



**THE YOUNG MARINE WAS WEARY  
AND HE SOUGHT A LITTLE REST  
WITH HIS HELMET FOR A PILLOW  
AND HIS RIFLE ON HIS CHEST.**

**HE HAS SEEN THE GUNSHIPS FIRE.  
HE HAD HEARD THE CANNONS ROAR.  
HE HAD SEEN THE NAVY'S POWER  
AS HE MADE HIS WAY ASHORE.**

**THEN HE THOUGHT ABOUT HIS RIFLE  
AND HE FOUND IT RATHER SMALL,  
WITH THE GUNSHIPS AND THE CANNONS  
IT WAS NOTHING MUCH AT ALL.**

**THE EFFORTS OF A RIFLEMAN  
MEANT LITTLE, IT WOULD SEEM.  
THEN, AS HE SLIPPED TO SLUMBER,  
HE DREAMED HIMSELF A DREAM.**



**THE MAN WHO STOOD BESIDE HIM  
HELD A MUSKET IN HIS HAND  
AND CLOSE AROUND HIS NECK HE WORE  
A HEAVY LEATHER BAND.**

**"WHEN I WAS ON OLD IRONSIDES"  
THE APPARITION SAID  
"THERE WERE CANNONBALLS AND CUTLASSES  
WHEREVER DANGER LED.**

**THERE WERE PISTOLS TOO, AND DAGGERS  
AT EVERY FIGHTER'S SIDE  
WHEN THE SHIPS WOULD COME TOGETHER  
ON THE ROLLING, HEAVING, TIDE**

**BUT WHEN IT CAME TO BOARDING,  
WITH THE BATTLE FURY HOT  
IT WAS RIFLES, ALWAYS RIFLES  
THAT MADE THE TELLING SHOT.”**

**THE APPARITION FADED  
AND STANDING IN ITS PLACE  
BENEATH A SHALLOW HELMET  
HE SAW ANOTHER FACE.**

**“WHEN WE WERE IN THE TRENCHES  
IN THE WOOD THEY CALL MARINE  
THERE WERE MORTARS, TANKS, AND CANNONS,  
MORE THAN I HAD EVER SEEN.**

**BUT WHEN THE FINAL CHARGE WAS MADE  
TO PUSH THE GERMANS BACK  
IT WAS RIFLES, ALWAYS RIFLES  
AT THE POINT OF THE ATTACK.”**



**THE FACE CHANGED ONLY SLIGHTLY  
AND THE HELMET STAYED THE SAME  
BUT THE ISLAND THAT HE SPOKE OF  
HAD A MORE FAMILIAR NAME.**

**“THEY HIT US VERY EARLY  
ON THE DAY THE WAR BEGUN.  
ON THE WINGS OF ALL THEIR BOMBERS  
WE COULD SEE THE RISING SUN.**

**OUR PILOTS AND OUR GUNNERS  
WHO FOUGHT AND FELL AT WAKE  
WROTE A STORY FULL OF GLORY  
THAT TIME CAN NEVER SHAKE.**

**BUT WHEN THE ENEMY DREW NEAR  
TO MAKE HIS FINAL REACH  
IT WAS RIFLES, ALWAYS RIFLES  
THAT MET HIM ON THE BEACH.”**

**THERE NEXT APPEARED A SHADOW  
IN A SWIRL OF STINGING SNOW  
AND IT BREATHED A FIERCE DEFIANCE  
AND ITS EYES WERE ALL AGLOW.**

**“IN ‘FIFTY AT THE CHOSIN  
WHEN THE BIG GUNS COULDN’T TALK  
AND THE FIRST MARINE DIVISION  
TOOK A FIGHTING, FREEZING WALK,**



**WHEN ALL THE WORLD, EXCEPT THE CORPS  
HAD COUNTED US AS GONE  
IT WAS RIFLES, ALWAYS RIFLES  
THAT LET US CARRY ON.”**



**THE SCENE WAS CHANGED TO SUMMER  
AND THE FACE WAS HARD AND LEAN  
AND THE TIRED EYES WERE FIRED  
WITH THE LIGHT THAT SAYS “MARINE”**

**“AT KHE SAHN WHEN THEY SHELLED US  
WE WERE WRAPPED IN ROLLING SMOKE  
AND THE THOUGHT OF OUR SURVIVAL  
WAS A GRIM AND GHASTLY JOKE.**

**BUT WHEN THE WAVES CAME SWARMING IN  
TO FINISH THE ASSAULT  
IT WAS RIFLES, ALWAYS RIFLES  
THAT CALLED THE FINAL HALT.”**

**THERE NEXT APPEARED A GENERAL  
AS SOLID AS A TANK  
WITH THREE STARS ON HIS COLLAR  
TO SIGNIFY HIS RANK.**

**HIS STATURE AND DEMEANOR  
WERE THE MILITARY TYPE  
AND IN HIS HAND HE CARRIED  
A STUBBY LITTLE PIPE.**

**HIS JAW WAS SQUARELY CHISELED  
HIS EYES WERE CLEAR AND KEEN  
AND HIS BEARING LEFT NO QUESTION.  
HE WAS ALL MARINE’S MARINE.**

**“THE MESSAGE THEY’RE CONVEYING”  
THE BURLY GENERAL SAID  
“IS THAT THROUGH OUR TROUBLED HISTORY  
THE RIFLES ALWAYS LED.**

**WE’VE HAD CANNONS, TANKS, AND MORTARS  
WE’VE HAD WEAPONS BY THE SCORE,  
WE’VE HAD BATTLESHIPS AND FIGHTER PLANES  
TO COMPLEMENT THE CORPS.**

**WE’VE A MOST IMPRESSIVE ARSENAL.  
THAT’S OBVIOUSLY TRUE,  
BUT THE FINAL THRUST FOR VICTORY  
HAS ALWAYS BEEN WITH YOU.**





IT WAS RIFLES, ALWAYS RIFLES  
WHEN THE CORPS WAS SORELY PRESSED  
AND THE RIFLE THAT YOU CARRY  
MUST MEET THE FINAL TEST.

SO SLING THAT RIFLE PROUDLY,  
FOR EVERYTHING WE DO  
WITH MORTARS, TANKS, AND CANNONS  
IS JUST AN AID TO YOU.”

THE YOUNG MARINE AWAKENED  
AND PUT THE DREAM ASIDE,  
THOUGH NOW HE CLUTCHED HIS RIFLE  
WITH A CERTAIN TOUCH OF PRIDE.

AND THEN HE CHANCED TO NOTICE  
THAT LYING NEAR HIS HAND  
WAS A STUBBY LITTLE PIPE  
AND A HEAVY LEATHER BAND.

*~ R.A. Gannon ~*

*Sergeant of Marines*