

**RED.** Was a few nights ago, I think. I was south, somewhere, in the middle of the dark, pitched dark somewhere, out on my uppers, thinkin' a nowhere, comin' back or somethin'. I's tried to follow the stars, get back the road, my feet back on the ground, some solid feet beneath the stars, I think. But my head was shiftin', blowin' on a storm, or somethin', shiftin' on the spot, a circle, on the spot, I think, I couldn't move. Was stuck on the spot, you see, a dark an' heavy storm beneath the stars.

An' then's a sound. Somethin' slung an' low, a breathy wind, I think. I feels before I hears, the emphysemic wind, amidst' the ground. I feels it low, and breathe and rumble. 'S a heart-stoppin' sound, somewhere out'a time, 's a creature come to kill me, stop my heart, I think, or somethin' worse 'n that. An' then, I hears:

'S a bugle. 'S a fuckin' bugle charged to kill me. Far across the way, an army on the trail, I think. Marchin' on to kill me, in the middle of there, the dark of nowhere, dead and quiet in the dark, I sit and wait to die.

An' then I sees 'em. Sees 'em through the dark. The heavy eyes that's suffered somethin', sees 'em through the haze: the tufty brown of . . . mother – fuckin' – elk. Ruttin' like they owns the place. High on musk an' horny as hell, I sucks a deep breath, an' thanks my lucky stars, the fuckers, an' turns around, an' sees him. The bull. The beast. The fuckin' general. His two green eyes, 's wide as planets, drippin' with jealousy, an' stoopin' down his rack to fight me, before's gaggled herd'a women.

So I fucks off quick smart, three thousand pounds'f elk rushin' on my tail, steerin' through the dark, a mad crusade of love. An' it brings me to my senses, rushin' through the haze, an' out beyond the spot, a dirty bastard out to fuck his herd. I's a prickin' elk-fucker!

Well's, an *instinct* – I know this. We's both men. An' I gets back beyond the road, an' finds my pack, scrapin' through the dust, an antler up my arse, I's nearly fucked, an' BANG!, I shoots him up the head, the nick'a time. I's never been so scared in all my days.