

Dear Suzanne,

You have quite a son, I'll have you know, always brave, helping out whenever he can, being almost like a big brother to all the guys. I don't know if I even saw any better out of all of us. We were hiking up the mountains in Nam, looking for higher ground, tryna see if it'd do us some good. We were all joking around and cutting up about how the whole area would be one helluva playground if we weren't out there fighting for our lives. About halfway up we noticed a break in the rock wide enough for a few men to fit through, and we decided to check it out. We ain't got much entertainment at war, ya know. Well he was real skeptic about it, said it could be infested with wild animals or some Greenies, but we all just thought he was afraid of the dark or something. We all slugged him in the shoulder and urged him to come inside. My how wrong we all were. We walked inside that cave, and sure it was dark, but there was something off about it all, something.. just not right. Out of no where the two of 'em Greenies jumped right on us, and we were under attack. While we were caught off guard and unarmed, Kenny only did one thing, one of the most bravest things I had ever seen. He jumped right into action, slinging the Greenies off our backs, knocking them out with his iron fist, in the ribs, at their throat, and right square in the nose. He fought like that's what he was born to do, a real fighter. He yelled at us to run, kept looking back at us, screaming, "Leave! Go!" There was this look in his eyes like somehow he knew he wasn't gonna win this one, but he was willing to give himself up for the rest of us. If that ain't a hero I don't know what is. Suzanne, your son was a real hero, one no one can compare to. There weren't no Greenies, that's not how he went down, but he was a hero in a different way. That's all I gotta say. You raised that boy right into a man, and he'll be looking down on you from up there in them clouds protecting you and watching out for you like he always watched out for us.

Rick

I stuck that letter in the bottom of my boot, between my lucky sock and the worn leather. We set up camp out in the jungle because there was no way we'd make it back to everyone before all the critters came out at nightfall. Jones stripped the leaves off some trees nearby to lay as a makeshift roof on top of our skimpy thing of a hut. Bronson took a little walk and took a toke of his pipe about 27 times before he was out of sight. Everyone was tense, and little on edge about what happened up in them mountains. No one could quite make of it. What kind of man steps off the side of a mountain at 500 feet to end his life. Those rocks sure gotta be rough. He could've just took his pistol and ate a bullet before he fell, but no, that's not Kenny. He was a bit off key the whole way up the mountain, but no one said much because we can't get in our emotions out here or our brains would be swallowed whole from insanity. We were almost at the top, thought we mighta seen some snow too, when Kenny turned towards the sky and said to us all, "Ya ever wonder what I'd be like to fly? Just dive into the wind and spread your arms like a bird." Jones, Bronson, and I looked back and forth at each other, wondering whether his bra I had been swallowed or not.

Bronson was the first to answer, "Son, there ain't no way a man could fly by himself. That's what the planes are for."

"Yeah man, whatcha talking like that for? Ain't no one done it, and ain't no one gonna do it. You ain't no eagle or nothing," I agreed.

Jones took the lead and started back up the mountain, "Let's just keep moving boys. We've got a job to do. Come on."

Bronson and I turned with him, but before we could take 5 steps, Kenny had one more thing to say, "At least a bird's feet don't have to touch the bloody, rotten flesh-infested ground that we walk on. At least a bird can fly away from the pounding noises of a bomb or the last screams of a soldier who has all his limbs ripped from his body. I don't know about you guys. But I'm telling you, I won't do it for another day." Then he flew.