

## The Man Who Outlived His Lieutenant

Ell Tee and I used to have this, well... kinda argument  
About what to do in an ambush  
I'd already been in a couple, figure I'm a vet, an *aguerra*, a beenaround  
Duck the fuck behind of a tree burn off a mag wait till they get tired  
I got more ammo'n they do more time they know  
If they mess with me too long I'll call down the *Johnson*

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

Lieutenant he don't see it thataway figures  
Somebody fire you up only way to act is get on him  
Assault through it on line break it up  
Fire and maneuver like in the book  
Discipline pree-vails on the field of battle troops get to  
thinking all's they gotta do is get shot at, they're not soldiers any more... just targets

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

I say bullshit do love my Lieutenant, though bright and curious and tough  
We all do drinks beer with us packs sandbags with us keeps Tee Oh Cee off our back  
Wants to do Right and what's more translates that Faith into Act  
Cuts square corners like they taught him at Vee Emm Eye not because  
He has no imagination but because Honor is what keeps this butchery from  
Being butchery but he can't sell me Honor... not at the cost of my ass

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

I say I doan wanna be butcher but most of all I doan wanna be the beef  
Important to him to be neither but a soldier  
Like his Old Man and *his* paratrooper at Normandy teddy bear Captain in the Ardennes  
In the end though he pretty much listens to us pretty much  
And don't sell us for nothing and we talk and sweat in the sunwashed dust and shiver in  
mountain fastness  
And soldier's Honor rarely enough intruded into the soiled business at hand

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

We stumblefumblebumble together upthendown Lao mountains  
Curse and laugh and Christ I laughed with him  
Silly futile fatal ironies I'd never laugh at now preposterous paunchy greying Citizen  
And we carrybury our dead a mine here firefight there ones and twos  
Yet at each loss he withdraws a little ages a little sages a little talks a little less about  
Honor more about men hurtmen lostmen wastedmen thesemen ourmen more like me

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

In the six kilometer square grid Lower Left No Bomb Hotel Nine  
A bonetired sweatsoaked *montagnard* snaches a vine from across his face  
Steps out onto a trail threading its way along this ridgetside just  
As a bonetired sweatsoaked Pathet Lao ambles aimless home  
Infinite moment of locking eyes fumbling fingers  
Rounds crack shattering branches scattering leaves spattering dirt

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

I duck the fuck down burn off a mag wait till they get tired  
I got more ammo'n they do more time they know  
If they mess with me too long I'll call in the *Johnson*  
I'm burrowed deep into the embrace of a fatroot tree  
Shelter enough from fire's reach rounds thwack the trunk spike the black soil  
Shelter enough from Honor, too

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

But the second I've taken to hide does not end  
And somehow it seems that what threatens me comes from back there not up front  
Sure enough out of the brush busts Ell Tee piece in one hand grenade in t'other  
Bolts past me is that a look is that a look a *look*  
Heads right into it Follow Me Aw Jeezus, sir, what're you doin'

You're gonna get

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

Was just a smallish hole and we did what you do  
Cleartheairway stopthebleeding sealthewound but before long  
Those fingers go bluegrey then those lips bluegrey then cold  
His hand actually goes cold in mine goes cold I cradle him bloodless me tearless  
Gentlybutgently turns out Honor can't keep  
This butchery from being nothing but butchery I was right after all

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me

We wrap my Lieutenant in a ponchomyponcho I was right after all  
Carry him on our backs don't lug this man on no pole  
Who died on his feet and face to the enemy I  
Would have died in a huddle behind a tree face in the dirt  
And now surely shall in soiled sheets old man who outlived his Lieutenant  
But *right after all*

That's a combat man 'ere talkin', sir  
Seen the bear an' smelt 'is fur  
Shots in anger, Cee Eye Bee  
Get in a fight, jus' do like me