

RICHARD'S RELICS by Grace Augustine

Excerpt

“Johnny! Goddamn it! Get down!” Richard yelled from his belly, the brush barely hiding him and the other four men on this clusterfuck of a mission. Just as the sound of gunfire erupted, Johnny hit the ground, not even a twitch from his body as bullets whizzed by like a thousand angry, deadly bees.

Richard kept his stomach French-kissing the ground as he crawled over to the young man who was in his charge. Blood covered Johnny’s chest and head.

“Sonofabitch! Johnny, don’t you dare die on me! Do you hear me? Johnny!”

Richard sprang to a sitting position and looked at the clock. The red digital numbers 3:00 am stared angrily back at him.

He ran a shaky hand through the small stubble of hair on his head. Like so many other mornings he woke up drenched in sweat from undying memories: memories of gunfire, yelling, children crying. Memories of clear unblinking eyes and permanent looks of fear frozen into faces as still as marble. The stench of death. Vietnam.