

I ordered a car and Brian somebody drove me to Newbury. Nobody knew I was coming. Nobody saw me drive there, no stars on the plate, no flag on the hood, just an officer in a motorcar. When we got there, General Maxwell wanted to make a big thing of it, I said, 'No, let me just go out an' meet the guys, talk to them, no big deal.' So that's what I did. Hard to look a man in the eye when you know you may be sending him to his death. In every face I saw the schoolboy that soldier had once been. You know what I mean? When you see the child in the adult face. They were blackened up with boot polish and they looked like dirty, enthusiastic, serious-minded schoolboys on a summer camp. And they trusted me, their dads weren't there, so they were relying on me. There was one guy who leaned forward to catch every word I said, as if the words themselves would keep him safe. What could I say to them? What could I say to these... boys? I asked them how their chow was, asked them where they were from, I wanted to find a soldier from my home town, Abilene, these kids were from all over the United States, from Fort Worth, Little Rock, New York, Grand Island Nebraska, Blue Mound Kansas, Sunnyvale Texas, but no one from Abilene.

I don't know how they walk let alone run, they were loaded up like Christmas trees, anything they couldn't fit in their pockets they had strapped to their backs, their arms, their legs. There was one guy, he had a pack of Chesterfields taped to every available inch of flesh... there was a man after my own heart.

*IKE pauses for a moment.*

The airborne divisions are... my baby. Trafford thinks I'm sending those boys to their deaths, but I believe their role will be pivotal... and that makes it personal. Those boys are *my* responsibility, they're risking their lives because I dug my heels in at a meeting in an office. That's really why I went to see them... and I will feel every one of their deaths.

*Silence. The room is very quiet. IKE checks his watch.*

They'll be landing in thirty minutes.

*Another silence.*

How did you like your doughnut?