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Born in the North to die in the South

de
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traducción de
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(fragmento)

In a world turned upside-down,
truthfulness is a moment of falsehood.
La société du spectacle, GUY DEBORD

CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN LINARES
AN UNKNOWN SOLDIER
COMMANDER VEGA
LIEUTENANT ROMERO
A NURSE

CAPTAIN ROBBINS *of the US Army Special Forces*
CORPORAL DELGADO *of the US Army Special Forces*
PRIVATE ARMSTRONG *of the US Army Special Forces*
PRIVATE DONALD DUCK *of the ARVN Special Forces*
A PEASANT WOMAN

1
LIGHT

Dong Khe, 1949

Two kilometres to the south of a small village in the north of Spanish Indochina, in the middle of the jungle. In a trench, Captain LINARES takes shelter from the rain of mortars and bullets coming from the Viet Minh. An unknown SOLDIER stumbles into his trench. The darkness is lit up intermittently by fire from explosions.

LINARES

Is there someone there?

SOLDIER

...

LINARES

Is there someone there?

SOLDIER

Huh?

LINARES

Where's your squad, Soldier?

SOLDIER

Can you see me?

LINARES

Return to your position immediately. That's an order.

SOLDIER

I think something's happened to my eyes, Sir. I can't see you.

LINARES

Are you from the Fourth Battalion?

SOLDIER

There *is* no Fourth Battalion... The Fourth Battalion was swallowed up by the earth... or the sky, Sir.

LINARES

What do you mean, *swallowed up by the...*?

SOLDIER

There's no one in the Fourth Battalion now, Sir.

LINARES

What are you talking about? Three hundred men can't disappear just like, just like... that. It's physically impossible.

SOLDIER

I don't know, Sir. They were all over us; we could smell the bastards' breath, they were so close. We heard explosions around us, quite close by. But later, seconds later, or maybe it was the same second, I don't know, Sir... Time stopped and everything was flooded with silence. Everything fell silent and it burned our ears. And that light... between the leaves, between the tree-trunks, so quick. It was like damnation; it cut right through the jungle like lightning. We saw a ball of fire and in that flash of brightness... They'd disappeared, Sir. Every single one of them. The Fourth Battalion had disappeared. *(Pause.)* Can you see me? Can you see my eyes, Sir? What's wrong with my eyes? They hurt... and they won't let me see anything.

LINARES

What are you talking about, Soldier?

SOLDIER

I don't know. I don't know myself, Sir.

LINARES

Come on, make yourself useful. Find your superior and tell him they're trying to obstruct the rearguard. Come on, quickly... *(Pause.)* What is it? Are you deaf, too?

SOLDIER

The general's disappeared.

LINARES

What?

SOLDIER

The general was taken away by the fireball too.

LINARES

What the devil are you talking about, Soldier?

SOLDIER

Maybe everything's dark, too dark to see anything, so you can't see my eyes and I can't see yours, and that's why we, why we can't...

A bullet strikes the SOLDIER, who falls down dead.

LINARES

I order you to return to your position immediately. You're delirious. Soldier, do you hear me? Do

you hear me? *(Pause.)* Damn it...

A mortar explodes close to the trench. Captain LINARES falls wounded. From the sky, a ball of light descends over his position.

LINARES

What... what the hell is that?

A high-pitched, almost animal buzzing crosses the jungle. We are blinded by a flash of light, as two small humanoid shadows appear upstage. Quickly, darkness returns. And with it, silence.

2

THE DEAD

Nha Trang, 1967

A military base, in the south of South Vietnam. Corporal DELGADO prepares lines of an orange powder on top of a gasoline drum. Private ARMSTRONG is lying on his kit, sunning himself.

DELGADO

...well, sure, and I said to him, negro, *what do you think we're doing? You think I'm having fun? You think I came out here for a stroll like you? You're doing business and I do your public relations.* It's not so hard to understand, man. Come on, come on... It's not so hard. We're not all here to do business like him. We're not so lucky... Some of us are here to go-into-combat. *(Pause.)* I love that expression, because basically we never go into any damn combat, but anyway... You know that only one percent of these search and destroy missions – like big Westy says – are successful? It's just one percent. And what's one percent? Nothing? A stupid number? Yeah, it is. But I'm gonna explain it to you, too: one percent means that for every ninety-nine groups that go out mouse-hunting, only one, exclusively one of those groups comes face to face with *Charlie*. And now we're one of those groups. Knowing our luck, we're bound to be that one percent. *(Pause.)* They sure screwed the fucking Spanish. Barely twenty years ago they kicked them out of here. One by one, pam-pam-pam, good and hard, right in the head... And the Chinese, just the same... Pam-pam-pam... Anyone who tries to come into dear old Uncle Ho's beautiful house gets the door slammed right in his face. And we're next. Just so's you know...

ARMSTRONG

So what?

DELGADO

Well, I'm just warning you.

Pause.

ARMSTRONG

So was he pissed?

DELGADO

You mean...? Pissed? Why? The guy makes two or three big ones every month, from the pay of little soldiers, and on top of that he wants to give me lessons on morality.

ARMSTRONG

Forget about it.

DELGADO

No way I'm forgetting.

ARMSTRONG

So don't forget about it.

DELGADO

It fucks me off that there are people like that. We're supposed to be buddies.

ARMSTRONG

Don't believe everything you hear.

DELGADO

Friendship's very important to me, you know?

ARMSTRONG

Yeah, yeah, yeah...

DELGADO

We're supposedly amongst friends, aren't we? Your friends aren't supposed to leave you hanging when you run out of cash... Well, supposedly. It's an army. One set of guys on one side, and another set of guys trying to kill you. We help each other out. We're supposed to help each other. Save each other's asses. And we're at war. It's very simple. The good thing is, when the going gets rough you find out who your real friends are. *(Pause.)* And he says to me: *Help yourself.* Can you believe that? *Help yourself.* Like I hadn't carried so many guys to him wanting to try a new experience; like he'd never made any money thanks to me. And on top of that he treats me like a dog sticking his nose between his balls. *Look, man, I don't wanna smell your balls. I don't care if you've got one bigger than the other.* What I want is a cut proportional to my services. And if I do your public relations and I bring you a bunch of newbies from New Jersey or Seattle or New Orleans or wherever the hell else to try your product, this amazing *orangeade*, you oughtta be more generous with your commission. It's called commission, right?

ARMSTRONG

Yeah.

DELGADO

You want some?

ARMSTRONG

No, it's OK. Thanks a lot, but no.

DELGADO

It'll do you good.

ARMSTRONG

No way I'm shoving that shit up my nose.

DELGADO

You can shove it up your ass. That's not a bad trip either.

ARMSTRONG

I'm not interested.

DELGADO

Well, suit yourself, gringo. *(Pause.)* But you know what I mean?

ARMSTRONG

About what?

DELGADO

If we're going into combat, I'd rather go in high. *(Pause.)* You like him, right?

ARMSTRONG

Who?

DELGADO

The soul brother.

ARMSTRONG

Jones?

DELGADO

Is that his name?

ARMSTRONG

Jones is the guy who sells the *orangeade*.

DELGADO

No, Jones is the guy from Florida. I'm talking about the brother from Alabama.

ARMSTRONG

He's called Jones too.

DELGADO

You sure?

ARMSTRONG

Yeah. There are two Joneses in this squad.

DELGADO

And do you like him?

ARMSTRONG

I don't care either way.

DELGADO

He's not your buddy?

ARMSTRONG

Actually, no.

DELGADO

But if you liked getting high, would he be?

ARMSTRONG

That question makes no sense.

DELGADO

Tell me.

ARMSTRONG

I'd never stick that stuff up my nose.

DELGADO

Why not? You gotta try everything in this life.

ARMSTRONG

It's carcinogenic.

DELGADO

You sure?

ARMSTRONG

It's defoliant.

DELGADO

So?

ARMSTRONG

It's a herbicide.

DELGADO

So...?

ARMSTRONG

You have no idea what that is, do you?

DELGADO

Insecticide.

ARMSTRONG

Herbicide.

DELGADO

It's the same thing.

ARMSTRONG

It's not the same thing. It's one thing to kill plants, and it's quite another to kill the insects that live on the plants.

DELGADO

Which means it's not gonna to kill me, right?

ARMSTRONG

Interpret it how you like.

DELGADO snorts a line of orange powder.

DELGADO

Woah...! That's awesome...! Oh...! *(Scratches his nose.)* At least I don't go around sucking that acid shit. Call me original. *(Pause.)* When they gonna pick us up? It's getting dark.

ARMSTRONG

The sergeant told us to wait here, by the runway.

DELGADO

What do they want with us in Da Nang?

ARMSTRONG

I thought you knew...

DELGADO

I think they're gonna take us to the front.

ARMSTRONG

Is that a belief, a thought, or something you just made up?

DELGADO

I'm bored of being here. *(Shouts.)* I'm gonna die of boredom!

ARMSTRONG

If that powder doesn't kill you first.

DELGADO

You know something?

ARMSTRONG

Surprise me.

DELGADO

In a war there are two types of guys.

ARMSTRONG

Just two? I'd say, what with Vietnamese, Americans, Australians, Koreans and...

DELGADO

Shut up. I said two. Two types of guys.

ARMSTRONG

And they are...?

DELGADO

There's the ones who don't wanna die, no way, no how; they love their mommies and daddies and they think it's a wonderful life. They've promised their girlfriends they'll be back before they even notice they're gone. They're the ones who are scared of death. Their guts flip over every morning when they wake up and feel this could be their last, their very last day on earth. They protect themselves to keep it from happening. Try to impress God or Satan to make it right. They're the heroes. The ones who wanna survive.

ARMSTRONG

I wanna go home.

DELGADO

That makes you a hero. *(Pause.)* Then there's the others. *The dead.* I call them that, to give 'em a name, 'cause I'm making it up as I go along, but... But I think there's another kinda guy who goes to war because he's incapable of understanding where he is. Guys who don't know the laws of the world around them, but who are sure about one thing: they know consciously that they will never achieve anything in life, that they lost everything in the moment they were born and that, for some strange reason, they know that someone up there chose them to be the first ones to fall. And for that reason, they're not afraid of anything.

ARMSTRONG

Interesting.

DELGADO

Those guys stand out a mile.

ARMSTRONG

And what kind are you? Fearful or fearless?

DELGADO

Look: the world could end this very day and I'd look God in the eye and I'd say: *man, You've done good things and bad things; most people think You're an idiot, but I...* Corporal Elías Delgado, can state that *You are a better friend of mine than that negro from Alabama who pushes orange powder.* And then I'd give Him a hug.

ARMSTRONG

You're an idiot, you know that?

DELGADO

I know.

ARMSTRONG

So that's why you're here? I've been wondering for days and I still can't find a fucking answer to the question: what the hell is an Indian like you doing in the US Army? What the hell is a South American doing fighting for the flag of someone else's country?

DELGADO

What about you? You think you're fighting for your country? For freedom? Bullshit. You Americans like talking with big words. But it's all bullshit; don't kid yourself. Words, words, words... Lying bullshit. Lying son-of-a-bitch words...! *(Pause.)* To tell you the truth, I had nothing better to do.

ARMSTRONG

You had nothing better to do, so you come to the end of the world to die for a country that's not even yours, is that it?

DELGADO

Look: death solves all our problems. If there's no man, there's no problem...

ARMSTRONG

Fucking peachy. What's the point in fighting, right?

DELGADO

There is no war when you know the war's already lost.

ARMSTRONG

You think? So you're the *second* kind, right?

DELGADO

What?

ARMSTRONG

The second kind.

DELGADO

I'm a dead man who's gone to war to die again.

ARMSTRONG

Your nose is bleeding.

DELGADO

You sure? Shit. Don't fuck with me... Not the nose! Not the nose!

A plane lands at the base.