



**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