

**“The Voice”**  
**BY RITU MIAH**  
( based on Hanoi Hannah’s broadcasts during the Vietnamese War )

The jungle doesn’t sleep. Not really. It just changes shape in the dark.

Daniel Avery sat with his back to the damp trench wall, rifle across his lap, sweat soaking through his fatigues. The smell of wet earth and cordite hung in the air like a damp curtain. Somewhere in the distance, an M60 coughed. Then silence. Then the static.

The radio fizzed, then crackled into clarity.

**“G.I., your government has abandoned you...”**

Everyone in Fire Base Echo paused. It didn’t matter how many times she came on. That voice - velvety, a strong accent, feminine, almost kind - always made your stomach twist.

**“They have ordered you to die. Don’t trust them.”**

Daniel clenched his teeth. Her cadence was wrong. Too slow, too deliberate, like someone tucking you into your own grave.

“Jesus,” muttered Klein beside him, adjusting the dial like that would stop her.

**“They will give you a medal, G.I., but only after you are dead...”**

Daniel’s fingers twitched. He looked out beyond the wire, past the glint of trip flares and shadows of jungle trees swaying like ghosts. He thought of his father, Staff Sergeant Richard Avery, 3rd Infantry, Normandy. The man who stormed a beach under Nazi machine-gun fire, then came home and built fences for a living. That man had believed in his war.

Daniel? He wasn’t even sure what this one was about anymore.

**“Your army will leave you behind. Your helicopters fall from the sky like broken birds...”**

The first time he’d heard her, he laughed. The second time, he listened. Now, he tried not to.

“She ever shut up?” Klein asked.

“No,” Daniel said. “She just waits until you’re alone.”

Three weeks earlier, they'd pulled Charlie Ramirez out of his foxhole. Blood from his nose. Hands clamped over his ears. Rocking, muttering something about birds and burning. He hadn't been hit. Not by anything you could see. He'd just listened too long.

**“G.I., your bombers will fire you...”**

The radio fizzed again. That same velvet voice, bleeding out through static like oil from a cracked drum. Daniel stared at the speakers like they were breathing. He could hear things now, between her words. Things that weren't in the broadcast. Footsteps crunching over bones. Screams stitched into the silence. He thought about Normandy again. About the way his father never really came back from France, not all the way. The way he'd stare at a blank wall some nights like it owed him something. 'He bled for the world' Daniel thought, 'and I'm just bleeding for nothing'. His hand moved to his neck, to the dog tags. His father's name etched into one. His own on the other. Two wars, two ghosts.

That night, Daniel dreamed of waves. Not ocean waves, but waves of fire, rolling over the tree line, boiling men alive. He stood in it, burning, but feeling nothing. He saw his father, clean-shaven in his dress uniform, offering him a Purple Heart with shaking hands.

**“They'll give you a medal, G.I., but only after you're dead.”**

Daniel woke screaming.

They moved out the next day. Orders from command. Sweep and clear near Hill 491. Dense jungle, thick with mist and mosquitos. But worse than the bugs was the voice.

She followed them.

A tape looped through someone's booby-trapped radio they'd stumbled across. Buried in the mud, still running.

**“You cannot win this war, G.I. Your skies are dangerous. They come to bomb you.”**

They left it behind. But the words stayed.

Even as they moved. Even as they killed. Even as they died.

That night, Daniel sat alone on watch. The jungle hummed, low and constant, like it was waiting.

Then it came again.

Static.

Then the voice.

He stared at the radio. Switched it off.

The voice kept speaking.

Not through the radio. inside.

**“Poor soldier. G.I. Your pilots do not care that you are down here...”**

He pressed his palms against his ears. “Stop. Just stop.”

But it was her voice, and also his father's. Also his own, echoing through his skull like a rifle report.

He raised his rifle, aimed it into the dark, waiting for movement that never came.

They're watching.

They always were.

**"They will not return for you."**

His hands shook.

When dawn came, Daniel was still there. Blank-eyed. Mud-caked. Rifle slack in his hands.

Klein found him.

"Jesus, Dan, you okay?"

Daniel didn't answer. He just whispered:

"She knew my name."

Klein frowned. "What?"

"She said my name. Not G.I. Not soldier. Daniel. She said..she said "Daniel, they won't come for you"

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Later, in the med tent, they wrote it off as exhaustion. Stress. Malaria hallucinations, maybe.

They flew him out.

As the chopper rose, Daniel looked down. Saw the jungle yawning below like a mouth full of teeth.

The radio next to the pilot crackled again.

He knew it before she even spoke.

**"G.I., your government has betrayed you."**

He closed his eyes.

And this time, he listened.