

Mosquito

Jonathan hadn't seen mention of Vietnam in the paper for weeks. He wondered if he was going to train for a war that didn't exist. On January 23, 1972, the day Jonathan was leaving for boot camp, his dad had to turn to page twenty of *The New York Times* to find an article titled "G.I. Deaths Raise Boot Camp Issue." Some months before, Private Warren John had died of a stroke in an Orlando hospital "following the routine stresses of combat training," as the Marine Corps put it. "Parents have questioned these types of accidents," the article said, "and some have sought Congressional investigations." Over 150 combat training accidents had occurred in the past five years, but not all were from exertion. Some were stabbings. Some were drownings during failed escape attempts. Some were suicides. Jonathan never saw the article.

When Jonathan woke at five-thirty in the morning, everything looked slanted. Skewed. As if his body or his bed or the room itself were turned at an angle. When he stood up, his head reeled as if he were high. But he hadn't gotten high for a week.

He dressed quickly in the dark. The past couple weeks since he'd been drafted had gone by quickly. The president was still refusing amnesty for draft-evaders and Jonathan couldn't imagine never coming home again, so he'd signed up for the Navy. Not at the start of the war, when he would have been a hero, but now, when everybody was talking about how this war was dirty and wrong and the US had to get out of Vietnam. The US was getting out. De-escalating, withdrawing troops, releasing POWs – that was all he'd heard on TV for months. It wasn't fair that they were screwing with his life now, just when it seemed like he could learn some skills, make a little money, get

into his music, fall in love. They'd taken away his possibilities and left him to choose the lesser evil.

At least the kitchen was the way it should be – steam and warmth and unspoken support. Mom smiling, though in the firm, determined way she had for the past few weeks. She was all breath and bones when he hugged her, like the thrush he'd picked up in the woods during the first cold snap last fall and sheltered in the garage till it was strong enough to fly again.

The pancakes and homemade applesauce with cinnamon filled his mouth with memories of sitting at this same blue and white Formica table on other dark winter mornings, dreading the thought of going to school. Dreading the stupid rules and brutal monotony of a place where there was no music. And that was just school.

Here was music: the rustling of Dad's morning paper, the staccato of percolating coffee. The kitchen always held a coffee smell, but behind that were others – butter and onion from last night's schnitzel, the bleach Mom cleaned with, a trace of gas from the stove.

Would he come back to this? White curtains at the dark window above the sink. The Blue Onion dishes Mom used for special occasions. He closed his eyes to memorize it all. Mom was sitting beside him now, sipping coffee, frail in the folds of her blue bathrobe, blonde curls falling over her forehead. Dad was looking up, nodding, as if he knew everything would be all right. Jonathan wanted to believe him. He asked Dad what he was reading.

“An editorial on Nixon's State of the Union Address last Thursday. He was talking about our involvement in Vietnam coming to an end, and our need to build a

generation of peace.” Jonathan met Dad’s eyes, and Dad cleared his throat. “The editorial asks why the draft’s still in effect.”

“What do you think, Dad?”

“The President said on Thursday that strong military defenses are the guardians of peace. I don’t have any reason to disagree.” He put down his paper and looked at Jonathan. “It seems unlikely you’ll see active duty, Jon.”

Jonathan took a gulp of milk to settle his stomach. He’d eaten enough.

His brother Rudi came out from the bedroom, squinting in the sudden light, afraid he’d missed saying goodbye. “Dad, can I drive Jon to the airport?” Rudi had just gotten his license.

Dad shook his head. “I want to talk to your brother man to man.” Jonathan sat up straighter.

Dad took a last gulp of coffee and Jonathan stood up. He grabbed Rudi around the neck and punched his arm. “Hey, you better take care of my Audi while I’m gone. Remember to get it tuned up.” He dropped his voice. “And don’t let any of your buddies puke in it.”

Rudi grinned and nodded.

Mom stood waiting by the door. Jonathan put his arms around her and rested his chin on her head. She was shaking a little, but she didn’t cry.

Then he was grabbing gear, loading the car, scraping ice from the windshield, hanging out the window in the cold darkness to wave good-bye until they turned the corner.

Dad used few words for his man to man talk as they made the half hour drive to the airport.

“Do what you’re told, Jon, and things can go pretty smoothly.” Ten minutes later, “Study hard. You’ve got a chance to build a career out of this training.”

“Sure, Dad. Dad?”

Have you ever launched a torpedo at a ship, Dad? Have you ever shot someone? Is it easier if you don’t have to see the person’s face?

“What is it son?”

“Nothing. I’ll call you if I can come home before I’m assigned.”

A month ago, before he’d signed up, he’d asked Dad if he’d killed anyone on tour in Korea. The muscles around Dad’s lips twitched and the corners of his eyes creased before he answered with another question, “What do you think, son?” From then on, Jonathan knew he had to figure it out himself.

They pulled up to the door of the American terminal, and Dad left the engine running. Their breath hung between them, a white cloud in the gray morning. The American Indians believed a person’s spirit lived in his breath. Like when God breathed into the first man and woman and gave them life.

“Make us proud of you, Jon.”

“I’ll try, Dad.”

Dad’s arm wrapped around his shoulder for one quick inhalation. Then he was standing on the platform alone.

The plane ride was better than getting high. It was only the second time he’d flown and besides, this was a Boeing 707. Even at takeoff, hurtling down the runway, the

jet felt faster than the Cyclone at Crystal Beach amusement park. The flight magazine said a 707 could reach a cruising speed of 591 miles an hour, and cruising altitudes of 25,000 to 40,000 feet. As the plane ascended and Buffalo retreated, he wondered who he'd be when he saw this place again.

That afternoon, the airport bus sped down Semoran Boulevard, all Jonathan could see were tract houses and a couple small lakes. It was worse once he arrived on base. The buildings were one, two, and three story rectangles the color of sand. Their windows were tall, thin rectangles like the loopholes of a castle, just large enough to shoot through. The grounds alternated rectangles of cement with rectangles of burnt grass. Form conformed to function. No trees, except a few short, scrawny things near the barracks, shorter than the buildings. No music.

Only the sky was beautiful here, a bright blue and full of light so intense he couldn't look for long. Big white clouds drifted slowly with the light breeze. It was hard to believe it was January in Florida.

Jonathan pulled a map of the base out of his pack and looked for the Administration Building. Still walking, studying the map, he slammed into the chest of a navy blue uniform and looked up, and up, into a good-looking black face. Great. His first dumb-ass act as a recruit – plow into a guy big enough to kill him. But the sailor broke into a slow smile.

“Hey, man, I'm sorry,” Jonathan said. “I wasn't looking where I was going. I just got here.”

“That so?” the sailor said, looking down at Jonathan's jeans, his smile widening.

Jonathan had seen black guys sometimes in downtown Buffalo, but always as strangers, not as neighbors in his hometown of Hamburg, NY, or as classmates at his school. He'd never even been in a position to speak much with people who didn't look and talk like he did. The sailor in front of him was from another world.

He'd nearly gotten into fights before, playing guitar at dances where guys didn't like the look of his long hair or his Nehru shirt. Maybe he could talk his way out of this, like he'd talked his way out of fights before.

"Yeah, I guess you can tell I just got here. Anyhow, I'm sorry." Jonathan fumbled with his gear and dropped a bag of books on the sailor's feet. "Oh shit. Sorry – wait – you're not an officer, right?"

The sailor threw back his head and laughed. "You better hope not – you can't go talking to no officer like that. I'm here for basic. I'm a seaman recruit, just like you gonna be when you get them goldilocks trimmed off."

Jonathan had watched cats play with birds before they killed them. But the sailor laughed again, and put out his large hand to compass Jonathan's.

"Name's Tyler Carter. They call me TC."

"Glad to meet you TC. I'm Jonathan. Jon." He wished he had a real nickname, something that sounded cool, even a little dangerous. Maybe it was a good thing he was getting his hair cut.

"Round here we call each other shipmate. Where you headed, shipmate?" TC said.

TC offered to show Jonathan around, and picked up his guitar case. As they walked across the base, Jonathan asked him if he played.

“I mess around some. I mostly sing, though.”

“With a band?”

“At church. Been doing that since I was five. You ever been to a Baptist church?”

Jonathan shook his head. “I haven’t been to church for awhile.”

“That’s cool. Everybody forgets about God sometimes, but God don’t forget about us.”

TC talked about himself openly, comfortably. He was from Charleston, South Carolina and had grown up near the naval base. He hadn’t been drafted, but had enlisted in December, as soon as he’d turned eighteen.

“You mean you *want* to be here?” Jonathan asked.

“I wouldn’t say that. I want to do my bit. Make something of myself. I’m gonna study electronics.”

Jonathan said he’d be studying electronics too. He didn’t mention that maybe the Navy would make something else out of them, something they didn’t want to be, but he did ask whether TC thought they’d see any action.

“Nobody’s sayin,” TC answered. “And I expect that’s cause nobody knows.”

As they reached the main part of the base, Jonathan was relieved to see some taller trees, even a few elms like at home. There were a couple palm trees too, just like on postcards they used to get from friends on vacation in Florida. On the parade ground stood a model ship decorated with flags, nearly life-size but made of plaster, like a stage prop. It was set on a hill and leaned to one side, making it look even phonier. The base

was far from the coast, so this was as close as they were going to get to a ship for the next eight weeks.

TC went with Jonathan while he reported to the Administration Building and was assigned a service number. Strange, having a number attached to his name. Then they went to pick up his uniforms – Navy issue work dungarees and dress blues. They walked over to the barracks together to drop off the gear.

“You can pick out any bunk that’s not made up,” TC said. “Matter of fact, I don’t have a bunkmate yet.”

Jonathan laughed, surprised. “You do now,” he said.

Half an hour later, Jonathan was on his own, dressed in dungarees, and waiting to have his hair cut. When he glanced into the room where the recruits disappeared one at a time, it looked like any of the other classrooms he’d passed, only with a chair in the middle and an unusually glaring fluorescent light. Like an operating room. No operating table, though. Just a chair, a Chief Petty Officer with a pair of scissors that flashed in the fluorescent light, and the mosquito buzz of an electric razor.

Around twenty new recruits were waiting in the hallway, as they’d be waiting all day, first for clothing issue, now for haircuts, next for physicals. These, and others like TC who’d been processed yesterday, were the men who’d be going through basic training with him. “Going through,” like going through changes. Like going through hell. They’d already lost their cowboy boots and embroidered tunics and were wearing dungaree pants and jackets. The dungarees didn’t exactly look like uniforms if you took them one at a time, but when you looked at a room full of men all dressed the same, in

these sort of play clothes, they looked like grown up, bummed out kids at summer camp. Still, for the next few minutes, each of them had a distinctive-looking head – an Afro, a handlebar moustache, wiry red curls.

Jonathan wanted to talk to these guys right away, before they went into that room. When they came out, one looked pretty much like the other. He looked around at the men staring into space like sheep. Nobody had told them to keep quiet, but the hallway was so still that when somebody did talk, words bounced off the walls of the narrow space and everybody, bored as they were, turned to look.

He turned to the guy next to him, who had an Elvis haircut, but without the sideburns, and who didn't seem to have any facial hair. "Have you been waiting a long time?"

"For a haircut? No. But I've been waiting three years for basic."

"How come?"

"My brother's in the Navy, joined three years ago. But I just turned seventeen."

"Seventeen? Did you finish high school?"

The recruit grinned. "Nope. Didn't have to." He winked as if he'd gotten away with something, then introduced himself as Steve from Nashville, Tennessee. Within minutes, they'd agreed to jam as soon as they could grab the time. Steve stood up as his name was called and another recruit emerged from the room. The newly sheared man ducked his head as if he could maybe make it to somewhere private and get reacquainted with himself before anyone else saw him. Lots of luck shipmate. This shipmate was supposed to be shipshape, but he looked like shit. From the neck to the ears, he was bald. Shaved. On top, his cropped stalks looked like some kid had cut the lawn too short so he

wouldn't have to mow it again next week. First uniform clothes, then uniform hair, then the way you talked, and what you said. Eventually how you thought around the officers so you wouldn't screw up. Then, maybe the way you thought all the time, even when you were alone. That was the thing that scared him most. Except for Vietnam.

He didn't care so much whether his hair was long or short. He'd worn it long for the last couple years because most guys who played music wore it long, some to the chin, others to the shoulders like he did. There was the blonde freak on that one album that let his hair grow all the way to his ass, but he wasn't from Buffalo. In Buffalo, you made a statement, but you didn't look like a girl.

Cynthia said she thought he'd look "cute" with his hair short. Cute. Tricia would never tell him he looked cute. She wouldn't care whether he had hair or not. She'd want to know if he'd made friends, if he could get into the training, if things could be good for him here. Cynthia would want to know if there were any hot spots in town he could take her to if she visited. He wasn't sure he wanted her to visit. Cynthia was starting to be a pain in the ass.

Dating Cynthia was a tradeoff. Did that mean he was using her? She practically threw herself at him at No Name Bar that night two weeks ago, and then afterwards in her dorm room – her soft, firm little body on top of him, her knowing exactly what to do and laughing when he didn't, but in a friendly way like it didn't matter. Like their bodies moving together were the only things that mattered. It was never as great again as it was that night. Not that the sex wasn't good the other times. For the past two weeks, whenever he wasn't with her, he could smell her musk perfume and taste the saltiness of her breasts and see the reddish brown birthmark at the crease of her left shoulder. But

there wasn't much they could do together with their clothes on except get drunk, which they'd been doing a lot. Maybe everything was a tradeoff.

“Richter, Jonathan,” the Chief Petty Officer called, poised the scissors in mid-air. Jonathan walked through the door and sat in the chair. Unlike a barber shop, this room had no mirror, just harsh light bouncing off bare walls. He listened to the grating of scissors on hair, his hair. A long blonde curl fell near his foot. His neck felt cold. Clumps of hair were falling over his shoulders. Hair that had been on his head for years. Hair that he'd shaken out of his eyes during gigs when the music was moving through him. Hair Tricia had kissed along with his neck and his eyes and every feature of his face that last night they'd been together, right before she got uptight and he didn't make it with her after all, even though it seemed they'd been building up to it for weeks. He'd cut her off then, without a word, like they were cutting off his hair. Hair that held pot smoke and wood smoke and Tricia's earthy, woody smell, green like the woods behind his house, so when he woke up in the morning he'd remember right away what he'd been doing the night before, and who he was, and who and what he loved, and he'd lie in bed and think about things. No more.

Needles of hair were falling into his eyes and inside his collar. The officer worked with the razor quickly and efficiently, like a farmer Jonathan had seen shearing a sheep at the Erie County Fair. He'd wondered if the sheep was pissed off, having part of him cut away like that.

The officer handed Jonathan a towel to dust off his face. Jonathan stood up, reaching to feel the new bristle. He walked through the door, heading toward the barracks. Without thinking about it, he ducked his head.

During “Welcome Orientation” that evening, the recruits heard a talk by a bomber pilot who’d recently finished his tour of duty.

“It’s just business,” the pilot said. “I just did my job. All you have to do is pull the commit switch on the stick and the computer figures out the rest – ballistics, air speed, slant range, target – and then the computer drops the bombs.”

Jonathan looked at TC, who was frowning with thought.

“Bull shit,” Jonathan hissed into TC’s ear. “So it’s the computer that drops the bombs, and not the pilot?”

“I hear you, man. Maybe you gotta kill people, but you gotta own it when you do.”

“It’s a lot like setting off firecrackers,” the bomber pilot went on. “It’s kind of exciting blowing things up.”

Jonathan looked around. Wasn’t anybody going to stop this guy? He was starting to sound psycho. But the officers were sitting calmly, some of them nodding as he spoke.

“I never saw the people,” the bomber pilot said. “Houses sometimes, but never any people.”

Less than a foot separated Jonathan’s face from the ceiling of the bunk house. He’d been glad TC had taken the bottom bunk because he’d always had the top at home with Rudi, and because if the mattress ever fell through like it used to sometimes at camp, and TC fell on top of him, he’d be squashed like a bug. The barracks felt a lot like the bunkhouse at summer camp, which was the only experience he’d had of being away from

home for long, and he'd always managed to get the top bunk at camp too. But he hadn't considered that at home, and even in the log bunkhouse, the ceilings were way higher than they were in this low, wide, hot box. He was starting to feel claustrophobic.

The smell didn't help. A gym locker smell of more than thirty guys' sweat and breath that turned his stomach, which didn't feel too good anyhow from the greasy sloppy Joes in the mess. He'd tried to open a window before lights out, but the guys down here in Florida seemed to think this was winter weather and closed it again. He shouldn't have opened the window, because there weren't any screens, and a mosquito got in that he could hear whining, traveling the room, waiting to attack.

Most of the guys were already asleep, judging from the symphony of snoring, from high-pitched, nasal hums to guttural grunts. He'd be sleeping too if being tired had anything to do with it. He looked at his watch – 11:40 – and reveille was at 5:30, in the middle of the fricking night. He swatted as the mosquito landed on his newly bare forehead, but he missed.

The pilot said he never saw the people he bombed, but Jonathan could see them now. An old woman standing by her bombed out hut, crying, holding her head between her hands as if it'd come off if she let go of it. Somebody's feet sticking out of the rubble of a hut, not wearing army boots, but cheap embroidered house slippers. A naked girl running, burning, screaming. Hadn't everybody seen those pictures on TV and in magazines?

Maybe the pilot could say all that crap about fireworks and how exciting it was blowing things up because he couldn't hear the woman crying, or smell the little girl's

skin burning. When the bomber lay in his bunk at night, maybe he never wondered exactly what he'd done down there. And then, maybe he did.

The bomber said he was just a technician. Jonathan was going to be a Navy technician. He was going to work on the engines of those damned computerized planes that did everything for you so you wouldn't have to think or feel or take any responsibility. He wasn't training to be a pilot, but maybe it wasn't much different.

He swatted at the mosquito whining in his ear. How could he be so tired and so wide awake and so horny at the same time? Was he being fair to Tricia? She listened to him whenever he asked, listened to every word no matter how confused, picking up her long, dark hair in both hands and throwing it impatiently behind her back as if it were just in her way, as if it weren't beautiful and didn't smell fresh as the woods. He trusted her and he liked being with her and she turned him on. He was probably in love with her. Having sex with her would have been good. Okay, it would have been amazing.

In a way it was her fault they weren't together. She wanted everything – love, commitment. There wasn't time for somebody like Tricia. But he'd still have to deal with loving her. That is, if he saw her again.

Because he could die, too. Navy seamen died – it wasn't just foot soldiers, and it wasn't just in Vietnam and it wasn't just in planes. Dad said he probably wouldn't see active duty, but TC was right. Nobody knew.

His cheek was itching like crazy. The mosquito had gotten him. He licked his finger and eased the itching with his spit.

When he saw Tricia again, things would be painful and difficult like they were at his going away party at the Anchor Bar. He'd been with Cynthia that night, and he

hadn't told Tricia why. Before she left, she whispered, "Take care of yourself," and slipped a package into his hands. A book of poetry. At first it seemed like a weird gift for somebody going to boot camp. Then, when he looked at it on the plane, he saw she'd marked that poem they'd talked about, "The Man He Killed." Damn. He didn't need somebody who knew what he was thinking. What he needed now, and maybe for years, was just somebody to have fun with.

The mosquito landed on his arm and he slapped at it. The buzzing stopped. When he took his hand away it was smeared with blood. His blood, and his shipmates' blood.

Jonathan got up, took the stationery out of his pack, and went over to the window to write Tricia a letter. Cool light from a nearly full moon shone on the paper as he wrote. It wouldn't work, he said. They were too much alike. Not good for each other. But he always wanted her as a friend, he said.

By the time he finished, the place between his eyes was pounding. Maybe he could do some deep breathing like Tricia had shown him. Yoga breathing. He climbed into bed, lay on his back, and inhaled. He spread out his hands and laid them across his abdomen. Were you supposed to expand your chest when you breathed out, or when you breathed in? He heard Tricia's voice: *In, expand. Hold. Out, contract, slowly emptying your lungs.* He saw her with her eyes closed, concentrating, as if breathing were the most important thing in her life.

The next thing he knew they were blowing reveille. His head was better but he felt dizzy, disoriented. While TC showed him how to make up a regulation bed, a recruit

he didn't know passed by and with a drawl said under his breath, "Nigger lover." By the time Jonathan registered the words, adrenaline was pumping through him, the recruit was gone, and Jonathan didn't even know if he'd recognize him again. He glanced warily at TC, who shook his head slowly as if to say, let it go. But he didn't feel like letting it go. The recruit wasn't likely to forget, and Jonathan sure as hell wasn't going to stop hanging with TC.

An hour later, Jonathan's face hovered a foot away from the ground, then lowered into the sting of the short-cropped grass. It lifted again, or was lifted, by his arms and legs, where muscles he didn't usually pay attention to were screaming for mercy. The recruits were going through PT-Zero, their first fitness test. They'd already done sit-ups. After push-ups they'd do a mile and a half run, which under other circumstances would be a piece of cake for Jonathan, but he wasn't sure he was going to make it through sixty push-ups. His face burned with exertion and his breath was coming in gasps. At least it was early, and the sky was still cool with gray fog.

"Twenty-five!" RDC Hicks shouted, and the recruits tried to shout with him through their labored breath. RDC Hicks was from Alabama. The recruits had had some fun with the name last night in the barracks, but they damned well better be sure they were alone when they were laughing. They had three RDCs, or recruit division commanders, who were supposed to represent the Navy for them during basic. As Hicks said first thing this morning, "We're gonna be your mama and your daddy and your worst nightmare for every minute of these fifty-six days, and don't you mama's boys forget it."

Before breakfast, Hicks had collared Jonathan when he accidentally started walking into the women's toilets instead of the men's. Hicks pushed his face into Jonathan's and spit out each word with a snarl.

“Are you a little girl? Are you a dirty whore?”

This is shame, Jonathan thought as he ran double time out to the main gate and back before he could relieve himself. When he did, it hurt to pee.

“Thirty-two!” Jonathan's arms shook, the way they had when he was nine and his dad let him help bring in a steelhead trout at Catteraugus Creek. He'd planted his feet in the muddy bank of the lake, trying to anchor them, but that never worked too well at Catteraugus Creek. They usually fished during the steelhead run, so it was almost always rainy like it was that November day, and the slippery, sloping bank was no place to anchor anything, especially the sneakers he didn't want to take off because of the cold. He couldn't be sure his legs wouldn't slip right out from under him, because more than once before they had. Then there was the stench, some gut-retching stink from the gases that rose out of the mud. The name Catteraugus was Seneca for stinking river bank, and they got that right. But worst of all were his arms, his weak, skinny arms. The trout darted and pulled and leapt in every direction, and he struggled to reel it in.

“Dad, help, my arms are shaking so bad – I've got to let go.”

“It's okay, Jon. Your muscles are just shaking from exertion. This is a contest between you and the fish. Use your will. Hold steady. He'll get tired after a while.”

“Forty-one!” Jonathan yelled now, trying to hold steady.

Dad was a steel worker. A fisherman. A Navy veteran. The son of German immigrants who'd worked two jobs so he could buy his family a home. He was a tall, dark, fleshy man with a barrel chest. Jonathan took after his slightly built blonde mother, but he wanted to be like Dad. He reeled in the trout inch by inch, holding steady, planting his sliding feet, gulping the gassy air. And Dad patted him on the shoulder.

“That’s my man, Jon.”

But the steelhead was strong and smart, and seemed to be the one trying to tire him out. After a few minutes his arms ached so badly and shook so hard he was sure he was going to let the rod slip from his hands.

“Dad, you’ve got to take it. I can’t hold it anymore.” With a barely noticeable shake of his head and a slight, disappointed twitching at the corners of his mouth, Dad took the reel and Jonathan dropped his sore arms in an ecstasy of sorrowful relief.

“Forty-seven!” Jonathan gasped now. “Forty-eight!” The shaking was getting worse. His arms might give out under him no matter what he told them to do. He could call time-out if he had to – a couple of the recruits had given out before twenty-five. RDC Hicks was pacing the ranks, arms folded, face scowling, ready to jump on him for any sign of weakness.

“Fifty!” Jonathan wheezed. His arms never hurt this badly in gym class or in training for track, but how many had he done then, twenty? He’d been good in track and Dad had been proud when he’d won a ribbon for long distance his senior year, even though he’d been disappointed

when Jonathan hadn't wanted to go out for football. Maybe that was because Jonathan hadn't been able to explain well enough about not liking contact sports, the way he hadn't been able to speak his mind yesterday morning when they drove to the airport together.

"Fifty-six!" He focused all his energy into his quaking arms.

Skeeter, the kids at school used to call him, short for mosquito. Skinny arms and legs and a long beak of a nose. The only way he'd survived was to laugh along with them, and Skeeter stuck all through grade school. By high school his muscles started to bulk up and the girls stopped laughing. Then he got good enough at guitar to play with a garage band for school dances, and the guys stopped laughing at him, too. School had been pretty much a matter of waiting things out until they weren't crappy anymore. Maybe the Navy was going to be something like that.

"Sixty!" Jonathan collapsed into the cool grass for just a minute before they started their run. When he stood up, everything looked skewed.