



## **King Rat**

### **King Rat - Bunker Bonkers**

© 1997, by Denis Cook (RIP: 21 May 2017), USAF; *Rats, I Lost My Helmet - 1968*

As a member of the 377th Combat Security Police at Tân Sơn Nhứt, Viet Nam, I was assigned a sandbag bunker, guarding the transient ammo dump. It was very boring, working all night with nothing to see, and no one to talk to. Like any good SP, I improvised... Target practice on rats seemed like a good idea--*what could go wrong?* C-rations was the bait, and a helmet the home-defense *Search and Destroy* weapon of choice.

I set out a can beans-and-wieners, and waited in the dark for the commie-hoard to attempt penetration of my bunker. Moon light filtered in through the bunker's firing slit, and soon, there were beady little commie eyes scurrying toward the green can on the dirt floor. *WHAMM-O!* Got that little sucker--you might say I *beaned* him with my helmet! [*Obviously, I had been in-country too long, and was overdue an R&R*]

Hey--that was fun... think I'll do it again. But I had not planned for the KIA-RAT having called for reinforcements. And before long, there were Viet Cong rats... and NVA rats... all determined to *Chow-oi* in my bunker--*but I was not afraid*. You rats want my C-rats, huh? Well ... take that! *WHAMM-O*. In no time, I had C-rat cans flying at rats in a blizzard of cans worse than a shovel of gravel in a laundromat drier! Noise discipline was ZERO. War? What War? CSC--Command and Security Control--was calling for a status check every 20 seconds! *Ahhh... A-Okay...* Marine M60 machine guns were swiveling in my direction for two-clicks, claymores were redirected, and *Puff the Magic Dragon* was dropping flares faster than cops at a train vs. 18-wheeler gas-tanker accident! *And I was not afraid!*

The battle raged with give and take, and I was in a *take-no-prisoners* mood. There were many misses and a few close hits. Soon, it became apparent that rats don't play fair--they don't like being squished into a C-rat can full of dead rats. *WHAM-oo...* I missed one big hairy varmint--and another sandbag bled sand like a dike with a basketball hole in it. *Hey...* I think he stole my helmet! Gemmie back my helmet! I was slipping and sliding on goo that would shame Texas-Roadkill (mammoths) in comparison.

With flashlight in hand, I shifted to Plan-B... Search and Helmet Rescue. *Impossible!* How could those little suckers hide a helmet inside an 8 foot square sandbagged bunker? No luck, I just couldn't find my helmet.

Then it happened! The rats' reinforcements arrived: The night commander was making his rounds, checking posts. Maybe, if I'm good and do my best job, he'll never even notice I'm not wearing my helmet!?!? So I gave a good loud post challenge: "*Hallll-tttt, who goes there?*" (as if the whole dang world didn't know) We exchanged passwords (I wondered if I still had my magic *Captain Zoom* decoder ring). Everything's working according to my plan--the dummy doesn't even notice my bare head--*heh-heh*. He asks, "How are you tonight?" I reply (lie), "Doing just fine, Sir," but think what I wished I had the wavos to say: *I love sitting in the middle of nothing but blackness for endless hours, without a helmet, surrounded by a mound of dead stinking rats and beans and wieners... yea, I'm doin' just fine*).

The Tech Sergeant with him is reading my mind and thought-projecting his opinion into my brain (*today I recognize him as a member of the Borg who was determined to assimilate me*).

Obviously, he *has* noticed I part my hair on both sides. After the L-T has finished his questions which I have sort of satisfactorily answered: *Air Force? Ahhh... I love the Air Force, Sir... Vietnam? ... I love Vietnam, Sir. Third Post Security Instruction is... aha... (is this a trick question?)* He nods, and started toward the next post, satisfied that he had stumped the dimwitted Airman. I relaxed a little. My thoughts began to drift toward Plan-C... where can I *find* another helmet? I *wondered* where I could steal a Plan-C sledgehammer? Oh well, at least I won't get my butt kicked by the L-T tonight. And then my heart jumps into my throat as I heard: "COOK, WHERE THE @!%\$&^! IS YOUR HELMET????!!!"

Now, *I was afraid*. There's two things you never leave home without, and one of them is your helmet. The grinning TSgt had obviously *ratted* on me. It was not a pretty sight as I tried to explain about the Godzilla rats and my valiant defense of government property (me), the C-rations, and the Dropper Effect (*whatever*) when a helmet is propelled at a certain trajectory and bounces when goeing a rat. *What do'ya mean YOU LOST A @(!\*\$% HELMET inside a bunker!?!?! L-T was not buying my creative (lie) unique (a bigger lie) story... so I puked up a new version of the approximate truth (a sort of lie containing the beginnings of truth and a full blown confession). Sarge was impressed that he had righted a great wrong (enlisted man once again conning a duffus butter-ball Lieutenant). I wonder what he wants to chat about in the morning?*

Okay. *So what...* I lost the battle to a bunch of rats (Dobermans in training for the film *Alien*)! So what if the bunker rats *won* this one---there'll be other battles ... I've just begun to fight... and--  
-I've got a *new* helmet!



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