

THE ARMY

(with apologies to Kipling)

—Geoff Sutton

I've eaten my chow where I found it,
I've swilled some bad beer in my time,
I've smoked some rotten old stogies,
And mostly I've stayed in the line.
Served my time down at company level,
Then to staff and Battalion XO.
Taking command, wearing green tabs,
Always wishing I was on my way home.

Platoon leader—fuck, what should I do?
I sweated and growled in the dust.
My grizzled platoon sergeant grabbed me
And he taught me to do what I must.
Sunburned and chewing tobacco,
He smacked me upside of my head:
“Check with me before you do dumb shit.”
And I learned 'bout the Army from him.

Staff time was next for my training,
Penance before my reward.
Serving in each planning section
To sharpen and straighten my sword.

S1? What the fuck? Who'd I piss off?

UMRs are not my forte.

I only ever knew one happy adjutant,

And I swear he must have been gay.

Intelligence? It's all mumbo jumbo,

IPB and MCOO overlays.

My balls shrink and now I can't swagger,

My Y chromosome's run away.

Logistics? What the hell's this S4 shit,

And all these weird classes of stuff?

I thought food just fuckin' appeared.

Do I need to be more than just tough?

Operations! At last, something real!

Pulling OPORDS out of my ass.

Why would I ever need more than one COA?

How come the Four can't support that?

At last! I've got a battalion!

I can finally do what makes sense.

But I've spent all these years just agreeing,

My jumbled thoughts all refuse to condense.

The CSM drags me out of the briefing,

Says, "Goddamit, your logic is thin!

You're the Colonel, don't act like a dumbshit!"

And I learned 'bout the Army from him.

I've eaten my chow where I found it,
In garrison, combat and home.
Time after time, when I stepped on my crank,
I've been saved by an old NCO.

So now my career is behind me,
With single malt at the end of the day,
And PTSD, I can't leave the basement,
At least there's calm in a Henry Clay.