

June 20, 1970

I was sitting waiting for my final interview before leaving the service, amusing myself with a reflective glass widget that displayed some sort of winged animal. Turned one way, the glass had a violet-blue color, the other gave off a greenish blue tint.

Finally my name was called and I had the distinct displeasure of interviewing with Lieutenant White, a true bastard who was always arrayed in the finest of government issue military finery, not one spot or wrinkle on his uniform, every hair perfectly in place. There's nothing wrong about that; what I didn't like was that he was one of the biggest sphincters I ever had the displeasure of interacting with.

But, I knew I was getting out of the service and that mitigated just about anything negative I would have to put up with from this idiot.

"Good afternoon, sir!" I said crisply, snapping off a perfect salute to the last officer to whom I would ever pay such tribute. After a seemingly endless debriefing he said, in his highly cultivated officer's voice, "Get out of my office, Dyal and stay out!"

I did, with pleasure.

The armed services are no place for compassionate tenderness.

Case in point, one afternoon in basic training our drill sergeant was having sadistic fun with us, walking us around in circles hour after hour. Finally, the heat and dust overpowered me. My head felt like it had exploded, my nose bled and, as far as I was concerned, the exercise, or drill, or whatever it was supposed to be, was over.

I halted directly in front of the DI and threw my equipment down in front of him. Ordinarily this kind of behavior isn't conducive to a smooth basic training, but for some reason the sergeant merely said, "Dyal, get your ass the hell under that tree and take all this shit with you!"

I dragged myself under the pine tree and rested while the others continued their long trek to nowhere.

Sometime later, I left my barracks and walked out into the afternoon sunshine. I don't know if it was the warmth of the sun or what, but I suddenly felt nauseous as I headed to my car, having a little fun by marching instead of walking. Inserting the key in the door lock, I was overcome by dizziness, falling against the door, but avoiding hitting the ground as I was able to pull myself up using the car itself to remain steady and balanced.

"Get the fuck down!" I heard someone shout.

As in a dream, I witnessed myself hitting the ground just as explosions began erupting all around me. Looking around, I saw nothing but fire and smoke and the charred remnants of a small hut. All around me people dressed as jungle-type villagers were either dead or dying. The fear was thick enough to cut with a bayonet.

I shook my head, trying to clear my thoughts. Once more, I was leaning against my car, drenched in perspiration, unsure what had occurred, wanting only to leave that place and head for home.

Dean and I had split up a few months before my discharge and I had been staying at my parents' house. Painful as that was, I needed time to get a handle on my life, obtain my music degree, and commence my post-graduate work.

I got home around 6:30 that night, just in time for dinner. I ate but was still feeling disconnected and disoriented. I decided to sleep it off, but slumber remained out of my reach.

My head began to spin and the room simply vanished. I was now in a jungle whose foliage was a large leafy plant; I was serenaded by the distant cries of animals. I tried to focus my concentration on leaving, on getting home, but I was hopelessly lost.

I felt the incessant tapping of raindrops and crawled under one of the more sizeable leaves for cover. It was only then I noticed how dark the scene was; I was unable to see anything in the pitch blackness. Most worrisome was my complete ignorance as to my location and how I would get home.

The rain was cool against my face as I peaked out from under the protection of the leaf. What stood before me was a large, human-like creature. Although it remained silent, I clearly understood that it desired me to follow it. Rising up, I heard a cracking sound from somewhere in the dense rainforest.

As swiftly as the episode began it was over and I found myself at home in bed. My head felt gelatinous and I hadn't the slightest idea what had happened.

A dream? A seizure? I didn't really care.

As I had done after so many other such episodes in that room, I turned over and lost myself in the glorious oblivion of sleep.