn back in three ragged strips, while the other is smooth and hairless. His rubber sandals have been blown off.

KIOWA

Azra, go away.

Tim finally creeps up silently. Despite the 90 degree heat, Tim shivers, and he is afraid to look down at the man he killed.

The Vietnamese soldier's jaw is in his throat, his upper lip and teeth are gone, his one eye is shut, his other is a yellow star-shaped hold.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The man probably grew up on his parents farm near the central coastline of the Quang Ngai Province. In the village of My Khe, as in all Quang Ngai, patriotic resistance had the force of tradition. He was taught, probably at a young age, that to defend the land was a man's highest duty and privilege. He had accepted this.

Tim is still silent, now staring. He never takes his eyes off the body.

AZRA

You really scrambled his sorry self, look at that...you did...you laid him out like Shredded fuckin' Wheat!

KIOWA

Go!

Azra carefully examines the body. The blood in his neck hasn't dried yet. The yellow eye is expanding.

AZRA

Fuckin' A...you're looking at about
a nine outta ten on the death test.

KIOWA

(to Tim)

Don't you go listenin' to him. You
hear me?

Kiowa leans down next to the body, opens his canteen, and
takes a long drink.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

His jaw was in his throat, his
upper lip and teeth were gone.

KIOWA

You gotta quit that staring, Tim.
Just forget that crud he was
saying...

NARRATOR (V.O.)

His one eye was shut, his other eye
was a star-shaped hole.

Tim remains staring blankly at the corpse.

Kiowa removes whatever items he can from the soldier's body:
a sack of rice, a comb, a fingernail clipper, an ammunition
belt, and finally, a picture of a young woman...

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPH

A beautiful young Vietnamese woman with long brown
hair stands in front of a parked motorcycle.

BACK TO SCENE

The young dead soldier wears a gold ring on the third finger
of his right hand.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The man probably attended the
University of Saigon, where he had
the pleasure of meeting a young
girl of seventeen. She would tell
him how she admired his narrow
waist and the cowlick that rose up
like a bird's tail at the back of
his head. One evening, perhaps,
they exchanged rings.

Tim still stares downward, motionless.

KIOWA

What else could you do? He had a
weapon, right?

Tim notices a BUTTERFLY land on the soldier's forehead.

KIOWA (CONT'D)

Let me ask you a question...Turn it
all upside down. Do you want to
trade places with him?

The butterfly flutters its wings, and travels down the
lightly freckled forehead to the soldier's undamaged nose.

KIOWA (CONT'D)

Think it over.

The sun's rays shine through the gaps of the trees.

Tim kneels down next to Kiowa.

KIOWA (CONT'D)

You okay?

No response...

KIOWA (CONT'D)

Well listen, you can't just stay
here all day. You gotta get your
shit together.

Tim watches as gnats swarm the soldier's mouth. The bleeding
has stopped except for at his neck, which has turned a
purplish black.

The butterfly is gone.

Kiowa gets up and throws a poncho over the body.

KIOWA (CONT'D)

Now you look better. No doubt about
it.

Tim rises to his feet.

KIOWA (CONT'D)

Can't we talk about it?

Tim stares...

Kiowa starts to walk away.

KIOWA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

The sun doesn't quite shine through the trees anymore. Tim is left looking down upon the man he killed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

After his years at the university, the man returned with his new wife to the village of My Khe, where he enlisted as a common rifleman with the 48th Vietcong Battalion. The man was only a soldier for a single day. He knew he would die quickly.

Tim slowly walks down the path, away from the soldier, to a small town on the other side of the ridge.