Starship Troopers

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

Robert Heinlein was the third of seven children born to Rex and Bam Heinlein. Heinlein grew up in Kansas City, Missouri in a German-American family that had been in the U.S. for six generations. He attended the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, graduating in 1929 with an ensign's commission and the equivalent of an engineering degree. His Navy assignments included radio communications—still a relatively new technology in the early 1930s—and gunner. He took early retirement after five years, having suffered tuberculosis and chronic sea sickness during his term. When the U.S. entered World War II, he was prevented from reenlisting due to the tuberculosis, as there wasn't yet a cure available. Heinlein worked a series of odd jobs and dabbled in politics after leaving the Navy. His first short story, "Life Line," was published in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1939, launching his literary career. During his lifetime, Heinlein published 32 novels, 59 short stories, and 16 collections; more nonfiction, poetry, short stories, and collections were published after his death. In his later years, Heinlein suffered a series of health crises, including one which required multiple blood transfusions. Subsequently, in the 1970s, he and his wife became advocates for reorganizing and expanding the American blood donation system. In 1977, he was one of the first people to undergo a carotid bypass surgery. He died in his sleep of heart failure and emphysema—having been a lifelong smoker—in 1988.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Heinlein began publishing science fiction stories in 1939, during the height of World War II. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 inspired him to start including more overt political themes in his works. At the time, he was a "flaming liberal," but the conservative and libertarian shift in his thinking can be traced through his later works, including *Starship Troopers* and *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966). Heinlein took up *Starship Troopers* as a direct response to the suspension of missile tests being negotiated between President Dwight Eisenhower's administration and the USSR in 1958. Heinlein also expressed his opposition to nuclear test suspension by sending a 500-person petition to the White House. These tests happened in the broader context of the Cold War. The stamp of this conflict between American democracy and Soviet communism appears in *Starship Troopers*' overt arguments against communism and its presentation of a "communist" enemy in the Bugs. Finally, *Starship Troopers* was published at the height of the Golden Age of American capitalism. The wealth and prosperity that followed in the wake of World War II contributed to Heinlein's utopian vision of the future and the book's concern that excessive privilege, peace, and prosperity contribute to the moral decline of human society.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Starship Troopers repeatedly claims that violence is an inescapable part of human nature that may be directed but cannot—and should not—be excised, because only the strongest and most adaptable creatures will survive. William Golding presented similar views in his 1954 *Lord of the Flies*, where a group of young boys are stranded on a remote island. Golding depicts their descent into a primal state of violence that particularly targets the weakest members of the group, though Golding presents this aspect of human nature as a horrific tragedy. Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, published in 1974, shares setting and plot elements with *Starship Troopers*: both novels use an interplanetary war waged by futuristic humans to offer commentary on modern society. Haldeman has discussed the influence of Heinlein on his own work, and many readers see *The Forever War*—in which war is alienating and destructive—as a direct rebuttal of *Starship Troopers*. Haldeman denies such a direct correspondence between the two novels, and his repudiation of war is filtered in part through his horrific experiences after being drafted into the Vietnam War. Orson Scott Card's 1985 *Ender's Game* bears a marked resemblance to the premise of *Starship Troopers*: Card's novel also tells a militaristic coming-of-age story about a young man whose human society is menaced by a hive-minded alien species. However, *Ender's Game* focuses more on humans' interactions with technology than *Troopers*, and it presents a far less triumphant vision of war when Ender ultimately learns to empathize with the Buggers and repudiates the humans' violent conduct in the "Bugger War."

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Starship Troopers
- **When Written:** 1958–1959
- **Where Written:** California, United States
- **When Published:** 1959
- **Literary Period:** Postmodern
- **Genre:** Science Fiction
- **Setting:** 27th-century Earth and several other planets
- **Climax:** Johnnie completes an operation on Planet P as a probationary third lieutenant.

- **Antagonist:** The Bugs
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

A Tradition of Service. According to family tradition, Heinleins had served in every American war since the War of Independence.

Home Sweet Home. Heinlein and his third wife, Virginia, were both trained engineers. The house they designed for themselves at 1776 Mesa Avenue in Colorado Springs was designed with cutting-edge technologies built in and was featured in *Popular Mechanics* magazine.

PLOT SUMMARY

In the distant future, humanity is united under the **Terran Federation**. In this society, the only way to earn franchise and full citizenship is through volunteering for "Federal Service" in the military. Despite his Father's wish that he remain a civilian and become involved in the family business, Johnnie Rico volunteers shortly after his 18th birthday, inspired by his friends Carl and Carmen and by his desire to achieve citizenship. Based on a letter of recommendation from his **History and Moral Philosophy** teacher, Mr. Dubois, Johnnie is assigned to the Mobile Infantry. These foot soldiers wear special armored **suits** that enhance their strength, speed, and armament while protecting them from enemy fire.

Johnnie goes to Camp Arthur Currie on the northern prairies for his basic training, along with 2,009 other male recruits. They learn how to fight with everything from bare hands to simulated atomic bombs. The instructors intentionally make the training regimen as challenging as possible to weed out of the group those men who won't make capable soldiers because of their age or temperament. Johnnie himself nearly resigns during the "hump" of his training. Around this time, another recruit—Ted Hendrick—both disobeys Sergeant Zim's orders during a training drill and strikes him, giving him a black eye. Hendrick feels that the training and discipline are unfair and complains to the Battalion Commander, Captain Frankel. His admission of insubordination leads to a field court-martial, after which he is dishonorably discharged and publicly flogged.

Just as he is about to hand in his resignation, Johnnie receives a letter from Mr. Dubois, who expresses pride in Johnnie's character and choice to volunteer. Bolstered by this vote of confidence, Johnnie decides to complete his term. The remaining challenges of training can't break his resolve to finish, even when he himself is flogged for actions during a training drill that would have cost the life of a teammate in real life. Although Johnnie earns the maximum administrative punishment of five lashes, he gets off light compared to another recruit named Dillinger. Dillinger deserted Camp Currie two days into basic training; while he was gone, he kidnapped, tortured, and murdered a little girl. When he's returned to the M.I. for punishment, he's dishonorably discharged and publicly hanged until he's dead.

Once Johnnie and the recruits move from Camp Currie into the mountains for advanced training in the M.I.'s suits, they're given more freedom and can even travel to nearby cities on "liberty." Johnnie visits Vancouver and Seattle with two other recruits, Kitten Smith and Pat Leivy; in Seattle, the three are attacked by resentful civilians. Realizing how easily they defeat these men shows Johnnie how much he's already changed during his training.

By the time Johnnie graduates basic training and joins Willie's Wildcats as a private, the Terran Federation has moved from peace to a state of hostilities with two alien species called the "Skinnies" and the pseudo-arachnids or "**Bugs.**" The Bugs, a species connected by a hive mind, attacked Buenos Aires. Johnnie makes his first combat drop in "Operation Bughouse," a Federation attack on the Bugs' home world. "Brain" Bugs coordinate the attacks of their lethal warriors, catching the M.I. off guard. Johnnie barely makes it off the planet alive; so many of the Wildcats die on Klendathu that the "orphaned" survivors are reassigned. Johnnie finds himself in Rasczak's Roughnecks, where he quickly finds a family among the other men in the unit.

Johnnie is happy in the Roughnecks until he receives a letter from home telling him that his Mother had died in Buenos Aires. Assuming that his Father died there too, Johnnie finds himself orphaned. Shortly after this blow, Lieutenant Rasczak dies on a mission while rescuing a private. Military discipline and duty save the Roughnecks from their grief; despite their devastating personal losses, they must continue to behave like professional soldiers as the war continues. When the Roughnecks visit Sanctuary—a colony of the Terran Federation—for R&R, Johnnie's friend Ace talks him into making a career out of the army and taking the placement test for Officer Candidate School.

Just as Johnnie detaches from the Roughnecks for OCS, he is reunited with his Father; some last-minute business kept his Father home from Buenos Aires during the Bug attack. Following his wife's death, Johnnie's Father left his business in an associate's hands and volunteered for Federal Service, requesting an assignment to the M.I. His first unit, like Johnnie's, had been decimated in a combat drop, but when he was reassigned, his request to join the Roughnecks was honored. Johnnie remains on Sanctuary for OCS while his father boards the *Roger Young* to ship out with the Roughnecks.

At OCS, Johnnie receives a second training in History and Moral Philosophy under **Major Reid**. If high school H&MP teaches a teenager why a soldier should fight (to lay down his

life between his home and the enemy), the OCS version elaborates on the purpose of violence in human history as a tool of evolution and covers the history of the current political system (in which only veterans can earn the right to vote and control the government). The final assignment of OCS is an apprenticeship cruise where the temporarily commissioned officers are battle-tested in the field.

Johnnie's apprenticeship cruise is with Blackie's Blackguards. Because the lieutenant who should be mentoring Johnnie has fallen ill, Captain Blackstone himself takes Johnnie under his wing, helping him to develop a more mature approach to his soldiering. With the Blackstone's best Fleet Sergeant to assist him, Johnnie drops onto Planet P in command of a platoon for the first time. Their mission in "Operation Royalty" is to bleed the Bug forces dry enough that they can access the Bugs' tunnels and try to capture some of their brain caste or queens. When the Bugs overrun Johnnie's platoon, the Sergeant—who turns out to be Johnnie's old instructor, Sergeant Zim—sees an opportunity to go down into a hole and captures a brain Bug; Johnnie and the rest of the men follow after to rescue him.

Johnnie is wounded by falling debris in the tunnels and wakes up aboard a Federation ship on its way back to Sanctuary, where he finishes OCS, is commissioned a second lieutenant, and is reassigned to the Roughnecks to serve under Lieutenant Jelal.

Some years later, after Jelal has been wounded severely enough to retire from combat missions, Johnnie commands the Roughnecks—now "Rico's Roughnecks"—as they prepare to begin the Federation's final assault on Klendathu.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Johnnie Rico – Johnnie Rico was born into a wealthy Filipino family on Earth in the **Terran Federation** of the future. His upbringing is normal, if privileged: his family are law-abiding, upstanding legal residents of the Federation, but he doesn't come from a family with a history of military service. As he approaches high school graduation, his parents expect he'll attend elite universities to prepare for eventually taking over the family business. However, inspired overtly by his friends Carl and Carmen and more subtly by the subject matter Mr. Dubois teaches in **History and Moral Philosophy** class, Johnnie decides to volunteer for Federal Service shortly after his 18th birthday. His coming-of-age story, which plays out across his basic training, early military career, and stint at Officer Candidate School, showcases the development of a bright and promising child into a dutiful and virtuous future citizen of the Federation. Key to this story are his relationships with a series of father figures, whom he respects and emulates. He respects and eventually comes to admire Zim in basic training; he readily accepts guidance from Colonel Nielssen and Captain Blackstone while in OCS; and—once they're reunited and united by military service—he leans on his own Father for guidance and support. While Johnnie's initial motives for volunteering—a mix of wanting to impress his friends and an unfocused desire for franchise and the pride of citizenship—aren't very sophisticated, he readily absorbs the lessons that his military training and career offer. He attends to formal lessons, like combat drills and H&MP lectures, but he also learns by his own experience and the lessons of others: witnessing Hendrick's defensiveness about his treatment in basic training teaches Johnnie to quietly accept his own punishment when he later messes up. Johnnie represents the ideal soldier and provides a clear demonstration of how military service teaches and develops the civic duty required of Federation citizens.

Sergeant Zim (The Sergeant) – Sergeant Zim instructs recruits as a company commander at Camp Arthur Currie. He's been there for long enough to have trained Captain Frankel when he was a recruit. Zim carries himself with dignity and style; Johnnie's initial impression of him is that he doesn't need sleep—just maintenance every several thousand miles, like a well-oiled machine. And Zim is, in many ways, a well-oiled military machine, an embodiment of the "one-man catastrophe" he's training his recruits to be. He's a competent fighter who easily bests four recruits in hand-to-hand combat on the first morning—despite being much older than them—and then leads morning calisthenics without breaking a sweat. He honors military doctrine and believes in civic virtue and duty, which he tries to cultivate among his recruits. When he fails to do so and Hendricks earns himself a dishonorable discharge, Zim feels personally responsible for his student's failure. He is an important father figure to Johnnie. When the **Bug** war breaks out, he returns to active duty and is assigned Fleet Sergeant under Captain Blackstone. He serves as the first platoon's sergeant under Johnnie on his apprenticeship mission. On Planet P, Zim demonstrates his sense of duty, his willingness to put his life on the line for a mission, and his considerable experience by recognizing the Bug attack as a desperate feint and taking the opportunity to drop into the tunnels and capture a Bug brain. For his role in accomplishing that critical mission, he receives a field commission.

Johnnie's Father (Mr. Rico) – Johnnie's Father runs a successful family business that's been passed down for generations because the family hasn't bothered with Federal Service. He dotes on his son and gives Johnnie expensive presents, like a helicopter for his birthday or a vacation on Mars for his graduation. But he is also somewhat domineering and believes that his plans for his son are best, so he refuses to speak to Johnnie after he volunteers. Later, he reveals that his silence was also motivated by his own sense of internal dissatisfaction that he himself had not volunteered despite his

strong conviction that it was the right thing to do. After the **Bugs** attack Buenos Aires, he can no longer justify his continued inaction; in part to avenge the death of Johnnie's Mother, but mostly to fulfil his sense of civic duty and to prove that he's a man, not just a piece of the economic machine, he enlists in Federal Service and joins the M.I. After the attack on Sheol decimates his first platoon, he's reassigned to Rasczak's Roughnecks just as Johnnie detaches for Officer Training School. When Johnnie, now an officer, inherits the command of his old unit from Jelly, Mr. Rico has become the Roughnecks' platoon sergeant.

Mr. Dubois – Mr. Dubois served in the M.I. and achieved the rank of lieutenant-colonel before retiring and becoming an instructor of History and Moral Philosophy. He served with Mr. Weiss and Sergeant Zim; both still hold him in high regard and value his opinion of Johnnie. He's disabled, having lost his left arm in combat. Although he loudly bemoans the total lack of civic virtue among his students in class, he can sense Johnnie's potential and isn't surprised to learn that he's volunteered. It's for this reason that he's one of Johnnie's father figures. Mr. Dubois uses his connections to keep an eye on Johnnie as he trains and serves. His letter to Johnnie at Camp Currie inspires Johnnie to stick through his "hump" rather than resigning. His admiration for his former student is so strong that he writes to Colonel Nielssen to ask that Johnnie be given the same set of probationary pips that he himself wore when he was an officer in training. Because he teaches History and Moral Philosophy class, and flashbacks to these lessons are often positioned as commentary or explanation for various episodes in the book, Mr. Dubois' voice seems to most closely approximate the book's beliefs about the themes it explores, especially citizenship, moral decline and discipline, and communism and moral individualism.

Colonel Nielssen – Fleet General Nielssen serves as the Commandant of the Officer Candidate School on Sanctuary, having taken a temporary pay cut and rank assignment of colonel to qualify. Because of this he exemplifies the ideal soldier—one who's so dedicated to military service that he skips a comfortable and honorable retirement to continue to play an active role in the military long after he's disqualified for combat roles. A disabled combat veteran, he spends most of his time in a wheelchair, although he's able to stand and walk for brief periods like parade and inspection. He worries about the safety and success of his cadets, and he dispenses a great deal of advice when giving them their temporary commissions and sending them on their training missions. He respects Johnnie enough to trust that he'll be able to break the string of bad luck that's plagued the temporary commission pips that he himself broke in on his apprenticeship cruise many years prior.

Captain Blackstone – On the *Tours*, Johnnie serves under Captain Blackstone of Blackie's Blackguards during his apprenticeship cruise. Blackstone serves as an important father figure to Johnnie, lavishing attention and advice on him to help shape him into an outstanding officer. Blackstone himself wears many hats and gracefully balances obedience to doctrine and the chain of command with clear, independent thinking; Sergeant Zim respects his "hunches" because they often keep his men out of trouble. While he does overrule Johnnie several times during the mission, for the most part he's willing to step back and let him call the shots during "Operation Royalty," and he's impressed enough by Johnnie's performance to recommend him for officer.

Sergeant Jelal (Jelly) – Sergeant Jelal is Lieutenant Rasczak's platoon sergeant and right-hand man until the Lieutenant's death, when he is promoted to platoon commander. Jelly is of Finnish and Turkish descent, and he was born on one of the **Terran Federation** colonies. His elevated position in the platoon's hierarchy thus demonstrates the meritocratic impulse of the Federal Service, in which personal character is far more important than race or birthright. Jelly is demanding on duty but friendly off duty, a sort of "mother" to his men. And he ignores doctrine to allow Ace and Johnnie to make it back to the retrieval boat when they must retrieve a wounded soldier, Dizzy Flores. This shows his devotion to the cohesion and safety of the group, as he also risks his own life to complete the pickup.

Ace – Ace serves in Rasczak's Roughnecks. He's a career infantryman with the rank of corporal and he cares fiercely about his men, risking his life to pick up Dizzy Flores when he's wounded on a mission. When the assistant first section leader dies, Ace prefers to stay with his squad rather than be promoted, which places Johnnie above him in the platoon's chain of command. Johnnie feels he must assert his right to give Ace orders by challenging him to a fistfight, and although Ace wins, he demonstrates his willingness to follow Johnnie's orders by letting him land the final blow. Ultimately the two men become close, with Ace using his father figure position to encourage Johnnie to go career and try for Officer Candidate School.

Ted Hendrick – Ted Hendrick volunteered for Federal Service because he wanted to earn his franchise and go into politics so he could make some changes to the way the military and government run things. In basic training at Camp Currie, however, he demonstrates an insufficient sense of duty and a general lack of discipline when he breaks a "freeze" order because of his personal discomfort. He compounds his error by striking back at Sergeant Zim and demanding a hearing with Captain Frankel, where he proceeds to earn a court-martial with his insistence that it's unfair for the instructors to guide the recruits with corporal punishment. After a field court-martial presided over by Lieutenant Spieksma, Hendrick is sentenced to five lashes as administrative punishment, followed by a discharge from the Army that will prevent him from ever becoming a citizen or serving in politics. He thus

serves as a warning to those who volunteer for the wrong reasons and as the proof that people who aren't capable of military service won't make suitable citizens.

Major Reid – Major Reid, a disabled combat veteran, teaches History and Moral Philosophy class at Officer Candidate School on Sanctuary. Although he's blind, he can point his face toward and call on cadets by name as if he *could* see them. He demands precision and historical accuracy in their understanding of the course material, and in this way he helps to clarify the relationship between the military and civilians in the **Terran Federation.**

Captain Frankel – Captain Frankel commands the battalion at Camp Currie, where he once did his own basic training under instructor Sergeant Zim. He's good at hand-to-hand combat and performs his actions with style. Yet he's overworked with administrative tasks, and he feels a deep sense of personal responsibility for the recruits. He goes out of his way to avoid having to hold a court-martial for Ted Hendrick, and when Hendrick forces his hand, he still works to keep the punishment to a minimum. Later, he expresses relief when Johnnie earns administrative punishment but accepts it without complaint.

Carl – Carl and Johnnie are childhood best friends who share "everything" from Carl's engineering lab to Johnnie's helicopter. Carl is a science whiz, and Johnnie enjoys taking his direction on engineering projects. His decision to serve a term in the Federal Service's research and development arm before going to college inspires Johnnie to consider volunteering, too. It also demonstrates his independence and sense of duty; unlike Johnnie, he doesn't allow his parents' concerns about his choice to dissuade him, even temporarily. During the **Bug** War, Carl dies in an attack on the research station on Pluto.

Al Jenkins – Al Jenkins is a recruit at Camp Currie with Johnnie; on the first day, he sneezes during morning exercises and Sergeant Zim sends him to run around a distant building to "warm up." Although he's frustrated by this experience, basic training helps him develop the necessary discipline to make a good soldier. After basic, he's assigned to Willie's Wildcats with Johnnie and Kitten Smith. He survives "Operation Bughouse" and is reassigned with Johnnie to Rasczak's Roughnecks, where he dies covering a pickup shortly before Johnnie goes to Officer Candidate School.

Carmen Ibañez – Carmen is a classmate and friend of Johnnie's who volunteers for service on her 18th birthday, along with Carl. Johnnie's decision to enlist is partially inspired by Carmen, whom he wants to impress. She's as intelligent as she is beautiful, and she's readily accepted into Federal Service for pilot training. She and Johnnie stay in touch throughout their training, and Johnnie continues to find her beauty and her example inspiring.

Fleet Sergeant Ho – Fleet Sergeant Ho is the face of Federal Service at the recruiting office where Johnnie, Carl, and Carmen volunteer. He's a proud combat veteran of the M.I., where he lost both his legs and most of his right arm. It's his job to scare away as many people as he can who volunteer without fully understanding the weight of that decision.

Breckenridge – Private Recruit Breckenridge steps forward first to answer Sergeant Zim's challenge of hand-to-hand combat on the first day of basic training. He's large, tall, broad, and a former football player; he has a thick southern accent and a beautiful singing voice. Zim quickly defeats him, breaking his arm in the process, but Breckenridge doesn't harbor ill-will towards the Sergeant, instead boasting that he'll eventually beat the instructor. He dies in the Canadian Rockies while on a wilderness survival drill; after the other recruits find his body, he's posthumously awarded the rank of Private First Class—the first in the class to be given rank—and buried with full honors.

Carruthers – Carruthers is a 35-year-old "geezer" who attends Camp Currie. Despite his Harvard education, he's fully committed to his Federal Service, refusing a medical discharge even after being so badly injured he can't finish basic training. Following a reassignment, he ends up as third cook on a navy ship, where Johnnie later runs into him and discovers that he's still as proud to be an alum of Camp Currie as of Harvard.

Supply Sergeant – One of the instructors at Camp Currie, the Supply Sergeant's fatherly manner belies the extensive military experience that the ribbons on his uniform spell out for those who can read their code. When he advises Johnnie to tailor his own uniform and provides him the materials for this work, he teaches an important lesson about discipline and responsibility.

N. L. Dillinger – N. L. Dillinger volunteered for Federal Service but deserts after just two days of basic training. He then kidnaps a young girl, Barbara Anne Enthwaite, demanding a ransom and mistreating her until he finally murders her. When he's caught by a local tribunal, they discover he's a deserter and return him to Camp Currie. Regimental Command gives Dillinger a bad conduct discharge and carries out the punishment for his crimes—hanging. He serves as an extreme example of moral decay; in punishing him, the military both asserts its ability and right to enforce law and order and demonstrates its moral imperative to "take care of its own," even when they don't deserve it.

Lieutenant Rasczak – Lieutenant Rasczak embodies the ideal qualities of an officer in the M.I., and his men—including Johnnie—look up to him adoringly. To his soldiers, he's like a distant father or demigod, somewhat aloof in formal situations, but always aware of each and every man on the battlefield. He won't leave a soldier behind and in fact dies while rescuing an injured private. His example—his willingness to put his body on the line for the good of his men and of the **Terran Federation** generally—shines out in Johnnie's mind as the perfect example of what it is to be a citizen

Cadet Hassan ("the Assassin") – Cadet Hassan, "the Assassin,"

was field commissioned as a first lieutenant, but he still attends Officer Candidate School with Johnnie, because his lack of formal education would otherwise impede his further promotion. Colonel Nielssen gives him his apprenticeship assignment—and a great deal of advice—at the same time as Johnnie and Byrd.

Cadet Byrd ("Birdie") – Cadet Byrd is one of Johnnie's classmates at Officer Candidate School; he, Johnnie, and Hassan are all given their temporary assignments together. He's very small and quite young; Johnnie estimates he could be as young as 18 or 19 years old. He's also brilliant and well-educated, and the cadets all think he's got what it takes to be a General. He dies on his training mission but does so in a way that earns him a commendation for his actions.

Lieutenant Spieksma – Lieutenant Spieksma works at Regimental Headquarters when Johnnie is at Camp Currie; he presides over Hendrick's field court-martial. Like Captain Frankel and Sergeant Zim, he understands the seriousness of Hendrick's crime, but wants to avoid the death penalty. After declaring Hendrick's punishment, however, he indicates the seriousness of the crime by spelling out the actions that Frankel could have taken that would have led to capital punishment.

Kitten Smith – "Kitten" Smith earned his name at Camp Currie when Corporal Jones criticized his hand-to-hand combat skills, claiming a kitten would punch harder. He goes to Seattle with Johnnie and Pat Leivy, where they end up in a fistfight with some angry merchant marines. Smith is sent with Johnnie and Al Jenkins to Willie's Wildcats after graduation, but he dies in the launch tube waiting for his first official drop when the *Valley Forge* and the *Ypres* collide.

Johnnie's Mother – Johnnie's Mother is a doting woman who is upset when Johnnie volunteers and worries about him when he's at Camp Currie. She writes him a letter reminding him of her maternal love and letting him know that he has a place to return to if he'd like to leave Federal Service; she thus represents the pull of "soft" civilian life against the harsh realities of military service. But she also symbolizes the importance of civic duty: she's on vacation in Buenos Aires when the **Bugs** attack, and although Johnnie doesn't learn about his loss for some time, when he does, his Mother's death becomes yet another facet of why he—and his Father—serve.

Mr. Weiss – Mr. Weiss once served in the K-9 corps. As the placement officer at Johnnie's local Federal Service recruiting office, he gives Johnnie placement and aptitude tests that reveal little aptitude or skill. But he's swayed by a recommendation from Mr. Dubois, whom he remembers from his time in the Army, and ultimately places Johnnie in the M.I.

Pat Leivy – Pat Leivy grew up in Seattle. He and Johnnie are recruits together at Camp Currie—where he was one of the witnesses to Hendrick's insubordination—and Camp Spooky Smith. It's his idea to go revisit Seattle on a day pass, where he, Kitten Smith, and Johnnie get into a fistfight with some belligerent merchant marines.

Brumby – Brumby has been leading one of the 1st platoon sections for a few weeks when Johnnie joins the Blackguards. Bolstered by the recommendations of Lieutenant Silva and Captain Blackstone, Johnnie promotes him to full sergeant. He and his section follow Sergeant Zim down into the **Bugs**' tunnels on Planet P.

Shujumi – Shujumi is one of Johnnie's fellow recruits at Camp Currie. His name and use of Japanese words indicate his heritage. His extensive martial arts training allows him to nearly best Sergeant Zim in hand-to-hand combat on the first day of camp, and he's later put in charge of teaching the other recruits.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Migliaccio – Migliaccio wears several hats in Rasczak's Roughnecks, embodying the M.I.'s "everyone works, everyone drops" ethos. He is first section leader, the platoon's chaplain, and he's responsible for suit maintenance. He dies covering a pickup shortly before Johnnie goes to Office Candidate School.

Dizzy Flores – Dizzy Flores serves in Rasczak's Roughnecks as a cap trooper. He's in Ace's squad, and when he's wounded in an action against the Skinnies, Ace, Johnnie, and Jelly risk their own lives retrieving him, even though he dies on the way back to the Roger Young.

Captain Deladrier – Captain Deladrier is the talented, respected, and beloved skipper of the *Roger Young*. She's an able pilot, and she demonstrates her skill when she recalibrates her orbit on the fly to pick up the boat on a botched retrieval.

Major Malloy – Major Malloy is the Regimental Commander when Johnnie is in basic training, and he presides over the administrative punishment for actions Johnnie took contrary to doctrine while on a drill at Camp Currie.

PFC Dutch Bamburger – When Johnnie is assigned to Willie's Wildcats, Dutch Bamburger is his section leader. Bamburger dies on Klendathu in "Operation Bughouse" when he and Johnnie are caught unawares by a **Bug**.

General Diennes – General Diennes leads the first assault on the **Bugs**' home world, Klendathu, where he dies leading the diversion that covers the rescue of those infantrymen who were able to escape from the failed operation.

"Red" Greene – "Red" Greene is the leader of Johnnie's squad when he joins the Roughnecks. He beats Johnnie in a boxing match to reinforce Roughneck discipline after Johnnie talks back to him.

Lieutenant Silva – Lieutenant Silva led the 1st platoon of Blackie's Blackguards under Captain Blackstone. Because he came down with "twitching awfuls," he's in the hospital and unable to mentor Johnnie on his apprenticeship cruise, allowing Blackstone to take over that job.

Jimmie Bearpaw – Jimmie Bearpaw travels with Rico's Roughnecks under Johnnie's command as a temporarily commissioned officer-in-training.

Heinreich – Heinreich is a German recruit with Johnnie at Camp Currie who fights with Meyer and still loses hand-to-hand combat with Sergeant Zim on the first day.

Meyer – Meyer is a German recruit with Johnnie at Camp Currie who fights with Heinreich and still loses hand-to-hand combat with Sergeant Zim on the first day.

Barbara Anne Enthwaite – Barbara Anne Enthwaite is the "baby girl" whom Dillinger kidnaps and eventually kills. She symbolizes what the M.I. recruits are preparing to protect, not to ruin.

Johnson – Johnson is the first cook and second section leader of Rasczak's Roughnecks.

Madame Ruitman – Madame Ruitman is a friend of the Ricos' who doesn't understand that civilians aren't exempt from wartime violence.

Miss Kendrick – Miss Kendrick is Colonel Nielssen's civilian personal assistant at Officer Candidate School. She's extremely knowledgeable and efficient and understands that her place is outside of the military hierarchy.

Captain Jorgenson – Captain Jorgenson is the skipper of the *Tours*. She's formal and aloof but isn't too strict a disciplinarian. She takes over tutoring Johnnie in math and wants his homework to be perfect every time.

Second Lieutenant "Rusty" Graham – Lieutenant Graham commands the 3rd platoon in Blackie's Blackguards and serves as Johnnie's first math tutor aboard the *Tours*.

Corporal Bronski – Corporal Bronski is one of the instructors at Camp Currie.

Corporal Jones – Corporal Jones is one of the instructors at Camp Currie.

Corporal Mahmud – Corporal Mahmud is one of the instructors at Camp Currie and one of the witnesses to Ted Hendricks's insubordination.

Aunt Eleanora – Aunt Eleanora is Johnnie's Mother's sister, and she's the one who ultimately informs Johnnie of his Mother's death.

Second Lieutenant Khoroshen – Lieutenant Khoroshen is commander of the 2nd platoon in Blackie's Blackguards

Major Xera – Major Xera is the battalion commander of the battalion that includes Blackie's Blackguards.

Cunha – Cunha is a section leader serving under Johnnie in Blackie's Blackguards.

Navarre – Navarre is a cap trooper serving under Johnnie in Blackie's Blackguards.

Naidi – Naidi is a section leader serving under Johnnie in Blackie's Blackguards.

Bjork – Bjork is a cap trooper serving under Johnnie in Blackie's Blackguards.

Malan – Malan is a cap trooper serving under Johnnie in Blackie's Blackguards.

Hughes – Hughes is a cap trooper serving under Johnnie in Blackie's Blackguards.

Angel – Angel is one of Johnnie's roommates in Officer Training School, and the only one to greet him on his return from his apprenticeship cruise.

Mr. Salomon ("Sally") – Sally is one of Johnnie's classmates at Officer Training School.

Clyde Tammany – Clyde Tammany is one of Johnnie's classmates in Officer Training School.

TERMS

Franchise – The franchise refers to the right to vote. Although democracies are ruled "by the people," in practice, every democratic system has barred some people from casting their votes for the direction of the government. In political terms, a "franchise" is a right that's upheld by the law, and it's often the word used to indicate the right to cast a vote in a democratic system. This is how it's used in *Starship Troopers*, where "sovereign franchise" stands for the "duty, obligation, and privilege" of voting. More generally, the idea of "franchise" points at participation in government. *Starship Troopers* imagines its limitation of voting rights to military veterans in the context of American democracy, which has experimented with many different limitations on the franchise throughout its history.

Communism – Communism is a philosophical, social, and political ideology strongly associated with the work of 19th century German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and Russian politician and revolutionary Vladimir Lenin. In broad strokes, communism seeks the creation of a socioeconomic system based on common ownership of property instead of social hierarchies, symbolic money, and rule by a centralized political class. In *Starship Troopers*, the Bugs' society caricatures communism.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

MILITARISM

The world in which Johnnie Rico, a "cap trooper" of the **Terran Federation**, comes of age is ruled by the military. *Starship Troopers* sees evolutionary pressures—especially survival of the fittest and self-preservation—as the primary drivers of humanity's destiny. Although a few civilians try to claim that violence isn't necessary, the **Bugs**' attack on Buenos Aires shatters this illusion, proving yet again that those who forget the power of violence to shape history pay a high price with their lives or freedoms. Later, Johnnie's research in Major Reid's **History and Moral Philosophy Class** is used to demonstrate the "moral perfection" of war. From Mr. Dubois, Johnnie already knew that morals arise from the survival instinct. So does population pressure—if more people survive, there are more people around—which is the root of all wars. Since war is necessary and good, the men and women who volunteer for military service—at least those who don't resign or find themselves kicked out for bad conduct, like Hendrick and Dillinger—are presumed to have fully developed morals. Johnnie, the model soldier, serves because he wants to. By the time he gets into Officer Candidate School, being a soldier has become its own reward, and he's forgotten that the right to vote and the pride of full citizenship were his initial reasons for volunteering. The number of disabled cap troopers who occupy desk jobs—from amputee Sergeant Ho at the recruitment office to wheelchair-bound Colonel Nielssen and blind Major Reid at Officer Candidate School—offer further proof of the pride soldiers take in their Mobile Infantry (M.I.) membership.

The Terran Federation defends its limited, militarized system government with the arguments that violence is inherent in the human survival instinct and that only harsh military service can prove that a person is capable of feeling civic virtue for people at a "scale" greater than their immediate family or "gang." But, by excluding civilian voices and leaning on scientific verifications or mathematical proofs that exist only in its futuristic world, *Starship Troopers*' ability to examine—or truly prove—these premises is limited. Civilian voices are infrequent and underdeveloped: the complaints of the merchant marines in Seattle aren't repeated in a way that readers could judge their accuracy, and the civilian doctor at the recruiting station doesn't offer much proof of his assertion that soldiers are merely "ants." Johnnie's Father offers the most fully developed civilian viewpoint at first. But he joins the M.I. partway through the war because he's got the character and civic virtue of a soldier, and so civilian life has left him feeling dissatisfied and frustrated. Moreover, it quickly punishes and discharges those who volunteer for ulterior motives as "bad," undisciplined soldiers like Hendrick. Hendrick's insubordination contrasts with counter-examples of civic virtue like Carruthers, an older recruit who can't cut it in the M.I. but prefers the very lowly job of third cook in the Navy to a medical discharge and civilian life. By focusing on the noble motives of Johnnie (service and brotherhood) and his father (civic virtue and proving that he's a man) while glossing over less pure reasons for service (revenge for loved ones' deaths, the respect offered to soldiers and veterans), the novel upholds military glorification and avoids offering an alternative to militarism.

CITIZENSHIP

In the futuristic society of *Starship Troopers*, only people who have served in the military become full citizens. Civilians are merely "legal residents," barred from voting or working in the government. The novel thus presents a strong argument that the most successful form of government is a limited democracy in which only those with moral virtue hold power. In **History and Moral Philosophy Class**, Major Reid demonstrates that all forms of government have been limited by arbitrary distinctions like gender, age, or class. While citizenship in the **Terran Federation** is limited, it's designed to select citizens that fulfill two very specific criteria: they value their franchise, and they have sufficient responsibility to balance out their power. Citizenship is limited because things are only valued if they come at a price; without truly winning, being awarded the prize for a competition is worthless. According to Mr. Dubois, the "decadent" democracies of the 20th century collapsed because their citizens thought they could vote for—and get—whatever they wanted without having to work for it. In contrast, soldiers prove that they're willing to risk even their lives for the good of the state. Moreover, soldiers prove their ability to put the welfare of the group above their own needs by protecting their mates in battle, leaving no one behind who's still alive, and even ensuring that criminals in their midst are properly punished. Merely wanting the franchise isn't enough to guarantee that one will use it responsibly, and so people who view Federal Service as a gateway to citizenship are usually weeded out. During basic training, for example, recruit Hendrick's unwillingness to tolerate personal discomfort for the good of his team means he fails on the second charge of citizenship—putting the good of the group above oneself—and so he's dishonorably discharged and barred from ever earning his franchise.

This system appears to benefit both civilians and citizens: civilians live in a safe and prosperous society, and they don't have to believe or express civic virtue—a valuation of something greater than oneself—if they don't really feel it. Johnnie's Father initially devalues service and the franchise as unimportant; he's more concerned with his own business holdings than the good of the whole Federation. However, at the time that Johnnie volunteered, he was feeling deep dissatisfaction that he eventually realized came from frustrated civic virtue and a feeling that he should participate in the protection of his society. However, the novel's view rests on the

idea that everyone without enough civic virtue—for example, the selfish and immature Hendrick or the fully criminal Dillinger—will eventually fail or leave. It also leaves unanswered the question of how service can be totally voluntary when it is the only path to citizenship—something that would-be politicians and powerholders might value in its own right.

MORAL DECLINE AND DISCIPLINE

Starship Troopers presents a vision of the future where humanity thrives in a stable, prosperous society organized by reason. By contrasting this futuristic society with the "history" of the late 20th century, taught by Mr. Dubois and Major Reid in their **History and Moral Philosophy Classes**, the novel suggests that the way to prevent moral decay is to instill moral sense by appealing to a person's survival instinct though the threat of public, physical punishment. The novel critiques the moral decline of mid-20th century culture, which it sees as taking a soft-on-crime approach and emphasizing individual rights instead of personal responsibility. According to this perspective, the "softness" of people in the 20th century took many forms: a belief that physical punishment of children—spanking, essentially—caused permanent psychic damage; an excess of non-combatant officers in the military; commissioning officers who had never been in battle to lead the military; and an assurance that they had an inalienable right to vote, even if they didn't have the wisdom to use that power properly. These were symptoms of a social failure to accept responsibility for one's actions.

The **Terran Federation** is guided by a belief that moral sense is an extension of the survival instinct. While all humans have a survival instinct, it is only through education and discipline that a person can gain moral sense. This discipline is public corporal punishment. Parents "paddle" their children to teach them what to do and not to do, and likewise the instructors at basic training apply their canes to unruly recruits. Hendrick's inability to follow orders earns him ten lashes with a whip in the sight of all of the recruits, while Johnnie Rico earns five for endangering his teammates; in the civilian world, lashes are also mandated for crimes like drunk driving. The novel follows Johnnie as his military training and career help him grow from self-interest and allegiance to a very small circle of others (his Father and Mother, his best friend Carl, and his crush, Carmen) to higher ideals and to a valuation of society as a whole. He matures from a recruit who doesn't know how to take care of his own uniform to an officer candidate who is willing to get his hands dirty in the work of his platoon. Ultimately, he demonstrates his willingness to risk his life both for his platoon and for the mission of "Operation Royalty" on Planet P; in doing so, he demonstrates the internalized self-discipline that the novel holds up as an ideal.

COMMUNISM VS. MORAL INDIVIDUALISM

In *Starship Troopers*, the **Terran Federation** wages war with an alien species called the Pseudo-Arachnids, or **Bugs**, a battle that is symbolic of the strife between democracy and communism in the 20th century. The Bugs—which represent how effective communism would be in a species evolutionarily adapted to it—share a hive mind. While this centralized control by "brains" and "queens" allows workers or warriors to work together in perfect coordination, it also has disadvantages. The Bugs are absolutely dependent on their brain caste; when the brains are stunned by nerve agents or acoustic shock waves, the warriors become helpless, twitching automatons. When Sergeant Zim kidnaps a brain Bug, the warriors can't attack him because wounding or killing the brain would be like committing suicide. Moreover, the Bug brains apparently sacrifice more than 70% of their workers and warriors on Planet P without guilt or concern, and they abandon their wounded during battles.

Conversely, although some civilians compare the troops to mere "ants," suggesting that they lack their own free will, human soldiers can only achieve coordination through intense and incessant training and practice that brings them into sync with each other. Additionally, they have a moral imperative to never abandon their wounded: Ace and Johnnie risk their lives to rescue Dizzy Flores; Lieutenant Rasczak dies rescuing one of his privates; and even the disgraced Dillinger is dealt with by his own regiment. According to the novel, communism, among a species of individuals guided by their survival instincts, is a sham. By contrast, the highest expression of humanity is the moral individualism demonstrated by the cap troopers, who willingly risk their lives for the good of the group, but maintain their ability to think and act independently. It is this independence that allows Johnnie to identify the Bugs' feint on Planet P, and which prods Zim to drop down into the Bugs' tunnel and complete the operation's mission.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

TERRAN FEDERATION

The Terran Federation demonstrates the achievements available to humanity if it follows the evolutionary impulses of the survival instinct and outcompeting other species for dominance. *Starship Troopers* presents the Federation as a kind of utopia: the people living within the Federation seem to have moved beyond internal divisions such as religion, nationality, and race, although local traditions and languages persist; Johnnie frequently notes the language or

ancestry of other soldiers, and he himself speaks both Tagalog and English. The division and chaos that characterized the twentieth-century "history" represented in the book are all gone: humanity on earth and spread among the stars shares one government, culture, and education system. A benevolent but limited government controlled solely by military veterans—the only group of people who can vote or run for office—makes this peaceful and safe society possible.

The Federation shows what humanity could accomplish when united by military leadership and guided by the evolutionary forces that *Starship Troopers* claims as the basis of a "scientific" theory of morality. And these accomplishments are marvelous: faster-than-light technology, the exploration of space, and the colonization of new worlds. But despite the prosperity and safety of this era, the Federation ultimately can't meet its utopian vision: the **Bug** War demonstrates that even a strongly united humanity is not immune to harm. And there are tensions between civilians and soldiers. Johnnie and his Father characterize civilians as "groundhogs," profiteers, and clueless bumpkins; Johnnie's fight with a group of merchant marine civilians in Seattle demonstrates that the enmity goes both ways. Mr. Dubois and Major Reid teach that the Federation represents the best system of government yet discovered by humans because it is the most stable. Yet, dissent is virtually impossible in a society where aggressive tendencies are channeled into military service, franchise and political office are only available to the subset of people who join the Federal Service, and all children are indoctrinated in **History and Moral Philosophy Class**.

SUITS

Because of the way they protect and enhance the soldiers who wear them, the Mobile Infantry's armored suits serve as a metaphor for the M.I. infantry itself. Soldiers make up a small part of the human population, but they serve to magnify and enact the decisions of the **Terran Federation** as they protect its citizens and legal residents and fight on their behalf. Likewise, the suits are only one part of what makes a cap trooper into a "one-man catastrophe"—their skills are developed by endless drills and exercises in everything from freezing still on command to hand-to-hand combat to simulated nuclear war. By utilizing "negative feedback and amplification," the suits' "pseudomusculature" responds exactly and immediately to the movements of the man wearing it, just as the M.I. soldier is trained to obey orders. Moreover, like nearly every soldier and officer in the M.I.'s lean hierarchy, the suits wear many hats: they're armor, spacesuit, tank, and weapons cart. And even though the suits aren't foolproof—many men still die wearing them—they keep enough soldiers alive in the Bug War for humanity to continue fighting for survival and dominance. In this way, the suits extend the soldiers' efforts, just as the soldiers provide the "punch on the nose" that backs up the Federation's decisions.

BUGS

The Bugs' society and government stands in opposition to the Terran Federation, representing the threat communism poses to democratic and individualistic societies. *Starship Troopers* was written during the Cold War, and its depiction of the conflict between the Pseudo-Arachnids (with their communal social organization and hive mind consciousness) and the **Terran Federation** (with its limited democracy and well-trained but still individual soldiers) parallels the contest between American democracy and Soviet Communism that played out in political, military, and cultural realms from the late 1940s through the early 1990s. As a philosophical and political system, communism seeks to share resources and work among the entire group of people equally; the Pseudo-Arachnids are a caricature of communism because individual Bugs are completely equivalent, indistinguishable, and replaceable. A brain Bug controls the warriors by a hive mind, so they can fight with ruthless efficiency and coordination as soon as they're hatched, unlike human soldiers, who must first grow into adults and then undergo rigorous training. The Bugs don't value their individuals either; while humans would start or resume a war to save just one individual, the Bugs will readily sacrifice their workers and warriors in battle and will even kill their "brains" and queens rather than allowing them to be captured. While *Starship Troopers* offers grudging appreciation for what total social coordination could accomplish, it maintains that it's a totally unfit system for humans. The Bugs succeed because they're evolutionarily adapted to "total communism." The Bugs threaten to outcompete the Federation by sheer numbers, but the humans' capacity for individualistic thought and action—even when working in coordinated groups—wins the day because it is what allows Zim to capture a brain bug on Planet P.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Ace Books edition of *Starship Troopers* published in 1987.

Chapter 1 Quotes

It's better after you unload. Until you do, you sit there in total darkness, wrapped like a mummy against the acceleration, barely able to breathe—and knowing that there is just nitrogen around you in the capsule even if you could get your helmet open, which you can't—and knowing that the capsule is surrounded by the firing tube anyhow and if the ship gets hit before they fire you, you haven't got a prayer, you'll just die there, unable to move, helpless. It's that endless wait in the dark that causes the shakes—thinking that they've forgotten you…the ship has been hulled and stayed in orbit, dead, and soon you'll buy it, too, unable to move, choking. Or it's a crash orbit and you'll buy it that way, if you don't roast on the way down.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 6-7

Explanation and Analysis

Johnnie Rico, a cap trooper in the Terran Federation's Mobile Infantry, waits to drop onto an unnamed planet on a raid. He's made dozens of drops in training and on active duty, but every time, he experiences fear and "the shakes." Once his capsule has been sealed into the launch tube, he's totally at the mercy of fate, and while he waits to drop, he considers why the wait is so unsettling. The quote is one long sentence broken by occasional commas, and the tumbling clauses capture Johnnie's sense of claustrophobia; readers can't get out of the sentence any easier than Johnnie can get out of the tube.

Johnnie's ruminations also emphasize the trooper's reliance on his equipment—the suit and the capsule—to protect him from the vacuum of space, the violence of an atmospheric entry, and the hostile enemies on the ground. Given the threats to his life and safety, it's reasonable for him to be afraid, and it's more impressive that he overcomes his fear each time he's assigned to a new mission. Moreover, his admission of fear humanizes him and makes him both a reliable and likeable narrator: he demonstrates admirable humanity and honesty instead of military machismo or bragging.

Chapter 2 Quotes

"Son, don't think I don't sympathize with you; I do. But look at the real facts. If there were a war, I'd be the first to cheer you on—and to put the business on a war footing. But there isn't, and praise God there never will be again. We've outgrown wars. This planet is now peaceful and happy and we enjoy good enough relations with other planets. So what is this so-called 'Federal Service'? Parasitism, pure and simple. A functionless organ, utterly obsolete, living on the taxpayers. A decidedly expensive way for inferior people who otherwise would be unemployed to live at public expense for a term of years, then give themselves airs for the rest of their lives. Is that what *you* want to do?"

Related Characters: Johnnie's Father (Mr. Rico) (speaker), Johnnie Rico

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

When Johnnie tells his Father that he plans to volunteer for Federal Service, Mr. Rico doesn't react well. In part, he doesn't believe in the values that the Federal Service professes, and in this passage his thoughts represent all those civilians who can't understand the value of military service. The Federal Service understands its role to the civilian world as symbiotic: soldiers protect civilians and enable them to live lives of relative prosperity and safety. In turn, civilians owe soldiers and veterans respect and must defer to their leadership of the government.

Mr. Rico, on the other hand, thinks of Federal Service as parasitic because he sees the contributions made by civilians—he himself must pay those taxes on his evidently great personal wealth—but he doesn't see the contributions made by soldiers. Blinded in this way, he thinks that the soldiers just want good things (control of the government, respect, room and board) handed to them without their having to earn anything. Ironically, this description better fits the civilians in the book, who want their safety and prosperity to be maintained by the Federal Service even though they themselves aren't willing to make the necessary sacrifices of life or liberty.

Moreover, Mr. Rico is just wrong: the stability and prosperity of the Terran Federation has blinded Mr. Rico, and many other civilians, to the very real threat of war. The attack on Buenos Aires shortly after Johnnie enters basic

training proves that war isn't yet obsolete.

"Anyone who clings to the historically untrue—and thoroughly immoral—doctrine that 'violence never settles anything' I would advise to conjure up the ghosts of Napoleon Bonaparte and of the Duke of Wellington and let them debate it. The ghost of Hitler could referee, and the jury might well be the Dodo, the Great Auk, and the Passenger Pigeon. Violence, naked force, has settled more issues in history than has any other factor, and the contrary opinion is wishful thinking at its worst. Breeds that forget this basic truth have always paid for it with their lives and their freedoms."

Related Characters: Mr. Dubois (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after listening to his Father's negative comments about Federal Service and his belief that war is outdated, Johnnie attends a session of Mr. Dubois's History and Moral Philosophy Class in which the teacher refutes a student's claim that violence doesn't solve anything. The student's claim that violence doesn't solve problems echoes Mr. Rico's claims that war has become obsolete. Civilians are blind to the true nature of the universe, but soldiers and veterans like Mr. Dubois can see the importance of violence in the course of history. This also gives context to Mr. Rico's complaint that the schools are indoctrinating children to support the parasitic and vestigial M.I.; in this passage Mr. Dubois not only directly contradicts the civilian opinions of the student's mother, but also makes incompletely substantiated claims about the value of violence—the vocation of the military—as a historical force.

Mr. Dubois invokes Darwinian ideas of evolution to support his claim that violence is not only necessary, but it is moral. Some of his historical examples are clear-cut—very few people would argue that the Allies' fight against Hitler didn't solve several problems. But the list of extinct animals complicates his theory. It's certainly true that violence (in the form of hunting) caused the extinction of the dodo, great auk, and passenger pigeon. But it's ridiculous to claim that these animals "forgot" or "ignored" the power of violence, since they had no meaningful way to defend themselves against it. The implication—that those who can't or won't fight are doomed to extinction—utilizes an animal metaphor but doesn't adequately justify why it applies animal models to the human context.

Suddenly, he pointed his stump at me. "You. What is the moral difference, if any, between the soldier and the civilian?"

"The difference," I answered carefully, "lies in the field of civic virtue. A soldier accepts personal responsibility for the safety of the body politic of which he is a member, defending it, if need be, with his life. The civilian does not."

"The exact words of the book," he said scornfully. "But do you understand it? Do you *believe* it?"

"Uh, I don't know, sir."

"Of course you don't! I doubt if any of you here would recognize 'civic virtue' if it came up and barked in your face!"

Related Characters: Mr. Dubois, Johnnie Rico (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 32-33

Explanation and Analysis

One day in History and Moral Philosophy class, after he's refuted another student's claim that violence doesn't solve anything, Mr. Dubois turns to Johnnie and asks him to define the difference between a soldier and a civilian. The first student repeated her mother's words, and now Johnnie simply recites the textbook definitions of civilian and citizen. Both students betray their immaturity and insufficiently developed individualism by parroting the words of others on subjects that they themselves don't understand.

This passage is important because it's the first time that the distinction between the civilian and soldier—an important theme in the book—has been made. The definition Johnnie offers isn't wrong: in fact, it will come up again and again throughout the book. Mr. Dubois criticizes his lack of conviction. However, it's notable that Mr. Dubois calls on Johnnie because once Johnnie's in basic training, he'll write a letter explaining that he always saw a capacity for civic virtue in his student. His disappointment may thus arise from Johnnie's inability to understand the virtue he's capable of.

"I," we each echoed, "being of legal age, of my own free will—"

"—without coercion, promise, or inducement of any sort, after having been duly advised and warned of the meaning and consequences of this oath—

"—do now enroll in the Federal Service of the Terran Federation of not less than two years and as much longer as may be required by the needs of the Service—

[...]

"I swear to uphold and defend the Constitution of the Federation against all its enemies on or off Terra [...]

"—and to obey all lawful orders of the Commander-in-Chief of the Terran Service and of all officers or delegated persons placed over me—

"—and to require such obedience from all members of the Service or other persons or non-human beings lawfully placed under my orders—

"—and, on being honorably discharged at the completion of my full term of service [...] to carry out all duties and obligations and to enjoy full privileges of Federation citizenship including but not limited to the duty, obligation, and privilege of exercising sovereign franchise for the rest of my natural life."

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico, Carl (speaker), Fleet Sergeant Ho, Mr. Dubois

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 42-43

Explanation and Analysis

Johnnie went to the recruitment center with his best friend Carl and ended up volunteering, inspired by the examples of Carl and another friend. After Carl and Johnnie undergo a physical exam and a brief check of their documentation, Fleet Sergeant Ho calls two witnesses and administers their Oath of Service on the spot. The words of the Oath are closely modeled on the United States' Service Oath, with which Heinlein would have been familiar from his own time in the Navy. This continuity speaks to a human militarism that transcends historical and cultural divisions.

However, in contrast to the U.S. Service Oath, the Federation's places more emphasis on the hierarchy—both up and down. Discipline is one of the novel's main themes. Obeying orders demonstrates self-discipline, and the M.I. doesn't hesitate to apply external discipline, including physical punishments like flogging, when a soldier's internal discipline falls short. Citizenship is closely related to these ideas of discipline and self-control; citizenship and the ability to vote aren't rights, they are obligations just as much as obedience to superior officers. The duties and privileges of citizenship come at the end of the Oath because they are the final stage of a soldier's development. People who volunteer to earn these rewards instead of to protect the Federation and its government aren't signing up for the right reasons.

"I just got my orders."

"For what?"

"Mobile Infantry."

His face broke out into a big grin of delight and he shoved out his hand. "My outfit! Shake, son! We'll make a man of you—or kill you trying. Maybe both."

"It's a good choice?" I said doubtfully.

"A good choice? Son, it's the *only* choice. The Mobile Infantry *is* the Army. All the others are either button pushers or professors, along merely to hand us the saw; *we* do the work."

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico, Fleet Sergeant Ho (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

After Johnnie receives his assignment to the Mobile Infantry, he has mixed emotions. He's not unhappy, since he at least qualified for a fighting unit instead of an ignominious job like physical labor or medical experimentation. On the other hand, his preferences indicate that the assignment is somewhat of a blow to his ego, since he thought he might qualify for an exciting job like pilot or spy. In this state, he bumps into Sergeant Ho in the foyer of the recruitment office. At this point in his journey, Johnnie still needs the assurance and guidance of adults or other authority figures, and Sergeant Ho provides this in his enthusiastic endorsement of Johnnie's assignment to the M.I.

He also lets Johnnie know exactly what he's in for: the entire purpose of basic training is to "make a man" out of a recruit. Barring that, it will kill (or dishonorably discharge) him. Military service is the path to political power precisely because it's a way to instill discipline and awaken the civic virtue of potential citizens. This is also Johnnie's first taste of cap trooper pride. Before long, he'll feel as Sergeant Ho

does: that the M.I. is the heart of the service.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ Now I am not sure that I saw it happen this way; I may have learned part of it later, in training. But here is what I think happened: The two moved out on each side of our company commander until they had him completely outflanked but well out of contact. From this position there is a choice of four basic moves for the man working alone, moves that take advantage of his own mobility and of the superior co-ordination of one man as compared with two—Sergeant Zim says (correctly) that any group is weaker than a man alone unless they are perfectly trained to work together. For example, Zim could have feinted at one of them, bounced fast to the other with a disabler, such as a broken kneecap—then finished off the first at his leisure.

Instead he let them attack. [...]

And here's what I think I saw: Meyer never reached him with that body check. Sergeant Zim whirled to face him, while kicking out and getting Heinrich in the belly—and then Meyer was sailing through the air, his lunge helped along with a hearty assist from Zim.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker), Meyer, Heinreich, Sergeant Zim (The Sergeant)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

On the first day of basic training, Sergeant Zim complains about his bad luck in receiving a ratty group of mama's boys and apes that he's supposed to turn into men and soldiers. He says he wants to work off his frustration with some hand-to-hand combat and asks for volunteers. Heinrich and Meyer are among the volunteers, and Zim defeats them almost as quickly as he dispatched a solo recruit before. By working out his frustration physically, the first lesson Zim teaches the recruits is that fighting is an occupation and a businesslike transaction rather than an emotional reaction. This workmanlike attitude towards violence is characteristic of the M.I. and underwrites the militaristic orientation of the Terran Federation.

It also demonstrates the idea that skill is more important than number: Heinrich and Meyer work together but Zim quickly incapacitates both. Zim's victory shows that individualism isn't a liability for humans but can, in fact, be a great benefit. Zim's lightning-fast assessment of the situation and his ability to instantaneously choose the right counterattack specifically mirrors his war-changing actions later on Planet P. In both cases he sees through his attacker's plans and then turns those plans against them to achieve his victory. Here, it's adding force to Meyer's lunge; on Planet P, it's recognizing that the Arachnid "attack" is a feint and seizing the opportunity to drop into their undefended tunnels.

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ Now about these batons—They have two uses. First, they mark the men in authority. Second, we expect them to be used on you, to touch you up and keep you on the bounce. You can't possibly be hurt by one, not the way they are used; at most they sting a little. But they save thousands of words. Say you don't turn out on the bounce at reveille. No doubt the duty corporal could wheedle you, say 'pretty please with sugar on it,' inquire if you'd like breakfast in bed this morning—if we could spare one career corporal just to nursemaid you. We can't, so he gives your bedroll a whack and trots on down the line, applying the spur where needed. Of course he could simply kick you, which would be just as legal and nearly as effective. But the general in charge of training and discipline thinks that it is more dignified, both for the duty corporal and for you, to snap a late sleeper out of his fog with the impersonal rod of authority. And so do I. Not that it matters what you or I think about it; this is the way we do it.

Related Characters: Captain Frankel (speaker), Ted Hendrick, Sergeant Zim (The Sergeant)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 87-88

Explanation and Analysis

Ted Hendrick struck Sergeant Zim during a training drill and refused to accept administrative punishment from the instructor in the field, instead demanding an interview with Captain Frankel. Among his many complaints about his mistreatment at the hands of the instructors, Hendrick includes the corporal punishment they freely and frequently administer with their batons. Frankel explains the importance of the batons and of corporal punishment in this passage. External discipline, like the batons or administrative punishment, comes into force when a recruit or a soldier shows that he doesn't have sufficient internal self-discipline to behave appropriately. Johnnie experienced a taste of this on the first morning of basic training, when he tried to roll over and go back to sleep but found his entire

cot tipped over.

Hendrick's actions have already demonstrated his lack of self-discipline, which in the Federation's culture is also a mark of lingering immaturity. Hendrick's surprise and frustration is unexpected in a culture where corporal punishment is commonly used to instill morals and discourage criminality. Frankel's point here is that punishment is succinct: the imaginary career corporal waking the recruits isn't sweating out a term to earn his citizenship; he's committed himself to the service for the public good. It's a waste of his time and of the public's resources for him to wheedle cranky recruits. It's also impersonal: regardless of a recruit's background or previous experiences, he's subject to the same expectations and the same punishments as everyone else.

❝ The Court does not permit you to resign. The Court wishes to add that your punishment is light simply because this Court possesses no jurisdiction to assign greater punishment. The authority which remanded you specified a field court-martial—why it so chose, this Court will not speculate. But had you been remanded for general court-martial, it seems certain that the evidence before this court would have caused a general court to sentence you to hang by the neck until dead. You are very lucky—and the remanding authority has been most merciful.

Related Characters: Lieutenant Spieksma (speaker), Ted Hendrick, Captain Frankel

Related Themes:

Page Number: 95

Explanation and Analysis

When he admits to his act of insubordination—striking Zim during a practice drill—Hendrick earns himself a field court-martial, and Lieutenant Spieksma quickly arrives from Battalion command to preside over it. After finding Hendrick guilty, he refuses to allow him to escape a Bad Conduct Discharge through resignation. As Spieksma explains in this passage, Hendrick has already been given as much leeway as possible. Hendricks came close to talking himself into his own execution. His behavior amply demonstrates his lack of civic virtue, but his superiors feel that it's sufficient to excuse and bar him from service—and, by extension, citizenship.

Executing Hendrick would be like Zim's metaphor of spanking a baby with a battleaxe; more extreme than the situation warrants. But while this episode serves to show the necessity of true civic virtue rather than a desire to "sweat out" a term, it also raises questions about the ultimate authority in the Federation.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ But it appeared that Captain Frankel worked so hard that he skipped meals, was kept so busy with something or other that he complained of lack of exercise and would waste his own free time just to work up a sweat.

As for worries, he had honestly seemed to be even more upset at what had happened to Hendrick than Zim had been. And yet he hadn't even known Hendrick by sight; he had been forced to ask his name.

I had an unsettling feeling that I had been completely mistaken as to the very nature of the world I was in, as if every part of it was something wildly different from what it appeared to be—like discovering that your own mother isn't anyone you've ever seen before, but a stranger in a rubber mask.

But I was sure of one thing: I didn't even want to find out what the M.I. really was. If it was so tough that even the gods-that-be—sergeants and officers—were made unhappy by it, it was certainly too tough for Johnnie!

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker), Captain Frankel, Ted Hendrick, Sergeant Zim (The Sergeant)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 108-109

Explanation and Analysis

After Hendrick's court-martial for insubordination, Johnnie eavesdrops on Captain Frankel and Sergeant Zim while they discuss the situation. Later that night, after he's witnessed Hendrick's public flogging, Johnnie can't sleep and he replays the day's events in his head, worrying at their implications. Prior to Hendrick's surprise court-martial, Johnnie had been feeling sorry for himself because he'd been demoted from the rank of "recruit-corporal" following some unspecified mistakes among his teammates. His own story mirrors—in a drastically reduced way—that of Zim and Frankel, who feel personally responsible for Hendrick's actions. Moreover, Johnnie's been feeling that basic training is hard, and coming to realize that there's no point at which service gets easier is an unwelcome shock.

Sergeant Ho had, in fact, warned him about this: the difficulty of military service is a feature, not a bug. So

Johnnie's surprise points towards his immaturity and inexperience in the world. To this point in his life, he doesn't seem to have perceived the adults around him as having troubles or difficulties. His use of metaphors—the fake mother in the rubber mask—is both vivid and interesting, especially given that Johnnie's choice to enroll estranged him from his parents. Although he's now sure that he wants to resign, going home would mean admitting that he won't ever be his own man. And, when he speaks of himself in the third person, it almost seems like he's echoing his Father's voice reminding him that service was too high a price for a prize of too little value.

> You are now going through the hardest part of your service—not the hardest part physically (though physical hardship will never trouble you again; you now have its measure), but the hardest spiritually … the deep, soul-turning readjustments and re-evaluations necessary to metamorphose a potential citizen into one in being. Or, rather I should say: you have already gone through the hardest part, despite all the tribulations you still have ahead of you and all the hurdles, each higher than the last, which you still must clear. But it is that "hump" that counts—and, knowing you, lad, I know that I have waited long enough to be sure that you are past your "hump"—or you would be home now.
>
> When you reached that spiritual mountaintop you felt something, a new something. Perhaps you haven't a word for it (I know I didn't, when I was a boot). So perhaps you will permit an older comrade to lend you the words, since it often helps to have discrete words. Simply this: The noblest fate that a man can endure is to place his own mortal body between his loved home and the war's desolation.

Related Characters: Mr. Dubois (speaker), Johnnie Rico

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 114-115

Explanation and Analysis

Following Ted Hendrick's public flogging and discharge, Johnnie decides to resign before he gets himself into any sort of similar trouble. However, before he has a chance to speak about it to Sergeant Zim, he receives a surprise letter from Mr. Dubois. In this passage, Mr. Dubois articulates key tenets of the book regarding military service, citizenship, and self-discipline. Johnnie feels terrible, but his fears—that service is too hard or too miserable, that he'll make a stupid mistake and end up flogged or worse—actually demonstrate that he's shifted into a more mature understanding of the commitment that being an infantryman requires.

As Mr. Dubois holds up a very flattering mirror for Johnnie to see himself as a potential solder, it's important to note that he considers Johnnie to have become a citizen already, despite the fact that he hasn't even graduated from basic training. While immature and civilian-minded characters see citizenship as an award to be earned by service, real soldiers like Mr. Dubois (and now, like Johnnie) understand that it's actually an acknowledgement of the personal virtue a true soldier possesses and demonstrates with his actions.

Finally, Mr. Dubois defines the guiding principle of the cap trooper—that the best thing he can do is to lay his life as a shield between the enemy and his beloved homeland. While the disparaging attitude soldiers (including Johnnie) have towards civilians throughout the book somewhat undercuts this idealized vision, its basic premise—sacrificing oneself for the good of society—inspires and guides Johnnie throughout his various experiences.

> Of course, the Marxian definition of value is ridiculous. All the work one cares to add will not turn a mud pie into an apple tart; it remains a mud pie, value zero. By corollary, unskillful work can easily subtract value; an untalented cook can turn wholesome dough and fresh green apples, already valuable, into an inedible mess, value zero. Conversely, a great chef can fashion of those same materials a confection of greater value than a commonplace apple tart, with no more effort than an ordinary cook uses to prepare an ordinary sweet.
>
> These kitchen illustrations demolish the Marxian theory of value—the fallacy from which the entire magnificent fraud of communism derives—and illustrate the truth of the common-sense definition as measured in terms of use.

Related Characters: Mr. Dubois (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 116

Explanation and Analysis

After receiving Mr. Dubois's letter, Johnnie recalls a lesson from his History and Moral Philosophy class in which Mr. Dubois endeavored to teach the students about the nature of "value." His illustration of Marxian economic principles with the "kitchen-table" example of the mud pies and the

apple tarts misrepresents Marx's theories, which clearly include the properties of a commodity in calculating value—in other words, Marx wouldn't consider the mud pie to have value as a commodity anyway.

This passage, like many others pertaining to History and Moral Philosophy class, have been criticized for functioning as "infodumps" or rhetorical opportunities for Heinlein to insert his own political views into the text. And while the circumstances under which he wrote the book may substantiate these claims, it's not necessary to see them as representative of anyone's views other than Mr. Dubois's. In this context, it's useful to note that his appeals to "commonsense" or "kitchen-table" wisdom are a form of the "alleged certainty" logical fallacy. However, in the context of the Terran Federation, Mr. Dubois's beliefs do seem to be commonly held, and this example sets up further discussions of the value of citizenship and freedom throughout the book.

❝ This very personal relationship, 'value,' has two factors for a human being: first, what he can do with a thing, its *use* to him ... and second, what he must do to get it, its *cost* to him. There is an old song which asserts 'the best things in life are free.' Not true! Utterly false! This was the tragic fallacy which brought on the decadence and collapse of the democracies of the twentieth century; those noble experiments failed because the people had been led to believe that they could simply vote for whatever they wanted ... and get it, without turmoil, without sweat, without tears.

Related Characters: Mr. Dubois (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 117-118

Explanation and Analysis

As Johnnie recalls a session of Mr. Dubois's History and Moral Philosophy class, he remembers how his teacher explained the concept of value to the students. After he allegedly discredits communism entirely with a simple, common-sense example, Mr. Dubois grudgingly admits that Marx correctly understood that value isn't absolute. Rather, as he explains in this passage, the utility and cost of a thing—which each person must decide for him- or her-self—determines its value. By this logic, civilians don't value citizenship because they neither see it as useful (Mr. Rico, in fact, called it "parasitic") nor as worth the cost of an arduous term of Federal Service.

In the futuristic context of the Terran Federation, the 20th-century world in which the book was written is old history, and Mr. Dubois's classes also provide an opportunity to criticize the moral decay of that era. The song he refers to was written in America in the 1920s and was frequently covered by bands in the 1940s and 1950s. The moral decay of the 20th century arises from the mistaken belief that truly valuable things—like the ability to determine the course of one's nation—are free for the taking and don't need to be earned. It should be noted that this perspective is potentially limited by racial bias: Mr. Dubois' claims that the freedom to vote was freely guaranteed disregards the history of the Civil Rights movement and the often severe limitations placed on the ability of Black persons and others to vote in 20th-century America.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ There are a dozen different ways of delivering destruction in impersonal wholesale, via ships and missiles or one sort or another, catastrophes so widespread, so unselective, that the war is over because the nation or planet has ceased to exist. What we do is entirely different. We make war as personal as a punch in the nose. We can be selective, applying precisely the required amount of pressure at the specified point at a designated time—we've never been told to go down and kill or capture all left-handed redheads in a particular area, but if they tell us to, we can. We will.

We are the boys who go to a particular place, at H-hour, occupy a designated terrain, stand on it, dig the enemy out of their holes, force them then and there to surrender or die. We're the bloody infantry, the doughboy, the duckfoot, the foot soldier who goes where the enemy is and takes him on in person. We've been doing it, with changes in weapons but very little change in our trade, at least since the time five thousand years ago when the foot sloggers of Sargon the Great forced the Sumerians to cry "Uncle!"

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker), Ted Hendrick, Sergeant Zim (The Sergeant)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 125-126

Explanation and Analysis

Johnnie is immediately fascinated by the powered suits that the Mobile Infantry uses, and he describes their capabilities in detail. Woven into this description, he considers the role that the suits allow the M.I. to play in the scheme of history. Johnnie's reflections offer a clear explanation of the important uses of violence that Mr. Dubois and Sergeant Zim have already sketched out. War is directed violence, and the Mobile Infantry make it personal, because they understand the language of fists.

This passage also shows how much Johnnie has matured during basic training. His ideas are drawn from things he's heard from or been taught by others: Sergeant Ho's pride at being an infantryman; Zim's explanation that warfare is precisely controlled violence; and Mr. Dubois's claims that violence (generally, but military violence specifically) is the controlling force of history. But Johnnie takes these ideas and makes them his own. When he was a student, he repeated the textbook definition of citizenship to Mr. Dubois, but now it's clear that he believes these things with his whole heart.

The list of soldiers at the end of the passage highlights the M.I.'s heritage, as they carry on the tradition of the British and Americans in the trenches of World War I (the bloody infantry and doughboys, respectively) and the soldiers who helped Sargon of Akkad conquer Sumerian city-states in the 24th and 23rd centuries B.C.E.

❝ And *that* is the beauty of a powered suit: you don't have to think about it. You don't have to drive it, fly it, conn it, operate it; you just wear it and it takes orders directly from your muscles and does for you what your muscles are trying to do. This leaves you with your whole mind free to handle your weapons and notice what is going on around you … which is *supremely* important to an infantryman who wants to die in bed. If you load a mud foot down with a lot of gadgets that he has to watch, somebody a lot more simply equipped—say with a stone ax—will sneak up and bash his head in while he is trying to read a vernier.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 129

Explanation and Analysis

Johnnie describes the technology of the suits in broad terms, even though he's just a boot and not one of the electromechanical engineers responsible for more than basic maintenance. But it doesn't matter that he's not able to precisely describe the suit's internal workings, because of the suits' almost magical ability to function without the trooper having to think consciously about it. This passage develops the idea of the suits as an extension of the wearer, and this is an important component of their symbolism in the book. The idea that the M.I. (and the Federation's military, broadly speaking) are the means of enforcing the government's will has already been well-established. The relationship between the man and his suit—where the suit effortlessly and without question allows the man to move as he wishes—is a miniature version of the relationship between the M.I. and the government. The suits also take away much of the mental burden of soldiering, since they enhance his situational awareness and free him up to pay attention to his weapons.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ Dillinger belonged to us, he was still on our rolls. Even though we didn't want him, even though we should never have had him, even though we would have been happy to disclaim him, he was a member of our regiment. We couldn't brush him off and let a sheriff a thousand miles away handle it. If it has to be done, a man—a real man—shoots his dog himself; he doesn't hire a proxy who may bungle it.

The regimental records said that Dillinger was ours, so taking care of him was our duty.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker), N. L. Dillinger , Ace, Dizzy Flores, Ted Hendrick, Captain Frankel, Sergeant Zim (The Sergeant), Breckenridge

Related Themes:

Page Number: 140

Explanation and Analysis

A volunteer that reported for basic training at Camp Currie, N. L. Dillinger deserted after just a few days' time. After he left, he kidnapped, abused, and murdered a small child, and when he was captured by local authorities, they discovered he was an undischarged M.I. recruit. Dillinger is sent back to Camp Currie, where the Regiment is responsible for not only dishonorably discharging him but carrying out his death sentence. This passage addresses two key issues in the book: the idea of communal vs. individual responsibility and the inherent nature of civic virtue.

Previous examples of the M.I. refusing to leave men behind have been positive: Ace and Johnnie making pickup on Dizzy Flores or the recruits locating the bodies of the three men lost in the Canadian Rockies. But as Johnnie learned through his own punishment and through witnessing the distress of Zim and Frankel over Hendrick's failures, this responsibility is still there when recruits or soldiers fail in their duty. Secondly, Dillinger's heinous crimes, like Hendrick's less serious insubordination, are offered as evidence for the book's premise that bad character will ultimately betray itself, allowing the Federal Service to discharge the kinds of men who don't have enough civic virtue to make good citizens.

"Law-abiding people," Dubois had told us, "hardly dared go into a public park at night. To do so was to risk attack by wolf packs of children, armed with chains, knives, homemade guns, bludgeons … to be hurt at least, robbed most certainly, injured for life probably—or even killed. This went on for years, right up to the war between the Russo-Anglo-American Alliance and the Chinese Hegemony. Murder, drug addiction, larceny, assault, and vandalism were commonplace. Nor were parks the only places—these things happened also on the streets in daylight, on school grounds, even inside school buildings. But parks were so notoriously unsafe that honest people stayed clear of them after dark."

Related Characters: Mr. Dubois (speaker), Johnnie Rico

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis

Dillinger's heinous crimes—the kidnapping, abuse, and murder of a small child—and his subsequent execution call to Johnnie's mind another History and Moral Philosophy lesson with Mr. Dubois. In this passage, Mr. Dubois describes the terrible state of the world in the late 20th century. The book's futuristic setting allows it to invent a version of 20th-century history that aligns with its claims about moral decay, but which doesn't exactly match *actual* 20th-century history. The chaos, vandalism, and destruction indicate the inability of civilians, with their lack of proven civic virtue, to successfully run a well-ordered society, in contrast to the Federation's militarized government.

It's also interesting, given that the book was written at the height of the Cold War, that it imagines the Russians joining with the Americans and the British against the "Chinese Hegemony." The "Hegemony," or alliance of various powers, is likely based on the Chinese Communist Party's support for North Korea in the Korean War (1950-1953) and its involvement in the First Indochina War (a 1946-1945 precursor to the Vietnam War) and the Vietnam War (1953-1975). It's also possible that the Russians, despite their communist government, are imagined joining with Western powers because they'd done so before, during World War II.

I didn't then know what a sadist was—but I knew pups. "Mr. Dubois, you *have* to! You scold him so that he knows he's in trouble, you rub his nose in it so that he will know what trouble you mean, you paddle him so that he darn well won't do it again—and you have to do it right away! It doesn't do a bit of good to punish him later; you'll just confuse him. Even so, he won't learn from one lesson, so you watch and catch him again and paddle him still harder. Pretty soon he learns. But it's a waste of breath just to scold him."

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker), Mr. Dubois

Related Themes:

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis

In the wake of witnessing Dillinger's execution for heinous crimes against a small child, Johnnie wrestles with the harsh nature of both the crime and its punishment. As he does so, he recalls a lecture Mr. Dubois gave during History and Moral Philosophy class that dealt with the idea of "delinquency" and examined the discipline and training necessary to teach people right from wrong. In this passage, Mr. Dubois uses the Socratic method and a common-sense example—training a puppy—to help his students understand the importance of corporal punishment. The basic premise is twofold: corporal punishment is the only way to teach proper behavior, and the punishment must be painful enough to adequately communicate the lesson.

Mr. Dubois's teaching style is characterized by the Socratic method, in which a teacher releases a student from strongly held convictions and directs him or her to higher truths through the use of questions, and in this passage, he's baited Johnnie with just such a question. Playing dumb and allowing the students to "teach" him also increases the power of his lessons. Earlier Mr. Rico suggested that History and Moral Philosophy is less a class than an arena

for indoctrination, and the way that the students so readily give Mr. Dubois the answers he wants seems to support this fear. Also, important questions about the analogy remain unanswered: the puppy must be paddled to learn "correct" behavior, but neither Mr. Dubois nor any of the students interrogate the difference between puppies and human beings, who are capable of rational thought and moral reasoning.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ But I didn't go to the social center that first pass. Mostly I stood around and gawked—at beautiful buildings, at display windows filled with all manner of unnecessary things (and not a weapon among them), at all those people running around, or even strolling, doing exactly as they pleased and no two dressed alike—and at girls.

Especially at girls. I hadn't realized just how wonderful they were. Look, I've approved of girls from the time I first noticed that the difference was more than just that they dress differently. So far as I remember I never did go through that period boys are supposed to go through when they know that girls are different but dislike them. I've *always* liked girls.

But that day I realized that I had long been taking them for granted.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker), Carmen Ibañez

Related Themes:

Page Number: 158

Explanation and Analysis

After Johnnie arrives at Camp Spooky Smith for the second phase of his training, he and the other recruits are given more freedom to move about and leave the camp during their free time. The first time Johnnie sets foot in Vancouver—the closest town to the Camp—he's overwhelmed. An important premise of the Federation's form of government is that it provides stability and prosperity for its citizens and legal residents. The civilians' freedom to move around without being bothered—especially after hearing Mr. Dubois's description of the chaos and moral decay that characterize the late 20th century—demonstrates stability, and the window displays suggest economic prosperity.

Although Johnnie volunteered at the same time as his classmate, Carmen Ibañez, he hasn't seen a woman since. Although service is open to anyone, man or woman, who wants to volunteer, training and service are strictly gender segregated. This reflects the book's context, since co-ed military training didn't start in the United States until 1994. Johnnie's casual objectification of women—talking about them as if they are pretty things for him to look at or think about rather than human individuals in their own right—contradicts the Federation's gestures to equality (opening service to men and women, the belief that females make better pilots).

Chapter 10 Quotes

❝ But B. A. really stirred up the civilians and inspired loud screams to bring all our forces home, from everywhere—orbit them around the planet practically shoulder to shoulder and interdict the space Terra occupies. This is silly, of course; you don't win a war by defense but by attack—no "Department of Defense" ever won a war; see the histories. But it seems to be a standard civilian reaction to scream for defensive tactics as soon as they do notice a war. They then want to run the war—like a passenger trying to grab the controls away from the pilot in an emergency.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 168-169

Explanation and Analysis

As Johnnie completes his basic training, the hostilities that have been developing for quite some time between the Terran Federation and the Arachnids blossom into war when the so-called "Bugs" attack and destroy Buenos Aires. Johnnie pokes fun at "Defense" departments, likely providing commentary on the reorganization of the United States Military following World War II. In 1947, the Department of War was renamed the "Army Department," and the Army, Navy, and Air Force Departments were combined into one group which was subsequently renamed the Department of Defense in 1949. Johnnie is making a distinction between what the civilians say they want—defense—and what is really necessary (in the military's opinion) to keep them safe: offensive war. It's notable that no mention is ever made of diplomatic efforts made by the Terran Federation, governed as it is entirely by veterans.

Johnnie's comments are also very condescending towards the civilians he's supposed to be protecting with his life, and his language paints the civilians as hysterical—they scream, they're silly, and they forget their place as "passengers." This

attitude reflects the book's heavily militaristic outlook.

Chapter 11 Quotes

In the past, armies have been known to fold up and quit because the men didn't know what they were fighting for, or why, and therefore lacked the will to fight. But the M.I. does not have that weakness. Each one of us was a volunteer to begin with, each for some reason or other—some good, some bad. But now we fought because we were M.I. We were professionals, with *esprit de corps*. We fought because we were Rasczak's Roughnecks, the best unprintable outfit in the whole expurgated M.I.; we climbed into our capsules because Jelly told us it was time to do so and we fought when we got down there because that's what Rasczak's Roughnecks do.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 193-194

Explanation and Analysis

In the weeks after the Lieutenant's death, the war is going badly for the Terran Federation, although the Roughnecks don't know that. Johnnie speaks with considerable pride about the character of the M.I. soldiers, outlining how their reasons for fighting are different than in armies of the past. He makes several important statements in this passage that illustrate or expand on ideas he's already introduced. First, a significant difference between the Federation's military and those of the past is that it doesn't rely on conscripting (forcing) soldiers to join but runs entirely on a pool of willing volunteers. While many armies around the world are completely voluntary today, this was a radical idea in the 1950s when the book was written. Second, although Johnnie acknowledges that people have a variety of reasons to volunteer, by the time he gets to active service, anyone with insufficient civic virtue or fighting spirit has been disqualified. His initial reasons (to win citizenship, to impress his friends) were not good, but they've been replaced with the right reasons during his training. Third, a large component of the Roughnecks' success lies not only in the men's training and discipline, but in the sense of camaraderie and *esprit de corps* (literally, "pride in the group") that they feel. This includes the capable leadership of Jelly and Rasczak. Taken together, these feelings represent the highest celebration of militarism in the novel.

On a linguistic note, Johnnie's quote apparently includes two expletives, which have been replaced with "unprintable" and "expurgated" in the text, the written version of "bleeping" out the word.

Nevertheless, I had signed up in order to win a vote.

Or had I?

Had I ever cared about voting? No, it was the prestige, the pride, the status…of being a citizen.

Or was it?

I couldn't remember to save my life *why* I had signed up.

Anyhow, it wasn't the process of voting that made a citizen—the Lieutenant had been a citizen in the truest sense of the word, even though he had not lived long enough ever to cast a ballot. He had "voted" every time he made a drop.

And so had I!

I could hear Colonel Dubois in my mind: "Citizenship is an attitude, a state of mind, an emotional conviction that the whole is greater than the part…and that the part should be humbly proud to sacrifice itself that the whole may live."

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker), Lieutenant Rasczak , Mr. Dubois, Carl, Carmen Ibañez

Related Themes:

Page Number: 207

Explanation and Analysis

While on Rest and Relaxation at Sanctuary, Ace takes Johnnie out for drinks and suggests that he "go career"—a 20-year commitment to the M.I. instead of two—and try to get into Officer Candidate School. At first, Johnnie thinks the idea is crazy, but after the conversation, he takes a long walk to think it over and ends up realizing that his reasons for being a soldier have changed. The most obvious reason for volunteering is to earn the franchise, and Johnnie initially assumes that this must have inspired him. But he didn't argue with his Father's complaints about politics. And the idea that citizenship confers prestige and status sounds far more appropriate for Johnnie's path into the military—remember that he volunteered to impress Carl and Carmen. But the true sign that Johnnie has become the ideal soldier is that he can't remember why he signed up. It no longer matters, because he already has that attitude of humble pride—humble because he recognizes the importance of his platoon, and proud because his entire identity now rests in being a cap trooper and a Roughneck.

This passage further illustrates the idea that citizenship isn't a prize for service but rather it's an acknowledgement that service demonstrates civic virtue. In name, Johnnie can't be a citizen until he retires. But he feels himself to be a citizen now—and Mr. Dubois called him a citizen as far back as basic training.

Chapter 12 Quotes

"Son, do you know about civilians?"

"Well...we don't talk the same language. I know that."

"Clearly enough put. Do you remember Madame Ruitman? I was on a few days leave after I finished Basic and I went home. I saw some of our friends, said goodby —she among them. She chattered away and said, 'So you're really going out? Well, if you reach Faraway, you really must look up my dear friends the Regatos.'

"I told her, as gently as I could, that it seemed unlikely since the Arachnids had occupied Faraway.

"It didn't phase her in the least. She said, 'Oh, that's all right—they're civilians!'" Father smiled cynically.

Related Characters: Johnnie's Father (Mr. Rico) (speaker), Johnnie Rico, Madame Ruitman

Related Themes:

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

As Johnnie leaves the Roughnecks to attend Office Candidate School, he learns that his Father is not only still alive, but that he himself volunteered for Federal Service and joined the Mobile Infantry. As Mr. Rico tells Johnnie his reasons for joining up, he offers this anecdote about a family friend as part of his explanation. Madame Ruitman believes that her friends will be exempt from war because they are citizens, and this shows that she's incapable of understanding what the soldier knows: no one is exempt from war, but the soldier distinguishes himself by facing its dangers willingly. While Johnnie had to come to this understanding over time, Mr. Rico's decision to join up arose consciously from his need to fulfill the urgings of his civic duty.

But this passage also betrays the condescending attitude that soldiers have towards civilians, who don't speak "the same language" as soldiers. Once, citizenship drove a wedge between Johnnie and his Father; now, they can unite in their sense that they're superior to silly civilians who don't understand that the war means people—even civilians—are dying.

Well, why *should* I fight? Wasn't it preposterous to expose my tender skin to the violence of unfriendly strangers? Especially as the pay at any rank was barely spending money, the hours terrible, and the working conditions worse? When I could be sitting at home while such matters were handled by thick-skulled characters who *enjoyed* such games? Particularly when the strangers against whom I fought had never done anything to me personally until I showed up and started kicking over their tea wagon—what sort of nonsense *is* this?

Fight because I'm an M.I.? Brother, you're drooling like Dr. Pavlov's dogs. Cut it out and start thinking.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 226

Explanation and Analysis

All students in the Terran Federation must take History and Moral Philosophy class in high school—taught by a veteran, it's meant to teach the children the values of the Federation and the history of its unique form of government. As Zim tells Hendrick in basic training, H&MP should have taught a person why soldiers fight. Therefore, Johnnie is surprised to find that he has to take it again in Officer Candidate School; since he and the other cadets are all combat veterans, he assumes they've already settled the question of why they fight. The second round of H&MP allows Johnnie to articulate these reasons now that he understands their costs.

This passage reiterates the distinction between the civilian and military (citizen) mindset. Earlier, Mr. Rico called soldiers "parasites" and a civilian doctor likened them to mindless "ants," and Johnnie outright rejects the circular logic of those who think that soldiers fight only because they're soldiers. Infantrymen, as H&MP demonstrates, are highly principled human beings, even though they may need help articulating those principles.

Moreover, if citizenship requires sacrifice for the common good, then the moral underpinnings of military service and violence, as they are conceived by the Federation, are necessary in order to attract the right kind of soldiers—the kind that are willing to make those difficult but necessary sacrifices. The Federation's military isn't made up of

mercenaries, men who would fight just for money (the pay is terrible) or for the love of fighting (as Johnnie is well aware, fighting is pretty terrible, too).

> "The ruling nobles of many another system were a small group fully aware of their grave power. Furthermore, our franchised citizens are not everywhere a small fraction; you know or should know that the percentage of citizens among adults ranges from over eighty percent on Iskander to less than three per cent in some Terran nations—yet government is much the same everywhere. Nor are the voters picked men; they bring no special wisdom, talent, or training to their sovereign tasks. So what difference is there between our voters and wielders of franchise in the past? Under our system every voter and officeholder is a man who has demonstrated through voluntary and difficult service that he places the welfare of the group ahead of personal advantage.
>
> "And that is the one practical difference.
>
> "He may fail in wisdom, he may lapse in civic virtue. But his average performance is enormously better than that of any other class of rulers in history."

Related Characters: Major Reid (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 233

Explanation and Analysis

During Officer Candidate School, Johnnie's second round of History and Moral Philosophy instruction happens under Major Reid, a blind combat veteran. His lectures allow the book to clarify its theories about militarism and citizenship, and in this passage, Reid compares the way the Terran Federation limits citizenship to veterans to other limits on franchise that can be found in history. Federation citizens aren't smarter, better, or more moral than the average civilian, and as a class they aren't even representative of the Federation's demographics, since colonists are overrepresented. This suggests, not that the government is unfair, but rather that representation isn't important if the government is run by principled and dutiful citizens who understand that the most important thing in governing a group is putting its good above one's individual desires. Military service asks men and women to do this, trains them to do it wholeheartedly, and then confers the ultimate privilege of governing society, creating its laws, and enforcing them.

Reid's gesture at the outsized ratio of colonists in Federal Service supports the book's utopian vision of a unified humanity. The government isn't hindered by economic, racial, national, religious, or gendered divisions. The fact that the government doesn't reflect the demographics of the people suggests that a true meritocracy, where people earn their authority through their actions, is better than equitable representation.

> Superficially, our system is only slightly different; we have democracy unlimited by race, color, creed, birth, wealth, sex, or conviction, and anyone may win sovereign power by a usually short and not too arduous term of service—nothing more than a light workout to our cave-man ancestors. But that slight difference is one between a system that works, since it is constructed to match the facts, and one that is inherently unstable. Since sovereign franchise is the ultimate in human authority, we ensure that all who wield it accept the ultimate in social responsibility—we require each person who wishes to exert control over the state to wager his own life—and lose it, if need be—to save the life of the state. The maximum responsibility a human can accept is thus equated to the ultimate authority a human can exert. Yin and yang, perfect and equal.

Related Characters: Major Reid (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 234-235

Explanation and Analysis

As he expands on the history of the Terran Federation, Major Reid offers various forms of proof for the inherent superiority of its system of democracy over all others. Calling the Federation's system of government a "democracy" is a stretch, and many critics have characterized it as military fascism instead. What Reid and others seem to believe keeps the Federation solidly in the realm of democracy is the principle that anyone, regardless of age, race, aptitude, moral stature, or anything else, can volunteer for service. Yet, the book has provided many examples of people being excluded for many of these reasons. While the Federation's view is that the difficulty of service is necessary to prove the mettle of its future

citizens, it's also possible that the military's ability to discharge or force resignations on whomever it wants means that its systems is more limited—and less democratic—that it seems.

To bolster this somewhat unstable proposition, Major Reid points to the inherent stability of the Federation, especially compared to its historical forebears. In the context of a Darwinian worldview—where survival and success indicate that an organism is as suitable as possible to its environment—this argument makes sense. However, outside of the Federation's context, Reid's assertions that authority and responsibility must be made equal by natural law and that the Federation' system accomplishes this are difficult to assess.

❝ Young man, can you restore my eyesight? [...] You would find it much easier than to instill moral virtue—social responsibility—into a person who doesn't have it, doesn't want it, and resents the burden thrust on him. This is why we make it so hard to enroll, so easy to resign. Social responsibility above the level of family, or at most tribe, requires imagination—devotion, loyalty, all the higher virtues—which a man must develop himself; if he has them forced down him, he will vomit them out. Conscript armies have been tried in the past.

Related Characters: Major Reid (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 236

Explanation and Analysis

As Major Reid's lecture on the History and Moral Philosophy of the Terran Federation winds down, a student asks why the government couldn't adopt a policy of mandatory service. If everyone was required to experience a soldier's life, wouldn't this give them the sense of social responsibility necessary in a citizen? Reid's answer acknowledges the difficulty in maintaining the discipline that characterizes conscript armies (where people are forced into service). But his answer also says the quiet part out loud: the Terran Federation doesn't want just anyone to serve and become a citizen. They are, in fact, quite picky about their future citizens, and they purposefully make it hard to join and easy to leave so that they don't have to worry about the concerns of those with insufficient social responsibility.

This passage also complicates Mr. Dubois's earlier assertions about the importance of discipline. There's evidently a fine line between using sometimes harsh physical discipline to instill a moral instinct in children and attempting to force everyone to rise to the level of social responsibility demanded of soldiers. Johnnie's own story is instructive here: he volunteered based on the influence of his "tribe" of friends, but while he's been in the military, he has indeed managed to develop the moral and virtuous imagination necessary to a citizen.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ "Try to figure where the Bugs are going to break out. *And then stay away from that spot*! Understand me?"

"I hear you, sir," I said carefully. "But I do not understand."

He sighed. "Johnnie, you'll turn my hair gray yet. Look, son, we *want* them to come out, the more the better. You don't have the firepower to handle them other than by blowing up their tunnel as they reach the surface—and that is the one thing *you must not do*! If they come out in force, a regiment can't handle them. But that's just what the General wants, and he's got a brigade of heavy weapons in orbit, waiting for it. So you spot that breakthrough, fall back and keep it under observation. If you are lucky enough to have a major breakthrough in your area, reconnaissance will be patched through all the way to the top. So stay lucky and stay alive! Got it?"

"Yes, sir. Spot the breakthrough. Fall back and avoid contact. Observe and report."

Related Characters: Captain Blackstone, Johnnie Rico (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 311

Explanation and Analysis

On Planet P, Johnnie commands one of the platoons in Blackie's Blackguards as a temporary third lieutenant. Johnnie and his men patrol a parcel of land that lies above an Arachnid city. When Johnnie's listening stations identify the sound of tunneling Arachnids, he discusses his next steps with Captain Blackstone.

What Johnnie and his men are being asked to do is

dangerous, which is why there's so much firepower in the skies above. It also requires sufficient internal fortitude to overcome the individual's survival instinct, because the cap troopers are being asked to behave more like Arachnid warriors: they're supposed to keep soaking up casualties until the Arachnids don't have enough warriors to continue the attack. Once the Bugs have been drawn out, the Federation hopes some of the M.I. will be able to drop into the tunnels and retrieve some queens or brains. Having these prisoners will provide the Federation with vital information for the next phases of the war, which means that Johnnie and the rest of the Blackguards are being asked explicitly to do what they've been told good soldiers do: put their lives on the line for the greater good.

Blackstone's fatherly manner towards Johnnie humanizes a plan that otherwise seems sadistic. It's clear that he wants to protect Johnnie and his men as much as he can.

❝ I did learn, eventually, why my platoon sergeant decided to go down into that Bug town. He had heard my report to Captain Blackstone that the "major breakthrough" was actually a feint, made with workers sent up to be slaughtered. When real warrior Bugs broke out where he was, he had concluded (correctly and minutes sooner than Staff reached the same conclusion) that the Bugs were making a desperation push, or they would not expend their workers simply to draw our fire.

He saw that their counterattack made from Bug town was not in sufficient force, and concluded that the enemy did not have many reserves—and decided that, at this one golden moment, one man acting alone might have a chance of raiding, finding "royalty" and capturing it. Remember, that was the whole purpose of the operation; we had plenty of force to sterilize Planet P, but our object was to capture royalty castes and learn how to go down in. So he tried it, snatched that one moment—and succeeded on both counts.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 326-327

Explanation and Analysis

Just after rescuing his platoon sergeant from the Bug tunnels on Planet P, Johnnie is knocked out by a tunnel collapse. He wakes up some time later on a ship, having been separated from the Blackguards and routed back to Sanctuary. As he slowly pieces together the events of that day, he learns why the sergeant—who turns out to have been Sergeant Zim all along—had gone into the tunnels.

Zim's successful completion of Operation Royalty's mission has many facets. First, his actions at Camp Curie and as Johnnie's unnamed platoon sergeant show how deeply disciplined he is in the terms of military doctrine (this is part of why Johnnie repeatedly mentions his "precision"). Second, he's high enough up the chain of command to know where and how the platoon's troops are being used, but unlike Johnnie, he's not the ultimate authority, which accords him some leeway to make his split-second decision. Third, the entire platoon—which carries out its work without complaint or question—is sufficiently disciplined that Zim can drop down an Arachnid hole without worrying that the men won't know what to do or be able to follow Johnnie's commands. But while all these factors touch on his teamwork with the rest of the Blackguards and other parts of the M.I., ultimately it's his quick individual decision-making that ensures his success. In this way, Zim's actions seem to prove the superiority of the human forces which strike a balance between teamwork and individualism, in contrast with the Arachnids, whose social structure only allows for communal thought and action.

Zim's success also indicates that the General's battle plan—although it was costly—was correct. Many troops were lost, but they didn't lay their lives down in vain, since the operation was ultimately successful.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ "Another Bug hunt, boys. This one is a little different, as you know. Since they still hold prisoners of ours, we can't use a nova bomb on Klendathu—so this time we go down, stand on it, hold it, take it away from them. The boat won't be down to retrieve us; instead it'll fetch more ammo and rations. If you're taken prisoner, keep your chin up and follow the rules—because you've got the whole outfit behind you, you've got the whole Federation behind you; we'll come and get you. [...]

"Don't forget that we'll have help all around us, lots of help above us. All we have to worry about is our one little piece, just the way we rehearsed it.

"One last thing. I had a letter from Captain Jelal just before we left. He says that his new legs work fine. But he also told me to tell *you* that he's got you in mind ... and he expects your names to *shine!*

"And so do I. Five minutes for the Padre."

I felt myself beginning to shake.

Related Characters: Johnnie Rico (speaker), Johnnie's Father (Mr. Rico) , Sergeant Jelal (Jelly)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 334-335

Explanation and Analysis

Time has passed since the mission on Planet P, and Johnnie has been promoted to Lieutenant in command of the Roughnecks, with his Father as his platoon sergeant. In the final pages of the book, the Roughnecks prepare to land on the Arachnids' home world for their part in the Federation's final assault. As he makes his final inspection of the men, Johnnie offers them these words.

Johnnie's story ends as it began, preparing for a drop. And while some things have changed—he is now an officer, he's now in charge of his own platoon, the Federation's fortune in the war has improved—others haven't. He still gets the shakes, which means that every time he overcomes them while he waits to drop, he's proving his civic virtue yet again. Nor has the business changed: the soldiers are still making war personal, bringing the fight to the Arachnids when a massive bomb won't do; they still won't leave anyone behind; and all they need to do is worry about their own small piece of the action. Just like a drill. Repeating Jelly's words from the first Chapter illustrates the continuity of soldiering and warfare, but it also emphasizes the importance of all the men who mentored Johnnie as he grew up in the M.I.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Cap trooper Johnnie Rico always gets the shakes before he "drops" from the spaceship *Roger Young* into a mission. The psychiatrist assures him that the shakes aren't fear—they're more like the excitement of a racehorse. But Johnnie knows that he's "scared silly, every time." Johnnie shakes while the troops are called for pre-drop inspection by Sergeant Jelal, whom they affectionately call "Jelly." He's acting as platoon leader because their former commander, Lieutenant Rasczak, died on the last mission. Jelly is a small but mighty "Finno-Turk from Iskander around Proxima," who is friendly and approachable to the troops when off-duty.

Johnnie Rico tells his own story in first person, and his admission of getting the shakes immediately establishes him as a reliable and relatable narrator. He's not afraid to admit that he gets scared before dropping, and he does so even though the psychiatrist's explanation gives him an out. Johnnie's story begins in what readers will learn is the "Bug War." Later, he will explain how soldiers only see their own little bit of the war, and this introduction replicates that experience for readers, who feel what it's like to not see the whole picture. Sergeant Jelal's friendly relationship with the men establishes the sense of familial camaraderie that characterizes the Mobile Infantry and is one of the reasons Johnnie loves being a soldier so much. Finally, Jelly's bio establishes both the story's interstellar setting—he's from a human colony that orbits a distant star—and the book's utopian vision of a unified humanity where racial and cultural divisions, like his Finnish and Turkish heritage, don't matter.

Jelly inspects everyone's combat equipment (even though it's already been checked by each soldier and by the acting platoon sergeant), and he also checks on the men. When Jenkins's **suit** reads out that he has a fever, Jelly pulls him from the lineup. Johnnie—recently promoted to assistant section leader due to the Lieutenant's death—now has a man missing from his section, which could create a dangerous situation on the ground.

Jenkins's desire to drop even though he's feeling unwell demonstrates his commitment to the M.I. and the power of the military ethos in this world. But if he goes into battle in less than perfect condition, he risks endangering everyone's lives. The needs of the whole team are more important in this case than his individual desire to participate. Johnnie's field promotion establishes his personal merit—yes, Jelly has to fill slots opened by the death of other soldiers, but Johnnie has still been chosen over other possibilities.

Jelly reminds the men of their training, tells them to focus on their mission instead of being heroes, and reiterates the mission brief: the troops will drop in two groups and advance by turns as they surround the target area. This is a raid, not a battle: the goal is to show the enemy that they *could* have destroyed the city but didn't. The troops shouldn't take prisoners or kill anyone unnecessarily, but they *should* use as much "firepower and frightfulness" as possible. Finally, Jelly reminds Rasczak's Roughnecks that they have a reputation to maintain; before the Lieutenant died, he told Jelly to tell the men "that he will always have his eye on you…and that he expects you to *shine*!"

Jelly's pre-drop speech highlights the militaristic values of the Mobile Infantry: coordination, dedication, and destruction. The close-knit devotion of the Roughnecks to each other and to their Lieutenant, even after his death, conveys a key component of the book's celebration of the military: the platoon is a family that cares deeply about its members. Jelly's final words of inspiration, which he attributes to the Lieutenant, serve to keep his memory alive among the men. His words will also show up as significant in Chapter 14.

Johnnie's attention turns to Sergeant Migliaccio, first section leader and platoon chaplain. In the past, chaplains were non-combatants, but Johnnie doesn't understand how someone could "bless anything he's not willing to do himself." Before the drop, "Moslems, Christians, Gnostics, [and] Jews" are all free to see the chaplain.

The platoon's chaplain serves soldiers of all faiths, another indication that humanity in this imagined future has overcome the religious divisions that were the basis for wars in earlier centuries. It's also important that the chaplain is an active duty solider: in the 20th and 21st centuries, chaplains were non-combatants. The militaristic values of the Terran Federation emphasize self-sacrifice as a demonstration of civic virtue, and the ultimate expression is dying to protect others. There can be no non-combatants, because non-combatants aren't making the same sacrifices as everyone else.

Migliaccio comes over to speak privately with Johnnie. This is his first drop as a "non-com," although he doesn't feel that either he or Jelly have moved up the ranks. Migliaccio reminds him to avoid "buy[ing] a farm"—dying—by sticking to the mission and avoiding personal heroics. As the troops climb into their capsules, Johnnie wonders whether the Greeks got the shakes as they climbed into the Trojan Horse. Jelly seals him into the capsule with a final reminder to treat the mission like a drill. Shaking worse than ever, Johnnie waits for his capsule to be deployed. The worst shakes come from knowing that there's no chance of escape if the ship gets hit.

Johnnie's recent promotion has raised him to the rank of "non-com" or non-commissioned officer, giving him authority over and responsibility for the men in his section. This chain of command is a key component of military culture. His inability to truly feel that he's been promoted indicates the profound shock of Lieutenant Rasczak's death; neither he nor anyone else has had time to get used to the new normal. Migliaccio warns Johnnie not to "buy a farm," a euphemism for death commonly used by the cap troopers. Although it may seem to indicate a light attitude towards death, euphemistic language often serves to soften distasteful or alarming subjects. The ever-present reality of death also contributes to Johnnie's pre-drop shakes. In fact, his fear of dying in the tube if the ship gets hit is well-founded: this happens to some of his friends later in the book (Chapter 10). His rumination about the feelings of ancient Greek soldiers connects his adventures to a long history of human militarism stretching back thousands of years.

Suddenly, the G-forces of the ship's deceleration slam Johnnie into his straps. Despite his discomfort, he respects Captain Deladrier and her flying. Most ship captains are females, because their reaction time is faster, and they can withstand more G-forces than males. Johnnie's capsule bumps forward one place at a time toward the end of the launch tube. By the time he's shot into the upper atmosphere, his shakes have stopped.

Both Johnnie's respect for Captain Deladrier and the Terran Federation's preference for female pilots seems to point to a future in which there's less gendered division, just like there's less emphasis on national or religious differences. Her excellent flight skills also introduce the key theme of moral individualism, which values a person's unique, human intuition and skill augmented by training. Johnnie trusts the Captain's skill as much as his own, and remembering their training helps to calm his fears.

While descending, the capsules slough off three layers, slowing down their fall and creating a debris field that confuses ground forces and hides the cap troopers from radar. When he's 1.8 miles from the ground, Johnnie jettisons the final layer of the shell. It's nighttime, but his **suit**'s infrared "snoopers" let him see the terrain clearly, including the river. Someone on the ground shoots into the debris field but misses him. Johnnie deploys his parachute to slow his descent and get out of the attacker's sights.

The capsules offer several forms of protection to the troopers as they drop towards the planet. A Mobile Infantryman is particularly vulnerable because he engages in close-range combat. But he's also valuable to the military, and many precautions are taken to protect infantrymen as much as possible. That Johnnie can fall from nearly two miles in just his suit points to the military's advanced technology, and the snoopers are but one of the super-charged powers they give the cap troopers. The suits protect the troopers just as the cap troopers protect the interests of the Terran Federation.

As he lands on the roof of a building near the river, Johnnie looks for Jelly's beacon and he realizes he's on the wrong side of it. Seeing that Ace, one of his squad leaders, is out of position, Johnnie orders him to fix his formation. Then he jumps across the river while bombing the building, and he's nearly knocked out of the sky because he's too close to the explosion. Realizing he's gotten excited, Johnnie remembers to approach the mission like a drill—with precision. Ace straightens his line but doesn't acknowledge Johnnie's order. Johnnie was promoted above Ace, and he knows that he'll need to assert his dominance over Ace soon.

Johnnie's miscalculation has brought him very close to just the kind of behavior both Jelly and Migliaccio warned him against, and he quickly refocuses himself on his work. Although he gets a thrill from battle, it's his job to be a soldier. There's friction between Ace and Johnnie because Ace is older and more experienced—normally he'd be giving the orders, not taking them. Johnnie worries about asserting his authority over Ace because this will prove his aptitude for leadership in the platoon. In a militaristic culture defined by violence, it's the strongest and best that survive and get promoted.

While jumping the river, Johnnie spotted some important-looking buildings on a hill, and as he awaits his turn to advance, he aims one of his **suit**'s "pee-wee" atomic bombs at it. The flash of the atomic explosion is unmistakable. It destroys the target, forces civilians to shelter against fallout, and may temporarily blind any hostiles unlucky enough to look. As the flash subsides, Johnnie finds himself face to face with a local, whom he "toasts" with his flame-thrower while he jumps towards the next line of buildings.

The futuristic technology of the suits allows each man in the M.I. to be as well armored as a plane or a tank might have been in the 20th or 21st century. Johnnie's atomic bomb, even though it's small, helps to demonstrate the suits' power, both because he's able to carry it with him and because he's shielded from its radioactive fallout. Despite the increasing attention that the troopers have drawn to themselves—shown by Johnnie's encounter with a hostile local—he continues to do his job in a methodical way.

The troopers' **suits** allow them to jump far and high. Johnnie misjudges his next jump and finds himself approaching a roof full of pipes and obstacles and some of the natives (humanoid aliens that are taller and skinnier than humans). Johnnie prefers to fight the "Skinnies" rather than the arachnids because the "**Bugs**" nauseate him. Johnnie "bounces" off. With each jump, he looks for a worthwhile target, hoping to find the waterworks. When he's tempted to jump higher to see farther, he remembers Migliaccio's words and resumes doing things by the book. Just as he thinks he's spotted the waterworks, he hears Jelly's order for the troops to begin circling up and converging.

The suits augment the soldiers' movements, although their technology won't be explained until a later chapter. The distinction between the "Skinnies" and the "Bugs" provides the first clue about the war's circumstances and adds to the futuristic vision of a universe in which humans aren't the only sentient species. Because Johnnie refers to the Arachnid species almost entirely by the derogatory term "Bugs," readers never learn the proper name for the Skinnies; the hostility and competition between these species and the humans reduces Johnnie's ability to recognize their value.

Now that the leapfrogging advance is over, Johnnie can concentrate on speed and destruction. The danger rises as the troops lose the element of surprise, and the locals are beginning to shoot back. Johnnie narrowly escapes a few attacks, including one that leaves him momentarily paralyzed. That's the kind of moment that might make one question military service, but Johnnie is too busy with the mission to second-guess himself. When a building explodes under him, he decides to go through the next few streets at ground level. He cuts into a building and discovers a hive of Skinnies who begin to shoot at him, but he tosses in a bomb and jumps away.

Johnnie's brief series of near misses illustrates the dangers of war, even with the protections offered by the suit. He's saved twice when the discipline and doctrine instilled by his extensive training allow him to react instinctively to threats to his life.

Within minutes, the troops have closed the circle, but because their retrieval beacon hasn't yet arrived, Jelly tells them to continue to destroy things while they converge on their pickup location. The troops call in, but one of Ace's soldiers—Dizzy Flores—is missing. Ace reports that he's already out for pickup, and Johnnie heads out to help, because pickups are the assistant section leader's job. Just then, he hears the retrieval beacon broadcasting the platoon's song, which means that the retrieval vehicle will arrive within three minutes. Johnnie continues toward Flores because "you don't walk away on another cap trooper, not while there's a chance he's still alive."

The mission appears to be going according to plan—so well, in fact, that there's time for the soldiers to destroy still more property before they head back to the ship. Dizzy seems to be in trouble, but the M.I. don't abandon their own. Despite the personal risks—there are still hostile locals out there, and taking time to make a pickup could keep Johnnie and Ace from retrieval—neither hesitates before heading out to rescue him. It takes a deep sense of duty towards others to care for one's mates in this way, and this theme of the mutual responsibility between individuals and groups will be explored throughout Johnnie's story.

Johnnie closes in on Ace's locator beacon, while Ace tells him it's useless and that he should leave. Johnnie ignores him. He finds Ace standing over the grievously wounded Flores. Doctrine says to take a man out of his **suit** and carry him back for retrieval, but Flores's injuries mean he can't safely be removed. Instead, Ace and Johnnie pick him up, suit and all, and begin jumping back with him towards the beacon. The combined power of their two suits is just enough to lift him, but they are still too far away when the retrieval boat lands.

The Flores pickup also extends Ace and Johnnie's earlier conflict over dominance: Ace wants to take full responsibility for his squad member, but Johnnie joins in. The assistant section leader is responsible for pickups, but Johnnie also seems eager to show Ace who's boss. And the fact that hauling Flores back to the retrieval boat ends up requiring both men seems to support Johnnie's choices. In adjusting their actions according to the situation rather than blindly following doctrine, Ace and Johnnie demonstrate the moral individualism idealized in their world.

Jelly delays the troops from boarding just enough to race to Ace and Johnnie and help carry Flores. The four troopers arrive at the boat just in time to board. As they take off, Jelly whispers to himself (as if he's talking to Lieutenant Rasczak), "All present, Lieutenant." Retrieval rendezvous are precisely planned and calculated to coincide with the spaceship's orbit, and they can't be changed. Nevertheless, Captain Deladrier noticed the short delay, manually braked, and readjusted her trajectory on the fly to collect the retrieval boat. Flores "die[s] on the way up."

Jelly also breaks doctrine, but his actions put the entire platoon in jeopardy. Due to the recent loss of Rasczak, Jelly's delay functions—much like his promotion of Johnnie over Ace—to prevent disruption to the family as much as possible. The potentially horrific consequences of his choice are prevented by Captain Deladrier's unique combination of instinct and skill.

CHAPTER 2

Johnnie reminisces about how he became a cap trooper. He never intended to join the military or the infantry. But, approaching high school graduation and his 18th birthday, he told his father he was considering it. Many kids consider service, even though most go to college or start civilian jobs instead. Johnnie thinks he would have remained a civilian if his best friend Carl hadn't planned to volunteer. They were inseparable in high school. Johnnie particularly enjoyed helping science whiz Carl build his electrical engineering projects. Carl's family was less wealthy than Johnnie's, but the boys shared everything, including the helicopter Johnnie got for his 14th birthday.

Johnnie begins an extended flashback in which he recalls his training and military service up to the beginning of the mission he's just described. The Terran Federation's army is entirely voluntary, which is part of the book's futuristic vision. In the mid-20th century, when the book was written, the United States still had a compulsory draft system; it wouldn't transition to an all-volunteer force until the 1970s. Johnnie's history with his friend Carl foreshadows his military success because it shows that his temperament is suited for taking orders and working cooperatively with others. And the way the two boys share everything, despite their differences in intelligence and socioeconomic status, previews the meritocratic aspects of the military—the idea that people are rewarded according to their skills and character—in which both Johnnie and Carl will make successful soldier recruits.

In his ongoing flashback, Johnnie is surprised to learn that Carl plans to serve a term in the Federal Service before college. But he is also impressed by Carl's attitude that joining is "natural and right and obvious." To impress his friend, he declares he will volunteer, too. Carl expresses doubt that Johnnie's Father will let him. Although Johnnie legally has the sole right to make the decision, Carl believes Mr. Rico will find a way to discourage his son.

Carl is the first in a long series of examples of the right kind of soldier—ones who volunteers to protect and serve society rather than for personal glory or gain. In other words, his choice to volunteer demonstrates his civic virtue, or the qualities that make a person a good potential citizen. Johnnie has yet to discover his own civic virtue—which is why Carl thinks his Father will be able to prevent him from volunteering even if he can't physically stop him.

His Father's response, on hearing about Johnnie's plan, is to ask if his son has gone crazy. He ignores Johnnie's muttered reply while declaring that the desire to serve is just another predictable stage of childhood. As a toddler, Johnnie broke his Mother's Ming vase because he didn't understand its value. When he was older, he secretly smoked his Father's cigars, which his parents ignored, because boys must learn that "men's vices are not for them" experientially. Next, Johnnie started noticing girls. In his final stage of development, a boy decides to join up, get married, or both. Johnnie's Father experienced these desires himself, but luckily avoided ruining his life by pursuing either.

Johnnie's deferential response to his Father betrays immaturity and dependence—qualities his military training will help him to grow out of. Mr. Rico's recollections of Johnnie's childhood are ironic, because he lists situations where Johnnie's parents realized he had to learn his own lessons to grow up, yet he wants to decide Johnnie's life plan for him. If Johnnie obeys his father's wishes, he will be tied to and dependent on his parents for the rest of his life, rather than asserting his individual rights.

Johnnie protests that he only plans a term of service, but his Father interrupts. He reminds Johnny that the family has avoided politics for generations. He can't imagine that Johnnie would consider service except under the influence of his teacher, Mr. Dubois. Noting that a taxpayer has some rights, Mr. Rico expresses his opinion that schools shouldn't be used for covert military recruitment. Johnnie interrupts to say that Mr. Dubois, with his superior attitude, seemed to discourage service. But his Father doesn't believe it. He planned on Johnnie studying business at Harvard, going to the Sorbonne, then coming home to join the family business, where he would work his way up from stock clerk to boss.

Mr. Rico's comments hint at the power of the military in the Terran Federation and its limits on citizenship: he pays taxes but only has "some" rights; military recruitment is somehow happening in the schools; and military service is connected with the "politics" that the family has avoided. But Mr. Rico's plans for his son are as limiting—if not more so—than Federal Service. In the army, Johnnie will have to earn his rank and the respect of the other soldiers, whereas in the family business, his ultimate leadership is a foregone conclusion. Because his Father opposes his military service, Johnnie can only express free will by volunteering.

Johnnie remains silent, while his Father claims to understand his desire. He would have supported it, if there were a war. But because he believes that war is a thing of the past, both on Terra and between humans and other species, he feels that Federal Service is a holdover from the past and a way for parasitic people to live on taxpayer support and then act superior for the rest of their lives. Johnnie defends Carl, who certainly isn't parasitic, but his Father retorts that he's misguided. He then presents Johnnie with his graduation present: a solo vacation to Mars. Johnnie, who loves to travel, is surprised and pleased. He feels that his future should proceed according to his father's plan, even as he understands that the trip may be a bribe.

In talking with his son, Mr. Rico becomes emblematic of the ignorant attitudes of civilians. Military service doesn't make sense to him unless there's a war, and he believes (incorrectly, as it will turn out) that humanity has evolved beyond the need for war. Rather than the gateway to full citizenship and participation in society, Mr. Rico sees Federal Service as a way for inferior people to take advantage of everyone else for support and respect. Yet, although he sees citizenship as a bribe to parasites, he's not above a little bribery himself to accomplish his goals for his son.

Meanwhile, Carl continues to assert his right to volunteer, despite his own family's reservations. Johnnie thinks about this during the last day of History and Moral Philosophy Class. Everyone is required to take H&MP, but no one can fail, so the students sometimes debate the teacher. On this day, Mr. Dubois—a veteran with a missing left arm—argues with a girl about her mother's claim that violence doesn't solve anything. Pointing to historical examples, he claims that violence is the most powerful force in history and that forgetting it means risking one's life and freedom.

Carl's ongoing assertions of independent conscience—his determination to volunteer even in the face of his family's disapproval—troubles Johnnie's easy acceptance of his Father's demands. Importantly, Johnnie thinks about the difference between himself and his friend during History and Moral Philosophy Class. It's this class—taught by veterans and designed to teach students the value of citizenship—that Mr. Rico meant when he complained that high schools are covert recruitment centers. In contrast to Mr. Rico's belief that war is no longer necessary, Mr. Dubois claims that violence is the primary force in history. The student parroting her mother's incorrect beliefs mirrors—and implicitly criticizes—Johnnie's acceptance of his Father's life plan for him.

Bemoaning his students' lack of independent thought, Mr. Dubois asks Johnnie the difference between a civilian and a soldier. Johnnie quotes the textbook definition: a soldier takes personal responsibility for defending the body politic, unlike a civilian. But because his answer is rote, Mr. Dubois doesn't think Johnnie or any of the students truly believes in civic virtue themselves, and he dismisses the class in disgust.

Just like the girl repeating her mother's words, Johnnie quotes the textbook definition of citizenship verbatim. He doesn't understand or believe it himself, which is what Mr. Dubois wants the students to be able to do. The definition, however, isn't wrong, it's just that Johnnie doesn't have the experience to understand it yet. The first half of the book, which covers his military training and early career, traces his maturation as he comes to understand and embody the soldier-citizen's responsibility in himself.

Johnnie is too embarrassed to admit to Carl that he's changed his mind. So he accompanies his friend to the recruiting office on Carl's 18th birthday. The boys run into their classmate and friend Carmencita Ibañez. It is her birthday, too, and she's come to volunteer because she wants to be a spaceship pilot. Although Johnnie always considered her ornamental, she's also smart and fast. Listening to his two friends, Johnnie finds himself announcing his intention to volunteer as well; unable to leave well enough alone, he says that he wants to be a pilot like Carmen. Carl hopes to use his electrical engineering skills in Starside R&D.

Carmen embodies the "natural" superiority of women's reflexes and stature for piloting, like Captain Deladrier in Chapter 1. However, Johnnie's attitude towards her—his surprise that she's as useful as she is decorative—undermines the book's attempts to claim that Federal Service is equal-opportunity. Johnnie's desire to impress his friends overwhelms deference to his parents' wishes and betrays his immaturity. Carl and Carmen are suited for the jobs they hope to have because they've prepared in high school. On the other hand, Johnnie has little awareness of his abilities and limitations, so he's more like the society parasite his Father disparaged earlier than the ideal soldier, according to the definition he gave Mr. Dubois.

Entering the recruiting station, Johnnie, Carl, and Carmen find a Fleet Sergeant (whose name is later revealed to be Sergeant Ho) behind the desk, wearing a dress uniform draped with ribbons and awards that Johnnie can't yet decipher. He is missing his right arm and both legs. He welcomes Carmen warmly, admitting her for intake without hesitation. But his attitude towards Johnnie and Carl is much harsher. He tells them directly that he's been put out front to dissuade people from volunteering. Many want to serve their term just to "earn a franchise" and claim veteran status. They don't care about combat. Because it's everyone's right to serve but not everyone has what it takes to be a soldier, it's hard to find jobs for everyone.

This is the first time that franchise and full citizenship have been connected to military service, clarifying Mr. Rico's earlier comments about his rights. The potential reward of citizenship and political power calls into question assertions about the voluntary nature of Federal Service, since it provides a reason other than militarism and civic virtue to join up. Sergeant Ho worries about low-life parasites taking advantage of Federal Service as much as Johnnie's Father does. His warnings introduce the idea of right and wrong reasons for service. "Combat" is a good reason, but wanting the prestige of citizenship is a bad one. This distinction is a key feature of the book's militarism—its devotion to the idea of violence and military service as their own ends—and its reluctance to acknowledge that not all soldiers are, in fact, noble and selfless.

Even a common soldier must have very specialized skills. The Federal Service can't afford stupid soldiers, so they've come up with terrible jobs to convince people to leave before their term is complete or teach them the full value of their citizenship. Sergeant Ho's job is to discourage boys like Carl and Johnnie from joining. Pointing to his missing legs, he reminds them that even those who end up as proper soldiers are likely to be seriously injured or killed. He asks why they don't just go home or to college instead, because a service term isn't a "kiddie camp," even during peacetime.

Countering Mr. Rico's erroneous perception that war has disappeared, Sergeant Ho's body reminds Carl and Johnnie that war is present and dangerous, even if civilians like Mr. Rico don't see it. And, even if the boys escape this kind of physical damage and suffering, there's plenty of misery to go around in the Army. The point of service is proving one's civic virtue, and it's hard for a volunteer to prove that he's made of soldier—and future citizen—material.

Carl and Johnnie reiterate that they have come to join up. Sergeant Ho reminds them that they can't pick their service. Although recruits can state their preferences, they might not get what they want: first there must be a need for one's choice, then a recruit must demonstrate both aptitude and preparation, and one's actual orders may be for something else. Carl believes that he can qualify for electronics. The sergeant's warning makes Johnnie hesitate, but he knows that if he doesn't go for it, he'll spend the rest of his life wondering if he is anything more than the boss's son, so he decides to "chance it" on service.

Carl and Carmen both have aptitude and preparation for military services. Johnnie doesn't; at this point, he's far better suited for his Father's plans. But he wants to volunteer even if he gets a terrible job, because he desires to earn his place in the world by his own efforts. This desire hints at the civic virtue he actually possesses but which is still underdeveloped and hidden inside him.

Sergeant Ho takes the boys' IDs and sends them for physical exams. The civilian doctor tells Johnnie that military service is for "ants;" the privilege of franchise is nominal, and most people don't use it properly anyway. He counsels him to back out while he still can. Nevertheless, Johnnie goes back to Sergeant Ho with Carl. The Sergeant gathers witnesses who scrutinize the documents and confirm the boys' mental competence. Sergeant Ho then administers their service oath. Johnnie pledges of his own free will to serve a minimum of two years defending the Terran Federation and its Constitution against internal and external enemies, to obey the orders of his superiors, and to carry out the duties and obligations of a full citizen upon the honorable completion of his term.

Although Johnnie says repeatedly that he didn't intend to join, he still finds himself at the recruiting center with all the necessary paperwork; it seems that he's destined for service even if he's not consciously aware of it. The doctor's feelings about "franchise"—the right to vote and full citizenship—mirror Mr. Rico's. It's clear that not everyone values citizenship, and that people can be successful and respected even without it. The Terran Federation's Oath is based on the United States Military's Service Oath, although its clauses about citizenship are part of the book's science fiction future.


Although Johnnie has analyzed the Oath in History and Moral Philosophy, it feels different to commit himself to its heavy and unstoppable clauses. Afterwards, he doesn't yet feel like a soldier, but he doesn't feel like a civilian either. Once the paperwork is completed, Sergeant Ho releases Carl and Johnnie to 48 hours of leave. This is an opportunity to change their minds without disgrace. If they don't report back, the only consequence would be that they couldn't change their minds and try to join up later. Johnnie's parents are upset, refusing to talk to him or say goodbye. Only their houseboys and the cook see him off.

History and Moral Philosophy Class teaches students about civic virtue and citizenship. But swearing the Oath shows Johnnie the distance between book learning and personal experience. The opportunity to walk away without punishment rather than reporting for basic training provides another indication of how lightly some people take Federal Service—and how willing the Service is to let these potential parasites go. Despite his parents' displeasure, Johnnie doesn't abandon his plans, again showing that he has more civic virtue than he yet realizes.


Johnnie's aptitude tests quickly confirm he won't be a pilot, so he lists his other preferences and undergoes more testing. He puts in for a Navy post because he wants to travel. Barring that, he lists Military Intelligence; psychological, chemical, or biological warfare; combat ecology; or logistics. At the very end of the list, he puts K-9 corps and Infantry, because these at least are combat outfits. When he meets with the placement officer, Mr. Weiss, Johnnie is pleased to see his high school transcript. He is proud of his high school career because he hasn't gunned for grades or slacked off and has been a "big man around the school" with his various clubs and activities.

Unlike his friends, Johnnie is unprepared for Federal Service. Again, this lack of preparation makes him seem like the kind of undisciplined person who signs up for the wrong reasons. In addition, his assignment preferences demonstrate his immaturity and lack of self-awareness; for example, he thinks of the Navy as an exciting and free way to travel. Still, his desire to serve in a combat role hints at a greater sense of virtue than he yet realizes.


Mr. Weiss questions Johnnie about his history with dogs and explains that the Federal Service's trained neodogs, or "Calebs," are artificially enhanced and symbiotically attached to their human handlers. Since Johnnie's attachment to his own childhood dog was so casual, Mr. Weiss concludes that he isn't a good match for the K-9 corps. Only then does Johnnie realize that he's failed to get any of his other preferences and the only thing left on his list is Infantry. Mr. Weiss regrets that Johnnie didn't take more useful classes but notes that he has earned the endorsement of Mr. Dubois—whom Mr. Weiss knows. Accepting his recommendation, Mr. Weiss asks Johnnie how he'd like to be an infantryman.

Johnnie's story about his childhood dog reveals how deeply dependent he's been in his relationship with his parents. Prior to volunteering, he'd never stood up to them. While an ability to follow superiors' orders is necessary in the military, Johnnie still needs to develop the moral individualism to take responsibility for his own actions. But, while he has misjudged his own capacity for civic virtue, Mr. Dubois hasn't. His endorsement takes the place of his parents' blessing and foreshadows his role as one of the alternate father figures who mentors Johnnie.

On his way out of the Federal Building, Johnnie encounters a familiar face—Sergeant Ho. Off duty, he wears prosthetic limbs and civilian clothes and no longer has to "put on my horror show." He is delighted to hear that Johnnie has been assigned to the infantry, his old outfit. He tells Johnnie that everyone else in the Army is just a functionary as he warmly shakes Johnnie's hand with his life-like prosthetic. Back at his temporary quarters, Johnnie's roommate pities him for his assignment because the infantry is for "poor, stupid clowns." But Johnnie defends their honor and offers to fight his roommate over it.

Sergeant Ho's off-duty appearance serves to soften the very real possibility of injury and death that Johnnie now faces. And because he is still a child who needs the direction of an adult or authority figure, he expresses uncertainty in his assignment until Sergeant Ho's pride in the M.I. inspires him. This gives Johnnie a sense of belonging—demonstrated by lashing out at his roommate's mockery—that has the potential to blossom into personal pride during basic training.

CHAPTER 3

Johnnie goes to Camp Arthur Currie for his basic training. The recruits live in tents, and because he is used to a warm climate, Johnnie resents the cold of the northern prairie. On the first morning, the instructors wake the recruits before dawn. When Johnnie tries to go back to sleep, he finds his whole cot tipped over. Within ten minutes, the recruits are dressed and lined up outside, facing a large, "mean-looking" man. He is polished, "wide-awake, relaxed, and rested," giving the impression that he never needed sleep. He introduces himself as Career Ship's Sergeant Zim, the company commander.

The first day of basic training illustrates how soft and unprepared Johnnie is. Conversely, Zim demonstrates the epitome of military professionalism, and his demeanor contrasts sharply with the uncomfortable and cold recruits. He foreshadows what successful recruits can become, but at this point it's not clear to Johnnie whether he'll be one of the successful ones.

Sergeant Zim reminds the recruits to salute and say "Sir" when spoking to him or to anyone else carrying an instructor's baton. While he speaks, someone sneezes, but no one will admit to being the man. Finally, Jenkins speaks up, saying he sneezed because he was cold. Zim warms him up by assigning him a run around a distant building, with a sergeant to pace him. Turning back to the rest of the shivering recruits, he addresses them as slack-bellied "apes" and declares that he's never seen such a group of mama's boys in his life. Johnnie forgets being cold while he listens to Zim's creative description of the recruits' every failing. He feels respect for Zim rather than feeling insulted.

Jenkins's run indicates that everything, even the soldiers' bodies, is subject to military discipline from this point on. Zim calls the recruits "mama's boys" because they are soft and undisciplined, in contrast to "men." The military can be a path of discipline and maturation for successful soldiers, and it's his job to turn as many mama's boys as he can into men. Johnnie's reaction to Zim's insults is important: he feels curious and impressed rather than stung. This is yet another indication of his innate aptitude for the military lifestyle, even if he doesn't yet realize it.

Zim asks if there is a man in the crowd who will fight him. Eventually, a large recruit with a thick accent, Breckinridge, volunteers. Zim tosses his baton aside and quickly bests Breckinridge, accidentally breaking his wrist in the process. Zim sends him for medical treatment with a friendly slap on the back. Next, a pair of German recruits—Heinreich and Meyer—step up to fight. Johnnie thinks he sees the Germans try to outflank Zim, who quickly knocks them both out.

Despite his age, Zim quickly bests several recruits in hand-to-hand combat, suggesting that military power is not simply rooted in brute, physical force. Although he's clearly dangerous in a fight, he banters with Heinreich and Meyer and he slaps Breckinridge on the back in a friendly way after injuring him—the fighting isn't personal, it's just a part of military culture. The range of recruits—some of whom speak German better than English—provides another reminder that 20th- and 21st-century national boundaries don't have the same importance in the Earth of this future.

Zim asks for more volunteers. And a small recruit named Shujumi—the son of a Colonel whom Zim knows—steps forward. They agree to use martial arts contest rules. Shujumi initially throws Zim, but Zim lands on his feet and quickly returns to the fight, where he easily overpowers Shujumi. Zim then reveals that he was trained by Shujumi's father.

The martial arts in which Shujumi is practiced emphasize set forms and rigorous discipline, so his bout with Zim follows "rules" and reinforces the idea that fighting is a disciplined practice, not a free-for-all. The fact that Shujumi's father—himself a general—trained Zim again shows the transnational unity of this future humanity and emphasizes the familial component of the military, where everyone seems to know everyone else.

Zim leads the recruits through their morning exercises, without breaking a sweat. This is the first and only time that Johnnie sees him before breakfast. After exercises, the recruits run to the mess tent to eat, because they run everywhere at Camp Currie. Breckinridge, sporting a cast, is already there. He amicably swears that he will eventually best Zim, but Johnnie doubts he can. Even though he dislikes Zim, he appreciates the man's style.

By joining in the morning exercises, Zim both shows off his physical fitness (he's not even out of breath) and demonstrates that he's not asking the recruits to do anything he himself can't or won't do. This emphasizes the fraternal feeling cultivated in the M.I. By taking his loss and injury in good humor, Breckinridge demonstrates the character of a future soldier. Zim will become an important father figure to Johnnie later in the book, so his grudging appreciation—despite his initial dislike— for the sergeant instructor lays the groundwork for their future relationship.

Breakfast tastes good to Johnnie; during basic, mealtimes are the only break from instructors' commands. Jenkins returns partway through breakfast, out of breath and angry that Zim denied him a chance to catch his breath. As he eats, Jenkins quietly cusses Zim out, and when Zim leaves, he loudly asks what kind of a mother could have made such a man. One of the corporals answers that sergeants don't have mothers—they reproduce themselves like bacteria.

In contrast to Breckinridge, Jenkins isn't yet showing an aptitude for military life. He takes his "punishment" too personally, and his anger at Zim demonstrates a lack of self-discipline that contrasts with the instructor's military professionalism. The joke cuts through Jenkins's anger and shows that, while military business is deadly serious, there's also room for fun and camaraderie.

CHAPTER 4

Within two weeks, the recruits begin to sleep on the ground. Boot camp teaches Johnnie that the key to happiness is a good night's sleep. In theory, the recruits are given eight hours for sleep and an hour and a half in the evening for their own activities. But because they are subject to drills, night watch, extra duty assignments, laundry, uniform maintenance, haircuts, and personal hygiene, they often have much less free time. When they do have some free time, they use it to write letters, gossip, play cards, or sleep, which is widely regarded as the best use of it.

Basic training is challenging, and one of the biggest changes from civilian life is how little control the recruits have over their time. From a privileged childhood in which he received helicopters as birthday gifts, Johnnie now finds happiness in the smallest of things, like a good night's sleep or a few extra hours for a nap. Military life is hardening him and preparing him to withstand discomfort and distress.

Looking back, Johnnie maintains that boot camp was made just hard as necessary. The meanness and difficulty of training were planned and carried out with surgical precision. The military's psychologists prevented dumb bullies from becoming instructors. Making things as hard as possible for recruits required smart, detached, and "dedicated craftsmen" who could trim away those recruits not cut out for military service.

The difficulties of training serve an important purpose. Since the lives of all soldiers depend on their comrades, and since Federal Service is the gateway to citizenship, it's incredibly important that only those men who are cut out for military service make it through basic training. This reinforces the militarism in the Terran Federation's culture: the government is run by people who have survived this training. In addition, the discomfort of military discipline contrasts with the softness and moral decay of a privileged, civilian life.

Some recruits were too old to keep up the pace. There was a 35-year-old named Carruthers who shouted that it wasn't fair and that he'd be back while he was carried away on a stretcher. He rejected his medical discharge and became a third cook on a troop transport. When Johnnie encountered him years later, he was still proud of his time at Camp Currie.

Carruthers is another example of the ideal soldier, even though he can't make it in the M.I. His refusal of medical discharge by itself isn't enough to prove his civic virtue. But his willingness to accept any position, even the incredibly lowly one of third cook, demonstrates his devotion to Federal Service as its own reward.

Thinning the ranks saves resources, but most importantly, it prevents soldiers who aren't prepared from ending up in combat, because sending unprepared soldiers into battle isn't fair to society, the soldier's teammates, or the soldier himself. If someone were to ask Johnnie if boot camp was harder than necessary, he would answer that the next time he goes into battle, he'd rather be beside men who graduated from Camp Currie or its Siberian equivalent.

With the benefit of hindsight, Johnnie is confident that basic training was exactly as hard as it needed to be to get rid of the kinds of men he wouldn't want to find himself in battle with. Johnnie takes it for granted that sending an unqualified man into battle is not only dangerous, but it's unfair to the man. However, he doesn't really consider why "unqualified" people might try to make it in Federal Service, even though powerfully incentivized by the reward of full citizenship.

Still, it sometimes felt mean. Johnnie recalls how he once received a too-large tunic for parade. On this occasion, he complains to the supply sergeant. Because of his fatherly manner—and Johnnie's inability to interpret his award ribbons—Johnnie thinks of him as more approachable than the instructors. But the supply sergeant doesn't have time for Johnnie's complaints either. He offers Johnnie a needle and thread and tells him to tailor the tunic himself. Johnnie's work leaves Zim unimpressed, so he catches extra duty. But he does a better job before the next parade.

While he's just a soldier recruit, Johnnie hasn't learned the nuances of military culture. Therefore, he doesn't treat the supply sergeant with the respect he deserves. Nevertheless, the supply sergeant treats Johnnie decently, teaching him how to take responsibility for himself. Johnnie initially expects someone else to fix the tunic, like an irresponsible civilian. But listening to the supply sergeant and learning how to properly tailor his uniform for himself shows that he's learning to take care of himself instead of relying on others.

The first six weeks of basic training are mostly hazing and conditioning. Sometimes the recruits will march out and stay in the field, so Johnnie learns to sneak sugar and crackers from the mess tent. He's promoted to recruit-corporal after his squad leader goes to the hospital. During a drill in which the recruits sleep on the prairie without rations or bed bags, Johnnie organizes his squad to share their snacks and learns to huddle like sheep with his mates to stay warm. The next morning, he initially feels pretty rough, but he warms up as he starts to move around. Johnnie sticks it out even as other recruits resign.

Johnnie learns quickly how to take care of himself. Sneaking extra items from the mess tent might not be quite according to regulations, but it's the kind of self-reliance and quick thinking that the M.I. trooper needs to augment his training. Sharing snacks and sleeping in a huddle teaches Johnnie and the others how to balance their individual needs with the good of the whole group. And again, although Johnnie downplays its importance, his quick promotion to "recruit-corporal" indicates that his instructors see his potential, even if he himself doesn't.

Flashing forward briefly in his memory, Johnnie recalls enduring a similar, harder test twelve weeks later, when the recruits are dumped, alone and naked, in the Canadian Rockies and tasked with finding their way back to base. He hates the Army the whole time, but he makes it. He hunts rabbits for food and turns their skins into moccasins and a coat for protection. Two other recruits die trying. Johnnie and the rest of the class spend two weeks searching for them because "the Mobile Infantry doesn't abandon its own while there is any thin shred of hope." The dead recruits—one of whom is Breckinridge—are posthumously awarded the rank of Private First Class and buried with military honors. They are the first—but not the last—to die in training.

When Johnnie hunts rabbits in the wilderness and fashions their skins into a rudimentary coat, he completes the character development arc begun by tailoring his own uniform for parade. Before, he looked to others to fix his problems, but now he's becoming disciplined enough to take care of himself. He has already claimed that training is just as hard as it needs to be to properly prepare soldiers for duty, and he doesn't make exceptions for the deaths of three recruits during the Rocky Mountains exercise. As the book repeatedly claims, Federal Service demonstrates a soldier's willingness to put his life on the line. The dead recruits are awarded their rank and buried with military honors because they made good on this commitment even though they never saw a real battlefield.

CHAPTER 5

Before the Canadian Rockies test, however, the recruits complete a lot of combat training at Camp Currie, with everything from their fists to simulated nuclear weapons. As the ranks thin out, Zim spends less time on formations and more time on personal instruction. Johnnie likes him much better as a personal teacher.

Johnnie's flashback emphasizes the importance of personal skill. Even with the Terran Federation's futuristic technology, a soldier's value lies in his ability to fight with whatever weapons are available to him—even his bare hands. Zim's devotion to his recruits' success models the importance the M.I. places on making good soldiers and worthy citizens.

Once, Ted Hendrick asks why they spend so much time on hand-to-hand combat, insisting that an unarmed man hasn't got any chance against one who has dangerous weapons. Zim answers that there are no dangerous weapons, only dangerous men. The whole point of training is to train soldiers who are deadly as long as they're alive. Hendrick isn't convinced; he wants to know the point of foot soldiers risking their lives when a "professor type can do so much more just by pushing a button." If Hendrick doesn't already understand the importance of being a soldier from his History and Moral Philosophy class, Zim isn't going to be able to give him a satisfactory answer. Nevertheless, Hendrick is intent on "sweat[ing] out" his term.

Zim's lecture lays out the militaristic values of the Terran Federation when it emphasizes the value of lethal soldiers and claims that violence is the key to out-competing and dominating other species. Taking on a better-armed opponent can also be a sign of bravery. Hendrick's inability to understand Zim's answer—a sign that he hasn't internalized the lessons of History and Moral Philosophy class—should be a warning sign that he's not cut out for soldiering. His plan to "sweat out" or survive his term further confirms that his heart isn't in being a soldier.

Zim asks Hendrick if he'd cut a baby's head off just to teach it a lesson. Warfare is like that: sometimes it's necessary to use a smaller amount of force—"controlled and purposeful violence"—to support the government's decisions. The soldier's job is to enforce these decisions, not to make them. If this answer can't satisfy Hendrick, Zim thinks he should resign and go home, because he won't ever make a successful soldier. Zim commands the recruits to resume their knife throwing practice, and Hendrick misses his next target.

Zim's definition of war begins to refine the book's idea of the importance of violence as a historical and evolutionary force. The point isn't just brute violence. It's using violence to achieve specific aims. Zim's theory of purposeful violence echoes the destruction and chaos of the mission on the Skinnies' planet in Chapter 1, and looks forward to the mission on Planet P in Chapter 13. Missing the target with his knife parallels the way that Hendrick misses the point of being a solider and foreshadows his short-lived future in the M.I.

The recruits train with weapons ranging from sticks and wire to simulated nuclear weapons. They also use obsolete weapons like guns and bayonets. Most of the training is simulated, but their guns have one live round in every 500. This may be dangerous, but so is life, and it teaches recruits the instinct for finding cover and keeps them continually alert. When their attention slackens, the instructors warn that the incidence of real rounds could be increased if necessary. One recruit is shot—nonfatally. The instructors don't take cover, but none are wounded or killed.

The recruits' training stresses the continuity of war over time, and it reinforces the idea expressed earlier by Mr. Dubois that violence is the driving force of history. Using live rounds in practice guns, which Johnnie dismisses by saying that life is dangerous, pokes at the idea of moral decline in the 20th-century context in which the book was written—the danger the recruits readily accept, then, makes them tougher than their historical counterparts.


On a certain occasion, Johnnie loses his recruit-corporal rank because one of his squad mates does something bad. He complains to Zim that he wasn't involved, but Zim retorts that Johnnie is responsible for what his men do at all times.

Because Johnnie doesn't give the full story of his punishment, he implies that the specific circumstances are unimportant. It doesn't matter what his men did—whether it was serious or trivial—because personal discipline is important in all things. In the next chapter, he'll describe witnessing what it looks like for Sergeant Zim and Captain Frankel to take this kind of responsibility for one of the recruits' misdeeds.



One day, after a training accident injures his shoulder, Johnnie is put on light duty in battalion commander Captain Frankel's office. He feels sorry for himself due to his sore shoulder and demotion. Suddenly, Sergeant Zim enters the office looking grim and bruised. With him are two armed recruits and Ted Hendrick, who has a split lip and disheveled uniform. Surprised, Captain Frankel asks what's going on. Zim reports two disciplinary actions against a recruit: disregard of tactical doctrine and disobedience of orders. Because the recruit refused immediate administrative discipline and demanded a hearing, Zim must bring the issue to the Captain's attention.

Johnnie displays his lingering immaturity through self-pity. He's not yet willing to take full responsibility for himself and his men, and he's not yet able to accept the repercussions of his voluntary service, in which injury is an ever-present possibility. The two charges are important: Hendrick is in trouble for what he did (disregard of doctrine) and how he did it (disobedience of orders). Together, his actions demonstrate a lack of the personal discipline befitting a soldier, and his demand to speak to Frankel adds to this. His physical actions reflect the lack of conviction he demonstrated at the beginning of the chapter.

On the first disciplinary count, Hendrick disregarded a "freeze" order, in which the recruits were expected to instantly freeze and remain completely still until released. The M.I. tells stories of men who'd died in freezes without moving or making a sound. On the second count, he had refused orders to return to the freeze. Captain Frankel deprives him of his free time, orders extra duty, and limits his meals to bread and water, noting that this punishment is as severe as he is allowed to make it without having a court-martial. He tries to dismiss Hendrick, who refuses and complains that he hasn't been able to tell his side of the story.

Military discipline requires the recruits to follow doctrine immediately and fully, even when it is uncomfortable, dangerous, or difficult. The stories of men dying in freezes, which are likely tall tales, reinforce the importance of total obedience. Frankel's attempt to quickly punish and dismiss Hendrick hints that he should be in a lot more trouble, but Hendrick is unable to see or understand how hard the Captain is working to protect him, despite his disobedience. In asking to tell his side, he demands an acknowledgement of his individual rights.

Hendrick claims he'd been unable to hold the freeze because he'd been on a stinging anthill. Captain Frankel, disgusted, asks if he was willing to get himself or his teammates killed over a few ants. He tells Hendrick that even if they'd been rattlesnakes, he would have been expected and required to freeze. In his own defense, Hendrick complains that Zim laid hands on him, and rants about the corporal punishment handed out by the instructors.

Hendrick thinks that his discomfort is enough of a mitigating circumstance to excuse him from following orders, demonstrating his fundamental misunderstanding of military life. Not only is he unable to follow orders, but because movement in a freeze could draw enemy attention, he's also demonstrated that he sees his individual needs as more important than those of the whole group of soldiers. Hendrick rejects the right of the instructors to practice corporal (physical) punishment, striking at a key pillar of Federation society.

Captain Frankel explains that Hendrick's superiors have every right to strike him in the line of duty; sometimes superior officers are even required to kill the men under their command—for example, if they refuse to fight because of fear. He explains that the batons show who has authority and the instructors use them to strike recruits—because corporal punishment is much more effective than words. Moreover, the "impersonal rod of authority" preserves the dignity of the recruit, although kicking him would be just as legal. Captain Frankel explains all of this to Hendrick, who'd been a "bad boy," so he'd understand why he was being punished. To help his effort to set Hendrick straight, Frankel asks why he thought he'd been mistreated.

Frankel's lecture lays out the book's case for corporal punishment, which will be explored in later chapters. Importantly, it is efficient and impersonal, a tool to help external rules become internal self-discipline. Frankel dismisses Hendrick's actions as those of a spoiled child because he doesn't have the dignity to accept his punishment without external complaint. He doesn't even seem to understand what he signed up for when he volunteered, indicating both immaturity and a lack of the civic virtue that is so important to the book's conception of military service.

Hendrick explains that he'd tried to move just a few feet off the anthill, but that Zim knocked him to the ground and yelled at him. Hendrick jumped up and "popped [Zim] one." Captain Frankel, expressing disbelief that Hendrick would hit his company commander, orders him to be silent. Hendrick mutters that he wants to resign while Frankel quickly confirms that the "pertinent articles" have been published to Zim's company. Johnnie notices Zim's now obvious bruise and wonders why the commander hasn't.

Hendrick's inability to understand why a small move during a practice drill should matter so much further drives home the idea that he doesn't have the personal discipline required to make a good soldier. Hitting Zim shows a lack of self-control, even after Zim emphasized that war is controlled *violence. Hendrick hasn't been paying attention to what service entails, either in the words of the Oath or the ideas of his instructors. The attempts of Frankel and Zim to avoid discussing Hendrick's worst crime (hitting Zim) demonstrate the self-discipline that Hendrick lacks and provide an example of how far the M.I. will go to take care of its soldiers.*

Each week on Sunday, the instructors read the Laws and Regulations of the Military Forces to the recruits. They only really paid attention to the "thirty-one ways to crash land," or the capital offenses. Johnnie suddenly remembers that these include striking a superior officer. He is stunned to realize that Hendrick might hang for his crime, especially as the recruits regularly try to hit Zim during hand-to-hand combat exercises.

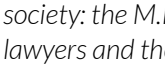
Like "buying a farm," "crash landing" is a euphemism for a very serious situation: execution. If Johnnie is correct in his assessment that the recruits pay attention to the list of capital offenses, it's surprising that Hendrick admitted to striking Zim. Hendrick and Johnnie are both "sweating out" a term to gain citizenship, but there's a clear distinction between them: Johnnie's paying attention and keeping his complaints to himself. Hendrick's insubordination indicates a total lack of self-control and provides a contrast to Johnnie's own growing sense of virtue.

Frankel orders Johnnie to call regimental headquarters, and he requests an officer to judge a court-martial. He then gathers the witnesses and asks Hendrick if he wants witnesses for his defense. Hendrick repeats his request to resign.

Once Hendrick has openly admitted to his actions, Frankel must use the "impartial rod" of military discipline to punish him according to the law. Hendrick—still demonstrating his lack of discipline—tries to avoid punishment by resigning from the service.

Lieutenant Spieksma arrives from regimental HQ and convenes a court-martial, charging Hendrick with striking his superior officer while the Federation was in a state of emergency. Johnnie is appointed officer of the court, and within twenty minutes, the two recruits and their company commander, Corporal Mahmud, have all testified. Zim isn't called. Hendrick waives his right to cross-examine the witnesses and asks for a lawyer. However, legal counsel isn't permitted for field court-martials. Hendrick also waives his right to testify. Spieksma asks him if he was aware of the regulations before his offense. Hendrick acknowledges that he was. He has no answer when asked if he can add anything to mitigate or explain his actions. But when Spieksma asks if he feels anything about the trial was unfair, Hendrick complains it was all unfair, because Zim hit him first.

The fact that the Terran Federation is in a state of emergency doesn't get much attention at this point, but it's a hint of the impending Bug War. Hendrick's request for a lawyer arises from his fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the military in his society: the M.I. is its own world, and civilian considerations like lawyers and the right to self-defense don't apply. Hendrick complains that the trial—like Zim's treatment of him—is unfair, because he didn't get the result he wanted, even though his superior officers have been intent on reducing his punishment as much as possible. His focus on "fairness" also previews complaints Mr. Dubois will have about the entitlement of the citizens in 20th-century democracies in Chapter 8.



Lieutenant Spieksma finds Hendrick guilty as charged and sentences him to ten lashes and a Bad Conduct Discharge. Hendrick restates his wish to resign, but Spieksma refuses to allow it. He adds that Hendrick is getting off easy because a field court-martial can assign no greater punishment than lashes. If Captain Frankel had required a general court-martial, the punishment would have been death by hanging.

Hendrick demonstrates his inability to accept the consequences of his actions all the way up to the end of his court-martial when he is still trying to resign rather than face the legal punishment. His Bad Conduct Discharge means that he will never be able to attain full citizenship, and his behavior suggests he wouldn't have been a good citizen. And Spieksma makes sure to tell him that even this punishment is light—if Frankel had wanted to, he could have convened a proper court-martial which likely would have sentenced Hendrick to death. Hendrick doesn't see or appreciate the care with which Spieksma, Frankel, and Zim have approached the situation.

At afternoon sick call Johnnie is cleared for full duty. He gets back to his company just in time to muster (in his slightly messy uniform) for parade and witness the publication of Hendrick's punishment. Johnnie hasn't seen a flogging before, even though corporal punishment was carried out in public back home. Hendrick is chained to a post, his shirt is removed, and a corporal-instructor from another battalion strikes him with the whip. Hendrick is quiet until the third strike, when he starts to sob. Johnnie passes out, as do a few dozen other recruits.

After the court-martial, life quickly falls back into its normal patterns, such as Zim dinging Johnnie for the minor spots on his clothing. Military discipline and order quickly smooth over the drama Hendrick caused. Although Johnnie finds the whipping distressing, it's clear that corporal punishment of this kind is normal in Federation society—he could have snuck away to watch public floggings at the local courthouse when he was a child.

CHAPTER 6

The night after Hendrick's flogging, Johnnie can't sleep. He has stopped worrying about his demotion because he has decided to resign. In just one second, Hendrick had made a mistake so serious it cost him his chance of citizenship—which was the reason he'd volunteered in the first place. Johnnie thinks he's ready to admit that his Father was right, to go to Harvard, and to join the family business. The only reason he's waiting until morning is to avoid waking up Sergeant Zim in the middle of the night. And Johnnie is also worried about Zim.

Johnnie reveals Hendrick's reasons for volunteering: he wanted to attain citizenship and eventually have a political career. He's a vivid example of the wrong kind of volunteer that Sergeant Ho and Mr. Rico both disparaged in Chapter 2. Witnessing Hendricks' court-martial and punishment also forces Johnnie to see, for the first time, exactly what kind of a commitment he has made. This is part of the book's argument for corporal punishment, which in this case sends a very clear message to Johnnie and the other recruits about how they must behave themselves to succeed. And, although Johnnie initially thinks that Hendrick's court-martial is a sign to get out while he still can, his concern for Zim shows how important the sergeant is becoming as a father-figure and inspiration to him.

After the court-martial, Zim had asked to speak to Captain Frankel, and although Johnnie left the room, he could hear their conversation through the thin wall. Zim requested transfer to a combat team. Frankel ignored the request and asked what happened. He said that Zim was the one who messed up by even giving Hendrick a chance to strike him. The recruits are "wild animals," and an instructor should know better than to turn his back on them. Zim admitted that he had liked Hendrick and thought he was "safe" because he was so determined to complete his term despite his lack of aptitude.

Frankel and Zim hold themselves at least as responsible for Hendrick's actions as they hold him. By calling the recruits "wild animals," Frankel contributes to the book's argument that evolution is directed by violence and that the role of society is to discipline direct violence into purposeful directions. By taking responsibility for Hendrick's actions, Zim shows Johnnie how to take responsibility for his men in the way he has been asked to do (remember, he got demoted for something some men on his team did in Chapter 5). Painting the officers in a virtuous light contributes to glorifying the military. But it also shows how important taking care of one's fellows is to the success of the M.I.

Frankel reminded Zim that an instructor couldn't afford to like recruits. Both Zim and Frankel wished they could have taken the flogging instead of Hendrick. Frankel had intentionally ignored Zim's black eye and tried to brush off the incident. Hendrick's unrepentant insistence that he'd hit Zim forced them to carry out punishment. They had to enforce regulations, even if they were ultimately to blame for keeping an unfit recruit in training. But Frankel denied Zim's transfer request. Zim had been his instructor in basic training, so he knew that no one was better qualified to turn "unspanked young cubs" into soldiers.

Zim and Frankel's conversation acknowledges their efforts to avoid punishing Hendrick; if they are taken at their word, then Hendrick truly earned his punishment not only by his actions but also by being too immature or too stupid to play along. Like Jelly, Rasczak, and other officers Johnnie encounters throughout the book, Frankel and Zim are completely noble, good, and responsible—they can do no wrong. The book's glorification of militarism is thus built on an unquestioned assumption that the military's leaders are always good and will always do the right thing.

Hendrick's flogging also served as a warning for the other recruits. Warning Zim to ensure that he and his instructors wouldn't allow any other recruits to successfully land a strike on their superiors, Frankel dismissed him and returned to his own busy schedule of work. He ordered Johnnie to send the commanders of the battalion's other companies to him, to set out his dress uniform, and to go to sick call.

Hendrick's flogging was the first instance of corporal punishment being used to enforce the rules and standards in the book. Later, Johnnie will recall History and Moral Philosophy conversations that develop the theory of corporal punishment. But for now, it's important to note that the fear of physical pain seems to be the best incentive for good behavior.

Johnnie is unsettled by how upset the unflappable Sergeant Zim was over his failure and by hearing Captain Frankel "chew out" the sergeant. He is also bothered to learn that officers like Frankel, who had seemed so untouchable, are subject to at least as much hard work and worry as the recruits. Johnnie feels sure that he doesn't want to be in the M.I. if it's so hard that even the officer-"gods" are unhappy. He also worries about making mistakes that could get him flogged, or even hanged. No one in his family has ever been flogged. Even though his Father doesn't value citizenship, he would be very upset if Johnnie did anything to deserve a flogging. Johnnie had wished to strike the instructors himself, and he believed that only fear of being hit by their batons had stopped him.

Johnnie didn't have strong reasons for joining the Federal Service, so his dawning realization of how serious the commitment he's made is unsettles him. He's beginning to understand that there's no end point where it becomes easy: the instructors work at least as hard as the recruits—and they have more responsibility. Johnnie's immaturity shows itself in his reliance on external discipline: he's still more motivated by avoiding the pain and shame of punishment than he is inspired to behave in virtuous ways.

Johnnie decides to resign, and his Mother's letter confirms his choice. She writes about how Johnnie hurt his Father's pride by volunteering. She was also hurt, but she still loves Johnnie and thinks of him as her little boy. She hopes that he still feels a childish need for her comfort. Her letter brings Johnnie to tears.

The letter from Johnnie's mother puts him back into his childish role. The letter features deeply infantilizing language, calling Johnnie his mother's "little boy." Johnnie falls prey to it (crying, deciding to resign) in part because he's still behaving in a childish way. Instead of accepting responsibility for his demotion, he felt sorry for himself. Although he avoided making Hendrick's mistake this time, he worries that he won't have the self-discipline to avoid being punished again in the future.

Johnnie falls asleep after reading the letter but is quickly awakened by an alert. The recruits are sent to the bombing range and put into a freeze, which lasts at least an hour. While he is holding perfectly still, an animal—probably a coyote—runs right over Johnnie's body and he doesn't even twitch. Although he gets cold, he comforts himself with the thought that this is his last freeze ever.

The midnight freeze order tests the recruits and demonstrates how effective Hendrick's punishment was: no one moves a muscle through the grueling test. It also acts as a reminder to the recruits that they must earn their citizenship by proving that they can handle difficulty and discomfort.

The next morning, Zim isn't at breakfast, preventing Johnnie from taking the first step in resigning. Immediately afterwards, the recruits leave on a march, and when Zim brings them their lunch and mail in the field, Johnnie receives a letter from Mr. Dubois. The M.I. places a high value on getting the recruits their mail as quickly as possible.

Chance intervenes in the morning as several things prevent Johnnie from following through on his decision to resign: Zim isn't at breakfast and the recruits are immediately sent on a march. Mr. Dubois's letter, however, has a very different effect on Johnnie's plans.

Mr. Dubois writes of his delight to discover that Johnnie has volunteered and become an infantryman. Mr. Dubois himself had been M.I. As a student, Johnnie was a rare gold nugget among rough pebbles. Mr. Dubois says he waited to write until he was sure Johnnie would make it through training. He's been keeping an eye on him through his own connections, and he feels certain that Johnnie must now be now over the "hump," having made the deep, internal changes necessary to become the kind of soldier who would gladly put his body on the line to protect his home. Mr. Dubois writes to Johnnie, "You've made me proud."

With this letter, Mr. Dubois truly becomes an alternate father-figure for Johnnie. His letter of recommendation to Mr. Weiss in Chapter 2 suggested his support, but now Johnnie has clear evidence of the value Mr. Dubois places on his character. While Mr. Rico didn't value citizenship and tried to dissuade Johnnie from service, Mr. Dubois recognized Johnnie's untapped potential. If Hendrick's flogging inspired Johnnie by negative example, Mr. Dubois' letter inspires him with a vision of himself as a virtuous, noble man. It also offers the basic rationale for the militarism that guides the book: the best thing a person can do is to place his own body between his home and its enemies.

Johnnie is surprised to learn from his signature that Mr. Dubois had been a lieutenant colonel. Mr. Dubois hadn't boasted about his rank at school, so Johnnie assumed that he was just a corporal who'd retired after he lost his arm and was given the "soft job" of teaching History and Moral Philosophy (a class which must be taught by a citizen). Johnnie thinks about the letter on the march back, especially its warm tone and the friendly way Lieutenant Colonel Dubois had addressed him, a recruit private, as "comrade."

The rank that Johnnie assumed Mr. Dubois held—corporal—is about six ranks below the one he earned. Moreover, Mr. Dubois was a commissioned officer, selected for Officer Candidate School and given responsibility over soldiers in action. This respected man recognizes and appreciates Johnnie's innate virtue, even if Johnnie hasn't yet seen himself as citizenship material. And, while his mother addressed him as a child, Mr. Dubois addresses him as a man.

Johnnie recalls a lecture in History and Moral Philosophy in which Mr. Dubois had explained the difference between the Marxist theory of "value" and the "orthodox 'use' theory." He used everyday examples to demonstrate that work doesn't always add value, and sometimes subtracts it. But although he declared communism a magnificent fraud, Mr. Dubois credited Marx for his understanding that "value" is relative, not absolute. The value of a thing is always relative to a particular person, based on its cost and use to him. Twentieth-century democracies failed because they didn't understand that things—such as the right to vote—were not valued if they didn't have a cost.

This is the first of many episodes where the book develops its arguments about the importance of military service, citizenship, discipline, and communism. Here and elsewhere, Mr. Dubois becomes the voice of reason while Johnnie and the other students offer up incorrect viewpoints for him to refute. In this case, the subject is how people value things. Mr. Dubois's grudging appreciation for Marx arises from his understanding that value can only be defined in specific contexts. His related claim—that 20th-century societies didn't "charge" enough for valuable things like citizenship—develops the theme of moral decay through which the book criticizes the cultural context in which it was written.

Nothing of value is free, and for this reason, Mr. Dubois pitied the wealthy students who hadn't earned their privilege. As an example, he called out Johnnie and "awarded" him a ribbon for winning the hundred-meter dash. But it didn't make him happy because he had really come in fourth. Johnnie found the award worthless because he hadn't earned it. Mr. Dubois clarified that lyrics to an old song claiming "the best things in life are free" meant that the best things in life must be purchased with something other than money. The cost of truly valuable things is agony, sweat, and devotion.

Mr. Dubois offers an example to prove his point about value: if Johnnie didn't earn an award like first prize, he won't value it. By analogy, Mr. Dubois claims that citizenship can only be valued if it's earned through hard work or suffering. In making this claim, he represents the book's view that citizenship isn't properly valued amidst the moral decay of 20th-century society. However, the analogy is limited: Mr. Dubois's analogy only makes sense if citizenship is a prize, and he doesn't acknowledge any other reasons that people might value citizenship. Within the limits of this worldview, military service—precisely because it is hard and dangerous—is the only way to earn truly valuable things.

Johnnie remembers this lecture while he marches back to camp and sings military songs with the band. The band—made up of recruits—provides a valuable morale boost. Johnnie suddenly realizes he feels good, not because he is going to resign, but because he has gotten over the hump and knows he is going to complete his term. As they reach the Camp, Zim asks Johnnie about Mr. Dubois; they both know the same man and this is the only time that Johnnie feels he ever impresses Zim even slightly. Zim reveals that he fought alongside Johnnie's teacher in the past and says how lucky he was to have been his student.

Without realizing it, Johnnie has decided to stay, because Mr. Dubois's letter has shown him that he does have the character of a soldier and citizen. Zim knows and respects Mr. Dubois and Johnnie benefits from his association with Mr. Dubois—perhaps contradicting Mr. Dubois's claim in History and Moral Philosophy class that only things one earns through one's own effort have any value. In any case, the association between Zim and Mr. Dubois marks them both as important father-figures to Johnnie.

CHAPTER 7

The rest of Johnnie's training was uneventful, but he did get into trouble because of the powered **suits**. Powered armor makes the Infantry "Mobile": it augments a soldier's senses, strength, endurance, firepower, and situational awareness while decreasing his vulnerability. The powered armor is not a spacesuit, but it can function like one; it's not just armor, but it does protect; it's not a tank, but it's armed like one; it can fly a little; and it allows the soldier to do many things that an airplane, submarine, or spaceship can't.

Although the life of the cap trooper is hard and military service is dangerous, the suits go a long way towards providing protection to the men who wear them. Johnnie describes the suits in loving detail; they make the hard work of soldiering somewhat easier by augmenting a trooper's strength and training. Similarly, the M.I.'s capacity for violence and destruction augments the decisions of the Terran Federation's government.

There are many ways to impersonally destroy the enemy and its territory, to end a war by completely obliterating a nation or planet. Instead, the M.I. makes war personal by applying the right amount of pressure at the right time and place to force the enemy to surrender rather than die. They are part of a long tradition of infantrymen who bring the war to the enemy; the weapons may have changed over the centuries, but the tactics haven't. Maybe someday infantry will be unnecessary, but until then, Johnnie and his mates can handle the job. Maybe someday there will be no more war, but until then, Johnnie goes where the government sends him.

Johnnie's words about the personalization of war recall Jelly's description of the mission in the first chapter—a demonstration of firepower and frightfulness—and Zim's assertion in Chapter 5 that the point of war is controlled and precisely applied violence. The suits enable the M.I. to do this work. The cap troopers are just the current version of the foot soldier, and foot soldiers have been the backbone of every military campaign during recorded human history. If there is still war—and there is still war, despite Mr. Rico's belief in Chapter 2—soldiers like Johnnie will show up and do their work.

The **suits** make the soldiers look like steel gorillas, but the pseudo-musculature in them makes the soldiers much stronger than the apes. The soldier doesn't have to control the suit, he just wears it like clothes, or like his own skin. Even though it weighs roughly 2,000 pounds, he can move as easily in it as he would without it, whether he's picking something up delicately, dancing, or jumping over things in his way. Negative feedback and amplification give the suit its amazing adaptability. Johnnie can't explain the suit's design, even though he can do field maintenance and repairs on one. Serious repairs are done by an electromechanical engineer, usually a Navy lieutenant on a troop transport.

The suits make the men look more like the "ape" their sergeants and instructors sometimes call them, while simultaneously asserting humans' place at the top of the evolutionary chain. Despite their size and bulk, the suits are easy to wear and use thanks to the advanced technology they contain. The suits imply that the best use of human technological innovation is military equipment—or at least that the need for violence to ensure survival has inspired the creation of advanced technology.

Basically, the **suit** is lined with hundreds of pressure sensors which take a soldier's motion and amplify it. The suit's feedback makes it exactly match any of the soldier's motions with much greater force. It also intelligently controls this force. If a soldier jumped really hard, the suit's jets would shoot him into the air, and its proximity and closing gear would use the same jets to soften his landing. The beauty of a powered suit is that the soldier doesn't have to think about it at all; he just wears it, and it does what his muscles tell it to do. Thus, the soldier's mind is free to focus on his weapons and mission.

If the M.I. provides the controlled force to enact the decisions of the Terran Federation's government, the suits provide the controlled force to enact the movements of the cap trooper inside; the suits both symbolize and protect the M.I. as it functions in the Terran Federation. Johnnie's explanation also drops a few more hints about the kind of imagined technology it would take to allow these futuristic suits to function.

The "eyes" and "ears" of the **suit** also help the soldier without distracting him. While the radio frequency modulation necessary to maintain security on the suit's communication channels is very complex, the soldier can simply bite down to switch channels. The mike and speakers are attached to his person, so he can speak and listen naturally. External microphones also keep him aware of his surroundings. Head movements control the various displays: for example, the soldier tosses his head to engage and disengage his infrared "snoopers." The suits also take care of air and water supply and everything else so that the soldier can focus on his job, which is killing.

Not only do the suits augment speed, strength, and motion, but they also allow the individual trooper to communicate with his platoon and to survey his surroundings. By managing communications, surveillance, and firepower, one cap trooper can perform the tasks that required several soldiers in the less-advanced militaries of the past. The suits thus allow the trooper to focus on the job at hand, which Johnnie understands very clearly: the job of a soldier is to kill enemies.

The recruits needed practice to master using the systems in the helmets, but the only adjustment necessary for wearing and moving in the **suits** was getting used to the greater airtime when jumping. Seconds in the air are priceless opportunities to pick a target, take aim, communicate with the squad, fire weapons, or reload. The only drawback to the suits is that they won't let you scratch where it itches. There are three kinds: scout suits are lightly armored, very fast, and long-range; command suits have extra communication and radar gear, extra speed, and more jumping power; marauder suits are for the infantry ranks—the "executioners."

Different suits support different tasks necessary for any military action: scouts must be fast, marauders must be well-armed, and commanders must be able to serve as the connection point of the platoon. For the time being, however, he and the other recruits are just practicing with the suits until using their sophisticated communication and sensory equipment is second nature.

The day that Johnnie "goofed," he was leading a section during a simulated battle. Although everything was simulated, he had to behave like it was real. The instructors simulated a casualty by cutting power to one of the recruit's **suits**. Johnnie called in pickup for the incapacitated man, then began to throw simulated atomic bombs to cover the section's retreat. He was supposed to fire diagonally, locating his men by radar instead of visually, to confirm that he'd wouldn't catch anyone in the nuclear fallout. Johnnie, still slow at reading the radar display, gauged the distance visually, shot his "bomb," and bounced off. As he jumped, Zim cut the power in his suit, so he landed frozen in a squat.

This training drill provides insight into the M.I.'s methods of making men into good soldiers and explains why it's so important to observe discipline and doctrine. Johnnie correctly understands and reacts to the situation. But he not only cuts corners; he trusts his limited, human senses instead of the suit. When Zim cuts his power, the suit which previously augmented Johnnie's ability now traps him, suggesting the limits that military discipline and protocol put on personal power.


Sergeant Zim bounded to Johnnie and began to berate his stupidity and clumsiness, asking if he thought his decisions would make Mr. Dubois proud. He left Johnnie frozen in the **suit** until the drill was over, then took him to see Captain Frankel. Frankel offered him the right to demand a court-martial, which indicated to Johnnie just how much trouble he was in. He waived his right and was taken to Major Malloy, the Regimental Commander, for discipline. Because Frankel vouches that Johnnie still has a chance to make a good solider, the Commander orders five lashes instead of discharge.

When Zim invokes Mr. Dubois to shame Johnnie, he reinforces the teacher's position as one of Johnnie's father figures. While he related Hendrick's punishment in detail, Johnnie is sketchier about his own, generalizing what Zim, Captain Frankel, and Major Malloy say to him. This could be seen as showing shame for his actions or expressing distaste for recalling this event, but it's also possible that his attention is limited until he understands the seriousness of his actions. Johnnie learned from Hendrick's failure, and he takes responsibility for his actions, accepting his punishment without complaint.


After the doctor cleared Johnnie for punishment, Zim gave him a rubber mouthpiece to bite on. Zim knew from personal experience that it would help. Handcuffed, Johnnie was led to the parade ground, where he was punished for "gross negligence" in the simulation that would have caused the death of his teammates in real action. Surprisingly, Johnnie found it easier to get a flogging than to watch one, even though it did hurt.

The fact that a soldier as respected and disciplined as Zim has personal experience with flogging suggests that flogging is a tool to teach correct behavior rather than just a shameful punishment for mistakes. Johnnie finds the flogging easier to take than to have watched, suggesting that mental suffering is more powerful than physical suffering, which is temporary.

Afterwards, the instructors didn't treat him any differently than they had before; as soon as he was treated by the doctor and sent back to duty, the ordeal was over and forgotten. Officially, the flogging was forgotten, because administrative punishment records are destroyed at the end of basic training. The only permanent record of the event was where it counted—on Johnnie's body. It was a lesson he would not forget.

In the Terran Federation, corporal discipline is the norm, and once the punishment is complete, everyone moves on. There is no shame in corporal discipline itself, especially because it's a tool for helping a person to internalize discipline. This is why the records of administrative discipline—at least the paper ones—are destroyed at the end of basic training. Johnnie will carry the "record" on his body as scarring for the rest of his life, ensuring that he won't repeat his mistake.

CHAPTER 8

A few more recruits were flogged during training, but not many. Administrative punishment had to be cleared by Major Malloy, who was more likely to kick out recruits instead. Administrative flogging was almost a compliment, because it meant that the instructors still thought they could turn a recruit into a good solider. No one other than Johnnie got the maximum, which was five lashes.

Discipline serves to instruct those who will make good soldiers and citizens, so the M.I. doesn't waste it on those who don't demonstrate the right character, choosing to simply kick them out of the service. Citizenship is valuable, as Mr. Dubois has already asserted, and therefore the path to achieve it should be challenging.

There was one recruit who earned the death penalty, an episode that Johnnie recalls in a flashback. The crime takes place away from Camp, and the recruit is clearly unsuited for the Army. He deserted almost immediately after he arrived at basic training. And although desertion is one of the capital offenses, the Army doesn't usually hang deserters unless they've done something else criminal, preferring to treat desertion as a "highly informal way of resigning."

According to the way the Federation is organized, a successful career as a soldier is accepted as proof that one has the correct morality to be a good citizen. However, the success of this system depends on Federal Service accurately and quickly identifying individuals who won't make good citizens. Deserters, by this logic, aren't worth prosecuting, because they've both shown that they're not citizen material and they've taken care of removing themselves. Dillinger's crime and punishment are an example of this process; although his desertion isn't taken seriously, his crimes certainly are.

The Army doesn't waste time looking for deserters, because it's made of volunteers, and no soldier wants to serve with others who aren't fully committed. It's better to have an empty space in the ranks than a man who feels like he's been forced to serve. Many deserters eventually turn themselves in, receive their 50 lashes, and move on with their lives. It's exhausting to be a fugitive when everyone else is a citizen or legal resident—even if the police aren't looking for you.

Johnnie emphasizes that Federal Service is "fully voluntary," but neither he nor any of the other characters who make similar claims (Mr. Dubois, Major Reid) fully acknowledge the incentive that citizenship may hold for some people. Because the book imagines that morally lax people are easy to spot—their behavior is obviously insubordinate (Hendrick) or criminal (Dillinger)—it imagines that people with bad intentions or poor character could volunteer, but it's confident that they will show their true colors and be excluded. And this confidence is never challenged within the book.

But this recruit, N.L. Dillinger, didn't turn himself in; he is caught and convicted by a local tribunal for murdering a "baby girl" named Barbara Anne Enthwaite. Because his identity papers show that he is an undischarged soldier and military law takes precedent over civil law, he's returned to Camp Currie. Johnnie wonders why, since he doesn't think that most people need a lesson to remind them not to murder innocent children. However, the recruits do learn an important lesson: "the M.I. take care of their own—no matter what." Dillinger "belonged" to them, so they were responsible to clean up his mess.

Dillinger's crimes, although they're only hinted at, are dark, so his punishment serves a different purpose than Hendrick's, which was meant to deter similar infractions. Johnnie takes it as a lesson about the way that troopers' responsibility for each other applies to discipline as much as support. Johnnie feels responsibility for the stain of Dillinger's mistakes even though he's aware that he's not to blame for his actions. This is the lesson he failed to learn when demoted in Chapter 5.

The recruits wear their dress uniforms and slowly march to the parade grounds. Dillinger is marched out, stripped of his insignia and uniform, and hanged. No one faints or gets sick, although the mood is very subdued at dinner. In a way, Dillinger's death is less shocking than Hendrick's flogging had been, because his crimes were so heinous that no one could imagine being in his shoes. Johnnie doesn't have any sympathy for Dillinger, just for the victim and her family. The regiment observes 30 days of mourning, because it has been disgraced by Dillinger's actions, and they need to clean its reputation. They cover their colors with black and don't sing on march or have the band at parade.

The execution is carried out with solemnity and military splendor. The dress uniforms—and by implication, the deeds and virtue—of the recruits contrast with Dillinger's debased behavior and his relative nakedness. The group is responsible to discharge his guilt by publicly mourning Barbara Anne, even though they aren't responsible for having harmed her in any way.

Johnnie remembers how he spent time wondering how to prevent similar crimes. Even though they are rare, one is too many. Dillinger had looked normal, and his behavior hadn't raised any red flags during the recruitment process. Johnnie realizes that if criminals exist, at least capital punishment prevents them from repeating their crimes. If Dillinger understood what he was doing, he deserved to die. If he had been so crazy that he didn't understand his actions, then he still deserved to die, because people shoot mad dogs. Even if insanity is an illness, Johnnie still only sees two possibilities: Dillinger couldn't be cured and he was better off dead for everyone's safety; or he could be cured but understanding what he'd done would have driven him to suicide. Regardless of how he approached it, Johnnie always arrived at the same result: Dillinger's death.

Dillinger's execution begins a period of soul-searching for Johnnie. Dillinger looked normal, so there must be limits on the assumption that bad character will always be evident. To comfort himself, Johnnie works out a multi-pronged defense of the death penalty. It's a mark of both his own civic virtue, as defined by the book, and the limited nature of this virtue that Johnnie can't imagine an outcome for Dillinger other than death. His assertion that Dillinger, understanding both what he'd done and that it was wrong, would have necessarily killed himself sounds certain, but it's offered without any real evidence.

This reminded Johnnie of another conversation from History and Moral Philosophy. Mr. Dubois told the students about the late 20th century, when crimes like Dillinger's were common, and law-abiding citizens didn't dare go out at night for fear of being robbed, hurt, or killed by gangs of children. Murder, addiction, and criminality were widespread. Johnnie couldn't imagine this, so he asked why they didn't have police. Mr. Dubois explained that they did have vastly overworked police and court systems.

The execution also provides Johnnie an opportunity to better understand some of the lessons he'd been taught in History and Moral Philosophy class. Claiming that crimes like Dillinger's were common in the 20th century is another dig at contemporary society at the time that the book was written. The book imagines that mid-century trends were paving the way for utter chaos and lawlessness because the system of policing and punishment wasn't effectively addressing the root of the problem.

Johnnie was still confused. He knew that if a child did something wrong in his city, both the boy and his father would be publicly flogged. Mr. Dubois began to consider the history of the "juvenile delinquent," which he declared a "contradiction in terms." As an example, he asked how any of the students who ever raised a puppy had housebroken it. When Johnnie's puppy made mistakes, he wasn't angry at it, because it hadn't known any better, yet he still scolded it, stuck its nose in its mess, and "paddled" it. He had to make it *think* he was mad to teach it.

In Johnnie's world, punishment is corporal (flogging), public, and communal—when minors commit crimes, the adults who should have taught them the correct way to behave are also held responsible, and the adults and children are punished together. Mr. Dubois introduces another one of his "common-sense" examples. Although the puppy-training story provides a feeling that his views are commonsensical or natural, it also prevents critical analysis or counterarguments. Fear and pain are necessary components to puppy training, so Mr. Dubois implies that they are also necessary and natural for teaching human beings right and wrong.

Mr. Dubois accused Johnnie of being a sadist for paddling a puppy that didn't understand right and wrong. Frustrated, Johnny retorted that he *had* to: it's the physical punishment itself that teaches the dog what's expected. Mr. Dubois declares that he has raised many pups by the same method. He related the juvenile delinquents of the 20th century to these puppies: they were often caught and scolded, but their noses weren't rubbed in it because laws demanded their names be kept out of the news. They also weren't spanked—and many of them hadn't even been spanked by their parents as children, due to a common belief that corporal punishment caused permanent psychic damage.

Mr. Dubois's devil's advocate position and his use of Socratic questioning (using directed questions to expose and unravel deeply held beliefs while leading a student to greater knowledge) contribute to a feeling that the arguments he's about to make for corporal punishment are unassailable. But he doesn't support his appeals to nature with evidence that justifies the leap from puppies to children. Nevertheless, that's just the connection that Mr. Dubois makes when he claims that 20th-century children were failed by a system that didn't punish them with enough physical pain or social shame to change their behavior.

Corporal punishment was also forbidden in twentieth-century schools, and flogging was regarded as a "cruel and unusual punishment." Mr. Dubois couldn't understand the objections to such punishments; suffering is a necessary part of punishment and pain is a basic mechanism by which evolution has kept individual organisms safe. Likewise, a punishment must be unusual enough to be significant and notable enough to deter potential criminals.

Mr. Dubois directly attacks a key ideal of 20th- and 21st-century democracies; his words are drawn from the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution. And while he begins by making an argument about corporal punishment in schools, he seems to deliberately misunderstand the "cruel and unusual" designation by claiming that 20th-century people found all suffering to be cruel. His claim—that punishment must be painful because pain is an evolutionary mechanism for keeping organisms safe—supports subsequent discussions of punishment and violence later in the book, and seems to clearly state the book's stance on corporal punishment generally.

Mr. Dubois explained the usual sequence of a juvenile delinquent: this person hadn't been spanked as a child, so he committed minor offenses. He was scolded about these. At worst, he'd be confined with other criminals, which only allowed him to learn more "criminal habits." For many years, his only punishment would be "dull but comfortable" terms in jail, until one day he turned 18 and suddenly would find himself tried as an adult, awaiting execution for murder.

Mr. Dubois offers further supports for the corporal punishment that the Terran Federation endorses when he claims that the juvenile delinquents of the past weren't spanked by their parents and their crimes were met with little real deterrence. This contributes, too, to the book's criticism of 20th-century social norms insofar as they were moving away from corporal and public punishment. Mr. Dubois makes a case here that painful punishment is kinder than no punishment, because it has the potential to teach proper behavior before it's too late.

Returning to the example of the puppy, Mr. Dubois asked Johnnie what would have happened if he'd scolded his puppy without punishment until he realized it was an adult dog that still made messes in the house and shot it dead. Johnnie answered that an owner would be at fault for raising a dog in such a way. Another student asked why parents hadn't spanked their kids in the past. Mr. Dubois pinned the blame on a class of people—"social workers" and "child psychologists"—who found corporal punishment unappealing. The student answered that she didn't like being spanked but was relieved to know that her parents' discipline would keep her from someday committing serious crimes.

Continuing his extended analogy, Mr. Dubois relates the juvenile delinquent back to the puppy. It's evident to the students that killing the adult dog is crazy; its owner would be at fault for failing to train it properly. This common-sense argument seems to prove Mr. Dubois's point that failure to effectively use discipline to teach proper behavior is cruel. He therefore dismisses the complaints of psychologists and social workers that physical punishment of children was cruel or inappropriate, indicting the softness and moral decay that, in the book's worldview, characterized the 20th century.

Mr. Dubois assured the students that the failure of 20th-century society was that it lacked a scientific theory of morals and assumed that human beings have a moral instinct. According to Mr. Dubois, people acquire moral sense through discipline and training. Moral sense, in his definition, is an extension of the survival instinct. While at its most basic level the survival instinct protects the individual, it can be cultivated into more complex forms. Concern for the survival of one's family or nation can only be scientifically rooted in the individual's survival instinct. Johnnie and his peers were living in a society that had a scientific theory of morals and could solve any moral problem, even among different species.

Mr. Dubois claims here that the futuristic society of the Terran Federation has discovered a scientific theory of morals based in evolutionary theory. In contrast, 20th-century people assumed that humans have a moral instinct. This mistake led to chaos and crime. While Mr. Dubois's argument is founded in the scientific theories of evolution and survival of the fittest, there is room to critique his application of it to the realm of morals, which draws on the theory of Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism claims that individuals and societies compete for resources and power in ways that will allow the best and most able groups to rise to the top. Notably, here and in later chapters, the book's theories of evolutionary-based human morality are discussed as scientific truths, although their proof lies outside of the book's discussion.

Juvenile delinquents of past centuries only had their survival instinct, and their morality ended at loyalty to their gangs. Any "do-gooders" that appealed to their better natures were bound to fail, as these delinquents hadn't had the opportunity to develop a more advanced moral sense. Duty is the foundation of morality. The delinquent children weren't taught duty but were incorrectly told they had "rights." The idea of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" being "unalienable rights" is a poetic fiction. Death means that life isn't a right; the patriots who wrote the Declaration of Independence bought their liberty with war; and by their nature, human beings pursue happiness.

According to Mr. Dubois's theory of evolutionary morality, a sense of duty and strict, painful discipline are the means by which an individual's prioritization of his or her own survival can be transformed into concern for the group. His critique of 20th-century social decay rests on the difference between understanding that a person has a duty to his society and believing that the society owes a person rights, as the Declaration of Independence proposes. Not only are unearned rights valueless (recalling Mr. Dubois's demonstration with the unearned first-place ribbon in Chapter 6), but the so-called "rights" valued in 20th-century democracy aren't even things that a government could promise its people.

Turning back to Johnnie, Mr. Dubois explained that "juvenile delinquent" was a contradiction in terms because duty is an adult virtue. In fact, one becomes an adult only when he or she understands and embraces duty as more precious than self-interest. For every so-called juvenile delinquent in the 20th century, there were adults who had failed their duty.

In concluding the lesson, Mr. Dubois connects the dots between virtue and corporal, public discipline: strict discipline and training are necessary to mold a child's selfish instincts into adult virtue. The corollary is that children aren't fully responsible for their actions, since they still need training, and this belief undergirds the sense of responsibility Zim and Frankel feel for Hendrick in Chapters 5 and 6. If he doesn't know how to behave himself yet, it's because his teachers haven't succeeded in teaching him discipline.

Wondering how Mr. Dubois would have classified Dillinger, Johnnie now comforts himself with the thought that, regardless of whether he was a pitiable juvenile criminal or a reprehensible adult delinquent, he wouldn't be able to kill any more little girls.

As his flashback ends, Johnnie's not sure if Dillinger should be pitied as a child for his inability to behave or held in contempt as an adult delinquent who understands what he should not do but does it anyway. Regardless, Dillinger's punishment leaves Johnnie with a sense that—even if it's not possible to predict and prevent every crime—the disciplinary regime of his society will adequately train most people to avoid delinquency as children and will swiftly deal with adult delinquents, keeping him and everyone else almost completely safe.

CHAPTER 9

In a flashback, Johnnie recalls the recruits' move to Camp Sergeant Spooky Smith in the Canadian Rockies for their next phase of training. The Third Regiment has shrunk from 1,000 recruits to fewer than 400. Smaller ranks mean more personal attention from the instructors. Now Johnnie feels that Zim and Captain Frankel are trying to turn them into soldiers instead of chasing them away from service. Johnnie can't decide who is the better soldier of the two: Zim is precise and stylish, but Frankel is daring and enthusiastic.

Of the self-selected class of volunteers, less than half have made it this far in training, so if military service truly proves one's capacity to be a good citizen, then there are astonishingly few people who should be citizens Johnnie draws closer to Zim and Frankel as instructors and as role models for how to be a soldier-citizen. They're equally competent even though they do things differently, offering a reminder that the strength of the M.I. lies not in cranking out mindlessly identical soldiers but in producing disciplined individuals, a contrast that will become important later in the Bug War.

Operating the **suits** in the mountains is more challenging than on the flat prairies, and several recruits die. Johnnie doesn't understand why they need to learn mountaineering without the suits, but he has learned to shut up and do as he is told by this point.

Johnnie may question why he needs to learn mountaineering skills if he's going to be in a suit most of the time, but by now he's internalized enough military discipline to avoid asking questions. And, in his earlier flashback, he revealed that he was indeed given a test of his survival skills at Camp Spooky Smith in which he had to rely on his own wits rather than any technology.

At Camp Currie, the recruits had "liberty" to leave the base on Sundays, but there was nothing for miles around. At Camp Spooky Smith, they can go into Vancouver. The first time Johnnie sets foot in town, he realizes that he doesn't fit into complex and untidy civilian life anymore. Vancouver is a lovely city that welcomes soldiers. There is a social center where local hostesses dance with them at weekly events. But Johnnie prefers to gawk at the buildings and pedestrians—especially girls. He's always liked girls, but hasn't understood their full delightfulness until Vancouver.

As the recruits become more and more like soldiers—adults, following the lessons of the last chapter—they're allowed more freedom to make their own choices. Johnnie's reaction to Vancouver shows the distance between the chaos and complexity of civilian life and the disciplined order of the military. Although he doesn't say it outright, this implicitly suggests that the military is better suited to running society precisely because it's neither untidy nor chaotic. Johnnie's "appreciation" carries a taint of sexism in the way it suggests that women are most important for their value as beautiful objects to men like Johnnie.


On liberty, Johnnie, Pat Leivy, and Kitten Smith go to Seattle, where Pat had grown up. The girls are just as plentiful in Seattle as Vancouver, but the Army is less present and appreciated there.

Moments of antagonism between the military and civilians have surfaced already (Mr. Rico's complaints about History and Moral Philosophy class, the doctor labeling soldiers as "ants"), but Johnnie has been insulated from this friction in the separate world of basic training. Now that he's left the isolated world of Camp Currie, that's about to change.

The trio ends up at a dockside bar for dinner. Johnnie isn't drinking; Kitten has one beer with his meal, but his temperament isn't belligerent. Most of the other customers are merchant marine sailors. Merchant marines are particularly opposed to the M.I., in part because their guild tried to get their trade classified as Federal Service unsuccessfully. A foursome of merchant sailors and civilians begins to make remarks aimed at the soldier recruits, who choose not to respond and get up to leave when they realize the whole bar is listening in.

Citizenship is only available to those whom military veterans deem worthy of citizenship, and this doesn't include other dangerous, hard services like the merchant marines. However, Johnnie describes the actions of the merchant marines and civilians in the bar—loudly insulting the recruits, trying to provoke them, and then dishonorably attacking them from behind—as if they illustrate the lack of discipline and virtue inherent in anyone who isn't in Federal Service, suggesting that they're barred because they don't have the right morals. In contrast, the recruits behave with discipline, refusing to become upset in the face of the foursome's taunts.


The four men follow Johnnie, Pat, and Kitten outside and charge at them. Johnnie knocks one out, Kitten "handle[s]" two of them, and Pat throws the last into a lamppost. When the police arrive, they ask if the soldiers want to press charges—attacking a soldier is a serious offence. In part because Zim had told them to keep out of trouble, they decline, claiming that the unconscious men had "stumbled." Johnnie defended himself on reflex, and his training allowed him to disable armed men quickly and without killing them. This showed him how much he's changed.

The fistfight in Seattle provides a working example of the thoughtful application of force that Zim and others have cited as the point of the M.I. Without killing the men, Johnnie and his friends apply just the right force at the right points to incapacitate the men and show that they should be left alone. The militaristic orientation of the Federation explains the seriousness of the men's crime and the deferential attitude of the police officers. In refusing to press charges, Johnnie and the others show that they deserve this deference and won't use it to take advantage of others.

At Camp Spooky, the recruits begin to practice drops. These get harder over time: into mountains, ice fields, the Australian outback, and finally the moon. The company continues to shrink as men die or are injured. Some refuse to enter the capsules, and they are discharged. Those who are afraid of dropping are treated kindly. Johnnie never refuses, but he always gets the shakes and is "scared silly" before a drop. But you have to drop to be a cap trooper.

Training seems to be only slightly less lethal than actually being a soldier. Later, Major Reid will expand on this idea, but even at this point, it is yet another example of the importance of pain and suffering as teachers. The M.I.'s apparent callousness towards life contrasts sharply with the compassion the instructors have for those men who can't bring themselves to drop out of a ship in orbit. Because the M.I. only wants those who are truly cut out for the cap trooper life, they have no reason to force or ridicule those who demonstrate their incapacity.

There's a story about a cap trooper who stumbled upon the tomb of Napoleon while sightseeing in Paris. He asked a guard who Napoleon was, and the scandalized guard answered that Napoleon was "the greatest soldier who ever lived." The cap trooper asked where Napoleon's drops had been. This story is certainly fictitious because the sign outside the tomb tells you about Napoleon. But all cap troopers feel the same way.

Like Johnnie's musings about the Greek soldiers at Troy in Chapter 1, the anecdote about the cap trooper in Paris connects these soldiers of the future to the many soldiers of the past. His question about Napoleon's drops pokes fun at those who haven't engaged in the M.I.'s particularly dangerous form of warfare, but it also parallels Sergeant Ho's statement in Chapter 2 that the M.I. is the Army. This tunnel vision relates to the trooper's responsibility—which is only for a tiny corner of any war—and demonstrates the pride that successful soldiers have in their abilities and training.

Eventually, Johnnie graduates. Other events from training included fighting a forest fire, going on a real alert that he thought was a drill, and the cook tent blowing away. The weather is important to an infantryman, but only while it's happening, and it's boring to recall after the fact. The regiment had started with 2009 recruits but only 187 graduate. Fourteen had died, including the disgraced Dillinger; the rest resigned, transferred, or were discharged. Johnnie is now a "Trained Solider" instead of a "Recruit Soldier." His graduation day is the biggest day of his life.

Johnnie glosses over many events from basic training because they are less important than his internal shift from immature civilian boy into virtuous adult soldier. This implies that those he's related are particularly important to this process. The extremely small number of graduates—less than 10% of the volunteers—again raises questions about whether the opportunity for citizenship is as egalitarian as it's claimed to be.

CHAPTER 10

Johnnie remembers how he thought of himself as a trained soldier until he reported to his ship. During his training, the Terran Federation had moved from peace to a "state of emergency" and then to war, although Johnnie was too concerned about the details of training to notice. "Peace" is when civilians don't notice military causalities unless they happen to know the soldiers; Johnnie doesn't know of any period in history when there was no fighting happening.

Basic training was hard, designed to separate soldiers from civilians, but Johnnie hasn't experienced real battle yet. The charges against Hendrick in Chapter 5—which cited the Terran Federation's "state of emergency"—provided a hint of the impending war, although Johnnie was too occupied with his daily reality to notice. After his training, Johnnie has begun to embody the military's dismissive attitudes towards the civilians they protect; his comments that "peace" is when they are unaware of conflict suggests that, unlike soldiers, civilians would rather avoid dealing with painful facts.

When Johnnie reports to the *Valley Forge* and his company, "Willie's Wildcats," the fighting in what would turn into the "**Bug** War" had been going on for a few years. Its official start is just after Johnnie joins his company; everything before that was called "incidents, patrols, or police actions." Soldiers don't notice wars much more than civilians do, at least generally. They are usually more concerned with the little details of their daily lives.

Johnnie's first ship, the Valley Forge, *is named after the place where General George Washington camped during the Revolutionary War and where he and his officers transformed the rag-tag Continental Army into the professional force that would ultimately defeat the British. Johnnie's first missions—which also turn him from a trained recruit into a professional soldier—happen with the Wildcats on this appropriately-named ship.*

When Johnnie, Kitten Smith, and Al Jenkins report to their unit, however, all of Willie's Wildcats turn out to be battle-tested, with at least one combat drop apiece. Still, Johnnie isn't hazed for his lack of experience. The sergeants and corporals are nicer than in training, although Johnnie eventually realizes this is because he is a "nobody" who won't earn his spot in the Wildcats until he makes a drop.

The camaraderie among the men is a defining feature of the M.I. Like the soldiers who were too afraid to drop, the new privates are treated kindly but held at a distance until they can prove that they are dependable in action. In basic training, Johnnie was doing well when he didn't draw the attention—and discipline—of his instructors, but in the adult world of war, he's not yet worthy of attention. He can only become "somebody" by proving himself in battle.

Johnnie is very inexperienced. He admires his section leader's gold earring—a skull with small bone charms hanging from it—but the sergeant explains that he can't buy one on Luna base. When they get somewhere where he could, he promises to let Johnnie know about it. Johnnie soon learns how unreasonably expensive they are for such small trinkets.

Johnnie doesn't understand that the earrings are a way that the soldiers can quietly flaunt their experience. Because he's still on the threshold between civilian life and proving himself as a soldier, his first response to the earrings is aesthetic—he thinks they're pretty and would like one for himself. His casual appreciation of jewelry pushes lightly against mid-20th-century gender norms, in another example of what an advanced human society would and would not worry about.

The First Battle of Klendathu, or "Operation Bughouse," takes place shortly after the **Bugs** destroy Buenos Aires. The loss of a major city makes "groundhog" civilians realize what is happening, and they demand that the military surround and protect the planet. Defense, Johnnie knows, has never won a war, but civilians' standard response is to cry for defense as soon as they notice that war is happening. Then they want to run it, even though they have no experience.

Although civilians generally don't bother themselves with attending to military casualties, they overreact to an attack directed against them. In addition to the belittling of civilians as "groundhogs," implying a lack of intelligence and an inclination for hiding rather than defense, Johnnie's remarks support the Federation's argument for the validity of its militarized government. Civilians are too concerned with their immediate safety and suffering to understand the necessities of war or how to protect the group.

It would have been impossible to bring all troops back to Terra given the Federation's treaty obligations, and the military is also busy mounting an attack on Klendathu, the **Bugs**' home world. Johnnie feels vaguely bad, but he is so busy preparing for the attack that Buenos Aires feels very far away and unimportant. He is wrong; this loss will mean a great deal to him, but he doesn't know it yet.

Despite civilian interference, the Federation takes the war to the Bugs—enacting the vision of the soldier and the army as the shield between home and the enemy. Johnnie's disconnection from the tragedy of Buenos Aires arises from the soldier's preoccupation with his own small piece of the war, but it also raises the question of how a group of people so distant from the lives of the civilian majority can best attain that majority's interests.

Johnnie's first combat drop is under PFC Dutch Bamburger. The operation should have been called "Madhouse" instead of "Bughouse," because everything went wrong. Federation troops are supposed to end the war by occupying the capital and key cities. It's possible that General Diennes, who commands the operation, had asked for more troops than he got—but the planning isn't Johnnie's business. The General drops with the troops, commands them on the ground, and leads the diversion that allowed for some of the infantry—including Johnnie—to be retrieved. He loses his life in the battle.

The Terran Federation isn't perfect, and Johnnie's first operation is marred by tactical missteps. Johnnie suggests that people other than General Diennes—maybe other military leadership, maybe the civilians who wanted as many soldiers as possible protecting Earth—could be responsible. Despite the tactical mess, the General still earns Johnnie's praise for being a good soldier: he didn't ask his men to do any work that he wouldn't do, and he died saving the lives of the men he commanded.

Johnnie answers "armchair strategists" who claim that the Federation should have blanketed Klendathu with atomic weapons by pointing out that the **Bugs**, properly called Pseudo-Arachnids, share a hive mind. Destroying the surface wouldn't have killed the queens or the "brain caste" which live below ground. The Bugs would still have had colonies, ships, allies, and intact leadership, allowing them to continue the war instead of surrender.

Johnnie's address to "armchair strategists" again points towards clueless civilians. By contrast, he himself understands enough about the situation to assess the Federation's response. Specifically, the social hierarchy and biology of the Arachnids limits the utility of conventional warfare. The Arachnids' resilience also relates to the book's argument about violence as a force of history: they won't stop being a threat to the Federation until they surrender.

Johnnie isn't even sure that the **Bugs** can surrender. The workers can't fight, and the soldiers can't surrender. The Bug warriors are "smart, skilled, and aggressive." And hard to fight: a soldier can burn off any number of a warrior's legs, and as long as he can move, he'll keep coming; the only way to kill the Bug warriors is to hit their "nerve case."

The Arachnids may be incapable of surrender since their social organization allows a small number of "brains" to telepathically control bands of warriors. The warriors keep going in the face of tremendous physical damage, which raises a question about their individuality. According to Johnnie's understanding, the only way to stop a warrior Bug is to cut its communication with its controlling "brain."

Flashing back to that day, the operation is a mess. Fifty ships are supposed to fall into orbit in perfect coordination and begin dropping troops. By the time Johnnie's capsule lands on the surface, the *Valley Forge* has been destroyed—along with half the Wildcats—after ramming into another ship. Johnnie spends a nightmarish 18 hours on Klendathu. Because he's always been afraid of spiders, his first sight of the **Bugs** terrifies him. But the infantry is in better shape than the K9 Corps. The neodogs are so scared by the Bugs that many of them "suicide" as soon as they land. The Corps must now train its dogs to be unafraid of the bugs.

In contrast to the Arachnids' perfect coordination, the Federation forces must contend with human error and a battle plan that sacrifices safety for an overwhelming show of force. Johnnie's shakes (Chapter 1) come into better focus when he reveals that he lost friends and comrades in the collision between his ship and another. Moreover, basic training gave Johnnie discipline, but it can't overcome his instinctive horror of the Arachnids. Unlike the Arachnids themselves, controlled by distant brains, or neodogs that can be bred to be resilient, Johnnie must come to terms with his fear on his own.

Johnnie sticks close to Dutch and eventually learns how to kill a **Bug** without wasting his ammo, although he can't yet tell the difference between a worker and a warrior. The Bugs' weapons are lighter than the M.I.'s, but they are still lethal. Because they are controlled by a hive mind, they cooperate better than humans. And, because the "brain that is doing the heavy thinking for a 'squad'" is hidden below the surface, the soldiers can't reach it.

Apart from operational differences—hive mind vs. independent humans banded together in a unit—the Federation soldiers and the Arachnid warriors are well-matched in terms of firepower. The Arachnids' advantage lies in the imperviousness of their "brain" creatures to harm. In contrast, the Federation force survives only through the sacrifice of the General leading the mission.

The goal of the operation is to establish a beachhead and hold it until reinforcements and heavier units arrive to pacify the planet. Johnnie's section landed in the wrong place and their platoon leader and sergeant have died, but it still occupies and holds an area. They wait for reinforcements which never arrive because they've landed in another spot.

The individual ingenuity of the human soldiers, together with their extensive training, allows them to make the best of the botched situation. Despite having landed in the wrong area and having lost their leadership, Johnnie, Dutch, and the rest of the section are still able to carry out the mission they've been given.

When Johnnie and Dutch respond to a call for help from their mates, a **Bug** pops up through a hole in the ground and shoots Dutch. After killing it, Johnnie tries to remove Dutch's helmet, but his whole decapitated head comes with it. As an all-hands call sounds in his helmet, Johnnie leaves the body without even salvaging ammunition and heads for the nearest beacon. The battle is officially called a "strategic victory," but Johnnie was there and knows that the Federation took a terrible loss.

Johnnie's lack of foresight—he fails to collect Dutch's ammunition—signals his inexperience, but his instinctive reaction to flame the bug, inculcated by his training, keeps him alive. He once again situates himself as a reliable and relatable narrator when he acknowledges that the operation was a mess, even though the official statement tries to avoid that admission.

Six weeks later, Johnnie and Al Jenkins report to Sergeant Jelal on the *Roger Young*. Both wear gold skull earrings with one bone. Kitten died in the tube on the *Valley Forge* while waiting to be dropped. Because fewer than 20% of the Wildcats were left after the operation, the survivors were distributed around the Fleet.

Johnnie has learned the value of the gold skull earrings, and it's steep. His training saved him on the planet, but the catastrophic loss of Wildcats proves that training can only do so much. Johnnie's new ship is named after a famous soldier. Roger Young was born in Ohio in the early 20th century, and he passed the National Guard's entrance exams despite a childhood injury that left him nearly deaf and blind. He served in the Pacific during World War II and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for drawing enemy fire and allowing his company to safely retreat from a Japanese unit. He thus exemplifies the civic virtue and bravery that motivates the ideal soldier—the soldier Johnnie must become—because he quite literally placed his body between his comrades and the enemy.

Jelal and Lieutenant Rasczak greet Johnnie and Jenkins warmly. They soon abandon their earrings because in Rasczak's Roughnecks, being a member of the "family" is more important that the amount of drop experience a trooper has. The Roughnecks welcome Johnnie and Jenkins as combat veterans but remain somewhat formal until they've proved themselves in their new platoon. But within a week, a shared combat drop has made them full members of the Roughneck family.

Johnnie briefly enjoyed using his skull earring to broadcast his status as a drop veteran. The Roughnecks, however, are a meritocratic platoon, meaning that character is more important than rank (recall how friendly Jelly is with the men) and virtue rests in actions rather than displays. They thus live up to the ideal of civic virtue represented by Roger Young himself.

When he is off duty, the soldiers could call Sergeant Jelal "Jelly," but Rasczak is always "The Lieutenant." He is like a god to the men, and Jelly is his prophet. He also acts like a father who loves and protects his men and would never abandon them. Jelly mothers the Roughnecks without spoiling them. The platoon is disciplined, but close. When Johnnie talks back to his squad leader, "Red" Greene, Greene privately sets him straight with a "medium set of lumps," but later recommends him for promotion.

Although Johnnie's family hasn't supported his military career, he now has new "parents" in Rasczak and Jelly. When Green sets him straight with a bit of unofficial corporal punishment—the "medium set of lumps" or bruises he gives Johnnie—his actions reiterate the importance of physical punishment as a form of care, even love. Correction is for those who are worth the effort of teaching, and it's a responsibility that senior members of the family have towards the young and less mature.

Lieutenant Rasczak and Captain Deladrier run a tight ship. The Navy and the Infantry keep to their own parts of the ship. The *Roger Young* was a co-ed ship and "ladies' country" lies beyond bulkhead 30. Two armed M.I. guard their door at all times. Guard duty is a privilege because it carries the possibility of seeing a "feminine creature."

While Johnnie respects Captain Deladrier for her piloting and her command of the Roger Young, his attitude towards the rest of the female navy sailors betrays his somewhat sexist views of women. The best job is the one that brings the cap troopers closest to women, who have become so exotic to Johnnie during his time in gender-segregated training and service that he thinks of them as "creatures" instead of "people."

Johnnie's shipboard job is servicing electronic equipment under Migliaccio, who is also the chaplain and the first section leader. The second section leader, Johnson, is the first cook. The M.I. rule is that everyone fights, and everyone works.

When the cap troopers are aboard ship, they all have jobs, because in the M.I., everyone fights and everyone drops. Johnnie and Migliaccio check and repair the soldiers' suits. Migliaccio, the chaplain, is therefore responsible for the platoon's bodies as well as their souls. Associating Johnnie with such an important task foreshadows the protective roles he'll take on as he continues his military career.

Johnnie works and makes several drops, all of which are different so that the enemy couldn't predict them. These are patrols and raids rather than pitched battles. The Federation lost so many ships and men in Operation Bughouse that they must scale back operations and rebuild their force. But small, fast ships like the *Roger Young* continue to speed around, poking at the enemy. Johnnie is happy with his life in the Roughnecks, until the Lieutenant dies.

Operation Bughouse cost more resources than the military expected, and they must rebuild their force. Although Johnnie has previously characterized civilians as "groundhogs" for their unwillingness to face danger, it also seems that the ongoing action serves not only to keep the Bugs on their toes but to appease the civilians back home without letting them know the true losses. Despite catastrophe, the M.I. continues to lay its collective body between its beloved home and the enemy.

The time after the Lieutenant dies is the worst in Johnnie's life. He had already received a letter from his Aunt Eleanora informing him that his Mother had died in the attack on Buenos Aires. Johnnie assumes that his Father must also have died. He will later learn that although Mr. Rico had intended to go, last minute business had detained him. In light of his loss, Lieutenant Rasczak offers Johnnie an opportunity to take some leave, but he declines.

Very belatedly, Johnnie learns about the death of his Mother and, he assumes, his Father with her. He's already bonded with Jelly and Rasczak as alternate parents, so while he's distressed to discover that he is (presumably) an orphan, he elects to remain with his Roughneck family rather than take time to grieve his losses.

On the Roughnecks' next mission, a man in the third squad is wounded, and his assistant section leader gets hurt trying to make the pickup. The Lieutenant picks up both and carries them back to the retrieval boat, but he is killed just before he can board. Maybe Johnnie was the wounded man, but he won't say, because it doesn't matter. The Roughnecks have lost their father. Jelly keeps the team from falling apart by keeping the Lieutenant's structure intact and maintaining the fiction that the Lieutenant was "merely out of sight."

Johnnie's claim that it doesn't matter who the wounded private was, because picking up one man was the same as picking up the entire platoon, speaks to the sense of common identity among the Roughnecks and the M.I. But even at their closest, the humans are still protected from total annihilation by their individualism; if a Bug unit's "brain" was killed, they would cease to function, unlike the Roughnecks.

CHAPTER 11

As he returns to the ship after the raid that killed Dizzy Flores, a Navy gunner asks Johnnie how the mission went and complains that the M.I. soldiers have it "soft" because they only drop occasionally, while he's on duty daily. In truth, cap troopers' "long and busy" careers might only consist of a few hours of actual combat, and it's three weeks before they arrive at the next drop. They spend most of this time training and maintaining the suits. Jelal promotes Johnnie to corporal.

The Navy gunner's comments illustrate the differences between the branches of the military. Johnnie's description of the raid in Chapter 1 and Operation Bughouse in Chapter 10 have already demonstrated that the infantryman's life is anything but "soft." Nevertheless, Johnnie and his mates work very hard to prepare themselves for the hard work of making war personal.

In trying to maintain the Lieutenant's organization of the platoon, Jelly makes Johnnie assistant section leader. But because he's so young, the three squad leaders who report to him actually outrank him. He needs to establish his authority, especially with Ace. Johnnie finds Ace in his bunk and offers him the assistant section leader position. Ace states his preference for staying with his squad. Accepting his word as final, Johnnie invites him to "clean" the bathroom. Their fight lasts a long time because they're both well trained, and they're trying to avoid inflicting injuries that would keep them from combat. Although Ace beats Johnnie, he lets Johnnie land the last hit.

Johnnie's promotion has something to do with maintaining the organization of the Roughnecks, but it also speaks to his character. Jelly, like Mr. Dubois before him, sees Johnnie's potential even when Johnnie doesn't see it himself. He proves that he's the right man for the job by immediately ensuring that his authority will be respected by all the men in the section. Given the premise that violence is the controlling power of history, it's not surprising that Johnnie offers to fight Ace, and even insists on it. He feels that he must earn his position by asserting his dominance physically. Although Ace wins the fistfight by knocking Johnnie out, he signals his willingness to follow Johnnie's orders by allowing him to land the final blow of the fight. Johnnie may have lost, but he has won Ace's respect and loyalty.

The soldiers don't know much about how the war is going, but this is a period in which they're losing despite defending Terra effectively. The soldiers don't know about the Federation's efforts to turn the Skinnies against the **Bugs**—the only hint is the command to destroy property but spare Skinny lives on drops. The soldiers don't have much information because a captured trooper can't spill what he doesn't know.

With hindsight, Johnnie understands how precarious the Federation's position was at this time in the war. But it didn't matter if the humans were winning or losing. His job is the same in either case: to follow his orders, to create chaos and mayhem on his drops, and to come back alive to fight another day. He's beginning to truly understand the distinction Zim explained in Chapter 5 between decision-making (government) and enforcement (troopers). The relationship between the government and the military is one of mutual dependence and trust, like the relationship of the men in the platoon.

The **Bugs** lay eggs, which they can hold on to until they need to replace warriors. And because they're controlled by a hive mind, they don't need months of training to become effective soldiers, unlike the humans. Every time the M.I. loses a soldier—even if they killed a thousand Bugs at the same time—it's a net victory for the bugs, because total communism, when practiced by a species evolutionarily adapted to it, is incredibly effective.

One of the humans' disadvantages is their individualized social organization, which makes rebuilding their forces time- and labor-intensive. In contrast, the Arachnids need less time to prepare their warriors to carry out the commands of the hive mind. The direct connection of the Bugs' organization to communism here points to the Cold War context in which the book was written, and suggests that one way to interpret the war between the Federation and the Bugs is as commentary on the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, the Terran Federation learns how to hurt **Bugs**: to distinguish workers from warriors (the fastest way is to see who's shooting); and to go after the underground lairs where the brains hide instead of wasting ammo on warriors. For Johnnie and the Roughnecks, each mission is just another drill, to be completed according to their orders.

The soldiers may not be winning the war, but they are still contributing to the defense of their species. And anyway, they are trained professionals who will follow orders no matter what.

Eventually, the *Roger Young* must return to Sanctuary for more capsules. Jelly has been promoted to Lieutenant, and the Roughnecks know they should rename themselves for their new leader. When Johnnie and Johnson tell him that the men have landed on "Jelly's Jaguars," he quickly vetoes the switch.

Jelly's refusal to rename the platoon demonstrates some of the qualities that separate the humans from the Bugs: retaining the Roughneck designation shows humans' ability to act counter to the norm, and it demonstrates the platoon's continued devotion to Rasczak as an individual even after his death.

Sanctuary, a well-hidden Federation planet, is like a less advanced Earth. But it has a much lower level of natural radiation, so genetic mutations occur infrequently. Evolution happens very slowly in its flora and fauna. Currently, this means that Terran crops easily outcompete native species, but it also means that the descendants of Sanctuary's human colonists won't evolve as quickly as humans elsewhere, unless they intentionally dose themselves with radiation. A research scientist tells Johnnie he doesn't think that they will be willing to accept short-term health risks for the benefit of future generations. Johnnie doesn't know what he would do if given that choice. But he does know that Sanctuary is a delightful place that will be important to either the humans or the **Bugs** for a long time.

Johnnie's description of Sanctuary expands on the importance of discomfort and danger as evolutionary forces. The native species on Sanctuary don't evolve fast enough to compete with imported plants and animals; because evolution is a struggle for dominance, the most adaptable and advanced groups will win. Weighing the personal and individual costs of dangerous radiation exposure (which can cause suffering and death for some) against the benefits of introducing positive mutations that will benefit the group parallels the idea developed throughout the book that suffering is a necessary agent of progress. Here, the idea of painful discipline to develop an individual character is expanded to apply to a whole group or society that will ultimately have to choose whether to accept short-term pain for long-term gain.


Sanctuary is delightful because the civilian colonists respect and support the military, and because there are a lot of females there. There are many businesses to entertain the soldiers—some for free, and others designed to relieve the soldiers of their money. Johnnie considers being discharged to Sanctuary when his term is up. Military leadership even turns a blind eye to physical fights, so when some Roughnecks tangle with a group of Navy men, the only consequence is paying for the broken furniture.

The civilians on Sanctuary depend utterly on the military for safety and patronage since the planet serves primarily as a base of military operations. They thus fulfill Johnnie's ideal for the role of civilians: supporting the military materially (providing food and entertainment) and socially (accepting their faults, such as bar fights, without complaint).

Johnnie and Ace stay in the free barracks. Johnnie has a date with one of Carl's colleagues, who drinks expensive champagne while Johnnie has pineapple juice. The next morning, Ace takes Johnnie to a local cantina and encourages him to go career and to put in for Officer Candidate School. Johnnie has the education to pass the exams and the I.Q. to make a good officer. And anyway, given the state of the war, Johnnie will end up serving more than two years anyway.

Following their earlier struggle for dominance, Ace and Johnnie have become close friends. Ace is just the latest in a line of military men (following Mr. Dubois, Zim, and Jelly) who recognize Johnnie's innate excellence and encourage it. Johnnie's obsession with fresh pineapple juice offers a very small clue to his cultural roots, and although they won't be revealed until the end of the book, it's another nod towards a humanity that has moved beyond racial, national, and cultural divisions.


When Ace gets into a card game, Johnnie goes for a walk to think about his advice. He thought that he had volunteered to earn citizenship. Active-duty military aren't allowed to vote, so going career will delay this. But then he thinks that he'd actually volunteered for the pride and status of citizenship, not the right to vote specifically. But he already possesses citizenship, in the truest sense of the word, by virtue of his willingness to sacrifice himself for the Federation.

As he does at so many other points of confusion and difficulty, Johnnie thinks back to Mr. Dubois's lessons. He discovers that his initial reasons for volunteering no longer matter to him. He no longer feels a need to prove himself or "earn" citizenship because he's already taken on the role of a citizen in risking his life to protect humanity. His realization recalls the words of Mr. Dubois's letter in basic training (Chapter 6). In internalizing the discipline and virtue that military training seeks to develop in soldiers, Johnnie has become the epitome of the right kind of soldier and the right kind of future citizen.

Although Johnnie isn't sure if he's willing to sacrifice himself for the whole of society, he would do so for the M.I. because they are his family. So, going career makes sense. But Officer? Al Jenkins used to say it wasn't worth being an officer—commissioned or otherwise—because the private has the same risks and rights, but less responsibility. But Johnnie knows that he would never refuse a promotion that was offered to him.

Recalling Mr. Dubois's lesson on the development of moral sense from the individual to ever larger groups (Chapter 8), Johnnie isn't sure if he fights for the good of everyone. But he does fight for the good of his military "family," and that's enough of a reason to ensure that his actions serve the greater good. This also recalls the moment in Chapter 2 when Johnnie gave Mr. Dubois the textbook definition of a soldier. At the time he didn't truly understand civic virtue, but now it's come to direct his actions and choices.

Johnnie's walk takes him near OCS, where he watches the cadets before walking back to Jelly's room in the barracks and telling him that he wants to go career. Jelly immediately swears him in and presents him with his papers—they'd been filled in even before Ace had spoken to Johnnie.

Walking by Officer Candidate School without consciously intending to is another way that Johnnie's internal virtue directs his actions, even when he's not aware of it. The fact that Jelly has already prepared paperwork for his career commitment merely confirms that Johnnie's commitment is a natural extension of his character.

CHAPTER 12

Sometime later, the *Roger Young* returns to base for more capsules and replacements. Al Jenkins and Migliaccio have died, and Johnnie is going to OCS. While he's at the quarantine desk, another soldier approaches to ask if the boat he came from belongs to the *Roger Young*. Johnnie turns around and recognizes his Father, now a corporal. They embrace each other, making a spectacle with their joyful tears. Johnnie's Father is shipping out on the *Rog*.

Even as Johnnie continues to grow and mature, military life continues on as it always has: with suffering and loss. The surprise reappearance of Mr. Rico—and as a soldier himself—just after Johnnie has made a commitment to a full military career seems like a universal mark of approval on his choice. He's no longer divided between the civilian and military worlds, and all of his family, both biological and military, is now encompassed by the Mobile Infantry.

Johnnie and his Father are like "ships passing in the night" because of OCS. His Father bursts into tears when reading his orders for school, not from sadness for their continued separation, but from pride. Johnnie hopes he'll be re-assigned to the Roughnecks after OCS, but there's no guarantee. However, he's happy knowing that his mates will take good care of his Father.

An earlier version of Mr. Rico tried to dissuade Johnnie from volunteering, but this new, militarized version cries proud tears to learn that his son is going to Officer Candidate School. "Ships passing in the night" is a reference to an epic poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and hints that Johnnie is not just a killing machine, but that he's also a well-read and cultured person.

Johnnie's Father volunteered a little more than a year ago and is already a corporal—an honor he dismisses by saying that promotions are happening quickly during the war. He wanted to be an infantry man. He's only in his 40s, and age has its own advantages. Johnnie knows that the Army needs mature men as non-coms. He doesn't need to ask why his Father wanted M.I.; he just feels flattered.

Although he downplays his swift promotions, Mr. Rico was promoted from private to corporal during his first assignment after basic training. Like his son, he has the character and virtue of a soldier. His success in basic training and in the M.I. contrasts with Carruthers, the "geezer" recruit at Camp Currie whose age resulted in injuries.

Johnnie's Father did basic training at Camp San Martin. His training was compressed because of the war. His first assignment was to McSlatery's Volunteers, an outfit with a reputation almost as good as the Roughnecks. He was promoted to corporal when the Volunteers dropped on Sheol, but they lost so many men that few survivors were reassigned. This time, his request for the *Roger Young* was honored.

Like Johnnie, Mr. Rico quickly became a military "orphan" when his platoon was decimated in action, offering a reminder of the brutality and danger of service, especially during the ongoing war. The abbreviation of basic training and the catastrophic loss of soldiers, leading to swift promotions and reassignments, are used to explain how Mr. Rico could have volunteered after Johnnie yet caught up to him in this moment.

Johnnie asks when his Father joined up and learns that it was shortly after his Mother's death in Buenos Aires. But his father says that it had less to do with that and more to do with his sense that Johnnie had done what he himself *should* have done. When Johnnie volunteered, his Father had realized through hypnotherapy that he was unfulfilled and dissatisfied.

Mr. Rico ultimately volunteered to answer the urging of his own latent sense of civic virtue, a trait he shares with his son. But only Johnnie was brave enough to follow that call when he was 18. Mr. Rico even hints that his own dissatisfaction with the path he'd chosen lay underneath his efforts to dissuade Johnnie.

Johnnie's Father felt better as the war began brewing because he was busy. But after basic training, he understood his discontent better. It was clarified in a conversation with a friend who couldn't imagine the impact the war would have on civilians. After Buenos Aires, Mr. Rico did what he "had to do:" he turned the business over to an associate, put its stock into a trust, and volunteered. He wanted to prove that he was a man, not a mere economic animal. Johnnie and his Father hear the call for the *Roger Young*, and they embrace in farewell.

Earlier in the book, Mr. Rico was the voice of the citizens, but now that he's a soldier, he shares Johnnie's contempt for them. Mr. Rico's anecdote contextualizes Johnnie's "groundhog" comment (Chapter 10), because it illustrates how little civilians understand the danger of being alive in a universe where only the fittest individuals or societies survive. And once again, the conclusion of Mr. Rico's history of volunteering emphasizes the innate capacity for civic virtue he always had and that made him feel frustrated and discontent while he tried to ignore it.

Johnnie reports to his OCS Fleet Sergeant, who asks why it took him so long to show up. Johnnie's excuse about his Father is a new one. The Sergeant declines to verify it. The word of cadet-officers is accepted—but they're kicked out if it turns out they've lied.

As a cadet, Johnnie is changing places in the military hierarchy. To get into OCS requires both intelligence and education (passing the entrance exams) and demonstrating excellence as a soldier (and he's recently been promoted to sergeant). Having demonstrated his civic virtue has earned him some benefit of the doubt from his instructors, although he will still need to work hard to be successful.

Mornings at OCS are like basic training. In the afternoons, the cadets attend lectures on many subjects. The primary lesson is how to keep track of 50 other men while still being a "one man catastrophe." Every four cadets share a civilian servant, who gives them more time for training and studying by taking care of minor tasks. The work is hard, but Johnnie's too busy to be unhappy. He only worries about flunking math.

In basic training, Johnnie fretted over the discovery that Captain Frankel worked at least as hard as—if not harder than —the recruits. He's working harder than ever in Officer Training School, but the curriculum also proves that the basic tasks of soldiering, at least in the M.I., don't change at any rank.

Most of the instructors are disabled combat veterans and Johnnie eventually stops wondering why they opted to teach instead of accepting medical retirements.

If Johnnie needed yet another reminder that war is brutal—and that serving in the M.I is dangerous even during times of "peace"—the number of disabled combat veterans provides it. It also speaks to the camaraderie soldiers feel, because these men elect to teach rather than accepting honorable discharges and living out their days as civilians.

The high point of OCS is when Johnnie receives a visit from Ensign Carmen Ibañez. She appears in the mess, looking beautiful in her dress uniform, and asks the duty officer to let her take Johnnie to dinner. The meal—and the prestige Johnnie gets from his association with a beautiful woman—are worth flunking two classes the following day. Carmen and Johnnie mourn the loss of Carl, who died when the **Bugs** attacked the Pluto research station. Even though she's shaved her hair off, Johnnie still thinks Carmen is cute.

Yet again, Carmen's individual capabilities—she seems to be rising through the ranks of the Navy as fast as Johnnie is in the Army—take second place to her physical beauty in Johnnie's perspective of the world. His reputation improves from his association with a beautiful woman, not because she's pilot material. Carl's death is also a reminder of the potentially huge sacrifice made by soldiers; unlike Johnnie, he wasn't on the front lines, but he wasn't safe.

Cadets must take History and Moral Philosophy class. History and Moral Philosophy isn't about *how* to fight, but about *why*, and Johnnie thinks that anyone who is in OCS should have already figured that out. He assumes it must be for cadets from colonies where it wasn't required in high school. Because he's already had it, he thinks it'll be an easy course, even though he must pass it this time. And failure means a cadet may even be kicked out of the military altogether.

History and Moral Philosophy makes a comeback in OCS, and Johnnie struggles to understand why: everyone should have had it in high school, and anyone who's made it this far should already understand why he fights. In terms of the book's various arguments, History and Moral Philosophy at this point serves much the same purpose as before, providing space to elaborate and explore the theories that underpin the plot.

The class works like a "time bomb"—Johnnie often wakes up in the middle of the night thinking about what was said in class. Likewise, it wasn't until after he'd decided *to* fight that Johnnie understood that Mr. Dubois had been trying to teach him *why* to fight. Why is a legitimate question: the pay is terrible, and the conditions are harsh.

Johnnie's experience thus far—where events during his training and service would cause him to think back to the lessons Mr. Dubois was trying to teach him in History and Moral Philosophy—has already demonstrated the class's "time bomb" capabilities. It also helps Johnnie to understand his own motivations, because the military glorification of the novel rests on understanding and depicting what it is that inspires men to put up with terror and pain for the greater good.

The History and Moral Philosophy instructor, Major Reid, is blind. On the day that the **Bugs** destroy San Francisco and the San Joaquin Valley, the class discusses the events after the war between the Chinese Hegemony and the Russo-Anglo-American Alliance. Reid ignores the current attack and has the students discuss the "negotiated treaty of New Delhi," which ignored prisoners of war when the armistice turned into a stalemate. Around 65,000 Alliance prisoners—including civilians—languished in the enemy's hands while the Hegemony prisoners were released to return home if they wished.

Major Reid's physical blindness contrasts with the clarity of his moral insight, a point driven home by his apparent ability to "see" the cadets. Comparing the invented late-20th-century "history" to the book's Cold War backdrop provides interesting context. Although the Cold War primarily took place between the United States and the Soviet Union, Communism was also radically changing the political and cultural landscape in China during the 1940s and 1950s. Although the book has a decidedly anti-communist outlook, its projected history imagines Soviet-American cooperation against Chinese interests. This may relate to the World War II alliance of the USSR and the Allies.


Major Reid asks Johnnie if 1,000 prisoners of war are enough to start or resume a war that might kill millions of innocent people. Without hesitation, Johnnie answers yes. Major Reid asks if *one* unreleased prisoner would justify war, and Johnnie hesitates. The cap trooper's answer is "yes," but he's not sure if this is what Reid wants. But, when Reid complains about his delay, it's the answer Johnnie gives.

The cap trooper's answer to the question of how many men are worth risking one's life for is anti-Utilitarian—he doesn't consider the needs of the group to outweigh the needs of the individual. However, this trooper's logic is based on the relatively small group of a platoon, not an entire civilization.

Reid demands that Johnnie prove his answer mathematically because History and Moral Philosophy is an "exact science." Reid asks if taking the same actions for one person as for 1,000 wouldn't be the same as saying one potato has the same value as a thousand? Johnnie answers that men aren't potatoes, and Reid tells him to write out a proof "in symbolic logic" for his answer.

Johnnie defends his argument by pointing out that humans aren't potatoes—implying that a person is much more valuable than an inanimate object. The arguments in this section of the book, as in earlier History and Moral Philosophy sections, claim that ethics have become an "exact science" by Johnnie's lifetime, in contrast to the competing paradigms 20th- and 21st-century individuals must grapple with. Reid "proves" his statements by pointing to outside sources and scientific laws. But because these proofs aren't spelled out in the book, it's impossible to fully assess the validity of his claims. In the context of the Bug War, however, the anti-Utilitarian argument makes sense, because the concern for individuals is one of the key differences between the humans and the Arachnids.


Major Reid has Mr. Salomon ("Sally") explain how the current political situation evolved out of the post-war "Disorders." As 20th century governments collapsed, something had to fill the vacuum, and in many cases, jobless and disaffected veterans stepped into the hole. The first documented case was in Aberdeen, Scotland, where veterans organized vigilante groups to stop rioting and looting. They didn't let civilians on their committee because they only trusted other veterans. Over a few generations, this organization became constitutional practice.

In the book's worldview, military might makes right, as demonstrated by the history of the Federation's government. But the government rests on a foundational assumption that almost no one who is morally compromised will make a successful soldier. The cases of Hendrick and Dillinger (Chapters 5, 6, and 8) show that insufficiently virtuous and moral men can be excluded from citizenship, but these examples aren't necessarily exhaustive.

The Scottish veterans occasionally had to punish other veterans by hanging, and Johnnie suspects that they didn't want civilians to interfere in their duty to keep order within their own ranks. And there was a lot of antagonism between veterans and civilians at the time. When Sally messes up his answer, Major Reid assigns him extra homework, too: he must write a 3,000-word summary of the history.

The idea that the veteran vigilantes had to punish some of their own ranks harks back to the M.I.'s execution of Dillinger in Chapter 8, while simultaneously suggesting that many fewer veterans needed to be executed than civilians. Civilian violence and chaos seem to show that civilians aren't capable of governing themselves, while the antagonism between civilians and veterans suggests that the military takeover may not have been entirely benign.

Reid asks Sally for a practical reason why citizenship is limited to discharged veterans. Sally guesses that veterans are smarter than civilians, a claim Reid finds preposterous. Civilians can be more intelligent than servicemen, and this was the justification for the "Revolt of the Scientists," which was predicated on the idea that letting the intelligent elite run things would lead to utopia. It failed because the pursuit of science isn't a social virtue.

Major Reid's question asks Sally to consider the relationship between service and citizenship, which hasn't been explained. Sally's easily refuted answer helps to establish the necessary capacities for citizenship, and intellect isn't one of them. The pure pursuit of knowledge is not unlike the self-focused loyalty of the 20th-century juvenile delinquents discussed in Chapter 8: knowledge doesn't push people to rise above their allegiance to small groups.

Sally guesses that servicemen make better citizens because they're disciplined. Reid explains that it's because the system works satisfactorily. Societies have always tried to put franchise into the best hands. From absolute monarchy to the "weird" and "antlike communism" proposed by Plato, people desired a "stable and benevolent" government and tried to achieve it by limiting franchise to those wise enough to use it justly. Many rules have bestowed franchise on different groups; they all worked, but none of them worked well. Eventually, they all collapsed or were overthrown. The current system works better than any previous one: people may complain but no one rises up; living standards are high; crime is low.

Sally's second guess is closest to the arguments that Mr. Dubois and others have made: duty and discipline make a child into a man, and the civic virtue of adulthood possessed by soldiers makes them suitable citizens and leaders of society. For Major Reid, however, the rationale for the system is unimportant compared to the fact that it works well enough to bring stability and prosperity to the citizens and legal residents of the Federation. Because the fate of a society depends on how well it is governed, humans have tried many forms of government, all of which have failed.

Reid turns to Clyde Tammany and asks him why this system works better. Tammany guesses that it's because the electors are a small group that really studies the issues. Reminding the class that this is an exact science, Reid points out that the ruling class was often small and aware of their responsibility. Moreover, the government is largely uniform even though military service—and franchise—vary among Terran nations and colonies. Instead, the current government works because each voter and officeholder has demonstrated, by military service, that they value the welfare of the group more than personal advantage.

Reid may be content to know that the system works, but his answer to Tammany's question begins to explain how *military service confirms the qualities of citizenship. The mere fact that military veterans represent a small group of people doesn't guarantee success, as many governments throughout history also limited full participation. The real distinction is still the one that Johnnie quoted in class in Chapter 2: soldiers understand and have demonstrated that they are capable of valuing the group's welfare more than their own. However, Reid doesn't explore the potential conflict between this ethos and the recent argument that it's worth risking the good of the whole society to rescue even one captured soldier.*

The class period is almost over, yet they haven't determined the moral reason for their government's success. Like everything, the political system is subject to universal laws. To vote is to wield power, and the opposite of power is responsibility. Reid explains that for both practical and mathematical reasons, responsibility and authority must be equal. Unlimited democracies allowed authority without responsibility. In the current system, democracy is unlimited by personal factors such as age or race but is limited by dutiful military service. Because it perfectly balances the authority of franchise with the responsibility of military service, the system works.

As in previous sections enumerating the philosophy of the Terran Federation, Major Reid deflects important questions with an appeal to nature or outside sources. If authority and responsibility must be equal for a government to function optimally, then military veterans have earned their authority by demonstrating their responsibility. However, Reid doesn't explain the proof that the equal balance of responsibility and authority is a universal law.

Reid asks why there hasn't ever been a revolution. A cadet answers that revolution requires dissatisfaction and aggression, but their system diverts aggression into the discipline of Federal Service. If the aggressive people are the guard dogs, the "sheep" (civilians) won't rise up.

Reid has used the stability of the Federation's political system to claim its superiority over other historical forms of government. But the military's clear ability to overpower untrained and unarmed civilians may also ensure stability through deterrence, rather than just by providing stability. The friction between the military's actions following the attack on Buenos Aires and civilian desires sketched out in Chapter 10 illustrates this point: although the government wasn't providing what the civilians wanted, they had no choice but to accept the military's choices.

In the final moments of class, Reid opens the floor to the cadets' questions. One asks why they don't make everyone serve and give everyone franchise. Reid replies that it would be easier to restore Reid's eyesight than to instill moral virtue in a person who doesn't want it. This is why conscript armies in the past have failed.

This cadet's question anticipates an objection to the Terran Federation's system of government. To prove civic virtue, military service must be voluntary. Earlier episodes, particularly Hendrick's insubordination and Dillinger's crime spree, demonstrated that even volunteers can lack sufficient virtue, confirming Reid's assertion that it's impossible to force people to have virtue.

Johnnie gets one of Reid's "extra credit" assignments when he suggests that the Crusades were unlike other wars. He must prove "that war and moral perfection derive from the same genetic inheritance." All wars—including the Crusades—arise from population pressure. All correct morals are an extension of the survival instinct, and population pressure is a result of many people surviving. Therefore, because war arises from population pressure, which is itself a result of successful survival instincts, war comes from the same evolutionary pressures as moral perfection.

Johnnie's explanation weaves together the historical power of violence with Mr. Dubois's lessons on evolutionary theory. Like the History and Moral Philosophy sections, it provides an opportunity for the book to lay its arguments alongside the development of the plot. And, like the balanced "equation" of responsibility and authority, it relies on several assumptions that may or may not be true: that morals arise from survival instincts (discussed earlier by Mr. Dubois in Chapter 8), that violence is the defining force of history (discussed by Mr. Dubois in Chapter 2), and that there is a scientific theory of morals (discussed by Mr. Dubois in Chapter 8 and assumed by Major Reid earlier in this chapter).


Eliminating population pressure won't end war, either. Species that keep increasing will crowd out those that stop. Even if humanity balanced birth and death just right, they'll eventually encounter extraterrestrial species like the **Bugs** that are increasing. Humanity must spread out and wipe out the Bugs or be wiped out by them. Whether humanity has this right or not, correct morals arise from universal truths, according to which a human being is a wild animal with the will to survive.

In a society where violence is considered the defining force of history, Johnnie can pull the evolutionary concepts of competition and survival of the fittest from the natural world into the realm of military conflict, because he understands the military as the enforcer society's will. And if society operates like an organism, its primary objective is its own survival, which means outcompeting other species. In this worldview, there is no force in the universe that can stop population pressure: all species will continually seek to out-compete each other. This us-or-them mentality both reflects and explains the glorification of the military in the book.

Near the end of OCS, the cadets ship out and serve under experienced commanders. Some won't come back, either because they didn't make the grade, or because they were killed. Johnnie is excited to get a break from classes and late nights of studying. He is called to the Commandant's office for his orders along with Cadets Hassan "the Assassin"—the oldest man in the class—and the small and unintimidating Byrd.

Book learning alone is insufficient to make a good officer, and the cadets must show that they can manage themselves in action. As the oldest and youngest men in the group, Hassan and Birdie demonstrate the meritocratic nature of the military, in which ability is as important as age and experience.

Colonel Nielssen is a fleet general who accepted a temporary rank of colonel to be Commandant. He welcomes the cadets and offers them coffee while he explains that they'll be "temporary third lieutenants" on assignment. This rank keeps them junior to the real officers while still placing them in the line of command.

Like many of the other disabled teachers and Mr. Dubois, Colonel Nielssen illustrates the dangers of service while he models the commitment of the ideal soldier. And Colonel runs OCS for love, not money: he has taken a pay cut for the privilege of training the next generation of officers.

To illustrate the importance of the chain of command, Nielssen points out his assistant, Miss Kendrick, without whom he couldn't run the school. Nevertheless, if he drops dead, she will never take over, even though she has the knowledge and skill to do so. She has no authority because she's not in the chain of command. Neither are cadets, who don't even have a rank because they are students. They're under Army discipline but not *in* the Army. The thought that he's temporarily not M.I. leaves Johnnie feeling naked. Colonel Nielssen assures Johnnie that he still belongs to the M.I.; if he dropped dead, he'd be commissioned and sent back to his mates for burial.

When Johnnie was a private, he didn't think much about the chain of command, because he was junior to almost everyone else. However, as an officer, he must understand his place. His temporary rank is to make his orders legal. Johnnie expresses more distress at the thought of being cut off from the M.I.—his military family—than he did when he thought he had been orphaned by the attack on Buenos Aires. Especially now that his father is also an infantryman, Johnnie's allegiance and sense of community is limited to the military realm. And he's not truly banished; he'd be returned to his family if anything bad happened to him.

Nielssen explains that the cadets are temporarily commissioned so they can legally take and give orders and assume higher command if necessary. In this case, they must be ready to give the right orders in a calm and reassuring tone, because their teams will be looking toward them in a moment of trouble. Birdie, Hassan, and Johnnie are all unnerved, and Johnnie wishes he were still a private back on the *Roger Young*.

This is a big moment for Johnnie, who is about to step into a role of authority over others. Since he's already related two instances where this didn't go well for him—losing his recruit corporal status for his teammate's actions in Chapter 5 and cutting corners during a practice drill in Chapter 7—he's understandably nervous. However, he's learned a lot from those experiences and everything else he's gone through subsequently.

There's no way to tell a real officer from an imitation other than a trial by the fire of combat, so they must go on these apprenticeships. The Terran Federation's Army is different from historical armies, because all its officers must first prove themselves as soldiers. As in basic training, the instructors then try to get as many cadets out of OCS as they feel are unlikely to make good officers. The only thing they can't test in the school itself is whether a cadet just looks like he will make a good officer, or whether he will.

Just as all potential citizens must prove their civic virtue and willingness to sacrifice through military service, so too must all officers prove their ability to command in battle. In the 20th and 21st centuries, it was possible for individuals to enter the military as officers, through attending a military academy or participating in ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) in college. Nielssen's lecture insinuates that allowing untested soldiers to become officers violates the balance of responsibility and authority recently explained by Major Reid.

Colonel Nielssen asks if they're ready to take the oath. When they answer after only a brief pause, he frowns and resumes explaining the stakes. Johnnie hasn't considered what it would be like to be court-martialed for losing a regiment—but he knows it would be terrible.

Nielssen heavily stresses the potentially terrible consequences of the cadets' training tours. But like uncomfortable corporal discipline, his aim isn't to damage the cadets but rather to help them to grow into the role they're about to assume.

Nielssen quizzes Hassan on the largest number of command levels lost in a battle—four levels at once. There was once a very green third lieutenant in the Navy. In battle, he saw his commanding officer wounded and left his post to carry him out of the line of fire. However, at that moment, the rest of the officers were killed, putting him in command. He was charged for deserting his post as a commanding officer, because pickup and inexperience aren't excuses for the chain of command breaking. Johnnie hopes he won't ever be in a similar situation, but if he was, he'd take command and act according to the tactical situation. Nielssen assures him he'd die doing so, but he'd die doing what he was supposed to do.

The story of the ill-fated lieutenant offers a warning to the cadets about the responsibility they're about to assume and again draws a line from these cadets back to the soldiers of the past. As he did so many years ago for Mr. Dubois, when he's put on the spot, Johnnie gives the textbook answer to Nielssen's question.

Colonel Nielssen finally swears Johnnie, Hassan, and Birdie to their new temporary ranks. Before handing out their temporary insignia, he dispenses more advice. Now more friendly, he explains that his alarming lecture was designed to make the cadets worry now so they'd be prepared later. And they won't be alone: they will have their platoon sergeants to help them. These sergeants will surely be older and more experienced than the temporary third lieutenants. They should ask for—and listen to—their advice. They don't have to take it, but they do need to act with assurance.

Nielssen's advice to rely on their sergeants illustrates the value placed on experience in the field. While the cadets will each join a platoon temporarily, the sergeants' ongoing assignments give them a priceless depth of experience on which the cadets can rely. This also foreshadows the important role Johnnie's sergeant will play on Planet P in Chapter 13. Above all, the cadets should act with the authority of officers, because this is the true test of their merit.

Nielssen retrieves a box of insignia pips, previously worn by a cadet who's now a captain, and offers them to Hassan. He tells him to wear them gallantly and to bring them back. Birdie says he's not superstitious, which is fortunate because his pips have been worn by five officers that died in combat—but did so with bravery and excellence. The pips' owners have accumulated 17 posthumous awards.

Military tradition surrounds the temporary rank pips, which are used, returned, and passed down to subsequent cadets. Hassan's pips illustrate the best-case scenario, for O'Kelly (the previous cadet who wore them) not only survived his apprenticeship cruise, but he's been rising steadily through the ranks. Birdie's, which have belonged to five now-dead men, illustrate a worst-case scenario. But honorable deaths prove the worthiness of the men who have lost their lives.

Before receiving his pips, Johnnie asks where he can learn more about the unfortunate naval officer from Nielssen's story. He should look up the Battle between the *Chesapeake* and *Shannon* in the *Naval Encyclopedia*. Nielssen tells Johnnie that Mr. Dubois wrote to ask that his old pips be given to Johnnie, but the man who last had them died with them, and they were never retrieved. Johnny is delighted to realize that Mr. Dubois is keeping track of him.

Mr. Dubois is still watching his progress, and his desire for Johnnie to wear his own pips demonstrates both affection and respect for his former student. The battle Nielssen referenced earlier occurred during the War of 1812 between the United States Ship Chesapeake *and the British vessel* Shannon. *It does indeed illustrate the burden of responsibility that officers assume. Contrary to Nielssen's assertions, however, the lieutenant's family was able to convince the American government to overturn his conviction and reinstate his rank.*

Nielssen offers Johnnie the choice of breaking in a fresh pair of pips or a pair that seem unlucky—the past four candidates who wore them failed their commissions. Johnnie would "rather have petted a shark," but he accepts the mission of breaking the "hoodoo." Nielssen himself wore the pips first, and he'll be pleased if Johnnie brings them back with the bad luck broken. He reminds Johnnie to take—and study—his math textbooks while on assignment and dismisses him.

In place of Mr. Dubois's pips, Colonel Nielssen offers Johnnie his own, which represent the worst-case scenario: success and death are both glorious, but failure is not. This not only draws Johnnie into the Colonel's military family, but it speaks to his confidence in the young man, because he expects Johnnie to break the bad luck that seems to have attached itself to the pips.

Because they're on the same air car, Birdie tells Johnnie that Hassan has to study three subjects. In contrast, Birdie is a "professor type" who teaches math. Not only is he a genius, but he's also a good soldier, and everyone assumes he'll be in command of a brigade by the time he's 30. Johnnie worries that Hassan will flunk out, but even if he does, he reverts to his field commission rank of first lieutenant. Johnnie can't understand why he'd give up a permanent rank of first lieutenant to become a second lieutenant through OCS. Birdie points out that Hassan's education is primarily from his time in ranks, which will limit his promotions; to oversee planning battles and wars requires a deep and broad education. If Birdie fails, he'll revert to Private First Class, in part because he's so young.

Birdie, Johnnie, and Hassan illustrate different ways that the military meritocracy allows suitable men to rise to the top. Hassan's field commission proves his worth as a soldier, but he's not had the benefit of the same education that Johnnie and Birdie received. Nevertheless, his time at OCS will overcome this deficiency and enable him to progress as far in the ranks as his personal virtue will allow. Conversely, while Birdie's tremendous intelligence augments his training, he's far younger and less experienced than Hassan or even Johnnie. A soldier's value lies in his actions, not his education, natural intelligence, or age.

Johnnie and Birdie part ways. Two weeks later, Birdie is commissioned, and his pips are returned to the school with their newest award for his valor.

Unfortunately, Birdie will never progress through the ranks, although according to the book's definition of virtue, by dying with honor and bravery, he's already fulfilled his highest potential.

CHAPTER 13

Johnnie's new ship, the *Tours*, carries six platoons (the *Roger Young* only carries one), and it's fast. The Navy prefers these regimental transports because they use crew more efficiently, but the M.I. likes fast corvettes to get them in and out of the action. There's some friction between the Navy—which thinks it can fight and win any war with its advanced weapons—and the Army. Because the Sky Marshall must serve as both an infantryman and a Naval Officer, Johnnie trusts him.

Johnnie's newest ship is named for the Battle of Tours, which occurred in 732 C.E., proving that examples of valor can be found in all eras of human military history. French forces, led by the exemplary soldier Charles Martel, held back an invasion by the Umayyad Caliphate, which at that time stretched from India to Spain. The French forces won, despite being vastly outnumbered, and the battle turned the tide of the Umayyad advance into Europe. Invoking this battle thus foreshadows the shift in the war's trajectory that the operation on Planet P will make. The distinction between the Army's priorities and the Navy's illustrates different attitudes towards war—for the Navy impersonal power is more important, but the M.I.'s personal attacks seem to be the government's method of choice. At the very least, these parallel services must put aside their rivalry and function together cohesively during the war.

As an officer, Johnnie can go "North of Thirty" into the females' area of the ship. Women are important to the M.I., both as good pilots and for morale. Hearing a woman's voice as he's about to drop reminds a cap trooper of what he's fighting for. Johnnie is one of eight M.I. officers who join the fifteen Naval officers for mess, which is a social and formal event. Johnnie has much to learn about the distinctions between officers aboard: Army "captains" are called "majors" so they don't share the skipper's title.

Now that Johnnie is an officer, he can cross the formerly impervious boundary between the men's and women's parts of the ship, which gives him occasion to consider why women are so important to the military. Their beauty and sex appeal are more important than their previously noted flight skills because these provide the right inspiration for cap troopers. When he was a boot, Johnnie didn't need to know about the niceties of rank, but among officers it's very important to understand and respect the hierarchy, both because of the respect due to one's superior officers, and to prevent any potential confusion about the chain of command.

The senior Army and Navy officers sit at opposite ends of the mess table with the junior officers seated by descending rank. As the most junior Army officer, Johnnie sits next to the Skipper, Captain Jorgenson. He's supposed to seat her—and because no one warned him, he embarrasses himself by neglecting her at his first meal. The Skipper isn't too strict or aloof. When she learns that Second Lieutenant "Rusty" Graham is tutoring Johnnie in math, she takes over this task herself.

Johnnie's embarrassment at the mess table illustrates how much he still has to learn. But it also shows the dignity that rank confers on a soldier: none of the other officers mock him for his mistake, and the Captain herself doesn't hold it against him. Her willingness to tutor such a junior officer in math also shows the sense of kinship and mutual aid in the Federation's military.

Johnnie's boss, Captain Blackstone, commands Company D and the "rump battalion" formed by the six platoons aboard ship. Their battalion commander is Major Xera, who flies with A and B companies in the *Normandy Beach*, and only assumes direct command when the whole battalion drops together.

Johnnie's concern to explain the organization of the battalion contributes to the realistic portrayal of military organization and service in the book. It also hints at the current state of the war, which is chaotic—ongoing losses mean that the Blackguard's complement of soldiers is low, as noted by its "rump" or remnant designation.

Blackie's Blackguards are in the Third Regiment of the First Division, just like the Roughnecks. But in action, Johnnie only sees the closest soldiers in "his" regiment. He could spend a whole career in the 3rd Regiment and never see the regimental commander. Until he got his orders for OCS, Johnnie didn't even know the name of the Roughnecks' company commander.

Johnnie's explanation of military organization offers another reminder that a soldier is only responsible for—and usually only aware of—his own small corner of the action. Earlier, when he and Mr. Rico were reunited, they realized they'd been in some of the same battles, even though their platoons hadn't encountered each other.

M.I. legend says that a platoon once got lost on R&R because their company commander was reassigned, and they were forgotten. Johnnie could believe it, in part because the M.I. doesn't have a lot of officers to keep track of things. In the M.I., if there are 10,000 soldiers, all of them fight. Conversely, some armies of the past had more support positions than active soldiers. In the M.I., the soldiers who fill the few necessary "desk jobs" are usually disabled.

Another difference between the M.I. and armies of the past is the ratio of officers to soldiers. In addition to requiring all officers to be battle tested, the M.I. requires them to wear many hats, because their ethos emphasizes the importance of fighting. Johnnie has already noticed the high prevalence of disabled soldier-officers who fill the few absolutely necessary non-combat roles, like teaching officer candidates.

They do the non-combat jobs that civilians simply can't do—the ones that require the fighting spirit that distinguishes the soldier from the civilian. In the M.I., everyone works and everyone fights. Civilians take care of the "soft, safe" jobs so that the cap soldier climbing into his suit knows that *everyone* else in the M.I. also makes drops. This shared experience binds the M.I. together so that they don't need as many officers.

Johnnie has already listed many examples of the "everyone works, everyone fights" ethos of the M.I., and this is another point of its distinction from 20th and 21st century armies. For example, Migliaccio was the Roughnecks' first section leader and *their chaplain. The camaraderie of shared experience contributes to positive morale among infantrymen.*

Johnnie knows a lot about the M.I.'s "Divisional Wedge" because of an extra assignment in Military History that asked how many officers an M.I. division requires. Excluding units attached from other corps, only 317 out of 11,117 men in an M.I. division are officers—about 3%. Some officers, like a general, need a staff of officers, and many "wear more than one hat" to make sure all the roles are filled. And even the general drops.

To be absolutely clear about the M.I.'s low number of officers, Johnnie lays out the numbers. Notably, he considers what the M.I. requires—the bare minimum necessary to keep the organization running. To accomplish this small divisional wedge, many officers fill multiple roles, and many non-commissioned officers (sergeants) also take on officers' responsibilities.

Any team larger than a platoon should have a deputy commander, but this would push the officer ratio up to 5%. In the past, some armies commissioned up to 20% of their soldiers. These armies often lost wars because "officers" who don't command fighting men wasted their time with "fiddlework" like morale, athletics, recreation, public information, and nursery. In the M.I., *necessary* non-combat roles are extra duty for combat officers. As the war wears on, it exacerbates the shortage of officers in the M.I. The *Tours*' strike force should have thirteen officers, but it has only seven—including Johnnie.

Just by the number of required staff positions, in fact, the M.I. should have almost twice as many officers as it does. But even this much larger number would be dwarfed by the ratio of officers to soldiers in armies of the past. History teaches Johnnie that the caliber of a military's officers is more important than their number. The job of the army is to enact the government's decisions by force and Johnnie has already said that the infantryman's trade is slaughter. Thus, many of the jobs in historical armies (recreation, morale) are a useless waste in Johnnie's eyes. The Terran Federation's army, by implication, is fiercer and more focused than those of the past.

The 1st platoon's commander, Lieutenant Silva, is in the hospital with "twitching awfuls" and Captain Blackstone rearranges his staff so that Johnnie is "in charge" of the first platoon. But although this places Johnnie in the chain of command, Blackstone makes it clear that he himself and his fleet Sergeant—temporarily reassigned as the 1st platoon's sergeant—will be calling the shots.

The book opened with Johnnie's shakes, and when the cap troopers undergo drop training, those who can't bring themselves to enter the capsules or tubes are compassionately discharged. Silva's "twitching awfuls" is another example of this widespread problem. The fact that even an experienced officer can fall prey to what might be described in contemporary terms as PTSD again indicates the brutality of the war and the corresponding depth of commitment that successful officers have for protecting their society.


Johnnie takes his job very seriously, but he has much to learn about delegating authority. Captain Blackstone must remind him that it's the sergeant's job to prepare the troops for action, not the lieutenant's. Johnny's stiff demeanor with Blackstone also betrays his inexperience; a good officer looks and acts relaxed and happy.

Blackstone doesn't like Johnnie's stiff demeanor because a scared or tense officer is bound to alarm his troops. This connects back to Johnnie's respect for Zim's precision and Frankel's gusto during basic training (Chapter 9).

Captain Blackstone asks Johnnie what he needs to attend to in the 1st platoon. Johnnie has noticed that Brumby has been the acting section leader for two months but hasn't been promoted to sergeant. Johnnie worries that he's been acting sergeant for too long to go back to being just a private. Unsure why Lieutenant Silva didn't promote him, Johnnie wants to promote or transfer Brumby before the next drop because if he remains unpromoted, his frustration makes him a risk to the team.

Blackstone asks Johnnie to step into his leadership role long before the troops drop into their first mission, because understanding and taking care of the men is an important part of the officer's job. This recalls the familial relationship between the Roughnecks and their "parents" Jelal and Rasczak. Johnnie is sensitive towards Brumby's feelings, just as he was sensitive toward Ace's when he was promoted ahead of the more experienced man. To ensure that his troops are all ready to fight, Johnnie wants to make sure they all feel that their work is appreciated.

Blackstone challenges Johnnie to explain why Silva hadn't transferred Brumby when they were last at Sanctuary if he's a risk. On reflection, Johnnie realizes that Silva would have already transferred him if he weren't promotable. But he doesn't see why Brumby wasn't promoted earlier. Blackstone explains that he had been asked to supply two sergeants for reassignment; by not promoting Brumby before they visited Sanctuary, he and Silva were able to keep him in their battalion.

Blackstone—yet another father figure for Johnnie—tests his knowledge and instincts, and Johnnie yet again proves that he's not only a good soldier but that he's officer material. Blackstone and Silva have had to work the system a little, delaying Brumby's promotion to keep their platoon intact at this pivotal point in the war. This speaks to the importance of camaraderie among team members and points to the differences between the humans and the Arachnids. A soldier isn't as easily replaced in his unit as an interchangeable Bug warrior.


Blackstone is pleased with Johnnie's assessment of the situation, although an experienced officer would have been able to do it faster. He tells Johnnie to officially recommend Brumby for promotion, and Johnnie suggests further promotions to keep the chain of command filled up tight. Blackstone supports Johnnie's decisions, especially because he knows that many of the soldiers will die before they have much time to enjoy their promotions. The only limit is that Johnnie can only promote troopers who've dropped to Private First Class.

Officer-to-officer, Johnnie and Blackstone speak candidly about the dangers of the war—promoting people isn't just important to prevent mishaps like the episode with the Chesapeake *that Nielssen raised earlier, but also because the likelihood of surviving long enough to enjoy the promotion is getting smaller and smaller. A newly graduated recruit has the lowest rank—Private—and the first promotion (to Private First Class) is reserved for those who have proved their mettle in battle because a soldier's job is to prove his virtue on the battlefield.*

Johnnie remains worried about equipment: it will be hard for Cunha and Navarre to warm up or tune up all 50 of the **suits** necessary for the next drop in time. Blackstone asks him how he'll make sure it happens, and Johnnie volunteers to help, since he assisted in this work when he was a corporal. Noting that he doesn't know of a regulation that prevents an officer from getting his hands dirty, Blackstone approves the plan.

Johnnie worries that the suits won't be ready in time, despite their importance to the cap troopers (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 7). He's willing to help because he lives up to the M.I.'s "everybody works, everybody drops" ethos and symbolizes his concern for taking care of the men under his command.

Johnnie has never been so busy. In addition to working on the suits for 10 hours a day, he studies math and still must eat, shower, shave, and inspect the troops. As the most junior officer he's also the "George," or the person responsible for extra jobs like athletics, mail censor, referee, stores officer, and more. Rusty Graham was previously the George, and due to his negligence, Johnnie discovered missing items from the platoon's stores. Captain Blackstone chewed Rusty out for the oversight but kept him in his position to delay having to balance the account anytime soon.

Johnnie's inability to selectively focus on his most important tasks betrays his immaturity at the same time as it demonstrates his desire to prove himself worthy. He's afraid to disappoint Blackstone, Nielssen (who assigned him the math homework), or his men (who need the extra "George" jobs done on occasion). Johnnie was lashed for negligence during a training drill (Chapter 7), and his refusal to cut corners like Graham shows how deeply he's internalized that painful lesson.

Even simple "George" jobs take up hours. Between ten hours of suit maintenance, three of math, one and a half of meals, one of personal hygiene, three of "fiddlework" and "George" work, and eight hours of sleep, Johnnie has 26 hours of things to accomplish in 24. He can only skimp on sleep, which he does until Blackstone orders him to cut out the math and "keep a sense of proportion." His most important duties are making sure the equipment is ready and preparing himself to fight. Skipping exercise and sleep aren't helping him prepare.

Johnnie explained in Chapter 4 that sleep was the key to happiness and the cap trooper's most precious commodity. Yet, it's the first thing that he cuts when he's faced with an insurmountable amount of work. His fear of disappointing others has caused him to lose sight of what's important: keeping himself in top condition to practice the soldier's vocation. Blackstone, instead of punishing or mocking him, gently helps him to understand the magnitude of his miscalculation and sets him back on the right path. The harsh discipline of basic training is for immature recruits, but Johnnie's demonstrated his capacity for growth already as a cadet.

Blackstone orders Johnnie to exercise from 4:30-6:00 each day and to be in bed by 11pm, and helps Johnnie reassess his priorities to make this work. Math homework can wait. His hard work won't matter if Johnnie dies in action or fails the apprenticeship; he can save the homework for his trip back to Sanctuary. Blackstone formally relieves him of the rest of his superfluous duties and sends him to bed.

Blackstone's sense of proportion carries a grim reminder that nothing is guaranteed in the world of the M.I.: he could fail his apprenticeship voyage, or he could be killed in action. By emphasizing academic subjects like math instead of operational readiness, he's got his priorities backwards.

One week later, the *Tours* arrives at its destination, and Johnnie sees the orders. The troops won't drop; they'll ride down in retrieval boats, because the Second, Third, and Fifth M.I. Division have already gained control of Planet P's surface. Military intelligence believes that the **Bugs** are developing Planet P as an advance base for attacking the Federation. The Navy could easily obliterate it with bombs, but this mission is a raid to capture prisoners for the Psychological Warfare Corps to study.

This mission is different from any of the others Johnnie's been on. It is, however, precisely the kind of job that M.I. are cut out for, according to Zim's definition in Chapter 5. It would be easy for the Navy to obliterate Planet P and render it useless as an advance base, but the Commander in Chief wants Bug prisoners, and capturing them will require coordination, individual intuition, and valor.

Worker **Bugs** are easy to capture; warriors can be captured if they're injured seriously enough. But both are basically "animate machinery." The Federation needs to study the brain caste. Also, they hope to exchange prisoners. No one's captured a brain Bug and no trooper who's gone down into their holes has returned. But the Bugs have captured hundreds—or thousands—of human prisoners, whom they hold on Klendathu. Presumably, they're as curious about human psychology as the humans are about them.

Calling the Arachnids "animate machinery" belittles the species, but it also serves to emphasize the differences between their hive mind and human individualism. The fact that warriors are easy to capture but yield no useful information because they're not making decisions for themselves seems to support the "machine" idea, but the Federation doesn't have any understanding yet of how the Bugs operate.

It may be an evolutionary weakness to expend lives trying to rescue these prisoners. The **Bugs** certainly don't help their fallen members. But it's a part of human nature to try to help the vulnerable few, even at great personal risk. The Bugs won't trade warriors for warriors, but the Federation hopes that they might value the brain caste—or queens—enough to consider an exchange.

Johnnie acknowledges that the very human impulse to rescue their captured comrades may be an evolutionary weakness. The book has raised several questions about the balance between individual and communal good, including the example of the colonists on Sanctuary (Chapter 11) who are destined to be left behind by evolution unless they choose to irradiate themselves regularly. But it never provides a final answer to the question. Like the cap troopers, readers must accept the Federation's decisions on faith.

The third objective is to develop methods for bringing the fight under the surface. At this point in the war, the troopers and the **Bug** warriors are evenly matched on the surface, but the M.I. hasn't had any luck going into their tunnels. Planet P is a test of whether they can learn how to "root them out."

Johnnie's language debases the Arachnids when he describes a species so advanced that it has achieved interstellar flight as an infestation of "bugs" that must be "dug" and "rooted" out of the ground. The Arachnids' appearance may contribute to this language, but describing the enemy as subhuman or "other" is a key propaganda tactic employed in genocide.

The troopers hear the briefing awake and under hypno-preparation in their sleep. The mission is important, but it's also "just another Bug hunt." The Navy has cleared the surface and ships orbit the planet to guard and supply the ground forces. The Blackguards are charged with capturing **Bug** "royalty" if possible, relieving another company, protecting any units from other corps in their area, maintaining contact with the rest of the M.I. units, and killing any Bugs that "[show] their ugly heads."

The Federation forces brief the soldiers so thoroughly because mission success depends on their cohesive performance and understanding of the mission's goals—especially in a situation where quick, individual thinking will be required to capture brain or queen Arachnids.

When the Blackguards land, Johnnie has scouts locate the far corners of the platoon's patrol area and sends his sergeant to contact the Fifth Regiment's patrol. Johnnie's plot is 40 miles long and 17 miles wide. The battlefront is to their right and rear, and the Roughnecks might be off in that direction, too. Or maybe not; the situation on the ground never matches the plan exactly.

The platoon's patrol area is large, which suggests that the battle planners consider Arachnid activity to be manageable. However, Johnnie knows all too well from Operation Bughouse that the situation and the plan never quite match up. Rather than trusting the intelligence he's received in briefing, his priority is to establish his own understanding of the current situation.

Johnnie pulls his mind from the Roughnecks back to the Blackguards. He must locate the platoon leader he's relieving, establish the patrol area's corners, communicate with the platoon leaders that surround his area, and spread his own platoon out over their territory. Warning them to be mindful of the departing Chang's Cherubs in the area, he orders Cunha and Brumby to spread out their sections. He sends the Sergeant to put a new beacon on the anchor corner.

Johnnie risks distraction when he thinks about his former platoon—and his Father—who are somewhere else on Planet P. But he calls his mind back to the matter at hand, again demonstrating how well he internalized the painful lesson of his flogging during basic training (Chapter 7). He won't do anything to risk the lives of the men under his command.

Johnnie really wants to talk to Chang because he's worried about what he sees. Either the "brass" were too optimistic about their plan, or the Blackguards were given the worst spot. Johnnie's already seen half a dozen **suits** on the ground, indicating casualties. Only a few men are returning for retrieval, and their actions are uncoordinated.

The number of causalities Johnnie notices, in addition to the fact that the bodies are still on the ground, suggests some gaps in the operational plan. The uncoordinated actions of the surviving Cherubs suggests that they've lost their commander and sergeant and have no one left to give them orders.

The Battle Plan also says to leave any **Bug** tunnels open. The strategy is simple and logical, if there are enough troops to support it: allowing the Bugs to keep coming up will drain their reserves. The higher-ups estimated that they'd expend 70-90% of their warriors before they stopped attacking the surface. Only at this point will the troops go down the holes to capture the Bug "royalty," whose underdeveloped physiques will make them easy prey.

It will be easier to capture the brain if they're not well defended by warriors, so the Federation forces must first deplete the Arachnids' reserves. Unfortunately, doing so requires treating the cap troopers more like expendable Arachnid warriors, sacrificing as many as necessary to reduce the forces lurking underground. Johnnie finds this plan unnerving, and it's notable that the leadership in charge of planning and running the mission are orbiting the planet rather than having boots on the ground.

This plan means that Johnnie stands on 680 square miles of land that might be filled with unstopped Bug holes, and he wants to know where each one is. If there are too many, he plans to plug a few anyway for his men's safety. There's no answer from Chang's platoon because its chain of command has broken. Abe Moise—one of Johnnie's classmates—is the only officer still alive, and his report is confusing. Warning Johnnie that the situation is what he can see, Blackstone sends him off to check out Square Black One.

Johnnie won't exactly contradict his orders, but he's willing to cheat a little if it will protect his men while still fulfilling the mission objectives. The ability to make independent decisions is one of the differences between human soldiers and Arachnid warriors. Johnnie's concerns about the situation are confirmed by Moise's report and the fact that Chang and his sergeant both died on Square Black One.

Johnnie's sergeant can't put a beacon on the corner because it's occupied by a crater big enough to swallow the *Tours*. The **Bugs** like to use land mines, although the craters are usually smaller. He's placed an offset beacon instead. Johnnie has him send Cunha's squad to patrol the crater and spread Brumby's out to cover the ground. Johnny starts to worry about spreading his men out so far; each is covering 17 square miles, and a Bug hole is only five feet across.

The crater is another suggestion that the situation on the ground is worse than Johnnie has been led to expect, as its size and radioactivity indicate that the Arachnids are using some heavy weaponry to defend themselves. The size of Square Black One, especially relative to the number of men patrolling it, increases the danger, hinting that exemplary performance will be required from the men if they're to survive.

The crater is radioactive, but a **suit** will protect a soldier from radiation for a while. Johnnie wants his men to set up ground listeners near it, fearing that the **Bugs** would send their warriors through lethal radiation to reach them. His sergeant suggests reorganization of the men's positions to avoid leaving the newly-promoted ones at particularly dangerous points in their Square. Johnnie suspects that Blackstone is eavesdropping on their conversation, so he asserts his right to command the platoon.

Johnnie relies on his sergeant, just as Nielssen and Blackstone have urged him to do, but when they have a difference of opinion, Johnnie goes with his own gut over the sergeant's suggestions. It's important for him to assert his right to command his platoon. He's reenacting his experience in the Roughnecks with Ace, where he needed to assert the authority that he had been given over an older and more experienced man.

Leaving the newer officer in place, Johnnie orders an hourly replacement of the crater watch, a quick initial patrol sweep to identify potential **Bug** holes, and then a slow patrol to make sure they've all been located and to check for any surviving Cherubs. The sergeant's only suggestion is that the initial patrol use snoopers, which can see the warm vents from the Bugs' holes.

Thinking on his feet, Johnnie figures out a way to cover the territory while also protecting his men to the best of his ability. The sergeant suggests only a small change, demonstrating his approval of Johnnie's plan. Johnnie is doing a good job proving himself thus far.

Johnnie switches to the wide circuit and listens as the sergeant conveys his orders to the men with precision and panache. He watches them spread out on his radar display and notices that there's no chatter from the well-disciplined and experienced platoon. They could get along just as well without him, and for a moment, he wishes he wasn't responsible for so many people and could go back to the Roughnecks as a plain sergeant.

The sergeant's precision offers a subtle clue to his identity, although it won't be revealed until later in the chapter. The quick, silent efficiency with which the platoon follows his orders exemplifies military discipline at its finest and speaks highly of the sergeant, Blackstone, and Lieutenant Silva, who have prepared their men to run like a well-oiled machine. Johnnie wishes to go back to being a boot because it's hard to be in command. But it's hard because he's worried about the men's safety, so his authority over them is perfectly balanced by his sense of responsibility for them, proving Major Reid's truism about power (that responsibility is its opposite).

Square Black One is flat and barren, which will make it easier to spot any **Bugs**. Still, the platoon is spread so thin that each spot lies unobserved for three or four minutes at a time. They're also limited to close-range weapons to avoid friendly fire. Johnnie would trade this patrol for a strike any day, but he doesn't waste time moaning as he goes out to inspect the crater.

Johnnie and the men in the platoon need to rely on their training and discipline to confront a dangerous and difficult mission. The usual things that would protect them (long range weapons, plugging unguarded Arachnid holes) are out of the question. This moment strikes at the heart of Zim's statement (Chapter 5) that a cap trooper should be a dangerous man, no matter what weapons he has at his disposal.

Although the troops had been conditioned for a 40-hour mission, it's quiet and the time passes slowly. Johnnie tries many things to keep his men alert. He escorts Major Landry and the special senser when they arrive at Black One. The senser asks Johnnie to "freeze" his men while he visits several spots and generates a map of the **Bugs**' passageways. He isn't in armor and doesn't seem concerned about breathing the radioactive air.

Johnnie's ability to do things by the book makes him a good leader, but he's also concerned about keeping up the men's vigilance and morale. Their swift response to the freeze command recalls the Hendrick episode and shows how real, trained soldiers—as opposed to undisciplined recruits—behave.

Before the senser's unit leaves, they hand Johnnie a dimensional map of the Square with the **Bugs**' tunnels marked on it. One big artery lies under their feet, connecting the surface to a Bug colony far underground. Johnnie releases the men from their freeze, pulls the listeners from the crater, and redeploys them over the colony and along the "highway." Blackstone orders him to put a few listening posts over "empty" areas. Johnnie wonders if he can trust a map that seems to have been made by magic, and while Blackstone reminds him it's official, he also tells him to pay attention to any noises that fall outside of the marked areas.

Johnnie and Blackstone are united in their delicate balancing act between the official word of the higher-ups—represented by the senser's map—and their own, individual instincts. Of course, these instincts have been honed by training and tested by battle, but their caution in accepting the map shows the importance of individual intelligence and determination even in the context of a group operation.

Burrowing **Bugs** sound like frying bacon. Blackstone tells Johnnie that the men should take turns listening and sleeping. Two sapper companies are coming to stop up the tunnel where it comes closest to the surface. After that, Blackstone, Johnnie, and the rest of the men will have to wait and see what happens. Either the Bugs will break through to the surface, or the troopers will go down into their tunnels.

Given the nature of the operation, the most important job the men can do is wait, vigilant in case there's action. During these quiet moments, Blackstone continues to mentor Johnnie. The Bugs' sounds can be referenced against domestic noises like cooking—a stark reminder that, despite technological advances, the troopers must still rely on their senses, too.

Johnnie repositions his men quickly after talking with Blackstone, then uses hypnotic suggestion to put half of them to sleep in their suits. The sergeant suggests that he sleep also, and when Johnnie refuses—he can't imagine sleeping knowing that there are so many **Bugs** beneath his feet—Blackstone uses a hypnotic command to put him to sleep.

Johnnie still feels an instinctive dislike for the Arachnids; he can't imagine sleeping if they're crawling around under his feet. Blackstone eavesdrops on his conversation with the sergeant and puts them both to sleep by hypnotic suggestion. He shares his quiet omniscience with Rasczak, who also had an uncanny ability to keep tabs on his men. Overruling Johnnie and the sergeant also offers a reminder of why military redundancy and chains of command are important—sometimes a cooler or more experienced head must prevail.

Blackstone wakes Johnnie up over an hour later. He resents having been put to sleep against his will and suspects that it happened because the sergeant is the one really calling the shots. He tells Johnnie that if the Captain put them to sleep, he must have had a good reason. But Blackstone put him to sleep as well. Johnnie checks in on each of the listening stations; he can hear the **Bugs** "chittering" below the surface—but not cutting through the rock.

Putting Johnnie and the sergeant to sleep is also a sign of Blackstone's intuition, which the sergeant has learned to trust. Yet again, Blackstone's actions highlight the necessary balance between individual intuition and military protocol; the cap troopers have insight that the Arachnid warrior lack.

The "**Bug** boulevard" sounds like heavy traffic moving through at regular intervals. Johnnie calculates that a load, traveling at 110 miles per hour, goes past every minute. Blackstone has made his own calculations, which are close enough to Johnnie's.

Johnnie uses his head—and practices his math skills—while he listens to the Bug activity. Blackstone corrects him, but without causing Johnnie any shame. He doesn't expect Johnnie to know everything, and he provides the backup to ensure the safety and success of the mission without stepping on Johnnie's authority.

Johnnie makes it to one of the "outside" listening posts. The man posted there thinks the pickup might be broken; when Johnnie listens to it, he hears frying bacon. He wakes his whole platoon and makes a report to Blackstone. He struggles to keep the panic out of his voice, but Blackstone sounds pleased. He tells Johnnie to try to figure out where the **Bugs** will break through—Johnnie suspects it will be at a spot called Easter 10. The troops should keep their distance, because if the Bugs come out in force, they won't stand a chance, but the General could bomb them from orbit.

When Johnnie finally hears burrowing Arachnids, it's from one of the listening posts he and Blackstone set up outside of the areas identified on the senser's map. Their intuition has given them valuable lead time against what was clearly meant as a surprise attack. The panic Johnnie feels betrays his youth and inexperience, especially compared to Captain Blackstone. But, like with his shakes in the drop tube, he can still carry out his duties despite his anxiety.

Johnnie and his sergeant rearrange the troops, pulling the platoon closer together so they'll have a better chance of defending each other if necessary. Johnnie wonders if the **Bugs** are driving a new horizontal tunnel just under the surface. He asks Blackstone what he should do if the Bugs do surface. Blackstone orders him to hunt Bugs anywhere else but where they break through, because they need the tunnels open. He reminds Johnnie to hunt Bugs instead of medals, which Johnnie promises to do.

As he and the sergeant rearrange the troops, Johnnie continues to be bothered by the odd location of the tunneling noises; his best guess is that they're making a new pathway to pop up and surprise the troops from an unexpected angle. While this moment certainly is dangerous, the more tunnels they leave exposed, the greater the chance that the M.I. will be able to infiltrate their hives and capture brains or queens.

Johnnie turns his attention back to his men, making sure their **suits** have fresh charges of air and power. The sergeant suggests three men to relieve the listeners with Johnnie. When the sergeant suggests scouts, Johnnie realizes that the current men, in slow marauder suits, would have been extremely vulnerable if the **Bugs** broke through. Hughes relieves the other listeners, and for 37 minutes he and Johnnie monitor the sound of frying bacon growing louder.

In the moments before the action begins, Johnnie and the sergeant turn their attention to the suits—the men's only source of protection against the gathering attack. Johnnie's forgotten how some of the soldiers are made vulnerable by their slow marauder suits, but the sergeant—a professional with much more experience—hasn't. His correction of Johnnie shows how much the young man has yet to learn, while at the same time Johnnie shows his merit by catching on quickly without having to be lectured.

Everything turns chaotic as the **Bugs** surface in many places at once. As Johnnie relays reports to Blackstone, the ground falls out from under his feet, and he's "engulfed." It didn't hurt; he only fell 10-15 feet, and then he was carried back to the surface on a sea of Bugs. Johnnie's first reaction is to retreat, but he checks himself mid-jump when he realizes that there are no warriors among the group. He wonders if it's a diversion from the real attack, and Blackstone passes his report up the chain of command.

Compared to his first action against the Arachnids on Klendathu, Johnnie has come a long way; when the ground opens up under his feet and even when he's engulfed by a swarm of alarming, spider-like creatures, he keeps his head. He even has the presence of mind to recognize the strangeness of the situation as he jumps away, and when he realizes that the swarm is made up of workers instead of warriors, he trusts the intuition that tells him it's a distraction. His presence of mind and his instincts demonstrate his own virtue and suggest that the humans are superior to the Arachnids because they can make individual assessments like this of the situation as it's developing, rather than relying on a central brain for control.

Johnnie sees two bright flashes to either side. Blackstone isn't answering his call, and his sergeant's beacon suddenly blinks out. As Johnnie heads towards the sergeant's last position, Cunha reports that the sergeant is "reconnoitering a hole." Johnnie watches the entire first section disappear from his display as they follow the sergeant into the tunnels.

Earlier, Johnnie fretted that the Blackguards could do just as well on their own as under his command. Without downplaying his authority, the split-second decision of the sergeant and Brumby to explore one of the Bugs' diversionary tunnels demonstrates the power and importance of independent decision-making within the framework of the organized battle plan.

Cunha's section lost three men when the **Bugs** broke through. He doesn't know how many Brumby's lost. The shock wave from the sapper's explosion finally hits Johnnie, stunning nearby Bugs and giving the troopers a brief advantage. Johnnie uses it to flame Bugs and inspect the three holes. One is filled with rubble, and another shows no signs of further Bug activity, although Johnnie still assigns men to watch it.

A few men have died, but since the sergeant and Johnnie had the forethought and vigilance to tighten up the ranks, the troopers were able to contain their losses through mutual defense. And, despite the shock of the surprise attack, the professional soldiers calmly assess their losses and the new situation.

The **Bug** tunnel runs twenty feet below the surface. Two of the holes were diversions to cover the attack from this main tunnel. Cunha points out the direction the sergeant and Brumby's section went. Johnnie can't see anything in the dark, but he swallows his fear and prepares to go after them. Seconds after he jumps into the hole, Cunha and his section follow him down.

Johnnie swallows his fear to make good on the promise that the M.I. never leave anyone behind: if the sergeant and Brumby's section are in the tunnels, he's responsible to get them back to their retrieval boat on time or die trying. He doesn't ask anyone to go with him, making this an act of personal bravery. But Cunha and his men—model soldiers all—follow him immediately and without question.

Johnnie and the second section leave two men to guard the hole, and they proceed as quickly as their **suits** allow in the low tunnel. The must use their snoopers, confirming that the **Bugs** must see by infrared. When they come to an intersection, Johnnie considers the doctrines for being underground. But no one has ever returned to say how well they've worked (or not), so Johnnie must make his own decisions. The section will stay together, and he won't allow any of them to be captured.

While the Federation has provided some guidelines for underground action against the Bugs, Johnnie must assess and react to the situation on his own, since no one has been able to report how accurate the Army's guesses have been. He trusts his instincts to keep his men together as much as possible while leaving a few soldiers behind to ensure that their exits remain useable.

Johnnie calls Brumby, who answers. He and his men are lost, and they haven't found the sergeant. When Johnnie calls the sergeant on his private channel, he answers, suggesting that Johnnie find Brumby's section and then return to the surface. He's in a position where the **Bugs** can't reach him, but he can't escape either. When Johnnie gives him a direct order to report his location, he answers "precisely and concisely." He's two levels down and almost exactly under the section.

Remarkably, Brumby, his section, and the sergeant are all alive. The sergeant's reluctance to respond arises from his dangerous position, suggesting that he doesn't want the men to risk their lives attempting to rescue him. But Johnnie (a truly virtuous soldier) won't leave him behind. For the second time, the sergeant's precision is highlighted, suggesting that this trait is more than just the quality of a well-trained and experienced soldier.

By comparing Brumby's path to the map, Johnnie and the first section proceed towards their comrades. At the same intersection where Brumby's section fell under attack, Johnnie and the troops also encounter **Bugs**. Brumby's section followed the noise of the fight and rejoined. They've sustained four casualties, including Brumby. Johnnie and Cunha consolidate the survivors into one section of four squads and continue towards the sergeant's location.

Underground, Johnnie no longer has the luxury of listening devices to warn him of the Bugs' movements, so he and his men are surprised by a party of Arachnid warriors just like Brumby was; however, by rejoining forces, the two sections are able to overpower their attackers. And, just like Blackstone predicted, Brumby didn't get long to enjoy his promotion. Despite the loss of four more men, Johnnie and Cunha reorganize and swiftly continue their search for the sergeant.

The fight against the **Bugs** that have besieged the sergeant doesn't last for long. The sergeant told Johnnie what to expect: he'd captured a brain Bug, which he was using as a shield. The cap troopers attack from behind. Johnnie feels excitement as he realizes that they've achieved the mission's objectives. But he hears frying bacon, and the roof falls in on him.

Because the cap troopers now have the element of surprise on their side, they're able to quickly overcome the Arachnids that have the sergeant pinned down and return, victorious, towards the surface with their sergeant and his brain prisoner. Johnnie's injury in the tunnel collapse cuts his command short and illustrates the role that chance and accident—as well as training and preparation—have in war.

Johnnie wakes up in a temporary sick bay on the *Argonne*, suffering from nitrous oxide poisoning and radiation exposure, broken ribs, and a concussion. He'll never know why Brumby followed the sergeant into the hole.

Like the rest of the ships, the Argonne *is named for a famous battle; the Allies' Argonne campaign in France was both the largest and deadliest action for the United States in World War I. The historical battle reflects the size and importance of the battle for Planet P. Because he died valiantly, Brumby's rationale for following the sergeant into the tunnels will remain a mystery. But in the end, it doesn't matter much: he died honorably, in action, and his death contributed to achieving the mission's objectives.*

But Johnnie did eventually learn why the sergeant had gone in. He heard Johnnie's report to Blackstone that the first breakthrough was a feint, so when he saw warriors coming from the main tunnel, he realized that the **Bugs** were making a desperation push and no longer had sufficient forces. Concluding that they were running low on reserves, he saw the opportunity for one man raiding alone to find and capture one of the six brain Bugs taken on Planet P. He received a field commission for his actions. Johnnie always knew that, as Blackstone said, he was getting "the best sergeant in the fleet," because he is Sergeant Zim.

The sergeant is, in fact, Zim, and his participation in the final phase of Johnnie's training provides a neat symmetry to Johnnie's story. The fact that no one knew the two men had a history indicates their ability to approach each other as professional, although Johnnie's respect for Zim is evident even when he's just identified as "the sergeant." Zim's ability to quickly assess the situation and drop into the tunnels adds more evidence to the argument that the moral individualism of well-trained soldiers is superior to the Bugs' social structure—which is limited by their reliance on a smaller number of brain Bugs to make decisions for the collective.


Johnnie remains on the *Argonne* for a month, during which time he broods and worries over Operation Royalty. He knows he didn't run things as well as Lieutenant Rasczak would have. His injuries were from an accident and not from fighting. He didn't know how many casualties there'd been, but the platoon shrunk from six squads to four. He doesn't know that Blackstone survived. He wonders how he could pass his apprenticeship if he survived but his examiner died. But after he's released from bedrest, he goes back to studying math to keep his mind off of things, and when he makes it back to OCS he learns that he's passed the apprenticeship.

Johnnie's angst over the action derives from his feeling that his injuries aren't "real," because they didn't happen at the hands of an enemy, and his sense that he hasn't lived up to Rasczak's example. However, the operation was a success, and his was one of the only platoons to have captured a brain Arachnid. His isolation from the platoon—he's been rescued aboard a different ship and has no idea if Captain Blackstone is even still alive—exacerbates his distress, because a cap trooper lives and dies by his comrades. Being cut off so suddenly from the Blackguards seems more alienating than when he thought he had become an orphan. Based on Johnnie's earlier math, the platoon lost at least 20 men on Planet P, underlining the magnitude of risks soldiers are willing to accept in pursuing Federal Service.

When he gets back to Sanctuary, Johnnie's roommate Angel greets him. The other cadets thought he had died because it took him so long to return. Angel left just after Johnnie, made three drops, and has been back a week. When Johnnie says he didn't make any drops, Angel is envious of his "luck." Johnnie eventually graduates. He reflects that his "luck" has been people: Angel's tutoring that helps him pass math; Carl's and Mr. Dubois' examples; the support of his Father, Blackstone, Brumby, Ace. And most of all, Zim, who now has a permanent rank of First Lieutenant.

Johnnie graduates from OCS on his own merits—he has earned his passing grades and proved his readiness to command men on the battlefield under Captain Blackstone. Yet, he is deeply aware of his dependence on and debt to the role models in his life, from his friend Carl to the many senior officers who mentored him as he trained and served. He's earned his commission, but he's a soldier, and his military family has played an important role in helping to achieve his success.

The day after graduation, Second Lieutenant Johnnie Rico and his classmate wait at the landing field for their ships. Johnnie's dearest wishes have come true: he's being sent back to the Roughnecks while his Father is still there. To manage his excitement and nervousness, Johnnie reads the list of ships in orbit—there are a lot because some big action is coming. He sees ships named after famous battles, and after honorable soldiers from past generations.

In an extremely fortuitous turn of events, Johnnie finds himself assigned to his beloved platoon to complete his training under Lieutenant Jelly. For Johnnie, home is where the Roughnecks are, and the fact that his actual Father is one of them is merely a bonus. The list of ships—again, all named after famous battles or notable soldiers—connects Johnnie's story with a long and noble military history.

Johnnie tells his classmate that one should be named after Ramón Magsaysay, but he's never heard of him, because each country has its own version of history. Johnnie whispers to himself in Tagalog a phrase that translates roughly to "Home is where the heart is;" although he grew up speaking Standard English, at home his family also clung to the tradition of the "old speech." Johnnie continues to read ship names until he hears the song of the *Roger Young*'s beacon. He's finally going home.

Ramón Magsaysay is a historical example of the ideal soldier-citizen according to Mr. Dubois's—and Johnnie's—definitions. Coming from humble roots, he served with distinction in the Pacific Theatre of World War II before launching a successful career and eventually becoming President of the Philippines in 1953. He was a vocal opponent of communism—in alignment with the book's cold-war condemnation of communism as a political theory—and his administration was respected for its integrity and public service. Not only does he provide an exemplar of the soldier-turned-model citizen that provides the model for the Federation's limited form of government, but his story lies close to Johnnie's heart because he himself is Filipino. This final revelation underscores the utopian vision of united humanity. And, like his countryman Magsaysay, Johnnie earns his place in the Federation by demonstrating excellent character, impeccable virtue, and unquestionable devotion to the duties of citizenship.

CHAPTER 14

Every year, the Federation takes a little more territory. Johnnie's Candidate Officer, Third Lieutenant Jimmie Bearpaw, summons him for a drop. Johnnie tells Jimmie to stick with him and keep out of his way, have fun and use up his ammo, and—if Johnnie buys it and he assumes command—to listen to the platoon sergeant's suggestions. As they enter the drop room, the sergeant calls the troops to attention. Johnny inspects the first section and Jimmie inspects the second.

After earning his own officer's commission, career soldier Johnnie Rico now follows in the footsteps of his mentors Sergeant Zim and Captain Blackstone by training up the next generation of Federation officers. The advice he gives to Jimmie is almost identical to the advice he's been given and the alliteration of their names—Johnnie/Jimmie—hits at the continuity of military service at the heart of the Mobile Infantryman's vocation. The names may change, but the mission and the values are timeless.

Johnnie addresses his platoon: this is another **Bug** hunt. Because the Bugs keep prisoners of war on Klendathu, the Federation can't use a nova bomb there, so the orders are to go down, take territory, and hold it. They won't be retrieved; the boat will bring them more supplies instead. If anyone is captured, they should know that their outfit is behind them, and they won't be abandoned. They're only responsible for one little part of the operation. Johnnie tells them that he's just heard from Jelly, who reports that his new legs work well and wants them to know he's thinking of them and he "expects [their] names to *shine*!"

Johnnie's pre-drop speech offers a final reminder of the stakes of being a soldier: it's taken the Federation so long to rebuild its force after the rout of Klendathu in Chapter 10 that Johnnie has been promoted to captain of the platoon; Jelly was disabled in some action in the meantime; men are held as prisoners on the planet below. The platoon is about to enact the academic debate about the number of humans over which war should be waged—no one will be abandoned who is still alive, and any number of lives is worth fighting for, no matter how small. The words that Johnnie puts into Jelly's mouth in this moment are the same words that Jelly put into Rasczak's mouth in Chapter 1; along with Johnnie's pre-drop shakes, they bring the story full circle.

Johnnie's shakes begin. Johnnie and Jimmie inspect the men as they enter their capsules. When Johnnie seals Jimmie into his capsule, his shakes intensify. But his platoon sergeant—his Father—embraces him, reminding him that it's just like drill. Johnnie's shakes stop immediately, and the Navy drop crew seals them into the last two capsules. He calls the bridge to report that "Rico's Roughnecks" are ready, and he listens to the *Roger Young*'s fight song as he waits to drop.

Johnnie's story begins and ends with his shakes; he's still human and capable of fear. Despite his training and experience, he understands the danger and chooses to put his life on the line in every drop anyway, because that's what a good soldier and a virtuous citizen does. His father's presence reinforces the familial nature of military service. The fact that Johnnie outranks his father not-so-subtly suggests that his choice to volunteer as a teenager was the correct one. Mr. Rico has fulfilled his own sense of duty but will never be the soldier his son is, because he chose to ignore that calling for so many years of his life.

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