

JOE, STEWART

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when do you give two shits about the so-called opinions — i.e., the knee-jerk juvenile *fancies* — of a bunch of long-haired teenage radicals? I certainly don't. They don't know politics. They don't know history. They don't know anything. We don't write for them.

STEWART. Who do we write for?

JOE. The influential.

STEWART. You think those kids aren't influential? Have you visited the campuses lately?

JOE. No, I haven't been hanging around on college campuses, Stewart. I've been rather busy in some other places. Vietnam, for example.

STEWART. What did you see in Vietnam?

JOE. I saw brave kids risking their lives. I saw the endlessly resourceful military of a great and benevolent power in a twilight struggle for freedom against an inhuman enemy.

STEWART. Save that crap for the column. What did you really see?

JOE. The implication that I'd present a different picture to my brother in private than I would to my readers is deeply offensive to me.

STEWART. Did you get out in the field?

JOE. Of course I was out in the field. I live in the field. What are you implying, Stewart?

STEWART. I'm just saying. Halberstam, Sheehan, those guys, they're young guys and they're hot-headed but they're smart and they're good —

JOE. They are children. They're in their twenties —

STEWART. They're professionals, Joe, just like we were professionals in our twenties, and they've been there for a pretty decent spell. And they don't want America to lose.

JOE. They very definitely do want America to lose.

STEWART. Oh, come on. You can't believe that.

JOE. Have you seen the coverage? (*Suddenly shouting.*) Have you read the fucking stories?

STEWART. Easy. Joe ...

JOE. I have just been going through the reports from Ia Drang. It's the subject of my next column. Do you know *anything at all* about Ia Drang?

STEWART. Of course I do. Don't shout at me.

JOE. Four hundred fifty Air Cav soldiers surrounded in a valley by over two thousand North Vietnamese. Two thousand. Against our four hundred fifty. And we fight our way out. Two hundred

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fifty Americans killed. Heartbreaking. Heartbreaking. But — We killed *one thousand* North Vietnamese Communist troops. My sources at the Pentagon say probably more. We *routed* them. We *obliterated* a massively superior force by a factor of *one half*. It was astonishing. It was heroic. And *Sheehan* — do you want to know what he writes? “American casualties ... Americans’ heaviest death toll ... Americans sustain serious losses ... ”

STEWART. What would you call a fifty percent casualty rate?

JOE. We killed them by a factor of seven to one. *Seven to one*. I call that a massive victory. Would it have killed him to use the word *victory*? I think it would. Or *success* or *won*?

STEWART. I don’t know. I don’t know, Joe. I wish I had your certainty.

JOE. What is there to be uncertain about? A victory is a victory.

STEWART. Except when it’s not.

JOE. *Except*, I suppose you mean, when certain correspondents *say* it’s not, and the American people, who have no better source of information, believe them.

STEWART. So you’ll be the better source of information.

JOE. General Westmoreland is the better source. Robert McNamara. What better sources do you need? For God’s sake, don’t expertise and authority mean anything anymore? I have to stand up for these men and the damned hard work they do and for the simple truth, which they have maintained steadily, courageously, for many months, through sunny days and stormy, which is that we *must* win this war, we *will* win it, and we *are winning it now*.

STEWART. I heard Westmoreland’s gonna ask for a hundred thousand more troops next year.

JOE. I believe that is more or less correct.

STEWART. How come we need a hundred thousand more kids if we’re winning now?

JOE. Do you want a debate, Stew? Is that what you want?

STEWART. What’s the point? You don’t listen to me. You don’t listen to anyone. I don’t know why you bother to go on these trips. You never change your mind, and you sit with the same old fossils peddling the same old crap —

JOE. Oh, this is spite. This is just sheer professional envy.

STEWART. Don’t, Joe.

JOE. I can’t see any other reason for this harangue.

STEWART. It’s my name, not just yours. The Alsop *brothers* —

JOE. I won't be blamed for sharing a name with you.

STEWART. We're linked whether we want it or not and I'm not gonna sit here at the end and watch you undo everything I've —

JOE. The end? The end of what? Nothing's at an end. Don't blame me because you're floundering in your career.

STEWART. I —

JOE. You could have stayed with me, you could have stayed with the column! I would have helped you. I'm helping you now. My damn name, *my* name, is all that's keeping you afloat.

STEWART. I don't want your help and I don't need your goddamn help, you reckless arrogant prick.

JOE. "Reckless"?

STEWART. I —

JOE. Now arrogant I will accept, and the other as well, gladly, but I have never been reckless in my life —

STEWART. Oh, come on, Joe. It's a miracle it hasn't all blown up in your face. Half the time when we were partners I was terrified that — I never said anything. It's none of my business how you run your life —

JOE. Just a moment. I thought we were talking about work. What does my "life" have to do with anything?

STEWART. It's — nothing. I'm sorry I said it.

JOE. Blown up in my face? What the hell do you think you're talking about?

STEWART. Nothing. Look, forget it. See you at dinner.

JOE. Stewart. *(Beat.)*

STEWART. Moscow.

JOE. Moscow?

STEWART. Yes.

JOE. Well. *(Beat.)* You've obviously heard certain rather scurrilous rumors. Ugly words, "blackmail," and so forth. I'm not surprised. I know they're out there, of course. I wouldn't have thought my brother capable of believing them, let alone repeating them.

STEWART. Look, I —

JOE. Do you believe them? *(Stewart says nothing.)* Have you discussed them with my wife? I'm aware you're close.

STEWART. God, no. Never.

JOE. Do you believe them? *(Stewart looks away.)* Stewart. *(Beat.)* I will never forgive you for this. *(Beat. A knock on the door. Abigail enters. With her is Philip. They both have a proto-hippie look.)*

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