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GREEN TANKS AND OTHER HIDDEN VEHICLES OF DESTRUCTION

for Carroll Arnett

WASHINGTON — The demilitarized zone — the strip of land between the two Vietnams so crucial to diplomatic progress on the war — is in a comparative lull.

This reading by military officers came Thursday along with the official report from Saigon that Americans killed in the war totaled 177 for the week ending Aug. 17.

Military officers noting the lull in the DMZ were frank to say that nobody really knows where the enemy has gone from his old positions.

- I. Where the enemy has gone nobody knows for sure. Yet we wait for the miracle in my green tank, waiting for promises to break the lid a crucial lull weightless in one dark end of the infinite.
- II. The beast, flaring fire from out its bowels, crawls in the mud the very jungle sucking at its life. The energies it burned have turned into stone forever, to be thawed out of the cold stars at a distant historic age. In the meantime we twist sharpened steel deep into the wounds of the dead, and the half dead, to the point of acceptance, indivisible arbiters in the butchers' orphanage. I too have sat in the house of God and seen my enemy disappear into the dark.
- III. In the diplomatic lull corpses are tagged and tallied their torn mouths almost blackened by the light we sometimes use as mirrors for recognition. Most faces bear no hatred nor love; only the hidden madness revealed on faces in moviehouses when lights had permitted us to see ourselves. We move the bodies touching their cold, their stiffness: there is no way to keep their caked blood from my hands, and no single music to measure the circumference of their wound; only the shadows of my footfalls being sucked deeper and deeper down into those dark positions of the past.