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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
crawled 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 Winchester bark over Lincoln-log bulwarks;

"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 catapaulted 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

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 Luger.

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.