

RAY SIDE

Edited from pgs. 73 - 75. To be read as a monologue. The italicized dialogue is for context only.

RAY

I'm not a fucking war hero.

No? Well, I have a medal here that says otherwise.

You got no clue what that medal says.

If I remember correctly it says something about "military merit."

"Military merit" my ass. It says I'm a fraud.

I shot myself, John.

I don't even know what that means.

It means it wasn't enemy fire. I shot myself. The air campaign was over. We were marching to Kuwait. There was confusion with some deserters. And a gun went off. I panicked. Fumbled with my pistol and shot myself. When the smoke cleared, six Guard members were dead and I'd a bullet wound three inches from my heart. For all they knew, it was enemy fire. I wasn't one to argue.

Pinned the medal to my chest himself. Dad. Wasn't a Silver Star, but it was something.

You didn't know him. Not like me. He taught me everything I know. And he did it with an interest and excitement I've never been able to match.

And I come home at night and see you in the yard with Natalie, exploring, and I think ... oh... shit ... there he is. That's dad right there. Mama's little boy got him, too.

I failed him.

I did. He asked me to kill him. Everyday. All day, everyday I was here. Between gasps for breath. He begged for me to kill him. I didn't.