

There was no music. Most of the hamlet had burned down, including her house, which was now smoke, and the girl danced with her eyes half closed, her feet bare. She was maybe fourteen. She had black hair and brown skin. "Why's she dancing?" Azar said. We searched through the wreckage but there wasn't much to find. Rat Kiley caught a chicken for dinner. Lieutenant Cross radioed up to the gunships and told them to go away. The girl danced mostly on her toes. She took tiny steps in the dirt in front of her house, sometimes making a slow twirl, sometimes smiling to herself. "Why's she dancing?" Azar said, and Henry Dobbins said it didn't matter why, she just was. Later we found her family in the house. They were dead and badly burned. It wasn't a big family: an infant and an old woman and a woman whose age was hard to tell. When we dragged them out, the girl kept dancing. She put the palms of her hands against her ears, which must've meant something, and she danced sideways for a short while, and then backwards.

She did a graceful movement with her hips. "Well, I don't get it," Azar said. The smoke from the hootches smelled like straw. It moved in patches across the village square, not thick anymore, sometimes just faint ripples like fog. There were dead pigs, too. The girl went up on her toes and made a slow turn and danced through the smoke. Her face had a dreamy look, quiet and composed. A while later, when we moved out of the hamlet, she was still dancing. "Probably some weird ritual," Azar said, but Henry Dobbins looked back and said no, the girl just liked to dance.

That night, after we'd marched away from the smoking village, Azar mocked the girl's dancing. He did funny jumps and spins. He put the palms of his hands against his ears and danced sideways for a while, and then backwards, and then did an erotic thing with his hips. But Henry Dobbins, who moved gracefully for such a big man, took Azar from behind and lifted him up high and carried him over to a deep well and asked if he wanted to be dumped in.

Azar said no.

"All right, then," Henry Dobbins said, "dance right."