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That Which Was the Burning Slag of Navarone

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That Which Was the Burning Slag of Navarone

1. Under "Nature" watch them die a thousand times. A magnifying glass stolen from a mother's bureau converts into the Lensmen's laser, roasting through pin-oak leaf's petiole, veins in the blade, until fire erupts on board and the troop-carrier burns spilling acorn-warriors off the sidewalk's warp plane into sparse grass — autumn sun barely strong enough to focus at noon through the oak's branches. Yet they escape chlorophyll's end, until with his rusty compass (weapons unsheathed) he slashes them open, the screams of the green shelled who sally up the porch now blasting the brittle Picts on the knoll below the front bush. And like all doomed natives facing marooned companies of Earth's star-ship troopers,

2. they die.

Childhood is a dictionary of conflict, fleet encounters and death in a thousand Spartan theaters where yellow Lego squadrons of Athenian triremes surge against the Persian scourge. Under "Sickness," he misses seventeen days from fourth grade, keeps an aircraft hanger under his bed, lines up soldiers on a bright wooden floor, arrays statuettes ten to a row before the shell of plastic Navarone, which the Germans — not yet Nazis — hold for the coming invasion from Barsoon: the red moon itself descending to take all he loves away.

3. The dictionary includes entries under "Encyclopedia": Leyte gulf, Coral Sea, the number of destroyers in the Soviet navy in 1975; the *World Book* "W" always open to Axis, to Ally, the number of deaths in Stalingrad, picture of Roman cohort.

Under "Night" the house sleeps until he rises at 2 a.m. to watch a rerun of *The Longest Day* — or is it *The Big Red One*? — and plays island-hop through the Pacific on living-room floor, amphibious tanks

crawl over green carpet bombarded by Lego Dreadnaughts; his mother dreams
while disarrayed

4. kamikazes slam through flak
from fleet to fleet. The Lord's Prayer said rote
before bed does not penetrate there, and sound can not travel
through space — this under "Silence" — between worlds.
where Admirals watch men die with unspoken prayers dappling the star-brilliant
void.

Samurai. Marine. Conan his mighty self. All die again and again, in silent
afternoons of play. Under "Love" you find he loves it, dreams it, musters squads
and sallies barbarians against walls, while Winchesters bark over Lincoln-log bul-
warks;

"Anachronism" transforms each household object by the simultaneity of
violence,
held like his first boner, familiar, loved and unnamed, in his thin fingers;
you could not know the joy
of his destructions, the voracious concentrations

5. where no pain accompanies the howls when hours of arranging his troops ends in a
five minute tumult of catapulted blocks.

Under "Game," a photo. His step-mother draped
over the couch, yellow fire helmet boosted
on her head, siren roaring, passed out, still clutching golden
hundreds stolen from the monopoly game. Soon centurions scurry
over the crevices of her sleeping bag, a war of attrition waged crease to crease
across her body until he curls up
next to her and dreams that she is a hot vampire sucking him. Later, drunk, she
slices

6. her finger on a shattered glass while dish-washing, scrubs blood and spills Ajax

on the floor. In the etymology of "Count" how many Micronauts were uncovered
from dirt as the house's foundations are reinforced?

Foxholes, bunkers built with clods and sludge, built without end
that year where the honeysuckle bush once grew along the fence —
honeysuckle
so summer-heavy and sweet that he sat all day and tore the fine pistils from their
sacs and lapped, as he laps this, his narrativeless frame,

7. fluid condition of battle and blockade, first construction of courage
in the dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases which ends with isopropyl alcohol
sprayed from basters that become Greek-fire sapping the shape
from the American squads hurling themselves at Navarone's base,
jagged rifles
sagging, faces melting, briefly beholding shape
until one makes it through the throng to Navarone,
tommy gun chattering, dodging the zings of Lugers.

He blast every damn thing
Body half melted, arm aflame,
the phalanx shatters before the napalm of his body until the entire mountain sputters,
and gas fills the room, and molten plastic sears skin from his hands.
What is beautiful is still the silent

8.
night after the foray; a single potato-masher held aloft by the sliver of an arm,
German-gray, above that which was the burning slag of Navarone.
And the world, at last, again, finally, saved.